Reference Check FAQ

1) WHEN should reference checks take place?

The most common and recommended time for conducting a reference check is after the final interview process for the top candidate(s). It can also be done earlier in the process to assist in determining the interview pool or to prepare for the interviews.

At whatever point the reference check is done, the candidate needs to be informed in advance of the reference checks being completed.

IMPORTANT: Candidates should be informed that you are contacting their references PRIOR to starting any reference checks. To help expedite responses from the references, ask the candidate to reach out and inform their references that the checks are beginning and to be prepared to respond to requests.

2) What does the workflow look like for a reference check process?

At the initial interview:

Ask all candidates for their references (including one for their current supervisor). The candidate should provide you with a minimum of three professional references that include: name, phone number, email address, and a description of the working relationship to the candidate.

- **Internal candidates** should be informed that IF they are a finalist, you will be asking them to notify their current supervisor prior to any outreach for a reference. This allows the employee to progress through the process at minimal risk to see if they are even interested in the position. If they do not become a finalist, no contact will be made with the current supervisor.
- **External candidates** may wish to not provide their current supervisor's information. You can let them know that for external candidates, offers can be made contingent upon later completing a reference check with their current supervisor.

When the finalist candidates are identified:

Notify your top candidates that they are a finalist. At the same time:

- **Internal candidates** should notify their supervisor at this point, if they have not already.
- **External candidates** should be asked to contact their references to make them aware that the reference checks are in progress, so that their references are responsive to requests and respond promptly.

3) When reference checks are completed and satisfactory:

- Notify the person designated as your HR Business Partner for Job Offer (JOF) approvals that the checks have been completed so that they will be able to attest to this in the offer approval stage.
- If unfavorable checks occurred, please review the FAQ on unfavorable checks.

IMPORTANT: for internal candidates, reference checks must be completed BEFORE the job offer can be routed for approval.

4) How many reference checks need to be completed?

For external candidates, it's recommended that two to three reference checks should be completed, including a former supervisor. If those external candidates have been with their current employer for a long period of time (as their only employer), these references may need to be completed after a verbal offer has been made.

For internal reference checks, a minimum of one reference check with the current supervisor is required.

5) Who performs the reference check?

Hiring departments are responsible for completing reference checks.

For external candidates:
References for external candidates can be conducted by any of the following:

- Hiring manager
- An assigned member of the search committee
- Someone designated by the hiring manager.
- Division HR

For internal candidates:
Best practice is to contact BOTH the candidate’s current HR professional and their current supervisor. Checks can be conducted by the following:

- Hiring manager

  OR

- An assigned member of the search committee

  OR

- Division HR

6) What if a reference is reluctant to answer questions?

If the reference is reluctant to provide information, assure them that the candidate has consented to the reference check process. If the individual is still reluctant to provide information, ask what they would be willing to provide. At a minimum, attempt to verify dates of employment, position held, and if they would rehire the candidate into their former position.

7) What if no responses to reference checks are received?

- The first step would be to reach out to your candidate and ask them to contact their reference, encouraging them to respond. If that does not work, you can do the following:
- For references on external candidates, document that multiple attempts were made and proceed based on good faith effort.
- For references on internal candidates, contact DSAHR, who can ensure that the candidate does not have any relevant corrective action on file at IU.

8) What if an unfavorable check occurs, or raises questions about the candidate's ability?

Unfavorable responses should be communicated to DSAHR. For a candidate who has received an offer contingent upon the reference checks, best practice would be for DSAHR to consult with UHRS Talent Acquisition and/or UHRS Employee Relations if it would rise to the level of rescinding an offer.

While it is important to consider any unfavorable comments carefully, they should not immediately disqualify the candidate from further consideration. There are two sides to every story. Should this situation arise, the best course of action is to ask for specific examples to support the unfavorable comments and then check additional references. You should disregard information when the person giving the information does not have first-hand knowledge of the situation being discussed.

Be sure to speak with multiple references and to formulate a specific question that asks about the deficiency. For example, if one employer says that the employee had a problem with tardiness, ask other references if the candidate was prompt, dependable, able to meet deadlines, etc.

9) How do I attest that reference checks have been completed?

When submitting a job offer for a candidate in TAM, the person submitting the offer will need to click on the "Reason" dropdown menu on the left side of the page. If the person submitting the offer does not make a selection, a selection will be required at the HR Business Partner approval stage. **Hiring committees will need to inform DSAHR/payroll processor that this**

process has been completed the date completed, and the name of the person who completed the reference checks.

10) How to Perform, Document, and Retain Completed Reference Checks

Phone calls, in-person discussions or emailing templated forms are acceptable methods of completing external and internal reference checks. To document a reference check being completed, please use one of the following methods:

For reference checks completed on external candidates:

- Document discussion using a template: Record who you spoke with, when you spoke, and the results.

For reference checks completed on internal candidates:

- Via email: “Thanks for the time you took today with me to discuss ____. I appreciate the feedback. I will keep you posted on any offer acceptance and the potential start date. Thanks.”
- Document discussion using a template: Record who you spoke with, when you spoke, and the results.

NOTE: Completed reference check documentation is confidential. You must document each reference check with legible, thorough notes. Your notes from reference checks are part of the recruitment record and should be kept in accordance with the university’s retention sc