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*Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies
Kimberly A Nicholas*

2013-11-06

MEMORANDUM

To: Students requesting letters of reference
From: Kimberly Nicholas
RE: Process for requesting letters from Kim

Dear Students,

An important part of my job is trying to help my students to carry their skills out into the world through securing internships, jobs, and opportunities for further study. I am generally happy to write letters of recommendation for students I have worked with or taught, provided they follow the instructions here to use my time efficiently. Doing so both ensures that I can focus my time on writing a positive letter that will meet the purpose and help you get the job, and that I can comment positively on your professionalism.

When requesting a letter of reference, please give me adequate notice as early as possible and well ahead of deadlines (a **minimum of two weeks** in advance under normal circumstances). I'm sorry, but given the time I put into writing a thoughtful letter, generally **I'm not able to write a new letter with less than one week (five working days) of notice**, as this does not give me time to fit the task into my existing commitments fairly. (It is easier to send a copy of an existing letter to a new potential employer.)

Before you request a letter from me, please make sure that a "letter of reference" or "letter of recommendation" is specifically required by the application process. Note that asking for "a reference" generally means listing contact details (name, position, institution, email address) for someone who can provide a full recommendation letter later, if your application is selected to proceed. Asking me to serve as a **reference** only requires asking for my permission to list my name as a follow-up contact, not writing a letter, and this is easier for me to respond to more quickly.

It is generally not accepted professional practice to ask a letter-writer to give the letter directly to the referee (the student), unless it is in a signed, sealed envelope. Rather, to protect confidentiality and give the letter weight that will receive full consideration by potential employers, generally letters are submitted directly from the recommender to the potential employer. Please be sure you've read the employer's instructions for submission carefully and give me the right information to follow them.

In order to help me write a letter most efficiently and effectively (which also helps me write the most positive letters), students requesting letters should provide me with **all** of the following information **in one email**:

1. A **short description (1-2 sentences) of the job or program, and web link** for more information. (This helps me tailor the letter to address particular skills they are looking for.)
2. **Letter due date** (specify if due date applies to postmark, or received, if paper letter)
3. **Full contact details** necessary to submit the letter, including:
 - a. Name and mailing address of the **person to whom letter should be addressed** (this goes on letterhead in formal business letters, and is important to show you've done your homework and are serious about the job).
 - b. **Full name of the position and organization** to which you're applying.
 - c. **Format for submitting letter** (specify which of the following):
 - i. Mailing address to which letter should be addressed.
 - ii. Pickup in person of signed, sealed letter for inclusion in a package you will submit.
 - iii. Web link for submitting any online forms.
 - iv. E-mail address for submitting electronic letters.
4. A **copy of your transcript** (unofficial is fine). This lets me comment on your academic performance in the context of the present opportunity.
5. A current copy of your **resume**. (This allows me to comment on your previous experience and highlight how it relates to the present opportunity.)
6. A **short personal statement where you tell me why you want this job**, so I can comment on your commitment and interest, and how it fits with your previous experiences and future goals. This can be taken from your cover letter or personal statement from the job application. If provided early enough, I may be able to provide feedback on personal statements to help you revise them.

Please send me a **reminder email** shortly before the due date to follow up and ensure your materials are submitted on time.

Thanks, and best of luck!
Kimberly Nicholas