



REFERENCE CHECK POLICY

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Responsible Faculty/ Division & Unit:	Recruitment Unit, Human Resources Division				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Reference Check Guideline				
References & Legislation:	Recruitment and Selection Policy				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone Internal – UOW Staff Only				
Expiry Date of Policy:	Not applicable				

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Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to support the University's recruitment process by ensuring all appointable candidates for positions with the University are screened through appropriate selection tools, including effective reference checks, as part of the competitive selection process. The policy is aligned in all instances with the University's employment equity and diversity policies and governance principles and procedures.

Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Appointable Candidates	Candidates assessed through a competitive selection process and considered suitable for appointment to a role, subject to reference and other pre employment checks and their ranking viz a viz other candidates.
Competitive Selection Process	Selection process for a position that is competitively advertised and candidates assessed according to the merit process under the University's Recruitment and Selection Policy.
Recommended Candidate	The appointable candidate assessed through a competitive selection process and considered the most competitive for appointment to the role.
Reference Check	Written or verbal assessment from a nominated referee of a candidate's employment, history, work performance, education and other attributes directly relevant to the position being recruited to.

Application & Scope

1. This policy, in conjunction with the related policies and guidelines listed above, applies to the undertaking of reference checks in all competitive selection processes.
2. The completion of at least two verbal reference checks on the recommended candidate prior to approval of a final selection report is mandatory for all appointments. The requirement for formal verbal reference checks applies to both internal and external candidates.

General Rules for Reference Checks

1. Post interview reference checks must be undertaken before recommending any candidate for appointment. This will normally be done via a structured telephone interview with a minimum of at least two of the candidates' nominated referees.

Candidates need to give prior permission to contact their referees and this should be obtained or confirmed at or prior to interview. Where the candidate has not nominated their current or a recent supervisor as a referee they should be asked to do so. In cases where a recent direct supervisor is not nominated, the Chair of the Selection Committee should determine a suitable alternate referee in discussion with the Recruitment Unit. In all instances referees must have worked closely with the candidate, be in a senior role relative to the candidate and be in a position to comment knowledgeably on the individuals recent work performance.

The University has certain obligations under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* with respect to the collection, storage, use of and access to personal information. When collecting personal information, the University must take reasonable steps to ensure that the information collected is directly related to the inherent requirements of the position being recruited to.

2. In some instances written references may be sought prior to interview at the Selection Committee's discretion. These may be utilised for academic staff selection processes where they



may add value to the decision making process. Requests for written references from nominated referees must be provided to the Recruitment Unit with a minimum of at least one week's notice to allow time for referees to be contacted and respond. The Recruitment Unit will validate all written references received with the author.

3. Written references are not mandatory and do not take the place of the requirements for verbal reference checking post interview. Selection Committees are still required to conduct two verbal reference checks on the recommended candidate. The verbal reference check focus on verification of details and clarification on matters that have arisen from the interview and other aspects of the recruitment process.
4. The University will not proceed with hiring a candidate if complete reference information is not available. Hiring a candidate without such information poses an unacceptable risk.
5. Information obtained from a reference check, should be verified through specific examples and corroborated with other sources where practicable. The Recruitment Unit should be advised when negative information has been received to discuss the way forward.

In order to safeguard the privacy of the referees, it is recommended that as best practice, no candidates be given any indication of their ranking or the Selection Committee's recommendation until reference checking is completed.

Any information sought from referees must be job related.

Referees

1. The referee/s should always include the candidates' current or a recent supervisor. If this is not possible, an explanation as to why a current or recent supervisor cannot be nominated should be included in the selection committee report. All referees must have worked closely with the candidate and be in a position to comment knowledgeably about the candidates recent work performance relevant to the position being recruited to. Categories of referees such as co-workers, colleagues, subordinates and acquaintances are less likely to be unreliable in commenting and predicting subsequent job performance. If a direct supervisor is on a Selection Committee, then an alternative referee should be sought if possible. (Feedback from the direct supervisor with respect to the candidate's past work performance is appropriate.)

If a candidate has worked or is working at UOW, a reference from the direct supervisor of their current UOW position must be sought, even if they have not been listed as a referee. However, the candidate should be consulted prior to contracting the referee.

Publicly Accessible Information

1. Publicly accessible information is information that is obtained from sources such as social networking sites, internet search engines or other sites that freely allow the public to search for information.
2. Information about a candidate's character, past work performance, employment history, social networking habits etc that is found from non-professional and non authenticated websites via the world wide web is considered to be unreliable and therefore should not be used as part of the decision making process.
3. Recognised academic websites, professional association websites and websites that legitimately publish research publications and outputs may be searched, in order to verify a candidate's claims in their application. However, information sourced from these sites should be verified with the candidate or their nominated referee(s) where possible.

Undertaking Reference Checks

1. Reference takers must ask the referee to indicate that their reference is given 'in confidence' and hence assist the University in maintaining the confidentiality of the reference report under legislation. The questions at the beginning of reference check guide must be read out to the referee and the referee should be asked to confirm that they wish the reference report to be treated as



being provided 'in confidence'. Where confirmed the reference taker must indicate on the top of the reference check guide that the referee provides their reference on a confidential basis. This guide must also be signed and dated and returned to the Recruitment Unit, together with the notes taken during the reference check.

2. All information sought from referees must be job related and linked to the selection criteria. Personal information which could be considered discriminatory should not be sought unless it can be demonstrated the information relates to an inherent requirement of the position. Comments or criticisms relating to a candidates disability, gender, race, or other potential grounds for discrimination are not normally relevant and should be disregarded.

3. Reference takers should cross check and verify the information contained within the resume and that provided by candidate at interview with referees. In particular, referees should be asked to verify key achievements cited in the candidates resume or at interview which relate to the criteria and provide details of these achievements in terms of their success, importance, degree of difficulty and the contribution of the individual to the outcome. Contribution in this instance may encompass their specific part they played in the system. Where required, reference takers should also cover any other specific job related e.g. operating motor vehicles, capacity to work in laboratories, possession of plant licence or accreditation). All reference check information should be recorded in writing in either the reference check template available from the Recruitment Intranet site or other written format and forwarded to the Recruitment Unit with the final selection committee report.

Validation of Qualifications

1. Appointed candidates must provide original documentations or certified copies as evidence of their identities. Documentation provided will be required to satisfy the "100 point identification check" as defined by the Australian Commonwealth Government

2. Evidence of the original academic and/or professional qualifications claimed in the appointed candidate's application must be provided prior to commencing their employment. The University may subsequently verify these qualifications with the issuing institution

Resources

1. Guides and templates to assist selection committee members when recording the outcome of reference checks for academic and general staff are available on the Recruitment Intranet site.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. Normally, only the Chair of the Selection Committee or a member of the Recruitment Unit may undertake a reference check, but this may be allocated by the Chair to alternative members of the Selection Committee where circumstances require it.

2. The Recruitment Unit will obtain written references where requested as part of the interview arrangements. The Recruiter will normally electronically distribute all written references received to Selection Committee members prior to interview.



Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	September 2003	Vice-Chancellor	First Version
2	6 May 2009	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Migrated to UOW Policy Template as per Policy Refresh
3	9 March 2010	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Future review date identified in accordance with Standard on UOW Policy.
4	26 August 2010	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Updated to reflect divisional name change from Personnel Services to Human Resources Division
5	12 July 2011	Administrative Committee	Policy updated to reflect changes in legislation and practice. Reference Report Forms changed to Guide and new internal Guidelines developed