



## Health Professions Program

# Overview Of The Composite Letter Process For Medical (MD & Do) and Dental Schools

Letters of Evaluation are an essential component of your application to a graduate-level, health professional school. Admission committees read letters carefully to learn more about your academic, experiential, and personal skills and qualities. Letters can have a significant impact on your application, so it is important that you understand Dartmouth’s Composite Letter of Evaluation Process and think strategically about it.

The Health Professions Program (HPP) oversees the composite letter process. We work closely with both applicants and composite writers, coordinate the logistics, and ensure the integrity of your final composite letter. Letters are written on your behalf, so be conscious of the privilege of having people writing to support you in this process. Behave accordingly, with clear communication, gratitude, and respect. Your HPP team is here to assist you at every step of the process.

You are responsible for several parts of this process. Please read through all the sections of this document to be prepared for the steps ahead.

## Contents

<b>THE DARTMOUTH COMPOSITE LETTER OF EVALUATION</b> .....	2
<b>OVERVIEW: THE COMPOSITE LETTER PROCESS</b> .....	2
<b>CHOOSING YOUR WRITERS</b> .....	3
<b>SETTING DEADLINES FOR WRITERS</b> .....	3
<b>Important Tips for Setting Deadlines:</b> .....	4
<b>Format of Composite/Support Letters</b> .....	4
<b>THE COMPLETED COMPOSITE LETTER PACKET</b> .....	4
<b>YOUR TASKS TO A COMPLETED COMPOSITE LETTER</b> .....	5
<b>Fall – January 15 (by April 1, ideally)</b> .....	5
<b>Winter – March 25 (by May 30, ideally)</b> .....	6
<b>Spring – March 25 (by May 30, ideally)</b> .....	6
<b>Mid-May – July (by July 31, ideally)</b> .....	6

Mid-May – September.....	6
Final Important Tasks .....	7

## THE DARTMOUTH COMPOSITE LETTER OF EVALUATION

At Dartmouth College, the Composite Letter of Evaluation is a unique, comprehensive letter of evaluation written on an applicant’s behalf by a “composite writer.” It provides a comprehensive perspective on the applicant’s preparedness for medical/dental school by summarizing their academic and extracurricular experience, along with their personal and professional qualities. Dartmouth’s “composite letter” is our version of a “committee letter” which you may have read about on schools’ websites or through AMCAS (MD), AACOMAS (DO), TMDSAS (Texas schools) or AADSAS (Dental). **The complete composite packet includes the composite letter itself, your support letters, your citation report (if you have one), and an HPP cover letter that clarifies unique Dartmouth features.**

**You choose your composite writer.** That person is your head letter writer. They must be from the Dartmouth community (i.e., Dartmouth College, Geisel, or DHMC). They are often the faculty or staff member who knows you best, with whom you have the strongest connection and/or worked with the most. You will also choose 3–5 “support writers” who will provide letters of recommendation. The composite writer’s job is to write a comprehensive letter—a composite—that integrates their evaluation with information and quotes from the support letters. They also offer context if there is meaningful personal information you’ve asked them to include. This cohesive, final letter presents you as an applicant from Dartmouth College to MD, DO, or Dental schools.

## OVERVIEW: THE COMPOSITE LETTER PROCESS

- **Choose 1 Composite Writer:** Must be from the Dartmouth Community (i.e., Dartmouth, Geisel, or DHMC).
- **Choose 3 – 5 Support Writers:** Can include both Dartmouth Community and elsewhere.
- **Agree on Deadlines:** Discuss/agree on letter deadlines with all your writers.
- **Create a PrivateFolio account:** This is where your support writers will upload their letters confidentially for you. Please use the [HPP-specific instructions on our website](#) to set up your account.
- **Write an Autobiographical Sketch/Update Your Resume: Send these to your support writers directly** to assist them in their writing. Provide a transcript if they ask.
- **Upload your Autobiographical Sketch, Resume, Transcript, and Citation Report (if you have one) to PrivateFolio.** These documents will be sent by HPP to your composite writer along with your support letters.
- **Submit the [Release to Composite Writer form](#) to HPP** once all your support letters and other documents are uploaded to PrivateFolio. This form will signal HPP to gather your letters and documents into a file to send to your composite writer.

- **Submit the [Verification Notification Form](#) to HPP** once your primary application has been verified by AMCAS, AACOMAS, or AADSAS. We'll use this information to help determine the order composites are reviewed once they are submitted.

