



## LETTERS PACKET INSTRUCTION MANUAL

### Why use the UCF Letters Packet Service?

- PHPL Advising will **store your letters for up multiple application cycles.**
- PHPL Advising work with your letter writers to answer their questions and to ensure your letters include important components such as **letterhead** and **signatures.**
- The UCF Letters Packet includes a **Composite Assessment Form** compiled from ratings of you by your individual letter writers.
- The UCF Letters Packet offers the opportunity to **include a valuable autobiography.**
- PHPL Advising serves as a **“bridge” between your letter writers and you** which protects the confidentiality of your letter

### ELIGIBILITY:

To use the UCF Pre-Health and Pre-Law Advising Letter’s Packet Service, you must meet all the following criteria-

- Overall GPA of 3.0
- Completed at least 30 credit hours of academic credit at UCF by the end of Spring 2021
- Must be applying to medical school or dental school during the 2021-2022 application cycle

### DUE DATES:

Your goal should be to submit your Letters Packet request to PHPL Advising **as soon as you have confirmed all of your intended letter writers.** The following zones are designed to encourage you to aim for an early submission date.

**Gold Zone** submission deadline is **May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Silver Zone** submission deadline is **June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Bronze Zone** submission deadline is **August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

**No Letters Packet  
Requests will be accepted  
after August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 at  
11:59pm.**

Your actual letters of evaluation from your letter writers do not need to be received by August 2<sup>nd</sup>; however, you should encourage your letter writers to submit their letters as early as possible. Remember, your Letters Packet will not be uploaded to your application service until ALL your letters have been received by our office.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO REQUEST YOUR LETTERS PACKET:

- ✓ Complete list of up to five (5) total letter writers. A minimum of 3 letters is required.
  - Full name (with title) and email address
    - *For faculty, also include a list of the classes you have taken with that professor*
- ✓ If you choose to include an autobiography, this will be uploaded in the Letters Packet webcourse at a later time.

### WHAT TO EXPECT/HOW TO COMPLETE A LETTERS PACKET REQUEST:

*Note: Please keep in mind gathering, compiling, and uploading your Letters Packet is a process. When utilizing this service, you are expected to be professional in your communication and have patience as we work through the process. We are committed to working urgently on completing your packet. However,*



we reserve the right to discontinue your Letters Packet formation if you do not maintain these standards of respect.

**Step 1:** Talk with your potential letter writers in advance about writing your evaluation letter. The first time your letter writer hears about writing your evaluation should come directly from you, no from our email to them on your behalf!

**Step 2:** Complete the Letter Packet Request online. **Once you submit you may not add additional letter writers to your Letters Packet Request.** If you submit and wish to add more letter writers later, you will need to submit an entirely new Letters Packet Request. Your previous request will be voided, and your priority will be based on your second request. (Essentially, you will lose your place in line).

**Step 3:** Once we receive your completed Letters Packet Request, we will work in chronological order to process your request and reach out to your letter writers to request their evaluations. **Once your Letters Packet Request has been processed you will be added to the Letters Packet Webcourse where you can track the status of your letters, upload your autobiography, etc.**

**The Letters Packet Webcourse will be the hub for most of the information needed during the Letters Packet process – addressing FAQ’s, where you will upload your AMCAS request form (MD only), where you will upload your autobiography, and where you can find instructions on how to complete your letter designations in your primary application.**

**STEP 4:** Once we have received all of your letters, we will compile the letters of evaluation and your autobiography into one professional “Letters Packet”. Then we will upload the Letters Packet to your application (ex. AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS). You will receive an email from your application service letting you know that your letter from Erin Myszkowski has been received.

*\*Please reference the links below, or our website, for instructions on how to indicate that you are using a Letters Packet on the required letters of evaluation section of your application\**

<a href="#"><u>AMCAS Designation Instructions</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>AACOMAS Designation Instructions</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>AADSAS Designation Instructions</u></a>
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**HOW RE-USE LETTERS ON FILE:**

If you have submitted a Letters Packet Request to PHPL Advising during a previous application cycle, and therefore have existing letters of evaluation on file that you may wish to re-use, **you must complete a new Letters Packet Request for the current application cycle.**

If you are a re-applicant that plans to use all new letters in this cycle’s Letters Packet-

- Complete the Letters Packet Request Form online as a brand-new applicant

If you are a re-applicant that plans to **re-use** all, or some, letters on file from a previous cycle’s Letters Packet-

- Complete the Letters Packet Request Form online
- On the Introduction section of the request- indicate that you are planning to re-use letters



- In the Letters of Evaluation Request List section of the request form, include the names and information for ALL of your intended letter writers (including new writers and previously used writers). **Using the drop down**, indicate which letters should be re-used and which are new requests.

### **RECOMMENDED TYPES/AMOUNT OF LETTERS:**

We suggest that you solicit letters from three (3) populations, for a **total of five (5) letters**, to be used in your Letters Packet:

**2 Science Faculty Members** (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics)

**1 Non-Science Member** (All Other Disciplines Not Listed Above)

**2 Other/Character References** (Employers, Research Supervisors, Health Professionals, etc.)

*\*If you follow this format with your letters, you will satisfy the letters of evaluation requirements for all Florida Medical and Dental Schools. Please reference [this page](#) to see the specific letters of evaluation requirements at each of the Florida Medical and Dental Schools.\**

All letters of evaluation must be completed in a letter format **written on institutional letterhead, signed**, and sent to PHPL Advising when completed. Letters can be emailed, faxed, mailed, or hand delivered to the PHPL Advising office.

The individuals who will be writing letters on your behalf will be made aware of your choice about whether to **waive** or **retain** your right of access in our cover letter to them, so they will be aware of your choice before submitting their letter to us. Please see below for additional details.

