

Reference checking against social media profiles

The PSA received a circular that indicates that the Minister of Public Service and Administration issued a directive on Personal Suitability checks with effect from 1 February 2019 to elucidate Regulation 57(1)(c) of the Public Service Regulations, 2016.

In terms of the directive, personnel suitability checks will consist of the following:

- Criminal record checks
- Citizen verification
- Financial records checks
- Qualification/study verification
- Previous employment verification

The application form for employment makes provision for reference checks whereby the candidate must nominate referees and declare relationships with them. The Minister, in the directive, advises departments to also extend reference checking to social media accounts to align comments and behaviour by applicants on these platforms.

The PSA welcomes the fact that the directive further advises departments to obtain consent from employees in accessing their social media profiles.

The PSA cautions employees and those seeking employment to refrain from making remarks on public platforms that could lead to unnecessary hardships of misconduct hearings, possible dismissals or non-appointment to a post as a public servant.

The PSA will engage the Minister to ensure that an appropriate social media policy for the Public Service is in place.

Members will be informed of developments.

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