

GUIDE TWO

Letters of Evaluation and the veCollect Letter System

Johns Hopkins University



Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising
300 Garland Hall
<http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/>

Preface

This guide provides important details for Johns Hopkins University undergraduates and alumni who are in the process of applying to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) school.

Reference in this guide to “medical school” refers to applicants to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) school.

Letters of Evaluation

Letters of evaluation (also known as “letters of recommendation”) are a critical part of the health professions application process. Medical schools value the perspectives of people who have observed an applicant’s work and can speak to the applicant’s abilities and personality. At Johns Hopkins, you are responsible for requesting and collecting letters evaluation, using our online system called veCollect (described later in this guide).

Professionalism

All applicants are expected to operate with professionalism throughout the medical school application process. For example, sending a note of appreciation to a letter writer is appropriate once their letter of evaluation has been submitted to veCollect. We also suggest notifying evaluators when you have decided upon a medical or dental school to attend.

About this Guide

- **Part I:** Requesting Letters of Evaluation
- **Part II:** veCollect
- **Part III:** Setting up your veCollect Account
- **Part IV:** Utilizing veCollect as an Applicant
- **Part V:** Frequently Asked Questions
- **Part VI:** In Closing

We hope that you will reference this guide throughout the medical school application process!

Part I: Requesting Letters of Evaluation

How many letters of evaluation do I need and from whom?

First, in this document and in veCollect, individuals who write letters of evaluation are referred to as “evaluators.” Generally, you should aim to secure four to six letters of evaluation. As a *general* rule, we recommend:

- two (2) letters from science (or engineering) faculty
- one (1) letter from a faculty member outside of the sciences, preferably in the humanities or social sciences
- one to three (1-3) letters from outside of the classroom, including a research PI, athletic coach, employer or supervisor, volunteer coordinator, etc.

We realize not everyone will be able to follow this exact model, so speak to your pre-professional advisor about your plan.

Keep in mind that a person who knows you well will be able to write a more substantial and helpful letter than someone who hardly knows you. In choosing between a person who taught you in a small class versus someone with a famous name or title but who is unable to write a personal letter, choose the former.

How should I ask for letters of evaluation?

Some evaluators may prefer you ask for a letter of evaluation via email, and some may prefer you ask in person. In general, you’ll need to use your judgment to determine the best approach.

To assist your evaluator in writing the letter of evaluation, we suggest you share the following materials:

- resume
- transcript (optional)
- graded papers that you have written for the instructor (if applicable)
- an application essay (if applicable)
- a typed cover letter to include:
 - why you want to be a physician/dentist/other health professional
 - skills, abilities, or knowledge that you want to share (be humble!)

Make sure you allow the evaluator the option of saying “no.” Your goal is to secure strong letters. If a person is somewhat uncomfortable writing for you or doesn’t have enough time, it is likely that the result will be a short and weak letter. Ask any potential evaluators if they feel comfortable writing a strong letter for you. If they decline, that’s okay! It is much better to have someone be honest with you at the start, so that you can work to find another evaluator who will be more enthusiastic about your application.

Give your evaluators plenty of advanced notice so they have sufficient time to write a good letter of evaluation (minimum of a month or two). **We suggest you ask evaluators to submit their letters of evaluation to veCollect by mid-June of your application year.**

Part II: veCollect

Johns Hopkins applicants to medical, dental, and other health professions schools are supported by letters of evaluation obtained from faculty, administrators, and other professionals from both inside and outside of the university. These letters of evaluation are requested from and stored in **veCollect**, an online system that enables applicants to manage letters of evaluation. In using this service, evaluators submit letters of evaluation (on letterhead with their signature) electronically to veCollect. Hopkins students may begin to store letters in veCollect at the start of their junior year.

What are the benefits of veCollect?

- Applicants can track when letters have been uploaded to veCollect.
- Letters are stored securely until needed, even if the applicant decides to delay his/her application.
- Evaluators save time by submitting letters electronically from anywhere in the world.
- The Pre-Professional Office securely downloads letters from veCollect for transmission to medical schools as requested by applicants.

Who is eligible?

Johns Hopkins students who are in their junior year or beyond are able to create a veCollect account. Only current undergraduates and alumni of undergraduate programs who are eligible for a Committee Letter are able to utilize the veCollect letter service. All other Johns Hopkins affiliated students are prohibited from using veCollect and are instead advised to utilize the letter of evaluation modules of the centralized application service(s) (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS) to which they are applying.

What is the cost?

The non-refundable fee for creating a veCollect account is \$25.00, payable by cash, check, or online payment. You can find the online payment site at <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/make-a-payment/>. Checks should be made payable to “Johns Hopkins University” and mailed to:

Pre-Professional Programs and Advising
Johns Hopkins University
300 Garland Hall
3400 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

If you received a fee waiver from the AAMC (or other centralized application service), the fee for veCollect will be waived as well. A copy of the waiver should be sent to our office along with the veCollect form.

