

IEEE FELLOW COMMITTEE

Recommendation Guide

“Effective References and Endorsements” (September 2017)

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IEEE FELLOW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION GUIDE

EFFECTIVE REFERENCES AND ENDORSEMENTS

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1. Introduction

This IEEE Fellow Committee Recommendation Guide specifies recommendations and guidelines for References and Endorsers. This Recommendation Guide is consistent with higher precedence governing documents (IEEE Fellow Committee Operations Manual, Forms, and Handbooks) and its goal is to guide prospective IEEE Fellow Grade References and Endorsers on how to prepare effective Reference and Endorsement Forms.

This Recommendation Guide contains best practices and there are no normative requirements. In case of any discrepancy, the IEEE Fellow Committee Operations Manual, Forms, and Handbooks take precedence.

Amendments to IEEE Fellow Committee Recommendation Guides shall require the approval of the Fellow Strategic Planning Subcommittee and the IEEE Fellow Committee Chair.

1.1 Important Notice

In June 2017, the IEEE Board of Directors approved a proposal of the IEEE Fellow Committee to reduce the number of References from five-to-eight to three-to-five. This change has been included in the revised [Fellow Committee Operations Manual](#) approved by the IEEE Board of Directors in June 2017.

This change will not be implemented for the current Fellow Class of 2019, but it will take effect for the Fellow Class of 2020, i.e. for Nominations submitted by 1 March 2019. See also the footnote in §2.

To see other recent changes to the IEEE Fellow Committee policies, please see the IEEE Fellow Committee Governing Documents at www.ieee.org/fellows.

2. Writing an Effective Reference

The Nominator must secure at least five¹, but no more than eight, supporting References from Fellows who are able to assess the Nominee's contributions and their impact. The Nominator chooses the References with the goal of having them serve as advocates for the Nominee. If a potential Reference is not sufficiently familiar with the value of the Nominee's contributions to provide an informed evaluation, he/she should let the Nominator know and decline to serve as a Reference.

The purpose of the IEEE Fellow References is to provide an independent evaluation of, and support for, the Nominee. Therefore, References should be experts in the Nominee's technical field and be familiar with the Nominee's contributions and their impact. This is much more important than having a high-stature (in the community) Reference making generic statements or repeating what has already been stated in the Nomination. References should provide a candid personal perspective about the qualifications of the Nominee. A detailed statement carries more weight with the Fellow Committee than does a favorable, yet generic, statement. References can also provide additional evidence about the Nominee's contributions and their impact.

¹ As mentioned in §1.1, the IEEE Board of Directors approved a proposal of the IEEE Fellow Committee to reduce the number of References from five-to-eight to three-to-five. This change will not be implemented for the current Fellow Class of 2019, but it will take effect for the Fellow Class of 2020.

References provide a narrative discussion as to whether the Nominee meets the requirements for Fellow grade and a score/rating describing the Nominee’s level of qualification:

- Extraordinarily Qualified
- Highly Qualified
- Qualified
- Marginally Qualified
- Not Qualified

The identities of the chosen Fellow References are not disclosed to the Society or Technical Council (S/TC) Fellow Evaluating Committees (FECs). Furthermore, the Nominee, the Nominator, and the S/TC-FECs do not have access to the Reference Forms. Only five of the fifty Fellow Committee Judges who evaluate a specific Nominee plus the Fellow Committee Chair and Vice-Chair have access to the Nominee’s Fellow References’ identities and Forms. Fellow Committee Judges are also bound to confidentiality. Therefore, References can write openly and candidly about the Nominee’s qualifications, credentials, achievements, and shortcomings.

