

Guidelines for Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

Séverine Autesserre – Barnard College, Columbia University

Writing recommendation letters is a meaningful way to support former students as they pursue new opportunities. Since thoughtful recommendations take time and attention, please review and follow these guidelines to ensure I can provide you with a strong and effective endorsement.

Who Should Request a Recommendation

I am happy to write recommendations for students who earned an **A or A+** in my class. If your grade was lower, I encourage you to approach a professor with whom your performance was stronger. Many institutions ask recommenders to indicate if applicants fall within specific percentiles (e.g., top 1%, 5%, 10%), so choosing a professor who can confidently place you in the top tier is essential. Because being outside the top 20% weakens an application, a lukewarm recommendation could harm your chances. For these reasons, I reserve my endorsements for students whose potential I can fully support.

Timing and Preparation

Please consolidate all requests for recommendation letters into a single request and submit them at least **two months before the earliest due date**. This allows ample time to draft a thoughtful, effective letter. Additionally, please include, as separate documents attached to a single e-mail:

1. **Your CV/Resume:** Highlight any relevant research or professional experiences, extracurriculars, or other achievements you feel would be valuable for me to mention.
2. **Bullet Points for Reference:** In a Word document, provide approximately five bullet points about your experiences with me, other relevant experiences, and suitability for the position or program. Please write these in the third person, don't copy them verbatim from your materials, and be candid about your strengths. (I may adjust these as needed.)
 - Feel free to include any additional points you believe I should mention. Examples include strengths, past accomplishments, specific qualities (e.g., leadership, English proficiency), or aspects of your work with me that you'd like highlighted.
3. **Columbia Transcript:** An unofficial copy is fine. Please highlight the courses you took with me and the relevant semester/year.
4. **Personal Statement/Proposal,** if relevant: A draft is fine.
5. **Standardized Test Scores,** if relevant: Include GRE, MCAT, TOEFL, or other professional test scores.
6. **Final Project (Seminar/Colloquium Students):** If you completed a seminar with me, attach your final project with my feedback.
 - **Large Lecture Students:** Please ask your TA to email me a brief paragraph about your performance in discussion sections **at least a month** before the first letter is due.
7. **List of Schools/Employers/Funders:** Organize this list by due date, with detailed information for each application:
 - **Degree/Position/Grant:** Include specifics such as the degree or job title and the department (e.g., "Ph.D. in International Relations, Department of Political

Science, NYU”) or the grant name and funder (e.g., Pickering fellowship, US Department of State).

- **Submission Details:** Provide email addresses or URLs where the letters should be sent and verify their accuracy. If letter submission links will be emailed to me, let me know when to expect it, and ensure I receive them all at least a month before the earliest due date.

Note: Due to my travel schedule, I only submit letters electronically (**no mail or phone references**).

Please **complete all required information:** When using an online system (e.g., a dossier service or a university's application portal), ensure you fill out all sections, including my details:

Full Name	: Séverine Autesserre
Rank / Title	: Ann Whitney Olin Professor
Address	: Department of Political Science, Barnard College, Columbia University 3009 Broadway, New York, NY 10027, USA
Phone	: N/A (Please instruct them to use email for any communications)
Website	: www.severineautesserre.com
Email	: sa435@columbia.edu

Please **waive your right to access** your recommendation letters. Not doing so may lead graduate programs, funders, and employers to question the authenticity of the endorsement. If you have any reservations about my support, it may be best to request a letter from another professor.

Feel free to email me a few days before the recommendation is due to confirm that I've submitted your letter(s).

Finally, please keep me updated on the outcome! I genuinely look forward to hearing from you. I wish you the best and am always thrilled to receive good news from former students.

Good luck with your applications!