

To Whom it May Concern:

Thank you for accepting the important responsibility of writing a letter of recommendation for one of our medical students. We recognize that preparing a thoughtful, high-quality letter requires meaningful time and reflection, and we are deeply grateful for your willingness to support students during this pivotal stage of their training.

Letters of recommendation play a critical role in the away rotation application process by offering program leaders trusted, firsthand insight into a student's clinical performance, professionalism, communication skills, and readiness for further clinical experiences. Your perspective helps ensure that selection decisions are informed, equitable, and grounded in authentic evaluation—principles that align with nationally recognized guidance from the AAMC and VSLO.

Your mentorship and advocacy have a lasting impact on students' educational and professional trajectories. We sincerely appreciate your commitment to providing fair, accurate, and supportive assessments that help our learners present themselves honestly and confidently as they pursue advanced clinical opportunities.

To support you in this process, the best practices below outline key considerations for writing clear, effective, and equitable letters of recommendation for medical students applying to away rotations.

Thank you for your continued commitment to mentoring and supporting our medical students. Your thoughtful use of these best practices helps ensure letters of recommendation are fair, informative, and meaningful, and supports transparency in the away rotation selection process. We are sincerely grateful for the time, care, and professionalism you bring to this important role.

For questions or additional guidance, please contact **Bailey Jenkins:**
bailey.jenkins@som.umaryland.edu.

Best,
Bailey Jenkins
Academic Services Coordinator
Office of Student Affairs

Best Practices for Letters of Recommendation | Away Rotation Applications

Letters **must** meet the following criteria to be considered valid:

- **Official institutional letterhead**
- **PDF format**
- **Electronically generated** (Letters should be created digitally and saved directly as a PDF. Scanned letters—even if on letterhead—may be rejected by some programs.)
- **Signed** (typed or secure digital signature acceptable)
- **Submitted** directly to Bailey Jenkins: bailey.jenkins@som.umaryland.edu

Recommended Letter Length & Structure

- **Length:** 1–2 pages
- **Format:** Single-spaced, professional business letter
- **Addressed to:**
 - “Dear Selection Committee” or
 - “To Whom It May Concern”

Content to Include:

1. Your Relationship to the Student

Briefly describe:

- How you know the student
- Duration and setting of supervision (e.g., inpatient service, clinic, research, elective)
- Depth of interaction (direct supervision, team-based, longitudinal exposure, etc.)

Example:

“I supervised Ms. Smith for four weeks during her Internal Medicine clerkship at University Hospital, where I worked closely with her on daily rounds and patient care.”

2. Clinical Skills & Medical Knowledge

Comment on the student’s:

- Clinical reasoning and diagnostic approach
- Patient presentation and documentation skills
- Fund of knowledge appropriate to training level
- Ability to incorporate feedback

3. Professionalism & Interpersonal Skills

Programs value insight into:

- Reliability and work ethic
- Communication with patients, families, and teams
- Professional demeanor
- Teamwork and respect for staff

4. Work Ethic & Initiative

Address whether the student:

- Took ownership of patient care
- Prepared thoroughly
- Demonstrated curiosity, motivation, or leadership
- Went beyond minimum expectations

5. Comparative or Summative Assessment (If Possible)

If you are comfortable, provide:

- A comparison to peers at the same level of training
(e.g., “*top 10% of students I have worked with*”)
- Overall assessment of suitability for an away rotation in your specialty

6. Clear Recommendation

Conclude with a direct statement of support.

Examples:

“I recommend this student without reservation.”

“I give my strongest recommendation for this applicant’s away rotation.”

Tone & Professional Considerations

- Use **objective, specific examples** whenever possible
- Avoid generic statements that could apply to any student
- Write candidly—programs value authenticity
- If limitations exist in your exposure to the student, briefly acknowledge them