

HUNTER COLLEGE PRE-HEALTH ADVISING OFFICE

LETTER OF EVALUATION PROCESSING SERVICE

The Pre-Health Advising office at Hunter College provides the pre-health students with assistance in developing their applications to health professional schools. As a part of this service, the Office stores the letters of recommendation and evaluations electronically and uses them to compile and submit the students' letters of evaluation to health professional schools at the time of their application. Please visit the Hunter College Pre-Health Advising Website at <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/prehealth/pre-health-file> to learn about setting up your electronic file to which the faculty and your supervisors might send their letters of recommendation and evaluations. There are three different methods by which health professional schools accept letters of recommendation:

- 1) A committee letter- This option requires that the student meet the eligibility criteria (more details later in the document).
- 2) A packet of letters- This option is available to all Hunter students. Students who do not qualify for a committee letter will automatically receive advisement to receive a letter packet.
- 3) Submitting individual letters of recommendation- This is done by the recommenders directly and does not require any assistance from the Pre-Health Advising Office. This option is the method by which pharmacy schools, physical therapy and physician assistant programs accept recommendations at the present time. As such, pre-pharmacy, pre-physical therapy and pre-physician assistant students do not need an electronic storage nor a committee letter/ letter packet and will not utilize the Pre-Health Advising Office to process their letters of recommendation. In addition, direct submission of letters is a preferred method for many veterinary and optometry schools. More detailed description of veterinary and optometry school evaluation letter submission is provided later in this document.

Developing and submitting either the committee letter or the letter packet takes place in two separate phases:

I. Requesting and receiving approval to receive committee letter/ letter packet

- a. The student formally requests a committee letter/ letter packet by completing the *2013 Application Year Committee Letter/Letter Packet Application*. Students, who readily know that they will not qualify for the committee letter, may choose the letter packet option on the application, which is available to ALL Hunter College pre-health students.
- b. The Pre-Health Advising Office reviews the above application to determine whether the student meets the eligibility criteria and possesses the appropriate combination of recommendations/ evaluations in their electronic file.
 - i. If **both** requirements are met, the student will be approved to receive a committee letter. If the student does not meet the eligibility criteria for committee letter, he/ she will receive follow up advisement to qualify for the letter packet option.
 - ii. If the student meets the eligibility criteria, but is waiting for additional recommendations/ evaluations to complete his/ her electronic file, he/ she will receive approval for a committee letter contingent upon the receipt of evaluations/ recommendations.

The approval process may take up to four weeks. For both the committee letter and the letter packet option, the four weeks required to obtain the approval for your committee letter/ letter packet does not include the additional time it takes to wait for receipt of recommendations/ evaluations and downloading them to your electronic file. The completion of your electronic file is a pre-requisite to the interview with a member of the Pre-Health Committee.

- c. Upon approval of your committee letter request, the Pre-Health Advising Office will set up an in-person interview, in which you will meet and discuss your motivation for a career in health professions, your experiences and preparation with a member of the Pre-Health Committee. Students receiving a letter packet do not participate in the Pre-Health Committee interview process. After the interview, the Pre-Health Committee will work with the Pre-Health Advising

Office to develop your committee letter. Assuming that your electronic file is complete, this process may take up to 8 weeks from the time of your interview.

II. Uploading (submitting) the Committee Letter/ Letter Packet

Upon completion of your committee letter/ letter packet, the Pre-Health Advising Office staff will upload the letter to the centralized application services (i.e. AMCAS, AADSAS) directly. Please note that committee letters or letter packets can only be uploaded for **submitted** applications. As such, the applicants are required to release their standardized test scores as well as a copy of their submitted application. The Pre-Health Office staff will use the numeric identifiers contained within your application to cross reference the committee letter/ letter packet to your specific application. **All correspondence with health professional schools during the application cycle must be addressed to Dr. Karen Phillips, the Director of Pre-Health Program at Hunter College. Please refrain from listing other faculty members (including the Committee member with whom you conduct the interview) as the point of contact on any parts of your application.**

The following sections contain questions and answers about differences in evaluation methods and phases of processing of your letters of evaluation. **Your strict adherence to the information in this pamphlet is required to ensure efficiency in the process for all Hunter Students.** The Pre-Health Advising Office appreciates your attention and cooperation.

Phase I FAQ's: Requesting and Approval of a Committee Letter/ Letter Packet Request

What is a committee letter?

