Notes for Preparing an Application to the University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science Residency Programme

Letter of intent

This is a cover letter to go with your application. In it you should state which residency you are applying for. You then have the opportunity to describe things such as why you are interested in doing a residency, why you are interested in a residency at Waterloo and why you are interested in this particular residency, and why you think you would be an asset in the position. You can use it to emphasise information in your CV that you think is particularly relevant e.g. any experiences you have had which are particularly relevant that show you are committed/interested/have background experience that would be useful to this particular aspect of optometry. You can use it to mentioned things that are not in your CV. You could also mention how you would make use of the residency experience once you have completed it. It’s the sort of letter of interest that you would write for a job application.

Remember when you write your letter to format it properly - otherwise it does not look professional. So your address at either the very top (left or right), the address of the person to whom it is addressed at the top left hand side, and the date. And of course, sign it. The letter can be addressed to me (Susan J. Leat, as Head of Residencies). The correct way of addressing someone in a letter is as Dear Dr. Leat, not Dear Dr. Susan Leat, which looks like a mass-produced letter. See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/writing-help/how-to-lay-out-a-letter for how to format formal letters.

Reference Letters

Letters of reference can be from optometrists or ophthalmologists with whom you have worked and/or from instructors in an Optometry programme. Its good to have at least one from an optometrist, though. Its also good to have at least one academic reference (e.g. from one of your professors who knows you more than just from your grades) and at least one reference from someone in whose practice you have worked i.e. one clinical reference. So a good combination would be one or 2 references from someone you worked with in practice and one or two references from instructors. Note that the Instructor references cannot be someone who is a supervisor in the Residency to which you are applying.
If you are applying to more than one residency

As the applications to separate residencies are evaluated separately, it is recommended that you make two completely separate applications, with separate references and letter of intent for each. Then they will be evaluated completely independently without prejudice that you are applying more than once. Of course, you can ask one referee to write a letter for both, but you would ask him/her to write two slightly separate letters, which do not mention the other residency application.

However, if you wish, you can apply to more than one residency together. One previous applicant did one letter of intent in which she stated the two that she was applying for, her preference (or you could say that you are equally interested in both, if that is the case) and the other information as described above for letters of intent. She had 2 generic references which were used for both and the third reference was specific to each residency she applied for.

You have to decide, but make sure when you ask you referees that you clarify whether you are asking them for a general one for both residencies or a specific one (and of course tell them which residency(s) you are applying for). And also inform us which reference is for which residency.

Your CV and transcripts are the same for both and we only need one copy of each.

Sending documents

References letters and official transcripts should be addressed to the Head of Residencies but sent to Stephanie Forsyth (sforsyth@uwaterloo.ca), Administrator for Residencies. Letters can be sent by mail or email from the referee. If a letter is sent by email, it is preferred if it is sent as an attachment, with the person’s signature included, of course.

You can send your letter of intent and CV as an attachment to an email or by mail, or place it in Stephanie Forsythe’s mail box in the 3rd floor Administration Office of the School of Optometry and Vision Science, Waterloo.

Ontario License

You need to have the Ontario Licence in place when you start the residency. This means that you must take the CACO and jurisprudence exams as early as possible. Also you should complete your forms in advance, so that you can send them in as soon as you received your OEBC results. This means that you should be available (not travelling) when the results come out so that you can send in your forms and cheque to the College of Optometrists of Ontario as soon as you get your results.