Part III: Setting Up Your veCollect Account

To register for veCollect, you must complete the **veCollect Registration Form**, available on the “Forms” page of the Pre-Professional website: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/groups/forms/>

Once completed, submit your form and the \$25 non-refundable processing fee to the Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising (see previous page for more information.)

After your form and fee are received by the Pre-Professional Office, **you will be emailed an authorization code** to activate your veCollect account. From there, follow the instructions provided in this guide.

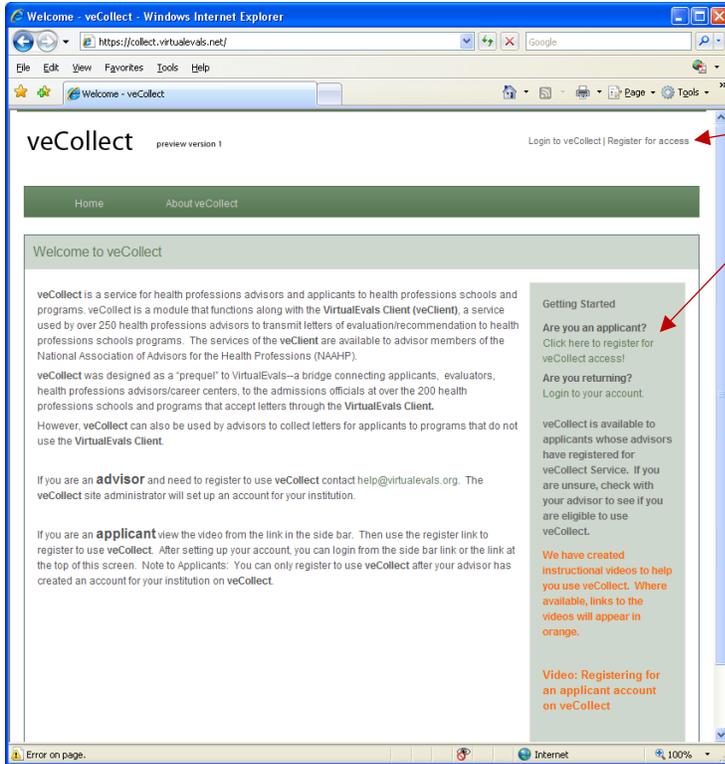
How does veCollect work?

The veCollect process can be summarized in five steps:

1. Once you receive an account, you will enter the contact information for each of your evaluators, including their email addresses.
2. You will then click on the envelope icon and the system will send an automatic email to your evaluator, requesting your letter of evaluation. *You should speak to your potential evaluators **before** clicking on the icon, to ensure they will write a letter for you and to inform them of a forthcoming veCollect email.*
3. At this point, you will indicate whether you waive your right to review the letter. Almost all applicants waive their right to review the letter, as medical schools prefer the candor of confidential letters and do not place as much value on letters to which you have had access. We strongly encourage you to waive your right.
4. Your evaluators will upload a PDF of your letter, which the system will save to your account. When a letter has uploaded, a PDF icon will appear to let you know it has been stored in your account. ***Please be patient with this process and allow up to three (3) business days for letters to be uploaded to your account.***
5. Once all of your letters are uploaded into veCollect, you will compile them into a “Quiver.” (More information about Quivers appears later in this guide.)

Getting started with veCollect

To get started, visit: <https://collect.virtualevals.net/login> to log in. This page appears:



Click here or here
to create your
account.

Instructions (see image of screen following the instructions):

1. Select “MD” in response to the question “In which state is your institution [meaning JHU] located?”
2. A **BLUE BOX** will indicate that Johns Hopkins requires an authorization code for registration. Enter your authorization code to create your account. **You will be provided the authorization code in the confirmation email you receive from the Pre-Professional Office.**
3. Complete the required (asterisk *) fields.
4. You will then follow a series of prompts. NOTE: Don’t worry if you do not know any ID numbers (AAMC, AACOMAS, etc.) as you can update your account with this information at a later time.
5. Once you have completed this form, click “Register for veCollect.”
6. After you register, **you will receive a confirmation email within 2-3 business days from the Pre-Professional Office notifying you that your account has been activated.** You will then have full access to your veCollect account.

Add your username and password. You may choose to use your JHED ID or you may choose something different.

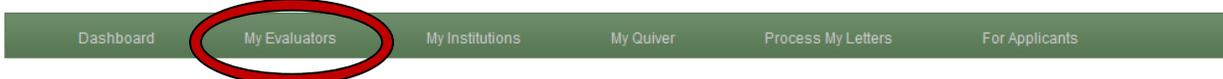
You do not need to enter any of these numbers when you first register; they can be added later.

