Background Check Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ for Policy 6.6.2, Reference Checks, Information Verification, and Background Checks

For Ithaca-based locations and Cornell Tech Campus

What population of employees will receive a background check?

Cornell University requires units to conduct a thorough reference check, education and employment verification on any applicant (internal and external) to whom an offer of benefits-eligible employment is to be made.

Additionally, a background check is required, as outlined in the procedures of the policy; in such cases, offers of employment must be contingent upon the satisfactory completion of the background check. Populations covered by the policy include:

- Regular non-academic (staff and union) positions
- Benefits-eligible temporary non-academic (staff and union) positions
- Those positions identified in the Policy Appendix regardless of the duration of appointment (covers all individuals regardless of current university employment/affiliation status).

Colleges/units have the flexibility to require background checks on individuals, to whom the contingent offer of employment has been made, beyond what is required by policy.

At what stage of the process can I initiate a background check?

In accordance with the university’s philosophy of a fair and unbiased hiring process, Cornell representatives will not ask an applicant to disclose information regarding criminal convictions until they have extended a contingent offer of employment. The reference checking, information verification and background check process is to be completed, with satisfactory results, before the first day of work. In a limited number of cases, and with the prior approval of the unit HR representative, Cornell will allow an individual to begin employment, unless working with children under 18 years old, contingent upon the successful completion of these processes, with satisfactory results, within 30 days of their start date.

What if the candidate has already had a background check?

If the candidate had a background check, with satisfactory results, in the past six months and the hiring unit has access to the results, a new background check is not required.

What are the background check packages available and how do I know which to choose?

Depending on the position and/or candidate you will need to consider which package is most applicable, for example, if the position requires the candidate to drive a university vehicle a Basic Domestic + DMV might be the best option. There are a variety of options to choose from; a full listing with definitions is available at the bottom of this page.

Should I inform applicants that they are subject to background checks in my employment advertisements?
No. It is a violation of the NYC Fair Chance Act and inconsistent with the university’s commitment to having an open, inviting and inclusive application process to include any reference to a background check in the advertising language.

**What if negative or misinformation is returned as a result of a background check?**

You must follow the [adverse action steps](#) and contact the Office of Workforce Recruitment and Retention.

**How long are Sterling records retained and how do I access them?**

All checks are retained for seven years and are accessible on the SterlingONE platform.

**If I need to run an international background check, what does it mean if I don’t see the country listed?**

If the candidate’s experience has been in a country that the US does not have diplomatic relations the country will not appear as a selection option. In this case you will want to run the Extended Global Sanctions check. This checks thousands of sources internationally that include individuals who have been placed on a watch list, exclusions list, sanctioned and prohibited parties list by the United States Government, European Union, United Nations Security Council, World Bank and other foreign governments. Sources include, but are not limited to international sanctioning bodies, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory enforcement agencies. Databases referenced include, but are not limited to, Denied Parties, The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)'s Specially Designated Nationals (SDNs), Blocked Persons, FBI Most Wanted list, Interpol Most Wanted, Terrorist Watch Lists, and World Bank Debarred Parties.

**How is billing handled?**

The university has reserved funds for and will cover the cost and associated fees of information verification and background check efforts, as required by this policy. The requesting unit is responsible for covering the cost and associated fees of information verification and background check efforts for all other positions, and for any checks beyond those required by policy.

Invoices for background checks covered by policy must be submitted through an [I Want Doc](#) using the central account number. Any expenses for checks not covered by policy are to be covered by the local college/unit accounts.

[accordion]

### Background check packages and descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Package Name</th>
<th>Products Included</th>
<th>Product Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMV</td>
<td>DMV Driving Records&lt;br&gt;Client Criteria</td>
<td>Motor Vehicle Record&lt;br&gt;Review of results conduct by Sterling based on criteria provided by Cornell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic International</td>
<td>International Criminal Search&lt;br&gt;Education Verification&lt;br&gt;Employment Verification</td>
<td>Search of criminal records outside the United States&lt;br&gt;Verification of the highest degree received and enrollment (if applicable)&lt;br&gt;Verification of the last 7 years of employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic Domestic</td>
<td>SSN Trace, National Sex Offender Registry Check, Multi-State Criminal Check, Federal Criminal Search, Education Verification, Employment Verification, County Criminal Search</td>
<td>Database search to identify additional names and addresses associated with the candidate &lt;br&gt; Search of the National Sex Offender Registry to determine if a candidate is listed &lt;br&gt; Database search of criminal information contributed by 43 states &lt;br&gt; Search of Federal courts records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history &lt;br&gt; Verification of the highest degree received and enrollment (if applicable) &lt;br&gt; Verification of the last 7 years of employment &lt;br&gt; Search of the County court records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history</td>
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<td>BASIC+DMV DOMESTIC</td>
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| BASIC+CREDIT DOMESTIC        | SSN Trace, National Sex Offender Registry Check, Multi-State Criminal Check, Federal Criminal Search, Education Verification, Employment Verification, County Criminal Search, Employment Credit Report | Database search to identify additional names and addresses associated with the candidate  
Search of the National Sex Offender Registry to determine if a candidate is listed  
Database search of criminal information contributed by 43 states  
Search of Federal courts records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history  
Verification of the highest degree received and enrollment (if applicable)  
Verification of the last 7 years of employment  
Search of the County court records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history  
Credit report for candidate provided by Transunion |
| BASIC DOMESTIC + INTERNATIONAL| SSN Trace, National Sex Offender Registry Check, Multi-State Criminal Check, Federal Criminal Search, Education Verification, Employment Verification, County Criminal Search, International Criminal Search | Database search to identify additional names and addresses associated with the candidate  
Search of the National Sex Offender Registry to determine if a candidate is listed  
Database search of criminal information contributed by 43 states  
Search of Federal courts records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history  
Verification of the highest degree received and enrollment (if applicable)  
Verification of the last 7 years of employment  
Search of the County court records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history  
Search of criminal records outside the United States |
| BASIC+CREDIT DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL | SSN Trace, National Sex Offender Registry Check, Multi-State Criminal Check, Federal Criminal Search, Education Verification, Employment Verification, County Criminal Search, International Criminal Search, Employment Credit Report | Database search to identify additional names and addresses associated with the candidate  
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DMV Driving Records  
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Motor Vehicle Record  
Review of results conduct by Sterling based on criteria provided by Cornell |
| **DOMESTIC: CAMPS/REUNION - CRIMINAL ONLY** | SSN Trace  
Multi-State Criminal Check  
Federal Criminal Search  
County Criminal Search | Database search to identify additional names and addresses associated with the candidate  
Database search of criminal information contributed by 43 states  
Search of Federal courts records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history  
Search of the County court records for potential criminal records, based on the candidates address history |
| **Employment Verification** | Employment Verification | Verification of the last 7 years of employment |
| **A la cart Education Verification** | Education Verification | Verification of the highest degree received and enrollment (if applicable) |
| **Global Sanctions Search** | Extended Global Sanctions Search | Database search of thousands of sources internationally that include watch lists, exclusions list, sanctions & prohibited parties list by the US Government, European Union, UN Security Council, World Bank, and other foreign governments |
| **International Education** | International Education Verification | Verification of the highest degree or enrollment (if applicable) received outside the United States |