

Reference Check Guiding Principles

Purpose

To guide units on the appropriate methods used to collect reference information about potential internal and external hires.

What are reference checks?

Reference checks are employers' principal means of securing information about potential hires from sources other than the candidates themselves. A reference check generally involves contacting candidates' former employers, supervisors, co-workers and/or educators to verify previous employment and to obtain information about the individuals' knowledge, skills, abilities and character.

Why do we conduct reference checks?

We conduct reference checks for a number of reasons:

- To create a safe and secure educational institution and workplace.
- To ensure UA employees are qualified to perform the jobs for which they are hired.
- To hire and retain high-quality employees.
- To ensure compliance with [ABOR Policy 6-709](#) and [UA Policy HR-401](#).

When should reference checks be completed?

You should conduct reference checks after you have completed the interview process. In most cases, you may only contact references for one finalist. However, if you are still considering multiple candidates after the interviews, you can contact multiple candidate references to aid in your decision. You should notify candidates before contacting their references.

Who should complete the reference checks?

Reference checks should be completed by the hiring supervisor. This allows them to gather the feedback directly and make an assessment based on first-hand information. Hiring supervisors may also request access to review official personnel records of current or former University employees who are under consideration for competitive recruitment or noncompetitive selection.

How many references do I need to collect?

You should collect three references before extending a written offer of employment. You should choose references that are both recent and relevant to the position. These types of references provide a better indicator of the candidate's current capabilities and related performance on the job. It is acceptable to ask for references that are different from those listed on the application. For example, if personal references are listed, you may ask the candidate for references from previous supervisors instead.

What do I do if I receive a negative reference?

You should make sure that you complete the entire reference form and make a note of all the information the reference provided. When assessing whether the candidate should move forward, consider all of the selection information gathered thus far (e.g., application materials, interview performance, and other references) against the job and needs of your unit. You are not required to hire a finalist but you are required to make a fair assessment based on the information you have received. We recommend working with your committee to determine whether you should extend an offer or consider another candidate in the pool.

What should I know before conducting reference checks?

Reference checks must be job related and uniform. Reference checks should never contain information related to a candidate's personal demographic information. You should use the same criteria for all candidates in determining their candidacy for the job. Reference check collection should be in alignment with the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

All applicants agree to reference checks as part of their application submission. Below is the statement that all applicants must certify before submitting their application.

I certify the statements made by me in this application are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this application and all attachments will become part of the University's applicant file for this position. I authorize the University of Arizona or any of its agents to make reference checks relating to my employment and I also authorize all prior employers to provide full details concerning my past employment.

I understand that employment in certain positions may be conditional upon a background verification including but not limited to criminal records. I understand that any material misrepresentation or omission on this application may be grounds for rejection of my application or termination of any subsequent employment with the University. I certify that I am or will be legally authorized to work in the United States at the time of hire. I agree that the University may retain copies of, and use for any purpose, any feedback, input, or work product provided to the University during the application and interview process.

If you have questions related to your selection process, including reference check collection, please reach out to HR Recruitment & Outreach or by visiting our webpage [here](#).