

## References:

We will now talk about the references required by the Ontario med schools.

Your referees will need to complete a reference form and a letter commenting on your moral and ethical character, your strengths and weaknesses and your outstanding characteristics. Your referees can submit them any time after August 1.

3 references are required and one should be a non-academic/character reference.

It is important to evaluate who can best provide a good supporting reference. Use each referee to build your application. Consider first what you want discussed in your references and then find people who can provide that information. If you are considering having a physician write a reference letter it can be helpful to your application, but it needs to be substantial. So in other words they need to be able to provide details on how they know you, how long they have known you, what you know about the health care system, etc.

We recommend that you ask the potential referee in person, "Do you have time to write a supporting reference letter for medical school?" If they don't, it is better to find out now as reference letters have an impact on your application package.

Give your referee enough time and information to write a letter. Do not leave this to the last minute. Meet with your referee in person at least 6 weeks before the deadline. **Tell them that they will receive a link to a form through e-mail from OMSAS. It is very important that they save this e-mail, as it will only be sent once! Ask your referee not to delete the e-mail until they have submitted the form, including the letter, as OMSAS is unable to resend the e-mail. OMSAS also will not send reminder e-mails. It is the responsibility of the applicant to follow-up with the referees concerning the completion of the references.** The referee may find it helpful if you provide them with your essay answers, admission requirements, and sketch. Provide them with any information that will help with their task.

If you are not applying this year, start cultivating relationships with faculty members as we find many students have difficulty getting references, so go to your classes, meet with your professors during office hours, and consider conducting research with them; however, remember that you need someone that can speak to your academic background.

The most ideal referees would be a health care worker, community member, and an academic leader.

McMaster reads references during the final file review for those who make it to the very end of the process; even then, references are not marked or scored. They are used as possible flags, so a good reference letter does nothing, but a bad reference can really hurt you! What your referee writes about you counts. McMaster recommends not to have all three references from the same aspect of your life, so don't have 3 academic reference letters; make sure to have 1 character reference. References for McMaster University can be submitted as late as December 1<sup>st</sup>, but if you are applying to more than one school that is a problem.

NOSM reads reference letters after the interview, and if there are any red flags, that can be a issue.

The University of Ottawa requires reference letters.

Queen's University will accept references as late as November 1, but most of the schools want them by Oct 1, so if applying to more than one school get them in on time!

An admissions member for the University of Toronto stated that if you ask family, or friends of family to write your letter it will be disqualified. If a family friend writes the letter, it is considered a conflict of interest, even if you have worked for them, as there is the capacity for friendship and Toronto will not accept this reference letter. This is the case for all schools. Your referees need to address the clusters outlined in the OMSAS instructions and on Toronto's website. They are the same clusters required for the ABS items and essays.

Western University also requires reference letters.

This is a screen shot to show what type of information is required about your referees. Note that there is a comments box that you can complete. This information will be sent in the body of an email that OMSAS sends directly to your referee. You could mention when you met with your referee to ask them to be a referee for your med school applications, and provide contact information on how to reach you if they have any questions. OMSAS will provide the due date of October 1<sup>st</sup> as part of the email they send.

This screenshot is to show you that an email has been sent to your referee. The system allows you to control when you want to send the request to complete the form and write the letter. However, remember the deadline date to receive the letter and form from your referees for most schools is October 1.

You need to have all of the information ready to complete each referee section as the system will not let you go back in and add more information once you have completed the form. However, you can complete the information for one referee at a time, if you like.

This is a screenshot of the reference form and you can see that your referee's name and contact information is filled in as well as your name and details.

There is a list of attributes that your referee needs to rank you on. They may not be able to rank you on each attribute, but it is a good idea to have at least 1 referee rank you for each attribute. We know it is difficult to read this, so the attributes your referees need to rank you on are:

- intellectual capacity
- initiative
- leadership capabilities
- maturity

- cooperation
- integrity
- problem solving
- fluency in spoken English
- fluency in written English
- fluency in spoken French
- fluency in written French
- ability to communicate
- ability to relate to others
- ability for self-directed learning and
- critical thinking ability

Please note that each referee also needs to write a letter **and upload it to this page**. It is best if the referee can provide proof such as examples of the attributes listed and not just list them. The University of Toronto wants your referees to focus on the clusters that they list and they state that the total range of clusters should be represented in all 3 letters. Since your referee is only submitting one reference letter that will be sent to all of the Ontario med schools that you apply to, make sure you provide each referee with that information.