Policy Statement

Cornell University requires units to conduct thorough reference checks and detailed information verification on all applicants (external and internal) to whom an offer of employment is to be made.

Reason for Policy

To promote a safe and productive environment, Cornell’s process of filling vacant positions will involve responsible hiring by requiring comprehensive reference checks and verification of information presented by job applicants.

Entities Affected by this Policy

- All units of the university

Who Should Read this Policy

- All members of the university community, especially the following individuals, in the performance of their jobs
  - Members of the human resources community
  - Hiring supervisors, faculty, or staff
  - Volunteer coordinators

Web Address for this Policy

- This policy: www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/humanresources/references.cfm
- University Policy Office: www.policy.cornell.edu
POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

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RELATED RESOURCES

University Policies and Documents
University Policy 4.2, Transaction Authority and Payment Approval
University Policy 4.7, Retention of University Records
University Policy 6.4, Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence
University Policy 6.5, University Volunteers
University Policy 6.6.1, Filling Vacancies
University Policy 6.10.9, Staff Transfer
University Policy 6.12, Separations, Voluntary and Involuntary (Including Layoff)
Cornell University Statement on Diversity
Guide to Giving Employment References
Human Resources Policy 6.6.12, Special Employment Circumstances (includes Employment of Minors and Nepotism)
Human Resources Policy 6.7.5, Temporary and Casual Appointments
Human Resources Tools for Managers
President’s Statement on Affirmative Action

External Documentation

Federal Fair Employment Practices:
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Civil Rights Act of 1991
- Drug-Free Workplace Act
- Employee Polygraph Protection Act
- Equal Pay Act
- Executive Orders 11246, 11375, 11478 (Affirmative Action)
- Fair Credit Reporting Act
- Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
- Immigration Reform and Control Act
- Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1995
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures
- Vietnam-era Veterans Readjustment Act
- Vocational Rehabilitation Act

Ithaca City, Tompkins County, and New York State Laws and Regulations

University Systems and Forms

HR Tools for Managers (References and Background Investigations)
**POLICY 6.6.2**

Reference Checking and Information Verification

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**CONTACTS – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS**

Direct general questions to your unit’s human resources office. If you have questions about specific issues, call the following offices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>E-mail/Web Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Clarification and Interpretation</td>
<td>Unit Human Resource Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.hr.cornell.edu/about/hr_leaders.html">www.hr.cornell.edu/about/hr_leaders.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division of Human Resources, Recruitment and Employment Center</td>
<td>(607) 254-8370</td>
<td><a href="mailto:employment_svcs@cornell.edu">employment_svcs@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.hr.cornell.edu/about/rec.html">www.hr.cornell.edu/about/rec.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Checks, Approval for</td>
<td>Vice President for Human Resources and Safety Services</td>
<td>(607) 255-3621</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vp_of_human_resources@cornell.edu">vp_of_human_resources@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.hr.cornell.edu">www.hr.cornell.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President for Finance and CFO</td>
<td>(607) 255-4242</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dfa-vp@cornell.edu">dfa-vp@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.dfa.cornell.edu">www.dfa.cornell.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Individuals Who Will Handle Select Agents</td>
<td>Environmental Health and Safety</td>
<td>(607) 255-8200</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dehs@cornell.edu">dehs@cornell.edu</a> sp.ehs.cornell.edu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Verification</td>
<td>Division of Human Resources, Recruitment and Employment Center</td>
<td>(607) 254-8370</td>
<td><a href="mailto:employment_svcs@cornell.edu">employment_svcs@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.hr.cornell.edu/about/rec.html">www.hr.cornell.edu/about/rec.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Employment Drug and Alcohol Testing</td>
<td>Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations</td>
<td>(607) 254-7232</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lkp5@cornell.edu">lkp5@cornell.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CONTACTS – WEILL CORNELL CAMPUS UNITS**

Direct general questions to your unit’s human resources office. If you have questions about specific issues, call the following offices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>E-mail/Web Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Clarification and Interpretation</td>
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DEFINITIONS

