Reference Check Guide

Reference checks are job-related inquiries which are useful in verifying an applicant’s previous work history and skills, knowledge and abilities. They should be conducted FOR FINALISTS ONLY prior to making a hiring decision and commitment. You must have written authorization from the individual for whom you are seeking the reference before you can contact a current supervisor (University or non-University).

1. **Introduce** yourself and state the purpose of your call. Be sure the reference has time to talk.
   - **Confirm the relationship** between the reference and the applicant, i.e., "In what capacity, and for how long, did you know Mary Thompson?" Former immediate supervisors are the most reliable sources.
   - **Briefly describe the position** for which the applicant has applied.
   - **Verify basic data** such as job title, duties, salary and dates of employment.

2. **Inform the reference** that:
   - If requested, you will be required to give the applicant a summary of the information the reference provides; (Information Practices Act requirement)
   - If the source is a current University supervisor, the source must be disclosed;
   - If the source is a current non-University supervisor or a former University supervisor, the source may be held in confidence.

3. **Ask job-related questions** to elicit the reference’s observation and personal assessments of observed work behaviors that will be required by the position for which you are considering the applicant. Do not ask for predictions.

   **ASK:** "What type of business correspondence did Mary compose? Describe the quality of her writing including grammar, spelling and punctuation."

   **DO NOT ASK:** "How well do you think Mary will be able to perform the job for which I am considering her?"

**BE CONSISTENT**

- Obtain references for ALL applicants that you wish to hire.
- Ask the same basic questions about all applicants for whom you obtain references.
- Weigh information you receive in the same manner for all applicants. What disqualifies one should be a basis for disqualifying any other.

**CONSIDER THE SOURCE**

Remember that the information you receive is limited by the perceptions of the person giving it. If you receive negative information about an applicant, weigh it with data received from other references before using it to make a decision.

Do not base an employment decision on subjective, non job-related comments made by the reference source.