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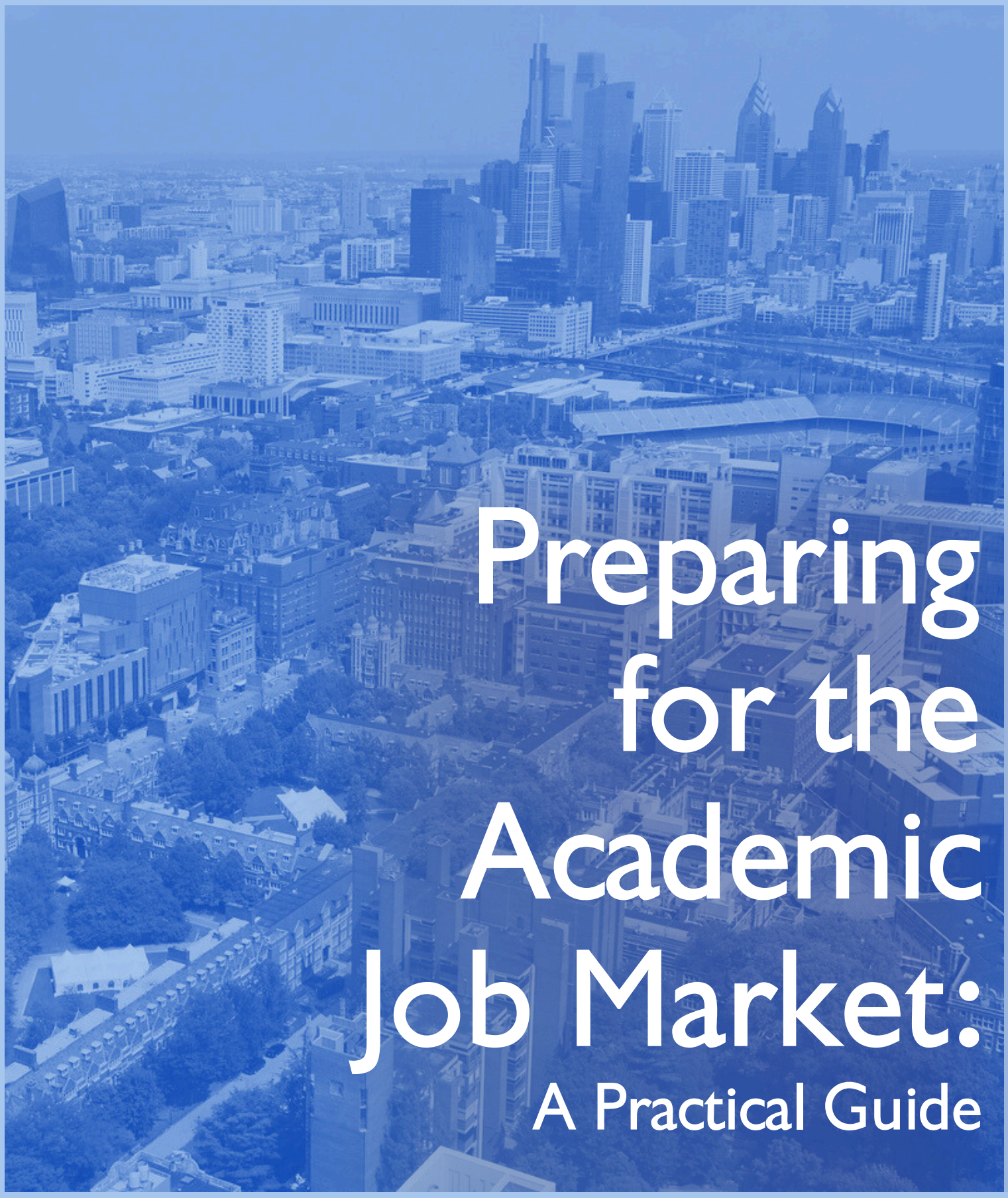

Preparing for the Academic Job Market:

A Practical Guide

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Applying for faculty jobs – starting the process

Many academic institutions begin the search for a tenure-track faculty member almost a full academic year before the anticipated start date of their new hire. Many faculty positions are posted in the summer, and they will continue to appear throughout the fall. In recent years, there has been a trend of positions being posted even earlier. 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) or alumni of your program to get their insights into when faculty roles are often posted in your field. Regardless of timing, having your materials as ready as possible in August is a good goal.

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. Regardless of the type of position to which you are applying, keeping track of where you apply, and when, is crucial. Click **here** for a downloadable job search template, and 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 often listed through disciplinary and professional associations, such as the **Modern Language Association**, **American Chemical Society**, **American Historical Society**, and **American Economic Association**. Be sure to consult with 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 **ChronicleVitae**, **HigherEdJobs**, **Inside Higher Ed**, **LinkedIn**, and the **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. Every academic institution will also post faculty jobs on their school website, and many allow you to set job alerts there as well.

