Policy on Background Checks and Credential Verifications

I. Purpose and Scope

Northeastern University is committed to promoting a safe and healthy learning, teaching, working, and research environment for students, faculty, and staff, and to furthering the safety and well-being of its enrolled students, employees, and volunteers. The university also recognizes the importance of protecting its property and funds, and safeguarding and conserving university resources. In all hiring decisions, the university intends to select qualified individuals of the highest ethical standards. To assist the university in meeting these commitments, this policy sets forth the credential verification and other background information checks that will be conducted as a condition of employment.

This policy applies to candidates for employment (faculty and staff), to current staff seeking promotional or transfer opportunities, to temporary non-student employees, to certain graduate students, and to current staff being assigned to certain new duties, including on an interim basis. It applies to all coaches (staff and volunteers). It also applies to all faculty who travel with undergraduate students, to volunteers who interact with students as part of their volunteer role, and to students who are engaged to drive university vehicles, to serve as Resident Assistants, or those who work in the Russell Call Children’s Center, as well as to students who serve as Teaching Assistants, Resident Assistants or in similar roles in international programs or in connection with university sponsored travel whether international or domestic.
Employees or volunteers who will supervise, coach, teach, or otherwise interact with minors in connection with a program for minors, as defined by the university’s Policy on Programs Involving Minors, will be subject to the provisions of that policy whether or not they also come within this policy.

This policy does not apply to employees of companies that contract with the university to provide services on campus, as those individuals are covered by the university’s Background Check Policy for Contractors and Vendors.

II. Definitions

For purposes of this Policy:

A Candidate is an individual who has applied for employment with Northeastern University, who is already an employee but is applying for promotion or transfer to another position, or who seeks a volunteer role that includes interaction with students.

A Selected Candidate is the finalist for a position who will be or has been offered the position or volunteer role, contingent upon the verification and reviews required by this policy.

Engagement refers to the process by which volunteers are selected to serve certain roles within the university, such as Club sports coaches and assistant coaches, who interact with students as part of their volunteer role.

Hiring Unit refers to the office or department that will interview and select the candidate for a position or volunteer role.

Credential and Reference Verification refers to the process of checking and verifying a candidate’s references, educational and employment history, and other information under Part III.A of this policy.

Criminal background check refers to obtaining and reviewing the results of a candidate’s criminal history.

CORI refers to the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information, which is a person's criminal history, and may also refer to a CORI-equivalent check in other jurisdictions where an employee or selected candidate has lived in the last seven years.

SORI refers to a person's Sex Offender Registry Information, which in Massachusetts is a record of convictions for specified sexual offenses committed as an adult or juvenile.
A SORI, or SORI-equivalent check from other jurisdictions, will be required whenever a criminal background check is required under this policy.

**University-sponsored travel** means academic or business travel with students taken by Northeastern faculty, staff, and/or administrators that is authorized, funded, coordinated or administered by Northeastern University. Such travel may include but is not limited to teaching, research, consulting, service, administrative work, field studies, volunteer work, performances, athletic contests, and trips in connection with a university recognized student organization, academic or administrative unit.

**III. Policy**

**A. Credential and Reference Verification**

As a condition of employment or engagement, candidates for all faculty, staff and volunteer positions who are selected for the position are subject to credential and reference verification. All information contained in the application form is subject to verification. The hiring unit is responsible for verifying professional references of all selected candidates. Human Resources Management (HRM) will coordinate verification of employment history and educational credentials. For certain positions additional verification or information is required, as indicated in Part B below.

For all faculty, staff and volunteers, the university requires:

i. Verification of post-high school education credentials for those positions that specify an educational requirement.

ii. Verification of actual employment dates for a minimum of the prior seven years.

iii. A minimum of three professional work references with at least one from a former manager or supervisor.

iv. For positions that require professional certification or licensure, HRM will coordinate verification that the selected candidate is duly accredited or licensed, and that such accreditation or licensure is current.

v. In limited circumstances where the need to fill a position is urgent, the selected candidate may be permitted to start in the position, conditioned upon the hiring unit’s completion of the credential and reference verification.
B. Additional Employment Verification Requirements

i. For positions where the employee may be required to drive Northeastern vehicles:

When selected candidates or employees are expected to be driving university vehicles, the process will include verification of current, valid license and review of driving record.

