

Credential File Information Quick Guide

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Credential File Information

What is a Credential File?

A credential file is a packet of information that is sent to a prospective employer when a candidate is applying for a position. Educational employers are the primary users of credential files. If you are interested in setting up a file, contact Career Services, 214 Sheridan Hall, 785-628-4260, careers@fhsu.edu.

What a Credential File consists of . . .

- A Records Release Authorization form
- A resume or registration form
- An unofficial FHSU transcript or university course sheet
- Recommendation Sheets

What a Credential File will not include . . .

- We do NOT include transcripts from other colleges or universities; these courses may be listed on the university course sheet
- We do NOT include copies of licenses or certifications
- We do NOT include student teacher evaluation forms

Who should have a Credential File?

Career Services maintains credential files for education students and alumni. Files are most frequently established for: elementary and secondary school teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and other personnel employed in a school setting. To be eligible for a credential file, you must be working toward or have already received a degree or teaching certificate/endorsement from FHSU.

Candidates applying for jobs in business, private industry or government should keep a list of references to be supplied to employers on request. The list should include the names, titles, business addresses and phone numbers of at least three people who will support your application. A credential file is not used for these employers.

How is the Credential File used?

Credential files are used by schools to help determine which candidates are best qualified for positions. Career Services prepares credential files for mailing by making photocopies of the materials in the file, preparing a cover sheet, and mailing the packet to the employer. A credential file is sent at the request of either the candidate or the employer after a candidate has applied for a position. **Credentials should NOT be sent before an application has been submitted.** Often, an employer will instruct you to submit your credential file as part of the application process.

FERPA/Buckley Amendment

The Buckley Amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits students and alumni either to have access to their files or to waive their right to see recommendations written after January 1, 1975. The amendment exempts references written prior to that date. Therefore, all references written before January 1, 1975, and placed in a credential file will remain confidential according to the law and are not available to be read by the registrant.

Confidential/Closed Files:

Persons with credentials in placement offices have the option to waive their right to see references established after January 1, 1975. There must be a written waiver of access with each letter of reference when a candidate has waived the right to view the confidential letter, Career Services staff cannot give the candidate any information concerning the content of the letter. Those who waive access to confidential statements will have the right to a list of names of all persons submitting a letter of reference for their file.

Non-Confidential/Open Files:

Candidates may choose to retain the right to review the contents of their file by establishing an open or non-confidential file. Candidates who have not waived their right of access may request to see references written after January 1, 1975.

What does it cost to have a Credential File?

There is no cost to establish a credential file at FHSU. Enrolled undergraduate graduating seniors will receive free credential mailing service thru August 31 of the academic year they graduate.

At the conclusion of the period of free services, rates for alumni are as follows:

- Each academic year (September 1 – August 31) alumni receive 5 sets of credentials mailed out at no charge. \$3.00 per set after 5 sets.
- There is no charge to have file faxed or emailed.
- There is no charge if an employer contacts our office directly to request your file.

How do I establish a Credential File?

If you are interested in setting up a file, contact Career Services, 214 Sheridan Hall, 785-628-4260, careers@fhsu.edu.

Form to establish a Credential File

The Records Release Authorization form is your signed consent that enables Career Services to release the information in your credential file to prospective employers. This form must be completed before your credential file can be established. The Records Release Authorization form can be obtained from Career Services.

The Resume

As part of your credential file, you will be asked to submit a current **1 – 2 page** resume. Please mail or email your resume to careers@fhsu.edu.

Unofficial Transcript

Contact the Registrar's Office, Sheridan Hall 106, 785-628-4222, to request a copy of your transcript and arrange to have it sent to Career Services. We do not include transcripts from other colleges or universities in your credential file. You may list hours taken at other colleges and universities on the University Course Sheet. Copies of the University Course sheet are available on the Career Services website as well as upon request at the Career Services office.

Recommendation Sheets

Selecting Recommendation Writers

Carefully select the people you will use as references. The most valuable recommendations come from those who can comment about your academic and work skills, abilities, and aptitudes. Contact your references and ask them if they would be willing to write a letter of reference for you. Explain your career goals and supply them with a signed Recommendation Sheet and envelope. (Open and Closed Recommendation Sheets can be obtained from the Career Services Office or from the Career Services website)

Candidates should include cooperating teachers and student teaching supervisors recommendation sheets. (Note: Student teacher evaluation forms are not a substitute for a written recommendation sheet.) Teacher candidates may also want to request letters of recommendation from professors, principals, superintendents, and former employers where they worked with children or students in some capacity. Candidates for administration, college teaching or other school positions will want recommendation sheets from supervisors, former employers and professors in their field.

