

# The University of Kansas

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## University Career Center

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### **FOR EDUCATION MAJORS**

#### **What is a credential file?**

A credential file is a packet of background information that is sent to a prospective employer when a candidate is applying for a position. The file consists of: a summary page, an unofficial KU transcript, and letters of reference. (We do **NOT** accept transcripts from other universities or colleges.) When you are ready to set up a file, fill in and sign the Release of Transcript form for the KU Registrar and send it to them so your unofficial KU transcript can be sent to UCC for your file.

#### **Who should have a credential file?**

Anyone who has completed 12 credit hours at KU may open a credential file with University Career Center.

Educational employers are the primary users of credential files. Candidates applying for positions in schools, colleges and universities will want to consider having a credential file. Files are most frequently established for: elementary and secondary school teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, college teachers and professors, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, speech pathologists and other specialty areas. Students applying to graduate schools may also use a credential file.

Candidates applying for jobs in business, private industry or government should keep a typed list of references to be supplied to employers on request. The list should include names, titles, business addresses and phone numbers of at least three people who will support your application. A credential file is generally not used for these employers, but a candidate may establish a file if they so desire.

### **Must I set up a credential file with University Career Center?**

You are not required to establish a credential file with University Career Center. You may choose to self-manage your credential materials. To make an informed decision, you will want to be aware of the opinions of school administrators who were surveyed by the Education Placement Consortium (EPC). Excerpts from the survey report follow:

The 1997 EPC survey report indicates a continuing preference by school superintendents and hiring officials for school-managed credential files. Ninety-four percent of school superintendents (representing small schools) feel that credential files should be continued. Eighty percent of school personnel administrators (representing larger schools) indicated they prefer to see school-managed credential files.

In addition, 85% of superintendents and 45% of personnel administrators stated that job seekers with self-managed credential files would be at a disadvantage compared to teacher candidates with school-managed files. Over half of the superintendent respondents and more than one-third of the personnel administrator group indicated they would not accept self-managed credentials.

If you choose to self-manage your credential file, please make an appointment to meet with a counselor at University Career Center to discuss how to prepare and manage your credential file to make the best impression. 785-864-3624.

### **How is the credential file used?**

Credential files are used by schools, colleges and universities to help determine which candidates are best qualified for positions. Credentials are prepared by making photocopies of the materials in the file, placing the copies in a folder and mailing the packet to the employer.

A credential file is sent at the candidate's request after a candidate has applied for a position. Credentials should not be sent before a letter of application. Often, an employer's application form will tell you to have your credential file sent as part of the application materials required.

### **What does it cost to have a school-managed credential file?**

There is no fee to set up a file with University Career Center. Simply pick up a credential packet from University Career Center to begin the process. Also, the necessary forms are available on our website at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials). After submitting all the materials necessary for the credential file, you may begin requesting that it be sent to prospective employers. The fee is \$6.00 per set of credentials mailed. (There are additional charges associated with special handling requests such as Federal Express and faxing.)

### **Instructions for Letters of Reference**

### Selecting Reference Writers

Select carefully the people you will use as references. The most valuable recommendations come from those who can comment about your academic and work skills, abilities and aptitudes. Contact your references and ask them if they would be willing to write a letter of reference for you. Explain your career goals and supply them with a signed reference letter waiver form and envelope.

Candidates for teaching positions should include cooperating teachers and student teaching supervisors. While these people complete evaluation forms for the School of Education, those are not included in the credential file.

Teacher candidates may also want to request letters of reference from professors, principals, superintendents, and former employers where they worked with children or students in some capacity. Candidates for administration, college teaching or other school positions will want reference letters from supervisors, former employers and professors in their field. Those using a credential file to apply to graduate schools will want reference letters from professors who can comment on their ability to do graduate-level work.

### Number of Reference Letters

A minimum of three reference letters are required to have an official credential file. You may open a temporary file by submitting the materials you have while you wait for the additional materials to arrive. Typically, a candidate will have 3 to 6 letters in their file. Experienced candidates usually have no more than ten letters of reference in their file. You may update your file at any time by adding new letters and/or having old letters removed.

### Confidential Letters of Reference

At the top of the reference letter waiver form are two statements:

1. I wish to have access to this letter and understand that under Public Law 93-380 I shall have the right to read this document.
2. I wish this letter to be confidential, and I hereby waive any and all rights of access granted me by Public Law 93-380 to this document.

[For an explanation of Public Law 93-380, please see the following section titled "Buckley-Pell Amendment" (Public Law 93-380)]

You should decide if you want to have open letters or confidential letters and sign under the appropriate statement **before** distributing the forms to your letter writers. If the form is not signed, it is assumed to be open. If you want a confidential letter you must be sure to sign under statement number two **and be sure your reference writer signs his/her name across the seal of the envelope.**

Indicating that you would like a letter to be confidential means you will not have access to the contents of the letter. Occasionally a reference writer may offer to give you a copy of the confidential letter they have submitted for your credential file. It is certainly within their right to do so, however, it is unprofessional to request a copy of a confidential letter from the writer.

