



Dear Colleagues,

Changes to clerkship curriculums and CaRMS policies, both pre-planned and because of COVID-19, have had profound impacts on our application process. Medical students have had significantly less opportunity to obtain general surgery experience compared with previous years. Reference letters play a vital role in the file review of applicants, but their value requires effective evaluation from their limited time on service.

For this cycle, we have developed a **checklist** as a guide to writing an effective reference letter. This checklist is **NOT MANDATORY** but will ensure key aspects of the student's clinical performance are not missed and that the evaluation is contextualized by the nature of the rotation. The letter may be formatted as the referee sees fit, and referees are encouraged to go beyond these requirements as appropriate to fully describe their impression of the applicant. Note that the letter reviewer will **NOT** have access to the applicant's CV; please ensure you are specific if referring to an applicant's research, awards, volunteer work, personal story, etc.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Please contact our Selections Committee if you have any questions or concerns.

QUESTIONS:

1. **How long have you known the applicant?** (i.e. years, months, weeks)
2. **Please describe the general structure of your service's clinical rotations for clerks** (e.g. subspecialty exposure, teaching, clinics, call, ORs, endoscopy, etc.)
3. **Is the student able to complete a consult/clinic encounter to an acceptable level in an appropriate amount of time?**
4. **Comment on the student's fund of knowledge and ability to apply their knowledge.**
5. **Has the student participated in the OR? If so, how many times?**
6. **What surgical skills did you or the senior resident directly observe? To what level did they perform?** (e.g. 'below expectations for a medical student', 'at the level of a PGY1')
7. **Comment on the following attributes** (please include specific examples):
 - a. **Professionalism**
 - b. **Work ethic**
 - c. **Collaboration skills**
 - d. **Perceived enthusiasm/interest in general surgery**
8. **Has this student shown the ability to be a self-directed learner?** (please give specific examples)
9. **How strongly would you endorse this medical student for a General Surgery residency training program?** (e.g. 'Must-have', 'strong candidate')

Sincerely,

Dr. Sav Brar and the CaRMS Selection Subcommittee