

Signature Assignment: Letter of Recommendation

In this assignment, you will prepare for a professional career in engineering by constructing a resume and writing a letter of recommendation for a scholarship. This assignment will require you to inhabit a persona: You will take on the role of one of your first year professors and recommend a particular student (you) for a particular scholarship/internship. Most importantly, you must write how and why you are an excellent match for a particular scholarship/internship. In other words, you must sell yourself to the scholarship/internship committee. However, you may not “bend the truth” or “exaggerate” your qualifications on in the letter of recommendation or the resume. Be creative, but be honest.

The Letter of Recommendation Assignment

Imagine it is the end of the semester and you have just found an engineering-related scholarship/internship opportunity for which you are going to apply. (Links to scholarships and internship information are provided later in this document. Each scholarship/internship application sets forth educational requirements and desired attributes of the recipient.) **Write a letter of recommendation of 450-475 words from one of your UT Arlington professors on behalf of yourself.** In this assignment, *you will play the role of the professor*. You will need to choose a professor who would realistically know quite a bit about your recent background and your activities and accomplishments. You, as the professor, will draw on the knowledge you have of this student (you) to write a clear, detailed letter of recommendation for a particular scholarship/internship. Remember that a letter must have a salutation, introduction, main body, conclusion, and signature. These are required components of the letter of recommendation. In addition, **the letter must include concrete details of activities and accomplishments from the student’s (your) relevant experience and education, including their time at UT Arlington.**

General requirements for assignment:

- Establish and maintain maximum structural integrity.
 - The main structural supports of the letter of recommendation are the how/why this student (you) is an excellent candidate for this scholarship.
 - Explicitly state, throughout the letter, how/why this student matches the criteria for this scholarship/internship; if you do not detail this match throughout the letter, the letter will be structurally weak—nothing will stand firmly, your claims and authority will fall apart.
- Have many concrete details.
- Show your work – Provide your readers with evidence in the form of concrete details or word pictures that illustrate and reinforce claims and evaluations; if claims and evaluations are not immediately reinforced via concrete details/descriptions, those claims and evaluations rest on fallacies or very shaky ground, and readers will not be able to believe what you are saying.

Required Components of the Letter of Recommendation

INTRODUCTION

The INTRODUCTION to an effective letter of recommendation must:

- Note the purpose of this letter.
- Establish the authority/ethos of the letter-writer.
- Explain why the letter writer has the authority/ethos to recommend a student for this scholarship; specify how/why the letter writer is an authority on assessing/evaluating engineering students.
- Explain briefly and how/why the letter writer knows this student well enough to credibly recommend this student for this scholarship/internship.
 - The letter-writer sees hundreds of students per semester; how does the letter-writer know this student and the details of his or her recent accomplishments and education well enough to provide a substantial, believable recommendation?
- Provide an initial discussion of why this student is a good fit for the scholarship/internship.

BODY

The BODY of your effective letter of recommendation must:

- Provide concrete specifics about the student's relevant recent activities and achievements.
 - "X did very well in my engineering class" does NOT demonstrate how or why this student is the best person for this scholarship.
- Provide concrete/useful numbers (for example, test scores, GPA, numerical class ranking, etc.).
- Provide detailed depictions of the student's actions and explain how those actions reveal him/her as possessing desired qualifications.
 - For example, if you claim the student has "excellent leadership skills" or is a "strong, effective team member" you want to describe the student's actions that led you to make that claim.
- Demonstrate the letter-writer's familiarity with the scholarship criteria by specifically stating particular scholarship/internship criteria throughout the letter.
- Describe exactly why this scholarship's/internship's criteria match with this student's relevant, specific experiences/achievements. (*Use keywords from the scholarship/internship posting!*)
 - Readers must see, clearly and specifically, how and why the particular qualifications of the student meet with the particular criteria detailed by the scholarship/internship.
 - "X would be an excellent recipient for this scholarship" does NOT demonstrate how or why this student is a good candidate/match for this scholarship.
- Include useful explanations of the match between this student and this scholarship/internship. Here is an example:

"The Y Scholarship honors students who demonstrate determination and creativity in problem solving. X has often shown good problem solving skills in class, regularly experimenting with better code writing procedures and testing out interesting possible work-arounds for both hardware and software issues. One particularly notable example of X's determination to

observe carefully and problem-solve accordingly occurred while I was mentoring X's team as they built a Lego Mindstorm robot for a technology fair. Prior to the fair, the team's robot was not performing reliably. While X's teammates insisted the problem was with the code, X's careful observation of how and when the robot stopped working led her to disassemble the sensor motor. She found a small defect, and proceeded to devise a fix by ingeniously reconfiguring a paperclip to reinforce the defective part. The robot then worked consistently throughout the technology fair demonstrations. X's assessments and solutions in this and other situations strongly suggest that she will address various kinds of problem solving with determination and creativity."

- The letter writer uses evidence in the form of the example of the Lego Mindstorm robot problem to show the student in action as a determined problem solver.

CONCLUSION

The CONCLUSION to your effective letter of recommendation must:

- Avoid bland, general, ineffective clichés.
- Reinforce the strong match between this student and this scholarship.
 - "I hope you can see that X is a good candidate" is NOT a useful statement in a conclusion.
 - The letter-writer should not be "hoping"; the letter-writer should show how and why this student meets the particular criteria for this particular scholarship; the conclusion must reinforce the evidence and further fortify the student scholarship match.

