

ISP Letter of Recommendation Checklist—Read Carefully

This checklist must be COMPLETE and SUBMITTED together with all other required documents. All items and sub-items that apply to your situation MUST be checked off.

FIRST STEPS Copy ispadmin@u.northwestern.edu on emails to André or Chris.

Contact André or Chris and ask if he or she will write you a letter of recommendation. Never list a reference before obtaining permission. You must also obtain permission for each subsequent application or recommendation. We strive to make each letter timely and personal so do not assume that we will send out an old letter.

Provide at least two weeks' notice. More lead time may be required. If you need a letter quickly, you can ask but we may not always be able to accommodate.

Please only submit electronic copies of the required components (see below).

Only give us hard copies of envelopes, forms, etc. when needed. Copy Andrea (ispadmin@u.northwestern.edu) on email to André or Chris.

Do not use our personal email addresses or your request will be delayed.

Once we agree to write you a letter, it is ok to send us reminding emails. However, do not send reminders repeatedly if what you really want is an estimated date of submission or confirmation. If so, ask us directly—as a rule, we do not reply to reminders; nor will we send you a confirmation. Do not resend documents in reminders.

REQUIRED COMPONENTS (electronic copy only, MSOffice and PDF files are preferred)

Provide clear instructions, in the form of a spreadsheet or table with:

For what are you being recommended?

To whom and where should the recommendation be sent? Provide a web link for each program and the full name of the person who is to receive the recommendation if it is to be e-mailed.

The exact due date

Recent, unofficial transcript (available from Caesar)

Resume

Include any honors, awards, and scholarships you have received. If you took many AP exams, what type of AP scholar were you designated? Include major activities/awards from high school if you are a freshman, sophomore, or you haven't participated in many activities/research at the college level.

Include a detailed and understandable description of research. Include the full name of your advisors and institution, the period of your research project, proper citation of your publications and presentations.

List extracurricular activities, volunteer activities, and relevant work experience. Include honors and relevant activities from high school.

Visit University Career Services (<http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/>).

REQUIRED WHEN HARD COPY SUBMISSION IS NEEDED

Envelope (#10 business-size). Do not use larger envelope unless there is a need.

Correctly and neatly address envelope

Provide adequate postage.

Return addressee should be the ISP address (see below).

- Recommendation form
 - Fill out your personal information and sign the waiver of your right to examine the letter of recommendation, if applicable.
 - Fill in requested information about the recommender (see below).

REQUIRED IF APPLYING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL/FELLOWSHIP/MED SCHOOL

- Essay(s) or proposal(s) (Electronic Copy Only). These don't need to be final drafts at the time that you request our letter; you can initially send what you have but the final version must be sent to us at least 48 hours before the due date. This is especially important for fellowships like Fulbright, NDSEG, NSF, etc.
- You may be required to set up a meeting with André or Chris. Email several different times and days when you are available to meet.

Now read through this checklist one more time and make sure you have followed it precisely. Your letter of recommendation request will be delayed or ignored if you do not!

Contact Information for Recommendor:

André de Gouvêa
Professor of Physics
ISP Director
ispdir@northwestern.edu

Christina Russin
Professor of Biological Sciences
ISP Associate Director
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Common Question From Students: "Why do I need to use an official Northwestern e-mail address in my correspondence with SonBinh and other professors? What else should I consider when writing e-mails"

Page 38 of Student handbook (<http://www.northwestern.edu/handbook/>) says "Faculty may assume that a student's official University e-mail is a valid mechanism for communicating with a student..." thus students are responsible for checking their NU email accounts and for using their northwestern.edu or u.northwestern.edu addresses in official communications with NU faculty and staff. Beyond this, it is highly advisable that students avoid using gmail, hotmail, yahoo mail, hanmail, or other commercial email accounts when sending official email correspondences such as job/internship applications, school applications, or recommendation request. Not only that these messages can get caught by spam filters, they also do not allow students to take advantage of the prestige that the Northwestern name brings. If students prefer to use their commercial email accounts, they should plan to forward messages from their northwestern.edu email account and set their commercial email account to send out messages with northwestern.edu email address.

As a strongly recommended etiquette, always use a subject line that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a faculty member requesting a letter of recommendation, it is better to write "Letter of recommendation request from John Smith" than "Hello" or "Message from John Smith"

Last but not least, write clear, short, meaningful paragraphs and be direct and to the point; professionals and academics alike see their email accounts as business. Do not write unnecessarily long email messages or ask vague questions, or otherwise waste the recipient's time with messages that require many back and forth. For example, don't write questions like "Can we meet in the next few days?" or "I was hoping I could meet with you to sign my petition to graduate form. Please let me know what days and times you are free this week or next." The first question is naive and deserves only one-word answer of the "Yes/No" type. The second question does not show a proper respect for the addressee, who is your professor or advisor and is most likely to be busier than you are. Why do you think that he/she would send you his/her whole two weeks schedule and wait for you to pick a time?

E-mail messages sent from non-university accounts or without a subject heading may be ignored as it will be clear that the sender has not read these guidelines.