



COLLEGE OF **VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Tips for Strong Letters of Recommendation

The Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine requires 3 letters of recommendation. These letters provide a unique, alternative perspective of an applicant's prior experiences and capabilities. Below are several tips that can help ensure quality letters of recommendation are received.

- **Ask first:** Never assume a reference is willing to write a letter on your behalf without asking first. Understand they may decline your request. Yes, that rejection may sting a bit but try not to take it to heart. There are many reasons a reference may not feel comfortable writing a letter of recommendation and it may not have anything to do with you or your qualifications. The reference may not feel they know you well enough or can speak to your qualifications. You want letters of recommendation from people who can vouch for you without hesitation. Ask first and give them a chance to decline your request. If you sense hesitation, thank them for their time and find another reference.
- **Give plenty of time:** Applicants should give their references a minimum of one month to submit their letter of recommendation. You can check the status of your recommendation letter request through the VMCAS portal. If you see your letter requests are not progressing in a timely manner, politely follow up with your references to ensure they received the initial email requests from VMCAS.
- **Choosing the right references:** An applicant should have a strong working or mentorship relationship with the individuals for whom recommendation letters are requested. Choosing someone in a mentorship role who truly knows your character, abilities, and can vouch for your work ethic is always advised over (for example) references who hold a prestigious role in the community but has a weak connection with the applicant. Remember that the Admissions Committee will be assessing *you*; the applicant. Letters that reflect a solid working relationship and provide significant detail about you will be most valuable.
- **Provide proper documentation with requests:** Although your references should have a strong relationship with you, they likely won't fully understand all the work you have invested to prepare yourself for this next stage of your life. Including a resume or CV with your recommendation request may help references better detail your capabilities.
- **Veterinarian Letters:** One of your three letters of recommendation must be from a veterinarian. You may have multiple letters from veterinarians but at least one is required. An academic letter of recommendation (e.g. a professor or academic advisor) is encouraged but not required. The maximum number of recommendation letters allowed is six, but applicants are recommended to submit no less than four in case one of the evaluators is unable to meet the deadline.
- **Mind your manners:** After references have submitted their letter, it is proper etiquette to send a thank you note expressing your gratitude for their efforts. Let your references know you are aware of how valuable their time is and that you are grateful for their assistance. A little appreciation can go a very long way.

For more troubleshooting tips, please visit the [VMCAS Applicant Guide](http://www.aavmc.org) located at www.aavmc.org.