

PREPARING TO GO ON THE ACADEMIC JOB MARKET

Although it may seem as though going on the market means putting some letters in the mail and returning to your dissertation, something you might 'try out' just to see what happens, it is in fact a major time commitment at any level. Think of it as another project as demanding and time-consuming as a full-time job. If you are at all unsure whether to go on the market this year, the following points might help you decide:

1. Wait to apply until the dissertation is mostly complete (you will want to have at least TWO strong writing pieces to go on the market: one to submit as a writing sample and one to present for a job talk)
2. Until you have submitted your work for consideration at an important journal
3. Until you have created a track record of independent funding by applying for grants, scholarships and fellowships.
4. Whatever you decide, it can be valuable to attend Humanities job talks (Winter quarter) so you can learn more about this process.

1. TIMELINE

If you are confident about applying this year, consider creating a timeline for yourself, with the goal of completing the dossier by summer's end. You might also want to ask your adviser if he/she is available in the latter part of the summer to look over your dossier and provide feedback.

Summer: Complete full draft of dossier; Notify Letter Writers; Provide Letter Writers with Dossier (late August)

Fall: Application period is typically from October-November (but can begin as early as Sept and end as late as Christmas)

Winter: Campus Visits occur January-March

2. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Choose the three professors who can write the strongest letters of recommendation for you; notify them by mid-summer you will be applying for jobs.
- Choose a fourth letter writer who may not be on your committee but who you have TA'ed for, or who can speak substantively to your teaching.

- Provide your letter writers with CV, Cover Letter, Précis, and Writing Sample at least TWO MONTHS before letters are due.
- Ask individual references to highlight certain aspects about you.
- Use the CDC's Interfolio electronic storage service for your letters of recommendation.
 - You can register for a free one-year Interfolio dossier account by entering in a Special Offer Code on Interfolio's website(www.interfolio.com) under the "Sign Up" tab. To receive this Special Offer Code, call the Career Development Center at (650) 725-1789 and ask to speak with Dietra Woods.

3. DOSSIER

For assistance writing these documents, look to the CDC's Career Guide as well as sample documents from past successful graduate students.

To keep in mind. Your dossier is "precious real estate;" in this sense, avoid repeating descriptions of your work across documents. You might think of your dossier as including three –different- pitches. In the CV you provide the elevator pitch. In the Cover Letter you are speaking to non-experts about the significance of your project. In the Research Statement you are providing a theoretical context for your work.

Here are a few key tips as well:

1. Curriculum Vita
 - Should reflect the three areas of experience and potential the search committee is looking for: (1) scholarship (2) teaching (3) service. You may want to consider tailoring it to reflect teaching first if you're applying to a teaching university, or publications and presentations first if you're applying to a research institution.
 - Use your formatting to create a document whose content is clear and easy to read.

2. Two Cover Letters. 1 for Research Institution and 1 for Teaching Institution
 - See examples attached
 - Whether you are applying for a teaching or a research institution, you will want to show an interdependence between your teaching and your research. This distinguishes a good letter from a great letter.
 - There is a standard structure to the cover letter that you will want to follow:
 - One parag stating the position you're applying for and a general description of your professional status
 - Two paragraphs on your research
 - One paragraph on your teaching
 - One paragraph of service

- If you are applying to a teaching institution, put your teaching parag. before research.
 - Style: The writing in the cover letter should differ from your writing in the dissertation. It's important that readers aren't struggling to decipher your prose.

- 3. Dissertation Précis. Some schools will ask for this in place of a research statement; otherwise they will ask for both the précis and a broader research statement.
 - The Hume Writing Center offers a workshop every quarter on writing the RS.
 - See also attached suggestions from Duke University's website.
 - The Précis involves a description of the dissertation (chapter descriptions included)
 - The Research statement will likely include both a description of your dissertation and ideas for new research (you can use this section to show how you match the specific job description)
 - Style: In the Précis/RS, you want to write with confidence and with the poise of retrospection. The committee wants to see whether you are able to project yourself into the next step of academia (post-dissertation): Are you able to view your dissertation from a larger perspective? Can you reflect on it, as a complete narrative?

- 4. Teaching Statement/Philosophy
 - Short: no longer than 1 pg
 - Evidence based
 - Clearly structured: Deeply held belief → teaching strategies that manifest this belief/good → examples from specific classes → evidence that the strategies were effective → conclusion
 - Distinctive and memorable: avoid saccharine, hackneyed or obvious phrases; think about this writing as a profoundly original endeavor
 - Appropriately tailored: Research instit- lectures, Teaching instit.- seminars.
 - Confident: (avoid: 'I was honored to have the opportunity; I was fortunate to be selected; I am always striving to improve,' etc)
 - Factual, not emotional lang: (avoid 'I would be thrilled to; It would be a great pleasure to' etc.)
 - Consistent with your scholarly persona: link your research and teaching into a consistent whole: i.e. "The same commitment to xx that propels my research also inspires my teaching."
 - Wrapped up with a conclusion.

