

# Recommendation Letters and References

SRO Supervisor Forum

Tuesday, July 22, 2014

2:30 – 4:00 pm

This is...

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**SRO  
JEOPARDY!**



# Rules

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- You'll be split into teams.
- Answers **do not** have to be in the form of a question.
- Ring your buzzer to answer.
- Determination as to who rang in first and whether answer is correct lies solely with the judges (Supervisor Forum Coordinating Team).
- Each member of the winning team will win 100 Grand!

**RECOMMENDATION  
LETTERS**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>

**OTHER TYPES OF  
REFERENCES**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>

**POTPOURRI**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>

100

100

100

200

200

200

300

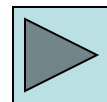
300

300



**TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
AREN'T ALLOWED TO  
WRITE  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTERS.**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



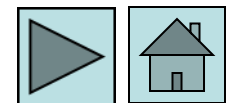
SRO • SRC • ISR

TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
AREN'T ALLOWED TO  
WRITE  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTERS.

<http://www.saysilabgroup.edu>

# False

Professional letters of recommendation for student collegiate admission, scholarship or employment can be written by a direct supervisor with firsthand knowledge of the work performance/work habits.



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# Recommendations

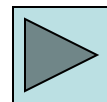
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- For purposes of this discussion, “recommendation letter” and “reference letter” are used interchangeably.
- Letters should be generally positive



**CAN I WRITE A  
PROFESSIONAL  
REFERENCE FOR  
SOMEONE WHOSE WORK  
I HAVE NOT  
DIRECTLY  
SUPERVISED?**

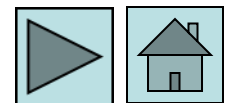
<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>





# No

However, you can write a personal reference – it cannot be on UM letterhead or reference your role with UM.

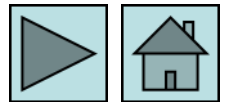


# Professional vs. Personal Letters

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**Professional letters of reference** speak to a person's performance on the job and are written by current or former supervisor with firsthand knowledge of their work. They usually offer insight on work habits, talents and skills, as well as reliability, professionalism on the job and value to an organization.

- Can be on UM/SRC/SRO letterhead
- Supervisor can refer to his or her own title/role at the University and that of the employee/former employee.
- Can use specifics as to projects worked on, etc.



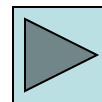
# Personal vs. Professional Letters

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A **personal letter of reference** is written by a person who knows a job candidate in a personal capacity. They can be written by business acquaintances, customers or clients, teachers, professors or neighbors. They often offer information about character, integrity and dependability.

- Can't be on letterhead
- Speak in more general terms about skills, qualities, etc.

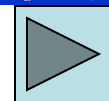




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I'M NOT REALLY  
COMFORTABLE  
WRITING A  
REFERENCE LETTER  
FOR SOMEONE. WHAT  
DO I DO?

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



I'M NOT REALLY  
COMFORTABLE  
WRITING A  
REFERENCE LETTER  
FOR SOMEONE. WHAT  
DO I DO?

# SAY NO!

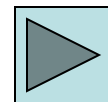
Don't commit yourself to praising someone whose work or behavior you don't endorse.



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**TRUE OR FALSE: I  
CAN GIVE A VERBAL  
REFERENCE OVER THE  
TELEPHONE TO AN  
EXTERNAL (NON-UM)  
EMPLOYER.**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



TRUE OR FALSE: I  
CAN GIVE A VERBAL  
REFERENCE OVER THE  
TELEPHONE TO AN  
EXTERNAL (NON-UM)  
EMPLOYER.

# FALSE

Verbal references can only be done for employees seeking employment at UM.





# Internal (UM) References

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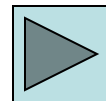
We can be frank with UM departments who call seeking a reference. But it's still a good rule of thumb to stick to documented facts on performance/behavior (is it fair to tell a potential employer something you never told the employee about?).

This is true for regular and temporary employees for any type of position on campus.



