

Best Practices for Reference Checks

5/2021

University of Colorado Denver/Anschutz Medical Campus encourages both on and off list reference checks. You may utilize SkillSurvey as a starting point and we encourage you to also do off-list references once you have notified the candidate. This is particularly important when you have a candidate who currently works at the university or who previously worked for the university. We encourage you to do your due-diligence and contact the most recent supervisor and work with your Talent Acquisition Consultant to check personnel file information and HCM entries related to the separation from employment.

SkillSurvey, a cloud-based reference checking software solution, automates the process of receiving confidential feedback from references. It utilizes job-specific surveys, designed by industrial /organizational psychologists, to gather insight on past performance and critical skills and behaviors, in these six key areas:

- Professionalism
- Personal value commitment
- Interpersonal skills
- Managing others
- Problem solving and adaptability
- Leadership

Reasons to use SkillSurvey

- **Is easy to use and provides a consistent approach** — for the applicant, the reference, and the recruiter.
- **Focuses on job behaviors** — the survey focuses on job behaviors required for successful performance.
- **Provides timely and higher quality information** — average turnaround time is less than two business days; confidentiality improves the quality and reliability of information from the references.

To use SkillSurvey, or to consult about its use, please contact your search consultant.

Guidelines for Conducting Reference Checks

Reference checks must be completed for all final applicants under consideration for regular full-time, part-time, temporary or student positions whereby all relevant listed references are contacted (both on and off-list references).

Reference checks are used to diminish ambiguity, obtain specific job-related information, and verify the accuracy of a candidate's background. The reference checks may be conducted before or after the interview. The following are guidelines to check references.

- Prior to checking an applicant's current employer, ask the applicant's permission as this may place the applicant's current employment at risk. If the applicant objects, inform the applicant that you will respect their decision; however it may affect your ability to fully evaluate the applicant for employment.
- Do not let letters of reference or SkillSurvey substitute for phone calls or e-mail inquiries.
- Begin your reference process by thoroughly reviewing information obtained in the application material submitted by the job applicant and identify the people you wish to reference. As a general rule, try to speak directly to the applicant's immediate supervisor when seeking employment references. Avoid references from friends and relatives.
- Contact at least two former employers for references before making a job offer.
- If applicant is an internal employee or former employee, talk to their current supervisor or last known university supervisor to get current knowledge about the applicant. In addition, contact your Talent Acquisition Consultant or Judy Cooper at (303) 315-2700 to review the Central HR personnel file.
- If a former employee, work with your Talent Acquisition Consultant to look at HCM to see why the person left the University. If the person has been terminated for cause, please reach out to the Employee Relations group and former supervisor to discuss the reasons the person was terminated before making a verbal offer.
- Ask the applicant to provide reference information if it is missing from the application including name, title, phone number and email address of the most recent employers.
- When introducing yourself to the employer, do not say that the applicant has "been selected", only that they are a finalist for a position.
- If you believe the employer is hesitant to provide information over the telephone, offer to have them call you back so that the person providing the reference can verify who you say you are. This will also allow the employer time to refresh their memory on the individual you are inquiring about.
- Consider whether performance problems reported by previous employers are in areas that might affect performance in the position you are filling.
- Be sure there is a business-related reason for asking specific questions and use of the information obtained.
- Do not raise any questions that fall under the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) discriminatory practice areas, such as questions regarding gender, race, color, national origin, age, disability, or religion.
- Inquire as to re-employment eligibility and reasons for leaving previous jobs.
- Maintain the highest level of confidentiality throughout the process. Do not delegate the reference gathering process to anyone outside the hiring process and share information gathered on a need to know basis only.



TELEPHONE AND/OR WRITTEN REFERENCE EXAMPLE

Thank you for taking my call. My name is (name) from the University of Colorado at (AMC or Denver). (Applicant's name) is a finalist for the position of (job title) and has indicated that he/she was employed by your organization from (beginning/end dates).

1. Was he/she employed by your organization during this period of time?
2. What was the nature of the job?
3. What did you think of his/her work?
4. What are his/her strongest job skills?
5. What job skills are his/her areas for improvement?
6. How did he/she interact with other people on the job?
7. Why did he/she leave your organization?
8. Please comment on candidate's:
 - a. dependability
 - b. ability to assume responsibility
 - c. ability to follow instruction
 - d. degree of supervision needed
 - e. quantity and quality of work
 - f. ability to work independently
 - g. ability to work as a team member
 - h. ability to meet deadlines
9. Would you re-employ this person? yes/no If no, why?

10. Do you have any final comment on his/her work performance?

Thank you very much for talking with me about this candidate. I appreciate your time.