

## Instructions for the TGS Offer Letter Template

### STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

TGS is pleased to offer programs an easy to use and welcoming template for generating offer letters to distribute to admitted PhD applicants. In developing the template, TGS worked closely with admissions contacts and graduate students from six pilot programs: History; NUIN; Psychology; Media, Technology, and Society; Linguistics; and Materials Science and Engineering. TGS also welcomes your feedback about the template.

The offer letter is a key touch point in a series of communications between the applicant and Northwestern. Applicants often communicate informally with staff and faculty from TGS and programs, but all who are admitted also receive an official admit letter from TGS (attached) when they view their admission decision in the online system CollegeNET as well as an offer letter from the program detailing the terms of their offer. The offer letter should only be distributed after an admission decision is rendered in CAESAR.

Once your offer letter template has been finalized, please email a Word version to [Nick Alena](#), Director of Admissions and Recruitment, for TGS approval. Once approved by TGS, offer letters will need to be sent via email (as a PDF attachment). When emailing the PDF version of the offer letter to admitted students, you must copy TGS at [tgs-offers@northwestern.edu](mailto:tgs-offers@northwestern.edu) as well as your School's Associate Dean. The subject line of the email must include the applicant's first and last name and your program or department name, so we can easily track the record.

The offer letter is a critical communication between the program and the applicant. It includes vital information about terms and conditions of admission while also highlighting your program's strengths to help attract top applicants from around the world. The template (attached) includes sections with text options; some of the content is customizable and some of the content is locked.

1. Open the template and save it as a Word doc; enable content.
2. Starting from the top of the document, insert the student's full name, address, and salutation name.
3. There are 10 sections in the letter, titled "A" through "J" in purple and red font. Those sections that are customizable are titled in purple font; those sections in which the text is locked are titled in red font. Many sections offer several text options. Choose your preferred text option and delete the remaining text option(s). Then insert the required information (highlighted in green font).
  - A. Welcome and Congratulations on Admission (customizable)
    - a. Select one of six suggested text options for customization based on your preferred tone. Insert any requested text (highlighted in green font) as necessary. Delete remaining text options.
  - B. Why Northwestern (customizable)
    - a. Sample texts are provided. Please create your own content, identifying key educational elements that distinguish your program and resonate with prospective students. Consider including information that prospective students might not find on your website such as area resources, significant conferences, distinguished scholars, graduate student

opportunities for publication or fellowship, etc. We recommend this section be approximately two-four sentences in length. Delete indicative text options.

- C. Quality of Experience (locked)
- D. Funding Offer (customizable)
  - a. Select one of two text options depending on whether your applicant is a humanities/social science student or a science/engineering student. This section has the greatest potential to confuse applicants, so keep it as straightforward as possible. Insert any requested text (highlighted in green font) as necessary. Delete remaining text option.
- E. Fellowship Opportunities (locked)
- F. Recruitment Visit (customizable)
  - a. If applicable, customize this section to include key dates and relevant contact information (highlighted in green font). Otherwise, delete section.
- G. CGS Regulations (locked)
- H. Closing (customizable)
  - a. Select one of three text options for customization. Enter contact information as appropriate (highlighted in green font); applicants respond positively to personal touches. Delete remaining text options.
  - b. TGS recommends including two signatures: the DGS or Admissions Officer and the Department Chair or Program Director.
- I. Next Steps (locked except for green font)
  - a. Provide information as appropriate (highlighted in green font).
- J. Additional Information (customizable)
  - a. Add or remove links as appropriate.

Review your offer letter and make any necessary edits. Save as a PDF. The offer letter should be exhaustive; there is no need for additional PDFs which students report are distracting and sometimes overlooked entirely.

If you have any questions as you are preparing your offer letter, please reach out to Nick Alena, Director of Admissions and Recruitment.

#### **BEST PRACTICES FOR ADMISSIONS COMMUNICATIONS**

TGS has identified the following best practices for communicating with applicants throughout this process:

- Applicants appreciate receiving multiple communications from the program, before and after an admission decision is rendered, as this conveys interest and enthusiasm.
  - Phone calls from potential advisors are affirming and provide a personal touch.

- Emails from current graduate students are also well-received; they provide reassurance and give applicants an opportunity to ask questions.
- Details matter: check that you are using the applicant's preferred name (it may not be his/her first name).
- Prompt responses go a long way and can be essential in a decision.
- Applicants benefit from an early decision, as they have a longer period to become familiar with Northwestern and all that the University and program has to offer.
- While communications are important, applicants find that the campus visit is often most salient in their decision-making process.