**CAN I FILL OUT A  
PAPER OR ONLINE  
FORM THAT IS  
SUBMITTED DIRECTLY  
TO A POTENTIAL  
EMPLOYER?**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



SRO ■ SRC ■ ISR

CAN I FILL OUT A  
PAPER OR ONLINE  
FORM THAT IS  
SUBMITTED DIRECTLY  
TO A POTENTIAL  
EMPLOYER?

<http://www.cjyo-k.com/ncpa.asp>

# Yes

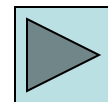
As long as you have the employee's authorization to do so (such as a signed release).



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**TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
ARE NEVER REQUIRED  
TO GIVE AN  
EMPLOYMENT  
REFERENCE.**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



SRO • SRC • ISR

TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
ARE NEVER REQUIRED  
TO GIVE AN  
EMPLOYMENT  
REFERENCE.

<http://www.sro-src-isr.org>

# False

In Michigan, service letter rules apply to educational employment. Upon request (and when accompanied by signed release), we are required to provide documentation of any “unprofessional conduct” within 20 days of receipt.

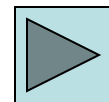
There are also some government or law enforcement requests with which we must comply.



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**WHEN HIRING, ARE  
WE REQUIRED TO DO  
A REFERENCE WITH A  
CANDIDATE'S  
CURRENT  
SUPERVISOR?**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



WHEN HIRING, ARE  
WE REQUIRED TO DO  
A REFERENCE WITH A  
CANDIDATE'S  
CURRENT  
SUPERVISOR?

# No

- If the candidate hasn't given you their current supervisor as a reference, the current employer may not be aware they're seeking other employment.
- If information on that position seems critical for decision making, you could ask the candidate for a copy of his or her most recent performance review in lieu of a current reference.
- For internal ISR/SRC candidates, contact HR for file review options.



# I'll take "THINGS I WISH I DIDN'T KNOW" for \$100, Alex

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What do you do when you find out someone is actively looking for another job?

Cue Annoying HR Answer:

**IT DEPENDS!**



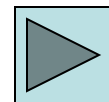
- How did you find out?
- Were you sworn to secrecy?
- Is there an organizational value to others knowing?
- Could it jeopardize the employee's relationship with their current supervisor if it was made public?





**CAN A  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTER BE SENT  
CONFIDENTIALLY  
DIRECTLY TO THE  
RECIPIENT (WITHOUT  
A CC TO THE  
EMPLOYEE)?**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



CAN A  
RECOMMENDATION  
LETTER BE SENT  
CONFIDENTIALLY  
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A CC TO THE  
EMPLOYEE)?

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# Yes

As long as that's what the employee/former employee has asked or authorized you to do.

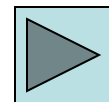
It would generally be good form to provide the employee with a copy, though. You should never write something about anyone you wouldn't be comfortable with them seeing.



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**TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
CAN'T HIRE A  
CANDIDATE IF WE  
AREN'T ABLE TO  
COMPLETE ALL THREE  
REFERENCE CHECKS.**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



SRO • SRC • ISR

TRUE OR FALSE: WE  
CAN'T HIRE A  
CANDIDATE IF WE  
AREN'T ABLE TO  
COMPLETE ALL THREE  
REFERENCE CHECKS.

<http://www.sas.com/indiana>

# False

- We perform reference checks as a best practice and to avoid negligent hiring.
- We just need to show a good faith effort to complete the reviews.
- If you can't get ANY of them to return your calls, that may be a red flag.
- Contact the applicant to get another name or see if they can contact the person



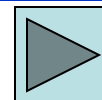
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# FINAL JEOPARDY!



**STARTING ON AUGUST  
4TH, EMPLOYMENT  
VERIFICATIONS WILL  
BE HANDLED BY WHAT  
DEPARTMENT?**

<http://www.says-it.com/jeopardy/>



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# The Shared Service Center

As the result of the HR Administrative Services Transformation (AST), the Shared Service Center will handle basic verifications of employment including:

- Job title
- Dates of employment
- Salary
- Hours
- Earnings



# Parting Shot

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There will always be “odd” situations that aren’t going to fit exactly within guidelines.

