HO 4.6 Requesting References (CAFOD)

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| **Title**:   | **Requesting References**  |
| **Key contact**  | **HR Services Officer**  |
| **Audience**  | All staff  |
| ***Variations***  | policies are based on UK law. Where principles do not comply with local law, local law will take precedent. For support in localising policies please contact the appropriate HR Advisor.  |

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**Requesting References**

**Principles**

CAFOD holds the following principles in relation to requesting references:

* All offers of employment will be subject to receipt of at least two satisfactory written references.
* All references must be checked against CAFOD’s satisfactory standards as per the “[Requesting References Checklist](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Checklist.docx)”
* At least one reference must be from the candidate’s most recent employer. If they have not previously had paid employment, they are asked to supply a reference from somebody who knows them through voluntary work, recent academic courses or employment training.
* References should cover the last two years of a candidate’s employment. If the candidate has not been in continuous employment during this time, then a character reference should be sought to cover the gap in employment.
* A minimum of three references are required where we need to conduct police checks overseas.
* No contract (statement of particulars) will be issued until all written references have been received and are deemed satisfactory. Following a verbal offer, an offer letter will be sent to successful candidates ‘subject to satisfactory references’.
* No candidate will start their employment with CAFOD until all written references have been received, with the exception of a level 2 or level 3 emergency (see below).

**Requesting References**

* Candidates are required to provide their referees at the time of applying.
* References should be taken up at the point of offer, and only for the successful candidate(s).
* Recruiting (line) managers are required to request the references and complete the [checklist](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Checklist.docx).
* Before contacting referees, recruiting managers must ensure they have the candidate’s consent to approach them. Every individual has the right to know and to be asked for his or her consent before any check is made on any aspect of his or her background.
* If a reference is received which contains any negative or adverse comments about the individual, CAFOD will not assume that this information is accurate, nor that any information provided by the candidate was inaccurate or deliberately misleading. Instead CAFOD will seek further information, either by contacting the candidate and inviting him or her to a further interview, or by seeking his or her consent to apply for further references.
* In the event of a recruitment campaign to support a level 2 or level 3 emergency – Rapid Recruitment will apply. This means that, as an exception, the reference from the candidate’s most recent employer must be obtained before commencement, and the second reference must be obtained within their probation period.

**Access to References under the General Data Protection Regulations**

* Once references have been received, copies of these references will be held confidentially and securely on the staff member’s personnel file. If a candidate is not hired, any references obtained will be stored on HR files for 6 months only.
* Subject Access Requests for References will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

**Appendix -  Further Guidance on Requesting References**

**Purpose of the reference**

References should be used to help to confirm the decision of the panel and check factual evidence about the successful candidate. By confirming past performance it may also assist in assessing the candidate’s future performance and potential.

In addition, references are a part of an CAFOD’s safeguarding measures to ensure the right people are recruited in terms of skills, but also with regards to behaviours. CAFOD seeks to adhere to the CHS Alliance guidelines on [safer recruitment](https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/Safer%20Recruitment%20Guidelines.pdf) which states:

“we … have a moral and legal duty to protect the communities and people we work with, staff, partners and stakeholders, from those individuals who may misuse their position for their own benefit, be this financial, sexual, abuse or positioning of power.”

**Reference request forms**

The line manager is required to:

* Request references in writing
* Check them against the ‘[Requesting References Checklist](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Checklist.docx)’
* If references are satisfactory, send them along with the checklist to the HR Services Team.
* If references do not meet the criteria on the checklist, seek advice from their HR adviser before deciding the next steps.

There are two versions of the reference request form:

* [Reference Request](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Request%20for%20Safeguarding%20posts.docx) for Safeguarding posts or “identified posts” under the Safeguarding policy.
* Standard [Reference Request](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Request%20for%20Non-safeguarding%20posts.docx) for all other posts.

**Unsatisfactory References**

In the unlikely event that a reference does not meet CAFOD’s satisfactory standards, as per the [Requesting References Checklist](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Checklist.docx), the manager should request to meet with the HR Adviser to help the manager consider whether the issue is serious and significant, bearing in mind the evidence obtained during the recruitment process (the individual’s skills and experience, test results, interviews and the other reference). Further information and clarifications will be sought. The manager will also consider what the likely impact would be on the individual’s ability to perform the job and what action could be taken to address the issue. For example, could it be rectified by learning, mentoring or monitoring? If it is not significant, recruitment should continue. If it is significant, the offer should be withdrawn in writing.

**Telephone references**

References must always be obtained in writing using CAFOD’s reference request form, alongside completion of the ‘[Requesting References Checklist](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Template%20Reference%20Checklist.docx)’. There may be times when follow up telephone conversations take place in addition. If an additional telephone reference takes place, a summary of this should documented as an addendum to the completed reference form, before being submitted to the HR Service Team.

**Internal references**

When a staff member is offered a new role internally, the receiving line manager should request one reference from the staff member’s current line manager (N.b. this is only required if the receiving line manager has not already worked closely with the staff member).

**Further Reading:**

[Requesting References FAQs](http://cafodportal/sites/rec/Recruitment%20Toolkit%20Documents/Requesting%20References%20FAQs.docx)

[ACAS: References for Employment](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5072)

[CHS Alliance: Safer Recruitment Guidance](https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/Safer%20Recruitment%20Guidelines.pdf)