

AAMC Letters of Evaluation Guidelines

<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/332572/lettersofevaluationguidelines.html>

Guidelines

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical school rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant:
 - How long you have known the applicant;
 - In what capacity you have interacted (e.g., faculty, pre-medical advisor, supervisor, etc.); and
 - Whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observations.
3. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
4. **Only** include information on grades, GPA or MCAT scores *if* you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, GPA, and MCAT scores are available within the application.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for medical school. Consider describing:
 - The situation or context of the behavior
 - The actual behavior(s) you observed
 - Any consequences of that behavior
6. Admissions committees find comparison information helpful. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about:
 - The comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.)
 - Your rationale for the final comparison

Key Areas of Interest

A. Unique Contributions to the Incoming Class

- Describe obstacles that the applicant had to overcome, and if applicable, how those obstacles led to new learning and growth
- Explain how the applicant may contribute to a medical school's diversity, broadly defined (e.g., background, attributes, experiences, etc.)

Note: If you write about any information that could be considered potentially sensitive, confirm with the applicant that s/he is comfortable with the inclusion of that information.

B. Core, Entry-level Competencies

Describe how the applicant has, or has not, demonstrated **any** of the following competencies that are necessary for success in medical school.

Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

Critical Thinking: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems

Quantitative Reasoning: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world

Scientific Inquiry: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated

Written Communication: Effectively conveying information to others using written words and sentences

Science Competencies

Living Systems: Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems

Human Behavior: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, social, and biological factors that influence health and well-being

Interpersonal Competencies

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society, locally, nationally, and globally

Social Skills: Demonstrates awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; and treats others with respect

Cultural Competence: Demonstrates knowledge of social and cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds

Teamwork: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals

Oral Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed

Intrapersonal Competencies

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; and develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning

Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance

Resilience and Adaptability: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks

Capacity for Improvement: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback

Medical schools are looking for insight you, the letter writer, can give about this particular person, and especially seek your opinion in the following areas:

- * Intellectual readiness: Include comments about general intelligence, the student's oral and written communication skills, ability to deal with complex and abstract ideas, evidence of being a lifelong independent learner. A letter that merely states the grade earned by an applicant in your class has very limited value. Can this person handle the load of medical school?

- * Motivation for medicine: If you have some knowledge of the student's experiences learning about medicine or experiences with volunteer work in a health care setting, comment on the applicant's exposure to the realities of medicine.

- * Maturity: Your impressions of this person as someone who has the integrity and emotional maturity to take on responsibility. Do you think this student could discuss intimate or sensitive topics with a variety of people? Is this someone you would trust to care for you or a loved one?

- * Difficulty of course work or major: It is helpful to explain how this student measures up with past and present candidates and to provide a context for their performance. If you have the impression that the bioengineering major is especially demanding for particular reasons, explain this as you make your remarks about a bioengineering major. If you have never seen a sociology major perform so well in your upper division biochemistry course, write this observation.

- * Special attributes and assets: Have you noticed the student often helps others in the hallway while waiting for class to start? Express your opinions and share any observations that illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the student.



Candidate's Name: _____
(printed) Last First Middle Last Four Digits SSN #

[Large empty rectangular box for writing the recommendation text]

NOTE: You may attach additional pages of text if necessary.

Signature _____ Date _____
(ink original)

	No basis for judgment	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent Top 10%	Outstanding Top 2%
Intellectual potential						
Ability to analyze/problem solve						
Creativity and imagination						
Communication skills: oral						
Communication skills: written						
Ability to work with others						
Maturity						
Motivation for advanced study						
Overall Promise						

Name _____
Title _____
Employer _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone _____
e-mail _____

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
COMPUTATIONAL SCIENCE GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP**

Confidential Reference Form

Applicant's Last Name	First Name	Middle
How long and in what association have you known the applicant?		

In a group of science and math students of comparable age and experience, how would you rate the applicant with respect to **personal characteristics** (motivation, imagination & originality of thought, ability to work with others, leadership potential) and **scientific capabilities** (fundamental knowledge in field, skill & originality of research project design, lab skill, written & oral communication skills)? Please provide comments that helps us better understand the applicant's character, attitude, ability, potential for research, and potential as a computational scientist. If you have taught or advised a current or former DOE CSGF student, please compare this applicant to that student with regard to the above criteria.

Recommender Information:

Name/Title

Date

Institution/Address

E-mail:

Must be RECEIVED BY January 11, 2006: DOE Computational Science Graduate Fellowship Program, Krell Institute, 1609 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101, Ames, IA 50010, Fax: 515.956.3699

Pays attention to detail
Follows through on tasks
Learns new skills quickly
Detects inaccuracies and flaws in reasoning
Probes to gain a deeper understanding
Seeks and makes sense of a wide variety of information
Can make effective decisions under uncertainty or with incomplete

Manages time effectively
Builds effective working relationships with others
Listens well
Relates well to people of different personality or background
Good team player
Expresses opinions and reactions without intimidating others
Expresses ideas clearly and concisely

Sensitive to the needs of others
Thinks "out of the box"
Expands on ideas of others

Willing to take risks
Persists despite obstacles and opposition
Is honest and candid
Demonstrates consistency between words and actions
Lives up to commitments
Accepts personal responsibility for actions -- good and bad
Does not blame others for difficulties

Is self-aware -- knows personal strengths and weaknesses
Able to learn from experiences -- good and bad
Acts with integrity -- trustworthy
Admits mistakes

Takes good care of self
Works well under pressure
Uses constructive outlets to provide perspective and relieve stress