For selected candidates in Public Safety, driving records will be reviewed and evaluated by the Public Safety Department. All other candidates’ driving records will be evaluated by the Human Resources Management department.

ii. For positions that require credit checks:

Some positions may warrant additional background checks, including credit checks. Positions where credit checks are required include, but are not limited to, those in which the incumbent can sign university checks, wire-transfer money, negotiate or authorize arrangements or accounts with banks, or sign contracts, and their designees.

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), no credit check will be conducted without consent. The hiring unit must provide the selected candidate or employee with a copy of the “Summary of Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act,” attached as Appendix A.

iii. For Officer and College Dean positions:

Given the breadth and range of responsibilities for these positions, the university requires a full background check to include the following:

a) Verification of educational credentials
b) Verification of actual employment dates for a minimum of seven years
c) Multiple professional references
d) Nation-wide and international criminal history
e) Credit history
iv. Criminal Background Checks:

In addition to the verification of information required above, Northeastern University requires a criminal background check (CORI/SORI or equivalent), for all new faculty and staff hires, for all coaches (staff and volunteers), and for current staff members who have applied for and been selected for promotion or transfer, unless they have cleared such check within the last five years. In addition, criminal background checks will also be required for current staff or graduate students being assigned, even on a temporary basis, to positions or duties where such a check is required by law or outside government agencies, or where the position involves any of the following:

- Unsupervised access to minors
- Access to computer infrastructure, systems, or applications with sensitive data or position providing computer security services
- Broad and extensive access to personally identifying information about students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, or research subjects, including employee performance reviews, disciplinary actions and compensation
- Responsibility for conducting reviews, audits or investigations including of financial and operational systems
- Direct access to and handling of cash and cash equivalents
- Ability to modify business or financial records after transactions have been processed
- Public safety and campus security
- Coaching students as part of the university’s athletics, club sports or intramural programs
- Travel with students, whether international or domestic
- Unrestricted access to building master keys, security systems, residence halls, athletic facilities, or areas where people have reasonable expectation of privacy.
• Authorization to receive or sign out controlled or scheduled drugs on behalf of a faculty investigator

Criminal background checks will be conducted for faculty traveling with undergraduate students on university-sponsored travel or who have direct access to controlled substances or any Chemical of Interest listed in Appendix A of the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards, 6 C.F.R. Part 27 (e.g., Principal Investigators and those, including graduate students, that they authorize to receive or sign out such controlled or scheduled substances for the lab). Criminal background checks will be conducted for any other faculty positions for which a criminal background check is or becomes required by law.

The criminal background check will be conducted in all jurisdictions where the candidate has resided for a minimum of the last seven years.

The university reserves the right to require a criminal background check for any position or in any situation where it is deemed appropriate to protect the interests of the university.

a) The criminal background check will be performed by the university, or its authorized vendor.

b) Any candidate with a criminal history will be subject to further review. A previous conviction does not automatically disqualify a candidate. In determining whether criminal charges and/or convictions will preclude candidates from being hired, university officials will consider and determine suitability by considering factors that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Age at time of conviction(s);
2. Number of convictions;
3. Nature of conviction(s);
4. Severity of conviction(s);
5. Length of time since conviction;
6. Behavior since conviction; and
7. Any other potential risk factors to be weighed, including the relevance of the offense(s) to the position applied for.
c) In accordance with state and federal law, no background check will be conducted without consent. The selected candidate or employee must personally authorize Northeastern University and/or its agent(s) to conduct a CORI/SORI or equivalent records check. The selected candidate will be asked to sign an authorization form. If the selected candidate or employee declines to sign an authorization, the individual will no longer be considered as a candidate for the position.

d) Offers of employment will be made contingent upon a satisfactory criminal background check.

