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Oakswood Admissions

Reference Guidance

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Reference Guidance for Mature Applicants

For Programmes Delivered in Partnership with Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)

Purpose:

To support mature applicants in providing professional or academic references that demonstrate readiness for higher education study. This guidance ensures references are consistent, verifiable, and aligned with BNU expectations.

1. Reference Requirements

Who can provide a reference?

- Academic references: Teacher, tutor, course leader (for recent qualifications).
- Professional references: Current or recent employer, supervisor, or manager.
- Exceptions (if no professional/academic referee available): GP/Medical Professional or Religious Mentor.

Who cannot provide a reference?

- Friends or family members
- Agents or consultants
- Personal acquaintances without a professional or academic relationship

Referee Expectations:

- Known the applicant for **at least 6 months**
- Able to objectively comment on applicant's suitability for higher education
- Preferably using an **official organisational email address**
- Reference must be **signed, professional in tone, and clear**
- Reference must be **dated no longer than 6 months before the Course start date** (therefore, if requested, it is advisable to ask the applicant to check if they need the reference at the time of requesting, or if one will be needed later on)

2. Key Content of Reference Letters

References should cover the following areas. Applicants are advised to check references before submission to Oakwood College/BNU by using the list below and checking each box to

verify all required information has been included, and may find it helpful to share this guidance with referees to support the production of the reference:

Referee Details

- Full name
- Job title
- Organisation name
- Contact details: official email & telephone
- Relationship to applicant (e.g., manager, supervisor, mentor)
- Length of time known to the applicant

Applicant's Role & Responsibilities

- Job title/role in workplace
- Employment/involvement dates
- Main duties and responsibilities
- Skills demonstrated relevant to academic/business readiness

Examples: teamwork, communication, organisation, client management, problem-solving

Skills Relevant to Higher Education

- Ability to follow instructions and meet deadlines
- Reliability and professionalism
- Analytical thinking and attention to detail
- Interest in learning and motivation
- Time management and organisational skills

Personal Qualities

- Commitment and motivation
- Maturity and responsibility
- Teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Initiative and willingness to learn

Suitability for the Programme

- Explicitly states applicant is suitable for **BSc (Hons) International Business Studies with Foundation Year**
- Comments on applicant's potential to progress to degree-level study

Example phrasing:

“I believe [Applicant Name] has the motivation, skills, and maturity required to successfully complete the Foundation Year and progress to the BSc (Hons) International Business Studies programme.”

Format & Tone

- Typed on organisational letterhead if possible
- Signed and dated
- Formal, professional tone
- Concise (ideally 1 page; maximum 2 pages if detailed examples provided)

3. Verification

- Oakwood College and/or BNU **may contact referees** to verify the authenticity of references.
- Providing false or misleading information may result in withdrawal or rejection of the application.
 - *In the event of a successful application resulting in an applicant becoming a student, false or misleading information found to have been provided in a reference submitted in support of a successful application may result in disciplinary action and/or the withdrawal of the student’s registration.*

Please see following pages for a reference letter template that can be used if preferred.

NB Referees are not required to use the suggested template; however, we advise that it can also be used as guidance when producing the reference to ensure all relevant information is provided.

4. BNU Work / Professional Reference Letter Template (Sample)

Referee's Organisational Letterhead

Date: _____

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to provide this reference in support of **[Applicant Full Name]**, who is applying to study **BSc (Hons) International Business Studies with Foundation Year** through **Oakwood College**, a partner institution of Buckinghamshire New University.

1. Referee Details

Full Name:	
Job Title:	
Organisation:	
Work Email:	
Telephone Number:	
Relationship to Applicant:	
Length of Time Known:	

2. Applicant's Role and Responsibilities

Job Title / Role:	
Employment or Involvement Dates:	
Key Duties and Responsibilities:	

3. Skills Relevant to Academic Study

Comments on:

- Work ethic and reliability
- Communication skills (written and verbal)
- Ability to follow instructions and meet deadlines
- Organisation and time management
- Problem-solving and initiative

Comments:

4. Personal Qualities

Comments on:

- Commitment and motivation
- Maturity and responsibility
- Teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Willingness to learn

Comments:

5. Suitability for Higher Education Study

Comments:

Example statement (optional):

“I believe [Applicant Name] has the motivation, skills, and maturity required to successfully complete the Foundation Year and progress to the BSc (Hons) International Business Studies programme.”

6. Referee Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this reference is accurate and based on my professional knowledge of the applicant.

Signature:	
Name:	
Position:	
Date:	

Important Notes for Referees:

- References should ideally be on **organisational letterhead** and signed.
- Referees **must not** be family members or close friends.
- Oakwood College or BNU **may contact referees** to verify the authenticity of references.
- False or misleading references may result in the application being rejected, or in consequences for the student in the event their application is successful, and the provision of false or misleading information is subsequently discovered.