



Reference Letter Guide

Most Calgary Foundation student awards applications require one to two reference letters. Reference letters support your application by highlighting your character, skills, and experience and why you are a strong applicant for the student award.

Choosing a Reference:

Award applications will specify the type of reference required for the application. Certain awards may ask you to provide an academic reference, a professional reference, and/or a reference from a community member. Always check the requirements carefully.

Within these guidelines, ask someone unrelated to you who knows you well, and has for an extended period. For example, you could ask teachers or professors who you have a meaningful rapport with, or supervisors or community leaders who you have worked with for an extended period.

The more specific your reference can be about your skills and achievements, the better.

Asking for a Reference:

Connect with your reference(s) at least four weeks before the award deadline so they have plenty of time to prepare.

If possible, it is ideal to connect with your potential reference(s) in-person to learn if they are willing and available to write your letter of reference. Provide information about the award and its criteria, a brief overview of what information should be included, and when you need the letter by.

You may also wish to provide initial information regarding your eligibility, skills/experiences, future goals, or other specific information you would like to see highlighted in their reference letter that will help to demonstrate you are a strong applicant for the award. In your conversation, determine if the reference(s) will be able to speak to this information.

Once you have confirmed who your reference(s) will be, send your reference(s) a follow-up email including the following information:

- What the reference is for, award criteria, and submission requirements.
- Why you're qualified for the award. Include your key skills, experience, community involvement and/or future goals that relate to the eligibility of the award you are applying for.
- Deadline – when they need to send you the reference letter.
- Note that all reference letters can be addressed to 'The [Award's Name] Selection Committee c/o Calgary Foundation'.
- Letters should be typed, signed, and on official letterhead (where possible), and provided as a PDF file.

As the award deadline approaches, connect with your reference to provide any additional information, answer any questions, and ensure you receive the reference letter in advance of the award deadline. It is important to be available to your reference in case they have questions. Ensure you thank your reference for their support.



Challenges Obtaining a Reference Letter:

If you encounter difficulty connecting with your reference, prepare to ask another person to be your reference. Missing a reference letter in your application means it is incomplete and this would impact your eligibility. If you encounter challenges obtaining a letter of reference for your application, please reach out directly to studentawards@calgaryfoundation.org.

Custom and Past Reference Letters:

While a custom reference letter is not required for each award you apply for, it is good practice to ask your reference to specify the award in the letter and tailor the letter to your achievements as they relate to the eligibility and criteria for that award.

If you request a custom reference, this letter should only be submitted with the award named in the letter. If you plan to apply for multiple awards, you may wish to request a generalized reference letter that can be used for multiple award applications.

It is recommended to submit a reference letter that has been written within six months of your award application. It is acceptable to use a past reference letter, however if there is an opportunity for the letter to be updated to speak to your current activities and experiences, that is preferential.

Adding the Reference Letter to Your Application:

Reference letters are uploaded to an application by the applicant. Whenever possible, upload the reference letter(s) as a PDF file. Most files can be saved as a PDF or “printed to PDF.”

References are not provided to Calgary Foundation by your reference. Applicants are responsible for obtaining the letter of reference and uploading it to their application.

Please note that the Calgary Foundation may contact your reference(s) for additional information if required.

If you have further questions, please contact studentawards@calgaryfoundation.org.