

Searching for a Job in Academia

Objectives

1. Explore steps and elements of the academic job search.
2. Review tips and suggestions for executing a successful job search.
3. Identify resources to assist in planning your search.

The Academic Job Search Process

The process of searching for a faculty or research position within academia shares many commonalities with a general job search. Candidates may find it helpful to evaluate their values, interests, and skills related to potential positions; identify and research employment options; create a list of desirable options, and make a plan to execute the job search. The differences between the academic search and a general search may primarily be found in:

- The application materials required
- The amount of time needed to execute and complete the search
- Interview and negotiation experiences

This guide gives a general description of how to execute an academic job search. However, be advised that each academic field may have unique requirements and processes, so it is suggested that you speak with faculty advisors and professionals in your field in addition to reading this guide. You may also want to review the Career Center's general "Searching for a Job" guide (www.career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides).

Application Materials

Applications for academic positions may require some traditionally requested materials such as a general application form, résumé, cover letter, transcripts, samples of work/writing, etc. Additional materials that may be required for academia include:

- **Curriculum Vitae (CV).** A curriculum vitae is a longer version of the traditional résumé. Unlike a résumé, there is no page limit and individuals are encouraged to include detailed information about a wide range of experiences spanning their entire career. Formatting considerations for a CV are the same as for a résumé (consistent font, aligned bullets, balance of white space and



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text, etc.) and content headings may be similar to résumé headings with the addition of other categories (e.g., "teaching experience," "research experience," "professional publications,"). For more information on how to write a CV, see the "Writing a Curriculum Vitae" guide at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

- **Research Statement.** A research statement is an essay, usually one to two pages long, that describes your previous research experience as well as your intended trajectory and goals for future research. This document helps academic institutions understand how your research interests and activities fit with departments to which you are applying and how you might contribute to advancing both the department and the institution. You might talk about:
 - How you will build on your prior research
 - Awards, grants, special recognition your previous research has garnered
 - Plans or ideas for how to fund future workSpeak with faculty advisors and professionals in your field regarding how to create a research statement for your specific field of interest.
- **Teaching Philosophy/ Statement.** A teaching philosophy is a one to two page essay that describes your approach to teaching. This is often

used to help institutions understand what kind of instructor you will be and how your methods align with their teaching practices. This statement may include your thoughts and feelings about learning, a description of your teaching methods, and your opinion of the purpose of teaching and education. Some institutions may provide prompts for you to follow. If this is the case, the prompts will usually be listed in the general application form.

- **Teaching Portfolio.** Many individuals choose to create a portfolio with artifacts from their teaching experiences to show in an interview. You may be asked to share work samples at the time of application, however, it is recommended that you assemble materials for your portfolio prior to applying to a position. What you choose to include in your portfolio may vary depending on your discipline, experience, and the position, but some potential artifacts to include are:
 - past syllabi you have developed
 - student work samples (make sure to acquire permission to use these)
 - press your teaching has received
 - sample assignments, lesson plans, etc.

The portfolio may be a physical padfolio folder, online, or both depending on what is expected in your field. Consult with faculty advisors and professionals in your field to assist you in determining which materials to include in your teaching portfolio.

- **Other Materials.** As with any application process, some institutions may have unique application requests. Read the application requirements very carefully and inquire further if you are unsure of what you are being asked to provide.

Some applicants choose to use a credentials filing service to submit their application materials such as *Interfolio* (www.interfolio.com) or *Vitae* (chroniclevitae.com). Before deciding to use a credentials filing service, it is important to check with the receiving institution to make sure the use of this kind of service is permitted.

When Should I Begin to Search?

Search timelines will vary depending on many factors related to your individual needs, program length, and type of position(s) to which you are applying. Below is an example of a student job search timeline that begins two years prior to desired start date for a faculty position. Your search process may be longer or shorter depending on your needs, field, and personal influential factors.

