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Referee for letter of recommendation does not use his institutional email ID?

(self.AskAcademia)

submitted 14 days ago * by [bleindB](#)

**Thanks for the helpful feedback guys, you all really helped me worry a lot less and be a bit more confident about this application :) **

I'm an undergrad applying for an internship at CERN openlab this month and have requested my supervisor at college as well as a supervisor at a top Institute for recommendation letters.

The problem is that the professor from the other Institute, while willing to write the letter, does not use his institutional email address at all. Now, he is a giant in his field and is known internationally so his recommendation would be absolutely gold for my application. But I am worried about the fact that a personal Gmail address would look shady on my part as actually verifying the address would be tough.

Furthermore, the form does not contain any area for optional info about the referee nor does it provide the option for uploading a pdf document (I would have requested him to use his letterhead in that case).

If he went ahead with his personal address would it negatively affect my application in any way? I personally feel that since I am responsible for sending the link to the referees (and hence able to view the form) they would be very strict about anything unusual.

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sorted by: **best**[-] [gummy_bear_time](#) PhD* 12 points 13 days ago

I wouldn't worry about it. If CERN has any

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this post was submitted on 22 Feb 2016

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reason to doubt this man's identity, they will call him. If he is indeed well known in the field, they've also likely interacted with him before and know his email address.

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[–] [bleindB](#) [S] 1 point 13 days ago

Yeah, my supervisor at college said the same thing :)

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[–] [dukwon](#) PhD Student, Particle Physics 4 points 14 days ago

Have you tried [emailing the recruitment team](#)? They're there to answer questions like this.

permalink

[–] [bleindB](#) [S] 2 points 13 days ago

I did but they haven't got back to me yet so I thought I'd post here for advice while I'm waiting.

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[–] [iyzie](#) 3 points 13 days ago

He'll presumably sign the letter as Professor so-and-so with such and such affiliation, so you should be fine.

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[–] [bleindB](#) [S] 1 point 13 days ago

That's the thing that worries me though. He may sign it but the institutional email ID is proof that it is actually him, right? I'd suppose they'd want a referee that can be easily verified which might not be true in this case. I've actually googled his email address myself and it's his institutional one that keeps coming up. I found his personal email only on a single website after a lot of digging around :/

permalink parent

[–] [iyzie](#) 9 points 13 days ago

You're over thinking this, faking a reference coming from a prestigious prof by using a false gmail account would be a major form of fraud, and no one would assume it is fraudulent without a really good reason. If they did have doubts then they would could easily investigate it by writing to the prof themselves. There is a big difference between the writing of students and professors, the application committee has a lot of experience that they can use to judge the legitimacy of a letter besides just the email address that was used.

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[Why are PhDs length seen as risky?](#)

[\[-\] derleth](#) 2 points 13 days ago

faking a reference coming from a prestigious prof by using a false gmail account would be a major form of fraud, and no one would assume it is fraudulent without a really good reason.

It's genius:

"This fraud is so stupid it must be legitimate. Nobody would attempt to trick us in such a moronic fashion."

Except... yeah, there *are* people who'd be that short-sighted. Not stupid in general, just unable to conceptualize the cause-and-effect nature of reality in cases like these. It's diagnostic for [antisocial personality disorder](#), for example.

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[\[-\] bleindB](#) [\[S\]](#) 1 point 13 days ago

Hmm, you make a valid point. Just to be safe, I'll request him to include his phone number at the end of the letter.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[\[-\] \[deleted\]](#) 3 points 13 days ago

I had quite a few letters written from famous people with an "@me.com" address. Wasn't a problem at all.

[permalink](#)

[\[-\] justsomemammal](#) 2 points 13 days ago

Echoing the other comments not to worry about it. I once had to recommend a reviewer for a manuscript who preferred his @gmail address to his institutional address, and I had similar concerns, so I contacted him directly to ask for the institutional address -- he said not to worry, I used his @gmail, and it all turned out fine.

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[\[-\] ardbeg](#) [Chemistry Lecturer \(UK\)](#) 2 points 13 days ago

I worked at a top 50 (maybe top 10?) US University and when i left 5 years ago their institutional email inbox had 10 Mb storage. Yes. 10 Mb. So everyone had gmail accounts to forward their email into - it's not that uncommon.

[permalink](#)

[\[-\] bleindB](#) [\[S\]](#) 1 point 13 days ago

Woahh. That bit of info has calmed my nerves by an insane amount. I actually feel pretty confident about it now :)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[\[-\] yurikastar](#) 1 point 13 days ago

Often if it is from a persona email and they cannot verify this address in their academic profile they will email them and ask for (a) them to re-email using an academic email address or (b) send a printed reference on university headed paper signed by the referee.

This is how we did it at LSE, where I used to work part time in admissions during my masters.

[permalink](#)

[\[-\] diazona](#) [PhD physics](#) 1 point 13 days ago*

In addition to what other people are saying, a lot of physicists use Gmail addresses, and many of those who don't are just having their email forwarded to a Gmail account behind the scenes. It's not shady or suspicious.

I personally feel that since I am responsible for sending the link to the referees (and hence able to view the form) they would be very strict about anything unusual.

No... no, they won't. As some other posters said, if they do worry about the email address not being correct, they'll check it out themselves, but they're not going to assume you're lying by default.

permalink

[\[-\]](#) [bleindB](#) [\[S\]](#) 1 point 13 days ago

Thanks for that heads up about physicists and Gmail :) I'm going ahead with it after reading all the comments here. pheww

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