

## Information for Students Requesting a Reference Letter from Dr. Chen

Thank you for all your hard work in the SHL! As noted in the orientation documents that you received when you joined the lab, I only write or co-write letters for RAs in the lab applying to graduate school after I have worked closely with them for at least 9 months. For my letter to be strong and detailed enough to be helpful to you, I should be able to comment, based on my direct observations, about your advanced research skills including in data analysis, academic writing, and oral presentation. In general, this applies to Honours and Directed Studies students, students who have completed a full-time paid summer internship in the lab (NSERC USRA or Quinn), and study coordinators who have presented their lab research at MURC or PURC.

If I agree to write or co-write you a letter, I will typically ask graduate students or postdoctoral fellows in the lab for input on the letter. Therefore, it generally would **not** make sense for you to ask a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow in our lab for a separate second letter, because the content would overlap too much. If you think your situation warrants an exception, please ask your grad student/postdoc supervisor for advice.

If you are applying for non-academic positions and need someone to provide a reference check or employment verification, you should ask the person in your lab who has supervised your day-to-day work (typically a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow). If you're unsure who would be best suited to write you a letter, please ask your grad student/postdoc supervisor for advice.

I receive a large volume of requests for letters, and I invest a lot of time in writing each one. Letters that will strengthen your application for competitive programs need to contain detailed information about your activities and accomplishments, and speak highly of your personal qualities, demonstrated strengths, and abilities. The more lead time you give me, the more time I will have to write you a letter that is sufficiently detailed and personalized to your situation. *One month* of advance notice ("notice" includes sending me the information specified below) is ideal during peak season (Nov-Jan deadlines). Unless there are truly extenuating circumstances, **I do not accept any new requests with less than two weeks notice.**

Please send me a list schools you'll be applying to, along with deadlines and any special instructions for how to submit my letters (e.g., through a website vs. emailed). A shared spreadsheet (e.g. using Google Docs, with columns for School, Program Type, Deadline, and Notes/Special Instructions) works well for this: you can add to or edit your list as necessary, and you'll be able to see my progress. Set permissions so that I can edit the spreadsheet; I'll mark off the schools I'm done with as I go. After I have created an initial draft of your letter, it can still take me some time to tailor your reference for each individual program that you are applying to. Therefore, please use the individual school's application portal to **generate an invitation email for your letter writers at least three days—and ideally one week—before that individual school's deadline for receiving your letters.**

On any paper and online forms, please fill in as much as my information as possible:

- Position: Associate Professor of Psychology
- Address: 3521-2136 West Mall, Vancouver BC Canada V6T 1Z4
- Phone: 604-822-2549

- Email: [frances.chen@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:frances.chen@psych.ubc.ca)
- ...and so on. Please also provide stamped, pre-addressed envelopes for any schools that require hard copies. (All of this saves me a lot of time, and is much appreciated.)

So that I will have a lot of material to draw from, please send me:

- a current CV and transcript, with GPA (overall and psychology) calculated
- the completed “Worksheet for RAs requesting a reference letter in the Social Health Lab” (ask Dr. Chen to send this to you, if you do not have it on hand)
- a few sentences describing your career goals, and what makes you most passionate about pursuing further graduate studies and/or the position you are applying to (can be taken/adapted from your personal statement)
- any other information you think could be helpful (GRE scores, LSAT scores, etc.)
- Note that the Canada Graduate Scholarships - Masters (CGS-M) program has a unique format and requirements for references. **If you plan to apply for a CGS-M fellowship, please let me know at least two weeks in advance of the deadline and ask me to send you additional information that is specific to the CGS-M application process.**

DO send me a reminder email if you haven’t received a confirmation of a submission by two days before your deadline. Good luck!