### **Distributing the Letters of Reference**

- 1) **Print or type your name** in the appropriate space provided on the reference letter waiver forms.
- 2) Be sure to **sign either statement number one or number two**, regarding the confidential status of the letter.
- 3) Give the form and an envelope to your reference writer. The reference writer should type (rather than hand write) their letter on their organization/business letterhead and sign the letter. The letter writer should seal the envelope and sign across the flap of the envelope before it is returned to you or mailed to University Career Center.
- 4) So that you know when your file is complete, it is recommended that you e-mail cleonard@ku.edu

### **Buckley-Pell Amendment (Public Law 93-380)**

Public Law 93-380 permits students or alumni either to have access to their files or to waive their right to see recommendations written concerning them after January 1, 1975. The amendment exempts references written prior to that date. Therefore, all references written before that date and placed in a credential file will remain confidential according to the law and are not available to be read by the registrant.

Persons with credentials in placement offices may waive their right to see references established after January 1, 1975; but they do not have to do so. Those who waive access to confidential statements will have the right to learn the names of all persons submitting a letter of reference for their file. Those not wishing to waive this right may request in writing to see references written after the above date. The amendment provides that this office has up to 45 days to respond to a request to view non-confidential letters of reference.

There must be a written waiver of access with each letter of reference when a candidate chooses that option. All reference letters without a signature waiving access will be considered accessible to the candidate.

If the candidate has waived the right to view the confidential letter, University Career Center staff cannot give the candidate any information concerning the content of the letter. A candidate may request at any time that a letter of reference be removed from their credential file, however, the student may not have the letter.

**The Summary Page**  
**(Cover Page)**

The summary page is the first page of your credential file and identifies you to the employer. **It is very important that this page be neatly typed (or laser printed) with dark print, and is clearly legible.** Since a photocopy machine is used to duplicate copies, the original pages must be dark and easy to read.

You may either use the summary page form provided in your packet and type in the appropriate information, or you may bring up this form from our website, fill it in and print it.  
[www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/).

- Type your full name in the center of the box.
- Type in your KU student ID number.
- Type in your e-mail address.
- List your complete permanent address and a present address, if applicable.
- Complete the educational summary as appropriate.

### **The Reference Page**

This page is not mailed with your credential file materials, but it is an essential part of your file. University Career Center needs to know which letters you plan to include in your credential file. This form can also be obtained at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/).

- List the names of the persons who are writing your letters of reference. Include their address (name of school or department is fine) and their position (such as “cooperating teacher”).
- When you revise or update your credential file, list previously collected references that you wish to continue to use on the bottom section of the reference page. List any new letters at the top of the form.
- If credentials have previously been filed with another institution, you may have a copy sent to University Career Center. Earlier letters of reference can be added to your KU credential file so that a record of experience will be complete.

Sign your name on the back of the Reference Page. Be sure to read the back of the page carefully. The credential file is the property of the University and does not belong to the candidate. You will assume the responsibilities described and pay the required fees when you have your credential file mailed.

### **Having Your Credential File Sent**

#### **When to send credentials**

A credential file is sent at the candidate’s request after a candidate has applied for a position. Credentials should not be sent before a letter of application. Often, an employer’s application form will tell you to have your credential file sent as part of the application materials required. Credentials are prepared by making photocopies of all the materials in the file, placing the copies under a cover and mailing the packet to the employer.

#### **Request to send credentials**

All credential requests must be submitted in writing to University Career Center. Please submit credential requests by mail or e-mailing [cleonard@ku.edu](mailto:cleonard@ku.edu) or via our website at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials).

Always include in the mailing address, the official position or department, the institution and address of the employer to whom the credentials are being sent. When sending an e-mail request or mailing in a request or submitting a request through our website, please be sure to include your name, address, KU ID number and e-mail address.

There is no limit to the number of credentials you may send. Preparation time is reduced if candidates submit several requests at once rather than one at a time. Credential fees must be paid before credentials can be sent. University Career Center will accept Visa, Master Card, American Express and Discover cards and e-checks via our on-line payment process at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials) if you wish to pay in this manner. If paying in person, we accept Visa and Master Card, checks and cash.

We maintain a record of the names and addresses of agencies to which your credentials are sent. If you are ever in doubt as to which agencies have received your information, please feel free to contact our office.

**If you carry a credit balance on your account with our office**, you may also:

- 1) fax your requests to (785) 864-4572
- 2) e-mail requests to the credential manager at [cleonard@ku.edu](mailto:cleonard@ku.edu)
- 3) use the credential link on our homepage at: [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/).

### **Fee Policies**

Credentials cost \$6.00 for each set sent by regular mail. **Requests for credential files will NOT be processed prior to receipt of payment.** A candidate may pay in advance and carry a credit balance to be used for future credential mailings. We accept Visa & Master Card, cash and checks if paying in person. We accept Visa, Master Card, American Express and Discover cards and e-checks through our website at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials).

