Senior Management Arrangements, Systems and Contro

Chapter 22

Regulatory references



22.1 **Application**

General application 22.1.1 R This chapter applies to all SMCR firms. 22.1.1A G ■ SYSC TP 8.5.1R applies this chapter to certain claims management firms that are not SMCR firms. **Activities covered** 22.1.2 G This chapter is not limited to regulated activities or other specific types of activities. Territorial scope and overseas firms 22.1.3 R There is no territorial limitation on the application of this chapter, subject to ■ SYSC 22.1.6R. 22.1.4 G One effect of ■ SYSC 22.1.3R is that the obligation to provide a reference can apply even if the employee worked in an overseas office of the employer. 22.1.5 R [deleted] R 22.1.6 For an overseas firm, ■ SYSC 22.2.2R (Obligation to give references) only applies if the current or former employee in question (defined as "P" in ■ SYSC 22.2.2R) is or was an employee of its branch in the United Kingdom and only relates to their activities as such. 22.1.7 R (1) In order to decide whether someone is an employee of a branch, the Glossary definition of employee is applied to the branch as if the branch and the firm of which it forms part were separate firms. (2) For the purpose of (1), paragraph (4A)(c) of the definition of

apply.

employee (someone employed elsewhere in the group) does not



22.2 Getting, giving and updating references: the main rules

Obligation to obtain references

22.2.1 R

- (1) If a firm (A) is considering:
 - (a) permitting or appointing someone (P) to perform a *controlled* function;
 - (b) issuing a certificate under the certification regime for P; or
 - (ba) appointing a board director;

(as explained in more detail in rows (A) and (B) of the table in ■ SYSC 22.2.3R), A must take reasonable steps to obtain appropriate references from:

- (c) P's current employer; and
- (d) anyone who has been P's employer in the past six years.
- (2) A must take reasonable steps to obtain the reference before the time in column two of the applicable row in the table in SYSC 22.2.3R. If A does not obtain it within that time it must take reasonable steps to obtain it as soon as possible thereafter.
- (3) A must in particular request:
 - (a) the information in SYSC 22.2.2R(1) to (3); and
 - (b) (if P's current or previous *employer* is also an *SMCR firm*) the information in SYSC 22.2.2R(4) (questions (A) to (F) of Part One of SYSC 22 Annex 1R).
- (4) When deciding what information to request under (1), A must have regard to the factors in SYSC 22.2.2R(5) (Factors set out in SYSC 22 Annex 2R).

Obligation to give references

22.2.2 R

- (1) A firm (B) must provide a reference to another firm (A) as soon as reasonably practicable if:
 - (a) A is considering:
 - (i) permitting or appointing someone (P) to perform a controlled function; or
 - (ii) issuing a certificate under the certification regime for P; or
 - (iii) appointing P to another position in the table in ■ SYSC 22.2.3R;

(as explained in more detail in the table in ■ SYSC 22.2.3R);

- (b) A makes a request, for a reference or other information in respect of P from B, in B's capacity as P's current or former employer;
- (c) B:
 - (i) is P's current employer; or
 - (ii) has been P's employer at any time in the six year period preceding the request in (1)(b); and
- (d) A indicates to B the purpose of the request.
- (2) B must disclose to A in the reference all information of which B is aware that B reasonably considers to be relevant to A's assessment of whether P is fit and proper.
- (3) B is only required to disclose under (1) and (2) something that occurred or existed:
 - (a) in the six years before the request for a reference; or
 - (b) between the date of the request for the reference and the date B gives the reference; or
 - (c) (in the case of serious misconduct) at any time.

[Note: See ■ SYSC 22.5.10G and ■ SYSC 22.5.11G for guidance on the meaning of serious misconduct]

- (4) B must in addition disclose the information in questions (A) to (F) of Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements).
- (5) When deciding what information to give to A under (1) to (3), B must have regard to the factors in ■ SYSC 22 Annex 2R (Factors to take into account when asking for and giving regulatory references).

22.2.3 R Table: What positions need a reference

Position	When to obtain reference	Comments
(A) Permitting or appointing someone to perform an FCA con-	One <i>month</i> before the end of the application period	
trolled function or a PRA controlled function.	Where a request for a reference would require:	
	(a) the <i>firm</i> requesting the reference;	
	(b) the <i>employer</i> giving the reference; or	
	(c) any other person;	

Position	When to obtain reference	Comments
	to make a mandatory disclosure prior to P disclosing to its current employer that such application has been made, the date is the end of the application period.	
(B) Issuing a certificate under section 63F of the <i>Act</i> (Certification of employees by authorised persons).	Before the certificate is issued	This includes renewing an existing certificate.
(C) Appointing someone to any of the following positions (as defined in the <i>PRA Rulebook</i>):	Not applicable	SYSC 22.2.1R (obligation to obtain a reference) does not apply to a firm appointing someone to the position in column (1).
(a) a notified non-executive director;(b) a credit union non-		However SYSC 22.2.2R does apply to a <i>firm</i> asked to give a refer-
executive director; or		ence to a firm appointing someone to
(c) a key function holder.		the position in column (1).
(D) A <i>firm</i> appointing someone to be a <i>non-SMF</i> board director sub-	Before appointment	Only applies where the appointment is by a <i>UK SMCR firm</i> that is:
ject to competence requirements of itself.		(a) a core SMCR firm; or
		(b) an enhanced scope SMCR firm.

Note 1: Mandatory disclosure means an obligation in any applicable laws, regulations or rules to declare or disclose information to the public.

Note 2: P refers to the *employee* or ex-*employee* about whom the reference is given as defined in more detail in SYSC 22.2.1R and SYSC 22.2.2R.

Note 3: The application period means the period for consideration referred to in section 61 of the *Act* (Determination of application).

