

# Sample Letters of Recommendation and Letters of Intent

## Letter of Recommendation

Should include:

- Your relationship with the person, how long you have known the person and in what context should be stated.
- Your qualifications to be writing the letter, telling the reader why they should be interested in your opinion, should be stated.
- State how the student stands out from all the others, exceptional qualities and skills, being specific to the objective (application for graduate school). Competency in area of expertise, people skills, organizational skills, communication skills, academic achievements, sound judgment, reliability, analytical ability, and so on.
- Be specific whenever possible, giving examples backing up what you are saying about the student.
- Rule of thumb: A letter of recommendation for school should be 1 to 2 pages. Too brief, a couple of skimpy paragraphs, may have a negative impact.
- Proofread and edit the final document; it represents you as well as the applicant.

### EXAMPLE ONE

Tom has a wonderful rapport with people of all ages, especially the "at-risk" children he worked with at Magnusome's School for Excellence. Tom has a special talent working with the children who need more guidance and support than those typically found in a traditional classroom setting.

He connects easily with students and his talent at teaching simple concepts, as well as more advanced topics, are both truly exemplary. With excellent written and verbal communication skills, Tom is extremely organized, reliable, and computer literate.

Tom would be a tremendous asset to your program and I recommend him to you without reservation. If you have any further questions with regard to his background or qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### EXAMPLE TWO

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Tomas Fairbairn since he came to our school as a new student. As a professor in sculpture/installation, I have watched him grow as both an artist and a person. He was a passionate and engaged first-year student, and he remained so throughout his career at Ontario University of Art and Design, pursuing his degree with diligence and focus while serving on the Student Union Board, and on many other university committees.

In our third year here at UAD, we have a pre-thesis assignment which allows students to explore what it is they will do for a culminating experience. I was Tomas's advisor that year and he absolutely stunned me and the other advisors with his proposal to do an interactive piece which had the viewer actually entering a sculpture of a one-roomed shack. There would be a bench along one wall which allowed for three people to enter the structure at a time. Once inside, all the lights would be doused and the participants would be left in complete blackness. This would last about three minutes. As the three minutes lapsed, the walls would become screens on which would be back-projected scenes from the 1930s depression era, and a hot, dry wind would be wafted through the small cabin interior. As the film faded to darkness again, another short interval of silence would take place before participants exited the structure.

When the piece was finally executed for the final year thesis, viewers came out of there shaking their heads. It was, some said, if not a life-changing, at least a mind-changing experience.

Tomas has worked hard to hone his creative identity and his skill sets to execute his vision. His work has become more focused, while at the same time, more complex over the few short years he has been with us. What he needs now is the kind of exposure which he will get in Savanna College of Art and Design's (SCAD) sculpture and installation MFA program

I have spoken with Dr. Jones in the sculpture department at SCAD, and shown him some pieces by Tomas. Professor Jones was enthusiastic about receiving Tomas's application and portfolio.

Please give Tomas's application serious consideration. My recommendation comes without reservation. He will be an asset to the program there, and it is an excellent fit for both parties.

Do not hesitate to contact me directly should you wish further information.

Sincerely,

### EXAMPLE THREE

As the Dean of Mansom College, at CSU, Northridge, I have had the pleasure of knowing Sharon Tomisso for the last four years. She has been a tremendous student and an asset to our school. I would like to take this opportunity to recommend Hannah for your graduate program.

I feel confident that she will continue to succeed in her studies. Hannah is a dedicated student and thus far her grades have been exemplary. In class, she has proven to be a take-charge person who is able to successfully develop plans and implement them.

Susan has also assisted us in our admissions office. She has successfully demonstrated leadership ability by counseling new and prospective students. Her advice has been a great help to these students, many of whom have taken time to share their comments with me regarding her pleasant and encouraging attitude.

It is for these reasons that I offer high recommendations for Susan without reservation. Her drive and abilities will truly be an asset to your establishment. If you have any questions regarding this recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## LETTER OF INTENT (Statement of Purpose)

Many universities will provide specific clues regarding these letters by asking the applicant to respond to specific questions. Follow these *exactly*, and *keep* the following in mind while writing a letter of intent or statement of purpose where such guidelines are not given:

Think very seriously about why you really want to go to graduate school (teacher's college) and put it in your statement.

Make your Statement reflect your thought about the research and writing work you have done. It should mention what inspired you to pursue literary criticism, and the sort of very broad trajectory you'd like to pursue.

It's fine to mention professors who inspired your work and thought, and why.

Personal history is fine if it is relevant to your decision or what you intend to pursue in school.

The following samples can be found on the Purdue Owl site at:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> (The Owl At Purdue – free writing help and teaching resources)

The personal statement, your opportunity to sell yourself in the application process, generally falls into one of two categories:

1. The general, comprehensive personal statement:

This allows you maximum freedom in terms of what you write and is the type of statement often prepared for standard medical or law school application forms.

2. The response to very specific questions:

Often, business and graduate school applications ask specific questions, and your statement should respond specifically to the question being asked. Some business school applications favor multiple essays, typically asking for responses to three or more questions.

