

# Sample Reference Check Questions

The following questions are taken from "Reference Review Guide" and are provided as a resource for selecting appropriate, job-related reference questions. Approximately 6-8 questions should be carefully selected for a 20-30 minute telephone interview with the reference source.

Prior to asking any questions, describe the position to the reference source. Be candid - explain any circumstances or characteristics that are a component of the position or the working environment.

## Work Experience

1. What is your relationship to ---- ?
2. Could you describe ----'s duties/responsibilities with your organization?
3. Would you comment on the ability of ---- to do the job I have described.
4. What do you feel are ----'s strongest point(s)? OR Why do you feel ---- was successful in his/her work?
5. What do you feel is ----'s weakest point? OR limitation?
6. How well did ---- perform in the following areas...?
7. Would you describe ---- as a "big picture" person, or a "detailed" person, and why?
8. Provide an example of a creative or innovative idea that he/she was able to implement, and how he/she went about it.
9. How readily does he/she accept new ideas?
10. How well does he/she respond to direction?
11. How well does he/she coordinate the efforts of others? OR How would you describe ---- as a leader?
12. What would you say is his/her working style? (hard-working, methodical, easy going)
13. How does he/she respond to pressures (e.g., from heavy work loads, from clients, constituents)?
14. How effective does he/she handle many projects or multiple priorities simultaneously?
15. Can he/she function as a troubleshooter? A mediator?
16. Could you give us an example of when he/she did something that others thought was really outstanding? For example, solving a difficult technical problem, completing a complex project, or saving money for the organization.

## Administrative / Managerial Style

1. How well does he/she communicate ideas?
2. How would you rate his/her written communication skills?
3. How would you rate him/her as a manager of (e.g., people, projects, technical work)?
4. How would you characterize his/her managerial style? How would you rate the effectiveness of this style in your organization?
5. How well does he/she prioritize the workload and use effective time management?
6. How would you describe him/her as a leader? Why?
7. What points do you think ---- needs to work on to reach his/her full potential?



To find more resources for supervisors of student employees, visit the Student Employment Supervisor Manual and Resources page at <http://www.cwu.edu/student-employment/supervisor-manual-and-resources>.

## Motivation

1. What do you think motivates ---- in his/her work?
2. Compared with others you have worked with (supervised), how would you rate him/her in terms of self-motivation?
3. How hard would you say ---- works in relation to others around him/her?
4. Did you ever have to use extraordinary means or take special effort to motivate him/her?
5. Is he/she easily distracted or discouraged?
6. Does he/she work better alone or in a group?

## Job-Related Personal Qualities

**It is imperative that you ask the entire question in this section. If the question is asked out of a job-related context, it is illegal.**

1. How often does he/she need feedback or praise about his/her work?

Purpose: Provides information about the candidate's work style or personal needs in the workplace, guidance required, ...

2. Does he/she have any issues or problems which would interfere with performing the job we have described?

Purpose: Gather information regarding handling conflict, respect for authority, other work-related characteristics that candidate has not mentioned.

3. This University is (briefly describe the environment as it relates to the position, i.e., in budget reduction, going through major changes...) and the department, work unit, office is (describe the work environment). In your opinion, would ----- have any difficulty performing the job in this environment?

Purpose: Same as above.

4. If you had the opportunity, would you rehire ----- for a similar position? OR, If you had the opportunity, would you promote ---- to a position such as ours?

Purpose: Look for unconditional response. If not, ask for an explanation.



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