Obligation to revise references: The main rule

22.2.4 R

If at any time:

- (1) a firm (B) has given a reference under SYSC 22.2.2R to another firm (A) about an employee or ex-employee of B (P);
- (2) B was also an SMCR firm when it gave the reference in (1);
- (3) either of the following applies:
 - (a) B is aware of matters or circumstances that mean that if B had been aware of them when giving that reference, this chapter would have required B to draft the reference differently; or

- (b) the following applies:
 - (i) B has since giving the reference reached conclusions of the type described in question (E) of Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R or taken disciplinary action of the type described in question (F) of Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R; and
 - (ii) if B had taken or reached those conclusions or actions within the six year period referred to in Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R, this chapter would have required B to draft the reference differently; and
- (4) it would be reasonable to consider the differences in (3) to be significant for an assessment by A of the fitness and propriety of P for the role at A for which the reference was given;

B must:

- (5) make reasonable inquiries as to the identity of P's current employer; and
- (6) give A details of those differences in writing as soon as reasonably practicable, unless ■ SYSC 22.2.5R says that B does not have to do so.
- 22.2.5 B does not need to update A if:
 - (1) A is no longer a firm;
 - (2) P has not yet been employed by A (because, for example, P is still working their notice period with B) and it is no longer intended for A to employ P;
 - (3) A is no longer P's employer; or
 - (4) despite making reasonable enquiries under SYSC 22.2.4R, B does not know whether P is still employed by A.
- 22.2.6 R This *rule* sets out time limits about the obligation to update a reference in ■ SYSC 22.2.4R.
 - (1) If B still employs P, SYSC 22.2.4R applies throughout the period B remains employed.
 - (2) If B no longer *employs* P, the obligation to update ends six years after P ceased to be *employed* by B.
 - (3) If B no longer *employs* P and the matters or circumstances are not serious misconduct by P, B does not have to disclose something if it did not occur or exist in the six year period ending on the date B gave the original reference. This limitation applies in addition to the one in (2).

[Note: See ■ SYSC 22.5.10G and ■ SYSC 22.5.11G for *guidance* on the meaning of serious misconduct]

Obligation to revise references: Finding out who the current employer is

22.2.7 R

If at any time:

- (1) a firm (B) has given a reference under SYSC 22.2.2R to another firm (A) about an employee or ex-employee of B (P);
- (2) B asks A whether P is still an employee of A; and
- (3) B gave A the reference no more than six years ago;

A must answer that question as soon as reasonably practicable, even if B does not tell A why it wants to know that information.

Sole traders

22.2.8 R

The obligation in \blacksquare SYSC 22.2.1R (Obligation to obtain references) does not apply if A and P (as referred to in that *rule*) are the same *person*.

22.2.9 G

An example of SYSC 22.2.8R is this. Say that P works at a *firm* (B) and leaves to become a *firm* and a *sole trader*. P appoints themselves to perform the *compliance oversight function*. P does not need to get a regulatory reference from B about themselves.

22.2.10 G

- (1) If a firm is appointing someone who was a sole trader to a position that would normally require a regulatory reference under SYSC 22.2.1R, it does not have to request a reference from the sole trader themselves. That is because SYSC 22.2.1R only requires a firm to request a reference from a previous employer and a sole trader is not their own employer.
- (2) An example of (1) is this. Say that P was a *firm* and a *sole trader* and performed the *compliance oversight function* themselves. P goes to work for another *firm* (A). A does not need to request a regulatory reference from P about P.



Drafting the reference and the 22.3 request for a reference

- 22.3.1 G [deleted]
- 22.3.2 G [deleted]
- 22.3.3 G (1) A firm (A) asking another firm (B) for a reference should give B sufficient information to let B know that the requirements in this chapter apply to the reference it is being asked to give and which requirements apply.
 - (2) As long as it complies with (1), A does not have to set out specifically the information this chapter requires it to obtain. This is because B should include that information even though B is not specifically asked to include it.
- 22.3.4 A firm asking for a reference under this chapter from a current or former employer that is not a firm will normally need to specify what information it would like.
- 22.3.5 G (1) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to ■ SYSC 22.4.6G(-1)]
 - (2) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to ■ SYSC 22.4.7Gl
- 22.3.6 G [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to ■ SYSC 22.4.8G]



Drafting the reference: detailed requirements

Drafting the reference: detailed requirements for SMCR firms

- 22.4.1 G
- SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements) has two purposes:
 - (1) to set out what information a *firm* should disclose under SYSC 22.2.2R(4); and
 - (2) to provide a template that a *firm* should use when giving a reference under this chapter.

How to draft the reference

- 22.4.2 R
- (1) A firm must use the template in Part One of ■SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements) when giving a reference under this chapter to another firm (A).

.....

- (2) A firm may make minor changes to the format of the template in Part One of SYSC 22 Annex 1R when giving a reference under this chapter, provided that the reference includes all the information required by SYSC 22 Annex 1R.
- (3) This rule applies even if A is not an SMCR firm.
- 22.4.3 G
- (1) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to SYSC 22.4.6G(1)]
- (2) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to SYSC 22.4.6G(2)]
- (3) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to SYSC 22.4.6G(3)]
- 22.4.4 G
- A firm should use the template in SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements) even if the firm asking for the reference does not specifically ask it to.

PRA requirements

22.4.5 B may combine in a single reference what the PRA's rules require and what this chapter requires.

Inclusion of additional material

G 22.4.6

- (-1) This chapter sets out minimum requirements for a reference. It does not prevent a firm from including more than is required by this chapter.
- (1) Therefore SYSC 22.4.2R does not stop a *firm* including matters in the reference not required by the template in ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R.
- (2) A firm may include the material required by the template and additional material in the same document.
- (3) Any additional material should not alter the scope of any of the questions in the templates.
- 22.4.7 G If a *firm* does disclose more than is required by this chapter the reference should still meet its duties under general law to its former employee and the recipient (see ■ SYSC 22.5.3G to ■ SYSC 22.5.5G).

Time limits

22.4.8 G Nothing in this chapter prevents a *firm* from disclosing material outside the time limits under this chapter.

.....



