Behavioral-Based Reference Check Guidelines

Behavioral-based questions can be asked of a final candidate's former employers or colleagues. It is important to be prepared with questions before calling a reference and to listen carefully to **what is and isn't said in response to specific questions**.

Remember to always start by telling the reference:
- Your name and title
- You are calling from Dartmouth, the name of the candidate, and the title of the position
- You are authorized by the candidate to inquire about their previous employment and to call former supervisors, including this reference
- Time needed for the conversation (if now is not convenient, schedule a time to call back)
- Information will be kept private and not shared with the candidate

Additional Inquiry Guide
- When introducing yourself to the current to previous supervisor, do not state that the candidate has been 'selected', only that they are a finalist for a position.
- Consider whether performance problems reported by current or previous supervisors are in areas that might affect performance in the position you are filling and follow up.
- Be sure there is a job-related reason for asking specific questions
- Do not ask any questions about characteristics that are protected by non-discrimination las and Dartmouth policy, such as questions about sex, race, color, religion, age, disability, status as a veteran, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other category protected by applicable law. Dartmouth's Notice of Non-Discrimination is found online at https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/notice-nondiscrimination.
- Maintain a high level of confidentiality throughout the process. Do not delegate the additional inquiry responsibility to anyone outside the hiring process, and share information gathered only on a need-to-know basis.

Following is a sample inquiry form which provides a variety of possible competencies and behavioral-based interview questions that can be explored with references regarding a candidate's past work-related performance. This list is not exhaustive, but should provide sufficient options for most student employment positions. Carefully consider the student position and the skills you are seeking for that position, then select 3-5 questions to ask of the former employer or colleague that directly relate to the needs of the position you are filling.

Please ensure that information received through additional inquiries are weighted in the same way for all candidates for which reference checks are completed. For example, a factor which disqualifies one candidate should be the basis for disqualifying any candidate. Document the information gathered from your reference check calls and include them in the search file maintained by the hiring department.

If you have any questions about the reference check process, including developing follow-up questions and how and whom you may share information collected from references, please be sure to contact the Student Employment Office.

APPENDIX A

Sample Additional Inquiry Form

Name of Candidate:
Position Title:
Reference Providers Name and Title:

1. Did you directly supervise, manage, or teach [xxx]?

2. Please give detailed comments on their:
     a. Attendance and dependability
     b. Initiative and motivation to take on additional tasks
     c. Ability to get along with others
     d. Degree of supervision required
     e. Professionalism/teamwork/collaboration
     f. Overall attitude

3. Why did [xxx] leave your organization (if applicable)?

4. Additional questions: (customized to job-specific items – examples of some that might be helpful are below)

Work Ethic
Describe a time when [xxx] went above and beyond the call of duty.

Service Orientation
Describe a situation where [xxx] provided exceptional customer service. What made it stand out? What characteristics did [xxx] exhibit that made this encounter notable?

Communication
Tell me about how [xxx] communicates with others concerning project process, concerns, and suggestions. How would you describe [xxx]'s communication style? Please provide an example of its effectiveness.

How does [xxx] communicate with people at different levels?

Adaptability/Flexibility
Tell me about a change that has occurred in [xxx]'s workplace. How did they cope with those changes? What did they do to facilitate those changes?

Self-Management

Describe how [xxx] works under pressure. Do they anticipate problems effectively or do they just react to them? Can you provide an example?

Tell me about a team/group project in which [xxx] was involved. What did they do to ensure the success of the team? Were there any problems?

Interpersonal Skills/Working with Others

Tell me about a conflict [xxx] had with another employee. How did they resolve the conflict? How did they work towards mending the relationship with that person?

Tell me about [xxx]'s relationship with a co-worker who they do not have a good working relationship. What steps have they taken to improve that relationship?

Give me an example of [xxx]'s ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with people regardless of cultural differences.

Describe a situation where the team was having trouble agreeing on a decision and what [xxx] did to facilitate consensus.

Give me an example of a situation when [xxx] has demonstrated sensitivity to diversity issues.

Describe how [xxx]'s ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with many different types of people has contributed to the organization's success.

Results Oriented

In relation to others in a similar role, how would you rate [xxx] on taking initiative?

Give me an example of when [xxx] achieved something by their persistence that others couldn't.

Accountability

Describe a complex problem [xxx] solved.

Tell me about a time [xxx] had to take responsibility for a mistake they made.

Describe a project in which [xxx] failed. What did they learn from this?

Leadership Skills

Describe a situation when [xxx] demonstrated initiative and took action without waiting for direction. What was the outcome?

Describe a situation in which [xxx] had to quickly establish their credibility and gain the confidence of others. What did they do?

What would [xxx] do if some team members weren't doing their share of the work?