



Applying for Faculty Positions



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Applying for faculty jobs – starting the process

Many colleges and universities begin the search for a tenure-track faculty member almost a full academic year before the anticipated start date of their new hire. Generally, social science disciplines begin posting faculty job positions during the summer a year before, while humanities and STEM fields start posting during the fall. However, institutions will also sometimes post tenure-track job openings outside of these common timelines. It's a good idea to check with faculty and colleagues in your department(s) to get their insights into when you should start searching for faculty job postings.

Career Services can help you utilize online tools to track openings. If you're applying for postdocs, visiting assistant professor roles, or other non tenure-track positions, consult with faculty and colleagues in your disciplines(s) to learn about those timelines. Make an appointment with a Career Advisor via Handshake to chat about how you can prepare for your academic job search ahead of time.

Where to Search for Academic Jobs

Academic job listings are usually listed through disciplinary and professional associations, so be sure to consult those organizations as well as your advisors and colleagues in your department(s) and disciplines. In addition, you can find comprehensive academic job listings on ChronicleVita, HigherEdJobs, Insider Higher Ed, and Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC). Don't forget to set job alerts when possible, so that you can be notified of job opportunities that match your preferences and criteria.

Understanding and Tailoring for Different Kinds of Institutions

As you're applying for academic positions, it's important to understand what kind of institution you're applying to so that you can demonstrate to search committees your strong fit not only for the role but also for their institution and community. For each application, try to determine how much the institution values research vs. teaching. Does it prioritize one over the other? Is it a private or public institution? Who are the students that they serve? Do they have graduate students? Speak with a Career Advisor to learn about strategies to research different colleges and universities as you tailor your applications for each one.



Application materials

CV

The CV is a complete summary of all of your academic achievements and can be as long as needed. Although it will grow longer as your academic career progresses, you'll want to make sure that you include accomplishments that are relevant and important. It typically includes sections such as education, publications, awards/grants/fellowships, conference presentations, teaching experience, research experience, academic/professional service, professional affiliations, and references. Depending on the institution you're applying to, your CV will be able to answer these basic questions that search committees will ask: What is your dissertation topic? Have you published? Do you have teaching experience? Have you presented at major conferences in your discipline? What are your teaching and research interests?

Cover letters

The cover letter serves as an introduction to your application package and answers the following questions: Who are you? When will you defend your dissertation (if you're currently ABD)? Why are you interested in applying for this assistant professor position? Why are you interested in this institution? What is your dissertation research about? What are your research plans? What kind of teaching experience do you have? How will you contribute to our department and institution? Why is the school a good fit for you and vice versa? A strong cover letter will be tailored to the institution to which you're applying. For the humanities and social sciences, it is typically two to three pages long, and for STEM fields, it is typically one to two pages but will vary depending on the specific discipline.

Research statements

Some institutions will ask for a research statement, while others will ask for a statement of research plans. We often advise students writing the former to spend about 50% of the statement on past research, and 50% on future research plans, while those writing the latter can feel confident in devoting 90-100% of their statement to future research plans, including specific research questions and sources you hope to consider. A strong research statement, often two to three pages, will not only summarize the research you've done, including sources and methodology, but also answer the "so what?" question: Why does your research matter? Why will it be publishable and/or fundable?

Teaching statements

One to two pages long, a teaching statement or philosophy allows you to demonstrate what you're like as a teacher in the classroom. It often begins with a broad description of your approach to teaching. More specifically, what goals do you hope to accomplish as a teacher? What do you want students to get out of your courses? What in your past academic experiences might have shaped your pedagogical views? The bulk of the document should focus on your teaching experiences. Have you taught your own courses? What worked well and what did you do to improve your courses? How did you assess the effectiveness of your teaching? If you have only been a teaching assistant, how did you organize your discussion sections? Did you contribute to shape the course in other ways? A strong teaching statement will provide relatively detailed examples of what you have done in the classroom, or if you don't have prior teaching experiences, what you plan to do as a teacher.