22.5 Giving references: additional rules and guidance for all firms

Verification

- This chapter does not require a *firm* to disclose information that has not been properly verified.
- (1) For example, this chapter does not necessarily require a *firm* to include in a reference the fact that an ex-employee left while disciplinary proceedings were pending or had started. Including such information is likely to imply that there is cause for concern about the ex-employee but the *firm* may not have established that the ex-employee was actually responsible for misconduct.
 - (2) However, a *firm* may include such information in a reference if it wishes to (see SYSC 22.3.5G).

Accuracy

22.5.3 G A *firm* should, when giving a reference under this chapter, provide as complete a picture of an *employee's* conduct record as possible to new *employers*.

Fairness

- 22.5.4 G
- (1) A *firm* supplying a reference in accordance with this chapter owes a duty under the general law to its former *employee* and the recipient *firm* to exercise due skill and care in the preparation of the reference.
- (2) The *firm* may give frank and honest views, but only after taking reasonable care both as to factual content, and as to the opinions expressed.
- (3) References should be true, accurate, fair and based on documented fact.
- 22.5.5 G
- (1) An example of the general duty described in SYSC 22.5.4G is that fairness will normally require a *firm* to have given an *employee* an opportunity to comment on information in a reference. The *firm* might do this through, for example, disciplinary proceedings.

- (2) Paragraph (1) does not mean that the firm should provide an opportunity to comment on the reference itself, as opposed to the allegations on which it is based.
- (3) A firm may have given the employee an opportunity to comment on allegations that are later included in a reference even though, at the time that the firm is giving that opportunity, no reference is being contemplated. That may mean that the firm gives the employee their opportunity to comment on the allegations some time before the reference is prepared.
- (4) Paragraph (1) does not mean that a firm will be unable to include an allegation in a reference if it has offered the employee an opportunity to comment on the allegation but the employee has unreasonably refused to do so.
- (5) Where a firm should have given an employee an opportunity to comment on an allegation if the allegation is to be included in a reference, this chapter requires the firm to give the employee that opportunity rather than merely to leave the allegation out of the reference.
- (6) Paragraph (5) may mean that where the firm has not given its employee an opportunity to comment on a matter at the time it first arose, it will have to give the employee the opportunity around the time that the *firm* is preparing the reference.
- (7) The obligation to give an employee an opportunity to comment does not mean that there is a wider duty to investigate whether there are facts that show that there has been a conduct breach (see ■ SYSC 22.5.18G).
- (8) This chapter does not require the *employee's* views to be included in the reference. Instead the firm should take those views into account so far as appropriate when deciding whether something should be disclosed and how the disclosure is drafted.

.....

Outsourcing

G 22.5.6

The requirements in this chapter for a firm (B) to give a firm (A) a reference also apply where A has outsourced the collection of that information to another (unregulated) third party, where B has been made aware that the unregulated third party is acting on behalf of A.

Circumstances in which the ex-employee left

G 22.5.7

The obligation to give a reference for an employee or ex-employee applies however the *employment* ended or is going to end. For example, it applies whether it ended through resignation, redundancy, dismissal or fixed term work, a secondment or temporary work coming to an end.

Missing or incomplete information

22.5.8 G

(1) If a firm's records do not cover the maximum periods contemplated by ■ SYSC 22.2.2R or ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory

SYSC 22/12

- references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements), the *firm* should note that in the reference.
- (2) A *firm* should not include a warning of the type described in (1) as a matter of routine. It should only be included if there is a genuine need to include it.

All relevant information: Calculation of six year period for disclosure

22.5.9 G

- (1) In general there is a six year limit on what should be disclosed under SYSC 22.2.2R(1) to (3).
- (2) Where the matter to be disclosed consists of a single course of conduct (such as market manipulation) the six year period does not begin until that course of conduct has come to an end. This means that individual events that occurred more than six years ago may still be within the six year limit.
- (3) This *guidance* is also relevant to the six year time limits for updating references in SYSC 22.2.6R.

All relevant information: Removal of six year period

22.5.10 G

- (1) SYSC 22.2.2R(1) to (3) normally has a six year time limit.
 SYSC 22.2.2R(3)(c) removes that time limit for serious matters. This paragraph (■ SYSC 22.5.10G) and SYSC 22.5.11G have *guidance* about this. This *guidance* is also relevant to the time limits for updating references in SYSC 22.2.6R.
- (2) The removal of the time limit does not mean that the time that has elapsed since the matter occurred is irrelevant. The length of time that has elapsed is relevant to deciding whether the matter is serious. In general, the longer ago the matter occurred, the less likely it is still to be serious for these purposes.
- (3) In determining whether something is serious for these purposes, the key question is how important the information still is for the requesting *firm's* assessment of the *employee's* fitness for the function that they are going to perform.
- (4) In considering what is relevant, a *firm* should, in particular, have regard to SYSC 22.5.4G (Fairness).
- (5) The table in SYSC 22.5.11G provides *guidance* on some of the factors which a *firm* should take into account when determining whether a matter is serious.
- (6) The guidance in this paragraph and in the table in ■SYSC 22.5.11G is only designed for the purposes of this chapter. It does not, for example, apply for the purposes of ■SUP 15 (Notifications to the FCA), DEPP or EG.

22.5.11 G

Table: Examples of factors to take into account when deciding whether old misconduct is sufficiently serious to disclose

■ Release 36 May 2024

Factors to take into account

Comments

(A) Whether P has committed a serious breach of individual conduct requirements.

Individual conduct requirements has the same meaning as in Part Two of SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements).

Factors to take into account in deciding whether the breach is serious include the following.

