



Providing Employment or Volunteer Reference Policy

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Providing Employment or Volunteer Reference Policy

1. Introduction

An author of a reference owes a duty of care to the person that the reference is being written for, and may be liable in damages to that person if loss is caused through negligence. If you give a reference, you have a duty to take reasonable care to ensure it is true, accurate and fair and that it is not misleading - a duty that is owed to both the employee/volunteer and to the new employer.

The new employer could also claim damages against the Students' Association if an employee provides a glowing reference for an employee/volunteer who has not in fact been satisfactory, and that person goes on to perform badly in their new role.

The principle aims of a reference are to:

- Confirm facts – to confirm the accuracy of the statements made in an application (e.g. volunteer roles, tasks undertaken)
- Provide opinions – to get the referee's opinion as to the candidate's suitability for the post/course in question, and his/her potential for the future.

A reference relies on both facts and opinions, and these two should be clearly differentiated.

2. Data Protection

- 2.1 An employee must ensure that the individual to whom the request relates has given their written consent for the reference to be provided. If an employee has any doubts about whether the individual has given their consent, they should be contacted to check that they want the reference to be provided. Written consent may have been provided by a former employee as part of the employee exit paperwork.
- 2.2 When providing a reference it is important to remember that an individual could ask the requesting organisation or the Students' Association for a copy.

3. Employment Reference

- 3.1 Only the Chief Executive (or nominee) may give references for current or former employees of GCU Students' Association. All employment references will be written using a staff email account or on Students' Association headed notepaper. Telephone references are not given. It is the policy of the Association to only provide factual employment references.
- 3.2 If the Association receives a further enquiry from the prospective employer for clarification of any information provided in the employment reference, the Students' Association will ensure it does not go beyond the content of the original reference in the information provided.

4. Volunteer Reference

- 4.1 Members of staff may provide references for volunteers and can be written on Students' Association headed notepaper or by using a staff email account. Telephone references are not given.

- 4.2 Members should be told that there is a Students' Association policy of not writing a volunteer reference until they have volunteered within GCU Students' Association for at least 3 months and that a member of staff should first be approached for permission.
- 4.3 Staff must not provide personal opinions about the individual's performance or conduct. Staff have a responsibility to ensure that the information provided is factual, true, accurate, fair and not misleading.
- 4.4 Staff should not provide information on the health and medical history of a volunteer.
- 4.5 Staff should ensure any references given on behalf of Students' Association are factual and do not have the potential to bring Students' Association into disrepute.
- 4.6 If a member of staff has been asked for the reference and does not want to give a reference this should be discussed with the Chief Executive. Failure to give a reference, without any explanation, can also imply that you have had problems with the volunteer and this could give rise to claims that you have discriminated against them.

5. Reference Disclaimers

- 5.1 All references should be marked '**Private and Confidential**', to make it clear that they are intended only for the person to whom the reference is given.
- 5.2 The following disclaimer should be included in every reference: ***The Students' Association accepts no liability, in negligence or otherwise, for the statements or information contained in this reference although they are given in good faith.***

6. Personal Recommendations on Professional Networking Sites

- 6.1 Employees are free to give personal positive recommendations on professional networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn) provided it is made clear that such recommendations are not given by the Students' Association but in a personal capacity. No personal recommendations should have the potential to bring the Students' Association into disrepute.

- 6.2 This policy applies to all employees who maintain a LinkedIn or other similar profile for professional networking purposes:

6.2.1 Professionalism

Employees should maintain a professional demeanour when giving and receiving recommendations. Recommendations should focus on professional achievements, skills, and contributions rather than personal characteristics.

6.2.2 Consistency and Fairness

Employees are encouraged to provide recommendations based on merit and professional experience rather than personal relationships. Recommendations should be honest, accurate, and reflective of the individual's performance and contributions.

6.2.3 Confidentiality and Privacy

Employees should respect confidentiality and privacy when giving recommendations. They should avoid disclosing sensitive or confidential information about colleagues or the Students' Association without explicit consent.

6.2.4 Endorsement of Association Values

Recommendations should align with Students' Association mission, vision and values. Employees should ensure that their recommendations uphold the Students' Association's reputation and brand image.

6.2.5 Permission and Consent

Employees should obtain consent from individuals before mentioning specific projects, achievements, or experiences involving them in recommendations. Respect for privacy and personal boundaries is paramount.

6.2.6 Monitoring and Compliance

The Students' Association reserves the right to monitor LinkedIn activity related to the Students' Association and ensure compliance with this policy. Any violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

7. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed by the Chief Executive, as and when required, taking into account feedback from consultation with employees. This policy is not contractual and the Students' Association reserves the right to alter or withdraw it at any time. The Trustee Board will approve any changes to this policy.