

## Plowden Scholarship: guidance for referees

Thank you for providing a reference for a Plowden Scholarship application. We receive more applications to this scheme than we are able to fund, so we aim to support the most promising and most deserving candidates. References are an essential part of the scholarship selection process, and the information you provide will be considered when applications are assessed.

### 1. Reference requirements for each application

We ask applicants to provide two references:

**An academic referee:** this should be from the leader or tutor of the conservation course the applicant is planning to attend, in support of their application to the Anna Plowden Trust.

**A professional or personal referee:** this can be from an employer (particularly if the applicant has been working in a conservation-related role), another tutor or supervisor, or from someone who knows them well and can comment on their suitability for a career in conservation and write in support of their application to the Anna Plowden Trust.

Your reference must:

- be written in English, dated, signed by you and provided on official headed paper where possible;
- include your name, position, institution and contact details;
- include the name of the person whose application your reference is in support of;
- include the information detailed in section 3 below;
- be submitted by email as a PDF attachment (see section 4 below);
- be written in support of a Plowden Scholarship application specifically. References that have been written for other purposes will not be accepted.

### 2. General guidance for referees

The references help us to get a better idea of each applicant's particular skills, qualities and strengths. The more specific information you can provide, the better!

Please:

- **Follow the specific guidance in section 3 below.**
- **Return your reference before the application deadline.** We cannot consider incomplete applications and are not able to chase up missing references.
- **Include both factual information and honest opinions** – but provide evidence for your opinions where possible.
- **Don't write ambiguous or coded references.** We aim to be as fair as possible in our assessments, and that means that we take references at face value.
- **Include an indication of the applicant's particular strengths or what differentiates them from other students.** This doesn't have to be in relation to their academic attainment – they may have distinguished themselves by being particularly diligent in their research, or by supporting other students/colleagues, or by always being punctual and reliable.
- **Give specific, concrete examples.** These really help us to build up a picture of the applicant.
- **Don't list every project that the applicant has done.** Examples of specific projects may be helpful where they demonstrate particular skills or qualities, but we are more interested in why an applicant needs or deserves our support.
- **Comment about more general qualities as well as conservation-specific skills and abilities.** Not all referees will be familiar with an applicant's conservation skills. It is still very helpful if you can comment on an applicant's general qualities (e.g. punctuality, reliability,

responsibility, communication skills, relevant personal qualities, etc.). If you *are* familiar with the applicant's conservation work, it is helpful if you can also comment on the way that they approach that work in terms of, e.g. research, ethics, planning and strategy.

- **Don't disclose any GDPR 'special category personal data' under GDPR requirements unless absolutely necessary.** This is information about race, ethnic origin, politics, religion, trade union membership, genetic or biometric data, health, sex life or sexual orientation. In some cases, you may need to include special category personal data in your reference (e.g. where a period of absence has been explained by illness). In this case, you must obtain explicit consent from the applicant before including this information in your reference.

### 3. Specific guidance for referees

All references should give information about the applicant and should be in support of their application for a Plowden Scholarship specifically. **A letter that simply confirms that they have a place on the course, or that confirms outline details of employment, is NOT sufficient.**

**Academic referees** should include the following information:

- How long you have known the applicant and in what capacity (e.g. course leader, tutor, etc.);
- The candidate's academic performance. If the applicant has not yet started their conservation course, then please give details based on their interview and/or application to the conservation course;
- Any particular academic or practical strengths, particularly in relation to their peers;
- Details of any barriers that you feel the applicant has had to overcome to study on the course;
- Any additional contributions that the applicant has made to college/university life or to the profession more widely;
- Why you feel they should be awarded a Plowden Scholarship (e.g. academic excellence, financial need, particular interests or skills);
- Whether (to your knowledge) the candidate has already secured financial support from another source, including from their college or university;
- Any other information that you feel will help us to assess the application fairly.

**Professional referees** should include the following information:

- How long you have known the applicant and in what capacity (e.g. employer, supervisor, etc.);
- The candidate's role and experience and how it is relevant to their chosen course;
- Any particular qualities (both relating to conservation and in general) that you feel makes them stand out and/or any notable achievements;
- Any additional contributions that the applicant has made within their work/volunteering or more widely;
- Why you feel they should be awarded a Plowden Scholarship (e.g. academic excellence, financial need, particular interests or skills);
- Any other information that you feel will help us to assess the application fairly.

### 4. Submitting your reference

References may be sent to the applicant for them to submit with their Plowden Scholarship application form, or may be sent directly to the Anna Plowden Trust. **If you prefer to send your reference directly you may do so by emailing it as a PDF to [info@annaplowdentrust.org.uk](mailto:info@annaplowdentrust.org.uk).**

**If you send your reference directly to the Anna Plowden Trust, please inform the applicant that this has been completed. We receive very many applications and cannot chase missing references – applications that do not supply two references WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**