**University Counseling: Recommendation Letters**

*Process for Requesting Letters, Etiquette, How the Counselor Recommendation is Used*

Why are recommendation letters necessary?

-At many universities, admission has become more competitive every year. Recommendation letters are one of the qualitative factors that can help differentiate students.

-Teacher recommendations (usually two) and a counselor recommendation are required for almost all US colleges and universities. In the US, university admissions tend to be a holistic process, meaning that many factors are considered: grades, rigor of courses, test scores, essays, extracurricular activities, recommendation letters, sometimes an interview, etc.

-UK universities require a composite reference letter. This consolidates the comments from two teacher recommendations and provides a brief introduction and summary from the counselor. This reference is sent electronically with the UCAS application, and Rochambeau sends paper copies of the full teachers’ letters.

-Canadian universities typically do not require recommendation letters, but it is important to check each school’s requirements.

Who should write the recommendation letters?

-Choose two teachers who know you well and can speak about your specific strengths and provide examples of notable work you’ve done.

-The subject of the class is not as important if the teacher knows you well.

-For example, say you’re considering a Biology major but you feel that your English teacher knows you well and would be able to write a strong letter for you. Go ahead and ask your English teacher for a letter. That said, if you are considering majoring in Physics in university, if you know your science teacher well then you could ask him for a recommendation.

-The counselor recommendation provides more context about you and about our school, providing a more complete picture of who you are:

-Your family’s background, where you’ve grown up, what languages you speak, favorite classes, your intended area of study (if you have one), what you did for your TPE and stage, highlights of your extracurricular activities, what you hope to accomplish in college, any special circumstances admissions officers should know, etc.

-Students will be asked to complete a survey through Naviance at the beginning of terminale to help me write this letter; ideally, I will have met with every student in person.

Process and timeline for requesting letters: What are the responsibilities of the student and the school?

-Students must request recommendation letters from at least two teachers. Aim to ask your teachers in person by the end of premiere.

-In the fall, or whenever students have access to Naviance, students follow up by entering the teacher’s name in the Naviance recommenders section. This will ensure the teacher receives the student’s recommendation request electronically.

-Students should follow up with their teachers to ensure that recommendations have been submitted on time.

-Students should provide their teachers with their Naviance survey, and complete their counselor survey. This information will help us write recommendations.

-Students must provide their teachers with accurate deadlines.

-Students should request the recommendations well in advance of the internal deadlines. Ideally, students should ask for recommendations before the end of premiere; this will allow the teachers time to start writing over the summer and write the best and most complete letter possible. At the very latest, students should ask for recommendations at least one month before the appropriate deadline.

-For example, due to the intricacy of the process, complete UK applications will be due to Ms. Parliman by early January. Ms. Parliman must receive the recommendation letters by early December in order to consolidate teachers’ comments for the reference letter and mail copies to the universities.

-Teachers can ask Ms. Finney to translate their letters to English, if they wish to write in French.

-Teachers must submit their letters electronically through Naviance so Ms. Parliman can send them on to the universities.

-Ms. Parliman provides teachers with guidelines for writing letters, and the technical steps to submit their letters to Counseling.

-Ms. Parliman sends email reminders to both students and teachers regarding the process of submitting recommendation letters and the deadlines.

-Ms. Parliman will write the US counselor recommendation letter and submit it to the relevant universities.

Etiquette

-Give teachers plenty of notice when requesting a recommendation.

-Provide teachers with accurate deadlines and your completed survey.

-Keep in mind that some teachers may have been asked for recommendations for many students-- some write letters for as many as 15 students each fall.

-Writing letters is a service teachers do for their students on top of the normal teaching load, and it can take several hours to craft a thoughtful, complete letter.

-Write a thank-you note to your teachers.

Questionnaires to aid letter-writing

There are two surveys for students to complete to help their teachers and me write recommendations. You are welcome to begin writing responses to these questions now; I'll be happy to receive responses by email at any time. The surveys will be available in Naviance in the fall.