



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').