You would be doing yourself a favour by accessing the site and reading through the Letter of Intent information. There is an internal search engine where you can simply enter 'letter of intent' to find the materials. For instance, the writer is encouraged to:

Tell a story

Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is to bore the admissions committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack. If you distinguish yourself through your story, you will make yourself memorable.

(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>)

There are also actual examples of statements on the site.

Here are two fashioned in the OCAD's Career Services Area, one for graduate school and one for teacher's college. Compare them with the ones on the OWL site, and fashion your own unique letter.

## EXAMPLE ONE

### Bachelor of Education Letter of Intent

Both my mother and one of my great uncles were teachers. I have vivid memories of visiting them and watching them settle in, usually with a cup of tea and a small dish of homemade cookies, at a table in the living room stacked with papers. They would let me pretend to be helping, by arranging the papers in neat little piles. This went on for three years and was, in fact, how I actually began to understand the basics of language, memorizing the first few letters of the students' last names, and arranging the piles in alphabetical order.

I can't tell you how clearly I can hear still my mother's or my uncle's voice praising: *What a fine teacher you are going to make, Tomas*. Nurture and nature converging, you might say I feel destined to become a teacher. I never really wanted to do anything else.

But it is not going to be easy. To become a qualified teacher today is somewhat more difficult than it was in their day. My first barrier is, of course, money. None of my three brothers, nor my sister completed high school. To keep the family going, it was necessary for them to begin their working careers as soon as they were old enough to drop out of school.

With my whole extended family's support, I was able to go on to high school by working part time in Peoples' Jewelry Store. I worked there for the four years while I attended high school, working in the stock room, learning how to receive and record incoming merchandise, keep inventory and even, occasionally, being allowed to work up on the floor servicing customers. I think I learned as much working in the department store as I did in my high school subjects. The subject matter of those two learning experiences were, of course, very different; and I was much more engaged in my literature and art courses than I was in learning how to keep the inventory records up to the minute.

This past fall, I graduated from Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) with a bachelor's degree in fine art (BFA), my area of specialization was drawing and painting; and I also completed a minor in integrated media.

Because the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) is, for the most part, a lap-top based curriculum, I am very excited about realizing my dream of being a teacher by fulfilling a Bachelor of Education program at your university. My family and my professors at OCAD, agree that it is a perfect fit for me. The professors there in your Faculty of Education – Dr. Peter Schupert and Dr. Rosalind Messer, for instance – are truly twenty-first century teachers, superb theoreticians and soundly grounded in current teaching research and methodology. I am particularly interested in working with these two individuals as I believe that my work with computer-aided learning (CAL) would be greatly enhanced and supported under their guidance.

I have included samples of my work, a statement of my teaching philosophy, and letters of recommendation from my professors at OCAD.

Thank you very much for taking the time to review my materials. I can't wait to start the Bachelor of Education program at UOIT. (Sincerely . . . . Tomos . . . )

## EXAMPLE TWO

### Letter of Intent: Graduate School

The making of art has always been a big part of my life. As children, we were about eight or nine perhaps, my younger brother and I used to spread these huge easel sheets of paper out on the living room floor and fill every nook and cranny with elaborate and painstaking details.

My parents still have one of these early works of mine, beautifully framed, and hanging prominently in the entrance way to the family home in Meaford, a small town in southwestern, Ontario.

Originally, it had been a summer scene, a picture of the forest of white birch trees which crowded the shores of Glace Bay, where we had a cottage. Each year, my father would go up there in late November, or early December, usually alone, or with one of my older brothers, to close up the place for winter. This one year, however, no one else being around, he took me. There had been an early winter storm, and the place was knee-high (for a nine-year-old boy at least) in gleaming, pure white snow. The birch trees glistened in the winter sun. When we got home, I immediately got that picture out and repainted it, now clothing the trees and the swollen banks around the lake in soft, rounded shapes of glistening white.

That's the picture that still hangs in the front foyer. There was no resistance from anyone in the family after that about me eventually going to Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) when it came time for me to go to university.

At OCAD, I was not happy just drawing and painting. I wanted to experience, to learn, to create in every medium, including the new digital and electronic media which was just then coming onto the scene. For my final project, my fourth-year thesis, I was allowed to take a very open and interdisciplinary approach. I received top marks for that work, as well as the coveted Howard and Jean Fairbairn Graduate School Scholarship. (You may view this at [http://www.ocad.ca/graduate/scholarships/](#); and it is also part of my portfolio submission.)

I am extremely passionate about continuing this multi-faceted approach to making art, and it is why the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) is my first choice for graduate school. The professors at SCAD are all current practitioners as well as sound scholars and researchers. I am particularly looking forward to being able to work with Professor Souchi, as I find his research in the area of sustainable, digital clothing absolutely fascinating. I had the incredible privilege of meeting Dr. Souchi at the 2008 Second Skin Exhibit in San Francisco. He graciously allowed me to show him some of my research and work in this area, and strongly encouraged me to apply for the interdisciplinary Master of Art and Design graduate program in your School of Digital Art.

Thanks you so much for looking at my materials. I eagerly look forward to continuing my artistic and professional growth at Savannah College of Art and Design.

Sincerely,

Tomas Gee Newbury