

Guidelines for Referees

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References, both academic and character, are often essential to scholarship applications and the decisions of many Selection Panels are largely based on these letters. Most people, whether they be an academic staff member or a person approached for a character reference, are more than happy to provide one. However, it can often be rather difficult to know exactly what to write! Consequently, we have put together some suggestions which may be of help to you. Remember, if you have any queries while writing a reference, you are always more than welcome to call our Office, and we will help in any way we can.

1. Make sure you know which scholarship the applicant is applying for, and include this in the subject line. This is helpful for the applicant (as Selection Panels are more impressed by a reference written especially for the scholarship than by a generic reference) and is helpful for us (when matching the reference to the application). If there is a coversheet to include with your reference, please also remember to attach this.
2. When a student has asked you to provide references for more than one scholarship, please provide us with that number of references (even if they are identical except for the name of the scholarship in the subject line).
3. Read the regulations of the Scholarship which the student is applying for. The applicants *should* have supplied these for you themselves, but if they haven't, most regulations can be found on our website (www.waikato.ac.nz/scholarships). If the Scholarship is an external one which isn't advertised on our website, it still might be worth giving us a ring; we may be able to direct you to a site which they are available from.
4. If you doubt that the applicant is actually eligible for the scholarship for which they are applying, please feel free to contact us. With many scholarships, we will allow students who have minor inconsistencies to apply. However, for other scholarships, the competition is so fierce that only applications which are strictly eligible can be passed on for the Selection Panel's consideration. It is a pity when referees waste time writing references for ineligible applications.
5. Please introduce yourself and explain your relationship to the applicant. For an academic reference, this section may be rather brief; e.g. 'I am a senior lecturer in English at the University of Waikato, and have known Jim Brown since I first lectured him at a second-year level in 2003'. For a character reference, you may want to take a little more time to explain who you are, to add authority to the reference, and to explain your relationship with the applicant, to ensure the Selection Panel can see why you are in a good position to recommend them for the Scholarship.
6. Please highlight the applicant's attributes, especially those which you feel are relevant to the scholarship for which the reference is being written.

Character

Most people will have a large number of good points which can be highlighted in a character reference, and indeed, any reference which praises the applicant will be looked at favourably. However, you can do the applicant an even greater service by specifically noting characteristics which the Selection Panel will be looking for. The scholarship's regulations should let you know whether the Selection Panel wishes to hear about the applicant's contribution to the community, their leadership skills, their sporting achievements or other strengths. Please also note that your reference does not only have to cover the one attribute. If you are a coach writing a reference, you will be expected to cover the sporting ability of the applicant; however, you may also praise the contribution which they make to the community by coaching junior teams, etc.

Academic

An ideal academic reference will not only cover the fact that, for example, 'Laura is studying for a BSc and has an 'A' average', but will also comment on other positive aspects of her academic performance, such as her diligence, her high attendance rate, the thought-provoking questions which she asks, the way in which she helps other students, etc. For undergraduate students, however, this can sometimes be a little difficult, as with larger classes you may not know a lot about the students who may have good marks, but sit further back, don't ask questions, and are generally invisible. In these cases, all you can do is either suggest they ask the lecturer of a smaller class for a reference, or do the best you can with the information you have available.

7. Please be as frank as possible in your reference. Remember, you always have the option of sending it directly to our Office; in fact, some scholarships require this.
8. Please do everything possible to arrange for us to receive the reference by the due date for applications (this will be on the regulations for the scholarship). However, we are occasionally able to be a little more flexible with our referees than we are with our students. If you believe you may have trouble getting the reference to us by the deadline, please feel free to contact us to see how accommodating we can be.
9. If it's not too much trouble, please consider keeping your reference on electronic file. If the applicant is keen, he / she is likely to approach you again soon with another request to act as a referee.

Finally, thank you for all the hard work which you put in to writing references for students. This is very much appreciated both by the applicants themselves, and also by us at the Scholarships Office.