ONCE YOUR ACCOUNT IS ACTIVATED

How do I enter my evaluator information and request a letter?

Step 1: Create an Evaluator Record

When you first log in to veCollect, you will see a screen with a navigation bar that includes the following:

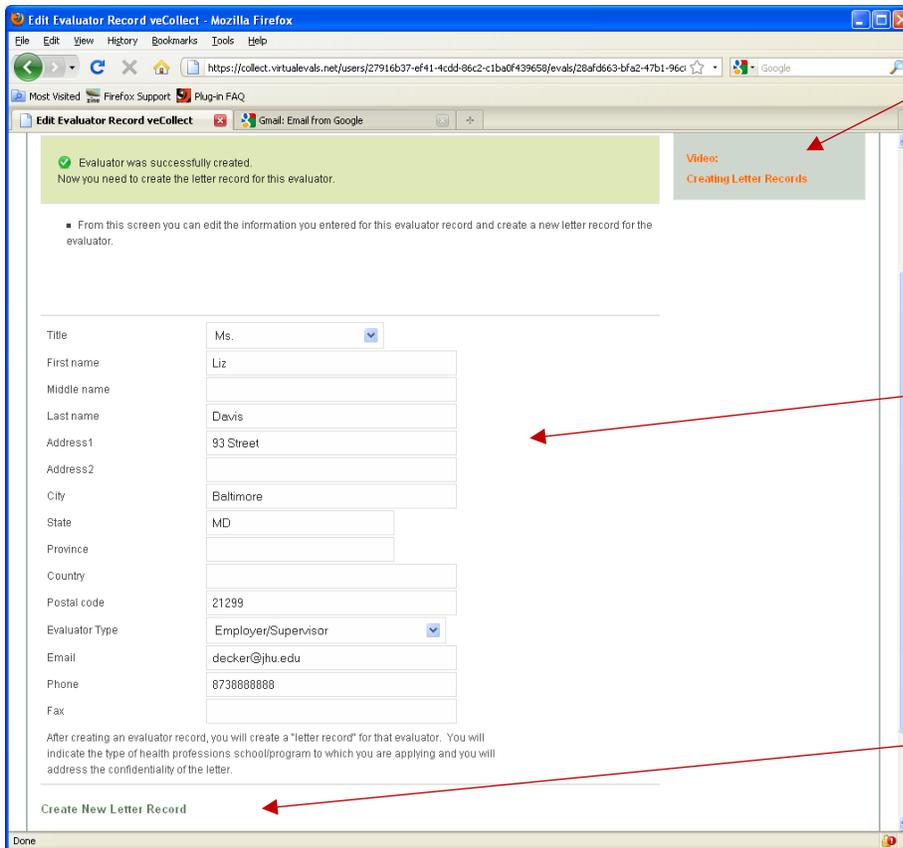


You will click on “My Evaluators” to get started. Once you reach that screen, you will click on the “Create New Evaluator Record” link. Complete the screen and click “Create Evaluator Record.”

The next screen will confirm that you successfully created the evaluator record. You have the chance to review the information you have entered and to make any necessary changes. If you make changes, you must click the “Save Evaluator Record” at the bottom of the page.

Step 2: Create a Letter Record

You will now create a letter record for this evaluator. To do so, scroll towards the bottom of the page and click on the “Create New Letter Record” link.



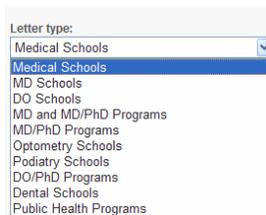
Instructional video

In this area, you can correct any errors you may have entered. Then, click “Save Evaluator Record” (at the end of the page) if you have made any changes.

Click here to create the new letter record.

