PREPARING FOR SCREENING INTERVIEWS FOR ACADEMIC JOBS

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What we’re going to cover

- Introduction to the Screening Interview
- Preparation
  - Research the institution
  - Research your qualifications and “fit”
- Interview Practice
  - Examples
  - Speaking about yourself
  - Common questions
- Setting up the Interview
- During the Interview
- Interview Follow-up
Intro to screening interviews

• Screening interviews generally are short (30 min to 1 hour) and take place as a preliminary assessment.

• A conference interview is a screening interview held at a professional conference.

• For budgetary reasons, some schools opt for telephone interviews or video conferencing instead of holding in-person interviews at the conference.

• At a screening interview, you can get an initial idea if there seems to be a “fit” between you and the department.
Your goal...

- At a conference interview you have a **limited time to stand out** among a group of candidates in what might be a rushed and stressful environment. A phone or Skype interview has a different set of constraints.

- Your goal for any screening interview is to prepare to present your qualifications succinctly and in an interesting way.

- If you have made it to this interview you have already passed a major screening step!
Preparation: Research the institution

• Learn about the department and school

• Become familiar with your interviewers’ work.

• Learn about the institution and the department’s place within it.

• Brush up on general trends in your field (in addition to your specific area of research), pedagogy and higher education.
Preparation: Research your qualifications and “fit”

- Go over the **materials** you’ve submitted
- Think about your **abilities** and **experience**
- Know your **strengths**
- **Identify** “talking points” about yourself, your research and your teaching. Areas you will need to be able to discuss:
  - Your dissertation/postdoctoral research
  - Your future research interests
  - Teaching
  - Your interest in the institution
Practice interviewing

• Take advantage of resources in your department.
• Practice questions
  – There are sample questions on the Career Services Website and in the *Academic Job Search Handbook*.
• Do a mock interview
  – Call Career Services (215 898-7530) to make an appointment for a mock interview with a career advisor
  – Utilize Interviewstream (via Pennlink) – it is a great way to practice a video-conference interview
Sample interview questions

• Three broad areas: research, teaching, and professional goals. You should anticipate them.

  – Tell me about your research.
  – Can you tell us briefly what theoretical framework you used in developing your research?
  – What are your research plans for the next 2/5/10 years?
  – What is your teaching philosophy?
  – How would you engage undergraduates in your research?
  – If you were responsible for teaching Class X, how would you structure it? What resources would you use?
  – How would you feel about living in X?
  – Why do you want to work at our institution?
  – Who else is interviewing you?
Tips on answering questions

• Understand the “so what” of your research – it’s good to be engaged by, excited and/or enthusiastic about your contributions to the field.

• Connect your accomplishments to what you know about the position, institution and department needs and goals.

• Provide concrete examples and tie in your answers to specific experiences you have had:
  – For example, illustrate your description of your teaching philosophy by sharing real classroom approaches you have taken, and the outcome.
Setting up the interview

• Make sure you’ve been fully informed of interview arrangements beforehand.

• Get the name and title of each person with whom you will meet if you can.

• Find out where you need to be and when.
  – At conference interviews, you may be in a hotel room or in a space provided by the association for interviews.
  – For phone or video interviews, test the technology before the actual interview

• Find out how long each interview will last. They can be 30 minutes, 45 minutes or an hour.

• Get a contact number in case of emergency. Provide yours to the department.
Setting up the interview (continued)

• If you will have multiple interviews at the conference, don’t over-schedule yourself.

• Be sure your schedule includes time between interviews so that you are not late. Also – remember you may need bathroom and snack breaks.
The day before a conference interview

- Know what you are wearing.
- Get together and review whatever materials you need to bring, including the **job announcement** and the **materials you initially sent** the search committee that got you the interview, which might include:
  - C.V.
  - Cover letter
  - Statement of teaching philosophy
  - Research statement
  - “Evidence of excellence in teaching” or a portfolio
  - Writing sample
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Transcripts
- Prepare some questions to ask.
- Try to get a good night’s sleep.
At the conference interview

• Arrive a little early.
• Shake hands with each person; look them in the eye. Memorize their names and pronounce yours for them.
• Try to establish a rapport with each person you meet – think about what their perspective or relationship with the open position may be.
• Respect the time limits of each interview.
• Try to remember and express your enthusiasm for the opportunity– smiling may put your interviewers at ease, and might make for a better interview experience.
During the interview

- Convey an image of yourself as a colleague, not a graduate student or postdoc.
- Know what you want to tell the hiring committee.
- Feel comfortable taking a moment to think about an answer.
- Keep in mind that the interviewers may have a list of questions to ask of every candidate.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question. Do not guess.
- If you are not a native speaker of English, be aware that a committee might be evaluating your English skills.
During the interview (continued)

- Be honest.
- Provide examples with details that illustrate what you mean.
- Ask for clarification, if needed.
- Have thoughtful questions for the interviewers.
- Don't forget crucial items, such as extra copies of your CV.
- Be confident and try your best to enjoy the interviews. Preparation makes that possible.
As the interview comes to an end

• Be aware of signals that indicate the interview is over.
• Express your enthusiasm for the institution.
• If you’re interested in the position, ask what the next step is, when a decision will be made and when you can call.
• Maintain eye contact and shake hands.
Before a phone or webcam interview

• Get together whatever materials you need to have in front of you, including the job announcement and materials you initially sent the search committee that got you the interview, which might include:
  – C.V.
  – Cover letter
  – Statement of teaching philosophy
  – Research statement
  – “Evidence of excellence in teaching” or a portfolio
  – Writing sample
  – Letters of recommendation
  – Transcripts

