



## **Guidelines for Conducting Reference Checks on Academic Professional and Civil Service Employees FAQs**

- 1) Which employee groups does my unit need to conduct reference checks on?

*Reference checks should be conducted on Academic Professional and Civil Service positions that are either full-time or part-time. Conducting reference checks for temporary hourly positions (i.e. extra help or academic hourly) is up to the discretion of the hiring unit or the appropriate human resources office. Faculty hiring has its own process, and is not addressed in these FAQs.*

- 2) How many references does my unit need to contact?

*It is best to obtain a minimum of two references, preferably three. If you receive conflicting information, more than two is recommended. Depending on the complexity of the position and its responsibilities, more than two references may need to be obtained.*

- 3) When should a reference check be done?

*The most common and recommended time for conducting a reference check is after the interview process and for the top candidate(s). At whatever point the reference check is done, consistency should be maintained for all candidates. Furthermore, the candidate should be informed in advance that their references will be contacted.*

- 4) Who should conduct reference checks?

*Reference checks should be completed by either the supervisor, the hiring manager, the search committee, or appropriate human resources office. System Office position reference checks will be conducted by System Human Resource Services. If you have questions about who should conduct the check, contact your university or system human resource office.*

- 5) A reference I contacted provided only basic information on a former or current employee. Is this information still useful?

*Yes. These reference checks will allow you to confirm things such as dates of employment, job title, and whether the employee is eligible for rehire. They also will allow you to determine the accuracy of*

*the information provided. Although a more ideal reference is someone who shares evaluative information, being able to confirm basic information provided on a resume or application is helpful.*

- 6) If I know a candidate personally, do I need to check references?

*Yes. References should be conducted on every person you wish to hire regardless of whether you know them on a personal basis, regardless of whether a coworker knows the finalist, and regardless of the level of position.*

- 7) If I receive a negative evaluation on a candidate, should I immediately disqualify him or her?

*No. While it is important to consider any negative comments carefully, they should not immediately disqualify the candidate from further consideration. The best course of action is to ask for specific examples to support the negative comments and then check additional references. You should also consult with your human resources office and/or university counsel before extending the offer if something is disclosed in the reference check that causes concern.*

- 8) Do I need to conduct reference checks for 0% appointments?

*No. Zero-percent appointments do not require reference checks.*

- 9) Do I need to conduct reference checks for visiting appointments?

*Yes. Visiting appointments require reference checks (unless it is a zero percent appointment).*

- 10) If my finalist is a current University of Illinois employee, may I waive the reference checking requirement?

*No. Always conduct reference checks for current University of Illinois employees.*

- 11) If my candidate is a current University of Illinois employee, may I contact their current supervisor?

*Yes. An applicant's most recent work experience will provide you with valuable insight into how they may perform in the future as well as their current skills and job responsibilities. Inform the applicant that they are a strong candidate for the vacancy and that you plan to contact their current University of Illinois supervisor to conduct a reference check.*

- 12) What if the candidate did not supply their current or most recent supervisor as a reference?

*Although contacting a current or recent supervisor is not required, it is beneficial. Explain the benefits to the candidate and ask them to complete the "Off-List Consent Form". This form provides permission for the search committee or hiring unit to contact existing and/or former employers.*

- 13) What if the candidate does not give permission to contact existing and/or former employers?

*Ask the candidate to explain their reasoning. The search committee and/or hiring unit shall inform the candidate that their decision will be respected; however it may affect the University of Illinois' ability to fully evaluate their employment suitability.*

14) Are any questions illegal to ask?

*Yes, there are several anti-discrimination laws related to the recruitment and selection process. These laws prohibit you from asking many questions. For a summary of the laws and questions you cannot ask, go to*

*[https://www.hr.uillinois.edu/userfiles/Servers/Server\\_4208/file/ERHR/Recruiting/SearchCommGuidelinesBestPractices.pdf](https://www.hr.uillinois.edu/userfiles/Servers/Server_4208/file/ERHR/Recruiting/SearchCommGuidelinesBestPractices.pdf).*

15) What if reference information that is not job related is received (such as personal information about drug or alcohol abuse, marital status, etc.)?

*Only job related information is to be considered. You may consult your university or system human resource office for additional guidance, if needed.*

16) May attendance records on current or former employees be reviewed?

*No, it is not appropriate to access this information because it may disclose information that should not be considered, such as protected leave absences.*

17) How should reference information be evaluated and used in the selection process?

*Information received from references is one data point used during the selection process. Look for consistency from reference to reference, with what is documented on the resume/application materials, and with what is observed during the interview process. If reference information is not consistent, discuss the inconsistency with the candidate, trying to find out what may have caused the inconsistency. You may consult your university or system human resource office for additional guidance, if needed.*

18) What if a candidate or employee asks to see the reference information?

*Reference information should be kept confidential. Reference information should be retained in the recruitment file and not the personnel file.*

19) May a reference check for one position be used if the candidate is being considered for another similar position in the same unit?

*Yes, if both positions are in the same unit, the reference information can be used for another position as long as the information has been received within the last twelve (12) months, the position is similar, and the reference names are the same.*

20) Who should I contact for more information?

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