

FAQs about Letters of Support for the SURF program:

Q. Who should write my SURF letter of recommendation?

SURF requires one letter – only one letter. The person sponsoring your research should write your letter. If you are doing independent research in SURF L&S or SURF Rose Hills Independent then the person writing your letter must be the faculty member who will be overseeing your thesis work.

If you are applying to SURF Rose Hills Experience, the letter writer should be the faculty member or principal investigator (head of research lab) that you will be working in – this person will be based at UC Berkeley, LBNL, CHORI, or UCSF.

Q. What should my research sponsor's letter of recommendation emphasize?

A. The strongest mentor letter will discuss the following four items:

- 1) your qualifications to take on your project;
- 2) the originality and feasibility of the proposed project
- 3) the mentor's commitment to, interest in, and, in the case of non-lab projects, suitability for guiding you through the process. (In the case of lab projects, your recommender may also want to describe other guidance you will be receiving, such as graduate students and post-docs with whom you will be consulting). For either lab or non-lab projects, it may be helpful for your mentor to discuss their role in the development of their proposal.

Q. Do I need more than one letter of recommendation?

NO, SURF requires only one letter of recommendation from your faculty sponsor, or in the case of Rose Hills Experience applicants this might be a principal investigator at the lab you are seeking to work within.

Q. How should I submit letters of recommendation?

A. When you start your online application to SURF, you will enter the name and email address of your intended recommender, who will then receive an email with a link they can use to upload their letters. Be sure to tell your recommender that they will receive that email so that they are not surprised. We recommend that you discuss the letter with your recommender at least one month in advance, and that you send them the link 2-3 weeks before the SURF application is due.

Q. What if I have additional questions about letters of recommendation and/or support?

A. We are happy to discuss your specific situation with you. Please contact surf@berkeley.edu

