



Education Verification-A Must in any Pre- Employment Screening



Education Verification

Verifying the education credentials of a potential candidate can be an important part in identifying if they have the suitable skills set for the position. Educational success reveals a great deal about an applicant's credentials and motivations; and through verification, an employer can get an accurate depiction of their qualifications. Many employers view particular educational qualifications as a key factor in seeking new employees. Moreover, education is a prerequisite for many positions because it ensures applicable knowledge of a subject matter, or more importantly, a required license for the position.

Studies show that approximately 30% of all applicants puff up information about their educational background, ranging from made-up degrees from legitimate schools to insignificant degrees from diploma mills. In 2004, the general Accounting Office revealed that nearly 200,000 federal employees had at the very least *exaggerated* education credentials on their resume. This number merely indicates those that were detected, but how many were undetected, and how many non-federal employees are guilty of falsifying education establishments as well? It is important to remember that this can happen to your company and the occurrence of fraud emphasizes the vitality of research involving educational qualifications.

A few key credentials that deserve confirmation are as follows:

- Diplomas
- Degrees
- Certificates
- Dates of attendance
- Extracurricular activities (Sports teams, clubs, etc.)

Colleges and Universities have taken it upon themselves to verify essential educational accomplishments; however, there are limits to what information they can provide. For instance, According to the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), if a school has received funds from the U.S. Department of Education, it cannot offer a former student's grade point average, or other similar confidential information. The school can however provide specific records including dates of attendance, or degrees and honors awarded.



Diploma Mills and Fake Degrees

It has also become exceedingly easy to access an authentic looking, knock-off diploma from any school in America; all you need is a credit card and a computer. Diploma mills and degree mills as well as various websites, advertise very realistic, physical diplomas and transcripts, which have been found to deceive many employers. Therefore, with the striking statistics of resume fraud, employers should think twice about using physical diplomas as proper evidence of a degree. Because the requirement for education qualification has become so demanding, education fraud is becoming more prevalent, as are the establishments of diploma mills. Consequently, in order to combat education fraud, laws have recently been passed in which companies who manufacture fake degrees and diplomas are considered to have committed a Misdemeanor, unless the degree explicitly states, “for novelty purposes only.”

In 2004, the United States Department of Education issued a proposal for developing a list that includes all accredited institutions of official education. This proposal was a response to the discovery of a senior director at the Department of Homeland Security whose supposed legitimate degree was actually processed out of a Diploma Mill in Evanston, Wyoming. Since then, ensuing investigation revealed that at least 30 other senior employees had received their “diplomas” from diploma mills. The biggest issue with targeting these diploma mills is that they frequently move around. Many diploma mills are constantly changing their names while others are sprouting up sporadically. There are currently hundreds of diploma mills on the internet that offer fake degrees and diplomas.





When posing as legitimate institutions, diploma mills will use catchy phrases to attract potential buyers:

- *Here is an opportunity to get ahead*
- *University diplomas*
- *Obtain a prosperous future, money earning power, and the admiration of all*
- *Diplomas from a prestigious university*
- *Based upon your present knowledge and life experience*
- *No required tests, classes, books or interview*
- *Bachelors, masters, MBA, and doctorate (PhD) diplomas available in your field of choice*
- *No one is turned down*
- *Confidentiality assured. Call now to receive your diploma within days*

Furthermore, these “schools” have no faculty, no classes, and no course catalog and only have one address or email in which they can be contacted.

Conclusion

Falsified education credentials have become a serious issue in the workforce; it breaches the faith on employees who are involved, especially when it can directly affect other employees and the company as a whole. It is also a serious blunder on the part of the employer who should have done the proper research in education verification; a mistake that could essentially hinder their current position.

Now that up to 20% of employers in America require a diploma or degree from a college or university that awarded it to them, education verification has become exceptionally crucial. Although a federal law has been implemented to target diploma mills that give out phony diplomas, the problem still exists and is far from being corrected. In the meantime, employers should remain steadfast about conducting pre-employment background checks that include verifying academic credentials. It should not be assumed that qualifications presented by potential candidates are always legitimate, and each educational establishment should be verified.

Education verification should be included in every pre-employment screening process, specifically by a professional with the proper knowledge and resources to do so. It only takes one bad hire to learn this lesson the hard way.