

Guide to Completing Appropriate Phone Reference Checks

It is best to be friendly and professional when conducting a Phone Reference Check. Begin the telephone reference check with basic questions. Tested techniques indicate that the referent is more responsive if the conversation starts with simple questions like:

1. How long has Dr. Jones been employed at your institution?
2. How long have you known Dr. Jones?
3. What courses does Dr. Jones usually teach?
4. Does Dr. Jones have tenure?

Do not hesitate to probe, refine, or rephrase questions. Establishing a basis for one's assessment or judgment and requesting examples of personal accomplishments can be very revealing. Be wary of responses that do not address the question directly. Changing the subject is frequently used as a way to avoid responding.

Before closing the conversation, be certain you know the opinion of the person you have called. A technique for accomplishing this objective when the reference has been ambiguous is to say either: "I take it that you recommend Dr. Jones very highly for this position" or "I take it that you do not recommend Dr. Jones very highly for this position." These statements, with slight modification, can also be useful for summarizing or concluding the conversation

1. Reference checks are conducted by telephone. If you are not getting a response from the referent, please send the questions via email.
2. Reference checks are conducted by the department chair or the hiring authority.
3. It is the University's practice to contact a minimum of three (3) references for tenured and tenure-track searches and one for non-tenure-track.
4. As a **courtesy** to the candidate, obtain the candidate's consent before speaking with representatives of their current employer.
5. Telephone reference checks are compliant with the CSU's Background Check policy. Follow-up questions, in addition to the core questions, are permitted and encouraged when needed to clarify responses by candidates. When you ask for a reference, the person you are calling is assisting you with the search process.