Step 3: Select Letter Type

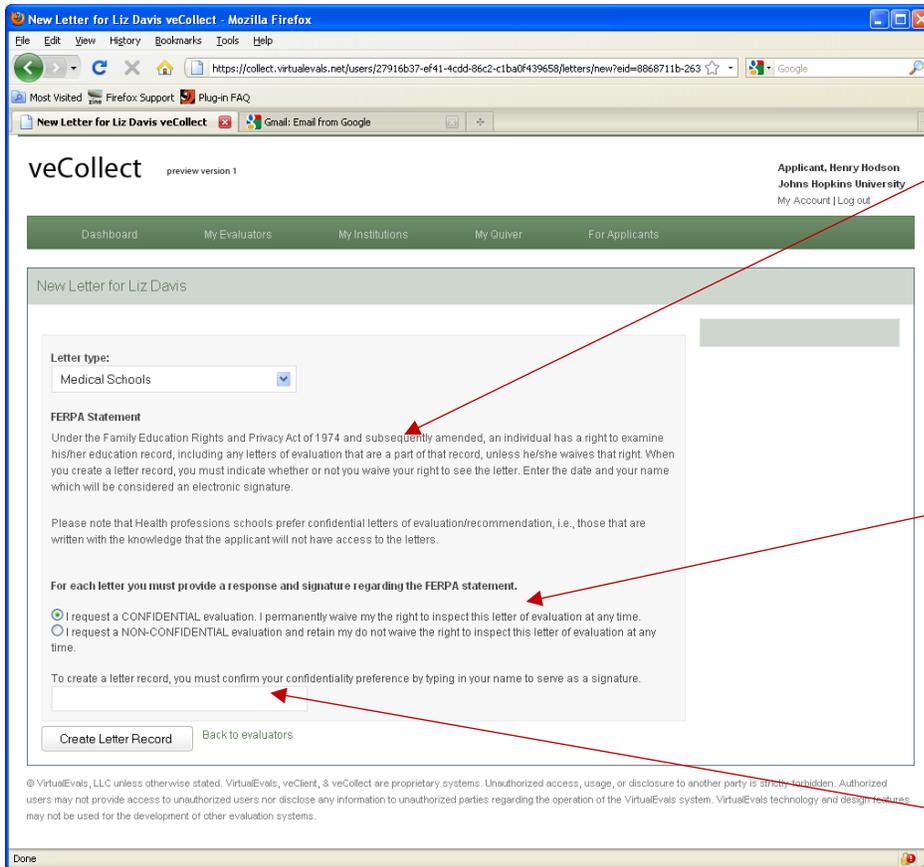
When you reach this screen, you will select the “letter type”. The dropdown menu looks like this:



Any student applying to medical school (either M.D., D.O., or M.D./Ph.D.) will select the “Medical Schools” option.

You must also read the FERPA statement. You will see that the screen defaults to “I request a CONFIDENTIAL evaluation” because medical schools prefer **confidential** letters of evaluation that applicants have been able to read. We strongly encourage you to request a confidential evaluation.

To continue and create a letter record, you must confirm your confidentiality preference by typing in your name to serve as a signature. (See screenshot below for more information.) Then click “Create Letter Record.”



FERPA Statement:
This describes your right to waive or not waive access to your letters. **We encourage you to waive.**

You must select one of these options. Remember that medical schools prefer confidential letters of evaluation.

You must type your name here to acknowledge your selection. Then, click “Create Letter Record.”

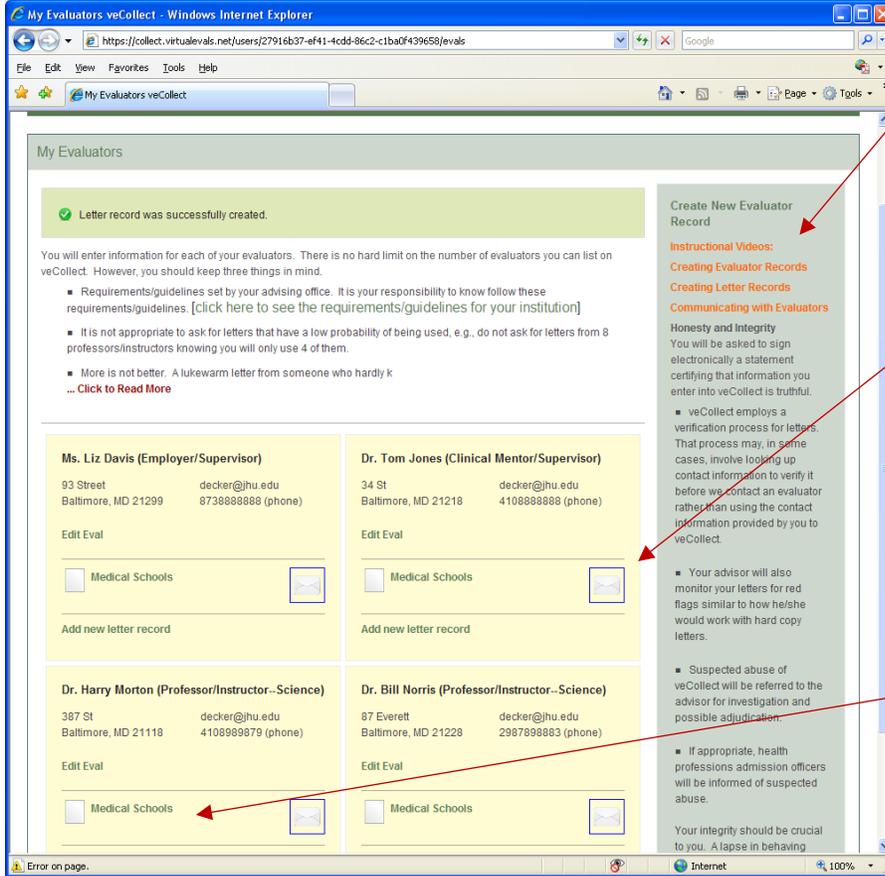
Step 4: Request the Letter from the Evaluator

On the next screen, you will see a message that says “Letter record was successfully created.” However, an email has not yet been sent to your evaluator.

