Health Professions Program

Med/Vet/Dental Application Newsletter

The Composite Letter of Evaluation Process

2026-2027

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If you are planning to apply to the 2026-2027 application cycle for medical, dental, or veterinary school, it is time to start preparing! To get started, it is critical that you read this newsletter for a quick overview about Letters of Recommendations and then review the attached Composite Letter Process Handbook for complete, detailed instructions.

This journey can be both exciting and overwhelming, but you won't be going through it alone. HPP is here to help you! Over the coming months, we'll send you important information and instructions to help you navigate the application process with confidence. We'll also work with you individually to assess your readiness to apply and reflect on your application.

One of the most important aspects of the application to start thinking about now is your letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation are a crucial component of your application, and admissions committees read them carefully to learn more about you and your academic journey, professional and personal experiences, and qualities that make you a strong candidate.

At Dartmouth, we use a process called the **"Composite Letter of Evaluation,"** our version of what other institutions may refer to as a "committee letter." The Composite Letter of Evaluation is a multi-step process, and you are responsible for many of the steps and tasks involved. This includes understanding the entire process, choosing and then communicating with writers, setting deadlines, providing writers with important information, and communicating with HPP.

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What is the Composite **Letter of Evaluation?**

The composite letter is a comprehensive letter written by a "composite writer" who combines their insights on an applicant's preparedness for medical/dental/veterinary school with information from the applicant's support letters and other materials. It offers a holistic summary of the applicant's academic, professional, and extracurricular experiences, as well as personal qualities.

How does the composite letter process work?

You are responsible for understanding the composite letter process. You will choose and ask your support and composite writers; set deadlines with them; and provide your support writers with your autobiographical sketch and resume (or transcript if they request it). You will create a PrivateFolio account where your support letters will be uploaded, and where you'll also upload your autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript. You will stay in communication with your writers and offer gentle reminders regarding deadlines. When all your support letters and other support materials are uploaded to PrivateFolio, you'll submit a form to let HPP know. This will prompt HPP to send all your support letters and materials to your composite writer.

The composite writer works directly with HPP and does not upload their composite letter to PrivateFolio or have access to it. When the composite writer finishes writing a draft of their composite letter, they will send it to HPP for review. If edits are needed, HPP will work with the composite writer to create a final composite letter draft. Once this is done, HPP will create your Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet and upload it to the application service(s) you are applying to (i.e., AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS, or AADSAS).

What is included in the Final Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet?

The final Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet is created by HPP staff to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and quality. The final composite letter packet is a single PDF document that includes your composite letter, your support letters, your citation report (if you have one), and a cover letter created by HPP that explains some of the unique aspects of Dartmouth College.

Choosing Composite & Support Writers

When choosing your composite and support writers, the best combination will demonstrate different facets of you and your experiences, in and out of the classroom, and provide insight into some of your intellectual, professional, experiential, and personal qualities.

You will choose ONE composite writer. Your composite writer must be from the Dartmouth community (i.e., Dartmouth College, Geisel, or DHMC) and is often the person who knows you best, with whom you have the strongest connection, and/or worked the most with.

In addition to your composite writer, **you will also choose 3 – 5 support writers.** We highly recommend that your entire writer group (composite + support writers) include:

- Two faculty members who have taught you in a science class (one can be neuroscience or engineering, if science-focused).
- At least one faculty member from your major (if you're not a science major) or another type of class that was meaningful for you.
- Writers from outside the classroom, such as a research supervisor (PI), a coach, an internship supervisor, a job supervisor, FSP faculty, extracurricular activity, etc. They can be individuals outside of Dartmouth as well.

