

# MALONE CENTER FOR CAREER ENGAGEMENT

## GUIDE TO REQUESTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Most employers and graduate programs will require you to submit references at some point in the application process. We've compiled some general guidelines for both, as the academic and professional worlds can have different expectations. If you have any questions about recommendations or a particular situation, please schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor through Handshake.

### GENERAL ADVICE

- Always ask a potential reference permission to include them on your application
- Select individuals that you know well to be your references (who are not your immediate family). These individuals should be able to speak highly of your skills, academic ability, and/or work ethic while also attesting to your character as a person
- Always hand write thank you notes to your references after they submit their materials or when your process concludes saying that you appreciate them taking the time to advocate for you
- Confirm that your professional contact has enough time to write your recommendation. Usually at least a month's notice is preferred.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REFERENCE & A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

- **References:** Candidates are often required to provide a list of references during a professional job search who are not usually contacted until late stages of an interview process. Having 3 or 4 references is recommended though not all may be contacted.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** These are written on behalf of a candidate and submitted in tandem with an application to a graduate program, fellowship, or academic program. A letter's author may or may not be contacted after submitting a recommendation depending on an organization's process.

### FOR PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

- Employers may ask for references even before offering an interview, ensure that you have a professional document listing your references that visually matches the formatting of your resume and cover letter (see the example on the next page)
- Provide full contact information including phone number(s) and email
- When an employer indicates that they will be reaching out to your references, contact your references to let them know what the position is as well as why you applied
- Keep your references informed about offers, they are invested in your success!

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### FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make sure that you give your reference enough time to write your recommendation (Ideally a month or more)
- Provide your reference with materials and samples that will inform their writing. This may include: a current resume or CV reviewed by Malone Center Staff, Personal Statement(s), a sample of works that display your skills (for a professor consider providing copies of work done for their class), information about the program or school that you are applying for with directions on how to submit the recommendation, and a calendar of application deadlines.
- A week before a due date, follow-up with references to ensure materials are submitted on time
- Keep references informed about acceptances to programs and where you ultimately choose to attend, they are invested in your success!

### AVOID THESE PITFALLS

- Do not spring a request on a reference last minute
- Do not be unprepared to answer your reference's questions about the position or program you've applied to
- Remember that if you're asking Faculty to be a reference, they are not on campus regularly during the summer so an office number may not be the best option for contact

### DON'T FORGET ABOUT LINKEDIN

- LinkedIn provides users with the opportunity to solicit recommendations from contacts who can vouch for your skill-sets and work performance
- Pro-tip: Before wrapping up an internship, seasonal job, volunteer project or course, ask your supervisor/colleague/professor if they would be willing to submit a brief recommendation about you to your LinkedIn profile
- These recommendations not only increase your profile's completeness score but also bolsters your credibility as a person and a potential candidate!

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### SAMPLE REFERENCE SHEET

#### YOUR NAME

Address (optional). Phone #. Email Address. LinkedIn URL (optional)

#### REFERENCES

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**Dr. Lynne Shackelford**  
Professor of English  
Furman University Department of English  
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**Dr. Emmett Lathrop “Doc” Brown**  
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