If a school district requests your credential file from us directly, we will contact you to let you know of the request and determine how you would like to proceed. Be sure University Career Center is kept up to date with your correct contact information.

When you obtain employment and still have a credit balance on your account, University Career Center will refund the amount **providing it is over \$6.00**. The credit balance may be left on your account for future updating materials or future credential mailings. (See Life Expectancy of a credential file.)

A **returned check or e-check** will result in a \$30 service charge and discontinuance of check writing privileges with UCC (this includes any checks written by you or from another's account on your behalf). In the future, only cash, cashier's check, money orders or credit card (Visa & Master Card, if paying in person and Visa, Master Card, American Express and Discover if paying on line) will be accepted as payment for any services provided through University Career Center.

### **Fee for letter forwarding service**

Graduating students often open a credential file and use it to apply for jobs during the time they are student teaching and interning. When the spring internship or student teaching experience is completed, students often add letters from their recent experience to their credential file. Because these new letters are important to employers, we offer a letter forwarding service. Additional letters can be forwarded to an employer for a fee of **\$3.00 per mailing**. This service is provided by our office primarily to accommodate the special circumstances that new graduates face.

### **Special handling**

In special circumstances, when you need a file to arrive more quickly than regular mail will allow, we will work with you to try to meet that need *as best we can*. We have restrictions on how a confidential credential file can be handled, but we will do our best to accommodate a special request *within reason*. Options for urgent file transfer are limited to: Federal Express and faxing. Special handling does add **additional costs** and **requires the normal prepayment**.

Occasionally candidates request only certain letters be sent from their files. For example, a candidate certified to teach in several different subjects may wish to include letters appropriate to just one subject area when applying for an opening in that area. We are happy to work with you in handling these special situations.

### **Updating Your Credential File**

Alumni are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to update their credential files with new letters periodically and especially **BEFORE** having their file sent to a potential employer. All necessary forms may be obtained at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/).

You may add new letters of reference to your file at any time, whether or not you are currently conducting a job search. Please send us **written notice** (either by U.S. mail or by e-mail) that you want certain letters either added to, or removed from your file.

It is a good idea to periodically update your credential file so you will be prepared to apply for jobs at short notice. Even though you may not be looking for a different position, if you see an ad for your "dream job," or you unexpectedly need to relocate, keeping your file up-to-date will allow you to quickly respond to unplanned or unexpected opportunities. If your file is not used or updated within 10 years, it will be destroyed.

Candidates who have not used their file for a number of years will occasionally contact us, and ask us to send their file "as is" because they are trying to meet a short deadline. Employers have told us that letters of recommendation that are four or five years old are of limited value to them. They need to have letters from your most recent experiences. Keeping your file "up-to-date" before a job search will eliminate this last minute rush to supply employers with new letters. If you have taken more courses at KU, be sure to fill in a Release of Transcript form and send it to the Registrar's Office, so an unofficial copy of your transcript can be sent to UCC for your file.

### **Life Expectancy of a Credential File**

Credential information is maintained at University Career Center for ten years from the time your file was last updated or sent to a potential employer. Files are checked annually and those that have not been **used or updated in the last ten years are destroyed.**

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**Checklist for opening  
and using a credential file at  
University Career Center**

- 1:** Obtain a credential packet from University Career Center. The packet contains all the forms and instructions you will need for a credential file. All the necessary forms may be obtained at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials/).
- 2:** Choose your reference writers. You need a minimum of three references to officially open your file.
- 3:** Complete your portion of the reference letter waiver form, then distribute them to your reference writers along with an envelope addressed to University Career Center.
- 4:** Be sure your reference writers know where to send your letters.
- 5:** Fill out the Release of Transcript form and send to the Registrar's Office to order an unofficial transcript for your file. Allow at least 2 weeks for the transcript to arrive. We do not accept other university/college transcripts for your file.
- 6:** Complete the summary page and reference page from the credential file packet. The summary page must be typed or filled in and printed from our website.
- 7:** Submit the credential pages and any reference letters you collected to University Career Center. If you have collected the confidential letters, the seal of the envelope must be signed by the writer.
- 8:** To have your file sent to an employer, you may request your file to be sent and pay via Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover or e-checks through our website at [www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials](http://www.ucc.ku.edu/credentials). You may also mail the complete address along with the required fee to University Career Center. You may also put money on an account and email your request to [cleonard@ku.edu](mailto:cleonard@ku.edu).
- 9:** Remember to update your credential file at any time in your career with name, address and phone number changes and provide new letters of reference as appropriate. Out-dated information makes a poor impression.
- 10.** Let University Career Center know when you have accepted a position by calling our office (785-864-3624) or e-mailing Melissa Johnson at [mejoh@ku.edu](mailto:mejoh@ku.edu). If you need an official transcript for your new employer, contact the Registrar's Office at 785-864-4422, 121 Strong Hall.