



# Planning for Graduate Studies



## > Applying for Graduate Studies

It is important to review graduate program websites to ensure you are aware of application requirements and deadlines. Answers to questions you might have may be located on program websites; however, if you have additional questions, names and contact information for graduate student advisors are also listed on these websites.

A large part of applying to a graduate program is obtaining reference letters. It is important to understand how to choose your referees, ask for reference letters and to ensure you provide your referees with all of the necessary information to help ease the application process.

### ■ Reference Letters

Transcripts and test results are important, but they do not help an application committee understand you personally - that's the job of reference letters. The letters you include in your application will help the committee get a better understanding of your skills, interest in your chosen field, and academic and research abilities. Your reference letters will reflect the quality of your relationship with your professors. Seek ways to connect with professors, work on research or get involved in experiences that set you apart as an applicant.

### ■ Choosing referees

- Choose referees who know you well enough to comment on not only your abilities as a student, but also your passion for the subject and activities related to your field of study.

- Good letters from professors who know you well will benefit your application. Neutral letters or letters from professors who do not know you well will weaken your application.
- Reference letters may need to include specific information. Check with the university or program before approaching referees about writing letters.
- You can seek references from employers if they include information on your duties and abilities related to your field of study.

■ DO NOT include letters from friends, spiritual leaders or public officials. Selection committees are looking for evidence of your scholarly abilities and your interest and enthusiasm for your chosen field of study.



### ■ How to ask for reference letters

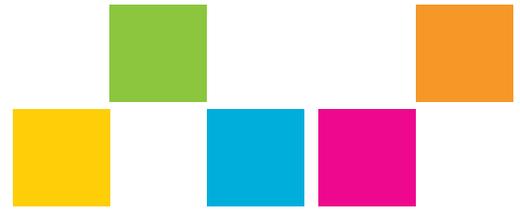
- Ask individuals you choose if they will write a reference letter for you.
- Discuss the letter with the referee. Make sure they are aware of the programs you are applying to and your skills, interests and abilities in your chosen course of study.

### ■ Provide your referees with

- Specific information the reference letter must include:
- Deadlines for delivering the letter.
- Instructions for delivering the letter, including who is to receive it and where it should be sent

### ■ Sending references

- Referees may be asked to send the letters directly to the program you're applying to. In this case, provide your referee with stamped, addressed envelopes (one for each letter).
- Some programs will allow you to include reference letters in your application package if they are in a sealed envelope.
- Some institutions may request that reference letters be sent electronically.



### A FEW MORE TIPS:

- Have all of your questions prepared in advance of contacting the program.
- Register for any remaining courses required for the program you are applying to.
- Register and prepare to write standardized exams if your program requires one to be written.
- Research the various funding resources available to you.
- Identify costs associated with your program (application cost, books, course costs).
- Apply for available funding and scholarship opportunities.
- Gather all required application materials.
- Keep copies of all application materials.
- Send out the application package as per program's instructions.

➤ For more information about graduate studies in Alberta, visit [gradstudies.alberta.ca](http://gradstudies.alberta.ca)