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## Guidelines to Issuing Employment References

### Introduction

1. These guidelines set out the procedure to be followed by employees of Trinity College Dublin who are requested to provide references.

### Application

2. These guidelines apply to all employees of the University who provide a reference in a professional capacity and all references supplied on Trinity headed notepaper or in any format which identifies the reference provider as an employee of Trinity. The Guidelines also apply to Trinity Line Managers completing the standard Trinity Reference Report form.

### Guidelines on issuing references:

3. There is no legal requirement on a referee to provide an existing or former employee with a reference of any kind. However, in situations where no problems arose during the employment relationship and the employee has given valued service, the employer may feel obliged to provide a reference. If a reference is provided, it must be accurate and fair and write or say only what can be defended. Economic loss to both the employee and the prospective employer can occur as a result of a bad reference and can cause irreparable damage.
4. References might include factual information like dates of employment, job title, and salary and sickness absence (excluding any absence relating to disability or parental leave). It might also include factual information related to their performance, integrity and reasons for leaving. Any data given in a reference should be capable of verification.



5. Where members of a Selection Committee for a Trinity Post are nominated as a referee, a candidate will be advised that only one member of the Committee may provide a reference. In the event that a Selection Committee member does provide a reference, such a reference may only be factual in content and cannot recommend the candidate for appointment.

## Procedures

### 6. Written references

When written references are given, it is recommended that they are headed private and confidential, addressed to a named individual and sent in a sealed envelope by post or courier, marked private and confidential. E-mail is also an acceptable format.

Always include a clause that describes the content as an expression of opinion.

Ensure that the reference provided is true, accurate and fair.

### 7. Questionnaire-type reference requests

In answering questionnaire-type reference requests, answer only what you have specific knowledge of and avoid answering general questions that are unrelated to the employment experience.

### 8. Telephone reference requests

It is University practice not to provide telephone references. This should be confirmed to the enquirer.

### 9. Academic references

Universities should be able to confirm that a particular degree was awarded if required for a particular post, provided that they were given precise names, course title and dates.

### 10. Access to references

Please note that employment references may be accessible under the Data Protection Acts and Freedom of Information Act.