

Job reference Interim reference Letter of recommendation

Information sheet

ETH Zurich employees are entitled to a job reference or an interim reference. These provide information about the type and duration of their employment and contain details regarding their performance and conduct.

Basic principle

A job reference serves as important proof of performance for employees. It provides information about the type and duration of their employment and contains relevant details regarding their performance and behaviour. It is intended to aid the economic advancement of employees once their employment contract comes to an end.

Practice

In practice, job references play a particularly important role when it comes to applying for jobs. In most cases, they determine whether applicants are shortlisted for the position in question and, consequently, whether they are invited for an interview.

According to Article 330a of the Swiss Code of Obligations, as an employer, ETH Zurich is obligated to issue a reference to employees at any time upon request. This takes the form of an interim reference if the employment relationship is ongoing or a job reference if the employee in question is leaving ETH Zurich.

In light of this, it is important for ETH Zurich as an employer and HR Operations to ensure that references are issued in accordance with the specified guidelines, thereby showing our appreciation for our employees and providing them with an accredited basis for their search for a new job.

If you have any questions about reference assessments or the wording used in references, your HR Partner will be happy to help you with this and advise you on legally acceptable customary practices.

Target groups

All employees – whether they have a permanent or non-permanent employment contract – have a right to request a job reference:

doctoral students, postdocs, senior assistants, senior scientists, student employees, project staff, technical staff, administrative staff, IT staff, etc.

Letter of recommendation

Scientific staff – e.g. doctoral students, postdocs, senior assistants and senior scientists – are often provided with a letter of recommendation from a professor to support their career advancement. In an academic context, this letter of recommendation (also known as letter of reference or reference letter) contains information about the academic performance and behaviour of the person concerned from the point of view of the relevant professor. It includes an explicit recommendation for a position in the field of science.

Letters of recommendation are not legally binding.

Structure and content of a job reference

Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim reference (written in present tense) • Job reference (refers to the past)
Personal details and total duration of employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First name, surname, date of birth • Job title • Duration of employment (start date and leaving date), job title, role, level of employment • Profile of the relevant organisational unit
Description of tasks and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role within the organisation, representation, promotions, transfers, departments • Chronological description of tasks and activities • Main and special tasks, skills, responsibility, projects
Assessment of performance, willingness to work, ability to work, specialist knowledge and continuing education education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative and quantitative work results: identification with work and dedication to it, use of own initiative, commitment, determination, perseverance, ability to cope with pressure, stress behaviour, powers of comprehension, organisational skills, flexibility, creativity, ability to put ideas into practice, talent
Working method, success of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working method: conscientiousness, diligence, self-reliance, systematic approach, methodological, ability to negotiate • Success of work: quality and quantity, adherence to schedules, achievement of targets • For managerial staff: leadership skills, working atmosphere, employee development
Assessment of behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour towards supervisors and colleagues: exemplary, impeccable, able to work in a team, friendly, appreciated, cooperative • Behaviour towards business partners and external parties: customer-focused, engaging, strong negotiation skills • Social skills: trustworthy, loyal, shows integrity, assertive, persuasive
Reason for leaving, final words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason for issuing an interim reference • Reason for leaving if the employment contract is terminated by the employee or employer • Expression of thanks for the employee's services • Good wishes for future success
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signature • Place, date (interim reference: issue date; job reference: date on which the employment contract ends) • Send the signed document to HR Administration for archiving.

ETHIS reference generator

HR Operations provides a reference application designed to help with writing references. This reference generator can be accessed via the ETHIS portal at [Personal > Mitarbeitende > Personnel and employment data > Generate Job Reference](#) and is available to employees with the appropriate ETHIS authorisation. <https://ethis.ethz.ch>

The user manual can be found at ETHIS Help/FAQ in the web: www.fc.ethz.ch > ETHIS > ETHIS Help/FAQ > reference generator

Information

Further information can be found on our website at: www.ethz.ch/job-reference

If you have any questions, please contact your HR Partner. www.hr.ethz.ch/contact

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