



## Guidelines for Letters of Reference for UBCO Internal Funding Programs

This document has been developed using the guidelines and best practices of the [Canada Research Chair](#) program.

### Format

Letters of reference should:

- be dated;
- state the full name of the nominee;
- include your (the referee's) name, position, department, institution, and contact (either email address or telephone number);
- include a signature (electronic or otherwise);
- include a statement describing the professional relationship between you (the referee) and the nominee;
- if applicable, include a brief description of your own qualifications and credentials to help peer reviewers put your recommendation into context;
- provide insights into the quality of the nominee in reference to the program's evaluation criteria as appropriate for the nominee's career stage;
- provide insights into the quality of the nominee's professional stature and skills at a more general level, as appropriate for the nominee's career stage.

### Best Practices

When drafting your letter, consider the following best practices:

- be accurate, fair, clear, and balanced;
- avoid being unduly personal (i.e., do not use the nominee's first name);
- support your points by providing specific examples of accomplishments where possible;
- use superlative descriptors (e.g., excellent, outstanding) judiciously and support them with evidence;
- letters should, ideally, be between one and two pages;
- include only information that is relevant to the competition (e.g., do **not** include information related to ethnicity, age, hobbies, marital status, religion, etc.);



- avoid revealing personal information about the nominee;
- be aware of unconscious bias and choose your words carefully.
- Consider whether your letter unintentionally includes gaps, or doubt-raising, negative or unexplained statements (e.g., 'might make an excellent leader' versus 'is an established leader').

### **Limiting Unconscious Bias**

In order to limit the influence of unconscious bias within your letter, consider the following:

- focus on comparing the nominee with the specific requirements of the role;
- avoid using stereotypical adjectives when describing character and skills, especially when providing a letter for a woman (e.g., avoid words like nice, kind, agreeable, sympathetic, compassionate, selfless, giving, caring, warm, nurturing, maternal, etc.);
- consider using 'stand-out' adjectives for both men and women, where appropriate (e.g., superb, excellent, outstanding, confident, successful, ambitious, knowledgeable, intellectual, etc.);
- use the nominee's formal title and surname instead of their first name;
- consider whether your letter unintentionally includes gaps, or doubt-raising, negative or unexplained statements (e.g., 'might make an excellent leader' versus 'is an established leader').