- (1) The extent to which the conduct was deliberate or reckless.
- (2)The extent to which the conduct was dishonest.
- (3)Whether the breaches are frequent or whether they have continued over a long period of time. The fact that breaches were frequent or repeated may increase the likelihood that they should be disclosed since the breaches may show a pattern of non-compliance.
- (4)The extent of loss, or risk of loss, caused to existing, past or potential investors, depositors, policyholders or other counterparties or customers.
- (5)The reasons for the breach. For example, where the breach was caused by lack of experience which has been remedied by training or further experience, it is less likely that the breach will still be relevant.
- (B) Whether the conduct caused B to breach requirements of the *regulatory system* or P was concerned in a contravention of such a requirement by B and, in each case, whether P's conduct was itself serious.
- (1) The factors in (A) are relevant to whether P's conduct was serious.
- (2) The seriousness of the breach by B is relevant. The factors in (A) are also relevant to this.
- (3)A breach by B of certain requirements is always likely to be serious under (2). Breach of the *threshold conditions* is an example. However that does not mean that P's involvement will automatically be serious.
- (C) Whether P's conduct involved dishonesty (whether or not also involving a criminal act).
- Dishonesty is an important factor but it is not automatically decisive in every case. For instance, a small one-off case of dishonesty many years ago may not be sufficiently serious to require disclosure.
- (D) Whether the conduct would have resulted in B's dismissing P, had P still been working for B, based on B's disciplinary policies and the requirements of the law about unfair dismissal.

SYSC 22/14 www.handbook.fca.org.uk ■ Release 36 ● May 2024

		Factors to take into account	Comments
		(E) Whether the conduct was such that, if B was considering P for a role today and became aware of the historical conduct, B would not employ P today notwithstanding the time that has passed.	
		Note 1: P refers to the <i>employee</i> about written.	_
		Note 2: B refers to the <i>firm</i> giving the r	eference.
22.5.12	G	(1) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of SYSC 22.8.10G(2)]	of this provision has been moved to
		(2) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of SYSC 22.8.10G(1)]	of this provision has been moved to
		Agreements not to disclose inforn	nation
22.5.13	R	A <i>firm</i> must not enter into any arrangem that limit its ability to disclose information	
22.5.14	G	■ SYSC 22.5.13R covers all types of agreement example:	ents and arrangements. For
		(1) it is not limited to an agreement of the <i>employee</i> leaves;	or arrangement entered into when
		(2) it applies however the employmen	nt ends (see ■ SYSC 22.5.7G); and
		(3) it covers a "COT 3" Agreement se and Arbitration Service (ACAS).	ttled by the Advisory, Conciliation
22.5.15	G	A <i>firm</i> should not give any undertakings information in order to secure a negotiat	
22.5.16	G	The obligation to supply information to a apply notwithstanding any agreement pr	•
22.5.17	G	Time in which to respond to reference The FCA expects that normally a firm sho chapter within six weeks of being asked to	ould issue a reference under this
		Duty to investigate allegations	
22.5.18	G	Outy to investigate allegations (1) A firm should, wherever feasible, before the employee departs.	conclude investigative procedures
		(2) However, this chapter does not cre misconduct by an <i>employee</i> or for	

- (3) There are several reasons why a firm may find it appropriate to investigate potential misconduct by an employee or former employee, including:
 - (a) assessing the actual and potential damage resulting from misconduct;
 - (b) identifying other individuals potentially culpable or accountable for the breach;
 - (c) satisfying itself that the SMF manager responsible for the areas where the misconduct occurred took reasonable steps to prevent or stop it; and
 - (d) (where the employee has remuneration susceptible to malus or clawback) enabling it to consider whether any adjustments are justified.

Criminal record checks

G 22.5.19

A firm giving a reference need not include information from a criminal records check it has carried out under Part V of the Police Act 1997 (Certificates of Criminal Records, &). The recruiting firm should carry out a criminal records check itself if necessary. The main FCA Handbook requirements on a recruiting firm to carry out a criminal records check are:

- (1) SUP 10C.10.16R a firm should carry out such a check when appointing an SMF manager); and
- (2) SYSC 23.4 (Criminal record checks for certain directors).

SYSC 22/16



Giving and updating references: additional rules and guidance

Omitting or supplementing mandatory disclosures

22.6.1 G

- (1) A *firm* may have concluded that an *employee* is unfit or has breached *COCON* or *APER* (as described in questions (E) to (F) of Part One of SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements)). The *firm* may later become aware of facts or matters causing it to revise its original conclusions.
- (2) If so, the *firm* may decide not to disclose in a reference its conclusion or may qualify its conclusion with supplementary information.

22.6.2 G

- (1) A firm may have concluded that an employee is unfit or has breached COCON or APER (as described in questions (E) to (F) of Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements)). However the firm may consider that the disclosure is incomplete without including mitigating circumstances.
- (2) For example, if the *firm* is reporting a breach of *COCON* it may consider that the breach is very uncharacteristic of the *employee* and that they have had an exemplary record since then. In that case, the *firm* should include those views.

Requirement to consider whether there has been a conduct breach

22.6.3 G

- (1) If a firm has taken disciplinary action of the type referred to in question (F) in Part One of ■SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements) against an employee and is asked to give a reference about that employee, the firm should (if it has not already done so) consider whether the basis on which it took that action amounts to a breach of any individual conduct requirements covered by question (F).
- (2) If the *firm* decides that the basis on which it took that action does amount to a breach of those requirements, it should include that disciplinary action in the reference under question (F).
- (3) Paragraph (2) applies even if the grounds of the disciplinary action did not include such a breach of individual conduct requirements.
- (4) The requirement in (1) is disapplied for disciplinary action taken before certain specified dates, where a *firm's* records do not record

- whether previous conduct subject to disciplinary action amounted to a breach. The date differs between different types of firms. ■ SYSC TP 5 and ■SYSCTP7 set out those specified dates and other details.
- (5) The obligation to consider whether there was a conduct breach does not mean that there is a wider duty to investigate whether there are facts that show that there has been a conduct breach (see ■ SYSC 22.5.18G).