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual Appointment</td>
<td>Employment in a position of less than 20 hours per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated Position</td>
<td>A position that contains job responsibilities that warrant more stringent scrutiny of applicants during the information verification process. Designated positions may be academic or nonacademic (including bargaining unit) and include regular, temporary, casual, and volunteer positions. (For a list of designated positions, see the Designated Positions sections of this policy. See also, Undesignated Position, below.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination and Affirmative Action Representative (DAAR)</td>
<td>An individual designated by management with responsibility for affirmative action issues at the unit level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Applicant</td>
<td>A job candidate who presently does not hold a regular appointment with the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Verification</td>
<td>The process whereby job-related information is checked and verified by the hiring authority, the unit human resource representative, and/or the university’s authorized third-party vendor regarding an applicant to whom the university intends to offer employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Applicant</td>
<td>A job candidate who is currently appointed to a regular position at the university, or someone in an eligible employment status, such as layoff status or short-term disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Appointment</td>
<td>Employment in a non-temporary position of at least 20 hours per week with an expected duration of at least six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Appointment</td>
<td>Employment in a position of at least 20 hours per week with an expected duration of less than six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesignated Position</td>
<td>Any regular, temporary, or casual academic or nonacademic position (including bargaining unit) that is not identified as a “designated” position. (For a list of designated positions, see the Designated Positions sections of this policy. See also Designated Position, above.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>A college, department, program, research center, business service center, or other operating unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Human Resource (HR) Representative</td>
<td>The primary human resource administrator at the unit level.</td>
</tr>
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## POLICY 6.6.2

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**RESPONSIBILITIES – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/Office</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination and Affirmative Action Representative (DAAR)</strong></td>
<td>Provide prior approval for job offers in coordination with the unit head and the unit human resources (HR) representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Health and Safety</strong></td>
<td>Maintain a list of positions that handle select agents. Initiate security risk assessments and collection of fingerprints, as required by federal regulations, for positions that handle select agents. Work with Cornell University Police Department to obtain and secure fingerprint cards. Forward all security risk assessments and fingerprint cards to the Department of Justice. Communicate results of security risk assessments to the subjects of the assessments. Coordinate renewal requests from the United States Department of Agriculture or Health and Human Services for security risk assessments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Hiring Authority**                                                            | Consult with the unit HR representative to:  
  - Review the unit hiring process  
  - Clarify expectations and responsibilities during the process, including the required reference and information verification process  
  Coordinate with the unit HR representative to retain detailed documentation of information obtained in the verification process. Before offering a position, contact at least two of an applicant's references, one of whom should be the current supervisor. Obtain advance approval from unit HR to extend a contingent or conditional offer of employment to an applicant before completing the reference checking and/or information verification process. Obtain advance approval from unit HR to extend a conditional offer of employment to an applicant contingent upon completion of a medical exam and/or immunization, as required.  
  After consulting with the unit HR representative, arrange for Department of Transportation (DOT) pre-employment drug and alcohol testing for an applicant, for DOT-covered positions. Conduct a specific reference check on an applicant for a DOT-covered position, obtaining information from prior employers about the applicant's testing history. |
| **Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations**                             | Consult with the unit HR representative or the hiring authority as to the appropriateness of pre-employment drug and alcohol testing. Communicate to unit HR and/or the hiring authority results of an applicant's pre-employment drug and/or alcohol testing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| **Recruitment and Employment Center**                                           | Lead efforts to review results and guide decisions to ensure adherence to New York State law when handling applicants with criminal convictions. Support HR representatives in addressing questions resulting from concerns throughout other verification efforts. Review requests to conduct credit checks for positions below band G in the finance/budget/planning job family. Coordinate credit check review and approval process with the vice president for human resources and safety services and the vice |
## RESPONSIBILITIES – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**Unit Human Resource (HR)</td>
<td>Maintain general oversight of the search process. Consult with the hiring authority to • Review the unit hiring process • Clarify expectations and responsibilities during the process • Ensure reference checking is completed satisfactorily • Initiate the information verification process • Submit all orders for information verification services to the university’s authorized third-party vendor Receive and review all reports from the university’s third-party vendor. Review and approve or deny, as appropriate, requests from the hiring authority to extend contingent or conditional offers of employment before completing the reference checking and/or information verification process. Review and approve or deny, as appropriate, requests from the hiring authority to extend a conditional offer of employment to an applicant contingent upon completion of a medical exam and/or immunization. Support, in coordination with the unit head, the performance of a credit check. ◆Note: With the approval of the unit head and the unit HR representative, credit checks may be requested for positions above and including band G within the finance/budget/planning job families. Credit checks for all other positions require additional approval in advance from the Recruitment and Employment Center, who will consult with the vice president for human resources and safety services and the vice president for finance and CFO, or their designees. Conduct domestic education verifications through the National Student Clearinghouse. After consulting with the hiring authority, notify the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations in writing that an applicant has been sent for pre-employment drug and alcohol testing. Conduct a specific reference check on an applicant for a DOT-covered position to obtain information from prior employers about the applicant's testing history. Coordinate with the hiring authority/supervisor to retain all records of the search and selection process appropriately. Contact and/or consult with the Recruitment and Employment Center, Division of Human Resources, as required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer (or designee)</strong></td>
<td>Consult with the vice president for human resources and safety services (or a designee) and approve requests, as appropriate, from the unit HR representative to conduct credit checks for positions below band G in the finance/budget/planning job family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vice President for Human Resources and Safety Services (or designee)</strong></td>
<td>Consult with the vice president for finance and CFO (or a designee) to approve requests, as appropriate, from the unit HR representative to conduct credit checks for positions below band G in the finance/budget/planning job family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

