



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 of evaluation can have a significant impact on your application, so it is important that you understand Dartmouth’s Composite Letter Process and think strategically about it.

The Health Professions Program (HPP) oversees the Composite Letter of Evaluation 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. The HPP staff 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 so you will be prepared for the steps ahead.

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THE DARTMOUTH COMPOSITE LETTER OF EVALUATION

At Dartmouth College, the Composite Letter of Evaluation is a unique, comprehensive letter of evaluation written on your behalf by a “composite writer.” It provides a comprehensive perspective on an 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), 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 Dartmouth Community (including 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** in order 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.

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 includes:

- Two faculty who have taught you in a science class (one can be neuro or engineering for example).
- 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 (see example timeline below). **Remember you can submit your Primary Application without your composite letter.**

Jan 1-March 1 Send your auto-sketch + resume (and transcript if they ask) to support writers.	April 1 Support letters have been uploaded to PrivateFolio, you submit "Release to Composite Writers" form to HPP.	April 5 Composite writer receives your file from HPP.	June 5 Composite Writer sends draft to HPP.	June 5-July 14 HPP reviews composite and exchanges drafts with writer until final draft.	July 15 HPP creates final composite letter file and uploads it to Privatefolio. HPP sends you instructions for adding to your app
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IMPORTANT TIPS FOR SETTING DEADLINES:

- Discuss timeline/deadline first with your composite writer. If, based on their other commitments, they need to complete their composite at an earlier time, adjust your support writer deadlines to an earlier time as well—with their agreement. Adjust the completion of your autobiographical sketch and resume accordingly.
- If your composite writer needs to submit later, that is usually okay.
- You might have a support writer who needs to submit later than April 1, adjust accordingly.
- You may have a support writer who wishes to submit before April 1. Again, move up your timeline for completing your autobiographical sketch and resume.
- If unexpected time concerns occur, consult with HPP.
- **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.

THE COMPLETED COMPOSITE LETTER PACKET

- The final composite letter packet is a single PDF document that includes your composite letter, 3 – 5 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. **The completed Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation packet is created by the HPP staff to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and quality.**
- When the composite letter packet is complete, you will receive a notification from HPP with instructions on how to send your packet to AMCAS. Please note, if you are applying to AACOMAS, AADSAS, or



TMDASAS, please review [THESE INSTRUCTIONS](#) to learn about how to deliver your packet. 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 (and the committee letter from other schools) 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

FALL/EARLY WINTER (of year applying)

1. You are responsible for understanding the [Composite Process Timeline](#).
2. Reflect, choose, then ask your letter writers as early as possible.
 - a. We strongly suggest asking all your letter writers by mid-winter term and at least 4 weeks before any agreed-upon deadline.
 - b. Speak with a pre-health advisor if you need to discuss who or how to ask.
3. Ask your composite writer first, ideally.
 - a. Make sure they can do it and check their timeline. Do they need to write sooner? Later?
 - b. Adjust the entire timeline accordingly.
4. You are responsible for:
 - a. Understanding the timeline
 - b. Communicating with your writers
 - c. Establishing deadlines with writers
 - d. Be sure to consider *their* schedules as well.

DECEMBER 1 – FEBRUARY 15 (latest, April 1st, ideally)

5. Open your Privatefolio account using [HPP-specific instructions](#).
6. In PrivateFolio, you will create a Letter of Recommendation Request for **each of your supporting writers**, but **NOT** for your Composite writer.
 - a. When you submit the request, your support writers will be sent a link that will allow them to upload their letters directly to your PrivateFolio account.
7. Send each **support writer** a thank you note, a reminder of their deadlines, a notice about receiving a Privatefolio message, and when they should expect your resume and autobiographical sketch.
8. **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.



9. Write an informal autobiographical sketch and update your resume and send it to each support writer.
 - a. Auto-sketch can be a draft of your personal statement, bullet points of your goals for medicine/dental school, important moments in your life, etc.
 - b. Please speak with an advisor if you want to go over your autobiographical sketch.
10. You will communicate with your Composite writer and send them a reminder of the agreed-upon deadline.

APRIL 1 – APRIL 15

11. Support writers: The ideal time to have them upload letters to Privatefolio
 - a. You are responsible for monitoring the arrival of your supporting letters.
 - b. You will receive an email notification as each letter is received by PrivateFolio.
 - c. Support letters will be included in your final packet.
 - d. Do not send these letters to AMCAS/TMDSAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS

MARCH 1 – MAY 30

12. Upload your documents to PrivateFolio—HPP sends these, with your support letters, to the composite writer
 - a. A resumé
 - b. Autobiographical sketch
 - c. Transcript and/or citation report
 - d. These are for your composite writer (medical schools will not see these documents).
13. You will monitor your Privatefolio account and support letters.
14. When all your supporting letters and documents are in, you will submit the [Release to Composite Writer form](#) online.
 - a. HPP will create a file of your letters and documents along with instructions and release it to your composite writer. This can take up to one week.
 - b. HPP has direct, confidential access to PrivateFolio. We oversee all exchanges of this information.
 - c. The latest recommended HPP deadline for supporting letters is May 30.
 - d. **While the letter deadlines are in place to benefit you, we will still work with you to have your composite letter packet completed even if you or your letter writers have a later timeline!**
15. Your composite writer should have 4 – 6 weeks with the supporting materials before a draft of their letter is due. Their timeline should be considered well in advance (see above).

JUNE 1 – JULY 15

16. The ideal time frame for the composite writer to submit a draft of their letters to HPP.
17. When the composite writer is done, they should send their letter to Health.Professions.Program@darmouth.edu.
 - a. The HPP recommended final deadline for the composite letter is August 1.
 - b. **While the letter deadlines are in place to benefit you, we will still work with you to have your composite letter packet completed even if you or your letter writers have a later timeline!**



JUNE 1 – AUGUST 15

18. HPP staff works with your composite writer to create a final draft of the composite letter. We will then create the composite letter packet which combines the composite letter and supporting letters.
 - a. This can take 1 – 4 weeks after your composite letter draft is submitted to HPP (i.e., if your letter is submitted on June 15 expect the packet to be completed around July 22). **Plan the deadline with your composite writer accordingly.**
 - b. HPP will create the completed composite letter packet, which includes your composite letter, support letters, citation report (if you have one), and an HPP cover letter.

JULY 1 – SEPTEMBER 1

19. HPP uploads your final Composite Letter of Evaluation packet, which includes a cover letter created by HPP on the unique aspects of Dartmouth College, your composite letter, support letters, and citation report (if you have one), to PrivateFolio. HPP will then notify you and send you instructions on how to send your packet to AMCAS.
20. YOU create a mailing delivery in PrivateFolio to send your Composite Letter packet to AMCAS.
21. Follow the instructions provided by HPP very carefully! Please contact us with any questions you may have before you attempt to complete your mailing.
22. If you are applying to AACOMAS, AADSAS, or TMDSAS, please make sure to follow [THESE INSTRUCTIONS](#) to ensure the delivery of your packet.