To request a letter from the evaluator, click the envelope icon on the right, (it has a **BLUE** square around it) and an email will automatically be sent to your evaluator. See screenshot below for more information. Included in the email are letter writing instructions for your evaluators. See **Appendix A** for a copy of the letter writing instructions.

Once you have entered a letter record, you will return to the “My Evaluators” page.

When a letter has arrived, you will see a “PDF” icon next to the type of letter.



Instructional videos

To send the evaluation letter email request to your evaluator, you must click the envelope icon.

If a letter has not yet arrived, you will see a blank box next to the type of letter you requested (Medical Schools, etc.).

What if one of my evaluators chooses not to use veCollect?

If an evaluator is not comfortable using veCollect, they have two options (listed below) for submitting letters. Regardless of which option they choose, it is necessary for you to create an Evaluator Record and a Letter Record for the evaluator, despite the fact they are not using veCollect. Enter the evaluator as you would if he/she were using veCollect. You will then click the envelope icon to send the information to your evaluator, which includes your intention to waive or not waive your right of access, as well as the information they should provide in the letter of evaluation (suggested length of the letter, on department letterhead with actual signature, etc). They then can choose one of the following options:

1. Submit a paper copy of the letter of evaluation to the Pre-Professional Office (via postal mail), or;
2. Email the letter of evaluation to the Pre-Professional Office (preprofessional@jhu.edu). Once received, Mrs. Krause or Mrs. Sanders upload the letter to your veCollect account.

How to complete the Evaluator Record if the writer is not using veCollect:

Instructional videos

Enter either Mrs. Krause's email (ckrause@jhu.edu) if your last name starts with **A-L**, or Mrs. Sanders' email (ladytee@jhu.edu) if your last name starts with **M-Z**.

How will I know when letters have arrived?

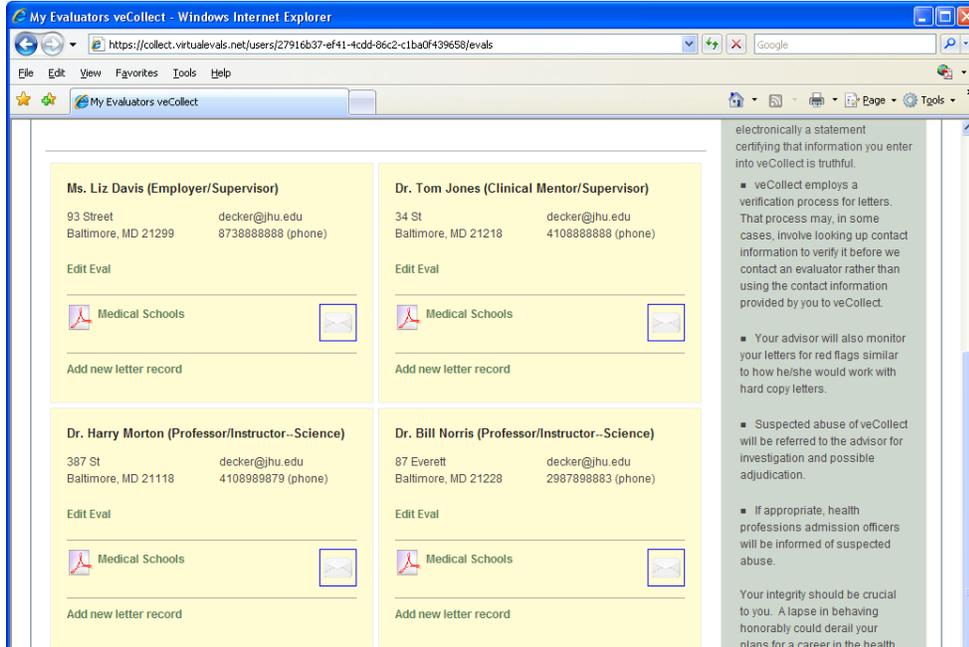
When a letter is uploaded, a PDF icon will appear to the left of the type of letter.

Instructional videos

When a letter is uploaded, a PDF icon will appear. Make sure to send your evaluators a brief email or note to let them know the letter has been received and to thank them for their efforts on your behalf.

