

Cooperating with your referees for Graduate School Applications

Applications to US graduate schools

Letters of reference inform the graduate school you are applying to about an academic teacher's professional opinion of your capacity and enthusiasm for graduate studies. They are usually very important in the selection process. Therefore, it is important that you help your academic referees write good and meaningful letters about you. This means making sure:

- they have all the forms and information they need;
- they know who you are, and what your plans are;
- they have enough time to do what you want them to do. (They are busy people, and everyone asks them for letters at the same time.)

The simplest way to success is the following procedure. At least four weeks before the first application deadline, put a **package for your referees** together:

- Any **forms** that your referees must have. Fill them in as far as possible (often you have to sign them before giving them to the referee).
- A list with the following information for each program (this could be an Excel sheet):
 - Program name and university
 - URL of the program website
 - Deadlines for the application (or for sending the reference letter)
 - Whether the letter of reference has to be sent directly to the university (address?) or whether you need to get it (in a sealed envelope) to include it with your application letter.
 - Write - in a few words - why this specific program is useful for you, and why you think you would be a good candidate for the program.
- Your Jacobs transcript
- Your CV
- Your motivational essay (statement of purpose).

When you are asked whether you wish to **waive your right to access (read) the letters of recommendation** then do so (waive your right). This will make the positive statements in the letter appear honest and truthful.

European applications

Here, it is often enough to enclose a sheet with the addresses of two or three referees. The principal investigator you are applying to will contact them if she or he is interested, and ask for a reference. In the cases where letters are specifically requested, see the above information.