Teaching portfolios

The teaching portfolio offers candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to teach in the best way that they see fit. While there is no standard list of teaching portfolio documents, most institutions will want to see a teaching statement or philosophy and evidence of teaching effectiveness, such as teaching evaluations, qualitative student feedback, and a letter from a faculty member who has observed your teaching. It is important to include materials that document your teaching, including syllabi that you've used in the past or that you plan to use in the future, handouts of tests and quizzes, or presentations that you've designed for a course. Given the variety of material that you can include for a teaching portfolio, it is crucial to provide context for the documents by providing a simple table of contents or just a brief description of how all the materials you've included fit together to demonstrate your teaching ability.

Diversity statements

As many institutions of higher education are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion as values in their communities, they have also increasingly asked job candidates to submit diversity statements as part of their application package. If you feel that you may not have a lot to write about for this one-page document, take a moment to reflect on diversity as it relates to your research topic, your teaching, and your service work. Do you study groups or people who have been marginalized in society and have uncovered their voices as part of your research? Have you employed inclusive pedagogical techniques in your teaching to encourage students to participate in discussion? Have you contributed to your department or your profession in helping to increase diversity or volunteered in your local community? Reflecting on these questions can help you to start thinking about ways in which you have or hope to contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion in your career.

Recommendation Letters

As part of your faculty application package, you will also need to submit between 3 to 5 reference letters from faculty you've worked with. In addition to having your primary advisor or PI write a letter on your behalf, keep in mind the kind of institution you're applying to as you consider asking other faculty members to advocate for your candidacy. Depending on the institution and the role, you may want to think about which faculty are best suited to write strong letters about your research, teaching, and service. If you have questions about how to navigate this process, Career Services is happy to help you brainstorm ideas -- just make appointment via Handshake.



Research Statements

The main goal of a research statement is to walk the search committee through the evolution of your research, to highlight your research accomplishments, and to show where your research will be taking you next. To a certain extent, the next steps that you identify within your statement will also need to touch on how your research could benefit the institution to which you are applying. This might be in terms of grant money, faculty collaborations, involving students in your research, or developing new courses. Your CV will usually show a search committee where you have done your research, who your mentors have been, the titles of your various research projects, a list of your papers, and it may provide a very brief summary of what some of this research involves. However, there can be certain points of interest that a CV may not always address in enough detail.

- What got you interested in this research?
- What was the burning question that you set out to answer?
- What challenges did you encounter along the way, and how did you overcome these challenges?
- How can your research be applied?
- Why is your research important within your field?
- direction will your research take you in next, and what new questions do you have?

While you may not have a good sense of where your research will ultimately lead you, you should have a sense of some of the possible destinations along the way. You want to be able to show a search committee that your research is moving forward and that you are moving forward along with it in terms of developing new skills and knowledge. Ultimately, your research statement should complement your cover letter, CV, and teaching philosophy to illustrate what makes you an ideal candidate for the job. The more clearly you can articulate the path your research has taken, and where it will take you in the future, the more convincing and interesting it will be to read.

Separate research statements are usually requested from researchers in engineering, social, physical, and life sciences, but can also be requested for researchers in the humanities. In many cases, however, the same information that is covered in the research statement is often integrated into the cover letter for many disciplines within the humanities and no separate research statement is requested within the job advertisement. Seek advice from current faculty and new hires about the conventions of your discipline if you are in doubt.

Getting started with your research statement

You can think of a research statement as having three distinct parts. The first part will focus on your past research, and can include the reasons you started your research, an explanation as to why the questions you originally asked are important in your field, and a summary some of the work you did to answer some of these early questions.

The middle part of the research statement focuses on your current research. How is this research different from previous work you have done, and what brought you to where you are today? You should still explain the questions you are trying to ask, and it is very important that you focus on some of the findings that you have (and cite some of the publications associated with these findings). In other words, do not talk about your research in abstract terms, make sure that you explain your actual results and findings (even if these may not be entirely complete when you are applying for faculty positions), and mention why these results are significant.

The final part of your research statement should build on the first two parts. Yes, you have asked good questions, and used good methods to find some answers, but how will you now use this foundation to take you into your future? Since you are hoping that your future will be at one of the institutions to which you are applying, you should provide some convincing reasons why your future research will be possible at each institution, and why it will be beneficial to that institution, or to the students at that institution.

