Guidelines for Job Market Preparation

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It is crucial that you follow the guidelines described below. It is also your responsibility to make sure that you supply all documents as requested, attend all meetings as scheduled, and prepare interviews as recommended.

Universities post job openings on JOE at https://www.aeaweb.org/joe/. This is the main platform where universities post job openings. Another useful platform is https://econjobmarket.org/. Most jobs are posted in October, but some are already posted in September and some places wait until November. Deadlines for applications vary greatly and it is important that you check carefully when you should send your package. Note that the first deadlines may already be in October (business schools and public policy schools tend to have earlier deadlines sometimes). It is very unlikely that your application will be considered if it is late.

The Placement Committee provides guidance and the PhD Program Advisor helps with administrative components. However, key elements of your job market (letters, where to apply, etc.) must be discussed with your main advisor.

Timeline

By August 15th at the very latest:

- Your advisor should approve your decision to be on the job market this year. Have him/her send an email to the PhD Program Advisor. Students who are not cleared by their advisors will not be able to complete the process described below.
- All students who are on the job market and plan to apply to the academic market should schedule a 90-minute seminar in the regular fall seminar series related to their field. Alternatively, they can present their job market paper at a conference or a workshop. If your advisor has not recommended it to you, you should schedule a meeting with him/her and determine how you should plan to practice the seminar you will have to give (if you are invited for a fly-out in the spring).
- Once you have determined that you will go on the market, you must read John Cawley’s guide. This has almost all the information that you will need to know about how the job market works, with excellent advice throughout. Reading it early will help you know what to do at each step of the process and prepare beforehand.
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- **All reference letters, at least three**, must have already been requested by this date from your main advisor and two faculty who know your research and can comment on it. The three letter writers must have agreed to write those letters. Please have your letter writers send their letters directly to your PhD Program Advisor, if they do not want to send or upload them themselves. It is your responsibility to chase your letter writers down and to make sure that they send their letters on time.

**By October 1st at the very latest**: Set up your website. Contact the PhD Program Advisor to discuss making your website available on the departmental webpage. If you do not have a complete website, you will substantially decrease the odds of being interviewed. Incomplete or inaccurate sections in your webpage sends a negative signal about yourself. Google Sites (https://sites.google.com/) offers beautiful, free, webpage hosting so there is no excuse for having a poor website.

**By October 1st at the very latest**: Determine with your advisor which institutions you should apply to.

**By October 15th at the very latest**: Your package must be ready. It must be composed of:
- **Your job market paper**, which should be labeled as such on the title page. This is the most important part of your package. John Cochrane has a helpful guide on how to structure your paper.
  - If you have difficulty communicating in written English, you should ask a native English speaker to edit it for grammar or spelling mistakes or consider hiring a professional copy editor.
- **Other working papers** (do not include preliminary notes – you should include only papers that are polished enough to be posted online as working papers)
- **Your CV**. A template will be given to you and you should follow it closely. Include only the most relevant professional information; do not adjust margins or character sizes to get more space. CVs are the most visible documents and they will be browsed first by your potential employers.
- **Teaching evaluations and other documents** requested by the institution you are applying to.

Most universities require that you submit your package online. Make sure that you submit it before the deadline.

Note: Letters of recommendation will be sent directly by faculty. Arrange with the PhD Program Advisor to determine how to input the information about your letter writers and the contact details of the person who will handle letters’ submissions.

**November**: Prepare for interviews and ask your advisor to assist you in that task. An additional document has been sent out by the Placement Committee with details about the interview and examples of questions. Refer to it for your preparation.
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- Prepare a 10-minute presentation of your job market paper. Practice informally over and over with your advisor, other faculty in your committee, and other students. When you are on the job market, you must be able to do this fluently and confidently without looking at notes. You should be practicing doing this without notes.
- Determine which classes at all levels (BA, MS, PhD) you would be willing to teach as an Assistant Professor and design syllabi to help you become comfortable with teaching material and anticipate questions during the interview.
- Think about your long-term career goals.
- Determine the two institutions to whom you would like to send a “signal” of your interest through the AEA system (see link for explanation). These signals should be sent to institutions that you and your advisor think would be a good match for you, or that might have thought that you would not be interested in them.

End of November/ Early December: A practice interview will be scheduled with a group of faculty. No make-up session will be scheduled if you fail to show up. This is a rehearsal, so you should wear the same clothes that you would to your interviews and behave as you would in front of interviewers.

An interview consists of (1) the short presentation of your job market paper (10 minutes) and (2) questions and answers about your research, potential teaching and other matters related to your application. We will expect you to have trained as suggested above. In particular, you should come very prepared to present your job market paper in a short amount of time and answer questions that the interviewers may have.

You will be debriefed at the end of the interview about the strengths and weaknesses of your talk and your answers to the questions.

We strongly encourage you to request your advisor to attend this session, as well as scheduling a separate meeting with him/her afterwards to discuss your performance.

We encourage all students who are on the job market this year as well as students who plan to be on the market next year to attend all interviews.

December: Universities that are interested by your application will contact you directly to set up a meeting at the ASSA meeting in January. Some European universities schedule their job market interviews at European meetings taking place before the winter break. Most notable is the “European Job Market”.

