

## GUIDE TO REFERENCE INTERVIEWING

Reference interviews are a service that the HR Advisor's offer to the departments. The reference provides the hiring department with an opportunity to find out how potential candidates performed in previous jobs.

References should be checked after completion of the interview process and should be strictly job-related. Any information received, which is not job-related, should be disregarded.

The same questioning techniques used in the interview (behavioural and probing) can be used during the reference interview to elicit legitimate information about the candidate.

### How to Make the Reference Check Call

- 1) Plan your call in advance. Prepare specific questions to be asked according to the core competencies of the position and any relevant questions that arose from the candidate interview. It is important to designate at least 30 minutes for making these calls so that you can do a thorough interview.
- 2) Introduce yourself immediately, stating your position with the University and explaining the purpose of your call.
- 3) Ask if the referee is free to talk and if not, arrange to call again at a later time. Convey to the referee that it will take at least 15-20 minutes to complete the reference interview.
- 4) Be yourself. Relax and attempt to establish rapport with the referee. It will be much easier to extract information when the referee is more at ease.
- 5) Convey to the referee that a release form has been signed by the candidate to allow for this verification to proceed.
- 6) Let the referee know that the some of the questions will be behaviourally based therefore will be looking for specific examples. It is helpful to set this expectation as will give the referee a little time to think of some relevant situations and examples.
- 7) Take notes as the referee speaks. Do not be afraid to ask them to repeat information or to slow down.
- 8) Assure to the referee that the information collected will be held in confidence.
- 9) Don't end the conversation until you have sufficient information. If the referee is out of time, attempt to rebook at a more convenient time.
- 10) Thank the referee for their help and offer to leave your contact information so that they can be sure of the legitimacy of your call.

**Reference Interview Form**

**Part 1: Candidate Information Form**

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Candidate's Name:**

**Date of Reference Interview:**

**Position Applied for:**

**Competition No.**

**Referee Name:**

**Referee's Current Position:**

**How long Referee worked with  
Candidate:**

**Referee's Position during that time:**

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(month/year) (month/year)

**Referee's Relationship to Applicant:**

**Contact Information:**

**Do you agree to the release of this information and understand that it is to be incorporated into the hiring decision?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_



## **Part 2: General Questions**

**What are the title and role and duties of the candidate? Please include any technical and/or administrative knowledge that was required for the position.**

**(Describe what the job entails to the referee.) Can you tell me about the skills and experience (insert name) can bring to this kind of position? In your opinion (or if in my shoes) would you hire (insert name) into this position? What strengths would be showcased? What weakness or weaknesses may inhibit success in this role?**

**What advice would you offer to a future manager of the candidate so that they can get the best results from him/her?**

**Appendix A:**

**Part 3: Competency Based Questions**

**Client Focus/Customer Service** - Providing service excellence to internal and/or external clients.

**Questions: (Pick one)**

Can you tell me about a time when she/he had to go beyond the call of duty?

**OR**

Candidate shared a situation about dealing with a difficult client (share the situation, action and result with referee). Was this a situation that you were aware of? If yes -What was your perspective of her approach? If No – How has the candidate helped a client in the past to determine the resources or services they needed to address the situation?

**Continuous Learning** - Identifying and addressing learning and development needs to enhance performance.

**Question:**

Describe a time when the candidate sought feedback from someone on his/her performance, for example from colleagues or supervisor?

**Creativity and Innovation** -Generating viable, new approaches and solutions.

**Question:**

Can you recall a situation where the candidate came up with an improved approach to better meet the needs of the organization?

**Problem Solving/Analytical thinking** – Ability to use conflict resolution techniques, handle situations with tact and diplomacy and ability to recognize own role in conflict.

**Questions: (Recommend picking one)**

Please describe a situation in which the candidate had to resolve a complex problem.

**OR**

What type of customer demands do you think she/he found to be the most challenging for him/her?

**Initiative**

Dealing with situations and issues proactively and persistently, seizing opportunities that arise.

**Question:**

Tell us about a time when candidate suggested an idea that had a positive impact on the functioning of your work unit.

**Communication Skills** - Listening to others and communicating articulately, fostering open communication.

**Questions: (Recommend picking one)**

Can you describe a time when the candidate's listening and interpersonal skills helped him/her to assist a customer/colleague, etc.?

**OR**

Describe a situation where the candidate had to explain a complex idea/problem to someone, in a credible and persuasive manner.



**Planning and Organizing** - Developing, implementing, evaluating and adjusting plans to reach goals, while ensuring the optimal use of resources.

**Questions: (Recommend picking one)**

Please provide an example of how the candidate organizes and prioritizes their work.  
(What tools do they use?)

**OR**

We all have peak times when workload is particularly challenging and heavy. Tell us about her/his ability to work under tremendous pressure?

**Teamwork/Collaboration** – working collaboratively with others to achieve organizational goals.

**Questions:**

Conflict can arise in varied situations at work, including when people work in teams. Describe a situation where the candidate was faced with a conflict between team members.

**Using Information Technology** – Using software and information technology to accomplish one's work.

**Question:**

What types of computer software (such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Banner) has the candidate worked with? What capacity?



**Leadership-** Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to inspire and guide individuals toward goal achievement; modifying behaviour to accommodate tasks, situations, and individuals involved.

**Questions:**

Please describe candidate's leadership style. Can you give me an example of where effective leadership helped him/her work through a difficult situation?

**Interpersonal-** Taking action that indicated a consideration for the feelings and needs of others; being aware of the impact of one's behaviour on others.

**Questions: (Recommend picking one)**

If we were to ask the people that candidate works with in her team, what would they say about her?

**OR**

What kind of impact does candidate have on others and can you give an example?

### **Part 3: Competency Based Questions**

Instructions:

If references are completed after the interview then please refer to the Interview Question list used in the interview for this candidate. With input from the hiring committee, choose relevant questions from the interview that will probe into the main competencies for the position to ask of the candidate. It is advised to pick at least three relevant questions to ask the referee.

If references are completed without an interview, please see Appendix A for a list of competency based questions to choose from. It is advised to pick at least three relevant questions to ask the referee.

Please attach competency based portion of the reference to the above section.

**Additional questions or areas to probe upon recommendation of the hiring committee.**

**What else would you like to add?** (About his/her professionalism, personality, core competencies for the position)?

**Internal Information/Additional Comments:**

(Regarding tone, pace or anything else relevant detected in interview)

**Authorized by:**

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**Signature**



Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, 2006.