PREPARING FOR ACADEMIC INTERVIEWS: SCREENING, CONFERENCE AND ON-CAMPUS

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The academic job cycle

University of Pennsylvania Career Services
What we’re going to cover

- Introduction to academic job interview types
- Preparation
  - Research the institution
  - Research your qualifications and “fit”
- Interview Practice
  - Examples
  - Speaking about yourself
  - Common questions
- Setting up the Interview
- During the Interview
- First steps in negotiating/Interview Follow-up
The job market cycle - candidate selection

- Application materials sent
- Screening interviews
- Campus interviews
- Offer made

- Job opening created and search committee formed
- Applications selected for preliminary interviews
- Candidates selected/ notified for campus interview
- Final decision made on candidates

This process can be months long – from 4-12 months or more
What happens to the application?

Typically...

• Your application materials must be complete, and then each search committee member will be given a copy and will review your materials.

• They will initially view in terms of who to eliminate, then who will be part of a short list.

• They will discuss who to invite to the first round interviews – factoring in the position, the needs of the department, and your profile.

• The references are weighed heavily in later rounds.
Interviewing

Readiness for the job market

Preparing and applying

Negotiating offers and accepting

Screening/conference & campus interviews

Plan A again or going with Plan B
Preparing for interviews

BASIC:
• Attend job talks in your department or related department
  – Chat with advisor about their thoughts on the talk

INTERMEDIATE:
• Research each institution you will be interviewed by
  – What is their mission? Who are their students and faculty?
  – How does the new position fit into the academic landscape?
  – With whom will you be talking?

ADVANCED:
• Practice how you would answer questions about
  – Your current research, research goals and your teaching
  – Think about your answers from the search committee’s view
Screening interviews

- Phone interviews
- Video interviews (e.g., Skype)
- Conference interviews

Applications submitted ~200

Candidates for screening interview ~15-20

Candidates for campus interview ~3-5
Intro to screening interviews

• They are short (30-60 minutes), preliminary assessments

• Conference interviews = screening interviews held at a professional academic conference

• **Telephone interviews or video conferencing** = “remote” interviews with 1 or more interviewers with minimal cost/fuss

• At a screening interview, you can get an initial idea if there seems to be a “fit” between you and the department
  – By inviting you, they are already expressing interest in you
Your goal…

To prepare to present your qualifications succinctly and in an interesting way, while expressing knowledge of the institution

• 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

• You need to be able to establish rapport during a phone or Skype interview while dealing with technology issues
Screening interviews – general advice

• You may only have 30 minutes for your interview
  – Answers must be concise, and relevant to search committee
  – Committees may be evaluating your English skills

• You MUST have good, concise answers to basic questions:
  – Why do you want this position?
  – Why are you interested in our institution?
  – Tell us about yourself.
  – Tell us about your research – where will you take it next?
  – What is your teaching experience?

• Ask about the timeline for the rest of the interview process
Preparation: Research the institution

• Learn about the institution, school, and department
  – Where is it?
  – Who are the students?
  – What is their mission?
  – What resources, facilities, or related institutions do they have?
  – What have been recent developments?
  – Any Penn alums who work there?

  – Q. Why do you want to work here?
Preparation: Research the institution

• Learn about the institution, school, and department

• Become familiar with your interviewers’ work
  – It is OK to ask who you will be talking to during the interview ahead of time

  – Q. What do you know about our institution?
Preparation: Research the institution

• Learn about the institution, school, and department

• Become familiar with your interviewers’ work

• Brush up on general trends in your field (in addition to your specific area of research), pedagogy and higher education
  – Chronicle of Higher Education
  – Inside Higher Ed
  – Professional Academic Associations

  Q. Why is your research important to your field?
  Q. How would you teach our students?
Preparation: Research qualifications & “fit”

- Go over the materials you’ve submitted
- Know what examples about your scholarship you want to talk about before the interview
- **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
  – Set up a 1-hour mock interview with a career advisor (schedule through Handshake or call 215-898-7530)
  – Utilize Interviewstream – it is a great way to practice a video-conference interview (www.penn.interviewstream.com)
Welcome, Dianne

Welcome to InterviewStream! Before you get started, make sure to view our InterviewWebinar and InterviewSuite that feature expert tips and advice on all things interviewing. Once ready, you can then record practice interviews and receive feedback from anyone with an email address. Note that Career Services has created several sample interviews to choose from, but you can customize your own interview by clicking on the "Customize Your Own Interview" button and then selecting from over 3000 questions. If you would like a Career Services counselor to review your interview, please contact them directly via email. A staff list for each school can be found on the Career Services website: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/staff.php. Please note that during busy periods there may be a delay in response time.