Part IV: Utilizing VeCollect as an Applicant

Once all of your letters have arrived, your screen will look like this:

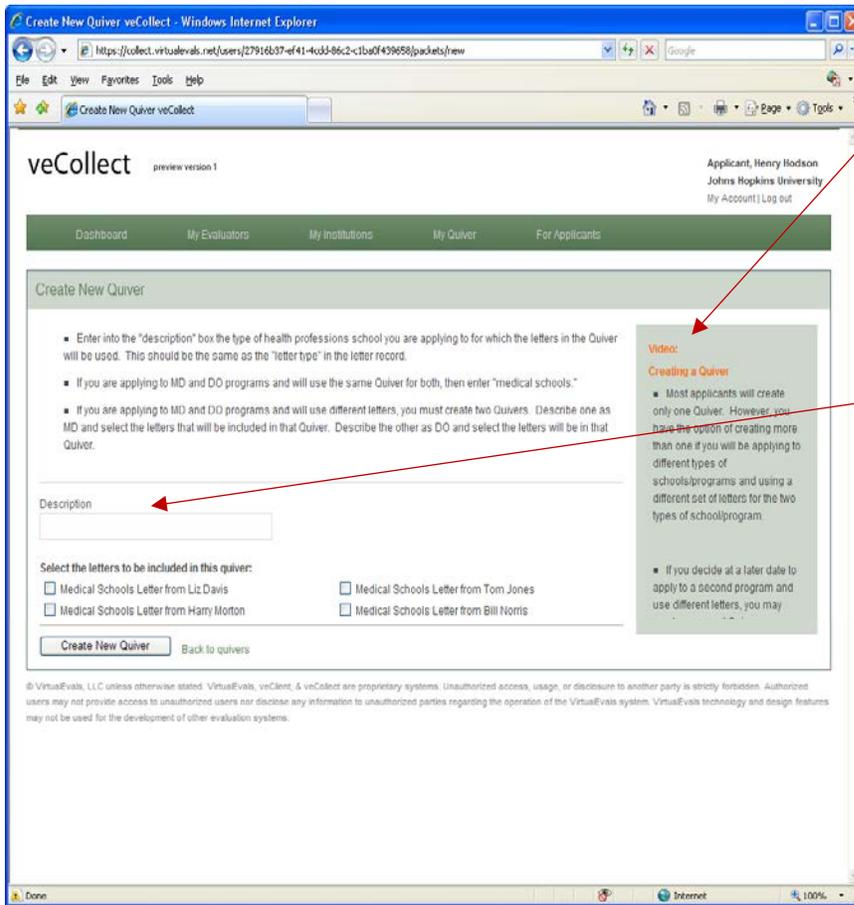


How do I create, label, and lock my “Quiver”?

1. When your individual letters of evaluation have all been submitted, proceed to the “My Quiver” section of the navigation bar and click the “Create New Quiver” link on the righthand navigation bar (just above the orange video link).
2. On the “My Quiver(s)” page, you will see the yellow folder on the screen (your quiver) that lists all of your individual evaluators. When all of your individual letters of evaluation are in, you will click the “Process My Letters” link on the top of the navigation bar.
3. Review all of the evaluators in your quiver to ensure they are correct.
4. Before locking your quiver, you must certify that the information you entered into veCollect is truthful and accurate by entering your name into the space provided.
5. Click the “Process and Lock this Quiver” button.
6. The labeling of quivers is very important. Quivers are to be labeled with the **type of school** and **application year** associated with that quiver.

For example:

- *MD EY19*
- *DO EY19*
- *Dental EY19*



Instructional videos

In the description box, label your quiver for the program type and application year.

7. Click on the “Process My Letters” link on the top navigation bar...

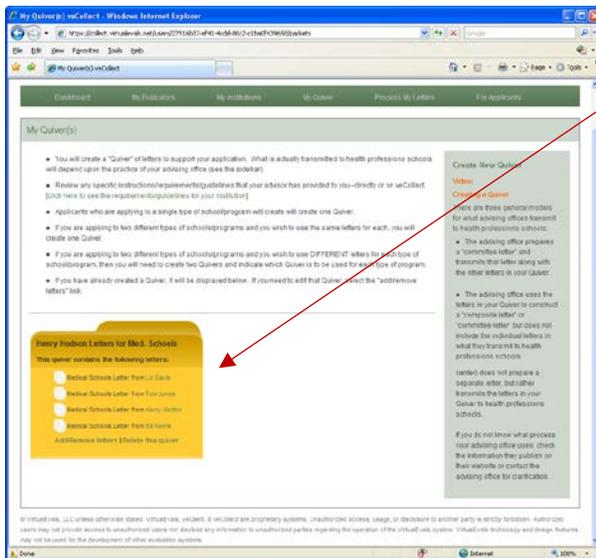


... and proceed to lock your quiver.

Once you have created a quiver, you can click the link “Back to Quivers” to see a screen displaying the letters in that quiver.

8. Once your quiver is labeled and locked, you will complete a form called the “**veCollect Locked Quiver Notification Form.**” See **Appendix B** for a copy of the veCollect Locked Quiver Form.

Once a quiver is locked, you will not be able to make changes to it.



This is an example of a quiver created for medical schools.