All relevant information: Interaction with mandatory disclosures

G 22.6.4

- (1) SYSC 22.2.2R(1) to (3) may require a firm to disclose information that goes beyond the mandatory minimum information in Part One of SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements).
- (2) This may mean, for instance, that a firm should in some cases disclose a conclusion that an employee or former employee has breached COCON or APER where that conclusion was reached outside the time limits in Part One of ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R.

Updating references fairly

22.6.5 G

- (1) SYSC 22.5.1R to SYSC 22.5.5G (Verification, accuracy and fairness) also apply to updating a reference under ■ SYSC 22.2.4R.
- (2) Therefore fairness may require a firm to have given an employee an opportunity to comment on an allegation if it is included in an update to a reference.

SYSC 22/18



22.7 Getting references: additional rules and guidance for SMCR firms

- 22.7.1 R
- (1) [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to SYSC 22.8A.1R]
- 22.7.2 G
- [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to ■SYSC 22.8A.2G]

Who should be asked to give a reference

- 22.7.3 G
- The Glossary definition of employer covers more than just a conventional employer and so it may not always be obvious who a person's employer is. Therefore a firm appointing someone to a position that requires a reference may have to get the employee's help in identifying their previous employers.
- 22.7.4 G
- (1) SYSC 22.2.1R (Obligation to obtain a reference) applies even if the ex-employer is not a firm.
- (2) A *firm* should take all reasonable steps to try to obtain the reference in these circumstances. However, the *FCA* accepts that the previous *employer* may not be willing to give sufficient information.

Asking for a reference to be updated

- 22.7.5 G
- (1) SYSC 22.2.1R (Obligation to obtain references) applies even if the *employer* has already got a reference for the *employee*. For example:
 - (a) a *firm* should have a reference whenever it renews the certificate of a *certification employee*; and
 - (b) changing jobs within the same *firm* may require a reference.
- (2) However, the *firm* does not necessarily need to obtain a new reference each time (a) or (b) above occurs. That is because an existing reference will very often still be appropriate for the purpose (see SYSC 22.7.6G to SYSC 22.7.8G).
- 22.7.6 G

G If a *firm* (A):

- (1) appoints someone (P) to a certification function position;
- (2) obtains a reference from an ex-employer; and

(3) later wishes to renew P's certificate under the certification regime;

it is unlikely that A will need to ask for another reference from that exemployer or ask for it to be reissued unless there is a change in P's role of the type described in ■ SYSC 27.2.15G (major changes in role).

22.7.7 G

- (1) If a firm (A):
 - (a) appoints someone (P) to a certification function or an approved person position;
 - (b) obtains a reference from an ex-employer (B); and
 - (c) later wishes to:
 - (i) appoint P to another certification function or approved person position; or
 - (ii) keep P in the same certification function but make a change in P's role of the type described in ■ SYSC 27.2.15G (major changes in role), whether that change is made at a time when the certificate has not yet come up for renewal or at the time it is being reissued; or
 - (iii) move P from a certification function to an approved person position or vice versa;

SYSC 22/20

A should consider whether to ask B to reissue or amend its reference.

- (2) A may decide that it is not necessary to ask B to reissue or amend its reference. For example, A may decide that:
 - (a) the existing reference already covers everything necessary; or
 - (b) (where B is not a firm) B will not give any further information.
- 22.7.8 G [deleted] [Editor's note: The text of this provision has been moved to SYSC 22.8A.3G]

When references are to be obtained

- 22.7.10 G
- (1) Where a *firm* needs to fill a vacancy for a *certification function* which could not have reasonably been foreseen, the *FCA* recognises that it may not be reasonable to expect the *firm* to obtain references prior to issuing a certificate.
- (2) In such cases, the *SMCR firm* should take up the reference as soon as reasonably possible.
- (3) If a reference obtained later raises concerns about the person's fitness and propriety, the *firm* should revisit its decision to issue the person with a certificate.
- 22.7.11 G
- (1) Although this chapter (see SYSC 22.2.3R) only requires a *firm* to try to get a reference for a *person* it is recruiting to perform an *FCA* controlled function or a *PRA* controlled function towards the end of the application process, the *FCA* would normally expect a *firm* to have obtained the reference before the application for approval is made.
- (2) The main examples of circumstances in which it would be reasonable for a *firm* to delay getting a reference are where asking for a reference earlier will create a serious risk of:
 - (a) breaching the confidentiality of a wider commercial or corporate transaction;
 - (b) prematurely triggering the need for a public announcement; or
 - (c) the *candidate* not applying for the position in the first place because it would reveal to the *candidate's* current *employer* the proposed move too soon.
- (3) The FCA may consider that it needs to see the information in a reference before it reaches a decision. If so, it may formally ask for that information and extend the time period in which it has to make its decision until it gets the reference. SUP 10C.10.28G gives additional details about requests for further information and the effect they have on the period of time the FCA has to make a decision about an application.

(4) Firms are reminded that the Act itself requires a firm to be satisfied that a *candidate* is fit and proper before it makes an application for approval (see ■ SUP 10C.10.14G for more detail). ■ SYSC 22.7.11G(2) does not affect that obligation.



