

Investigating and verifying qualifications & Experience of prospective employees

Pre-employment screening

- verify identity (passport or UK driving licence)
- confirm right to work in the UK
- ensure that applicants complete a self-declaration criminal record form DBS (criminal records)
- most recent academic qualifications
- relevant professional qualifications
- most recent employer reference (at least three years, preferably five years)
- confirmation with past employers of dates of employment, posts held and reason for leaving

Prospective employees are required to give a reasonable account of any significant periods (six months or more in the past three years) of time spent abroad

Structuring the pre-employment screening process

Application Form

The job application form should provide the majority, if not all of the information required for pre-employment screening

Interviews

As well as providing an opportunity to discuss the candidate's suitability for employment, an interview will play an integral part of the pre-employment screening process because:

- it encourages applicants to be honest
- it allows us to find out missing information which is relevant to the pre-employment process and to probe candidates about their responses or for additional information
- it provides a good opportunity to add to the overall assessment of the applicant's reliability and integrity.

All applicants are informed in writing that any offer of employment will be subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-employment screening checks.

Qualification and employment checks

The purpose of a qualification check is to verify information provided by the candidate on their application form or Curriculum Vitae (CV) for educational or professional qualifications

A qualification check should confirm:

- the establishment attended
- course dates
- title of the course (if the applicant has included details of the courses studied it would be advisable to check them)
- grade/mark awarded

Original copies of any certificates must be requested to compare the information provided on them with what is listed on the application form. For example:

- Do the names match? The applicant may have been married, entered a civil partnership or divorced since gaining the qualification.
- Request an explanation from the candidate if in doubt.
- Does the date(s) on the certificate match the date(s) on the application form?
- Is there any difference in the title of the course or the grades?

Employment checks

The main aim of an employment check is to verify the information provided on the application form. The verification process focuses on confirming:

- dates of employment
- position(s) held
- duties
- salary
- reason for leaving
- any employment gaps

The candidate's current employer should not normally be contacted without prior permission from the candidate

It is advisable to verify a minimum of three years of previous employment (five years is preferable). Ideally you should aim to check a period, which covers at least two positions with separate employers.

Employer references

Obtain personal references from the candidate's previous/ current line managers. Personal references can provide a useful level of assurance about an individual's qualifications, integrity and track record.

Pre-prepared references

The candidate may provide pre-prepared references as part of the application process. Reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that they are genuine; especially if they appear less than convincing (e.g. provided on poor quality paper or containing basic spelling or grammatical errors). Such checks might include:

- telephoning the author to confirm they provided the reference. As previously noted, the telephone number should be ascertained independently. A telephone number supplied by the prospective employee should not be relied upon;
- checking the existence of the employer (e.g. that it appears in relevant business directories).

Self-employment references

For periods of self-employment, evidence should be obtained (for example, from HMRC, bankers, accountants, solicitors or client references), to confirm that the individual's business was properly conducted and was terminated satisfactorily.

Other types of reference

Depending on the individual's circumstances, additional references may also be required.

- If an individual has been overseas for a single spell of three months or more, or a cumulative total of 6 months or more, every effort should be made to obtain a reference from the overseas employer.
- If an employer's reference is not available, a second personal reference should be obtained from a referee of some standing in the individual's community (for instance a doctor, lawyer or MP).
- If an individual has been in full time education, a reference should also be obtained from the relevant academic institution.
- If an individual has served in the Armed Forces or Civil Service during the previous three years, employer's references should be obtained from the relevant service or department.
- If no personal reference can be obtained then references should be obtained from personal acquaintances not related to or involved in any financial arrangement with the individual