Understanding and tailoring for different kinds of institutions

As you're searching 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 school? Who are the students that they serve? Do they have graduate students? Networking with alumni who work at institutions that interest you, or live in a city of interest, is also an excellent strategy to gain insight. Speak with a Career Advisor at Career Services to learn about strategies to research different colleges and universities as you tailor your applications for each one.

Application materials

As you begin to prepare your documents for your faculty applications, you will need to spend time considering the types of institutions and faculty roles to which you will be applying. While it would be helpful if each job ad asked for the same documents, there will be variations from school to school on what they are asking for and the lengths they specify for each document (if they share that information at all!). Being able to prioritize and adapt your documents for each application, and seeking ways to customize and tailor your documents, will be to your advantage.

CV

The CV is a complete summary of all 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? Do you have a track record of securing funding? Have you engaged in collaborative research or teaching?

Cover letter

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 future research plans? What kind of teaching experience do you have? How will you contribute to our department and institution? Why is this 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, and on what other documents are asked for.

Research statement

Some institutions will ask for a research statement, while others will ask for a statement of research plans. We 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 funding 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 three questions: 1) What is it about your research that you find interesting and that has motivated you to study it? 2) Why should others in your field find this interesting and see value in it? And 3) What are your short- and long-term plans for your research? How will it grow with you as a future faculty member?

Teaching philosophy

One to two pages long, teaching philosophies (also known as teaching statements) 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 shaping 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 experience, 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 also include materials that document your teaching, including syllabi that you've used in the past or that you plan to use in the future, sample assignments, tests or quizzes you've written, and/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 a brief description of how all the materials you've included fit together to demonstrate your teaching ability.

Recommendation letters

As part of your faculty application package, you will also need to submit between 3 to 5 reference letters from the 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. It is OK to have several faculty members lined up to write on your behalf, and then select those that you think would be the most effective for a particular institution. If you have questions about how to navigate this process, Career Services is happy to help you brainstorm ideas – just make an appointment via **Handshake**.

Other potential documents

As you peruse job ads of interest, you may potentially see requests for other types of documents. Some schools may ask for a writing sample or mentoring statement, and religious institutions may request a statement of faith. If you have questions about how to approach specific document requests, feel free to schedule an appointment with Career Services via **Handshake** to discuss.

Research statements

The research statement is a key component of a faculty job application, offering a clear overview of your scholarly work and, most importantly, future research plans. It should demonstrate the significance, originality, and feasibility of your research within your field. This section will guide you in crafting a compelling research statement that aligns with the expectations of academic hiring committees.

The primary goal of a research statement is to walk the search committee through the evolution of your research, highlight your research accomplishments, and 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, and a list of your papers, and it may provide a summary of what some of this research has entailed. However, there can be certain points of interest that a CV may not always address in 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 them?
- How can your research be applied?
- Why is your research important within your field?
- What direction will your research take you next, and what new questions do you have? Do you plan to turn your dissertation into a book? Do you plan to ask for specific funding?

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. Having a clear plan that takes you through to tenure is not a bad idea. 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. You will also want to show that what you plan to accomplish can happen at their institution. 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 STEM and the social sciences, but they may also be required for scholars in the humanities. Seek advice from current faculty and new hires about the conventions of your discipline if you are in doubt. Some institutions will provide page limits to the research statement/plans document. This can be as short as one page but is more commonly 2-3 pages.

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 be built 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 their students.

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. You may only be able to write a convincing future research question once you know where you will be applying, as you will need to tailor what you write for each institution. However, in most cases, the main elements of your future research will remain the same wherever you are applying.

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 read 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 or set of projects.

As you think about how you will present your future research plans, you want to make sure that they make sense within the context of the institution to which you are applying. You will not want to reference lab work that requires expensive pieces of equipment they do not have. If you are applying to a primarily undergraduate institution, you might mention how you could visualize undergraduates assisting in your work.

Another important consideration when writing about your research is realizing that you do not perform research in a vacuum—and research does not always go according to plan. When doing your research, you may have faced some serious challenges that require creative problem-solving or collaboration 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.

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 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, so 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 by 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 done. 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 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, art collections). 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 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 schedule an appointment with a career advisor via **Handshake** 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.

