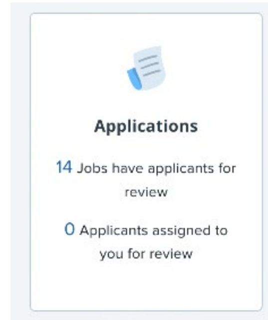
Letters of Recommendation: Best Practices

1. Letters of recommendation have demonstrated capacity to introduce bias into a search process. They also represent an additional "ask" to candidates and their referees in an already lengthy process, and a significant use of committee time. We recommend checking references through a phone call for finalist(s) rather than collecting letters, as more specific, relevant, and process-informed questions can be asked at that time.
    a. Please review these articles [LINK] which document examples of the potential impact of reference letters in searches.
2. If you intend to collect them, ensure that the committee discusses what job-related information you are seeking to assess with reference letters, and when that information will be used in the selection process. Pair this consideration with initial discussions about application requirements and the building of a criteria matrix, to define what you will assess, when, and how.
3. If you intend to collect them, we strongly recommend that you collect them *after* your first round of candidate evaluation is complete, from the subset of candidates advancing for ongoing consideration (e.g. those invited for campus visits, or your short list). This saves time for applicants and the committee, and contributes to mitigating possible impacts of bias.
4. Discuss as a committee how you will handle review scenarios **consistently** across your candidates:
    a. Some candidates will list 3 references and some will opt to list extra. How many letters constitute completion, and how will you treat extra recommendations?
    b. What if fewer than 3 letters are received for a given candidate?
    c. Will you accept letters that come in late (will need to be accepted via email and uploaded to candidate profile), and if so, how late?
    d. Will you accept letters submitted via email if referee realizes there was an error in their original submission? Will you accept letters submitted via email due to error in reference contact information not caught prior to collection?

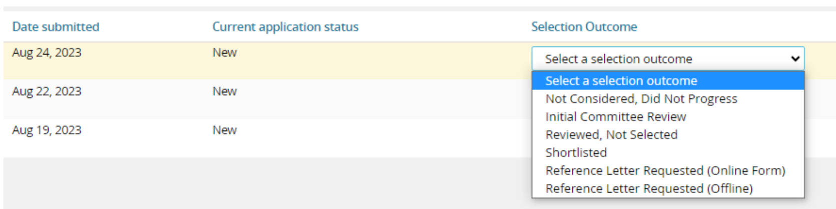
Before You Begin:

1. **Do not do initiate letter collection until after the application review date** (on-time applications may continue to be received through 11:55pm on the review date)**.** Waiting until after initial review or first round evaluation may be appropriate if you are collecting later in the process for a smaller group of candidates.
2. All candidates for whom letters will be collected should have the same timeline for completion, for consistency in process and ease of tracking. Do not initiate collection for batches of candidates on different days to avoid multiple inconsistent completion deadlines.
3. Prior to initiating collection, email all candidates you will be collecting references from to let them know you'll be doing so, and give them directions on how to update referees. Remind them to check spelling particularly in email addresses. Once you initiate collection, they will no longer be able to make edits or correct typos. Errors not caught prior to launch will require you to make manual fixes and re-send, which can be labor intensive.
    a. See sample email [insert anchored link to bottom of page]
4. Wait 2 or more days for candidates to make any needed updates, before proceeding to one of the instruction sets below.

Instructions for Collection, Method 1: Moving candidate status in MyTrack (preferred) - 30 Day Default Collection Period



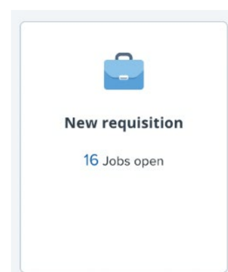
1. Via the applications "tile" of your MyTrack Dashboard, access your applicant list for the appropriate search.
2. Move selected candidates to status "Reference letter requested (online form)." Do not use "reference letter requested (offline)" - this will not initiate any action.



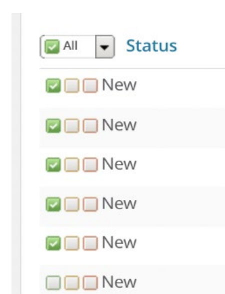
3. Don't forget to scroll up and press "Submit" after selecting dropdown status updates. This will send out requests to referees and give them 30 days to upload their letters. The 30-day period is fixed and can't be changed. Referees receive a reminder after 10 days.

Instructions for Collection, Method 2: Bulk Reference Check – Custom Timeline (at least 2 weeks).

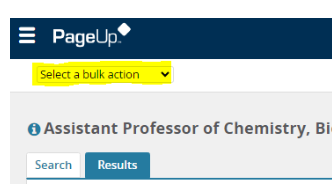
In previous years, this option was only available by working with Talent Acquisition to initiate collection. In AY 23-24, hiring managers may use the following instructions to complete collection independently. Please be mindful of the candidate experience and follow process carefully.



