

Sample letter of recommendation

[University letterhead]

[sender's name]
[sender's departmental address—if not printed on letterhead]
[sender's departmental phone number, if available]
[sender's departmental fax number—if not printed on letterhead]
[sender's institutional email address]

[today's date]

[recipient's name]
[recipient's institutional address]

Dear [recipient's name]: *or* To Whom it May Concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend Jane Doe for admission to [name of program] at [name of university]. I am a fifth-year Ph.D. student at the University of California, Berkeley. I came to know Jane when I was her Graduate Student Instructor for Philosophy 111: Ethical Relativism, taught by Professor John Smith. The course comprised [short description of course]. Jane distinguished herself by submitting an exceptionally well researched and interesting project on ethical practices in ancient Greece. I would rank her in the top 2% of students that I have taught in the past five years in respect of her writing ability and research skills.

Overall, Jane is highly intelligent and has good analytical skills. Her project on ethical practices in ancient Greece demonstrated her ability to come to a detailed understanding of the ethical practices of another, very different, culture, and to analyze the consequences of those practices for contemporary ethical theories. She gave a particularly interesting discussion of the difficult practice of infanticide, and showed both sensitivity and detachment when discussing its ethical consequences. Her overall intelligence is also reflected in her grades for the course, which were by far the best in the class.

Jane has excellent communication skills. Her written work is both clear and concise, as well as interesting to read. She demonstrated her oral articulateness in the discussion sections that were an integral part of the course. Each discussion section focused on a particular ethical dilemma. Students were required to analyze morally problematic situations, and to develop and argue for their own ethical views with regard to the issue in question. Jane was highly proficient in applying the course material in analyzing the problem situations. She always explained her views very concisely and gave supporting arguments that were both clear and persuasive. Jane also demonstrated good teamwork skills in group assignments.

At a personal level, Jane is a well-disciplined, industrious student with a pleasant personality. She went well beyond the course requirements in the quantity and quality of her project, putting in a lot of extra research and attending office hours every week. Throughout the course, Jane demonstrated great perseverance and initiative. Not only was she interested in and motivated to learn the material, but she also put great work into assimilating it to her own experience and developing her own ideas about each ethical topic that we discussed.

Jane is unquestionably an exceptional candidate for graduate study in Ethics. Jane's work in Philosophy 111 suggests that she would greatly benefit from the opportunities for intellectual development provided by a sustained period of graduate study. She has proven herself to have the perseverance, initiative, and

Sample letter of recommendation

intellectual creativity necessary to complete an advanced graduate degree. I would therefore highly recommend Jane Doe. If her performance in my class is a good indication of how she would perform as a graduate student, she would be an extremely positive asset to your program.

If I can be of any further assistance, or provide you with any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[sender's signature]

[sender's name and title]