2.1 Things to Do

- Describe how you personally know the Nominee and his/her work.
 - “I collaborated with the Nominee on the X Standard working group to develop...”
 - “The Nominee spent a month of her sabbatical leave with my research group and we collaborated on ...”
 - “In my work, I adopted the Nominee’s approach to ...”
- Describe the Nominee’s contributions in your own words and provide your own interpretation of the value of the Nominee’s contributions. It is appropriate to reinforce what has been stated in the Nomination but avoid cutting-and-pasting from it.
- Present a personal perspective and do not make comments on or give support to contributions/achievements you are not familiar with.
- Provide details that can clarify whether you are an expert in the same (or close) technical field of the Nominee.
- Provide specific examples of how the Nominee’s contributions have impacted the technical field and, where appropriate, the society at large.
- Provide both qualitative and quantitative measures of the Nominee’s contributions:
 - “Her 2005 paper initiated a new field of inquiry into ...”
 - “Reliability increased 35% as a result of implementing his program ...”
- Clearly articulate what the Nominee’s contributions were in a group work.
- Provide a “Level of Qualification” that is consistent with the narrative about the Nominee’s accomplishments and impact.
- Be balanced and objective in your statements. Both positive and negative statements can (and should, where appropriate) be offered.

2.2 Things NOT to Do

- Avoid general statements that do not pertain directly to the Nominee’s contribution
 - “The Nominee is a prolific author.”
 - “The Nominee is highly respected in his field.”
- Avoid using overly expansive language to describe the Nominee’s contributions.
- Do not copy and paste from the Nomination Form.

3. Writing an Effective Endorsement

Any person (including a non-IEEE member) may serve as an Endorser. Endorsements are optional, and a maximum of three may be submitted for a Nominee.

An Endorsement strengthens the Nomination only when it supplements the Nomination Form with specific evidence highlighting the Nominee’s contributions and their impact on the profession and/or society at large, without merely reiterating items given in the Nomination. Endorsements are not pseudo-references and are designed to be used when they can provide an additional and unique perspective on the Nominee’s work not publicly available. This is especially useful if the Nominee worked on proprietary or classified projects.

Endorsements can be very helpful, particularly to those Nominees who have been nominated in the AE/P and TL categories – which include not only members from industry but also a substantial number of academics and government employees. They can also be very useful to support RE/S category Nominations when the Nominee performed proprietary or classified work for which there is little availability of public evidence. For example, Endorsements allow the presentation of additional evidence of technical impact for contributions that may be proprietary and not publicly available. In these cases, Endorsements can be most effective if submitted by a company officer, program director, committee chair for a technical community or standards body, or a colleague, and, more generally, anyone who can attest and verify the Nominator’s claims on the impact and individual role of the Nominee.

Unlike References which are only available for consideration by the IEEE Fellow Committee, Endorsements are made available to both the IEEE Fellow Committee and the S/TC Fellow Evaluating Committees.

3.1 Things to Do

- Explain clearly why an Endorsement is being provided, i.e. what information is being provided that is not publicly available.
- Describe how you personally know the Nominee and/or their work.
- Describe the Nominee’s contribution in your own words and provide your own interpretation of the value of the Nominee’s contributions. It is appropriate to reinforce what has been stated in the Nomination but avoid cutting-and-pasting from it.
- Provide specific examples of how the Nominee’s contribution has impacted the technical field and, where appropriate, the society at large.
- Provide both qualitative and quantitative measures of the Nominee’s contributions.
 - “Her 2005 patent defined the primary technology upon which the line of the X family of products were based...”

- “His algorithm decreased the speed of image anomaly recognition by 20% over the previously employed methods.”
- Clearly articulate what the individual contributions of the Nominee were in group work.
- Be balanced and objective in your statements. Both positive and negative statements can (and should, where appropriate) be offered.

3.2 Things NOT to Do

- Avoid general statements that do not pertain directly to the Nominee’s contribution.
 - “The Nominee is a prolific author.”
 - “The Nominee is highly respected in his field.”
- Avoid using overly expansive language to describe the Nominee’s contributions.
- Do not copy and paste from the Nomination Form.

4. Further Reading

For further details on the normative requirements for the IEEE Fellow Nomination and Evaluations process as well as the eligibility requirements of all the participants in the IEEE Fellow process, please see the IEEE Fellow Committee governing documents and Recommendation Guides posted at <http://www.ieee.org/fellows>.

Also, please note that this Recommendation Guide does not replace the [Help Guide](#) for using the Fellow Nomination web application.