RESPONSIBILITIES – WEILL CORNELL CAMPUS UNITS
POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

PRINCIPLES

Overview

Hiring authorities and/or unit human resources (HR) representatives must conduct thorough reference checks and detailed information verification and receive satisfactory results on applicants to whom the university intends to offer employment, before the applicant’s first day of work.

◆ Note: With prior approval from the unit HR representative, an offer of employment may be made before the reference checking and/or information verification process is completed, contingent upon the successful completion of the required verification processes, with satisfactory results, before the first day of work. In a very limited number of cases, and with the prior approval of the unit HR representative, an individual may be allowed to begin employment contingent upon the successful completion of these processes, with satisfactory results, within 30 days of their start date.

Reference Checking

Before making an offer to an applicant, the hiring authority or a designee must contact at least two of the applicant’s references, one of whom should be the most recent supervisor, if possible. For an internal applicant, the current supervisor must be one of the references contacted. If extenuating circumstances exist, contact the unit HR representative for guidance.

Applicants to whom the university intends to offer a nonacademic temporary, casual, or volunteer position are subject to the same reference checking requirements as those that apply to regular staff positions.

◆ Note: Applicants for nonacademic positions must complete an employment application in accordance with the hiring process for the specific position vacancy, before information verification efforts (including reference checking) may begin. Regular, nonacademic position applications are completed via an online system. A completed Cornell employment application includes a certification that all information provided (written or verbal) is truthful, complete, and accurate, and authorizes the university to investigate pertinent information about the applicant.

Information Verification

All information verification efforts must be completed before the first day of work except in limited circumstances (see note below). All applicants (internal and external) for positions covered in either the undesignated or the designated positions categories are subject to the same information verification efforts as outlined in the chart under Reference Checking and Information Verification of Procedures. (For a list of designated positions, see the Designated Positions section of this policy.)
POLICY 6.6.2

Reference Checking and Information Verification

PRINCIPLES, continued

Applicants to whom the university intends to offer a nonacademic temporary, casual, or volunteer position that falls within the designated category are subject to the same background check requirements as regular staff.

◆ Note: With prior approval from the unit HR representative, an offer of employment may be made before the reference checking and/or information verification process is completed, contingent upon the successful completion of the required verification processes, with satisfactory results, before the first day of work. In a very limited number of cases, and with the prior approval of the unit HR representative, an individual may be allowed to begin employment contingent upon the successful completion of these processes, with satisfactory results, within 30 days of their start date.

Confidentiality of Information Gathered During Information Verification

All search-related materials are considered confidential and are to be shared only with those with a business need to know.
# POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

## PROCEDURES – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Initiating the Information Verification Process</strong></th>
<th>To initiate the required information verification process, hiring authorities must contact the unit human resources (HR) representative. The unit HR representative is responsible for submitting all orders for information verification services to the university’s authorized third-party vendor, and for receiving and reviewing all reports. For additional information, please review the “Reference Checking and Information Verification Chart,” below.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding the Cost of Information Verification Efforts</strong></td>
<td>For all designated positions, the university has reserved funds for and will cover the cost and associated fees of information verification efforts, as required. For all other positions, and for any checks beyond those required for designated positions, the requesting unit is responsible for covering the cost and associated fees of information verification efforts. (For a list of designated positions, see Designated Positions sections of this policy.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retaining Records</strong></td>
<td>For university policy language on retaining records related to search activities, refer to Retaining Records in the procedures of University Policy 6.6.1, Filling Vacancies (Excluding Academic and Bargaining Unit Staff).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chart: Reference Checking and Information Verification</strong></td>
<td>The following chart identifies the required checks and verification efforts by position type and responsible party. The university reserves the right to utilize additional checks and verifications, as appropriate, such as when there is a job-specific requirement. In such a circumstance, this requirement will be applied to all positions with similar responsibility in the unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reference Checking and Information Verification Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Check</th>
<th>Undesignated Positions</th>
<th>Designated Positions</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference Check(^2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Verification(^2,(^3)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Verification(^2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell Employment History Review</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSN &amp; Identity Check</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender Database Search</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete County and Federal 7 yr. Criminal Records Check for Felony and Misdemeanor Convictions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Job Related Checks</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional License and Certifications</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Testing(^4)</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Check(^5)</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Debar List (US Government’s “System for Award Management”)(^6)</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>If job related</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The university uses a third-party vendor to provide additional assistance in completing the requirements of this policy. If, for positions falling in the undesignated positions category, your unit’s process allows for completion of these verification and checking efforts without using the authorized third-party vendor, then the hiring authority must document in detail, and retain along with the official search records, how the checks were completed, and what information was obtained during the course of these efforts.

