

Department of Political Science Letter of Recommendation Request Policy

Faculty members of the PLSC department are always willing to write letters of recommendation for qualified applicants for law/grad school, jobs, scholarships, and/or awards. Because the department has so many accomplished students, the requests for letters of recommendation can be abundant at times. The department has decided to adopt a policy regarding these requests with specific rules and guidelines. Not only will this policy expedite the process, but it will guarantee a better quality letter.

Requests for letters of recommendation should include the following (where applicable):

1. **Cover letter** – This letter should contain your full name, address and current contact information (email & cell phone) and should give an overview of your specific request. Address the letter in a professional manner to the professor and give details regarding the position/school/award/etc. for which you are applying. These details should also include the format in which the letters are to be submitted. Are they to be mailed separately, or are you to collect them and send them all at the same time?
2. **Copy of Resume/Curriculum vitae*** – This is always a good item to include in any request for a recommendation. Keep in mind that while the professors know you as a student, they may not know what you do in your “free” time. Knowing that you spend 15 hours a week as a volunteer at the Red Cross or have co-authored a paper with another faculty member will go a long way to a more suitable letter.
3. **Unofficial Transcript** – This is especially important for letters of recommendation to law/graduate schools. Again, while professors from PLSC may know how well you did in their classes, they may not know that you got an “A” in International Finance. Once again, this is important for them to know before writing the letter.
4. **Waiver form** – Graduate and professional schools allow students to waive their right to view the letter of recommendation. It is not required of the applicant to do so. However, it has been experience of the faculty members in this department that recommendations carry more weight if an applicant waives the right to see the letter because employers, graduate schools, and law schools are more likely to believe that the recommendation is a candid one.
5. **Personal Statements** – Most graduate programs and law schools request a personal statement from the applicant. This allows the school/program to assess your academic goals to make sure that they are the best match to the program they offer. This statement (draft or copy) should also be included in the packet of information to assist the professor in writing the letter.

It is recommended that all of these items be submitted to the professor(s) in a manila envelope **no less** than one month before the due date. The due date for the letters (the date you give the professor) should be **no less** than two weeks before it is due to the school. This will ensure a prompt return of the letters to the schools and a more organized application.

A **curriculum vitae*** is a document that lists your educational successes. This type of document is used primarily for graduate schools and for people interested in focusing on their educational background rather than jobs. To see some examples, click on faculty members’ web pages at www.winthrop.edu/plsc/faculty and check out their CV’s.

A **resume** is a document that lists in a coherent fashion your job experience and related background. There are a number of different formats. We suggest that you look up Career Services (www.winthrop.edu/careers) for additional information.