

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

MIT Prehealth Advising
617-715-5328

5 Components of the Medical School Application Process

1. Grades
2. MCAT
3. Extracurricular Activities
4. Personal Statement

5. Letters of Recommendations

- ✓ A field as complex as medicine requires strengths and abilities that are not easily measured by grades and test scores.
- ✓ Highly valuable in both the decision to offer an interview & accept or reject



Rating Scale

- 5 = Extremely Important
- 4 = Very Important
- 3 = Important
- 2 = Somewhat Important
- 1 = Not Important

Requesting Letters of Recommendations

- Who to ask?
- When to ask?
- How to ask?
- What to provide?
- How to remind?

Who to ask?

Check each program requirements: Each medical school has their own policy

- In general 3-5 letters are requested
- Harvard has the most specific policy

Requirement	From Whom?
1 Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty• Ideally from Bio, Chem, Physics, Math, or Brain & Cog
1 non-science	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Humanities professor, music or arts instructor, etc.
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal Investigator (PI)• MD-PhD applicants should include all research experiences
Extracurricular Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community service, health-related experiences, leadership, summer internship, student groups, supervisor, etc.

Who NOT to ask?

Any individual below in your professional network:

Teaching Assistants* Friends Relatives
Student Club Leadership Post Doc Family Friends of family

UNLESS they've personally supervised your professional or academic work

Questions to ask before determining who to ask?

- ✓ Does this individual know me well enough to evaluate my relevant qualifications?
- ✓ Can this individual provide specific details to support their overall assessment of my candidacy?
- ✓ Has this individual seen me exhibit the required intellectual ability and professional effectiveness necessary to succeed in medical school?

**Teaching Assistants typically little weight – TAs aren't experience, reputable, nor knowledgeable sources.*

When to request?

MIT Committee on Prehealth Advising (COPA) Timeline	
September – December 16, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule a 2018 COPA Enrollment Appointment through CareerBridge (strongly recommended if you haven't met with a Prehealth Advisor in the last 6 months)
November 28 – December 16, 2016 5pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request a COPA letter* Pay your Prehealth Credential Service Fee Create a Prehealth Credential Service Account**
January 23, 2017	Upload all required materials to your Credential Service account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transcript(s) ✓ Resume ✓ Personal statement draft ✓ Prehealth Advising Questionnaire responses
January 31– February 3, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve an interview time with a COPA faculty member and the Senior Assistant Director of Prehealth Advising. You will be emailed the online scheduling tool.
February 20 – May 1, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student will be interviewed with a COPA member and the Senior Assistant Director of Prehealth Advising for approximately 30-45 minutes
April 14, 2017	ALUMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit your Prehealth Credential Service account, including letters of recommendation, by this date
May 31, 2017	UNDERGRADS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit your Prehealth Credential Service account, including letters of recommendation, by this date

- **Give at least 2 - 3 months notice**
 - know your deadlines!
 - agree upon a submission date
 - likely you'll need to send reminders
 - “polite persistence” can be appreciated – remind when necessary
- **Current recommendations are best!**
But if you wait..
 - Stay in contact with your recommenders (*i.e. Drop by, send an email, update them on your plans and progress*)
 - Recommenders will need to grant permission in future



How to ask?

In order of preference:

1. In Person

- Stop by during office hours
- Contact department administrator to schedule a brief meeting
- Email recommender asking when to stop by or invite for a coffee

2. By Phone

- Especially if you live far away

3. Email or write Professor

- Mention you'd like to discuss your application in person or over the phone

Keep in mind...

Regardless of the form you request, specifically request a “strong” recommendation

- Allows the recommender to say No
- Allows the recommender to respond to “strong,” by affirming it will be or not

Also, ask recommender “Is there anything I can provide to help write the letter?”

...and follow up with a reminder/check-in if needed

What to provide?

Provide the recommender with:

1. A personalized letter that:

- Thanks them, and explains why you asked them
- Reminds them of your experience with them
- Points out the value of the experience, and it's relevance to your future career/training
- Identifies 1-3 competencies you developed through working with them. Use AAMC competency list:

<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies/>

2. Resume

3. Personal Statement

4. Transcript

5. Work Sample

6. AAMC *“Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Medical School Applicant”*

<https://www.aamc.org/download/351978/data/letters-printfriendly.pdf>



What if I don't really know my recommender?

In environments where there is limited opportunities to engage with your potential recommender consider these strategies :

- **Classes** (large or limited opportunities to speak)
 - Go to office hours when no one else will be there – week 1, right after mid-term
 - Discuss your interest in class material, prof's background, etc. during this time
 - Do research with the professor or take more than 1 class with him/her
 - Become a Teaching Assistant
- **Informational Interview**
 - Gathering information and advice from a supervisor, PI, etc. at your research or extracurricular activity who is working in a career field you're interested in.