## CHOOSING YOUR WRITERS

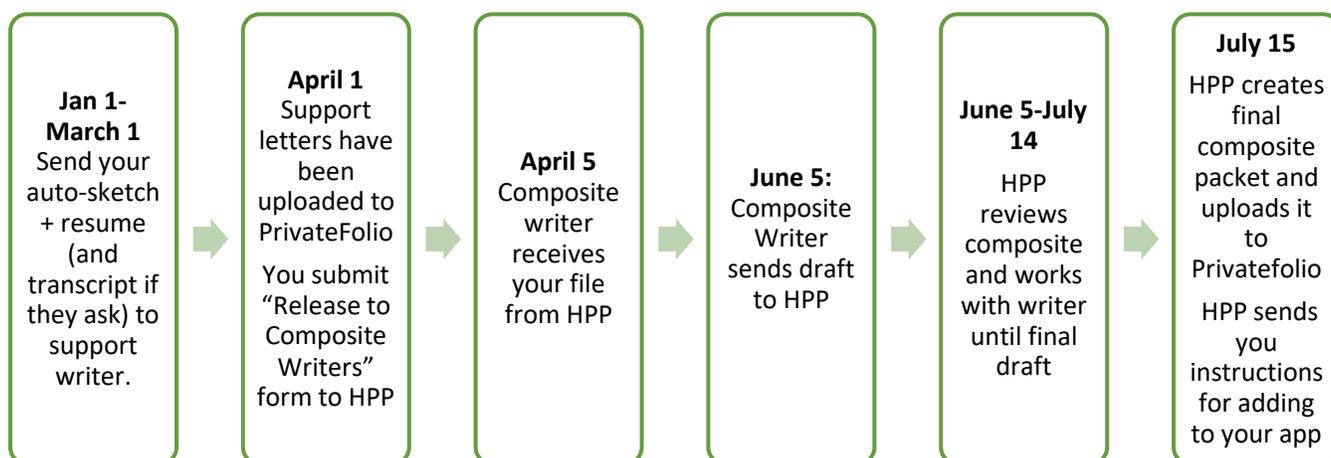
Your composite writer can be from any of these categories, though they are most often faculty. They must be a member of the Dartmouth Community (Dartmouth College, Geisel, or DHMC). We highly recommend your writer group include:

- Two faculty who have taught you in a science class (one can be neuro or engineering, if science-focused).
- Consider including at least one faculty from your major (if you're not a science major), and/or from another type of class that was meaningful for you.
- Writers from outside the classroom, such as a research supervisor (PI), coach, internship supervisor, job supervisor, FSP faculty, extracurricular activity, etc. They can be individuals outside of Dartmouth as well.

The best combination of writers will demonstrate different facets of you and your experiences, in and out of the classroom, and provide insight into some of your intellectual, professional, and personal qualities.

## SETTING DEADLINES FOR WRITERS

The process, from when you submit your Release to Composite Writer form to HPP, to when you upload your completed Composite Letter of Evaluation to an application service, may take about 9 – 13 weeks. **Remember you can submit your Primary Application without your composite letter.** We recommend on setting/agreeing on a timeline with your writers, see example timeline below.



### Important Tips for Setting Deadlines:

- Discuss your timeline/deadline with your composite writer first. If they need to complete their composite at an earlier time due to other commitments, then adjust your support writer deadlines accordingly to an earlier time – with their agreement. Make sure to also adjust completing your autobiographical sketch and resume accordingly.
- You might have a support writer who needs to submit later than March 25, adjust accordingly.
- You may have a support writer who wishes to submit before March 25. Again, move up your timeline for completing your autobiographical sketch and resume.
- If unexpected timing concerns occur, consult with HPP.

### Format of Composite/Support Letters

- **IMPORTANT! Be sure to emphasize to your writers that their letters MUST INCLUDE LETTERHEAD AND SIGNATURE!** Any letters without letterhead and/or signature can potentially slow down the creation of your composite letter packet.
- If your writer doesn't have a letterhead, they can enter at the top of their letter their name, contact information, title/position, and name of employer.
- **All letters must also be dated.**

## THE COMPLETED COMPOSITE LETTER PACKET

- **The completed Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation packet is created by the HPP staff to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and quality.** The final composite letter packet is a single PDF document that includes your composite letter, your support letters, citation report (if you have one), and a cover letter created by HPP that explains some of the unique aspects of Dartmouth College.
- When the composite letter packet is complete, you will receive a notification from HPP with instructions on how to send your packet to AMCAS. (To learn how to enter your composite packet into AMCAS, or how to send your packet to AACOMAS, AADSAS, or TMDASAS, please review [the Delivering Your Packet instructions](#).) This step of the process is usually completed during the summer of the year you are applying.
  - Applicants submit their composite letter packet **AFTER** they have submitted their primary application.
  - You don't have to wait for your packet to be completed before submitting the primary application.
  - It is typical for the composite letter packet to be added later.

The process, from when HPP receives your Release to Composite Writer form, to when you finally upload your composite letter packet to an application service, may take about 9 – 13 weeks. Details below.