Additional resources on research statements

Check out these additional resources on the Career Services website to assist you in preparing your research statement:

Research statements for faculty job applications

How to write a research statement that demonstrates your scholarly potential (PhD Career Training Platform)

Communicating future research plans in your research statement (YouTube video)

Teaching philosophy

The primary 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 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, and how you have applied it in the classroom, 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 a teaching philosophy is to show search committees that you have a firm foundation you can build on 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 being taught). Search committees are looking for someone who will be able to teach existing curricula, develop new and interesting courses, and connect effectively with students (and other faculty) – so 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 interacting with both groups? What differences have you observed between these groups, and how have you adjusted your teaching approach accordingly? What about teaching students from diverse backgrounds or international students – what evidence can you provide within your philosophy that might show that you can 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 teaching documents

Developing and teaching your own class is not a 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. While many teaching philosophies 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 approaches you saw to be very effective at achieving teaching goals and be clear as to what those goals are. As stated above, do not be afraid to give specific illustrations of particular situations where you saw teaching to be truly impactful. These concrete examples will help your teaching philosophy stand out from the rest of the philosophies in the application pile.

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.

If you are interested in gaining additional teaching experiences while you are studying at Penn, then consider visiting the **Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Innovation**, which works with graduate students and postdocs to help them improve their teaching at Penn and prepare to become future faculty. 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, providing one-on-one tutoring, and 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 into more formal lecture-based situations.

Remember, your teaching philosophy is subject to change as you continue to have new and different teaching experiences. 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 teaching statement updated with new perspectives and illustrations.

Steps to writing teaching documents

Step 1: Think about your experiences as a student, and any experiences you have had as a teacher, and describe your teaching goals and ideal learning outcomes. As you write statements for specific schools, think about how you can tie in your own experience as an undergraduate or graduate student and how that could correlate with the schools to which you are applying. 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 describe your experiences. It is OK to talk about learning experiences or areas where you have improved (in other words, teaching strategies 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 improve.

Step 2: Ask junior 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 document 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 like 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 in 1-2 pages, remembering to make your philosophy rich with actual examples and illustrations of your teaching experiences and ideas. Then, schedule an appointment with a career advisor via **Handshake** to get feedback on your draft. You can also meet with advisors from the **Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Innovation** to have your documents reviewed or your teaching observed. Finally, you should try to get faculty in your department to review your philosophy if they are willing to do so. Faculty who have seen you teach, or who have read your student evaluations, are important resources for feedback (and can serve as references).

Additional resources on teaching philosophies

Check out these additional resources on the Career Services website to assist you in preparing your teaching philosophy:

Teaching philosophies for faculty job applications

How to write an effective teaching statement (PhD Career Training Platform)

6 tips for writing an effective teaching statement (American Chemical Society)

Supporting your teaching statement with concrete evidence (YouTube video)

AI – pros and cons

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be a highly effective and versatile tool when drafting application materials for faculty positions. As you navigate the complex process of preparing multiple documents that are tailored to a wide range of institutions and departmental expectations, AI can offer valuable support. Specifically, AI tools can help streamline the writing process by assisting with grammar, structure, and tone, and by helping you align your documents more closely with the language and requirements outlined in job descriptions.

However, while AI can be a helpful starting point or a means of refining your drafts, it should not be used to generate application materials from scratch. Doing so risks erasing the personal voice, academic identity, and motivations that are crucial in such documents and that search committees are actively seeking. Your unique experiences, research trajectory, and pedagogical values must come through clearly and authentically in your writing.

It's also important to exercise caution when inputting personal or sensitive information, particularly details about your research projects, teaching strategies, or unpublished work, into AI platforms. Many AI tools retain and learn from user inputs, and there is often little transparency about how that data is stored or used in future model training. To protect your intellectual property and maintain the integrity of your application materials, avoid sharing proprietary content or detailed personal experiences with AI tools. AI can be a valuable assistant in the faculty job application process, but it should be used thoughtfully and selectively.

Faculty job interviews

Interviews for academic jobs often follow the same structure as for non-academic jobs, but there are certainly some unique aspects to the interview process. It is important to remember that different types of academic institutions will do things slightly differently. Liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and research-focused institutions will each be looking for different types of candidates, and the interviews are designed to evaluate potential candidates on the key elements they are looking for (e.g., research potential, grant writing abilities, teaching competencies).

Keep in mind that the hiring process for academic jobs can be quite lengthy. Even if applications are submitted in the autumn, interviews may not begin until the spring semester.

Screening/first-round interviews:

There are often large numbers of applications for tenure-track jobs (it is not uncommon to see 200+ applications for one assistant professor position in certain fields), and so a screening interview round is usually the first step, typically held over video conference. You may occasionally find interviews being conducted at academic conferences, but this has become much less common since the pandemic. These first-round interviews will be conducted by members of the search committee (or a subset of the search committee) in a group setting and are usually brief (15-45 minutes).

If you have made it to this round – congratulations! It means that your materials have demonstrated that you meet their basic qualifications, and they would like to learn more about you. 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 later in this guide to get a sense of what might be asked at these first-round interviews. The search committee will be trying to reduce the list of 10-20 candidates down to 3-4 finalists.