Policies and appointed representatives

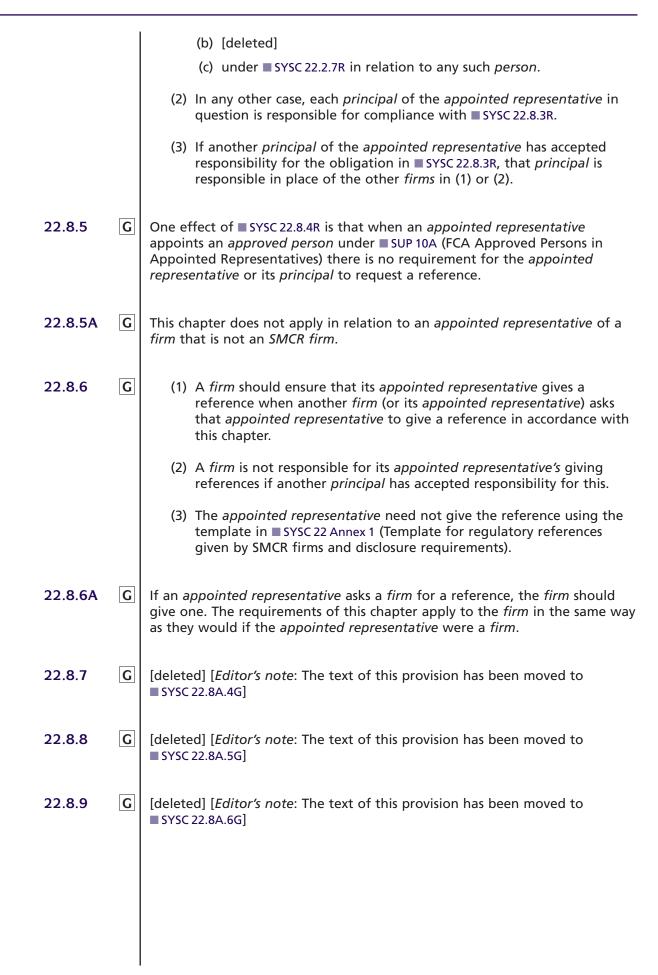
Policies and procedures

- 22.8.1 R
- A *firm* must establish, implement and maintain policies and procedures that are adequate for the purpose of complying with the obligations in this chapter.
- 22.8.2 G
- (1) SYSC 22.8.1R does not require a *firm* to create or keep records that are not required under SYSC 22.9.1R (General record keeping rules) or another *rule*.

(2) (1) applies to a *firm* whether or not ■ SYSC 22.9.1R applies to it.

Appointed representatives

- 22.8.3 R
- This chapter applies to a *firm's appointed representatives* as well as to the *firm*.
- 22.8.4 R
- When SYSC 22.8.3R applies to an *SMCR firm*, the requirements of this chapter for firms that are not *SMCR firms* apply in place of the requirements that only apply to *SMCR firms*. In particular, the following requirements do not apply in relation to an *appointed representative*:
 - (1) SYSC 22.2.1R (Obligation to obtain references);
 - (2) SYSC 22.2.2R(4) (Obligation to give references);
 - (3) SYSC 22.2.4R to SYSC 22.2.6R (Obligation to revise references);
 - (4) SYSC 22.4.2R (How to draft the reference);
 - (5) SYSC 22.8A.1R (Intra-group transfers); and
 - (6) SYSC 22.9.1R (General record keeping rules).
- 22.8.4A R
- (1) The approved person's authorised approved person employer is responsible for compliance with SYSC 22.8.3R in the case of a requirement:
 - (a) to give a reference about an *approved person* whose approval is under SUP 10A (FCA Approved Persons in Appointed Representatives); and



22.8.10



- (1) A *firm* should try to ensure that its *appointed representative* considers whether it needs to disclose a breach of individual conduct requirements (as defined in Part Two of SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements)) when giving a reference under this chapter.
- (2) Therefore an example of information that may be relevant under SYSC 22.2.2R(1) to (3) is the fact that the *employee* has breached a requirement in *APER*, not just a requirement in *COCON*.



22.8A **Groups and outsourcing**

Intra-group transfers

22.8A.1 R

- (1) This rule applies when:
 - (a) a firm (A) would otherwise have to ask another person (B) for a reference under ■ SYSC 22.2.1R; and
 - (b) A and B are in the same group.
- (2) A need not ask for a reference from B if there are adequate arrangements in place under which A has access to the same information sources as B to the extent that they are relevant to things A has to ask B under ■ SYSC 22.2.1R (Obligation to obtain references).
- (3) If A only has access to some of the information sources in (2), A may ask for a reference that only covers the sources to which A does not have such access.
- (4) If A, in accordance with this rule, does not ask for a reference or a full reference it must access the information resources referred to in this rule and get the relevant information within the time specified by ■ SYSC 22.2.3R.

22.8A.2 G

- (1) SYSC 22.8A.1R means that a *firm* recruiting someone from another member of its group is not required to request a reference from the other where the group has centralised records or alternative measures in place to ensure sharing of relevant information between its members.
- (2) The recruiting firm should be satisfied that the centralised or alternative measures ensure relevant information is made available as part of the fit and proper assessment of the recruit.

22.8A.3 G

If:

- (1) a firm (A) appoints someone (P) to a certification function or approved person position;
- (2) A obtains a reference from an ex-employer (B);
- (3) later P transfers to a certification function position or an approved person position with an SMCR firm in A's group (C);

- (4) B's reference is:
 - (a) addressed to all firms in A's group; or
 - (b) otherwise drafted so that it is clear that C may rely on it; and
- (5) C does not need to ask for the reference to be reissued or amended, taking account of SYSC 22.7.6G and SYSC 22.7.7G;

C may be able to rely on that reference without asking B to give another one.

Getting and giving a reference where the employee has worked in a group or on secondment

22.8A.4 G

If:

- (1) a firm (A) is thinking of employing someone (P);
- (2) P is employed by a group services company (D) that is not a firm;
- (3) P (in their capacity as an *employee* of D) performs a function or service for a *firm* (B) in the same *group* as D such that P is also an *employee* of B; and
- (4) A intends to appoint (P) to a position that entitles A to obtain a reference from B;

then:

- (5) A should ask both B and D for a reference;
- (6) B is obliged to give the reference if A asks it to;
- (7) B should ask D to provide it with the information needed to provide a reference in accordance with this chapter;
- (8) D may give a reference but (as it is not a *firm*) it is not obliged to; and
- (9) D and B may give a single joint reference.

22.8A.5 G

■ SYSC 22.8A.4G also applies where:

- (1) D is not in the same group but has seconded P to B; and
- (2) P (in their capacity as an *employee* of D) performed any function or services for B such that P was also an *employee* of B.