Assignment/Self-Registration

Assignment codes, provided by your Professor, register you for the Assignment it belongs to.

Enter Assignment Code Register

Messages

Your University of Pennsylvania account has been created successfully.

Message from 7/27/2017 8:59:00 AM

RESOURCES

InterviewSuite surf (85 KB) Self Evaluation Form doc (4.40 KB) User Guide pdf (200 Bytes) Umm Like Guide pdf (75.1 KB)
CREATE AN INTERVIEW

Question Library

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<th>Search Questions</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Selected Questions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your plans for publishing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What course, not currently in our catalogue, would you like to develop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What textbook would you use in a particular course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe how you’d teach an introductory survey course in your discipline (or in an advanced seminar)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the best lesson that you have delivered. Why was it successful?</td>
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</tbody>
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* Denotes a custom folder.
The 5 Questions you will get in every job interview:

1. Who are you? Tell me about yourself

2. What do you know about our organization?

3. What do you want this position?

4. What do you bring to this role? What are your greatest strengths? What can you contribute to the work we do?

5. Do you have any questions for us?
The 7 Questions you will get in academic interviews:

1. Who are you? Tell me about yourself
2. What do you know about our organization?
3. What do you want this position?
4. What do you bring to this role? What are your greatest strengths? What can you contribute to the work we do?
5. Do you have any questions for us?
6. Tell me about your research?
7. Tell me about your teaching experience
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.

• Don’t be afraid to ask clarifying questions – interviewers are interested in people who are confident and candid, not always “right”

• 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 a contact number in case of emergency or technical issues. Provide yours to the department.

• Get name and title of each person 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 – don’t over schedule yourself
  – 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.
Phone and Video Interviews
How to prepare

• Who and how long?
  – Who will call whom?

• The technical aspects
  – Quiet room
  – Access to alternative means of communication
  – Numbers if connection is lost
  – Other phones on mute

• There will be silence – do not try to fill the space
  – Learn to stop talking…, errr…, um….., so that…., your sentences don’t sort of end like this…., so yes…, this is the end…., of the sentence…., Ok?
They can’t see what you are looking at...

But they can still hear you...
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.
What to wear

DRESS THE PART

NOT RECOMMENDED
Skype..., and more
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.
  - You can reserve the CS video conference room

- Be aware of lighting issues – test the visual beforehand

- Use a professional sounding Skype username

- Add the institution address to your contacts ahead of time (and make sure they have yours)

- Watch this: https://youtu.be/rQwanxQmFnc
How to prepare

• Who and how long?

• The technical aspects
  – Quiet room
  – Close all other programs and scheduled back-ups
  – Turn off phone
  – Access to alternative means of communication
  – Numbers if connection is lost
  – Think about your surroundings
Don’t be Dougal

Or Dougal’s friend
What is wrong with this picture?

- Glowing lamp behind head
- Chin in hand
- Looking at myself and not the camera
- Slouching
Look at the camera when you are speaking

If you are looking at people on the screen, you aren’t looking at the camera..., so they’ll see you looking down.
• Choose your background wisely – first impressions do matter
• Think about:
  ▪ Lighting
  ▪ Distracting objects
  ▪ Where you are looking
• No notes or distractions
• Eye contact (as best you can manage) is essential
What to wear

SAME AS IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

TOP & BOTTOM
After any screening interview

• Write a thank you email within 24 hours. 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

• Last chance to salvage an answer
TIPS FOR A SKYPE INTERVIEW

- Skype Interviews: One job hunter’s experience being interviewed via Skype
- Career Services’s Skype Interview Tips Worksheet
- Video: How to Look Good for a Skype Interview
CONFERENCE INTERVIEWS
The day before a conference interview

- Know what you are wearing.
- Get together and review **job announcement** and your submitted materials:
  - C.V.; Cover letter
  - Statement of teaching philosophy
  - Research statement
  - “Evidence of excellence in teaching” or a portfolio
- 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.
Make First Impressions Count!
1. confident attitude
2. stand up with good posture
3. smile
4. hands interlink at the web of your hands (the part between your thumb and your index finder)
5. firm grip (not too limp, and not too strong)
6. where you make eye contact throughout
7. where you shake 2 or 3 times from your elbow
8. let go
9. done!
During the interview