A committee letter is a composite letter (a combination of the evaluations and recommendations contained within your electronic file) that reflects the assessment of the Hunter College Pre-Health Committee of your performance in the pre-health curriculum as well as your potential for success as a health professional student and practitioner.

Who needs a committee letter?

Students who wish to apply to medical (MD and DO), dental, and optometry schools can submit a committee letter to the respective admission committees. A note for **pre-veterinary and pre-optometry** students: As of the 2012 application cycle, most veterinary medical schools treat a committee letter as a single letter of recommendation. You may choose to apply with a committee letter and provide the veterinary school admissions offices with additional recommendation letters, or simply opt out of a committee letter option and have your recommenders submit their letters to the VMCAS directly. A note for **MSTP (MD/PhD) applicants**: You must consult the requirements for individual MSTP programs as they vary regarding the number of research experiences and number of recommendation letters from research supervisors. We will modify the committee letters for MSTP applicants as a function of the school list to which they wish to apply. As mentioned previously (option 3 above), students applying to **pharmacy, physician assistant or doctor of physical therapy programs** do not require committee letters and are required to ask their recommenders to submit their letters of evaluation to the centralized application system (pharmacy school and physician assistant programs) or the specific admissions committees (doctor of physical therapy) directly.

Committee Letter Eligibility Criteria

Students must qualify for a committee letter. The eligibility criteria include:

1. Good academic standing with at least a 3.3 GPA in math and science courses at Hunter College. Please note that calculation of your science and math GPA will include **all repeated courses** to reflect the practice of health professional school application services.
2. Completion of at least 30 credits in math and science at Hunter College.
3. An active file with the Pre-Health Advising Office which includes **ALL** the following:
 - A) At least one letter of recommendation from a science faculty at Hunter College
 - B) Evaluations (ideally greater than five) from courses completed at Hunter College
 - C) Recommendation letters from your employers, supervisors and mentors in clinical, research, and community service settings

What is the difference between an evaluation and a recommendation letter?

An evaluation is typically shorter in length and provides a brief commentary from people who have been in

positions to observe your performance in a limited capacity. As implied by the name, a recommendation letter is a much more comprehensive and lengthy document, written by a person who has known you in a more comprehensive capacity and can provide a comparative assessment regarding your ability/ skills. For example, a teaching assistant in a science course who knows you from recitations/ discussions and office hour attendance over the duration of a single semester can provide you with an evaluation. A professor, research mentor, or clinical supervisor who has graded/ rated your work in comparison to others, has known you for a longer period of time, or has had more direct interaction with you is a more suitable person to write you a letter of recommendation as they can compare your ability/ skills to others they have observed in their areas of expertise. You may ask your recommenders for both evaluations and recommendations electronically by following the instructions on our webpage at:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/prehealth/pre-health-file/evaluations-and-recommendations>.

What is the minimum number of evaluations/ recommendations with which I can qualify for a committee letter?

As previously stated, in addition to academic eligibility factors, the Pre-Health Advising Office uses at least one letter of recommendation from a Hunter College science faculty and at least five evaluations as the minimum eligibility criteria to approve a committee letter request. Meeting minimum qualifications, however, does not translate into a strong committee letter. We strongly urge you to request at least one letter of recommendation from each of the following categories: 1) a person who has supervised you in a clinical setting and can speak to your aptitude for working with patients; 2) a person who has supervised/ mentored you on a research project; 3) employer/ supervisor (if you have ever been employed); and 4) a person who has supervised you in a community service setting and can speak to your genuine interest in helping others. It is possible that certain experiences address more than one category. For example, if you are employed in a clinical setting, your supervisor can speak to your aptitude for working with patients as well as praising your positive qualities as an employee and member of his/her team. As such, a letter from such a supervisor can provide the Pre-Health Committee members with two separate types of information about you as an individual.

Conversely, if your electronic file does not contain any recommendation in a particular category, the Pre-Health Committee members will not have access to the relevant information to rate your performance in the particular category. For example, the pre-health students who do not participate in any research projects will not be able to provide a letter of recommendation from a research supervisor. As such, when addressing the students' research experience, the Pre-Health Committee will likely mention in the committee letter their inability to provide any comments on the student's potential for success in scientific research. On first glance, "inability to comment" appears neutral in sentiment. However, given the very competitive nature of health professional school admission process and the fact that competitive applicants receive glowing recommendations from mentors and supervisors in all categories, the Pre-Health Committee's "inability to comment" on any of your attributes will be interpreted by the admissions committees negatively. Please ensure that you have participated in the appropriate range of activities and secured the appropriate range of recommendations to reflect your true potential for success as a health professional student/ practitioner.