Campus/second-round interviews:

A campus interview could last 1-3 days. The search committee will invite their shortlisted candidates to visit the campus, where they will meet with committee members in a variety of interview, social, and presentation settings, usually involving both one-on-one and group conversations. Candidates may meet with faculty, senior administrators (e.g., deans, provosts), and students. There are many different components to a campus interview; not all of them will be part of every interview experience, but it is a good idea to be familiar with the format and purpose of these different components.

Elements of a campus interview

Pre-interview social gathering: This usually occurs in 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.

Meetings with 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. Some of these interviews could also take place via video conference, depending on the availability of the interviewers.

Job talk: At research institutions, there will usually be an hour set aside for candidates to give a presentation on their research (past, present, and future). 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 that is tailored to the audience can make all the difference in how the search committee views a candidate's application

Teaching demonstration: At institutions where teaching is valued, it is also possible that candidates will teach a sample class. This can be 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 be an actual class of students, students who have been selected to participate in a sample class, 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 likely meet with the full search committee in a group setting.

Meetings with students: It is common for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet with students, often over lunch. This provides candidates with a different perspective on the culture of the university and the department. It also allows students to later share their impressions of each candidate, since they're the ones who will be taught and mentored by the new faculty member.

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

Social events: Lunch, dinner, and receptions that occur during a campus interview are important unstructured parts of the interview process, often used to assess a candidate's "fit" in terms of how they might get along with the 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 often held on the second day of the 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 school?
- Why are you pursuing a career at a teaching-focused institution/research-focused institution/community college/etc.?
- What are your expectations for teaching at a small institution versus an R1?
- 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 our 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 to decide?
- What are your plans for publishing?
- 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 university prepared you for the field of teaching?
- How do you deal with an unmotivated student?
- How organized are you? Why is organization important for a teacher/researcher/colleague?
- What are your plans for your continued professional growth?
- What is your greatest strength? Greatest 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.
- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- 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 is your experience teaching online?
- 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 are you willing to teach?
- 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 (versus an advanced seminar) in your discipline.
- 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 online 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 or team-teaching interdisciplinary courses?
- What parts of your research can you teach 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?
- What do you feel are the most important factors in classroom control?
- 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 of teaching at a small institution versus an R1?
- How would you assess the effectiveness of your teaching?
- At our institution, teaching is the priority, and the teaching load is significant. How will you survive/thrive in that environment?

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 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 will be the next direction(s) of your research?
- What will be the title/topic of your first research proposal, and what kind of funding opportunities will you seek?
- What contributions 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 kinds of scholarly activity would you pursue outside of the lab as outreach to the community?
- How does your research inform your teaching?
- Do you plan to revise your dissertation for publication? What do you need to do to accomplish that?
- Do you have a publisher lined up or in mind?
- What other types of research/questions do you intend to pursue?
- 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? Is that something you're hoping to do at this institution?
- How do you plan to recruit graduate students and postdocs to your lab? How many will you need?

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 broader campus community?
- Describe committee work you have directed.
- What skills/attributes would you be able to contribute to committee work?
- How are you currently involved in service to the community, professional organizations, and/or the University? How would you like to be involved in the future?

- To what extent are you willing to participate in departmental committees and extracurricular events?
- 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?
- What would make you a successful candidate for tenure?
- What can you contribute to our department beyond your research?
- What experience have you had with diverse student populations?
- 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?
- 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! Many graduate students and postdocs ask us if they should negotiate their offer, and we believe that there are always opportunities to negotiate. When an institution extends an offer, they are seeing the value you will bring to their department and their students, and you can negotiate because you bring with you the skills, knowledge, and experience that they are seeking. You may want to negotiate a change to the start date, a higher salary, a start-up package sufficient for you to carry out your research, a different teaching load, or different timing for a sabbatical.

The time to negotiate is after you've received a written offer. 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 (not an email); it's much easier to convey your enthusiasm for the job offer and politely frame your requests during a 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 Salary Data Library**. 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.

Schedule an **appointment** at Career Services to discuss any questions you may have about the negotiation process. Many graduate students and postdocs have found it helpful to talk through questions like the following: Which details can I negotiate, and how? How should I prioritize my requests? Do I need other offers 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 you to 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 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 your future institution. Check out Career Services' **Negotiation Guide for Graduate Students and Postdocs** for more information.

Career Services is here to help you!

Embarking on the faculty job search can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to navigate it alone! Career Services is here to support you at every stage, from refining your application materials to preparing for interviews and negotiating offers. We encourage you to start early, stay organized, and seek guidance throughout the process. With thoughtful preparation and support, you'll be well positioned to pursue your academic career goals.

Scan here for a digital version of this document with clickable links.
https://careerservices.upenn.edu/resources/guide-to-faculty-job-applications/

Career Services

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