

## To students from my class: What reference letters to expect from me?

December 10, 2019

### Q: I have taken your courses before. Can you write me a reference letter?

In general, I am willing to write letters for students who took my classes in support of their job hunting and graduate application.

### Q: What letter can I get, if I just finished the course without doing something extra?

The letter will be standard:

- It will describe the scope and significance of the course
- It will describe your performance at a high level, which is reflected by your course grade

In my opinion, such a letter will neither hurt your case nor help your case significantly. So, please carefully weigh my potential letter in comparison to other letters you may obtain.

### Q: What letter can I get, if I have done extra things with the course, e.g. big data challenge, honor grade, small research tasks?

The letter will highlight these things in addition to the standard content described above.

### Q: I need a letter! How should I request one?

- Drop me an email and get a confirmation.
- State which of the above is your situation.
- State your objective: MS or PhD. This is important.
- Remind me when the deadlines are close. Note there are application deadlines (e.g. Dec 5) which are for applicants but not the letter writers. However, I will do my best effort to send in letters in time.
- Often, we do NOT need to meet in person.

### Q: Whom can you give the letters to?

Your prospective employers/schools must explicitly solicit the letter from me. I cannot send them a letter without solicitation.

I cannot give you the letter.

In general, I expect you to waive the right to view the letter.

### Q: The deadline is close!

The application deadline (e.g. Dec 15) is for applicants not the letter writers. In general, faculty are very busy in Dec. And I personally do not know any schools will start reviewing graduate applications in Dec. Unless you have extraordinary reason, I prefer to finish your letters during the winter break and upload before the New Year.

### Q: Anything else can I do to expediate the letter writing process?

When you enter my information on the online application system, please be as thorough as possible – providing my address, office phone, etc. which you can get from my website <http://felixlin.org>.

This saves me time!