

Policy Statement

To protect the safety and wellbeing of its students, employees, and visitors and to avoid reputational or other harm to the University, Carnegie Mellon University requires all individuals to satisfy background checks prior to beginning employment in a United-States-based staff position with the university and post-hire when required by law or deemed necessary based on department requirements or the duties of the position.

Offers of employment are contingent upon the individual authorizing a background check and successfully meeting the requirements established in this and related policies.

All colleges/divisions of Carnegie Mellon University are required to adhere to the background check practices and procedures established in this policy as well as those outlined in related policies and procedural documents. Except as set forth below, departments may not conduct employment-related background checks outside the scope of the requirements and procedures listed below, unless the requests are reviewed by and coordinated with the Office of Human Resources. This policy does not apply to the screenings performed by the Office of the Vice President for Research, including but not limited to export control screenings and restricted party screenings.

University resources referred to in this policy are linked in the Related Resources section at the end of this document.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff of Carnegie Mellon University, except for the position types listed below¹:

- The following staff positions:
 - Instructional staff
 - Adjuncts
 - Pre-/post-doctoral associates and fellows
 - Recent CMU graduates, interns, and non-CMU student work experience
- Staff positions in non-U.S. locations (Qatar, Rwanda, etc.). Non-U.S. staff shall follow the background check policies established by their location's administrative units.

Definitions

Definitions can be found in the [HR Glossary of Terms](#).

Background Check Requirements

1. The following background checks are required for all external new hires prior to their beginning work for Carnegie Mellon University:
 - a. Criminal Records Check—checks misdemeanor and felony records at the county, state and federal level. Includes a search of the National Criminal Record Database (NCRD) and may include international searches.
 - b. Education Verification—verifies education credentials for the highest degree earned.
 - c. Employment Verification—verifies prior/current employment, typically for the previous seven years. May include education and licenses, technical certificates, transcripts, GEDs, and military service.
 - d. Sex Offender List Check—checks for inclusion on the sex offender registries.

¹ Hires under the age of 18 are exempt from the background check requirements outlined in this policy unless being hired into a position in the state of PA that requires interactions with minors. In these instances, child protection clearances are required.

- e. Social Security Number Trace and Address History—identifies residential history, aliases, and other key data points required to complete the background check.
2. Re-hired employees are required to complete a background check if there is a break in service of more than one year OR if the re-hired employee does not have a background check already on file with the Office of Human Resources.
3. The following additional, position-specific background checks are required for new hires (internal and external) prior to their beginning work for Carnegie Mellon University and post-employment as necessary (e.g., renewals, changes in position, or job-related incidents):
 - a. **Motor Vehicle Records**, if the individual drives or is expected to drive as an essential function of the position; requires a valid driver's license or commercial driver's license (CDL).
 - b. **Credit History**, if the position or office is noted below:
 - i. Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
 - ii. Controller,
 - iii. Treasurer and Treasurer's Office,
 - iv. Investment Office,
 - v. Executive Director of Procurement Services,
 - vi. Other positions that have significant financial responsibilities and/or any cash handling on behalf of the university
4. Additional, position-specific background checks are required for new hires and existing employees in positions in the state of Pennsylvania that require interaction with minors. The following background checks must be completed in accordance with CMU's Policy on the Protection of Children in Carnegie Mellon Programs, Activities & Facilities:
 - a. Child protection clearances, to include the following:
 - i. PA Access to Criminal History Check (PATCH)
 - ii. PA Child Abuse History (PACA)
 - iii. Federal Criminal History Check (FBI)
5. Additional position-specific background checks may be required as a condition of working on certain sponsored research projects (e.g., where the sponsor requires a background check as a condition of accessing a secure network).
6. CMU employees who interact with minors in connection with a CMU program or activity may require additional background certifications, per the university's Policy on the Protection of Children in Carnegie Mellon Programs, Activities & Facilities.
7. CMU employees covered by a collective bargaining unit may require additional position-specific background checks as set forth by management of the department or prescribed by the respective bargaining agreement.
8. All offers of employment, both verbal and written, are contingent upon the individual satisfying the pre-employment background check requirements set forth in this and related policies. Any individual who fails to do so will no longer be considered for the position.
9. Before the university can initiate a background check, the individual is required to give consent. Individuals who refuse to consent will no longer be eligible for the position/role.
10. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) is responsible for determining whether unsatisfactory background check results constitute cause for denial of employment.
11. In accordance with the adverse action process mandated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), prior to taking any adverse action based on any element of an individual's background check, OHR shall issue a Pre-Adverse