5. Writing Sample

- Journal article if possible
- Polished dissertation chapter (ideally under review)
- Length matters but not necessary to spend time trimming 5-10 extra pages if it goes over the asking
- Subject must match job
- NOTE: If you are asked to give a job talk, you will need to speak on new work that doesn't include the writing sample.

6. Teaching Materials

Syllabi

Teaching Evaluations

OTHER RESOURCES

JOB LISTS

Job Lists usually come out in late August, early September. The first deadlines can be in October and usually end mid-December, though additional ads will often come out after this.

- Chronicle of Higher Education
- Higher Education Jobs
- Association of Art Historians (UK)

WEBSITES

Several websites are dedicated to assisting graduate students with guidelines and advice. Here are a few that might be helpful.

- Stanford University's "Career Resource Center"
- Brown University's "General Resources for the Academic Job Market"
- The Professor Is In. Concrete advice on the job process

NOTE on the difference between TEACHING vs RESEARCH Institutions

While many colleges and universities do not identify as research institutions, research is an increasingly central component of professorships. For this reason you will want to forefront research in most applications. Here are some exceptions:

- A community college
- Jobs seeking Masters level hires
- A temporary replacement hire at a teaching focused institution
- An ongoing instructor position at any institution, as long as it carries no research expectation whatsoever; this will be clear from the ad, which will make no reference to research in any way.

- Tenure track positions at teaching colleges and liberal arts colleges that are low-ranked; regional; possibly religiously-affiliated. The well known Selective Liberal Arts Consortiums [Williams, Amherst, Wellesley, Davidson, Smith, Grinnell, etc] should get research-focused not teaching-focused, documents.

WRITING THE DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Like the letter of application, you should strictly observe the conventions on the length and formatting of the dissertation abstract. The finished document should be two pages, single-spaced, in normal (12 point) font, with standard margins. You should avoid going over two pages (even if it's just by a line or two). Conversely, it is not to your advantage to shorten it further: when you're limited to two pages, it doesn't look good if it appears that you don't have sufficient material to fill them.

The initial one or two paragraphs of the abstract (approximately half a page):

should offer an overview of the project: its issues and methods, other relevant work engaged, stakes and contexts. While you might want to repeat a key sentence or formulation that appears in your letter of application, the opening to the abstract should not simply reproduce the paragraph on the dissertation included in your letter. Think of these opening paragraphs instead as an opportunity to flesh out and supplement what you say in the letter. For example, you might want to foreground a different strand of your argument (something that complements without simply repeating what was headlined in the letter). This opening is also an opportunity to situate your project more fully in relation to relevant scholarship in your field(s). Where the description in your letter most likely had to sound a single note (as in, my dissertation takes up X), here you have the relative luxury of space to detail (the interrelation between) a set of concerns (as in, my dissertation takes up X as it illuminates Y in the context of Z). You might want to conclude these introductory paragraphs by discussing your aspirations for the project– what you aim to achieve; how you hope your intervention will advance this or that scholarly conversation.

The body of the abstract should consist of a detailed chapter outline,

in which you explain the main argument (or preoccupation) of individual chapters, specific materials engaged, rationale for that selection, and analytical yield. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the design of the project and, ideally, to show how individual chapters comprise a series of discrete discussions or investigations that cumulatively amount to more than the sum of their parts. This is also your opportunity

to foreground your innovation in the choice or juxtaposition of texts, or perhaps original archival research accomplished.

A few cautions: If you choose to enter the job market before finishing and defending the dissertation, you should be sure that individual chapter descriptions are nevertheless complete and persuasive.

You should be able to generate a solid and compelling account even of a chapter you may not yet have composed, or finished composing. (If you can't generate a coherent and detailed description of all your chapters, completed and in progress, it is definitely too early to apply.) Think of the dissertation abstract as an occasion to map out both the broad contours of your dissertation (the overarching concerns; the kind of intervention you seek to make; the readers you aim to hail) and the specific pathways through which you pursue your inquiry. Search committees will notice if portions of the map are missing or vague. Conversely, a finely crafted, readable map will help to persuade them that you can be finished and defended before the start of the next academic year.

(Check out Duke University's "Preparing the Dissertation Abstract")