

### Preparation for Requesting Letters of Recommendation\*

Undergraduate students considering graduate school will find it necessary to request letters of recommendation from their professors. It has been my experience that students making such requests do so in their senior year with little awareness of the criteria a faculty member may use in agreeing to write or not write such a letter or the degree of support the faculty member may be willing to offer in assisting a student to achieve his or her goals.

Below is a list of questions that I attend to in deciding to write supportive letters for students. I believe that awareness of these questions early in a student's career can be helpful.

Has the student attempted to see an academic advisor each semester?

Has the student been a member of student organizations such as Psi Chi.

Has the student sought consultation with an advisor in selecting elective courses?

Was he or she active in Psi Chi as well as being a member?

Has the student taken a balanced set of psychology courses?

Did he or she hold an office?

Has the student developed his or her computer skills?

Has the student prepared for the GRE?

Has the student's work in methodological and statistics courses indicated an aptitude for graduate work?

Has the student consulted with faculty regarding their program selections and the adequacy of his or her credentials?

What is the student's GPA in psychology? In his or her minor? Overall?

Does the student show an interest in psychology above and beyond getting a good grade in class?

What is the student's GPA in "difficult" as compared to "easier" or more interesting courses.

Is there any reason to doubt the student's personal integrity?

Has the student attempted to strengthen his or her record with volunteer work or other relevant work experience?

Is there any reason to suspect the student would not complete the graduate program successfully?

Has the student established an academic record that would warrant enrolling in Psy 489?

Has the student asked for letters or presumed they would be forthcoming?

Has the student completed Psy 489?

Has the student provided clearly written instructions regarding programs, deadlines, qualifications, etc.?

If so, what was the final disposition of the research?

Has the student provided a comprehensive vita?

Has the student presented a convention paper or poster?

Has the student provided a personal statement specifying goals and objectives?

Has the student authored or co-authored a publication?

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Has the student made him or herself known to the faculty?