Sample Academic Job Search Timeline

Two years prior to intended start date

- **Identify and explore job opportunity resources and organizations/institutions that hire for your field.** The Career Center has excellent resources to help you find these in both print and online formats. Drop-in at the Career Center and speak with a Career Advisor for help finding resources in your field and visit the Career Center website's Graduate Student page at www.career.fsu.edu/Students/Graduate-Students.
- **Speak to your doctoral committee members (if applicable) or faculty advisors about your job search plans.** Consider how your degree completion timeline may impact your search. Some positions are contingent on candidates having their "degree in hand." International students may want to consider limitations and visa requirements related to timing of graduation as well.
- **Attend professional development programming events to learn about your field, network with connections, and develop employability skills.** The Graduate School has helpful programming for individuals looking to go into academia with their *Preparing Future Faculty* initiative and *Professional Development Series* workshops performed in collaboration with the Career Center. For more information, visit gradschool.fsu.edu. The Career Center also has a variety of workshops and events available for graduate students which can be viewed at career.fsu.edu/Students/Events.
- **Create and monitor your online presence.** You may consider creating a profile on LinkedIn.com or creating your own website if this is common for professionals in your field. You may also consider searching your name on the Internet to make sure searches yield results that portray you in a positive light. If undesirable content is returned, take action to remove it.
- **Build content for your curriculum vitae.** Consider ways to enhance your teaching skills, participate in experiential learning activities related to your field, submit a manuscript for publishing, present at a professional conference, etc.
- **Initiate conversations with important others.** If you have a partner, children, or other important people who will be affected by your employment choices, consider engaging in dialogue around their preferences and feelings for your search. These conversations can help you as you narrow and shape your search.

Summer, Fifteen months prior to intended start date

- **Make sure your degree will be awarded by the summer before the job begins** as many institutions will not consider applicants who have not been awarded their degree officially by the start of the position.
- **Begin reaching out for recommendations from faculty.**
- **Continue to research job opportunities and institutions you might like to work for.**
- **Begin drafting or revising necessary application materials** like your CV/resume, cover letters, teaching philosophy, research statement, and portfolio. Not all positions require all of the aforementioned materials, so be sure to research institutions you might be interested in applying to. Consult with faculty advisors for feedback.

Fall, Twelve months prior to intended start date

- **Finalize application materials.** Have a faculty, professionals, and Career Advisors review your documents for feedback.

Send recommendation requests to all individuals you wish to serve as recommenders.

- **Prepare a teaching portfolio (if applicable).** This portfolio may include items such as evaluation forms, syllabi you have developed, student work (ensure you have permission to use), press coverage of your work, etc.
- **Monitor job listings and make inquiries to departments you may be interested in.** It is possible that positions are or will soon be available, just not publicly listed.
- **Begin applying to desirable positions.** Now is a good time to make sure the answering message on your telephone is professional and appropriate in preparation for calls to interview.
- **Begin researching potential funding sources for your research if applicable.** Be prepared to discuss this in interviews. The FSU Office of Research has a tool called *PIVOT* (research.fsu.edu/research-fsu/pivot/) that can help you find funding sources and see how other researchers have been funded.
- **Attend to self-care.** Job searching can take a great deal of effort and may feel stressful at times. Be sure to find ways to take care of yourself during this process. If you find yourself needing support in developing a plan for self-care, you might visit the FSU Counseling Center (counseling.fsu.edu)

Eight months prior to intended start date

- **Prepare for interviews.** You might participate in a mock interview at the Career Center (career.fsu.edu/Students/Prepare-for-the-Next-Step/Mock-Interview-Program) to practice and receive feedback on your interviewing skills. Refer to the “*Considering Employment in a Faculty Position*” guide available at the Career Center or online (career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides) to help prepare interview responses and questions you have for prospective employers. Be sure to practice your presentation/job talk if required for an on-campus interview.
- **Continue to search for and apply to positions.**

Six - Three months prior to intended start date

- **Continue to apply and interview for positions.** Make sure to send thank-you notes/emails to all those involved in your interview process within 48 hours of your interview. If you are not receiving calls for interviews yet, that is okay. You might consider consulting with faculty advisors and a Career Advisor about your search and adjust your approach if needed.
- **Evaluate and negotiate offers.** If you have received offers, congratulations! It is normal and expected that candidates will take some time to look over offers and negotiate terms if needed. If you need assistance with this process, consult with faculty advisors and drop-in at the Career Center.

After accepting a position

- **Stay on-track academically.** Offers of employment may be contingent upon your successful completion of your degree.
- **Make relocation arrangements if necessary.** If you are moving for your new position, you will want to begin making arrangements for housing and moving your things to the new location. You might ask your employing institution for information and connections to help you.

