**Information for writers of recommendation letters: Marshall Scholarship**

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**OVERVIEW:**

The Marshall Scholarship offers graduating seniors and recent graduates funding for one or two years of graduate study at any university in the United Kingdom. The program is funded by the British government and is intended “to motivate Scholars to act as ambassadors from the USA to the UK and vice versa throughout their lives thus strengthening British American understanding.”

The Marshall Scholarship is highly competitve. The selection process is described as follows:

In appointing Scholars the selectors will look for distinction of intellect and character as evidenced both by their scholastic attainments and by their other activities and achievements. Preference will be given to candidates who display a potential to make a significant contribution to their own society. Selectors will also look for strong motivation and seriousness of purpose, including the presentation of a specific and realisticacademic programme.

In another place, Marshall Scholars are described as “future leaders [who are]*talented, independent and wide-ranging in their interests.”*

This information sheet is intended to make the process of submitting a letter of recommendation as simple as possible and to help you make the letter as effective as possible. We know you work hard on behalf of our applicants, and we appreciate your efforts!

Marshall uses a completely **online system**, and **signed hard copies of recommendations are no longer required**. Because the Marshall application process requires a campus review of all candidates, the internal deadline for submission of all materials is **early September**. Even though you are submitting your letter through Marshall’s official system, your letter does not have to be perfect at that time. There are two reasons for this. First, if the committee declines to put the student’s application forward, your letter will only be read by the internal committee. Second, if the student does receive official nomination, it is very easy for me to return this letter to you for revision in advance of the external deadline.

**CONTENT:**

Prior to preparing your letter**,** **it is essential that you review the “proposed academic programme” provided by the applicant**. We also recommend that you ask the applicant for a copy of her personal statement. Your deadline is 4 days after the student’s deadline, so she should be able to provide you with the version she submits to the committee.

You will receive the following instructions from the Marshall Commission through the online system:

Your letter should comment on the candidate's general fitness for the course proposed and the suitability of the university chosen. Confidential observations, negative as well as positive, on the candidate's general character as well as academic standing and abilitywill be of great value to the selection authorities.

Your letter is limited to 1000 words. Each Marshall applicant will have four letters of recommendation plus a letter of nomination prepared by the fellowships adviser with input from the campus interviewing committee. Please bear the following in mind as you write your letter.

* In order to avoid duplication of content among letters, do not to try to comment on all of the applicant’s interests and achievements. Instead, focus on those aspects of the student’s application record that bear most directly on your knowledge of the student.
* If you know the student primarily through classroom instruction, you should still be able to comment on the student’s personal qualities and potential for leadership. Consider the impact they have on the community of the classroom through their role in class discussion, in group projects, etc.
* Marshall selection committees are reputed to be very suspicious of what they see as an   
  American tendency towards inflated praise. Illustrating what is exceptional about a student is always more effective than asserting that she is exceptional.
* Any grade below 3.7 will absolutely be a concern to selection committees and even a 3.7 can be a concern. If you have assigned such a grade to the applicant, acknowledge it and put it in context.

**SUBMISSION:**

Marshall uses an online recommendation system. If a student asks you for a Marshall letter in person, please provide your email address for her to register you online.

Once the student has registered you, you will receive an email message with user id, password, and a link to the application website, along with advice and instructions. Please save this email in a secure, easily found place, so that you may return to it as necessary. The Marshall Scholarship online system tends to be very straightforward and easy to use, but don’t hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

**Note:** It is possible that messages from the Marshall application system could be perceived as spam. If necessary, please check your quarantine folder or contact the Help Desk.

Once you have submitted the letter of recommendation, it becomes available to me as Fellowships Adviser. In some cases, I may return it to you either to correct a minor error (a misspelling of the candidate’s name for instance, or misstatement of a grade) or to ask you to address an aspect of the candidate’s record that is not emerging clearly enough from the total application. Once you revised the letter as you feel is appropriate, please resubmit it, and I will then “approve” the letter .

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