• Prepare some questions to ask.
• Think about what you’ll wear.
• Insure that you’ll have no interruptions
Telephone interviews

- You can surround yourself with notes and “supporting” materials
- Requires extra effort to establish “rapport”
- Make sure your preparation includes securing a quiet location where you will not be interrupted, and have a GOOD phone connection.
Webcam interviews

- Find a quiet place with a good connection – if you don’t have such a space at home, try a library or department conference room.
  - Eliminate visual and auditory distractions.
- See where you can sit so that you are looking at the screen and the webcam at the same time.
- Try a lavalier microphone clipped to you - collar, lapel or tie.
- Be aware of lighting issues – test the visual beforehand.
- Add the institution address to your contacts ahead of time (and make sure they have yours).
After any screening interview

• Write a thank you note. Mention something that made you enthusiastic or more interested in the position, but keep it brief.
• Send anything you offered to send.
• Follow up if you were planning to do so.
Setting up a campus interview

- Will need to schedule when it’s convenient for both the search committee and the candidate.
- Find out who handles travel arrangements.
- Find out how long the job talk will be.
- Request a schedule listing with whom you will be meeting and when.
- Prepare – look at our resources for on-campus interviews, talk with your advisors, do a practice job talk with your department.
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Career Services for Doctoral Students & Postdocs

Services for doctoral students & postdocs
We have developed services tailored to PhD students and postdocs. Take advantage of what we offer

Navigating the course of your PhD
Set career goals for the next few years, whether you are in the early, mid, or final stages of your PhD

Faculty careers
Whether your focus is on teaching or research, you should explore different types of faculty opportunities

Non-faculty careers
Leverage your PhD to take advantage of a broad range of career opportunities available to you

Explore these additional resources to help you explore careers, and learn from the experiences of Penn alumni working in different career fields

Career plan surveys
Complete the current survey here and get information on the careers followed by Penn alumni from your academic program

Funding resources
Use these resources if you are seeking funding for writing, travel, professional development, or research

Workshops and programs
Career Services staff organize programs and workshops to assist graduate students and postdocs with career decision making and job hunting.

Featured resources
You can find featured resources on our website in this section. Take a look at data from the 8-13 year out PhD alumni survey - now available.
CAREER AND JOB SEARCH ADVICE

General Advice and Resources

Navigating The Course of Your PhD
The Academic Job Search Handbook
Preparing for the Academic Job Market. Narrated PowerPoint Presentation

Chronicle of Higher Education articles, such as:

- Preparing for Your Interview
- Preparing for the Conventions
- Minding Your Manners For The Conference Interview
- Show Them You Really Want the Job
- What to Ask – and Not Ask – in Your Interview
- On the Job Market? Don’t Sell Yourself Short, Even Now - Advice for negotiating academic offers

Inside Higher Ed articles, such as:

- Recruiting Talent in Higher Ed
- Interviews at Teaching Colleges
- Congratulations! Now What? - Advice for newly tenured professors

Programs and Workshops - Offered by Penn’s Career Services, Co-sponsored with the Office of the Vice Provost of Education

- Fall Semester:
  Academic Career Conference - the following titles are sessions being planned for 2013:

- Spring Semester: Faculty Conversations

Salary Information

Compensation Information - from The Chronicle of Higher Education
Adjunct salary information – the Adjunct Project

Advice on Applying for Faculty Positions

Application Materials - guides for writing CVs, Cover Letters, and Other Job Hunting Materials, such as research statements and teaching statements

General advice on Interviewing
ACADEMIC

General

- Why are you interested in this particular university/college?
- Why are you pursuing a career at a liberal arts college?
- What are your expectations teaching at a small institution versus a research I level institution?
- What might you say to a prospective student to get them interested in our school?
- What do you consider to be your strengths that qualify you for this position?
- Tell us about any areas you need to improve in.
- Tell us about a conflict or challenge you’ve had either with teaching, research, or a colleague and how you resolved the issue?
- Tell us what you know about our college.
- How would you integrate our mission into your teaching/scholarship?
- Is there any additional information you would like to share with us?
- What other schools have you applied to?
- If you get more than one offer how will you decide?
- Who else is interviewing you?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Teaching

- Tell us about your teaching style or philosophy.
- What classes could you see yourself teaching? What new courses would you develop?
- How would you teach the introductory course in your field?
- What do you consider to be important attributes of a good instructor and what strengths do you have that will make you a good instructor?
- Tell us about your teaching experience.
- Tell us about a lesson in an introductory course that went well and why it went well.
- Tell us about a lesson in a course that did not go well and what you did/would do to improve it.
- If you could teach anything, what would be your ideal course? Lab?
- What challenge in teaching have you faced and how have you overcome this?
- How would you assess the effectiveness of your teaching?
- What would you perceive some of the challenges might be with teaching at our institution?
- Many of the students taking our intro classes are non-majors. What do you want non-majors to get out of your class?
- How have you planned and delivered lessons? How have you involved all students in your lessons?
Career Services resources

Discuss your job search with a career advisor: call 215 898-7530 to schedule an appointment and check walk-in times.

Get a copy of The Academic Job Search Handbook
  - http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/academicjobssearchhandbook.php

Attend programs and workshops on the academic job search
  - http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/calendar.php

Check out resources on the academic job search on the Career Services website at
  - http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/academicfaculty.php

Sign up to be on a Career Services listserv on our website at
  - www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/grad_distribution_lists.php