

# LETTER OF REFERENCE THE THOMAS J. WATSON FELLOWSHIP

Application Deadline -- April 27, 2026, noon (Pacific)  
Please email this form to the FASA office at: [SReferences@caltech.edu](mailto:SReferences@caltech.edu)

---

\*THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT\*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This is a CONFIDENTIAL letter of reference. I hereby waive my access to this letter as per the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

\*THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY REFERENCE WRITER\*

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

The student above is seeking a Caltech nomination for the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. If awarded the fellowship, it will enable them the freedom to engage in a year of independent study and travel abroad following graduation. In selecting Watson Fellowship nominees, we are most concerned with holistically identifying individuals who demonstrate strong ethical character, intelligence, imagination, vision, and leadership potential. Because these qualifications can only be measured over time by those who know the candidate well, your frank and confidential estimate of the candidate is essential to us.

Please answer the following questions, sign, and return it to our office (email address above) with this form. Each answer below is limited to 200 words.

**The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship program mission:** The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship Program offers college graduates of "unusual promise" a year of independent, purposeful exploration and travel -- in international settings new to them -- to enhance their capacity for resourcefulness, imagination, openness, and leadership and to foster their humane and effective participation in the world community. (<https://watson.foundation/fellowships/tj>)

The following questions are especially relevant when selecting fellows for the significant year intended by the Watson mission. Please answer each question fully and provide examples where possible. You may also add additional thoughts at the end of this form. We appreciate the effort required to write a thoughtful and personal recommendation. Thank you in advance for your candor and time.

1. How long have you known the nominee, and in what capacity? (100 word limit)

2. In choosing fellows, we look for a collection of qualities that we call "Unusual Promise". These qualities include: Leadership, Imagination, Independence, Emotional Maturity, Courage, Integrity, Resourcefulness and Responsibility. How does the nominee exhibit these qualities? (200 word limit)

3. What are the nominee's areas for growth or improvement? (200 word limit)

4. What evidence can you provide of the nominee's investment in the proposed project beyond academic coursework? (200 word limit)

5. Please share any additional thoughts that you would like us to know or consider. (200 word limit)