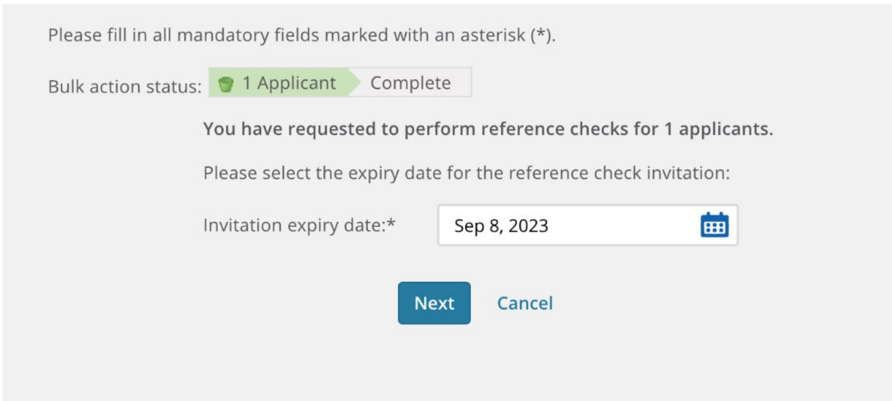
1. Go to list of applicants from the **requisition** (same place you would go to bulk compile application materials). You can find the requisition from the requisitions tile, or requisitions toolbar. Once viewing the requisition, click "view applications" in the upper right to open applicant list.



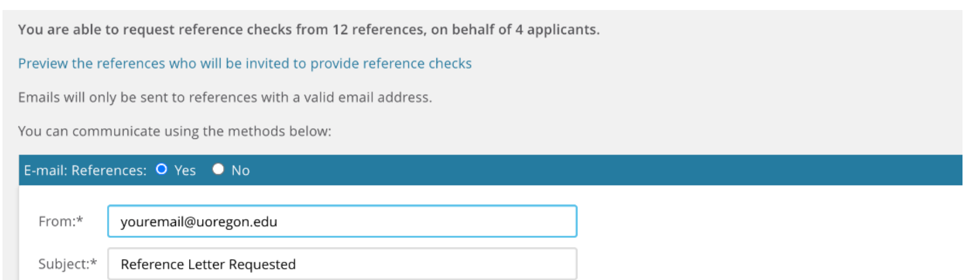
2. Select the boxes next to the applicants you want letters from. **You can only collect for up to 60 candidates** at one time – so you'll need to do it in batches if you're checking large lists of candidates. Be careful to track batches so as not to accidentally skip any applicants you intend to collect for. Since this method is not triggered by a *status change*, the only way to check whether you already initiated for an applicant will be to open their applicant card and check history.
3. Navigate to the dropdown at the top, "select a bulk action," and choose "bulk reference check".



4. Enter an expiration date that is AT LEAST 14 days from today. Look at a calendar to be extra sure you're selecting a date that is at least 2 full weeks from today. It should be the same for all candidates, so if you are working in batches, be sure to pick the same date each time. Errors here have strong potential to confuse applicants and their referees and are labor-intensive to correct; we advise caution. When ready, click Next button.



5. MyTrack will populate the auto generated email template. Change the 'from' field from uocareers@uogeon.edu to *your* email address (the person managing reference collection) so that you can be looped in on questions or troubleshooting that may need the attention of the search committee. Edit the body of the email to include YOUR signature and contact information. DON'T EDIT THE REST OF THE EMAIL – especially anything in {}. When ready, click "Finish."



6. Make sure to keep clear documentation of who you requested letters for and when-- since **candidate status will not have changed** based on use of bulk reference check, it will be difficult to track visually who you have collected for (you can open the applicant cards individually and access 'history' to check).

After Initiating Collection:

1. The hiring manager on the requisition will get an email notice every time an individual applicant's reference collection is complete (3 of 3, 4 of 4…however many they entered).
2. If you need to spot-check progress, you may access history and status information via the applicant card and history tab for each applicant.
3. Materials can be downloaded individually from the applicant card, or you may use "Bulk Compile" to export applicant files including reference letters only, or letters + other materials.

Troubleshooting/FAQ

- After the deadline, reference upload links will stop working for referees. You may receive inquiries from referees that missed the deadline, or applicants who want to add or change a referee after initiation. At the discretion of the hiring committee, you may choose to accept additional, late, or updated letters, but must do so consistently. Consider what exceptions you are able to make at scale, and how you will document submissions.
- If you will accept letters submitted outside the system (e.g., directly to you via email), they can be uploaded to MyTrack using the three-dot menu on the applicant card, "Add document." On the document type dropdown, select "reference check" if you want to be able to export it using bulk compile.
- Reach out to talent@uoregon.edu if you have questions.

Sample Email to Candidates:

Dear [CANDIDATE NAME],

Thank you for your application for xxx position. We are looking forward to learning more about your candidacy. As part of our application review we will be collecting letters from your referees. We will send the request to your referees on [DATE]. Before then, please log into the applicant portal and double check that your references are correct. There is a button next to your application to "update references" if necessary. Please take a moment to ensure email addresses are spelled correctly and any needed updates are made. Once we initiate letter collection, you will no longer be able to edit those fields.

This may be a good time to notify your letters writers that requests are forthcoming. For your awareness, referees will have [insert timetable] to respond to the request. A reminder will be automatically sent to referees 10 days after the initial request.

Thank you!