GECD Guide for [Networking & Informational Interviews](https://gecd.mit.edu/jobs-and-internships/finding-jobs-and-internships/networking-and-informational-interviews)

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Additional tips:

- Be clear about the requirements of each program you are applying to
- Their letter should not be addressed to any specific school
(Prehealth Advising will send them to each school you apply to)
- Each should include the date and their **signature** and should be on letterhead
- Email from the Prehealth Credential Service should not be the first point of contact!
- Make certain your recommendations are submitted by the COPA Deadline: **Alumni – April 14th**
Undergrads – May 31st

Prehealth Credential Service

Online system managed by MIT Prehealth Advising:

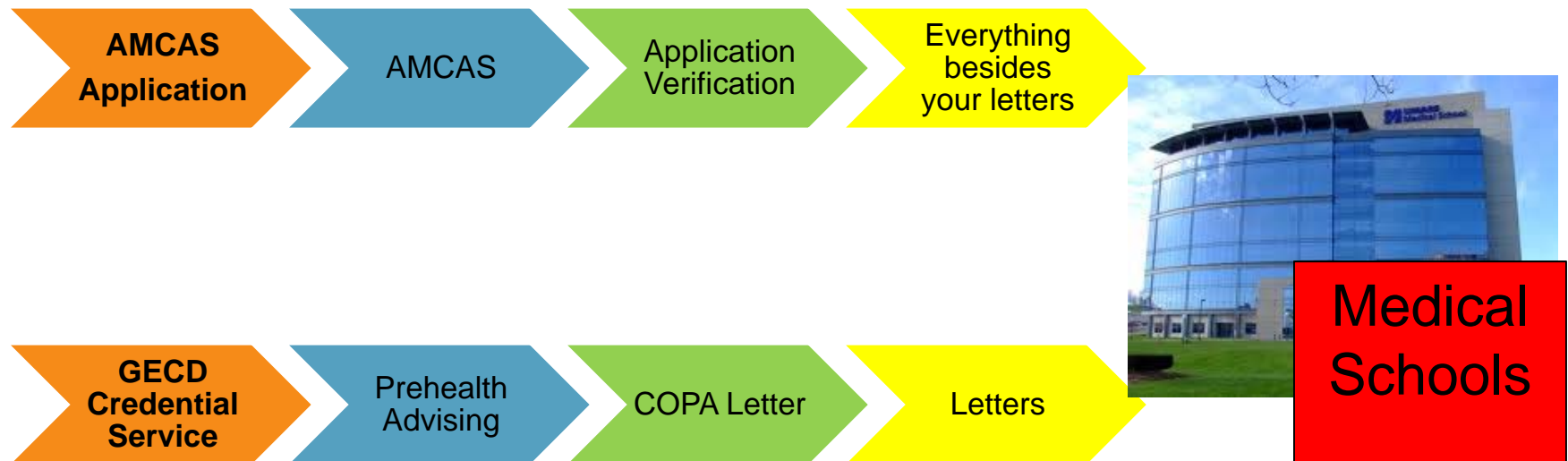
Allows:

- Applicants to enter/upload required materials
- Letters writers to upload letters of recommendation

Benefits:

- Review all letters of recommendation for errors
- Allows Committee on Prehealth Advising (COPA) to review your application materials and letters prior to writing the COPA letter
- Sends your letters of recommendation to all medical/health profession schools

2 Systems: 1 Destination



Methods of Letter Packet Delivery

- AMCAS Letter Service
- AACOM Letter Service

American Medical College
Application Service
AMCAS | **AACOM**

Letter Writer Application

Welcome to the AMCAS Letter Writer Application

Login

User name

Password

[Forgot Password?](#)

-OR-

Register For a New Account

If you can't remember your login or do not have an account, click the "Register" button below to proceed.

About the AMCAS Letter Writer Application
The Letter Writer Application enables letter writers to upload PDF documents to AMCAS rather than send letters via the mail. Once the PDF document is uploaded to the Letter Writer Application and after the processing of the AMCAS application the documents are made available to the medical schools designated by the applicant. Please click 'Help' after logging into the Letter Writer Application for instructions on uploading letters, or click [HERE](#) for a link to our public site which also contains detailed instructions.

About AAMC User Accounts
All major AAMC applications, such as AIS, AMCAS, MCAT THx, and the Fee Assistance Program use the same usernames and passwords. If you have used one of these systems please enter that username and password in the boxes to the left. **Each user needs a separate AAMC account and you will need to register if you are uploading for an AMCAS applicant as you cannot use your applicant's/student's AAMC ID and password to upload documents.**

Browser Requirements
For information regarding browser requirements and compatibility please visit <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/faq/browsers.htm>

Note: Medical schools may require your letters to be on official letterhead and include your signature.

AMCAS Letter Service

- Prehealth Advising sends your MIT Core Letter Packet to the AMCAS Letter Service rather than to each school.
- Participating medical schools can review your letters via the AMCAS Letter Service.
- Applicants can use the AMCAS Letter Service to send targeted/supplemental letters to specific schools.
 - Additional research letters if required by select schools
 - Targeted letters written for a specific school

*AMCAS retains letters for **one** application cycle only*

How to enter letter writer information into AMCAS for the MIT Core Packet:

- Select “Committee Letter” if using the MIT Prehealth Credential Service
 - **Committee Letter** if you are eligible for a COPA Letter
 - Letter Packet if you are using the Credential Service, but are not eligible for a COPA Letter

- Enter Debra Shafran as your “Letter Writer”
 - Debra Shafran
 - dshafran@mit.edu
 - 617-715-5328
 - 77 Massachusetts Ave, E39-305
 - Cambridge, MA 02139

- Upload the **Letter Request Form** to the Prehealth Credential Service
 - The Letter Request Form is generated once you enter this letter writer information into AMCAS)
 - The unique Letter ID # located on this form is needed for Debra Shafran to upload your letters to AMCAS

**Thank you for your attention.
Questions?**

**MIT Prehealth Advising
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