Letter of Recommendation Criteria:

Before I will consider or agree to write a letter of recommendation for/with a student, I require, compared to other faculty, a high number of quality contacts with a student, be they counted in hours and/or experiences with a student. I have this requirement so I do have access to a better sample of a student's behavior prior to my writing with the student some kind of an evaluative letter of recommendation. My requirement is 4 x 3 semester hour courses, or some 12 semester hours of class contact. Included in this requirement is at least 3 semester hours of an independent study course. This independent study course permits me to sample the student's repertoire more adequately. As a result of this long term contact requirement, I believe I can give a better evaluation of a student. Thereby permitting a more useful letter of recommendation. The success ratio students achieving the goal for which I wrote the letter of recommendation is 100% (* with some qualification needed).

In those cases where I received more extensive feedback on the student's performance from the readers of these letters of recommendation, many favorably comment have been made about my more extensive letters of recommendation. When the student is applying for a competitive job or graduate school, the readers find useful the more detailed format used in these letters of recommendation.

Because of the nature of courses I teach, and career objectives of most students who spend expensive academic time with me, many readers of my letters of recommendation know me. I believe it's safe to say, most would contend I am fairly demanding in terms of the quality and amount of daily work required by me in courses and in personal contacts out of class. If the student can handle these high demands I believe it is more probable the student will handle higher demands in graduate school programs and/or work. Many of the usual sources who read my letters of recommendation know these things about my courses, and they know the letter of recommendation is based on a good criterion.
A reader knowing the writer of a letter of recommendation, and having good experience with students who the writer of the letter of recommendation previous sent them is very important. I try not to send a bum-er to anybody.

The reason for including this handout is to provide the reader with some background thus providing a better basis for judging if they will work for a letter with me.

The people who I usually send letters of recommend to, also know I would never deliberately send them a bad student. I know faculty who view they have to send a good letter to any student (good or bad) that requests letters from them.