

CREATE YOUR SELF-MANAGED CREDENTIAL FILE (Tutorial)

What are credentials?

A credential is a letter of recommendation that attests to your professional training and experience. Credentials are typically expected as a part of the employment process for individuals seeking employment in education settings. In some instances, new candidates may choose to include student teaching evaluations.

What is a self-managed credential file?

A self-managed credential file consists of signed letters of recommendation written by references that are collected, maintained, administered, and sent by you directly to prospective employers.

Whom should I ask to write a letter of recommendation?

You should consider collecting a typed letter from any of the following:

- A cooperating teacher (Important for new teachers)
- A site supervisor (Important for new teachers)
- A field experience teacher
- Principal(s) or superintendent(s)
- Teachers or administrators who observed you teaching
- Mentor teachers
- Department heads
- University faculty from your subject area
- A current or former employer from a related employment experience
- A current or former director/supervisor of volunteer experiences
- A leadership or community service affiliation

What should a letter of recommendation look like?

A letter of recommendation should be typed or computer generated - nothing handwritten. Writers should limit their comments to one page. Writers may use official letterhead of their institution or the UNI Career Services reference form found on our Web site. It is important that the writer dates the letter and includes his/her signature and contact information. Your letters of recommendation should come from those who can speak directly to your abilities in the classroom and/or working with children. These career-related references, not character references (friends, family, significant others), are most useful to employers.

How many letters should I collect?

It is suggested that you limit the number of recommendations to 6. Most candidates have 4-6 letters in their files.

How do I obtain letters of recommendation?

You may obtain letters of recommendation by requesting them directly from the writer. The following suggestions are also recommended:

- For the writer's convenience, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.
- After you have received the letter of recommendation, it is appropriate to send a thank you letter to the writer.
- References may provide a letter of recommendation to the candidate on their organization's letterhead. If they do not have letterhead, a generic reference form may be used. These are found on the UNI Career Services' Web site. Reference letters should be no more than 1 page in length.
- Candidates should always retain the original letter of recommendation and only send copies to the employer.
- It is important that you maintain current letters of recommendation. UNI Career Services does not recommend the use of letters more than 4 years old in your job search.

How and when do schools receive my self-managed credential file?

You, as the applicant, are responsible for supplying your credentials when requested by the employer. Typically, this occurs during the application process. In some instances, employers do not request credentials until they have completed their initial screening process. It is very important that you follow whatever process the employer indicates in the job posting. All application materials, including credentials, should be sent in a 9x12-inch envelope. Address labels should be typed. Keep a record of when and where you have sent your applications materials.

What does a complete self-managed file "look" like?

A complete self-managed file would include a cover sheet and 4-6 letters of recommendation. Cover sheets may be obtained on the UNI Career Services' Web site. It is very important that your documents have a polished, professional appearance.

What does a complete application process "look" like?

The typical education position requires the following:

- A cover letter
- A resume
- A copy of your official transcript
- An application
- A set of credentials

Can I mail all of the above in one envelope?

Yes. Nationally, many school districts actually prefer this.

What if the advertisement asks for "official" credentials?

Simply send your self-managed set. If any employer has questions about your self-managed credentials, refer them to UNI Career Services.

Where can I obtain a copy of my student teaching evaluation if I want to include it in my credential file?

A copy of your student teaching evaluation can be obtained by contacting the Office of Clinical Field Experiences.

Where can I get a transcript?

Your transcript can be obtained from the Office of the Registrar, 319.273.2452 or: www.uni.edu/register .

Can Career Services assist me with questions I might have about self-managed credential files or the education job search?

Absolutely! We want you to be successful in your job search. We are pleased to meet with you individually to answer any questions you may have about self-managed credentials, resumes, cover letters, job search strategies, or career information. For a meeting with a professional staff member, call 319.273.6857 for an appointment. If you are out of town, email us at education.placement@uni.edu . Our office hours are M-F 8-5.

Additional Important Information from Career Services:

- UNI CareerCat is available free to all UNI students and for \$20/year for UNI Alumni.
- The UNI Overseas Recruiting Fair for Educators and UNI Teacher Fair are held each spring. Candidates should check the Career Services' Web site for details and registration information
- The staff of UNI Career Services is available to help you with resume critiques, cover letter critiques, job search strategies, mock interviews, and career decision-making strategies.

Contact information:

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www.uni.edu/careerservices
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