

Letters of Recommendation at UC Berkeley

Tools for Recommenders

Frequently Asked Questions

If a student is not selected to submit letters of recommendation, can they still submit them?

No other supplemental information will be included in the application unless it is requested.

Are these letters required?

These letters are optional. Students without a letter will not be at a disadvantage, but we do highly encourage invited students to use this opportunity as it can provide additional academic and personal context.

Who should write the letter(s)?

One letter should be written by an academic teacher or instructor. The second letter can be written by anyone the student selects, ideally someone who knows them well. Examples include a second teacher, college adviser or counselor, a coach, employer, clergy, etc.

What is the deadline?

All letters must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. (PST) on January 3. After this date, it is not guaranteed that the letter can be read as part of the application review.

Timeline:

Activity	Date
UC application opens	August 1
Berkeley supplement available	Only after a UC Application is submitted
UC application submission period	October 1 - November 30
Request for letters sent to students	October through early December
Letters of recommendation due	January 3

How to submit letters:

- Selected students will receive an email with instructions on requesting letters of recommendation.
- Once students complete and submit this request form, the recommender(s) will receive an email with a link to a submission form where they can submit letters.

Advice for writing letters:

- Help us understand who the human being is behind the numbers. Letters are most helpful when they provide specific examples of a student's accomplishments and character.
- Go beyond a student's grades, academic performance, or providing a laundry list of their extracurricular activities. Try to personalize each letter as much as possible.
- Letters should provide us with information that we cannot already obtain from the student's application.
- Be candid and honest.
- Avoid vague, general statements without any concrete examples of the student's ability, curiosity, or intellect.

Questions letters should try to address:

- What is the context and nature of your relationship with the applicant? If you know the student but due to workload constraints can only provide a brief summary, please let us know.
- Has the student demonstrated a willingness to take intellectual risks and go beyond the normal classroom experience?
- Does the student have any unusual talents, abilities, or interests?
- What motivates and excites the student?
- How does the student interact with teachers? Peers? If possible, describe the applicant's personality and social skills.
- How did the student react to setbacks, failure, or disappointments?
- Are there any unusual personal, family, or community circumstances of which we should be aware?



Other helpful prompts:

- If you are familiar with UC Berkeley, please let us know how and why you feel this student would be a good fit for our community. How might they fit into the Berkeley community and grow from their experience here?
- If the student is absent, how is the class, school, etc. different?
- How would peers describe the student?
- Does the student possess a genuine love of learning?
- What has surprised you about this student?