The best time to write your research statement is when you have some tangible results that you can focus on. However, even if you do not yet have significant findings, you can still talk about the importance of the questions you have asked, or the methods you are using to find answers, especially if you are using novel or cross-disciplinary approaches. And you may only be able to write a convincing "future research" question when you know where you will be applying, as you will need to tailor what you write for each institution.

While you are focusing on the past, present, and future of your research, and tailoring it to each institution, you should also think about the length of your statement and how detailed or specific you make the descriptions of your research. Think about who will be reading it. Will they all understand the jargon you are using? Are they experts in the subject, or experts in a range of related subjects? Can you go into very specific detail, or do you need to talk about your research in broader terms that make sense to people outside of your research field focusing on the common ground that might exist? Additionally, you should make sure that your future research plans differ from those of your PI or advisor, as you need to be seen as an independent researcher. Identify 4-5 specific aims that can be divided into short-term and long-term goals. You can give some idea of a 5-year research plan that includes the studies you want to perform, but also mention your long-term plans, so that the search committee knows that this is not a finite project.

Another important consideration when writing about your research is realizing that you do not perform research in a vacuum. When doing your research you may have faced some serious challenges that required some creative problem-solving to overcome. While these aspects are not necessarily as important as your results and your papers, they can help paint a picture of you as a well-rounded researcher who is likely to be successful in the future even if new problems arise, for example.

Steps to writing a research statement

Step 1: Think about how and why you got started with your research. What motivated you to spend so much time on answering the questions you developed? If you can illustrate some of the enthusiasm you have for your subject, the search committee will likely assume that students and other faculty members will see this in you as well. People like to work with passionate and enthusiastic colleagues. Remember to focus on what you found, what questions you answered, and why your findings are significant. The research you completed in the past will have brought you to where you are today; also be sure to show how your research past and research present are connected. Explore some of the techniques and approaches you have successfully used in your research, and describe some of the challenges you overcame. What makes people interested in what you do, and how have you used your research as a tool for teaching or mentoring students? Integrating students into your research may be an important part of your future research at your target institutions. Conclude describing your current research by focusing on your findings, their importance, and what new questions they generate.

Step 2: Think about how you can tailor your research statement for each application. Familiarize yourself with the faculty at each institution, and explore the research that they have been performing. You should think about your future research in terms of the students at the institution. What opportunities can you imagine that would allow students to get involved in what you do to serve as a tool for teaching and training them, and to get them excited about your subject? Do not talk about your desire to work with graduate students if the institution only has undergraduates! You will also need to think about what equipment or resources that you might need to do your future research. Again, mention any resources that specific institutions have that you would be interested in utilizing (e.g., print materials, super electron microscopes, archived artwork). You can also mention what you hope to do with your current and future research in terms of publication (whether in journals or as a book), try to be as specific and honest as possible. Finally, be prepared to talk about how your future research can help bring in grants and other sources of funding, especially if you have a good track record of receiving awards and fellowships. Mention some grants that you know have been awarded to similar research, and state your intention to seek this type of funding.

Step 3: Ask faculty in your department if they are willing to share their own research statements with you. To a certain extent, there will be some subject-specific differences in what is expected from a research statement, and so it is always a good idea to see how others in your field have done it. You should try to draft your own research statement first before you review any statements shared with you. Your goal is to create a unique research statement that clearly highlights your abilities as a researcher.

Step 4: The research statement is typically a few (2-3) pages in length, depending on the number of images, illustrations, or graphs included. Once you have completed the steps above, you can call Career Services at 215 898 7530 to schedule an appointment with a career advisor to get feedback on your draft. You should also try to get faculty in your department to review your document if they are willing to do so.

Teaching philosophy

The main goal of a teaching philosophy is to show search committees that you are ready and able to teach the students at their institution. There may be few formal opportunities to get on-the-job training to be an effective teacher once you start in your new role as a faculty member, and it is expected that you will be able to teach with minimal supervision once you start. This means that you should certainly seek out opportunities to gain meaningful teaching experiences as you are working on your PhD or as a postdoc. There are plenty of opportunities to do this as an adjunct, a teaching assistant, a mentor, a journal club coordinator, and in any situation where you are imparting knowledge to others, whether in groups or one-on-one.