How does the Committee Letter process work?

1. You submit your application to request a committee letter. The *2013 Application Year Committee Letter/Letter Packet Application* can be accessed by copying and pasting <https://ww3.hunter.cuny.edu/prehealth/view.php?id=30> into your internet browser.
2. The Pre-Health Advising Office team will review your application to determine your eligibility for receiving a committee letter and will issue a formal approval. The approval process is expected to take up to 4 weeks.
3. Upon the approval of your request, you will be directed to set up an interview with a member of the Pre-Health Committee. Please allow 6-8 weeks from the time of your interview to completion of your letter request. If you don't meet the eligibility criteria for a committee letter, the Pre-Health Advising Office staff will discuss the letter packet option with you in a follow up appointment.

I am a re-applicant and have an old committee letter. Do I need to go through this process from the beginning and reapply for a committee letter?

No! Re-applicants will be asked to request an update to an existing committee letter. Updating will not alter the original committee letter. Instead, the student's accomplishments, improvement and any additional recommendations and evaluations from the time of the first application will be summarized in an addendum to the original committee letter.

What can I do to facilitate the application processes?

In addition to addressing the academic eligibility criteria (credits/ good academic standing), please review the application checklist to ensure that your electronic file includes your evaluations/ recommendations to help us optimize the quality of your committee letter.

What happens if I don't qualify for a committee letter?

The Pre-Health Advising Office will support the application process for **all** Hunter College pre-health students. In the event that you do not meet the above criteria to qualify for a committee letter, your pre-health advisor will prepare a letter packet to facilitate the submission of your letters of recommendation.

What is a letter packet?

A letter packet comprises individual letters of recommendation as well as a cover letter in which we introduce you and your application to the health professional school admission committees. Please note that letter packets require actual letters of recommendation as stand-alone documents as they will not be incorporated into a composite, committee letter. As such, unlike the committee letter option, any evaluations you might have submitted to us during your time at Hunter will NOT be utilized when developing your letter packet. In other words, you will need many more recommendation letters than students who will qualify for committee letters. Similar to a committee letter request, students requesting a letter packet can do so by completing the *2013 Application Year Committee Letter/Letter Packet Application* which can be accessed by copying and pasting the can be accessed by copying and pasting <https://ww3.hunter.cuny.edu/prehealth/view.php?id=30> into your internet browser.

How does the letter packet process work?

After your committee letter/ letter packet has been completed, we require that you provide us with additional documents to upload them. Please read further to learn about the necessary documents to support uploading the letters.

Deadlines

For the application year 2013 (which means that you will be applying during summer 2012 through spring 2013 to start health professional school in summer 2013), you may submit your application to request a committee letter any time between January 10, 2012 and 11:59 pm EST on June 10, 2012. Applications will become available online in late December 2011. If you miss the June 10, 2012 deadline, You will be ineligible to receive a committee letter and will instead be considered for a letter packet option. The deadline for requesting a letter packet is October 31, 2012. **THE SERVICE IS PROVIDED ON A ROLLING BASIS (FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED).**

The Mach Form interface does not save your work between multiple log ins. As such, please review the different fields within the form to determine what you are expected to submit. Prepare all the supplemental documents in advance so that you may complete the form in one sitting. Please use the checklist below to ensure the successful completion of your application to request a committee letter/ letter packet. Incomplete applications or ones with poor quality answers will be returned for modification. As we consider the requests on a rolling basis, incomplete or hasty, poor-quality work will only delay the processing of your request.

Phase II FAQ's: Uploading (Submission) of the Committee Letters/ Letter Packets

Do I need to do anything else after my Committee Letter/ Letter Packet is prepared?

YES! After your committee letter or the letter packet has been prepared, you must provide us with the following items before we can upload your committee letter for submission:

1. All Applicants: A copy of your **SUBMITTED** health professional school application (AMCAS, AACOMAS, OptomCAS, or VMCAS). **The Office will not submit any committee letters/letter packets for applications that are in progress.** Please send the copies as PDF's to: prehealth@hunter.cuny.edu with the name of the application in the file title and email subject (i.e. File: **AMCAS.2013.Jalali.cathy & email subject: Cathy. Jalali. Submitted AMCAS Application 2013**).
2. Your standardized test scores (MCAT, DAT, GRE, and OAT). **The uploading of the committee letter is contingent upon you having released your test scores to the Pre-Health Advising Office.**
3. If required to submit letters via the US Postal Service (for schools that do not accept letters electronically), you must bring in a large manila envelope and three stamps for EACH school to which your committee letter or letter packet is to be sent. Please either provide pre-printed labels OR clearly write the addresses for the schools. Unaddressed envelopes will NOT be processed.
4. Please refer to the list below for requirements for individual health professional school applications in addition to items 1-3:
 - Allopathic Medical School: 1) AMCAS **Letter Request Form**. Please make the letter request to Dr. Karen Phillips at 695 Park Ave NY, NY, and 10065 (212-772-5244). **Please do NOT put the name of your faculty interviewer in this section. As the Chair of the Pre-Health Committee, Dr. Phillips serves as our official point of contact for health professional schools; and** 2) A personal check for 10 dollars made to Hunter College. This fee will pay for VirtualEvals, the service we will use to upload the letters/packets to the application services.
 - Osteopathic Medical School: 1) AACOMAS **list of schools** to which you have applied (in the AACOMAS application, this list does not automatically appear in the application printout); **and** 2) A personal check for 10 dollars made to Hunter College. This fee will pay for VirtualEvals, the service we will use to upload the letters/packets to the application services.
 - MSTP (MD/PhD): You must consult the requirements for individual MSTP programs as they vary regarding the number of research experiences and number of recommendation letters from research supervisors. The Pre-Health Advising Office will modify the committee letters for MSTP applicants as a function the school list to which they wish to apply.
 - Dental school: The AADSAS application asks for the e-mail address of your letter writer. Please put prehealth@hunter.cuny.edu. The AADSAS email to the Pre-Health Advising Office gives us the information we need to upload the letter. No fees are required.
 - Optometry and Veterinary Schools: Some optometry and veterinary schools do not accept committee letters and others require a committee letter if your school provides one. It is essential that you find out how the individual school policy affects your application. A committee letter will count as **one recommendation** on both OptomCAS and VMCAS. As such, the student is required to provide additional recommendation letters from one or more individuals depending on specific school requirements.
 - As with AADSAS, OptomCAS will ask you to enter the email address of the letter writer, please enter prehealth@hunter.cuny.edu. If you did not qualify for/request a Committee Letter but want letters of recommendation from your file sent please read carefully- **OptomCAS has a file size limit which means that we cannot upload all of the letters in your file.**
 - Podiatric Medicine: AACPMAS is used by all 9 of the podiatry schools. Podiatry schools vary on their policy regarding electronic letters of recommendation. Students should contact the individual schools for specific requirements.

2013 Application Year Committee Letter/ Letter Packet Application Approval Checklist

Student: _____ **Advisor:** _____ **Date:** _____

Requesting: ☐ Committee Letter/ ☐ Letter Packet

Approved for: ☐ Committee Letter/ ☐ Letter Packet

Health Professions School(s): _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Advisor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

| Item | Meets Requirements | Does Not Meet Requirements | Comments |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| <i>2013 Application Year Committee Letter/Letter Packet Application</i> (complete/ comprehensive) | | | |
| Committee Letter/Letter Packet Supplemental Form | | | |
| Official letter of good academic standing from undergraduate institution | | | |
| At least one letter of recommendation from a science faculty at Hunter College | | | |
| At least 5 instructor evaluations | | | |
| Letter(s) of recommendation from a clinical supervisor/ mentor | | | |
| Letter(s) of recommendation from a research supervisor/ mentor | | | |
| Letter(s) of recommendation from an employer/ supervisor | | | |
| Letter(s) of recommendation from a community service supervisor/ mentor | | | |
| MSTP applicants only: Discussion of the appropriate combination of research related recommendation letters for the entire school list to which the student wishes to apply | | | |
| Minimum of 30 credits in math and science at Hunter College with a minimum GPA of 3.3. | | | |

2013 Application Year Committee Letter/Letter Packet Upload Checklist

Student: _____

Advisor: _____

Date: _____

Requesting: ☐ Committee Letter/ ☐ Letter Packet

Approved for: ☐ Committee Letter/ ☐ Letter Packet

Health Professions School(s): _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

| Item | Meets Requirements | Does Not Meet Requirements | Comments |
|---|--------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Copy of SUBMITTED health professional school application. | | | |
| Release of standardized test scores | | | |
| AMCAS Letter Request Form (addressed to Dr. Phillips) | | | |
| Allopathic medical school application fee | | | |
| AACOMAS list of schools | | | |
| Osteopathic medical school application fee | | | |
| OptomCAS email | | | |
| AADSAS email | | | |