Summary of Tasks for a Completed Composite Letter

Below is a simplified summary of the composite letter process. For full details, review the entire **Composite Letter Process Handbook.**

YOUR STEPS

1. **Choose 1 Composite Writer:** Must be from the Dartmouth Community (i.e., Dartmouth, Geisel, or DHMC). See the Choosing Composite & Support Writers section below for more information.
2. **Choose 3 – 5 Support Writers:** These can include both Dartmouth Community and elsewhere. See the Choosing Composite & Support Writers section below for more information.
3. **Agree on Deadlines:** Discuss/agree on letter deadlines with all your writers.
4. **Write an Autobiographical Sketch & Update Your Resume:** Then send these documents directly to your support writers (not your composite writer) to assist them in their writing. Provide a transcript if they ask.
5. **Create a PrivateFolio Account:** Make sure to use the **Dartmouth-specific instructions** on how to create an account to receive Dartmouth's discounted rates. See the question "How do I create a PrivateFolio account?" for more information.
6. **In PrivateFolio, create a Letter of Recommendation Request for each of your Support Writers:** This will prompt PrivateFolio to send an upload link that will allow your support writers to submit their letters directly to your account. **DO NOT send your composite writer a request.** See the question "How do my support writers upload their letters to PrivateFolio?" for more information.
7. **Communicate with Your Writers:** Be sure to regularly communicate with your writers. Confirm deadlines after they agree to write, let them know to expect your autobiographical sketch and resume, let them know to expect the PrivateFolio upload link, and send polite reminders as you get closer to your agreed-upon deadlines.
8. **Upload your Documents to PrivateFolio:** Be sure to upload your autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript (and citation report if you have one) to PrivateFolio. These documents will be sent by HPP to your composite writer along with your support letters and instructions.
9. **Monitor Your PrivateFolio Account:** Keep track of your support letters as they are submitted.
10. **Submit the Release to Composite Writer Form:** When **ALL** your support letters are uploaded to PrivateFolio **AND** you have uploaded your autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript, submit the Release to Composite Writer Form. This will prompt HPP to send your materials to your composite writer.
11. **Submit the Verification Notification Form to HPP:** Do this once your primary application has been verified by AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS, or AADSAS to let us know. Please note that while we'll take this information into account to help determine the order we review composite letters, it is NOT our only criteria. Other criteria we consider are the date composites are submitted, any time restraints composite writers might have, and the number of other applicants who have submitted the verification form with a similar timeline.
12. **Submit Letter Requests in Application Service(s):** Whether you are applying to AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS, or AADSAS, you will create a letter request in these services addressed to our Program Coordinator, Rae Stokes, so we can upload your completed Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet. We will send more instructions on how to create a letter request for each service closer to the application open dates.

HPP's STEPS

1. **Release Materials to Composite Writer:** After HPP receives your Release to Composite Writer Form, we will compile your materials (support letters, autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript) into a single PDF document that we will send to your composite writer, along with instructions and resources to help them with the writing process. **This step generally takes HPP 1 – 3 business days to complete.**

THE COMPOSITE WRITER'S STEPS

1. **Write the Composite Letter and Submit Draft to HPP:** The composite writer will review your materials and integrate information and quotes from your materials with their own perspective to create a holistic evaluation. When they are finished writing, they'll submit their composite draft to HPP for review. **You should give your composite writer 4 – 6 weeks to write AT LEAST when agreeing on deadlines with your composite writer and support writers.**

HPP'S FINAL STEPS

1. **Review the Composite Letter:** After HPP receives the composite draft from your composite writer, it will go through our review process to ensure quality. If any edits are needed, we will work with your composite writer to create a final composite draft. **This process can take 1 – 4 weeks, depending on a variety of factors.** See question "How long does it take HPP to review composite letters?" for more information.
2. **Create the Final Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet:** Once HPP and your composite writer have agreed on a final composite draft, HPP will create your Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet. This will include your composite letter, support letters, citation report (if you have one), and an HPP cover letter that explains the unique aspects of Dartmouth College. **In general, this step can take 1 – 3 business days.**
3. **Upload Your Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet:** After HPP has created your packet, we will upload it to the application service(s) you indicate you are applying to in your Release to Composite Writer Form (i.e., AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS, and AADSAS).