2. The “Responsible Party” may vary by unit. Contact your unit HR representative to determine who is responsible for these checks within your unit.

3. Domestic education verifications may be conducted by the unit HR representative through the university’s membership with the National Student Clearinghouse. If no information is available from the clearinghouse, additional verification steps are required. All international education verifications will be conducted through the university’s authorized third-party vendor.

4. To request Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Testing, contact the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations.

5. With the approval of the unit head and the unit HR representative, credit checks may be requested for positions above and including band G within the finance/budget/planning job families. Credit checks for all other positions require additional approval in advance from the Recruitment and Employment Center, who will consult with the vice president for human resources and safety services and the vice president for finance and chief financial officer, or their designees.
POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

PROCEDURES – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS, CONTINUED

Offering Employment
For university policy language on offering employment, refer to Offering Employment in the procedures of University Policy 6.6.1, Filling Vacancies (Excluding Academic and Bargaining Unit Staff).

Offering Conditional Employment – Medical Examinations and Immunizations
For university policy language on requiring medical examinations and immunizations as a condition of employment, refer to Offering Conditional Employment – Medical Examinations and Immunizations in the procedures of University Policy 6.6.1, Filling Vacancies (Excluding Academic and Bargaining Unit Staff).
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PROCEDURES – WEILL CORNELL CAMPUS UNITS
POLICY 6.6.2
Reference Checking and Information Verification

DESIGNATED POSITIONS – ITHACA CAMPUS UNITS

The following positions have been designated by the university as requiring more stringent scrutiny during the reference checking and information verification process:

◆Note: Designated positions that will be filled by a temporary, casual, or volunteer are included under this requirement.

- President and other officers of the corporation, academic deans, vice presidents, and vice provosts
- Division of Campus Life positions, where living in a university-owned building is required (e.g., faculty-in-residence, artist-in-residence, house professor or dean, house assistant dean, residence hall director, graduate resident fellow, other live-in positions)
- Positions with transactional authority as defined in University Policy 4.2, Transaction Authority and Payment Approval, and any position that has been delegated such transactional authority
- Band I or above positions in the administration and finance/budget/planning job families
- Health job family
- Environmental Health and Safety technicians and specialists
- All positions within the Cornell University Police Department
- Information Technology job family
- Athletic titles – head coach I and II, assistant coach I and II, head athletic trainer, athletic trainer
- Athletic instructors who travel with students or provide one-on-one instruction
- Positions in the auditor job title progression
- Positions having administrative access (i.e., installing programs, activating or deactivating databases, creating, changing, or removing user accounts) to systems and databases containing sensitive data (university, unit, department, project)
- Positions with pass key access (grand master access, access to residence rooms and hotel rooms, housekeeping and custodial staff, service and maintenance staff)
- Positions requiring a commercial driver’s license (CDL) covered under the Omnibus Transportation Act
- Positions that conduct outreach work with children (newborn through grade 12)
- Positions that require working with children (newborn through grade 12) and present the possibility of care, supervision, guidance, or control of children, including, but not limited to as a child care provider or through a summer camp, summer college, internship or other similar situations
- Positions with access to priceless/rare collections of material (i.e., some librarian/museum positions) or highly sensitive information
- Positions handling select agents (infectious agents and toxins) as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or United States Department of Agriculture (see note below)
- Positions that involve the husbandry of vertebrate animals
- Positions with key/card access to animal facilities and/or rooms where animals are housed or animal research is conducted
- Positions with access to biosafety level 3 facilities

◆Note: The criminal records check for positions working with select agents is conducted by the Department of Justice. To initiate the criminal information verification request to the Department of Justice, contact the university’s biological safety officer at Environmental Health and Safety.
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DESIGNATED POSITIONS – WEILL CORNELL CAMPUS UNITS
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