Students applying to jobs in Europe might be asked to be interviewed at one of these meetings.

January: ASSA Annual Meeting
After the meetings, universities that are still interested in your application will contact you for a fly-out and you will be asked to make a seminar presentation of your job market paper. Fly-outs start in January and continue until the market clears. You may be called as early as a few days after the meetings or as late as March.

In addition to the Cawley guide mentioned earlier, there are many other good sources of advice on the job market online. A few particularly good ones are:
- Adam Guren at Boston University -
- UChicago job market advice

**Overview of Academic Job Interviews**

An interview consists of (Part 1) the short presentation of your job market paper (about 10 minutes) and (Part 2) questions and answers about your research, potential teaching and other matters related to your application.

**Part 1: Job market paper**
- 2-minute presentation of your job market paper: state the main contributions of your paper. This is the introduction of your talk, when you should get the attention of the committee.
- 8-10-minute presentation of your paper in more details.
  - This section should not be too technical. It should explain why you claim that the contributions are in fact contributions.
  - Be logical in your arguments.
  - Assume that the committee does not know about your research area. Do not use much jargon, and if needed, explain what you refer to.
  - Be prepared to answer questions and be concise in your answers. A question that is not properly addressed decreases dramatically your chances.
- Note: In some cases, the interview panel will have you talk about your job market paper for as much as 20 minutes, or even for the entire time of the interview. We recommend that you also prepare a “third layer” of your speech where you give additional details about your job market paper.
- Justin Wolfers has some very good 2-3-minute videos that are good examples of how to “pitch” a paper in a short period of time. These can be used as examples to come up with the 2-minute intro to your job market interview.
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKxHjqj8uRo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKxHjqj8uRo)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77zksx44F8OM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77zksx44F8OM)

**Part 2: Q and A**
- Teaching: be prepared to provide some details about what you could teach at all levels that apply in the institution.
  - Have references, ideas of topics to put in a syllabus.
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- Be broad but credible (do not offer to teach macro if your field is applied micro)
- Research agenda: be prepared to explain how you see yourself in the future. You can give examples taken from your current work in progress and ideas. Make sure this sounds a long-term research agenda, not a six-month extension of your job market paper.
- Personal questions: the committee will avoid asking direct questions, but you can give them some information that you want them to have (e.g. if this is a place you are very likely to accept because of a personal interest or locational preference.).
- A list of questions that you might get include the following. You should prepare short answers to these questions, so you are prepared if you do get them:
  - What is your research agenda for the next 5 years? What are the next 3 papers you plan to write?
  - How would you teach X to an undergraduate class?
  - Why did you apply here/why are you interested in working here?
  - Why is it Economics/why is this an interesting question/why should we care about your results?
  - How did you get the idea for this paper? [This question is asking whether your advisor gave you the idea. DO NOT SAY THAT YOUR ADVISOR GAVE YOU THE IDEA]
  - Why didn’t anybody do this before?
  - What journal do you see yourself submitting this paper to? What journals do you see yourself publishing in?
  - When will you finish your dissertation?
  - Tell me about a project you are working on that is not on your CV.
  - If you were the referee of your own paper, what would you say?
  - What courses would you like to teach?
  - What courses can you teach (undergrad, masters and PhD)?
  - What’s your teaching philosophy?
- Questions to the committee: you will be asked to ask questions.
  - Do not ask the wrong question (i.e. do not ask about salary, research money, teaching load. You can ask those at the offer stage, if you get an offer)!
  - You can show interest (Do you share seminars with other departments? How big is your PhD program?). Pick questions such that answers are not trivially found on the web. You are supposed to have visited the webpage of the department. Ideally, show some familiarity with their department from your research on their webpage.
  - It is OK (and safe) to say that at this stage you do not have any specific question to ask. If you have an interview with a department in the top 30, the correct answer is to say that you do not at this point in time but would love to be at institution X and definitely will have more if invited to a campus visit. You do not need to signal interest – they already know you are interested!
A key part of the interview is how you present yourself and your research. If you are inarticulate and have trouble answering their questions, they will not offer you a fly-out, no matter how good your research is.

- For your 30 second, 2-minute, 5-minute, and 10-minute speech, you should write out a draft of what you would like to say in it. Practice with classmates and revise until you are happy with it.
- Once you have a good draft, you should practice saying it in a fluent, interesting fashion, but without it looking like you have it memorized.
- Prepare answers to questions that you are likely to get in the interview. Again, it can be helpful to write your answers and then practice giving them.
- If you struggle to communicate in spoken English, practicing is incredibly important. In particular, practice answering questions and think about the types of questions that you are likely to get. This is especially important at teaching universities and business schools, which place a premium on good communication skills.
- Try to think of all the questions that someone could ask you about your paper (assumptions, methods, proof, related literature, etc.). If you cannot come up with more than 15, you are not thinking hard enough. Think about how you would answer each of these. The set of challenging questions you could be asked is finite, and after consulting with a few people, you will find that the same questions come up repeatedly. Come up with intelligent, short answers that are well organized. You can even write these up beforehand and practice. Answering questions well is key. If it was not, we would hire based only on the job market paper.