A teaching philosophy is a document that describes your general approach to teaching. Can you summarize for the search committee what your goals are when you teach? If you can articulate this, and do so in a way that aligns with that institution's own teaching philosophy or mission, then you will have done a good job at showing that you understand the role and responsibility that may take up a fair proportion of your life as a new faculty member. Search committees will be interested in seeing how you have improved over time, how you have incorporated new approaches, and even how you have learned from approaches that did not work.

To a certain extent, your teaching philosophy can focus on broad concepts of learning, and it can be philosophical at heart. However, it is helpful to show how your teaching philosophy has developed over time so that any broad concepts can become more tangible and real. For example, where did you get your ideas or inspiration? What has cemented the approaches you take? Was it your experience as a student, as a teacher, or based on research you may have done on teaching theory? Philosophies should not just spring out of nowhere, they develop and evolve as you put them into action and test them. One of the purposes of the teaching philosophy is to show search committees that you have a firm foundation on which you can develop as a faculty member. If your philosophy comes without context or explanation, you are not going to be as convincing.

Really good teaching philosophies quickly turn from general concepts to specific illustrations of teaching in action (whether you are doing the teaching or you are being taught). As search committees are looking for someone who will be able to teach existing curricula, develop new and interesting courses, and who can connect effectively with students (and other faculty), they will be looking for some evidence that you have done something similar already. If you are potentially going to be teaching both graduate and undergraduate students at the institution you are applying to, can you describe experiences where you have interacted with both of these groups that is in some way relevant to teaching approaches? What are the differences between these groups that you have observed, and how have you adjusted your approach? What about teaching students from diverse backgrounds or international students, what evidence can you provide within your philosophy that might show that you have the ability to do this, try to tailor your teaching statement to indicate you can work effectively with the population of students that attend the institutions that interest you.

Ultimately, your teaching philosophy should complement your cover letter, CV, and research statement to illustrate what makes you an ideal candidate for the job. The more specific the illustrations that you provide, the more meaningful your philosophy will become, and the more interesting it will be to read.

Getting started with your teaching philosophy

Developing and teaching your own class is not a necessary prerequisite to having your own interesting and informative teaching philosophy (but it can certainly help!). There are many aspects of your academic experience that you can draw upon when thinking about and developing your own philosophy.

The Search Committee's perspective

Everyone is busy writing their own teaching philosophies and sending them off with their applications. Most are likely to cover the same sort of information. Only yours will describe your unique experiences and perspectives, and be able to connect those to your future teaching at that institution.

As a student, you have seen a range of good, bad, and indifferent teaching styles and approaches. The teaching philosophy is not the place to complain about the negative ones, but it is an opportunity to discuss what you learned from these experiences as a student, how you can integrate what you learned into your own teaching approaches, and why this will make you an ideal candidate. You should mention those approaches you saw to be very effective at achieving teaching goals, and be clear as to what you see these goals to be. As stated above, do not be afraid to give specific illustrations of particular situations where you saw teaching being truly effective. These specific examples will help your teaching philosophy stand out from the rest of the philosophies in the application pile.

If you are interested in gaining additional teaching experiences while you are studying at Penn, then consider visiting the Center for Teaching and Learning, which works with graduate students to help them improve their teaching at Penn and to help prepare them to become faculty in the future. Visit the Center's website for additional information: <http://www.upenn.edu/ctl/>. It is important to think about teaching as more than just standing in a classroom giving a lecture. Mentoring students, overseeing aspects of your lab, coordinating practical or lab components of courses, participating in journal clubs, all involve teaching to a certain degree, depending on how you choose to define the term. You can certainly use these experiences as the foundation for your teaching philosophy, and expand on how these experiences will translate to more formal lecture-based situations.