- If you are applying to MD and/or MD/PhD programs, please create one quiver (for example, MD EY19)
- If you are applying to DO programs, please create a second quiver (for example, DO EY19)

**At this point, you are done.
Remember that you must submit your Locked Quiver Form
to the Pre-Professional Office.**

Part V: Frequently Asked Questions

How can I delete a letter from my quiver, or delete the quiver completely?

If you have prematurely locked your quiver and want to add or subtract an evaluator, or delete the quiver completely, (1) click on the “My Quiver” tab at the top of your veCollect page and (2) once you see the quiver, click on “Add/Remove letters” or “Delete this quiver,” depending on the action you wish to take.

What happens to my letters of rec if I delay my application or need to reapply?

Occasionally, applicants make the decision to delay prior to submitting their AMCAS/AACOMAS/or AADSAS application. If you decide to delay or if you need to reapply, your letters will remain in the veCollect system and you will be able to use them and/or add to them in a future application cycle. Please

retain your login information for your veCollect account so that you can access it when you do decide to apply or reapply.

What should I do if I'm having trouble getting one of my evaluators to submit his/her letter?

Sometimes it is helpful to provide a "gentle reminder" to an evaluator who has not yet submitted a letter for you. In some cases, the Pre-Professional staff may be able to help follow-up on your behalf. If you are missing one or more letters and are faced with the decision of whether to create your quiver without all of your expected letters of evaluation, we will help you with this decision. Be sure to bring these issues to the attention of Mrs. Krause or Mrs. Sanders.

Do letters of evaluation need to be in veCollect *prior* to submitting my primary application?

No. Letters of evaluation do not need to be in veCollect prior to submitting your medical or dental school application(s). Do NOT wait for all of your letters of evaluation to be in veCollect to submit your primary application. That said, letters do need to be in veCollect before the Pre-Professional Office can upload your Committee Letter to medical or dental schools.

What should I do if I would like an evaluator to update a letter of evaluation?

In this situation, the updated letter of evaluation will overwrite the existing letter. You do not create a "New Evaluator Record" for the recommender. You return to your "My Evaluators" page of your veCollect account where you will see on the righthand side of each evaluator's name/email address, a small envelope icon. Simply click on this icon and the veCollect system will resend the link and necessary information to your evaluator so they can reload the updated letter of evaluation into veCollect.

Can I add letters of evaluation to veCollect and my locked quiver *after* my Committee Letter packet has been uploaded to medical schools?

No. The Pre-Professional Office only uploads your materials once to each application service. If you wish to have additional letters of evaluation sent to medical schools, you will need to instruct your evaluator(s) to send the letters through the AMCAS Letter Service. See the [AMCAS Applicant Guide](#) for complete details (page 45).

What if an evaluator has not received the veCollect notification email?

This is primarily a result of applicants (1) creating an Evaluator Record but not a Letter Record or (2) forgetting to click the envelope icon. Please check with all of your evaluators to make sure they have received the email that is generated when you create an Evaluator Record and a Letter Record for each evaluator. We count on you to follow up with your evaluators to ensure they receive the email request and understand how to use the veCollect system.

As a reapplicant, can I use the same letters from my previous application cycle? And should I use the same quiver?

Your letters of evaluation will remain in veCollect until you matriculate to medical school. In the case of delayed applicants or reapplicants, letters stored in veCollect can be reused from one application cycle to the next. However, we recommend you speak to an advisor about your letters if you're reapplying, to determine whether you should request updated letters and/or add new evaluators. **Also note that all reapplicants are required to create a new quiver, labeled with the new application year (MD EY19, DO EY19, etc.).**

Can I use veCollect to apply to post-bac programs?

- **If you are applying to post-bac/special master's programs to enhance your academic credentials after you have unsuccessfully applied to medical or dental school**, the Pre-Professional Office can send your entire Committee Packet (Committee Letter + letters of evaluation) to the post-bac/master's programs of your choice. The instructions and form required to forward your Committee Packet can be found on the Forms page of our website: <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/forms.html>.
- **If you are applying to post-bac/special master's programs to enhance your academic credentials before applying to medical or dental school (and therefore you do not yet have a Committee Letter)**, the Pre-Professional Office will forward the letters you have stored in veCollect to the post-bac programs of your choice. Please follow the instructions and complete the form found on the Forms page of our website: <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/forms.html>.

Can I use veCollect to apply to medical programs that do not use a centralized application system?

If you are applying to programs that do not use the three centralized application services (AMCAS/AACOMAS/TMDSAS/AADSAS) and want to use letters of evaluation that are stored in veCollect, the Pre-Professional Office can forward those letters to the programs of your choosing. Please follow the instructions and complete the form found on the Forms page of our website: <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/forms.html>.

Once I have matriculated to medical school, can I request that my letters of evaluation in veCollect be forwarded to another medical school in an attempt to transfer institutions?

