

Academic Job Application Checklist

Adapted from article by Mary Corbin Sies, PhD
University of Maryland, College Park

The following checklist was created to summarize steps in the generic academic job application process for entry level candidates from start to finish. Applying for academic jobs requires a lot of preparation time. It is especially difficult to prepare materials for applications and interviews when one is struggling to meet deadlines for completing a dissertation. This checklist is intended to give you a sense, at a glance, of everything you MIGHT be asked to do or to provide so that you can manage your time as well as possible.

CHECKLIST FOR JOB APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Arrange for letters of recommendation. If appropriate for your discipline, activate a placement file with your graduate career office (common for candidates in the humanities, social and political sciences or those seeking community college teaching positions). Begin this process in August. Your file contains letters of recommendation that are sent out 'on demand'. Complete your file in advance of the first job deadlines so that you are not compelled to do a fast or sloppy job of it. Request that the dossier be sent to search committees well in advance of deadlines. Some deadlines may be as early as 9/30 and some placement offices are slow to send out. It is best to obtain updated letters of recommendation each year.
2. Begin checking job ads from September on. Regularly check these sources as appropriate for your particular field of study:
 - * Chronicle of Higher Education
 - * the appropriate job bulletin/journals for your field
 - * don't neglect online sources for faster notice of new postings.
3. Keep your advisor(s) apprised of which jobs you're applying for--update their list as needed-- in case they know someone in the departments to which you're applying or get phone calls from the search committees.
4. Do your homework: Research specific jobs on the internet or in the college catalog collection and through your gossip networks. Display this knowledge in your application materials.
5. Send out applications--being careful to meet the deadlines. Send what the search committee asks for; in other words, follow instructions explicitly. Usually they will ask for standard items: cover letter, CV, letters of recommendation (at least 3), dissertation abstract or research summary. Keep the summary short. If the search committee wants a full writing sample, they'll ask for it. Sending tons of paper before it's requested may irritate some members of the committee. Many colleges or universities will require an original transcript sent directly from your university.
6. Set up a system of information control so you can keep track of your progress for each job.
7. Once the initial screening begins, you may be asked for additional materials. Send supporting documentation as requested. This stage of the search usually begins in November and continues through late January or a bit later. These materials may include
 - * course syllabi or proposals
 - * course evaluations
 - * reprints of articles
 - * dissertation abstract
 - * statement of teaching philosophy
 - * statement of research goals: past, present and future
8. Plan to attend the major conventions in your field. If you are really serious about getting a job, you need to attend these annual meetings to engage in the networking, scholarly exchange, and schmoozing of publishers' representatives that is necessary for career advancement.

9. Prepare for convention interviews. Undertake additional research on the department, including research and teaching interests of faculty members. Prepare good raps on your dissertation research, future research plans, how you'd teach courses you know they need taught, and what else you'd like to teach. Have a good set of questions to ask them that demonstrates that you've done your homework about their department, institution, and location. **IMPORTANT:** If you are interviewing in the dreaded "job pit" at one of the big annual meetings, be sure to familiarize yourself with that scene before you interview. There's nothing quite like the contagious panic and nervousness that pervades a gigantic room with 50 tables and 50 simultaneous interviews going on and no privacy.

10. Prepare for campus interviews. These "flybacks" may occur as early as December but usually take place between January and March. Have a 45 min. presentation on your research ready to go. Rehearse it.

11. Wait to hear the search results. Search committees follow their own timelines in these matters. You may receive an offer within a day or two of your campus visit or 4-6 weeks later. You may receive a rejection call or letter within a week of your visit, several weeks later, or never.

Some additional advice on managing your time in the job application process:

- * Be generous in calculating the amount of time you need to manage this process well.
- * Know what you have to do and prepare in advance. It is terribly difficult to invent a syllabus for a new course or write an impressive job talk/seminar when your interview is a week away.
- * Keep good records so you know where you stand with each position.
- * Keep in touch with your gossip network and work it for all it's worth.
- * (I'm sorry to say this, but) Plan to lose three months on your dissertation: Nov. through Jan or whenever the interviewing ends.

What should you include on your CV? The most important points to summarize quickly are:

- * degrees and institutions granting them
- * research and teaching fields
- * publications
- * teaching experience and list of courses you've taught
- * academic awards and grants
- * references with phone numbers and full addresses including email

Other items to consider including:

- * evidence of additional talents as appropriate for the job
- * conference papers
- * book reviews
- * service or administrative experience
- * professional memberships and offices held

What not to include:

- * business experience unless it relates directly to academe or to the specific qualities asked for in the position announcement
- * detailed personal information

IMPORTANT: Use your word processor to tailor the CV to the specific job.

What to put in a cover letter:

- * mention where you saw the job posted
- * your basic fields (tailor appropriately)
- * a summary of your past research
- * a summary of your future research
- * teaching experience and interests
- * what you can do for this particular department

IMPORTANT: Be enthusiastic. The purpose of the cover letter and application is to obtain an interview. So act excited about the position and ASK for an interview. Indicate whether you'll be attending the usual conventions.

ALSO IMPORTANT: You should emphasize certain parts of your credentials and talents for certain jobs. Graduate degree-granting institutions will be more interested in research than teaching. Most other institutions will be primarily interested in your teaching experience and approaches. Good luck!