It is easy enough for anyone to say that they have a "student-centered teaching style" where they focus on the different learning styles of the students. However, it is much more effective to back-up broad statements like this with specific illustrations of your teaching in action, especially when the examples you choose have some great outcomes you can highlight (e.g., high student evaluation of the course, student retention throughout the class, individuals choosing your subject as a major). Do not spend too much time trying to drop in teaching buzzwords if this takes away from actual examples of you using or experiencing effective teaching approaches. And remember, your teaching philosophy is always going to be subject to change as you continue to have new and different teaching experiences that inform you. There are always new learning theories, new technologies, and new ways of assessing teaching effectiveness, which you can integrate into your philosophy over time. Keep your philosophy statement updated with your new perspectives and new illustrations.

Steps to writing a teaching philosophy

Step 1: Think about your experiences as a student, and any experiences you have had as a teacher, and describe what you see as your teaching goals and what you believe are effective outcomes of learning. Do not be tempted just to make up a philosophy that sounds good, really give some thought as to what you believe teaching actually represents. Additionally, you can try to envision how you would like to be described by your (future) students if they were asked about what kind of teacher you are. Specifically show how effective teaching approaches are tied to outcomes and results as you are describing your experiences. It is OK to talk about learning experiences that you have had or seen that you have improved (in other words, that were not as effective as you had hoped), especially if you describe how you used student or faculty feedback or your own evaluations to do so.

Step 2: Ask faculty in your department if they are willing to share their own teaching philosophies with you. To a certain extent, there will be some subject-specific differences in what is expected from a teaching philosophy, and so it is always a good idea to see how others in your field have done it. You should try to draft your own teaching philosophy first before you review any philosophies shared with you. Your goal is to create a unique philosophy tailored to your experiences and perspectives, not to echo the philosophies of your advisors.

Step 3: Look at the website of the academic institution(s) to which you are applying, and try to find out about their institutional teaching philosophy. You can usually find this in their mission statement, or on departmental homepages. If you can describe your own philosophy in a language that is similar to the way they describe theirs, then you will help them to see how you will fit in as a faculty member. It is advisable to tailor your teaching philosophy for each application, however, more time should be devoted to tailoring your cover letter and CV.

Step 4: Integrate all of this information together in 1-2 pages, remembering to make your philosophy rich with actual examples and illustrations of your teaching experiences and ideas. Then, call Career Services at 215 898 7530, and schedule an appointment with a career advisor to get feedback on your draft. You should also try to get faculty in your department to review your philosophy if they are willing to do so. In particular, faculty who have seen you teach or your student evaluations are important resources for feedback (and can serve as references). Schedule an appointment with advisors from the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Diversity statements

In order to write an effective diversity statement for academic applications, it is helpful to be familiar with the types of diversity goals and initiatives that different academic institutions have. This is especially important for the schools to which you are applying, and you can get good ideas by searching for each institution's diversity pages on their websites.

It is helpful to use some of the language you see in these pages to describe your own perspectives on diversity, since sharing common themes can make your statement more relevant to the search committee. Some schools that request diversity statements also provide clear instructions on how these should be written, and it makes sense to follow these directions carefully.

In general terms, diversity statement should include past experiences and activities, and also future plans to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. As you are thinking about your statement, keep the following questions in mind, as these can help you to structure what you are writing about:

- What does diversity mean to you, and why is this important?
- Do you understand the university's diversity goals?
- What have been some of your experiences either being part of a non-majority group, or interacting with diverse populations?
- How has your thinking about diversity actively influenced your teaching, research, and/or scholarship?
- In thinking about the different roles you have played, and will play, as part of your university service, what role has/will diversity issues play?
- What role do you believe that advising and mentoring play in working with diverse populations?
- Does your engagement with diversity help students prepare for careers in a global society?

Your experiences working with diverse populations will themselves be diverse, and there is no one type of experience that will be sought by search committees. You may not have substantial past activities. In this case, it will be a good idea to focus on future plans. As long as you are making an honest attempt to consider your role in meeting each institution's diversity goals, then you are on the right track. Think about your past experiences and future goals as they relate to these approaches:

- Service experience with under-represented groups such as outreach, tutoring, or other types of programs addressing topics relevant to groups such as women, minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities. This might include being involved in committee or group focused on diversity, equity, climate and/or inclusion
- Teaching, advising, or mentoring under-represented or under-served groups
- Teaching approaches that focus on different learning styles and that can accommodate different learning abilities.
- Being aware of challenges faced by historically underrepresented populations
- Community involvement beyond the university
- Research activities that specifically contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Future activities you might pursue in context of how they might fit into a research area, department, campus, or national context, listing any ongoing campus initiatives of particular relevance you have found from your research into the institution's diversity efforts.

