Guide for Reference Checks

Important Points

- It is critical to conduct reference checks for candidates.
- The hiring manager may also view central HR's personnel files for internal candidates.
- Reference checks should be done by the hiring manager or committee chairperson, not search committee members.
- Reference checks may be done only after interviews are conducted.
- Additional permission from candidates to contact the references provided in their application is not required.
- Questions must be the same for all candidates.
- You may not ask questions that you are not permitted to ask candidate in an interview (see list here).
- Questions must be job related.

When contacting references, identify yourself and tell them why you are calling and the position for which this person is a candidate. Make sure to document who you speak to and the date of the conversations.

Viewing Personnel Files

If candidate is internal, the Hiring Manager may ask Human Resources for permission to view the personnel file. This can only happen after the interview is completed and the candidate's status has been updated to "Interview Completed." Send an email to solutionscenter@hr.msu.edu, provide the posting number and request to view the candidate's personnel file. This is done by appointment.

Provide a summary of the reference checks and personnel record findings to Michele Burton and the hiring official.

Sample Questions:

1. Can you verify the job candidate's employment, job title, and responsibilities?
2. Why did they leave that job?
3. How do you know the job candidate?
4. What makes this person a good candidate for this job?
5. If you had the opportunity, would you re-hire this job candidate? Why?
6. What are the candidate's biggest strengths and weaknesses?
7. Did the candidate get along with their co-workers and management?
8. Tell me what it's like to work with the job candidate.
9. What advice can you give me to successfully manage the job candidate?

Resources:

Support Staff: https://hr.msu.edu/ua/hiring/support-staff/employment-guide.html

Faculty/Academic Staff:
https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/affirmative-action/references.html