### **FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA) NOTICE:**

*Note: The following factors have been adapted from Cornell University.*

FERPA provides you with the **right of access** to your evaluation letters and complete applicant file (housed in PHPL Advising). As a result, neither UCF nor other institutions can require you to waive these rights. However, we highly recommend taking the following information into consideration when making the choice to waive or not waive your right to see your letters.

#### **Factors to Consider in Deciding to Waive Access**

- An employer or a member of an admissions committee might tentatively draw one or more of the following conclusions:
  - The evaluation may be more candid if the writer knew that the student would not see it. As a result, more weight may be assigned to such letters.
  - The student has nothing to conceal.
  - The student did not feel it was necessary to review the letter before it was sent.
  - The student does not feel a moral obligation to exercise his/her civil rights in this way.
- If your recommender knows you well and has said he/she can write a letter in support of your candidacy, the chances are *slight* that inaccuracies or unfair statements will be presented in the letter.

#### **Factors to Consider in Deciding to Retain Access**

- A potential recommender may choose not to write a letter for you if you retain your right of access.

- If you retain access, you need to be prepared to explain your reasons for your choice during interview(s).
- An employer or a member of an admissions committee at a graduate or professional school receiving the letter might tentatively draw one or more of the following conclusions:
  - The evaluation may be less candid as the writer knew that the student would see it. As a result, less weight may be assigned to such letters.
  - The student wanted to discuss the letter with the recommender/evaluator before it was put in final draft.
  - The student feels a moral obligation to exercise his/her civil rights.
- You will have an idea of the information schools/employers have and therefore can prepare for interviews accordingly.
- It may relieve stress and anxiety to know exactly what has been said.
- Factual mistakes in the letter can be corrected, if the writer chooses to make those corrections.
- If you conclude that the letter is unfavorable, you can choose not to use the letter.
- By reading an evaluation, you have a chance of learning from criticism.

**For Applicants to Medical or Dental School Using the UCF Letters Packet**

- Recipients of the letter requests will know whether you have waived or retained access to their letter.
- Recipients of the UCF Letters Packet will know whether you have waived or retained access to the letters in the Letters Packet.
- The UCF Letters Packet states that a student/applicant has waived or retained access to the letter.
- The UCF Letters Packet Request form has a waiver statement for all letters in the packet.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY (OPTIONAL):**

If you choose to include an autobiography in your Letters Packet, you will need to indicate this on your initial Letters Packet Request Form. Then you will need to **upload your autobiography as an assignment in the Letters Packet Webcourse.** **Autobiographies will not be accepted via email or with the initial Letters Packet Request.**

**PROMPT:** The purpose of the Autobiography is to allow you the opportunity to share with the admissions committees more about yourself, your upbringing, and your life thus far. We know that there are often aspects of who you are that you are not able to convey well in the application. The Autobiography will give you the chance to expand upon and provide the admissions committees a more in-depth description and understanding of who you are. You should really reflect upon yourself and write about your experiences and perspectives in your life. The more the health professional schools can learn about you, your character, and your life, the safer they often feel offering you one of the coveted seats in their entering class.

For example, you can write your Autobiography as a chronological description of the biggest events and reflections on your life. Start with where you were born, where you grew up, your family, parents' backgrounds, and their jobs or professions. Include pertinent information about your upbringing, your schooling, and the biggest or most impactful events in your life (positive or negative). Be sure to include your reflections on your experiences along the way and how they helped to shape you into the person you are today.

The Autobiography should be about **three pages in length** (11,000 characters with spaces). You must be concise, yet accurate and sufficiently detailed. Your Autobiography may be single or double-spaced (your preference).

We would like to share a quote from a recently accepted applicant to medical school. She used PHPL Advising's Letters Packet and chose to write the optional Autobiography.

*"I think doing the autobiography on my letters packet was an excellent decision and highly recommend other students to do it even though it is more work. Two out of three of my interviews asked me about things I mentioned in my autobiography and it helped them get to know me better." J. Rodriguez, 2016*

### **Differences: Autobiography vs. Personal Statement**

The autobiography is NOT just an expansion of your personal statement. Therefore, you should try to avoid overlapping identically written information in the personal statement and autobiography; you want two, separate, individual works. In general, the following guidelines will help to differentiate the purpose of the two and will give a basic idea of what to include (you are not restricted to the information and topics):

#### **Autobiography:**

- Prompt: The autobiography asks you to "Tell the story of your life." **This document has a very broad scope.**
- What to consider:
  - Create a timeline. (What stands out to you during each of these time periods?)
    - When/where were you born? And to whom?
    - Early childhood events
    - Middle childhood
    - College years
- Your life story: hobbies, childhood, school, influences/inspirations.
- Demonstrate, with events, the person you have become.
- Focus on experiences up until entering college, though you can include some college experiences as well.

*\*\*\*Make sure information is different from what is included in the personal statement\*\*\**

#### **Personal Statement (General Outline):**

- Prompt: In general, why do you want to become a doctor (for AMCAS and AACOMAS) or dentist (for AADSAS) **This document has a narrow scope.**
- What events will demonstrate that you are well prepared for this next chapter?
- Choose your 2-3 most significant reasons/experiences
- Characteristics that will highlight you are a good candidate.
- Make the reader feel your passion:
  - Through your characteristics, qualities, and your drive for continuous learning
- Do **NOT**:
  - Simply list your experiences as you would on a resume
  - Try to include everything you have done
  - Lecture the readers



**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

If you have questions that are not answered in this instruction manual, please contact our Letters Packet Coordinator, Courtney Martinez, at [letterspacket@ucf.edu](mailto:letterspacket@ucf.edu) or (407) 823-0101.