Academic/Faculty Job Interviews

Interviews for academic jobs often follow the same structure for non-academic jobs, but there are certainly some unique aspects to the interviewing process. It is important to remember that different types of academic institutions will do things slightly differently. Liberal arts schools, community colleges, research-focused institutions will each be looking for different types of candidates, and the interviews will be designed to evaluate potential candidates on the key elements they are looking for (e.g., research potential, grant writing abilities, teaching competencies). The other important point to note is that applications for most academic jobs are part of a cycle. Applications are usually submitted up to a year ahead of time so that a decision can be made in time for the candidate to start at the beginning of the next academic year. Even if applications are submitted in the autumn, interviews may not begin until the spring semester.

Screening/1st round interviews:

There are commonly large numbers of applications for tenure-track jobs (it is not uncommon to see more than 200 applications for one assistant professor position in certain fields), and so a screening round of interviews is often used by some institutions, often by phone, over video, or at academic conferences. These interviews will be conducted by members of the search committee (or a subset of the search committee), and are usually fairly brief (30-60 minutes). It is usual for there to be multiple interviewers in a group setting for these interactions. Many of the questions will focus on whether the candidate can connect their academic experiences and knowledge to the unique aspects of the department or university where they would like to work. See the list of academic questions for some of the questions that might be asked at these 1st round interviews. The search committee will be trying to reduce a list of 10-20 candidates down to a shortlist of about 3 possibilities.

Campus interviews/2nd round:

Not every institution conducts screening interviews, and sometimes the campus visit is the first-round interview for candidates. While the on-site, campus interviews for small institutions might only last less than a day, larger institutions can hold two or even three-day interviews for some candidates. The search committee will invite their shortlisted candidates to visit the campus where they will get to meet with members of the search committee one-on-one (and in a group), as well as with senior administrators (e.g., deans, provosts), in a variety of different settings. There are many different components to a campus interview; not all of them will be part of every interview experience a candidate might have, but it is a good idea to be familiar with the format and purpose of these different components.

Final round interviews/follow-up campus visit:

In some cases, candidates are invited back to the campus for a final round of interviews. In this second campus interview, candidates commonly give a "chalk talk" (in the sciences), or further expand upon their job talk and future research plans and goals. Candidates may meet with some of the same people they interviewed with during the first campus visit, but there may also be other faculty or administrators present.

Elements of a campus interview

Pre-interview social gathering: This usually occurs the evening before the scheduled interview, and often involves members of the search committee in a more social setting (dinner, drinks, etc.). This is very much part of the interview process.

Meeting members of the search committee: It is common to meet with the department chair first, and then be taken to the offices of other members of the search committee for one-on-one meetings.

Job talk: At research institutions, there will usually be an hour set aside for candidates to give a presentation on their research (the past, present, and future of the research). The audience will usually contain members of the search committee, other faculty who are interested in your topic, faculty from other departments, and students. Giving a strong, confident job talk can make all the difference in how the search committee views a candidate's application.

Sample class teaching: At institutions where teaching is valued, it is also likely that candidates will teach a sample class. This can be on a subject of the candidate's choosing, or a topic chosen by the search committee (one that each shortlisted candidate will have to teach). The audience might actually be a class of students, or just the search committee (who should be treated as students for the purpose of the exercise).

Group interview: At some point in the day, candidates will meet with the whole search committee at one time.

Meeting with students: It is common for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet with students, often over lunch. This is an opportunity for the students to share their perspective on each candidate, and for the candidates to get a different perspective about the culture of the university and the students' thoughts about the department.

Meeting with administrators: Candidates will have the opportunity to talk with deans, provosts, and HR personnel at some point during the campus interview. These meetings can often be much less structured than other parts of the interview process, and can often seem like informal discussions. They are still part of the interview.