22.8A.6 G

If:

- (1) a *firm* (A) is thinking of appointing someone (P) to a position that entitles A to obtain a reference from another *firm* (B); and
- (2) P was an employee of other members of B's group as well as of B;

then:

- (3) A should ask all the group members that employed P for a reference;
- (4) B should give a reference if A asks it to;
- (5) P's employers in that group (including any that are not firms) may give a single joint reference; and
- (6) if the reference is being provided on a consolidated group basis, it should be clear what information is relevant to which employer within the group.



22.9 Records and transitionals

General record keeping rules

22.9.1 R

- (1) A *firm* must arrange for orderly records to be created and kept that are sufficient to enable it to comply with the requirements of this chapter.
- (2) This *rule* only applies to records in relation to the following questions in Part One of SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements):
 - (a) question (E) (fit and proper); and
 - (b) question (F) (disciplinary action).

Time limit for records to be kept

22.9.2 G

■ SYSC 22.9.1R does not have an express time limit for which a *firm* should retain the records as its effect is that those time limits are the same as the time limits in ■ SYSC 22 Annex 1R (Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements).

Reduction in disclosure obligations where there are limited record keeping requirements

22.9.3 R

A *firm* does not breach the requirements of this chapter by failing to include information in a reference that it would otherwise have to include if:

- (1) the reason for the omission is that the *firm* does not have the necessary records; and
- (2) neither SYSC 22.9.1R nor any other requirement of or under the regulatory system requires the firm to have those records.

22.9.4 G

If a *firm* is asked to give a reference in circumstances where the record keeping requirements in ■ SYSC 22.9.1R do not apply:

- (1) it is still required to give the reference;
- (2) it should give the reference based on the records it does have; and
- (3) it will not breach the requirements of this chapter by failing to include information in a reference if the reason for this is that it does not have the necessary records, as long as it is not required to have those records by some other requirement in the *Handbook* outside

this chapter or some other requirement of or under the regulatory system.

Effect of previous record keeping requirements

G 22.9.5

- (1) SYSC 22.9.1R applies to keeping records created before the date this chapter came into force as well as ones created afterwards.
- (2) A firm does not breach the requirements of this chapter by failing to include something in a reference or by failing to have records because it destroyed the relevant records before the date this chapter came into force in accordance with the record keeping requirements applicable to it at the time of destruction.
- (3) (1) also applies to records created before this chapter (or the relevant provision of this chapter) first applied to the firm.
- (4) (2) also applies if the firm destroyed the records before this chapter (or the relevant provision of this chapter) first applied to it.

Transitionals

22.9.6

If:

R

- (1) a firm (A) asks a person (B) who is not an SMCR firm for a reference;
- (2) B then becomes an SMCR firm; and
- (3) B gives the reference after it becomes an SMCR firm;

the requirements in this chapter apply to B when giving the reference.

G 22.9.7

If a firm gives a reference after it becomes an SMCR firm, the requirements of this chapter apply even if the matters covered by the reference occurred before then.

22.9.8 G ■ SYSC 22.2.4R (Obligation to revise references) does not apply to a reference that a firm gave before it became an SMCR firm.

Template for regulatory references given by SMCR firms and disclosure requirements

Part One: Form of Template

Guide to using this template:

Each question must be answered. Where there is nothing to disclose, this should be confirmed by ticking the "No" box for the relevant question.

In this template:

- "we" / "our firm" refers to the firm or firms giving the reference (as set out in either 1A or 1B below);
- •"individual" refers to the subject of the reference (as set out in 2 below); and
- •"your" refers to the firm requesting the reference (as set out in 3 below).

In	formation requested	Response
1A	Name, contact details and firm reference number of firm providing reference; or	
1B	Names, contact details and firm reference numbers (where applicable) of group firms providing a joint reference	
2	Individual's name (i.e. the subject of the reference)	
3	Name, contact details and firm reference number of firm requesting the reference	
4	Date of request for reference	
5	Date of reference	

The answers to Questions A to F cover the period beginning six years before the date of your request for a reference and ending on the date of this reference

Question A

Has the individual:

- (1) performed a certification function for our firm; or
- (2) been an approved person for our firm.

Answer:

Yes

No

Question B:

Has the individual performed one or more of the following roles in relation to our firm:

- (1) notified non-executive director;
- (2) credit union non-executive director;
- (3) key function holder (other than a controlled function); or

The answers to Questions A to F cover the period beginning six years before the date of your request for a reference and ending on the date of this reference

(4) board director.

Answer:

Yes

No

Question C:

If we have answered 'yes' to either Question A or B above, we set out the details of each position held below, including:

- (1) what the controlled function, certification function or key function holder role is or was;
- (2) (in the case of a controlled function) whether the approval is or was subject to a condition, suspension, limitation, restriction or time limit;
- (3) whether any potential FCA governing function is or was included in a PRA controlled function; and
- (4) the dates during which the individual held the position.

Question D:

Has the individual performed a role for our firm other than the roles referred to in Questions A and B above:

Answer:

Yes

No

If 'yes', we have provided summary details of the other role(s), e.g. job title, department and business unit, below.

Question E:

Have we concluded that the individual was not fit and proper to perform a function:

Answer:

Yes

No

If 'yes' and associated disciplinary action was taken as a result, please refer to Question F below.

If 'yes', and no associated disciplinary action was taken as a result, we have set out below the facts which led to our conclusion.

Question F:

We have taken disciplinary action against the individual that:

- (1) relates to an action, failure to act, or circumstances, that amounts to a breach of any individual conduct requirements that:
 - (a) apply or applied to the individual; or
 - (b) (if the individual is or was a key function holder, a notified non-executive director or a credit union non-executive director for your firm) the individual is or was required to observe under PRA rules (including if applicable, PRA rules in force before 7 March 2016); or
- (2) relates to the individual not being fit and proper to perform a function.