- Brand yourself as a colleague, not a grad student or postdoc
- Know what you want to tell the hiring committee
- Feel comfortable taking a moment to think about an answer
- 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 that a committee might be evaluating your English skills
- Have thoughtful questions for the interviewers
- Be confident and try your best to enjoy the interviews (it can happen). 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.
Important advice for all interviews

- Illustrate your answers with actual examples/anecdotes
  - When talking about teaching effectiveness, think of a situation where you used your skills successfully
  - How have you used your research to involve students in your work, and what did the students gain from this?
  - If your collaborations with other scholars have been successful, show how and why, and how this is beneficial

Tailor your answers for the people in the room (especially when talking about specific research)

Your illustrations show you’ve been effective in the past, and will be equally so in the future
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
Campus interviews

- Meeting the department
- Meeting administrators
- Meeting with graduate students and/or undergraduates
- The job talk
- Teaching a class
- Social situations and meals
Interview schedule
Interdisciplinary Program in the Biomedical Sciences, ABC UNIVERSITY

Sunday, February 18th
Arrive in City B at 2:16 pm. Picked up by Dr. X.
Dinner with Professor Y at 6:30pm

Monday, February 19th
7:30-8:45 am Breakfast with Dr. A. Pickup in the hotel front desk area
9:00-9:30 Dr. B
9:30-10:00 Dr. C
10:00-10:30 Dr. D
10:30-11:00 Dr. E
11:00 -11:30 Dr. F
11:30-Noon Dr. G
Noon–1:00pm Lunch with Graduate Students and Post Docs
1-2:30 Dr. H
2:30-3:00 Dr. I
3:00-3:30 Dr. J
3:30-4:00 Prepare for seminar
4:00-5:00 Seminar ‘The Selection and Activation of Regulatory T cells’
6:00 Dinner Dr. L and others

Tuesday, February 20th
Check out at 8:30 am Dr. X drive to airport
11:45 am Departure
The “job talk” or research talk

- A 30-60 minute presentation on your research
- Given to the search committee…, but also to:
  - Other interested members of the faculty; students; people who might know little about your subject

- An opportunity to showcase research (and teaching) skills
  - To connect your research with faculty and students at the institution by making it relevant
  - You’re an expert on your research and need to help people learn about what you do, and care about how/why you do it
  - Answer the “so what?” question about your research

- Summarize why your research is significant to your field
  - Is it fundable and publishable?
The research talk hour-glass

• Start broad/general

• Make your research relevant to those who may not have expertise in your subject area

• Provide some context for your research

• Talk about the “burning question” that drives you
The research talk hour-glass

- Focus in on your specific research questions
- Use the general foundation that you started with to explain why your research questions are important
- Discuss findings
- Illustrate your findings as much as you can
The research talk hour-glass

- End on a broader note

- Talk about:
  - Why your research is important to the discipline as a whole
  - How it will make you a better teacher
  - How you can foresee collaborations with other faculty

- Mention future research – research you know would be possible at that institution.

THE END
Some final points to remember

- **Never** talk for longer than the time allotted
  - Leave time for questions, and be prepared for challenging or adversarial ones
  - Answering questions shows you ability to think on your feet

- Be enthusiastic/strategic about **future research plans**
  - Helps people envision working with you in the future
  - Shows that you can be an **independent** researcher (especially important for postdocs) who can bring in grants

- Practice, practice, practice!
Standard topics you should be prepared for…

- Your dissertation/postdoctoral research
  - Different levels required depending on the audience
- Your future research interests
  - Publishing/funding needs/convey enthusiasm
- Teaching
  - Be able to discuss within the context of their institution
- Your interest in the institution
  - Show interest in both institution and the geographical location
Challenging questions you might get in an interview

• Would you be comfortable designing web courses (including laboratory)?
• How are you a good fit with this institution?
• What is your greatest strength?
• Tell us about a conflict or challenge you’ve had with your research, and how you resolved the issue.
• I don’t know anything about your field of research – teach me something now.
• What does diversity mean to you?
• So…, what can I tell you?
Preparing for campus interviews

- Practice job talk with an audience that asks hard questions, and with specialists and non-specialists
  - You need expert and cocktail party versions of your research

- Give context for your research and talk about why what you've done is important
  - What questions have you answered
  - Have a research agenda with some well-thought out projects

- Prepare to talk about your teaching
  - What you’ve done right; what you’ve learned from mistakes

- Research institution/department/interviewers and be able to talk about why you’re a good fit
  - **Fit** is crucial when final candidates are similarly qualified
Remember to ask questions

- You might ask questions about:
  - Teaching responsibilities
  - Expectations for scholarship
  - The tenure process and tenure criteria
  - The students
  - Current collaborations that faculty are involved with
  - On-campus support for teaching and grant-writing

- Try to understand the nature of your potential colleagues
  - What do they like the most about the institution?
  - Do they seem to be happy there?

