

Health Professions Program

Geisel EAP Letters of Recommendation Instructions

For the Geisel EAP process, we do not use the Composite Letter Process that you may have heard of for the regular application cycle. Instead, for Geisel EAP, you will submit a letter packet containing two to five letters of recommendation.

PrivateFolio is the dossier service HPP uses to collect applicants' letters of recommendation for the Geisel School of Medicine's Early Assurance Program and other medical or health professional schools. Be sure to closely follow the instructions below to set up your PrivateFolio account and ensure HPP has access to your letters of recommendation. **Please note that you will not have access to your letters; they will remain confidential.** Your writers will upload their letters directly to PrivateFolio (see more information below).

When all your letters are uploaded and you have submitted the [Release to Geisel EAP Form](#), HPP will check them to make sure they meet all the requirements (see more information below). If they do not, HPP will contact the writer **directly** to have the letter corrected and resubmitted to us.

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What are the criteria for choosing my support writers?

You will choose two to five support writers. We highly recommend that your entire writer group include:

- Geisel highly recommends two faculty members who have taught you in a science class (can include a neuroscience or engineering class), with at least one being from a faculty member who taught you in a required pre-health course.
- We also recommend one faculty member from a non-science class or another type of class that was meaningful for you. This is optional, you can also use this spot for another experiential letter.
- Writers from outside the classroom, such as a research supervisor (PI), coach, internship supervisor, job supervisor, FSP faculty, extracurricular activity, etc. They can be individuals outside of Dartmouth as well.

I'm nervous about bothering the people I want to be my writers. Is it really okay to ask them?

YES! Part of working in an educational environment is the value system of supporting students' growth. Writing letters is part of faculty and staff members' roles. You want to ask people who have seen you in action in some way.

Should I ask in person or over email?

If you see them regularly, feel free to ask in person. However, it is perfectly okay to start the conversation through email. Some ideas for how to proceed:

- If they don't already know, inform them of your goal and plan to apply to med/vet/dental school.
- Ask if they would consider writing you a composite/support letter.
- Inform them of the specific reasons why you are asking them to write for you (ex. you appreciate the class you took with them or the conversations you had with them, or working with them in class, lab or research, or job/internships allowed you to experience growth in a particular way, etc.)
- Invite them to meet at their convenience in person or through Zoom to further discuss if this is something they are willing to do.

What if I am not “friends” with any of my writers like I was in high school?

There are a range of ways someone can “know” you. The best choices for writers are those who have had the chance to observe relevant qualities and characteristics, even if you weren't at the level of being “buddies.” Were you an active participant in class who demonstrated an interest in learning? Did you speak to a professor before/after class or during their office hours? Did you engage during collaborative learning/flipped classroom

spaces? Were you inclusive? Collaborative? In smaller classes, did you lend something to discussions, engage with the material, etc.?

How do I get a letter from my lab because I mostly work with a grad student, not my PI?

Because this is super common, PIs and grad students are usually very willing to combine their efforts. Grad students often draft a letter or summarize information that the PI will formalize into a final letter. It's okay to directly ask them about this.

My internship supervisor was worried that they didn't have a formal writing background; could they still write?

Most certainly! Medical schools want to learn about their applicants and appreciate that writers from any background can write sincere, thoughtful letters.

Are there resources to help my writers with the writing process?

Yes! We have resources and guidelines for support writers [on our website](#). Additionally, the [AAMC has letters of recommendation guidelines](#) that you can share with your support writers.

How should I set deadlines with my support writers?

We recommend setting a **concrete deadline** for your support writers to submit their letters **at least two weeks before the application deadline (ex., September 29th)**, which is typically around mid-October. This allows your writers some flexibility in case they end up needing more time to write.

If any of your support writers need to submit later, please contact Rae Stokes at HPP@dartmouth.edu for assistance. You should also inform Geisel that you will have a late letter at Geisel.Admissions@dartmouth.edu.

What should I do after I've confirmed ALL my writers?