When in doubt, reach out to HR for guidance or to review a letter you’ve drafted.





# Handouts

## SRC Human Resources Procedure

Procedure Title	Recommendation Letters for Employees
Procedure No.	
Section in Manual	I. Recruitment, Employment, Benefits, Terminations
Procedure Completed (month)	As needed
Last Revision Date	06/27/2013

### Procedure Description

Letters of recommendation for student collegiate admission, scholarship or employment references and letters of recommendation for employee, regular, part time and temporary collegiate admission or employment references are endorsed by the Center if the recommendation is written by a direct supervisor who can provide firsthand knowledge of the work performance and work habits.

Letters of recommendations by peers or supervisors without firsthand administrative knowledge of work performance and work habits are not permitted on letterhead. These recommendations would be considered personal recommendations without affiliation to the University of Michigan.

## Sample Professional Recommendation Letter

Jane Smith  
123 Main St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

July 15, 2014

John Doe  
XYZ Corporation  
456 Elm St.  
Plymouth, MI 48170

Dear Mr. Doe,

I am writing to you to recommend Eric Northman for employment with your company. As a Survey Director in Survey Research Operations (SRO) at the University of Michigan, I had the great pleasure of supervising Eric in his capacity as a Survey Specialist Senior.

From 2008 - 2014, Eric was the lead project manager on several very large, complex surveys, such as Survey of Vampires in Rural Louisiana (SVRL) 2013. His work on that project required him to lead a cross-functional team to ensure that the survey produced high-quality data on time and on budget. Even in high-pressure situations, he showed a great deal of skill in building and coaching his team to ensure success. As a result of his leadership, the team was able to develop several innovations which SRO was able to successfully apply to other projects.

Given Eric's dedication, attention to detail, and overall excellent work ethic, I would wholeheartedly recommend him for a position with your organization.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith  
Survey Director  
Survey Research Operations

## Sample Personal Recommendation Letter

Jane Smith  
123 Main St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

July 15, 2014

John Doe  
XYZ Corporation  
456 Elm St.  
Plymouth, MI 48170

Dear Mr. Doe,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you to recommend Eric Northman for employment with your company. Having worked very closely with Eric for several years, I found him to be extremely dependable and willing to go the extra mile to get the job done.

Even with the most difficult situation, Eric would fly into action to ensure that the team was successful. He always inspired a great deal of loyalty amongst his team members.

I am confident that Eric would be a great asset to any organization and would recommend him without reservation.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

## ISR Shared Service Center Verification of Employment Process

Effective August 4, 2014, the University is moving to a shared services model for some human resources transaction processing. One of the services moving to the Shared Services Center (SSC) is the “Verification of Employment” (VOE) process. Currently, ISR HR provides verifications for institute staff. The University leadership has requested that all verifications of employment be processed directly through the SSC. Faculty and staff will have a couple of options for completing the VOE process:

Submit a paper request directly to the SSC. Within one (1) business day of receipt the request will be added to the ServiceLink transaction tracking system and reviewed. If no additional information is needed, the request will move forward for processing by the SSC staff. If additional information is required, the submitter will be contacted accordingly.

A second option is an electronic submission to the SSC via the “Employee Self Service” link in Wolverine Access. Successful electronic submissions will be immediately logged as received via “PS Workflow”. If no additional information is needed, the request will move forward for processing. If additional information is required, the submitter will be contacted accordingly.

SSC anticipates that all verification of employment requests will be completed within 3-5 business days (if additional information is needed, expect longer processing times). The option to request email notification when the transaction is complete, as well as requesting a copy of the completed VOE, is available. ISR HR will also receive automatic notifications when the VOE transactions have been completed for all institute faculty and staff.

Requests for VOE include all employee types including retirees, active or terminated employees. Please note that this process is only for verification of employment; information provided include:

Years of employment

Job titles

Salary

Hours

Earnings

VOE Notarization (if necessary)

Mail receipt of VOE

Employee work references continue to be a separate and unit specific process and will not be provided by the SSC. Both the SSC and ISR HR are available to assist with either the paper or electronic request submissions to the SSC.