

Referee checks

APS recruitment

Factsheets

## Overview

Referee checks should always be a part of a recruitment process. Referee checks provide independent information about a candidate to help assess their suitability for a role. In addition to the opportunity to obtain information about the candidate’s capabilities, knowledge and behaviours, referee checks also provide a selection panel with the opportunity to seek clarification on matters discussed during assessment and validate claims put forward by the candidate in their resume, application or at interview.

## Benefits

When properly administered, referee reports can:

* help identify potential difficulties in the workplace
* help mitigate the risks of false or omitted information

## Gathering information from a referee

The selection panel should undertake at least two referee checks including, where possible, from a candidate’s current supervisor (or most recent if the candidate is not currently employed). As referee checks generally form part of the assessment, they should be conducted for any candidate in contention for the role (or merit pool of list).

Supervisors, key stakeholders or other people who have observed the candidate’s recent work performance in a relevant context can be suitable referees. Selection panels may use referee reports to gather information on a candidates:

* work performance
* behaviours
* experience
* technical expertise and knowledge and
* other relevant work-related qualities.

There may be sensitivities in approaching nominated referees (this can be especially so when an applicant is not currently employed in the APS). Selection panels are encouraged to let the applicant know when referees will be contacted and check if there are special considerations to take into account before doing so.

Referee checks can be verbal, but selection panels should document conversations and confirm with the referee that the information gathered has been accurately reflected. Agencies should also ensure that potential referees are aware that their report may be provided to the candidate if requested.

Did you know?

Referee checks do not need to be standardised. They should be tailored for each candidate, and used to seek further information or validate information received through the assessment process. This should include verifying the accuracy of information presented by the candidate in their application and/or at interview (for example, verifying their role in achieving a major project, or confirming their response to an interpersonal conflict in the workplace). If referee reports are used they must be obtained for all potentially suitable candidates.

## Adverse referee reports

Where an adverse referee report is received, the selection panel should engage with their agency human resources area to seek guidance on how to proceed.

Procedural fairness requires that the candidate be given a reasonable opportunity to respond, but what is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each case. Different approaches might be warranted depending on whether information received goes to integrity, past performance or behaviour. This also applies to information gleaned through social media, on the Internet or by any other means.

If the candidate responds, the response should be considered by the selection panel or delegate and a record made of whether the response changes or confirms the assessment of the candidate and the reasons for that conclusion.  This record should be incorporated into the selection report.