1. **You should set letter submission deadlines with ALL your support writers.** See section "Setting Deadline for Writers" for more information.
2. **Open your Privatefolio account using [Dartmouth-specific instructions](#).** See the question "How do I create a PrivateFolio account?" for more information.
 - Send each of your SUPPORT WRITERS a Letter of Recommendation Request – this will prompt PrivateFolio to send an upload link that will allow your writers to submit their letters directly to your account. See the question "How do my support writers upload their letters to PrivateFolio?" for more information.
3. **Send each of your support writers a thank you note.** Be sure to remind them of the deadlines you agreed on, a notice that they will receive a PrivateFolio upload link, and when they should expect your resume and autobiographical sketch.

4. **You should also emphasize the format requirements for letters.** See section “What should the support letters contain?”

What should the support letters contain?

Please note that all support letters must contain the following items. If any of these items are missing from any of your support letters, HPP will contact your writer to ask for a corrected letter. **This can potentially cause delays in the creation of your letter packet, so it is to YOUR benefit to communicate these requirements to your writers.**

1. **Letterhead:** This can be an official letterhead from the writer’s employer or a self-created one. If the writer creates their own letterhead, it should contain their name, contact information, the name of their employer, and their title/position.
2. **Signature:** This can be an electronic signature (ex. Adobe Reader with signature capability), a JPG/PNG of their signature pasted to a Word document, or a handwritten then scanned signature.
3. **Date:** Should be at the top of the letter after the writer’s letterhead.
4. **Correct Name and Spelling:** Writers – especially those who may be writing multiple letters – should make sure they include the correct name and spelling of the student they are writing for.
5. **Program Statement:** Letters should clearly state that you are applying for the Geisel School of Medicine’s Early Assurance Program.

How do I create a Privatefolio account?

1. Use the [Dartmouth-specific sign-up page](#). You must use this sign-up page in order to receive the Dartmouth discounted annual subscription rate (\$19.99) and to be properly affiliated with the Dartmouth Health Professions Program, as well as allow HPP to access your account.
2. Enter your information, choose a password, and press CREAT ACCOUNT to create your account.
3. You will receive a confirmation email. Click on the confirmation link in the email and then log in to your account using your email address and password.

If you have any questions or issues setting up a PrivateFolio account, you can contact Rae at Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu. You can also contact PrivateFolio directly at help@privatefolio.com or 855-976-1245.

How do my support writers upload their letters to PrivateFolio?

In PrivateFolio, you’ll send each of your support writers a Letter of Recommendation Request. This will prompt PrivateFolio to send an upload link to your writer. Follow the instructions below on how to submit a Letter of Recommendation Request.

1. Click **Letters** in the navigation menu.
2. Click the **+ Request New Letter** button.

3. Fill in the form. See below for clarifying information about the different form fields.
4. Check the **FERPA waiver** box (required — confirms the letter is confidential).
5. Click **Send Request**.

Form fields:

- **Letter title** — A label for your reference, e.g., "Dr. Smith – Research Supervisor."
- **Due date** — When you need the letter by. You should have discussed specific deadlines with your writers.
- **Writer details** — Full name, email, job title, institution, and/or phone.
- **Writer type** — Whether they are science faculty, an MD/DO, etc.
- **Optional message** — Context or reminders for the writer. We recommend that you remind your writers in this message that they are required to include their letterhead and signature in their letters.

Your writers will receive an email with a secure link to upload their letter. The request appears as "Pending" on your Letters page.

I submitted the PrivateFolio letter request, but my writer didn't receive the upload link. What should I do?

It's not unusual for the upload link to end up in writers' spam or junk folders. Have your writer check there first. If they are still unable to find the upload link, have them **reach out directly to PrivateFolio for assistance**. Oftentimes, PrivateFolio is able to upload the letter on the writer's behalf. PrivateFolio can be reached at (855) 976-1245 or help@privatefolio.com.

What do I do once all my support letters are submitted to PrivateFolio?

You are responsible for monitoring the progress of your letters, especially as we get closer to the deadline. Please do not wait until the last minute to alert us to any problems or possible letter delays.

Once ALL your letters for this application have been uploaded to your PrivateFolio account, make sure to submit the **[Release to Geisel EAP Form](#)**. This form will allow us to download and packet your letters and then send them to Geisel.