Answer:

Yes

The answers to Questions A to F cover the period beginning six years before the date of your request for a reference and ending on the date of this reference

No

If 'yes', we have provided below a description of the breaches (including dates of when they occurred) and the basis for, and outcome of, the subsequent disciplinary action.

Question G:

Are we aware of any other information that we reasonably consider to be relevant to your assessment of whether the individual is fit and proper? This disclosure is made on the basis that we shall only disclose something that:

- (1) occurred or existed:
 - (a) in the six years before your request for a reference; or
 - (b) between the date of your request for the reference and the date of this reference; or
- (2) is serious misconduct.

Answer:

Yes

No

If 'yes', we have provided the relevant information below.

Part Two: Definitions used in Part One

Section One of Part Two of this annex defines terms used in this annex.

Section Two of Part Two of this annex modifies the meaning of certain requirements in Part One and has material about completing the template.

Section One: Meaning of certain terms and phrases		
Defined term or phrase	Meaning	
В	B refers to the <i>employer</i> or ex- <i>employer</i> giving the reference as defined in more detail in SYSC 22.2.1R and SYSC 22.2.2R.	
A finding or conclusion by B that P was not fit and proper to perform a function (see questions (E) to (F) of the template)	P refers to the <i>employee</i> or ex- <i>employee</i> about whom the reference is given as defined in more detail in SYSC 22.2.1R and SYSC 22.2.2R.	
	This means a finding or conclusion by B where:	
	(a)B assesses the continuing fitness and propriety of P as an approved person in accordance with the requirements of the regulatory system, including when carrying out this assessment under section 63(2A) of the Act (annual assessment of approved persons by an SMCR firm); or	
	(b)B assesses the fitness and propriety of P when B is proposing to issue a certificate under section 63F of the Act (Certification of employees by SMCR firms) for P.	
	Paragraph (b) applies whether the certificate is being issued for the first time or is being renewed.	
Individual conduct requirements	Individual conduct requirements mean any of the following:	
	(a)COCON;	
	(b)APER;	

Section One: Meaning of	certain terms and phrases
Defined term or phrase	Meaning
	(c)the <i>PRA's</i> Individual Conduct Standards or Senior Manager Conduct Standards in:
	(i) Chapter 3 of the Part of the <i>PRA Rulebook</i> called Insurance – Conduct Standards;
	(ii) Chapter 3 of the Part of the <i>PRA Rulebook</i> called Large Non-Solvency II Firms – Conduct Standards; and
	(iii) Chapter 2 of the Part of the <i>PRA Rulebook</i> called Non-Solvency II firms - Conduct Standards; or
	(d)the <i>PRA's</i> Individual Conduct Rules or Senior Manager Conduct Rules in:
	(i) Chapters 2 and 3 of the Part of the <i>PRA Rule-book</i> called CRR Firms: Conduct Rules; and
	(ii) Chapters 2 and 3 of the Part of the PRA Rulebook called Non-CRR Firms: Conduct Rules.
Function (as referred to in questions (E) to (F))	A function means a function as an approved person or certification employee.
Disciplinary action	Disciplinary action has the same meaning as in section 64C(2) of the <i>Act</i> (Requirement for authorised persons to notify regulatory of disciplinary action), which is:
	(a)the issue of a formal written warning; or
	(b)the suspension or dismissal of P; or
	(c) the reduction or recovery of any of P's remuneration.
	This definition applies even if B is not an SMCR firm.
Notified non-executive director, credit union non-executive director and key function holder	These terms have the same meaning as they do in the <i>PRA Rulebook</i> .
Certification function, approved person, controlled function and PRA controlled function	These terms have the same meaning as they do in the <i>Glossary</i> .
Board director	Non-SMF board director subject to competence requirements, as defined in the <i>Glossary</i> .
Potential FCA governing function	Potential FCA governing function means a function:
	(a)that would have been an FCA controlled function but for:
	(i)SUP 10A.11 (Minimising overlap with the PRA approved persons regime) (when that section was in force); or
	(ii)SUP 10C.9 (Minimising overlap with the PRA approved persons regime);
	(b)but instead is included in a <i>PRA controlled function</i> under the parts of the <i>PRA Rulebook</i> listed in SUP 10C.9.6G.
Section Two: Supplementary requirements Item of template for which supplemental requirements apply	Supplemental requirements

Section One: Meaning of	certain terms and phrases
Defined term or phrase	Meaning
Questions (E) and (F)	If:
	(a) the finding or disciplinary action was reached or taken by another member of B's group with the authority to do so; and
	(b) the finding or disciplinary action relates to conduct by P relating to the carrying on of activities (whether or not regulated activities) by B;
	this question applies to such finding or disciplin- ary action in the same way as it does to findings or disciplinary action made or taken by the <i>firm</i> itself.
Question (F)	This question is subject to SYSC TP 5.4.5R and SYSC TP 7.4.4R (where there is no need to disclose disciplinary action that took place before certain dates if the <i>firm's</i> records do not show whether there was a breach of individual conduct requirements).
The whole of Part One of this annex	The template to be used by a <i>firm</i> in giving a reference consists of everything in Part One of this annex except for the "Guide to using this template" paragraph.

Factors to take into account when asking for and giving regulatory references

Matters to take into account	Comments	
(A)Any outstanding liabilities of that person from commission payments		
(B)Any relevant outstanding or upheld complaint from an <i>eligible complainant</i> against P		
(C)Section 5 of the relevant Form A in SUP 10A Annex 4 (Application to perform controlled functions under approved persons regime) or SUP 10C Annex 3 (Application to perform senior management functions)		
(D)FIT 2 (Main assessment criteria)		
(E)The persistency of any life policies sold by P	This only applies if SUP 16.8.1G(1) (Persistency reports from insurers) applies to B	
Note: P refers to the <i>employee</i> or ex- <i>employee</i> about whom the reference is given as defined in more detail in SYSC 22.2.1R and SYSC 22.2.2R.		