## YOUR TASKS TO A COMPLETED COMPOSITE LETTER

As you read through the below tasks and timeline, please note that while these deadlines are in place to benefit you, we will still work with you to complete your composite letter packet even if you have a later timeline! Be reassured that having a later timeline does not necessarily impact your application negatively. If you have concerns, please feel free to discuss them with a pre-health advisor.

### Fall – January 15 (by April 1, ideally)

- You are responsible for understanding the [Application Timeline](#) and [Composite Process Timeline](#).
- **Reflect, choose, and ask your composite and support writers as early as possible.** We strongly recommend asking all your writers by early Winter Term and at least 4 weeks before any agreed deadline. Speak with a Pre-Health Assistant Dean if you need to discuss who or how to ask.
- **Ask your composite writer first, ideally, before asking your support writers.** Confirm that they can write a composite for you and their timeline. Do they need to write sooner or later? Adjust your entire timeline accordingly. You should use your composite writer's deadline to base your deadlines with your support letters.
- **You are responsible for understanding the timeline, communicating with your writers, and establishing deadlines with all your writers.** Be sure to consider all your writers' schedules and adjust your entire timeline accordingly.

After confirming your composite and support writers:

- **Open your PrivateFolio account using [HPP-specific instructions](#).**
  - Send each of your SUPPORT WRITERS (not your composite writer) a Letter of Recommendation Request – this will prompt PrivateFolio to send an upload link that will allow your writers to submit their letters directly to your account.
- **Send each of your support writers a thank you note.** Be sure to remind them of the deadlines you agreed on, a notice that they will receive a PrivateFolio upload link, and when they should expect your resume and autobiographical sketch.
  - **IMPORTANT! Be sure to emphasize that their letters MUST INCLUDE LETTERHEAD AND SIGNATURE!** Any letters without letterhead and/or signature can potentially slow down the creation of your composite letter packet.
- **Write an autobiographical sketch and update your resume.** Send both to each of your support writers (and your transcript if requested).
  - The autobiographical sketch can be a draft of your personal statement or bullet points detailing your goals, “Why medicine/dental school?”, important moments in your life, etc.
  - Please speak with an advisor if you want to go over your autobiographical sketch.
- **Communicate with your composite writer** and send them a reminder of the agreed-upon deadline.

### Winter – March 25 (by May 30, ideally)

- **Upload your documents (see below) to PrivateFolio.** HPP will send these, as well as your support letters (once ALL are submitted) to your composite writer. These documents are for your composite writer and HPP only – medical schools will not see them.
  - resumé
  - Autobiographical sketch
  - Transcript(s) and/or citation report
- **Monitor your Privatefolio account** and keep track of your support letters as they're being submitted.
  - You will receive an email notification as each letter is received by PrivateFolio.
  - Support letters will be included in your final packet.
  - Do not send these letters to AMCAS/TMDSAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS!

### Spring – March 25 (by May 30, ideally)

- **This is the ideal time for your support writers to upload their letters to PrivateFolio.**
- **Once ALL your support letters and documents are uploaded to PrivateFolio, submit the [Release to Composite Writer Form](#).**
  - HPP will send your materials to your composite writer, as well as resources to help them with the writing process. **It typically takes us 1 – 5 business days to process your release form and send your materials to your composite writer.**
- From the time they receive your materials, **your composite writer should have 4 – 6 weeks to write their composite.** Their timeline should be considered well in advance (see above).

### Mid-May – July (by July 31, ideally)

- **This is the ideal time for your composite writer to submit a draft of their composite to HPP.**
  - They should send their draft directly to HPP at [HPP@dartmouth.edu](mailto:HPP@dartmouth.edu).

### Mid-May – September

- **HPP reviews your composite letter and works with your composite writer to create a final draft.** Once finalized, we will create your composite letter packet, upload it to PrivateFolio, and send you instructions on how to deliver it to AMCAS.
  - If you are applying to AACOMAS, AADSAS, or TMDSAS, please make sure to follow the Delivering Your Packet instructions (see the Completed Composite Letter Packet section) to ensure the delivery of your packet.
- **This entire process can take 1 – 4 weeks** (ex. if your composite is submitted on June 1, plan that it may be finalized around July 1). **Plan deadlines with your composite writer accordingly.**
  - If your composite writer has any commitments (i.e., vacations, parental leave, conferences, etc.), that may affect their ability to respond timely to edits/feedback on their composite, please make sure to discuss this with them and inform HPP. We will do our best to accommodate your composite writer's schedule when reviewing.

## Final Important Tasks

- **As soon as you receive confirmation that your primary application has been verified by AMCAS, AACOMAS, or AADSAS, make sure to fill out the [Verification Notification Form](#).** HPP will use this information to help determine the order in which composites are reviewed once they are submitted.
- **As soon as you receive instructions from HPP** on how to deliver your composite letter packet from PrivateFolio to AMCAS, **make sure to follow the instructions carefully and send your packet to AMCAS.** If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact HPP.