Adapted from Miller Vick, Furlong, and Lurie's The Academic Job Search Handbook ©2016

Interviewing and Negotiating Offers

Similar to how academic and non-academic applications may share commonalities, so might the interview and negotiation processes for both. For this reason, you may want to review Career Center guides for “*Preparing for a Telephone Interview*,” “*The First Job Interview*,” “*Preparing for Your Second Interview*,” and “*Negotiating Job Offers*” for strategies, etiquette, and tips for interviewing and negotiating job offers (located at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides). There may, however, be some distinct differences in interview formats and negotiation items in an academic job search process which are outlined below.

Unique Components of an Academic Interview

- **Conference Interview.** Some institutions prefer to conduct interviews at annual meetings of professional organizations or at regional/national conferences. While interview groups vary in size, you may be one of several individuals interviewing on a lengthy schedule for the day. This interview may involve several academic departments/representatives, but the construction and size of the group can vary. Conference interviews are usually preliminary and are followed by a second-round on-campus interview. In addition to general interview preparation, be prepared to answer questions related to research goals and teaching experience. See the Career Center interview guides listed above for additional information on preparing for interviews.
- **Job Talk Presentation.** A “job talk” is a unique opportunity for applicants to speak about their history, qualifications, and goals for the future to a variety of stakeholders at an institution. This seminar-style presentation may be given in front of a large or small audience of academic department representatives, institution staff/administration, students, community partners, etc. The institution may or may not give you ideas for what to speak about in your presentation. Be prepared to talk about your:
 - research and work history
 - philosophy of teaching
 - goals and future directions for research
 - desire to work for the institution

It may be helpful to prepare for this interview by participating as an audience member in seminars and job talks at your current graduate institution to see what works and what does not. You will also want to rehearse this speech for timing and

to help if nerves set in on the day of the interview. At the end of the talk, there is generally an open forum question and answer session where members of the audience may engage with you.

- **Teaching Demonstration.** Teaching demonstrations are not always part of the interview process, but they are not uncommon for faculty interviews. These demonstrations usually occur in one of two forms. In the first form, you would be asked to teach an existing class on a topic of their scheduled curriculum. Be sure to ask for a syllabus if one is not provided. In the second form, you may be asked to teach a group of students the administration has gathered specifically to watch you teach. You may be given a topic or allowed freedom to decide what to present. In either form, it is recommended you treat the experience like any normal classroom session. If you have not taught in the past and are concerned about this, consult with faculty advisors and consider engaging with the FSU Graduate School's Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE) (gradschool.fsu.edu/Professional-Development/Program-for-Instructional-Excellence-PIE) to develop teaching skills.
- **"Chalk Talk."** This element may be more common in certain fields, such as the sciences and engineering. The "chalk talk" is an additional interview after the first on-campus visit where candidates sit down with members of their desired department and discuss research goals more in-depth without visual aids or technology. This session usually includes discussing a potential project that might be good for an initial grant proposal. Candidates may be asked to present and discuss ideas for an initial research project including a realistic timeline, hypotheses, goals and objectives. The purpose of this interview is to help the department gauge if a candidate is ready to be a Principal Investigator. Consult with faculty advisors and professionals in your field for assistance in preparing for this part of the interview process.

Special Considerations for Offer Negotiation

As stated previously, the negotiation process in academia is similar to any job offer negotiation. The primary differences may exist in the items negotiated. In addition to common items, such as start date, salary, perks, etc., some additional items for consideration in an academic position include:

- **Start-up package** - may include lab facilities, equipment, funding for staff, etc. needed to begin your work
- **Teaching load/schedule** - how many classes you will teach and at what times. See also the guide on "*Considering Employment in a Faculty Position*"
- **Graduate/research assistants** - staff provided by the institution to aid you in your work
- **Job hunting assistance for partner/spouse** - services or leads to help your partner gain employment in your new location

Keep in mind that some institutions may have more or less flexibility regarding what they are able to negotiate. Refer to the "*Negotiating Job Offers*" guide for additional tips in negotiation etiquette, ideas for items to negotiate, and how to evaluate an offer.

Summary

Academic and non-academic job searches have a great deal in common, but items like timing and planning, types of application materials, and interviewing/negotiation considerations may differ. Be sure to consult with faculty advisors and professionals in your field in addition to using Career Center resources to help you navigate this process.

Additional Resources

Select Career Center Library Resources

- The PhD handbook for the academic job search*.....VD C6
- Curriculum Vitae Binder*.....VA F552
- The academic job search handbook*.....VD C61

Select Online Resources

- career.fsu.edu/Students/Graduate-Students — learn about Career Center services specifically for graduate students, view links to job boards by field, and access graduate-related career resources

