

Best Practices for Reference Checking

The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus encourages both on and off-list reference checks. You may utilize our reference check tool, SkillSurvey, as a starting point, and we encourage you to 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, 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 into 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

General Best Practices for utilizing SkillSurvey

- The hiring department is responsible for following up with the candidate on completing the reference check form. Central HR will email the HR contact who submitted the request if we notice that the form has not been completed within at least three business days.
- SkillSurvey requires 5 (five) references, with 2 (two) managers/supervisors included. This should be completed by the candidate within 24 hours. Keep in mind that at least three of the references, including one manager or supervisor, need to respond before a report can be generated, and the reference check can be closed out.
 - SkillSurvey will send the initial email request for the candidate to complete. They will then get two additional follow-up emails if they haven't completed the survey.
 - Let the candidate know that the email title is University of Colorado Reference Checking Process
 - If the candidate states that they haven't received the reference check email, let them know to check their spam or junk mail, especially if they have Gmail or Yahoo email addresses.
- We are dependent on the candidate submitting the references in addition to the references completing the survey. The hiring department should notify the candidate that the step is taking place; that way, the references can be completed in a timely manner.
- It is recommended to receive all reference responses, but accommodations can be made.
- These are monitored daily. We typically see this process through within 3-5 business days.
- If a candidate reference request has been submitted and the person is no longer being considered, please notify hr.recruiting@cuanschutz.edu so the reference can be canceled. The department should ensure that the candidate is aware that they are no longer being considered.
- Reference checks that have been submitted and not completed in over a month will be

canceled and the department will need to submit a new request if needed.

If you have general SkillSurvey reference check questions regarding University Staff or Classified, please contact hr.recruiting@cuanschutz.edu. This process is facilitated by the Talent Acquisition and Classification team Specialists.

For Faculty or PRA, please contact hr.faculty-request@cuanschutz.edu.

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 diminish ambiguity, obtain specific job-related information, and verify the accuracy of a candidate's background. They may be conducted before or after the interview. The following are guidelines for checking 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 the 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. Personnel records relevant to hiring managers are typically held at the department level. An employee must provide written authorization for a hiring manager to view the personnel record before the record is requested. Central HR may also have some personnel records available. You can email hr.records@cuanschutz.edu to inquire if HR has a record available to view.
- 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, including the name, title, phone number, and email address of the most recent employers, if it is missing from the application.
- When introducing yourself to the employer, do not say that the applicant has "been selected"; only say 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 of 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 about 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 Anschutz Medical Campus. (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? How do you know this person?
2. What was the nature of the job? What were the primary functions performed by this person?
3. What did you think of his/her work? How would you characterize the quality of work performed by this person?
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? Describe how s/he interacted with co-workers. How did s/he interact with the public or your clients? Did s/he present a professional image?
7. How would you characterize this person's attitude toward change and learning new things? Would you characterize this person as being flexible in a constantly changing work environment?
8. Why did he/she leave your organization?
9. Please comment on candidate's:
 - a. Dependability
 - i. How was this person's attendance on the job? Was s/he frequently tardy?
 - 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
 - i. How closely was it necessary to supervise this person? Could s/he work productively on his/her own without close supervision after s/he has been trained?
 - g. ability to work as a team member
 - h. ability to meet deadlines
10. Would you re-employ this person? Yes/No. If not, why?
11. Is s/he eligible for rehire?
12. Do you have any final comment on his/her work performance? Do you have any additional comments or other information you think I should know about this person that might help me make a decision about this applicant?
13. Can you refer anyone else to me for reference checking purposes that is also familiar with this candidate's work?

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