

# West Virginia Division of Personnel

## Education Verification and Documentation Guidelines

(Revised: 4/8/2010)

### Overview

These guidelines are provided to assist state agencies in verifying the post-secondary education of persons being considered for original appointment. This implements a promulgated change in Division of Personnel applicant screening processes to provide more efficient recruitment and referral services to merit system agencies. In effect, the Division of Personnel will only review education information provided in the application or in documents voluntarily provided by the applicant. We will no longer routinely require every applicant to submit paper education and license verification documents at the time of initial applicant screening and ranking. These documents and other necessary verifications procedures will now be completed by the hiring agency after referral for interview and prior to appointment. This new process will enable the Division of Personnel to make more efficient use of the new online application system and more quickly make top candidates available for agency interview.

### Verification of Education and Professional Credentials

Hiring managers already have an obligation to avoid negligently hiring persons who are unqualified and who might fail or even endanger employees or clients. It should be understood that education verification is only one part of a broader due diligence hiring process. Hiring agencies should gather all information necessary to ensure that the person selected has provided accurate information and is right for the position and the organization. This process might include: employment history verification, employment gaps inquiry, skill level verification, criminal records review, and reference checks. These are not addressed in this guideline document.

Interviews and application reviews should be conducted prior to reference checking and verification of background information. Candidates should be advised that background information will be verified. Candidates should be given the opportunity to contact their references in advance of a call from the agency. The Division of Personnel application includes a statement indicating that submission of the application authorizes the State of West Virginia to conduct any job related inquiry to verify information contained in the application.

### Employing Agency Responsibility

The hiring manager or agency administrative staff shall review the job class specification and required post-secondary education. This might include various "substitution" statements that refer to post-secondary education, advanced degrees or license requirement.

The agency should, where possible, review **original** education and license documents and/or contact appropriate authorities to verify that the selected applicant meets minimum job requirements. The agency will provide copies of verification documents or records to the Division of Personnel as part of the regular personnel transaction documentation.

### Role of the Division of Personnel

The Division of Personnel will continue to review and assess education claims contained in the official application, attachments, and in any supplemental application questions. We will also continue to apply college **accreditation** standards. On a case by case basis we will continue to require official paper transcripts where specific course work review is necessary to assign a score or determine eligible rank order. If specific course work is used to meet job minimum

requirements, agencies should review the college transcript record. We realize that some verification can be complicated and may require standards interpretation. The Division of Personnel remains available to provide specific verification consultation and verification services at the request of any state agency.

## **Verification of High School or GED**

There is no requirement to verify high school education or GED. Each agency should review how the job skill level relates to primary and secondary educational achievement. The agency may choose to verify school grade completion. The Division of Personnel does not require any documentation of such optional verification.

## **Application Review**

The agency should carefully review the application of any candidate being seriously considered for appointment. In addition to employment history, references and other due diligence checks and verifications, note any required post-secondary education, training, or license claims. Any material misrepresentation of applicant training and experience should be reported to the Division of Personnel.

## **Candidate Provided Documents**

When contacting candidates for information or interview, instruct them that education verification documents are required and must be provided and reviewed prior to appointment. The applicant may be instructed to bring original documents to the scheduled interview. Alternatively, they may have the educational institution provide the verification directly to the agency. Optionally, the agency may defer verification until after the evaluation process and the top candidate or group has been identified.

If possible, avoid telling the candidate that he or she is "the final" candidate, since discoveries in the background verification process may affect the final selection decision.

## **Review Original Education Documents and/or Contact Institutions**

Documents (diploma, transcript, license) provided by candidates at the time of interview may be copied for later review and documentation. Where possible, you should only examine official and original documents. Hiring managers may delegate verification to agency HR or administrative staff. You may also request verification service from the Division of Personnel.

You may verify the qualifying degree level or the highest related degree received. Verifying other degrees is optional unless these were used in making the hiring decision.

**Important:** Depending on the job risk, we highly recommend that you contact the institution's Registrar to verify attendance. A signed release form may be required.

**Agencies can verify school accreditation at:** <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>

## **Example verification documents:**

**Original Diploma** - Verifies college graduation. (May not verify major field.)

## **Verification of College Major Field**

**Original Transcript** - Jobs that require a degree in a specific major field may have to be verified from an official transcript. This is not required if the diploma includes the major field.

Note: Agencies are only required to verify education that is used to meet stated minimum requirements. We recommend, however, that all desirable, advanced or additional training be verified if used in making the selection decision. **Also, any related education used to justify**

**appointment at a salary above the minimum MUST be verified.**

## **License Verification**

License verification is only necessary if the license is required for the position or is listed in the application materials to enhance the qualifications of the candidate.

Methods to obtain verification:

- Ask the candidate to show the original license. Make a copy of the license.  
Note: some licenses may not be copied (e.g., nursing). If so, record the number and expiration.
- On-line verification with the licensing board or authority
- Contact the licensing authority directly and request written verification

A printed copy of the license, on-line verification, or an e-mail from a licensing authority is sufficient documentation. Refer unique license verification issues to the Division of Personnel. If a license is required for the position, you must include a copy of the license verification with the personnel transaction (WV11) materials as described below.

## **Verification of Technical School Completion or Special Certificate**

Some jobs allow an applicant to use the completion of a post-secondary vocational or technical school program or other special Certification to meet minimum requirements. In such cases, the agency should ask the candidate to provide an original diploma, certificate or official program completion letter. These need not be verified unless the program was required or used to substitute for required job education or experience.

## **Original Appointment transaction documentation**

Hiring agencies are required to include copies of education verification documents in the original appointment transaction documentation (eFax). Failure to include documentation will result in transaction rejection and/or needless delays in processing the appointment.

## **Exceptional and Special Situations.**

Some job classes and special recruitment situations may require special verification procedures. Critical shortage jobs, unusual job requirements, and targeted college recruitment may require customize verification procedures. These will be approved on a case by case basis. Under no circumstances will an employee be approved for **permanent status** until **all** required education verifications have been completed and the appropriate documentation provided to the Division of Personnel.

The Division of Personnel will provide minimum requirements and verifications consultations at hiring manager or agency request. Once a top candidate has been identified, Division of Personnel staff will be available to answer any verification questions, review documents, and assist in any way possible to expedite the process. Agencies may call the **Staffing Services Section** at any time for immediate assistance. (304.558.3950 Ext. 57207)

We realize that these new procedures place specific responsibilities on hiring managers and agency administrative staff. We hope that hiring managers will understand that these requirements are simply a logical extension of their primary role in due diligence hiring. We are confident that these guidelines, if successfully implemented, will speed applicant processing and enhance professional recruitment.