

SAMPLE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION – STRONG

Esteemed Residency Program
Well-Known University
1234 University Way
Big City, Florida 54321

March 19, 2014

Dear Program Director,

It is my pleasure to write in support of the application of Mr. Ian Harris for your residency program. I have been an educator for decades with considerable experience with national organizations. I worked closely with Mr. Harris during his third year clerkship as well as during his acting internship. As is evident from his CV, Mr. Harris has excelled throughout his career with many notable accomplishments which I will not repeat here. I will focus on my experiences with Mr. Harris, primarily those related to his clinical abilities and which demonstrate the qualities necessary for your residency: excellent knowledge, clinical skills, patient care, and leadership. I have observed Mr. Harris in both the inpatient and outpatient setting, taught him in class, and overseen his performance during his clerkship and acting internship.

In addition to considerable intellect and exemplary performances on standardized examinations, Mr. Harris is a warm, engaging individual who teaches others by example, is inclusive, and consistently exhibits curiosity and motivation to learn. He comes prepared for all types of learning situations, having researched the relevant topics so that he can provide quality care as well as participate actively in class and clinical supervision. Mr. Harris is articulate, well-read, and able to utilize his knowledge effectively in the clinical setting. In addition to prioritizing his own learning, Mr. Harris considers the needs of others. On multiple occasions, he has arrived in clinic with handouts on relevant clinical topics tailored for the rest of the medical team. He has been described as one of the best students to rotate on our service by our residents and several attending physicians. A colleague was so impressed by Mr. Harris' knowledge and skills that she invited him to give a presentation during Grand Rounds. His presentation was outstanding – comprehensive in scope yet presented efficiently and effectively. On his own time, Mr. Harris designed a well-conceived, thorough study protocol on risk factors for readmission within 30 days to our inpatient service.

In conclusion, I am happy to give Mr. Harris my highest recommendation for your residency program. In my experience, he is in the top 10% of all medical students with whom I have worked over the past 20 years. If you have any additional questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Joseph Attending, M.D.
Associate Professor of Medicine

Note: This letter is strong for several reasons. It describes how and in what context the letter writer knows the student. It provides specific examples of the student's performance, including aspects that made him stand out in comparison to his peers. It also provides an estimate of how this student ranks among all students with whom the letter writer has interacted over the years.

SAMPLE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION – **WEAK**

Esteemed Residency Program
Well-Known University
1234 University Way
Big City, Florida 54321

March 19, 2014

Dear Program Director,

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation for John Jones, who was first introduced to me when he came to Butterworth Hospital as a fourth year student in 2013.

I found Mr. Jones to be a very hard working, conscientious individual. He took very good care of patients who were assigned to him, and he made sure that all the work-up was done before the morning rounds, where he actively participated. His responsibilities included taking histories and physicals, writing SOAP notes, collecting lab reports from the previous day, writing transfer and discharge summaries and also participating in morning reports and noon conferences. He also gave some excellent presentations. He has excellent clinical skills and displays them with mature mannerisms.

John is a very humble individual who gets along well with his peers and the entire medical team. It is therefore without reservations that I recommend him to you for any residency program that he may be seeking. I am sure he will be a valuable asset to your organization.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely yours,

William Attending, M.D.
Associate Professor of Medicine

Note: This letter is weak for several reasons. It is vague and non-specific, describing what any medical student would do on a rotation. There are no specific examples of John's work provided. It appears the writer does not even know the student's specialty choice. Overall, the letter is of little value in assessing the student's application.