

To students from my class: What reference letters to expect from me?

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Eligibility

a) I have taken your courses before. Can you write me a reference letter?

In general, I am willing to write letters for students who took my classes in support of their job hunting and graduate application.

Letter contents

b) Q: What letter can I get, if I just finished the course without doing something extra?

The letter will be standard:

- It will describe the scope and significance of the course
- It will describe your performance at a high level, which is reflected by your course grade

In my opinion, such a letter will neither hurt your case nor help your case significantly. So, please carefully weigh my potential letter in comparison to other letters you may obtain.

c) Q: What letter can I get, if I have done extra things with the course, e.g. big data challenge, honor grade, small research tasks?

The letter will highlight these things in addition to the standard content described above.

Deadlines

d) Q: Can you upload my letters the deadline?

I cannot guarantee to meet a specific deadline.

The application deadline (e.g. Dec 15) is for applicants NOT the letter writers.

In general, faculty are very busy in Dec. I personally do not know any schools will start reviewing graduate applications in Dec. Unless you have extraordinary reason, I will finish your letters during the winter break and upload before the New Year.

I want to help as many students as possible. I need to provide many letters every year.

e) Q: can I remind you?

That is welcome. Do so near Dec 15. Then during the winter break if needed.

Protocol

f) Q: I need a letter! How should I request one?

- Drop me an email and get a confirmation.
- State which of the above is your situation.
- State your objective: MS or PhD. This is important.
- State how many schools you plan to apply to.

- Remind me when the deadlines are close. Note there are application deadlines (e.g. Dec 5) which are for applicants but not the letter writers. However, I will do my best effort to send in letters in time.
- Often, we do NOT need to meet in person.

g) Q: Whom can you give the letters to?

Your prospective employers/schools must explicitly solicit the letter from me. I cannot send them a letter without solicitation.

I cannot give you the letter.

I expect you to waive the right to view the letter.

h) Q: Anything else can I do to expediate the letter writing process?

When you enter my information on the online application system, please be as thorough as possible – providing my address, office phone, etc. which you can get from my website <http://felixlin.org>.

This saves my time!