When an alum of our institution matriculates to a medical program, their file is not retained. Therefore, matriculants will no longer have access to letters of evaluation stored in veCollect.

For specific questions regarding the administrative handling of your letters of evaluations, please contact Mrs. Krause or Mrs. Sanders.

Letters of evaluation stored in veCollect are to be used only for the purpose of applying to medical schools or post-bac programs. Letters in veCollect cannot be used for applications to internships, fellowships, jobs, or other graduate programs.

Part VI: In Closing

Navigating your way through academic requirements at Johns Hopkins is, in itself, a challenge that takes careful planning and great patience. If you are pursuing pre-medical or pre-dental requirements, the

academic planning process requires precision, adaptability, and flexibility. Each student's academic path is unique and the one you set for yourself should take into account your ability to handle multiple sciences, your emerging strengths as a student, and a timeline that is yours alone. Most of all, we encourage you to seek input from your advisors to make sense of your situation and to devise a plan that is appropriate for your emerging academic and professional goals.

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Appendix A

Writing a Medical/Dental School Letter of Evaluation Using veCollect

Johns Hopkins applicants to medical and dental school are supported by letters of evaluation from faculty, administrators, and other professionals from both inside and outside of the University. The letters of evaluation that you submit for each student will accompany their Committee Letter of Evaluation, which is prepared by the Johns Hopkins Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising.

What should you discuss in a letter of evaluation?

Please assess the applicant as a **student**, a **worker**, **etc.**, and as a **future professional in the specific health career of intent**. Health professions schools do not expect you to provide information about every characteristic of an applicant. However, the hope is that you will focus on the applicant's competencies (See the [American Association of Medical Colleges \(AAMC\) website](#) for a full list of the 15 Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students.

The Intrapersonal Competencies and Interpersonal Competencies are:

- *Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others*
- *Reliability and Dependability*
- *Resilience and Adaptability*
- *Capacity for Improvement*
- *Service Orientation*
- *Social Skills*
- *Cultural Competence*
- *Teamwork*
- *Oral Communication*

In addition to the competencies, we also recommend that you comment on the applicant's leadership skills and overall professionalism.

Guidelines for writing your letter:

1. Health professions schools require that your electronic letter be **on letterhead with your signature**, also including the date, your name, and title.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant: a) how long you have known the applicant, b) in what capacity you have interacted (e.g., faculty, supervisor, etc.).
3. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
4. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for health professions school. Consider describing: a) the situation or context of the behavior, b) the actual behavior(s) you observed, c) any consequences of that behavior
5. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about: a) the comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.) b) your rationale for the final comparison.
6. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for health professions school.

In addition:

- *In the letter, include the date, student's name, and a salutation:
(For example, "Dear Committee on Medical School Admissions:")*
- *Do not refer to a specific medical school (e.g. "applicant to Johns Hopkins School of Medicine"). Refer to medical school generically (e.g., "applicant to medical school").*

The applicant has been instructed to provide you with background materials (e.g., a resume, an unofficial transcript, perhaps an essay).

You will receive an email from veCollect with specific instructions on how to transmit your letter.

Will the applicant have access to my letter of evaluation?

As per the **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)**, the veCollect service allows applicants to indicate whether or not they waive their right of access to read your letter.

Applicants will have the option on this form to waive or not waive their right to review your letter of evaluation. When you receive your request to submit your evaluation, you will see whether the applicant has waived his/her rights to read your letter. The Office of Pre-Professional Programs encourages all applicants to waive their rights. ***Health professions schools prefer letters to which applicants have waived their right of access.***

What if I am unable to use veCollect?

If you are unable to utilize veCollect, we ask that you prepare a paper copy of your letter, signed and on letterhead, along with the "Evaluation Waiver Form" that will be provided to you by the applicant. Both you and the student must sign the Evaluation Waiver Form. You may send your evaluation and waiver form as email attachments to preprofessional@jhu.edu and our staff will ensure the documents are uploaded to veCollect.

***Thank you for your support of Johns Hopkins University students
applying to medical and dental school.***

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising
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3400 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-516-4140
preprofessional@jhu.edu

Appendix B

veCollect Locked Quiver Notification Form

Once your individual letters of evaluation have been submitted, a red icon will appear next to the evaluator’s name. When all of your letters are received, you will need to create and lock your “quiver.” (Refer to “[Guide Two: Letters of Evaluation and the veCollect Letter System](#)” for instructions.)

Once your quiver is locked, complete this form and upload it to Blackboard as a Word document or PDF.

The Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising will not be able to forward your letters of evaluation and Committee Letter to medical/dental schools until you have completed this form and uploaded it to Blackboard.

I confirm that my quiver is locked and ready to be sent to medical/dental schools.

Applicant Name: _____

Name of Quiver: (ex. Med School 2019)_____