Social events: Lunch, dinner, and receptions that occur during a campus interview are important and unstructured parts of the interview process, and are often used to assess a candidate's "fit" in terms of how they might fit in with department and the faculty. These events should be treated as part of the interview.

Chalk talk: A chalk talk is normally given by scientists or engineers during the course of a campus visit and is less formal than a "job talk." It is usually held on the second day of the interview or during a follow-up interview. The chalk talk doesn't involve slides and is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate that they can think on their feet as they discuss the research they would do while working on their first grant. The talk is informal, and candidates may be interrupted by questions from members of the search committee and others present.

Sample interview questions - General

These questions have been shared by Penn alumni and former postdocs from academic interviews they have had

- 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?
- 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 do you fit into the school?
- How would you integrate our mission into your teaching/scholarship?
- Do you have questions about the tenure process?
- What do you think makes a good colleague?
- What would you like to know about us?
- Why do you want to work here?
- How do you envision your new lab at this school?
- What other schools have you applied to?
- If you get more than one job offer how will you decide?
- Who else is interviewing you?
- If we gave you an offer, how much time would you need?
- What are your plans for publishing?
- What course, not currently in our catalogue, would you like to develop?
- What textbook would you use in a particular course?
- Describe how you'd teach an introductory survey course in your discipline (or in an advanced seminar)?
- Describe your research. What are you currently working on? What is your five year plan?
- How will you seek funding to support your research?
- What are your plans for integrating students into your research?
- What classes have you taught?
- How well has your college/university prepared you for the field of teaching?
- How do you deal with an unmotivated student?
- How would you employ technology in the classroom?
- How well organized are you? Why is organization important for a teacher?
- What do you feel are the most important factors in classroom control?
- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- How would you instruct students of varying abilities?
- What are your plans for your continued professional growth?
- Describe your research.
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- What motivates you?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Sample interview questions - Teaching

These questions have been shared by Penn alumni and former postdocs from academic interviews they have had

- Tell us about your teaching style or philosophy.
- What's your approach to advising and mentoring?
- Tell us about a lesson in an introductory course that went well and why it went well.
- 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 do you feel about textbooks vs. lay publications vs. peer-reviewed publications?
- In what ways have you been involved in interdisciplinary education and how might you contribute to interdisciplinary education here?
- How do you define effective teaching?
- Which classes on our list are you willing to teach?
- What experience do you have in teaching diverse populations?
- How will you bring the insights of your research into the classroom?
- How important is it for you to be liked by your students?
- Have you had any experience with interactive on-line instruction?
- How do you integrate technology into your teaching and lab activities?
- What do you find most satisfying about teaching?
- What do you think is the optimal balance between teaching and research?
- What role can you play in developing/team-teaching interdisciplinary courses?
- How would you teach a survey/core course in your discipline?
- What parts of your research can you teach to undergraduates? What ideas or assumptions are likely to be challenging for them?
- How would you teach a classroom filled with students who have different levels of academic preparedness?
- Describe one of the most successful teaching activities you have conducted? What did you do? What was your objective? Why did you select the method you did? How did you know that it was successful?
- What professional development activity has had the greatest impact on your classroom instruction?
- What do you consider to be the most important aspects of working with adult students?
- What are your expectations teaching at a small institution versus a research I level institution?
- How would you assess the effectiveness of your teaching?

Sample interview questions - Research

These questions have been shared by Penn alumni and former postdocs from academic interviews they have had

- Tell us about your research.
- Tell me about your dissertation.
- Describe your dissertation to a lay person and convince them it's important.
- Will your dissertation be complete by the start date of this position?
- Tell us how you have/plan to involve undergraduates in your research.
- What resources and space will you need to conduct your proposed research here?
- Given that research with undergraduates is slower, how do you plan to make a scientific impact in your area of research?
- What is the relationship of your research to your teaching?
- What will be the next direction of your research?
- What will be the title/topic of your 1st research proposal and what kind of funding opportunities would you seek?
- What contribution has your research made to your field?
- How would your research be innovative compared to everyone else's in the field?
- What journals do you see yourself publishing in?
- What sort of grants are you planning to apply for? What specifically would you use that money for?
- What do you see as the major trends in your field for the next 10 years?
- What kind of scholarly activity would you pursue outside of the lab as an outreach to the community?
- How does your research inform your teaching?
- What resources will you need for your research? Where are you looking for funding?
- Do you plan to revise your dissertation for publication? What do you need to do to accomplish that?
- What other types of research/questions do you intend to pursue?
- Do you have a publisher lined up or in mind?
- How do you see your research complementing or adding to the research currently being done in our department?
- Are you engaged in collaborative work with colleagues from other institutions or is that something you're hoping to do at this institution?