Number of Recommendation Sheets

Most employers prefer a minimum of three recommendations and, typically, a candidate will have 3 to 5 recommendation sheets in their file. Even the most experienced candidates should have no more than 7 letters of recommendation in their file. You may update your file by adding new letters of recommendation/and or having old recommendations removed. (Please refer to the instructions in the section on **Updating your Credential File**)

Distributing the Recommendation Sheet

1. Print or type the requested information in the appropriate space provided at the top of each Recommendation Sheet.
2. Give the form and an envelope addressed to Career Services to your recommendation writer. The recommendation writer should type their letter on the form and sign the letter. If the recommendation writer prefers to use his or her own school letterhead/stationery, the recommendation still needs to be signed by the recommendation writer. The writer should seal the envelope and mail it directly to Career Services.
3. So that you know when your file is complete, it is recommended that you call or email Career Services at 785-628-4260 or careers@fhsu.edu to find out which recommendation sheets have been returned for your file.

Credential Files from other Institutions

If credentials have previously been established with another institution, you may request to have a copy sent to FHSU's Career Services. Earlier letters of recommendation can be added to your FHSU credential file (provided the letters of recommendation are the same as your FHSU recommendations) so that your record of experience will be complete.

Having your Credential File sent

When to send Credentials

A credential file is sent at the candidate's request after a candidate has applied for a position.

Credentials should not be sent before a letter of application has been submitted. Often, an employer's application form will tell you to have your credential file sent as part of the application process. Credentials are prepared by making photocopies of all materials in the file, placing the copies under a cover sheet and mailing the packet to the employer.

Request to send Credentials

The following options are available to order/request credential file mailings:

1. In person. Come to 214 Sheridan Hall.
2. Phone (785-628-4260)
3. Fax (785-628-4093)
4. Email (careers@fhsu.edu)
5. On-line form: www.fhsu.edu/career/credentials

****For each employer, be sure to provide: the name of the official, their title or department, and the complete mailing address of the employer to whom the credentials are being sent.**

****We must send out your entire file when you request your credential file to be mailed or faxed. We can not honor requests to only send a specific portion of the credential file.**

When requesting credentials, it is important to begin early. Don't wait until the last minute! Generally we strive for a one day turn around time to get credentials in the mail. However, during our peak season (April and May), it may take up to two days to get credentials in the mail. In addition to our processing time, you must also allow sufficient time for delivery.

There is no limit to the number of credentials you may send. Credential request forms may be obtained in our office, Sheridan Hall 214 or from our website, www.fhsu.edu/career/credentials.

Your credential file remains the property of Fort Hays State University. All sets of credentials will be mailed from our office. Your file will not be mailed to any name or address not connected with potential employment. Also, credential files are not sent to employment agencies.

We maintain a record of the places where your credentials were sent. If you are ever in doubt as to which employers have received your information, please feel free to contact our office.

Credential Fee Policies

Enrolled undergraduate graduating seniors will receive free credential mailing service thru August 31 of the academic year they graduate.

At the conclusion of the period of free services, rates for alumni are as follows:

- Each academic year (September 1 – August 31) alumni receive 5 sets of credentials mailed out at no charge. \$3.00 per set after 5 sets
- There is no charge for faxed or emailed requests.
- There is no charge if an employer contacts our office directly to request your file.

Alumni will be billed after 5 free sets of credentials have been mailed out. We accept payment by check, cash or credit card. Credit cards accepted at FHSU include Visa, MasterCard, and Discover. A returned check will result in the discontinuance of check writing privileges with Career Services. Be sure Career Services is kept up to date with your correct contact information in case we need to reach you regarding your file requests and payment status.

Referral Service

Employers may contact Career Services and ask us to refer qualified candidates for open positions. In response to an employer's request for referrals, Career Services searches the Handshake database for registered candidates and forwards resumes of qualified candidates directly to the employer. Candidate resumes are only forwarded if the candidate has opted to allow resume visibility to employers via Handshake. Career Services shall not be liable for any consequences resulting from a candidate's failure to keep their Handshake profile up-to-date.

Updating your Credential File

Alumni are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to update their credential files with new letters periodically and especially BEFORE having their file sent to a potential employer. Candidates who have not used their file for a number of years will occasionally contact us, and ask us to send their file "as is" because they are trying to meet a short deadline. Employers have told us that recommendation

sheets that are four or five years old are of limited value to them. They need to have recommendation sheets from your most recent experiences. Keeping your file “up-to-date” before a job search will eliminate any last minute rush to supply employers with new letters. Please contact Career Services before adding new references to your credential file. All necessary forms may be downloaded from our website. If you have taken more courses at FHSU, be sure to contact the Registrar’s Office, 785-628-4222 and request a new transcript for your file.

You may add new letters of recommendation to your file at any time, whether or not you are currently conducting a job search. You may make a written request to have a letter removed from your file. Written requests must be mailed or faxed to our office with your signature. **Letters you wish to be removed will be destroyed.**

Life Expectancy of a Credential File

The credential file is the property of the University and does not belong to the candidate. Credential information is maintained at FHSU Career Services. Files are checked periodically and those files that have not been used or updated within 10 years will be destroyed.