Academic References
Instructions for a Referee Supporting an Application for Admission to a Graduate Course

These instructions should not be used for Gates Cambridge Reference. Please follow the instructions found at https://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/how-do-i-apply/supporting-documentation/finance-documentation

(1) General

Referees will be asked to provide general details, including name, role, institution, and contact information. The form will also ask the nature of your relationship with the applicant, and how long you have known them for.

(2) Academic Ranking

Referees will be asked to rate the applicant within their academic cohort. You will be instructed to

“Select the most appropriate description of the candidate for which you are providing a reference. If you select the first option “best performance you have known in the last 5 years” it will indicate to the internal assessors that the candidate is also the “best performer in their year” and “among the top 10%” therefore only the first option needs to be selected. This also follows for the options below - selecting “best performer in their year” indicates that they are also “among the top 10%”.

This section asks for a description of the size and nature of the cohort against which you are comparing the candidate’s performance.

For referees who are not able to provide an academic judgement, there will be a section in which you can further explain the capacity in which you oversaw the candidate’s work.

Referees should then select an option describing the applicant’s potential for originality/creativity/independence of thought in the work they did for you when you taught them.

The final question in this section regards the applicant’s suitability for the course; there will be a text box for ‘Other’, should their suitability not be covered in the available options.

(3) Reference Letter

Referees must then upload a reference or recommendation in English on a separate sheet of headed paper. This should be in pdf form and no larger than 2MB.

The paper should be the letterhead of your institution: if you are not able to use a letterhead, please attach your business card. The reference should also be signed, as we cannot accept electronic or scanned signatures. Please address references to ‘The Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies’ and make sure you sign and date the reference.

In reference, please comment on:

- The applicant's academic results to date
• The applicant's academic fitness and general suitability to undertake the proposed course of research or study, in relation to the qualification sought
• A justification of any difference between the applicant's academic ranking and your estimate of their suitability for the course
• If the applicant’s native language is not English, their level of fluency and proficiency in English, particularly in the context of their academic work
• If the applicant is intending to study part-time, their ability to manage different responsibilities simultaneously
• Any other information which you think is relevant to the application (e.g. research experience, ability to work independently, key strengths/weaknesses)

(4) Delivery

We strongly recommend using the online referee portal to submit your references. In exceptional cases, where you do not have an email address, or you are unable to use the Electronic Reference System, please follow the steps below:

To deliver by email,
1) Email grad.reference@admin.cam.ac.uk to request a copy of the Academic Reference Form.
2) Complete and attach the Academic Reference Form and reference letter to your email. These should be .pdf files.
3) Send to grad.reference@admin.cam.ac.uk.

To deliver by post, please:
1) Email grad.reference@admin.cam.ac.uk to request a copy of the Academic Reference Form.
2) Enclose your reference with this form in a sealed envelope.
3) Sign your name across the seal and cover it with clear tape.
4) Send the reference to the address below:
   Graduate Admissions
   Office
   Student Services Centre
   Bene’t Street
   New Museums Site
   Cambridge CB2 3PT

(5) Further Guidance

Should any issues arise, please refer to the Referee FAQ in the first instance:
https://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/referee-faq.

If your query is not covered, please contact grad.reference@admin.cam.ac.uk for further assistance.