- You should ask about:
  - Timeline for when search committee will make a decision
Negotiating and accepting offers
After the campus interviews conclude

• Search committee, or possibly the whole department, deliberates
  – They may rank candidates on or just discuss their talk, teaching, research plans and interpersonal skills
  – They will also discuss each candidate’s “fit”
  – They will get feedback from staff and students who interacted with them

• Candidates need to be patient in waiting to hear
Getting offers

• Offers usually come by phone, but may come in an email

• Indicate how pleased you are but don’t accept immediately
  - “I’d like a few days to think about this”
  - Think about questions you want to ask

• Do research on the institution’s policies and resources for new faculty
  - Often there is a section on the Human Resources or Provost website
  - When possible, use your networks
  - AAUP has faculty salary surveys (Chronicle of Higher Ed links to information)
### Average salaries by institution

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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Professors</th>
<th>Associate Professors</th>
<th>Assistant Professors</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
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Penn and Philadelphia offer a wide range of opportunities for work and leisure, with New York and Boston to the north to Baltimore and Washington DC to the south.

**A GREAT PLACE TO WORK**

Learn more about:
- Faculty Positions at Penn
- Non-Faculty Positions at Penn
- Family-Friendly Policies at Penn
- Work-Life Balance
- Mentoring at Penn
- Teaching at Penn

**A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE**

Learn more about:
- University City
- Center City Philadelphia
- The Philadelphia Area
- Regional Job Opportunities for Spouses and Partners from HERC (Higher Education Recruitment Consortium)
Negotiating Offers: things that may be negotiable

- Decision date
- Salary
- Start-up funds for equipment, supplies and personnel
  - Research assistants
  - Computer resources
- Summer research funding
- Travel funds and conference expenses
- Teaching load and teaching schedule
- Starting date
- Moving expenses/housing help
- Job-hunting help for partner or spouse

Benefits such as insurance coverage usually aren’t negotiable
Negotiating well

- When possible, negotiate by phone and follow up by email
- Decide what you want to negotiate based on what will help you get tenure
  - Be intentional with professional reasons for what you seek
- This is the time to bring up a spouse/partner or pregnancy
  - Some institutions have policies for dual career couples
  - Some institutions have child care services or resources
- What to do when you have
  - Two or more offers
  - An offer from your second choice school when you haven’t even interviewed at your first choice school
Accepting an offer

• If terms of the offer changed during negotiating, get a new offer letter

• Thank everyone who helped you

• Notify other institutions who interviewed you that you have accepted a job and withdraw from the search

• Notify your network of contacts that you have accepted an offer

• FINISH YOUR RESEARCH
QUESTIONS

Answers
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.

NEW! Career Services now offers externships in academic administration to help PhDs prepare for careers both in academia and outside of it. Click here for more details.

Post-graduation career paths
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.

Appointments & Walk-Ins
Resumes, CVs, Cover Letters & Correspondence
Interviewing Advice
Networking & Mentoring
Resources by Career Field
Career Exploration
Jobs & Internships
On Campus Recruiting

DOCTORAL STUDENT & POSTDOC EVENTS
Next steps

• Discuss your job search with a career advisor
  – Get advice specific to your individual questions and needs

• Schedule an appointment through Handshake or call 215 898 7530 to schedule.
  – Discuss possible career paths and general job search issues
  – Review CV, cover letter, teaching philosophy, research statement, and anything else!
  – Revise CV to resume format for non-faculty jobs
  – Set up a mock interview
Use available resources

• Get a copy of The Academic Job Search Handbook (available at a discount at Career Services – $10)

• Attend programs/workshops on the academic job search (Academic Job Search Series)

• Resources on the academic job search and on expanded career opportunities on the Career Services website www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/phdpostdoc.php

• Sign up for Career Mail in Handshake (current PhDs in Humanities/Social Sciences or STEM)
  – Get announcements about jobs, workshops, discussion panels, and other career-related information
THE END