Ophthalmology Match Letters of Recommendation FAQs

Whom should I approach for my letters of recommendation (LoR)?

You should approach the physicians most familiar with your clinical abilities, medical knowledge, and work ethic. It is also important to select writers who are aware of your interpersonal skills with patients and their families, as well as your ability to work as part of a team. Although this application cycle is very different from previous cycles due to the pandemic, you should still ask for a letter from those who know you the best. Some medical schools will write a department letter, which is acceptable.

If you have significant clinical or research experience, program directors may expect to see an LoR from someone attesting to your clinical or research expertise. LoR attesting to a more recent clinic experience (within the last 2 years) is preferred.

When should I request my letters of recommendation?

The sooner you request an LoR, the sooner your potential letter writer can begin to note the knowledge, abilities, and personal characteristics that make you a desirable candidate for residency. Allow letter writers plenty of time to reflect upon your performance so they are prepared to meet program deadlines for receiving LoRs. Since the timeline this year has changed, generally requesting a LoR in mid-July so that the LoR is uploaded by the end of August is preferable.

Please be sure that you have the proper e-mail address for your letter writer, and you may follow up with your letter writer a few weeks after your request to ensure the writer does not need further information.

What documents should I provide to the letter writer?

Providing a letter writer with certain documents and information about your career objectives will help your letter writer to sculpt a more complete image, illuminating not only your academic accomplishments but also creating a portrait of you as a person. A copy of your Curriculum Vitae (CV) will help to familiarize the letter writer with your background and past experiences. A copy of the Personal Statement that you will submit with your residency application will provide your letter writer with insights into your passion for pursuing ophthalmology.

What other information does my letter writer need?

You should also ensure that your letter writer has a clear understanding of the deadlines for submitting LoRs to your programs. It is best to have your application completed and your supporting documents, including LoRs, ready by the time program directors begin to review application materials. A program may choose not

to view LoRs submitted after its deadline for accepting supporting documents.

Finally, you should provide your letter writer with detailed instructions on how the LoR should be submitted to SFMatch. All LoRs should be placed on professional letterhead, should include the letter writer's contact information, and be signed by the letter writer.

Should I waive my rights to view my letters of recommendation?

When you "waive your rights" to view a LoR, it means that you permanently give up your right to read the letter. Waiving your right to see your LoR sends a message to the program that the letter writer was free to speak openly, honestly, and without influence. It may also display confidence that you made a positive impression on the letter writer. The decision is ultimately up to you.

Is there a standard of etiquette that should be followed when requesting and submitting letters of recommendation?

Directors of the programs you apply to may contact LoR writers during the application screening process, so maintaining a professional and polite relationship with your letter writers is very important.

You may consider writing a thank you letter to those individuals who have submitted LoRs on your behalf. When following up with a letter writer who may be taking longer than desired to submit your LoR, continue to remain professional and polite to everyone involved with processing your request, including office assistants and staff. After matching to a program, you may choose to inform your letter writers and thank them again for their role in your success.

How many letters of recommendation should I submit?

You should submit a minimum of three LoRs in support of your SF Match application. Generally, one LoR should be in ophthalmology, one should be from a clinical non-ophthalmology letter, and the other may be from research, ophthalmology, or another clinical experience. Additional letters can be helpful to target specific programs.

How do I submit a letter of recommendation?

All letters of recommendation must be submitted to SFMatch. Please be sure to provide the proper information to your letter writers.