Recommendations from faculty and employers are a critical component to the supervised practice application process. What are internship directors and selection committees looking for in these recommendations? I can’t, of course, speak for all internship directors. These tips are based on my experience as an internship director.

In a nutshell, I am looking for evidence of work quality and character. Vague or mediocre recommendations send a message that the applicant’s work or character is poor or that you don’t know the applicant well—which may indicate those who know the applicant well would not write their recommendation.

- Everyone is not outstanding in all areas. Don’t feel that you have to rate someone outstanding on every criteria or they won’t be accepted. The recommendation is part of the overall application, but alone does not determine an applicant’s acceptance.
- Please write comments. Give specific examples of the applicant’s high-quality work (presentations, case studies, projects) as well as study and work ethic (consistent academic performance).
- Give specific examples of professional and ethical behavior (academic integrity, honesty, transparency).
- Think back to your internship experience. Does this applicant have the potential to handle the rigor and challenges of supervised practice? Tell why you feel the applicant has potential.
- Teamwork is critical. Give examples of how the applicant handled challenges in group work or other collaborations.
- Last but not least is maturity. An applicant can have a 4.0 GPA, a high GRE score, and not be ready for supervised practice. Why do you think this applicant is ready for a dietetic internship?