e) Pursuant to 803 C.M.R. 2.17, should Northeastern University be considering an adverse decision based on the background check information, the candidate will be notified of the potential adverse employment action, provided a copy of the background check report, and notified of the specific information in the CORI report that is the basis for the potential adverse action. The candidate will be given a copy of this policy and a copy of the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services information regarding the process for correcting criminal record information. The candidate will be provided the opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the information contained in the CORI report.

f) Information obtained during the criminal background check that requires further review will be shared with the appropriate university official. The hiring unit must consult with Human Resources Management and the final decision will be made by the Human Resources Business Partner and the Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the area vice president, dean, or their designee.

g) Positions in Public Safety require a more comprehensive criminal background check and accordingly those are conducted, and hiring approvals are made, by Public Safety officials.

C. Candidates for Employment and Employees of the Russell J. Call Children's Center

Pursuant to regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, candidates applying for positions at the Russell J. Call Children’s Center will be subject
to Background Record Checks at time of hire. Incumbent employees will be subject to Background Record Checks every two years.

D. Students Hired by the University for Certain Positions

i. Student drivers. All students who drive university vans carrying five or more passengers must be at least 21 years old and have three years of driving experience.

Such students are also required to produce their driving record, showing evidence of a responsible and safe driving history, complete an on-line training course and exam for student drivers, and take a driving test. They must provide a copy of their driver's license annually, and attest annually in writing that they are not under disciplinary sanctions through the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

ii. Resident Assistants and students with key card access. Students who are selected to serve as Resident Assistants, or who have jobs with Business Services, Facilities, or another university department for which they are given key card access to residential halls, will be required to have a criminal background check as a condition of the position.

iii. Students engaged or volunteering as RAs, TAs or positions with similar responsibilities in connection with university-sponsored travel will be required to have a criminal background check as a condition of the position.

iv. Students Working at the Russell J. Call Children's Center. Students hired on co-op as assistant teachers, and other work study or student assistants at the Children’s Center who may have direct and unsupervised time with children are required to have a Background Record Check pursuant to 606 C.M.R. §14.0.

IV. Additional Information

A. Pursuant to M.G.L.c. 151B, §§ 4(9), and 4(9 1/2) and M.G.L. c. 6, § 172, and based on the current CORI requirements issued by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS), Northeastern will adhere to the following procedures:

1. All CORI and/or criminal background check information is confidential. Access to CORI information will be limited to those individuals who have a “need to know,” which may include, but not be limited to, hiring managers, staff
submitting the CORI requests, and staff involved with processing job applications.

2. Human Resources Management will maintain and keep current a list of individuals authorized to have access to, or view, CORIs. The university will also ensure that authorized individuals will be trained on the applicable laws and regulations.

3. The university will maintain confidential files of all criminal history records, in a file separate from the personnel file, in accordance with its retention policy.

B. If the university is inclined to make an adverse decision based in whole or in part on the results of a criminal background check, the candidate will receive a copy of the background report, a Pre-Adverse Action Notice, and a document summarizing the candidate’s rights under the FCRA and will be advised of the part(s) of the record relevant to the desired position. Candidates will be permitted to provide responsive information regarding their criminal history, including evidence that they did not commit the offense (in the case of a misidentification), evidence of rehabilitation of character, and other extenuating circumstances. The candidate will be given five (5) business days to provide this information so as not to halt the recruitment process for the position. Extensions may be provided to the candidate at the sole discretion of the university.

If adverse action is taken against the candidate in whole or in part based upon the results of a background check, the candidate will receive an Adverse Action Notice indicating that the offer will be rescinded. The candidate will also receive a document summarizing the candidate’s rights under the FCRA.

C. The university expects all members of the university community to adhere to and act in accordance with this policy. Managers in hiring units who do not meet their responsibilities under this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including termination. Falsification or omission of information in an application may result in an offer or appointment being rescinded or in discipline, up to termination, of an employee.

V. Contact Information

HRM Customer Service Center: 250 Columbus Place; (617)-373-2230; HRMInfo@northeastern.edu