Sample interview questions – Academic Service

These questions have been shared by Penn alumni and former postdocs from academic interviews they have had

- How will you contribute to the community and distinguish yourself as a teacher?
- Describe committee work you have directed.
- What skills/attributes would you be able to contribute to committee work?
- How are you currently involved or how would you like to be involved in service to the community, professional organizations, and the University?
- What kind of scholarly activity would you pursue outside of the lab as an outreach to the community?
- To what extent are you willing to participate in departmental committees and extracurricular events?
- At our institution, teaching is the first priority and the teaching load is significant. How will you survive/thrive in it?
- Describe some innovative approaches for increasing enrollment in our discipline.
- In what ways do you see yourself making professional contributions in the next five years?
- This is a research institution. What would make you a successful candidate for tenure?
- What can you contribute to our department?
- What experience have you had with diverse student populations?
- Why do you want to be a faculty member at our institution?
- Are you willing to be involved in committee work?
- Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our department?
- How can you contribute to the mission of our school?
- How do you view your role as a faculty advisor?
- What has been your experience with grant writing?
- What institutional issues particularly interest you?
- What interested you in our school?
- Why are you pursuing a career at a liberal arts college?

Negotiating for faculty jobs

If you've received an official offer letter from an institution, congratulations!

The time to negotiate an offer is after you've received a written offer. Many graduate students and postdocs often ask us if they should negotiate, and we believe that there are always opportunities to negotiate. You may want to negotiate because the start date is earlier than you anticipated, a salary offer is lower than what you expected, the start-up package is not sufficient for you to carry out your research, or the teaching load will make it difficult for you to publish your book, or any other reasons you may have.

Once you've decided that you'd like to negotiate with your potential employer, do your research if you haven't done so already. Research and understand your own needs and desires (for example, what's your financial "bottom line"? Will this job allow you to pursue your larger career goals? Will your family be willing to relocate?) as well as the institution's culture, context, and resources (for example, will making a request to teach fewer classes fit with the institution's mission?).

Next, prioritize the list of items you'd like to request and practice asking for those things out loud. You'll then want to have a phone call with your potential employer to negotiate because it's much easier to convey your enthusiasm for the job offer while making your requests in a polite conversation than it is to do in writing, where tone can easily be misread. In your discussion, be sure to speak with confidence, respect, and optimism. After your conversation, it is best to summarize your requests and major discussion points by email so that you and your potential department chair (or chair of the search committee) can have a written record of what was discussed.

What resources can you take advantage of as you prepare to negotiate your academic job offer? If you're evaluating faculty salaries, be sure to consult the AAUP Faculty Compensation Report and the Chronicle's Data on faculty salaries. In general, take advantage of the academic and professional network you've developed to ask faculty mentors, colleagues, alumni, and friends about their advice and ideas when it comes to negotiating for an academic position.

Come to Career Services to discuss any questions related to the process of negotiation. Many graduate students and postdocs have found it helpful to discuss specific questions like the following: What details can I even negotiate and how? How should I prioritize my requests? Do I need other offers in order to negotiate? How do I manage this process given other faculty searches I'm involved in or other competing offers I may receive? In many cases, academic institutions will expect that you will negotiate your offer for a tenure-track position, so chat with a Career Advisor before you begin this important process.

In all situations, it is important to negotiate your offer with the kind and type of institution in mind, including its resources, mission, and values. We can help you brainstorm and strategize your approach to negotiations so that the outcome of the process is a win-win situation for you and for your future institution.

