

Reference Checking

Baseline/Foundational Information

It is generally recommended that hiring managers or search committee chairs complete a minimum of two reference checks prior to a job offer being made (a third check is highly recommended if either of the first two are less than satisfactory).

Before the tentative offer is extended, two reference check forms must be emailed to your HR Facilitator, to be submitted electronically in eRecruit and filed with the official search documents.

Reference Check Etiquette

Prior to placing any calls, be sure to contact the candidate(s) being considered for the position to let them know that you intend to contact both listed and off-list references (if you have not already established this in the interview).

Ideally, you should contact the most recent employer first and speak with the candidate's supervisor (or other person who has evaluated their work). If the candidate has only provided names/phone numbers of co-workers or friends, let them know that you will need to speak with someone who has supervised their work. If you are having trouble reaching one or more of the references listed, contact the candidate for alternate reference information.

Search Committees should organize and communicate among those calling to ensure that multiple people are not calling the same on and more importantly off-list references.

Reference Checking Tips

When contacting references, begin by identifying who you are and why you are calling (candidates is aware and has given permission). You will find that you are most likely to get detailed responses if you first give a brief overview of the position that the candidate is being considered for at The University of Missouri-Kansas City.

- Avoid asking questions in the reference check that you would not ask the candidate during an interview.
- Ask for specific observation about the candidate's ability.
- If necessary, ask candidates for additional references beyond those included on the application.
- Review notes and other application materials prior to placing the call. Do your homework.
- Explain that the candidate has also granted us permission to contact others who have not been specifically listed as references and ask them to suggest others who are familiar with the candidate.
- Follow-up and clarifying questions are encouraged throughout the discussion.
- Open-Ended Questions are more effective than closed.

Remember, you represent the University!

Many candidates we conduct references on may remain at their current institution. We do not want to do anything to make their situation difficult or discourage them (or the person giving the reference) from applying for future UMKC positions.

Things to Watch For

- Asking about the candidates personal circumstances or responding to similar comments
- Evaluating information during the gathering period
- Sharing personal (or committee) opinions/observations about the candidate
- Unusual hesitations
- Ambiguous responses
- Evasive answers
- Predominantly negative responses
- Vindictive responses
- Letting opinions override facts