

# USD Committee Letter

A committee letter is a letter of recommendation written by the USD Health Sciences Student Evaluation Committee (HSSEC). Committee letters are often preferred by medical and dental schools if an institution offers one.

The committee letter serves many purposes, all of which are valuable to students in the application process:

- **Introduces applicant to the admissions committees** by reviewing preparation and accomplishments. Gives the admissions committee a strong sense of the applicant in terms of academic ability and integrity, maturity, motivation, character and personality.
- **Because the committee sees itself as an advocate for students, the letter generally has a positive tone. However, it is an honest evaluation, including discussion of both strengths and weaknesses,** without which professional schools would stop paying any attention to committee letters. For this reason, it is essential that students apply for a committee letter when their application is strong.
- **As useful as the Committee Letter itself is, the process of completing the procedures to gain a Committee Letter is at least equally important because it encourages students to begin working on application materials early.** Through this process, students assess their readiness for application, and it provides an opportunity for feedback from the committee about weaknesses so they can either postpone their application or address them before applying.
- **Please note: Students only get one Committee Letter.** Using the Committee Letter in a year in which an applicant is not quite ready has proven to be a poor strategy. A Committee Letter is not something that helps prop up a weak application, but it can help a strong applicant be noticed.

## Committee Letter Eligibility for New Applicants

In order to apply for a committee letter to be written, the following criteria must be met:

1. The applicant must have taken at least half of the prerequisite science courses at USD and be applying to medical or dental school only.
2. The applicant must identify 3-5 science and 2-3 non-science faculty who will contribute to the committee letter.
3. The applicant must complete and return the committee letter application (always due the Monday after Thanksgiving break). Applicants will be interviewed in the spring semester. Committee letters will be written in the spring and early summer.
4. Minimum GPA of 3.2

For any students and alumni who are ineligible for a committee letter, USD will collect individual letters of recommendation on their behalf, and send a packet of the individual letters out to schools with a brief cover letter.