CORRECT, PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION OF YOUR LETTER

Overall, your effective letter of recommendation must reflect your professionalism and attention to the assigned task by satisfying the following criteria:

- Meet the stated word count specifications.
 - The letter (not including names and addresses, salutation, and closing/signature) **must be between 450 and 475 words**. While you may exceed this word count by several words, you must keep your letter to one page single-spaced (including your signature).
- Meet *all* format specifications.
- Have correct, careful sentence structure throughout.
- Have correct, careful vocabulary/word choice throughout.
- Have correct grammar and punctuation throughout.
- Submit a **PROOFREAD** letter with **NO ERRORS**.
 - If you are not sure about punctuation, grammar, best sentence structure, etc., do not guess; make an appointment at the Writing Center, and/or consult a reliable resource such as the Online Writing Lab at Purdue <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>
 - (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/>)
- See "Getting Help Along the Way" at the end of this document

LETTER OF REC: ESSENTIAL FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS/DETAILS

Your Letter of Recommendation **MUST** meet these format specifications.

You must include a **cover sheet** for your letter. The cover sheet should contain the following:

Your Name and MAV ID
Course and Section Number
Writing Professor Name
Engineering Professor Name
Date

Specific Format for Letter:

Margins: 1 inch on all sides (left, right, top bottom)

Font: Times New Roman 10 pt.

Line spacing: 1.0 (not 1.15 or 1.5)

All text must be **“full justified”**

The professor's UTA address

The professor's UTA email

The professor's UTA phone number

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the typed line, hit “enter/return” twice)

The recipient's title/name (for example, Dr. William Land, or DuPont Creativity in ChemE Scholarship Committee-- you can “invent” this if it is not listed in scholarship information)

The recipient's address (you can “invent” this if not listed in scholarship information)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the typed line, hit “enter/return” twice)

The date the letter was written (use this format: YYYY-MM-DD)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; hit “enter/return” twice)

Dear Dr. Land: (don't forget the punctuation)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the typed line, hit “enter/return” twice)

Opening Paragraph

(Double space between paragraphs—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the last typed line of a paragraph, hit “enter/return” twice)

Next Paragraph (**No indent!**)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the last typed line of a paragraph, hit “enter/return” twice)

Next Paragraph (**No indent!**)

(Double space between paragraphs —Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the last typed line of a paragraph, hit “enter/return” twice)

Next Paragraph (**No indent!**)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the last typed line of a paragraph, hit the “enter/return” twice)

Closing Paragraph (**No indent!**) (put word count in parentheses at the end of this paragraph)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; hit “enter/return” twice)

Letter closing (for example: Sincerely, or Best Regards,)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the “closing,” hit “enter/return” twice)

Signature (you may leave this blank, use a cursive font, or sign it “by hand”)

(Double space—Two 1.0 spaces; at the end of the signature, hit “enter/return” twice)

Typed Name and Position

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION: GETTING HELP ALONG THE WAY

I highly recommend a writing conference with your writing instructor (Professor Tavera) to go over the comments she made about your Letter of Recommendation Draft. You should schedule an appointment if you need assistance with revision. Contact your writing instructor via email to make an appointment.

- Your Writing Instructor is here to help you with any aspect of your assignment. Contact your Writing Instructor via email with any questions you have about this or any Engineering Writing Assignment.
- Contact your Writing Instructor via email if you would like to schedule an appointment to meet with him or with her to further discuss any aspect of this or any writing assignment.
- VERY important note: You must contact your Writing Instructor with any questions by no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before an assignment is due.
- The UTA Writing Center is also here to help you with this or any writing project. You can make an appointment for a one-on-one meeting with a WC consultant at <http://www.uta.edu/owl/appointments/index.php>
 - WC Consultants are familiar with your Engineering Writing Assignments and can assist you with any aspect of your Writing Assignments from getting started to helping you do your final proofreading.
 - WC Consultants cannot write any aspect of your paper for you or proofread or make changes for you. WC Consultants can help you see how to maximize the effectiveness and professional presentation of your writing.
- For basic, online help with grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary, etc. check “The OWL”—the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. At “The OWL” you can search for particular information, for example, “commas,” or “sentence fragment,” or “sentence clarity.” The OWL will provide useful information and examples.

FINDING A SCHOLARSHIP OR INTERNSHIP

You may know of real scholarships or internships not listed below. If these have criteria similar to the ones listed below, you may use one of them. Below are websites with other scholarships, including UTA Financial Aid Office:

<http://www.uta.edu/fao/scholarships/>
<http://www.buickachievers.com/guidelines/>
<http://smart.asee.org>
<http://www.nsbe.org/Programs/Scholarships/Scholarship-Vault.aspx#PCI>
<http://www.asce.org/ci/Content.aspx?id=23622322159>
<https://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/nets-scitech-scholarship.shtml>
<http://www.iie.org/Programs/Gilman-Scholarship-Program>
<https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/college-scholarships/scholarships-by-major/engineering-scholarships/hsf-generalmotors-scholarship-program/>
http://www.ams-awma.org/ams_scholarship.htm

<http://www.greatmindsinstem.org/college/henaac-scholarship-application-guidelines>
<http://www.aist.org/students-faculty/scholarships/aist-scholarships>

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit your Letter of Recommendation through Blackboard per in-class instructions. Make sure you can view your letter. If we cannot open the file or view the letter, you will receive a zero on the assignment. Make sure you submit in a file that is saved in a way to preserve the required formatting of the letter.