How to write a Recommendation letter

When students apply for studying/training abroad, they should submit at least two recommendation letters from lecturers or professors who honestly evaluate their academic abilities and creative potential.

These letters play a great role in decision making on admission. That is why it is important to provide any useful information. Your students trust you completely. If you can write a positive recommendation, you should agree. If you know that your recommendation only reduces the chances of a student, advise him to ask for a letter of recommendation from another lecturer.

Before writing a recommendation letter, you should learn the specific goals of the student. It is necessary to emphasize his academic and personal abilities, which correspond to these aims and tasks.

A recommendation letter should include the following information:

1. Position at the university, institution or company. Indicate how long you have known the student and your relation to him/her (teacher, curator, supervisor of the research or scientific work).

2. The better you know the student, the better your recommendation will be. It is important to provide specific information, not generalization in the recommendation letter. When you characterize the applicant as an organized and hard-working person, you should confirm it by specific examples. For instance: "... Julia is a hard-working student. Her research project on unemployment in Akademgorodok is a clear manifestation of the ability to work and analyze statistic data." You should tell what the student succeeded to do and what his/her future plans are. Enhance the individual abilities of the student that distinguish him/her from others. Describe why you think that studying/training in the educational establishment/programme of his/her choice will bring him/her benefits.

3. You should evaluate the student in comparison with other, whom you observe during work. For each category you should indicate the student’s level (excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory). An approximate list of assessment criterion:

● Intellectual abilities

● Love of labour

● Ingenuity, initiative

● Adaptation in a new situation

● Ability to teach

● Desire to continue studying

● Ability to make a significant contribution to the chosen field in the future

● Knowledge in the chosen field

● Seriousness of intentions

● Emotional stability

● Qualities of the leader

4. You should indicate the category, which in your opinion the student belongs to (with the number of students of your faculty of recent years): the best 5% of students, good 10% of students, 25%, 50% and so forth.

Regarding the size of the work, one page will be sufficient. You should remember that the quality of the information provided is important, not the number of lines. Do not include in the recommendation letter anything, which is not related to admission of the student to the particular programme. It is assumed that the students should not see the recommendation letter. However, due to the complexity of mailing, it is very difficult to follow this rule. Most of the universities / programmes require that the person giving the recommendation put his letter into a sealed envelope and sign it.