

Suggestions for writing a recommendation letter in the context of a scholarship competition

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The candidate must:

- Discuss with his or her referee to explain the nature of the competition they wish to apply for.
- Present the evaluation criteria to his or her referee.
- Send his / her résumé and indicate his or her major achievements.
- Provide the respondent with all transcripts and interpretations of the transcripts as required¹.
- Present his / her research project to the respondent.

Letter Format

- The letter must be written on the department's letterhead, research center or the university letterhead of the respondent.
- The letter must be ***dated and signed*** by the respondent.
- A co-signed letter by two respondents is not always allowed, even if they are the applicant's co-directors. The rules for presentation of supporting documents must be checked for the competition concerned.
- The contact information of the respondent must be visible.
- The letter's length should usually be one or two pages.
- It is customary that the recommendation letters are not read by the candidate. The letters must therefore be transmitted according to the transmission mode required by the organization administering the competition.

Suggestions for content

The first paragraph should tell about the **respondent's undeniable support of the candidate**. The respondent must **also explain how and when he or she met the candidate**. One must feel that the respondent knows the candidate well.

Subsequently, **one or two paragraphs should highlight the academic excellence of the candidate**. It is possible to make links with certain classroom interventions or certain elements presented in the course of work. The respondent may have certain characteristics of the candidate's personality (dynamism, intellectual curiosity, insight, etc.) It is also suggested to present elements related to: the candidate's excellence in one or more particularly difficult courses; highlight the cumulative average of the candidate if it is exceptional or if this average is rarely reached in the program of study in question; the ranking of the candidate or his cohort (e.g., among the top 10 students in his cohort); the mentions of honor received; his journey "Honor"; its ranking relative to other students that the respondent has already framed (e.g.: the candidate is one of the top five students I have supervised in the last 10 years ...); etc.

The third section should highlight the candidate's research potential. If a research internship has been carried out, it is necessary to explain how the candidate has demonstrated skills as researchers (judgment, initiative, ease in problem solving, creativity, proposal of new approaches, etc.). **Never diminish a candidate, for example:** *Although he has little experience in research, Mr. XXX is very well integrated into the team and has proven to be ...* Formulation to avoid.

The respondent **must present one or two interesting accomplishments** that have been carried out by the candidate of which he can testify. This should make it possible **to demonstrate the research potential of the candidate**. Example: collaboration in the writing of an article, presentation at a conference, collaboration with a patent, outstanding work as a research assistant, summer internship in research, practical work carried out. Communication skills can also be presented in this section, since in research field it is important to know how to disseminate your results.

Subsequently, the **respondent briefly presents the candidate's research project and justifies the completion of this project for the area**. The **respondent highlights the project's originality and the potential contributions to the scientific community and to the societal level**. It is also pertinent to highlight the reasons why the project is being carried out within the educational institution concerned and the choice of the research director.

If a criterion is **about leadership**, the sponsor must demonstrate that the candidate has leadership qualities and support it with examples. Note that leadership is defined as the ability of an individual to influence the outcome of a project or to direct actions taken by other members of the group. The same applies if a criterion relate **to teaching abilities and social involvement**.

Additional paragraphs should be added to provide answers to other criteria that have not yet been addressed in the letter. For example, some competitions award points for the quality of the research environment.

It is ultimately suggested to complete the letter by recalling that **the candidate is a high-caliber student** or bring out an element that distinguishes him or her. It is suggested that, by obtaining such a scholarship, the candidate can entirely devote himself to his research project and thus develop his or her full potential as a young researcher. The sponsor reiterates his full support and reappoints the scholarship competition.

A form of courtesy is required. The respondent must state that it is available to respond to potential requests from the evaluators.

Best regards,

Respondent's signature and title

1) It is important to remember that McGill's notes are out of 4 (maximum A and not A +)