Action letter to the individual. OHR shall also issue an Adverse Action letter, consistent with the FCRA, after implementing any Adverse Action based on the individual's background check.

12. Background-check-related information is confidential. Results may be shared within OHR and OGC and with the candidate or employee only when there is a business need to know. Hiring managers will be informed if an adverse action results in denial of employment; however, confidential information is not released to the hiring manager.

Any deviation from the above requirements must be approved as outlined in the Procedures section below.

Procedures

Responsibilities

The Office of Human Resources is responsible for administering the background check process, managing relationships with the background check vendor(s), interpreting background check results, and determining (in consultation with the Office of General Counsel) whether an individual is eligible for employment or continued employment based on the results of the background check(s). OHR is expected to work with hiring departments to conduct thorough background checks and receive results prior to the new hire's first day of work. OHR manages child protection clearances (CPC) for new hires and current employees.

OHR is responsible for review and decision-making pertaining to offers of employment and continued employment based on the results of background checks. OHR reviews background check results, completes follow-up communications with new hires/current employees, makes determinations and communicates decisions to recruiters, HR business partners, hiring managers, and others as appropriate.

Candidates and/or current employees are responsible for providing accurate information and providing consent for the applicable pre-employment and/or post-employment checks to be completed.

Satisfying the Background Check Requirements

A new hire/employee is considered to have satisfied CMU's background check requirements if all the required background checks have been completed, and the results are either 1) all clear or 2) flagged, but OHR has reviewed all flagged results and determined that the individual is eligible for continued employment in the position.

The existence of a conviction does not automatically disqualify an individual from employment. Any decision to accept or reject an individual with a conviction is solely at the discretion of Carnegie Mellon University.

Carnegie Mellon will not take adverse action based on criminal history records that have been expunged, sealed, overturned, annulled, pardoned, destroyed, erased, impounded or otherwise required by law or ordered by a court to be kept confidential. Arrests that have been fully adjudicated without a conviction or guilty plea are also not a basis for adverse action.

Contingent Written Job Offers

Due to applicable federal, state and local laws, a written offer letter must be issued before a background check can be initiated. The written job offer is contingent upon the successful completion of the background checks required for the position. This contingency must be clearly stated in the offer letter. If the new hire fails to satisfy the background check requirements, the offer must be rescinded.

In limited cases (not to include child protection clearances), and with the approval of the Office of Human Resources, a staff member may be allowed to begin work in a provisional capacity prior to satisfying the background check requirements. Should background check results ultimately warrant denying employment, the individual's employment will be terminated.

The Adverse Action Process

Adverse action is initiated any time background check results are cause for the university to deny employment to the candidate/employee or take any other adverse action. In such cases, the adverse action process must comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), including the university's giving notice of pre-adverse action and notice of final adverse action to the new hire/employee.

In accordance with FCRA requirements, Carnegie Mellon gives notice of pre-adverse action and notice of final adverse action before denying employment or taking any other adverse action due to background check results. Pre-adverse action notice provides the candidate/employee an opportunity to dispute or explain any background check results that might be cause for denial of employment. Final adverse action notice states the adverse action (i.e., the offer is rescinded, or the provisional employee is terminated) and provides a copy of the background check results.

In the case of current employees not working in a provisional capacity, the adverse action will make the employee ineligible for the new position/added responsibilities and may be grounds for employment termination.

Related Resources

[Guidelines for Hiring Staff](#)

[HR Glossary of Terms](#)

[HR Business Partner Directory](#)

[OHR Directory](#)