

# Reference Guidelines

**References should be obtained on the final candidate for your position before making an offer of employment.** A completed and signed Carnegie Mellon Employment Application gives you authorization to conduct references (and also provides information which may not be available on a resume).

**Consistency.** The Telephone Reference Checklist can be used to help insure consistency in the reference gathering process. It is your responsibility to obtain references from employers listed on applicant materials, *including Carnegie Mellon supervisors*. If you are unable to obtain reference information from a previous employer, document your attempt to obtain this information.

**Work vs. Personal References.** Personal references provided by co-workers, friends, relatives and neighbors will, in all likelihood, be positive and may not adequately address the applicant's work performance. *Please obtain work-related references whenever possible.*

**Reference Methods.** There are several ways to obtain references--by mail, by telephone and in person. Telephone is the preferred method of obtaining references at Carnegie Mellon. Telephone references often yield better results because employers may be willing to discuss performance factors rather than commit to comments to paper. In addition, telephone references can be obtained more quickly than written references.

**Applicant Release.** Some employers will only provide dates of employment, job title and salary information. If this is company policy, document this information and proceed referencing other employers listed. Some employers ask if an applicant has given permission to obtain information. If this occurs, you may fax or send a *copy* of the bottom of the application (Applicant Statement). The signature on the application verifies that permission was granted. Employers may feel more comfortable releasing information if consent to gather information can be verified.

**Contacting Employers.** As a general rule, try to speak directly to the applicant's immediate supervisor when seeking employment references. Should you observe that an 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. If you are unable to obtain a reference, document your attempts to obtain this information. Employers are not obligated to provide answers to all information requested, but you should at least be able to confirm dates of employment and position held; get the information you can. *Don't forget to thank the employer for information provided.*

**Negative Information.** If you discover a pattern of job performance problems or one significant performance problem, this may be an indication of future performance problems if this candidate is hired. If there are substantial discrepancies between the information you have received and what the applicant has stated to you, document the information. In some cases, you may be able to secure additional information or clarify sensitive issues with the applicant. *You are strongly encouraged to contact your Human Resources Representative in these situations.*

**Suggested Reference Script.** My name is (name) from the (department) at Carnegie Mellon. We are filling a position within our department and would like to verify employment information on (applicant name) who has indicated he/she was employed by your organization from (beginning and ending dates). (Applicant name) has completed the applicant statement on our Employment Application authorizing Carnegie Mellon to obtain reference information.

Names and title of person contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Is this person the candidate's immediate supervisor? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Company name and address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date reference initiated \_\_\_\_\_

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 points?

5. What 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 the following:

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

9. Would you re-employ this person? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no If no, why?

10. What was (applicant's name) final salary?

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