

# The Academic Job Search

## Suggestions for Graduate Students Seeking Teaching Positions

---

### Prepare Documents

- Faculty job postings usually ask for a variety of documents:
  - Curriculum vitae
  - Cover letter (Letter of Interest, Letter of Application, etc.)
  - Transcripts (sometimes from all undergrad and grad degrees)
  - Letters of recommendation (usually 3-5 letters) or a list of references
  - Research statement (Statement of Research Interests)
  - Writing sample(s) (usually publications or chapters from your dissertation)
  - Teaching statement (Teaching Philosophy)
  - Teaching portfolio (e.g., art and design fields)
  - Sample syllabi of classes you have taught
  - Sample syllabi of classes you want to teach
  - Teaching evaluations

### Conduct Research

- Make progress on your research. Having your dissertation near completion when applying enhances your marketability.
- Make sure your dissertation will be finished no later than the summer before the job begins and preferably earlier. In many cases, hiring departments will not consider a candidate without a Ph.D. in hand.
- Discuss your plans with your advisor or post-doctoral supervisor and any others in the department who may be interested. If they don't think you will be ready to go on the market until the following year, give their point of view serious consideration. If you begin a new position and have not yet completed your dissertation, you will start off behind schedule in terms of the "tenure clock."

### Network in Your Field

- Renew contacts with faculty members whom you may know at other institutions, letting them know of your progress and that you will be on the market soon.
- Get letters of recommendation now from those with whom you will have no further significant contact.

- At conferences, take advantage of the opportunity for formal and informal exchange of information.
- Find out if your department or disciplinary organization keeps an archive of former job postings. Review former postings to find out (1) what kind of information is available in job descriptions, (2) what materials are typically asked for in the application packet, (3) when deadlines and decision points typically occur.

### Publish and Present

- Consider giving a paper at a major conference in your field or submitting an article or articles to major journals in your field. Find out deadlines for calls for papers.
- Publish and present your work at the university, and local or regional level. Speak to a local organization interested in your field.

### Gain Teaching Experience

- Get some teaching experience. If possible, try to teach undergrads and grad students.
- Consider teaching at different types of institutions like a community college or liberal arts school.
- If Teaching Assistant opportunities are not available, seek alternative teaching roles. Become an adjunct instructor, volunteer to guest lecture for a colleague, or give scholarly presentations.

### Serve Your Institution

- Volunteer to serve on professional committees. If possible, participate in the activities of a search committee in your department so you can see the faculty job search from the other side.
- Look for opportunities for student mentorship or to advise a student organization.

### Review and Apply

- Read job postings carefully. Figure out what skills and specializations are being sought.
- Thoroughly research the departments to which you are applying.
- Revise your materials for each job posting.
- Find a way to stay organized, especially if you're applying for multiple positions. Consider creating a spreadsheet and/or clearly labeled electronic folders.

## Prepare for Interviews

- Start preparing answers to potential questions. Participate in mock interviews with peers, faculty members, or career counselors.
- Prepare a job talk and practice it with peers or faculty members. Polish your class presentation skills in advance of your interview.
- Candidates are evaluated on a myriad of qualifications depending on the department, area of study, and type of school. In general, however, the following attributes are assessed during screening and academic interviews:
  - Subject area knowledge
  - Communication skills
  - Personal attributes (leadership, engaging, personality, appropriate attire, etc.)
  - Teaching competence
  - Research competence
  - Research relevance to the field, department, and/or school
  - Enthusiasm for and interest in the position and fit for the department/school
- Research the departments with whom you have (or hope to have) interviews.
- Write a list of questions to ask prospective employers and keep it handy so you are ready when they call to invite you to interview.
- Don't turn down a chance for an on-campus interview—it may be very different than you think.
- If you haven't already done so, buy at least one business suit.
- Interviewers will ask you about your long-range research plans. Even if you are so immersed in your dissertation that you can't see beyond it now, take time to give some thought to where your research will lead.
- Review the literature in your field and sub-field in preparation for interviews.

---

**During this stressful time, plan to take some breaks for activities or events that you consider relaxing and renewing.**

---

## Concluding Your Search

- Read information on faculty negotiations. Talk with faculty members about what and how to negotiate in your field.
- You may begin to get offers. Decide what you need in an offer. Always negotiate.
- If you feel you need more time to make a decision about an offer, don't hesitate to ask for it. You will have to abide by whatever time period you and the employer agree on for your decision. You don't need to be totally open with everyone at this stage, but you must be completely honest. When you do accept a position, consider your acceptance a binding commitment. Celebrate your victory! Let other schools know that you are no longer on the job market.
- If the offers you want are not coming in, don't think that you must take absolutely any job that is offered to you, whether you want it or not. The job market will come around again next year.
- Talk with your advisor and others about the best way to position yourself for next year's market, if necessary. You can also keep watching for one-year appointments, which are often announced later than tenure-track positions.
- After you have accepted a job, take time to thank everyone who has been helpful to you in the process. Enjoy your new life as a faculty member!

## Resources

**The CV Doctor**, <http://chronicle.com/jobs/tools/cvdoctor/2008/>

**Tomorrow's Professor**, <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/index.shtml>

Vick, J. M., & Furlong, J. S. (2008). *The academic job search handbook* (4th ed). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Newhouse, M. L. (1997). *Cracking the academia nut: A guide to preparing for your academic career*. Cambridge, MA: Office of Career Services, Harvard University.

Reis, R. M. (1997). *Tomorrow's professor: Preparing for academic careers in science and engineering*. New York: IEEE Press.

Hume, K. (2005). *Surviving your academic job hunt: Advice for humanities PhDs*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Content in this handout was adapted from The University of Washington Career Center and *The Academic Job Search Handbook*, Heiberger & Vick Updated 1.2009