

Employment Verification and Background Checks

The proposed policy and procedures on Employment Verification and Background Checks are available for public review and comment. In 2007, a [university task force](#) reviewed current practices at ISU and other colleges and universities. The result was a recommendation that ISU's decentralized practices regarding reference checks, credentials verification, and criminal background checks be standardized under a university-wide policy. A committee began work on a policy in January 2008 and has shared the policy with a variety of campus groups, including representatives of Faculty Senate, P&S Council, S&C Council and AFSCME. The committee now seeks input from the entire campus community. [Submit comments](#) through September 30, 2008.

Effective: DRAFT

Contact: [Human Resource Services](#)

Introduction

The university's employees are essential to advancing the institution as a place to learn and work. It is necessary to consider both the quality and suitability of potential employees in order to further the institution's mission. The decision to hire an employee begins with an informed assessment. Experience shows that many serious problems-the worst of which involve violence or significant legal liability-can be avoided when determining whom to hire. This policy establishes the expected level of employment verification and background investigation, and also provides tools and resources to assist Iowa State University in appropriately employing its personnel. Those tools include employment verification through reference checks, confirmation of academic credentials and licenses, and investigation of criminal and credit histories.

Policy Statement

Scope

This policy shall apply to hires made through regular recruitment procedures, through an emergency hire, or through waiver or exception. When a search committee or search firm is used, the hiring department shall require that the committee or firm comply with this policy.

Some positions on campus are not covered by this policy, such as undergraduate, ~~and~~ graduate student, ~~and post doctoral~~ positions and temporary positions that do not otherwise meet the definitions below. Departments are encouraged to use any of the policy tools (see Resources below) for non-covered positions, when appropriate and possible.

This policy supplements and does not replace any law, regulation, or separate policy that requires employment verification and background investigations.

Definitions

"Covered positions" means

all regular, full-time, and part-time positions, whether continuous or term, including the following employee groups:

contract
 faculty
 merit
~~post-doctoral appointments~~
 professional & scientific

Temporary appointments expected to last longer than one month. If the temporary appointment exceeds one month, the department shall at that time follow the policy as set out below.

"Temporary" means employees hired to cover short term or sporadic needs of a department, such as filling in for vacation/illness, a special project, and seasonal work. Temporary employees are covered by this policy, as described above, even though they may not have been not hired through formal Human Resource Services recruitment and employment procedures.

"Any position" means any covered or non-covered position at the university, regardless of appointment type or term and including student and temporary positions.

"Finalist(s)" means the applicant(s)/person(s) selected for interview.

"Selected candidate" means the person selected for hire.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions and Prior Discipline

All external finalists or, at a minimum, the selected candidate for any position shall complete a written Disclosure Statement (see Resources below). Disclosure of negative information is not an automatic bar to employment. All relevant factors and circumstances will be considered. However, falsification, misrepresentation, or omission of information on the disclosure statement is a legitimate reason to deny or terminate employment.

Reference Checks

The hiring department shall check references of the finalists or, at a minimum, the selected candidate for a covered position. Departments are encouraged to check references for any position, including student and other temporary hires, when appropriate and possible. See Resources below for information on checking references.

Confirmation of Academic Credentials and Licenses

The hiring department shall confirm the academic credentials of the finalists or, at a minimum, the selected candidate for any position for which a degree is required or preferred. At a minimum, this shall include professional and scientific employees, post-doctoral and research appointees, faculty, and administrators. See Resources below for information on confirming academic credentials.

For any position at the university that requires or prefers a license or certification, the hiring department shall confirm that such license or certification is current and in good standing. See Resources below for information on confirming licensure or certification. For motor vehicle licenses, the Office of Risk Management will conduct the investigation.

Criminal History Investigation

The hiring department shall arrange for a criminal history investigation on the external finalists or, at a minimum, the external selected candidate for all covered positions. The purpose of this investigation is to determine the candidate's suitability for employment in light of past criminal convictions. Human Resource Services will be the recipient and holder of such information and will share the results only with the hiring authority and other necessary personnel.

New hires should not begin to work until the criminal history investigation is complete. In the event there is an immediate need for services, all formal offers of employment and continued employment are contingent upon a successful criminal history investigation. In that situation, prior to making the formal offer of employment the department shall consult with Human Resource Services or the Executive Vice President and Provost, as applicable.

All job postings and announcements should notify applicants that the selected candidate will be subject to a criminal history investigation.

See Resources below for information on conducting a criminal history investigation.

Conviction Not an Automatic Bar

A criminal conviction is not an automatic bar to employment. The university will consider the recency, severity, frequency, and nature of a conviction, as well as its relation to the position in question. Other

factors may include the candidate's role in the crime, the candidate's actions and activities since the crime, including rehabilitation or retribution, work history, truthfulness and completeness of the candidate's disclosure of convictions, and any other relevant information. Human Resource Services shall review any negative results in relation to the position in question and may also consult with necessary personnel as part of that review. The Associate Vice President for Human Resource Services, or designee, shall make a recommendation to the hiring department and notify the Executive Vice President and Provost or applicable Vice President.

Credit History Investigation

Some positions, whether covered or not, may require a credit history to determine if the prospective employee is a suitable hire given the nature of those positions, including access to or accountability for cash or financial assets or accounts. In those situations, the hiring department shall conduct a credit history investigation on the finalist(s) or, at a minimum, the selected candidate for any position determined to require such an inquiry. Faculty hired into non-administrative positions will not be subject to the credit history investigations. This credit history investigation policy applies to the categories of potential employees as provided by Human Resource Services and approved by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

A negative credit history is not an automatic bar to employment but will be considered along with factors such as the nature and seriousness of the credit history and relation to the position in question. Human Resource Services will be the recipient and holder of such information and will share the results only with the hiring authority and other necessary personnel.

All job postings and announcements (for individuals included in this policy) should notify should state if the applicants that ~~the are~~ selected candidates will be subject to a credit history investigation.

See Resources below for information on conducting credit history investigations.

Optional Steps

Hiring departments may choose to use additional means of verifying an employee's suitability for employment other than those identified in this policy. This may include speaking with former employers or colleagues of the applicant who were not listed as references but who are known to the department, or reviewing the candidate through electronic news or information resources. Caution should be used in these situations to ensure the information is reliable and accurate. In addition, such optional steps should be used in the same manner for all similarly-situated applicants for the position.

Confidentiality

Information received through this policy will be maintained in a confidential file. For reference checks and confirmation of academic credentials and licensure, the information shall be maintained in the department search file. For disclosure statements and criminal and credit history investigations, the information shall be maintained in a separate, confidential file in Human Resource Services.

Non-Discrimination

Employment verification and background checks will be used only to determine the candidate's suitability for employment and will not be used to discriminate against any candidate on a basis protected by law or Iowa State University policy.

Resources

[Application for Employment Opportunities](#)
[Checking References \[PDF\]](#)
[Conducting Criminal and Credit History Investigations \[PDF\]](#)
[Confirmation of Academic Credentials and Licenses \[PDF\]](#)
[Consent and Authorization for Background Check \[Form\]](#)
[Disclosure Statement \[Form\]](#)
[Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#)
[Human Resource Services](#)

[Human Resource Services – Recruitment and Employment](#)
[Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action Statement \[PDF\]](#)
[Office of Risk Management \(for Motor Vehicle Licenses information\)](#)
[Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act \[PDF\]](#)
[Volunteer Policy \(in development; contact Office of Risk Management\)](#)