ACADEMIC INTERVIEWS

EXPANDING HORIZONS, October 2014
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BEGIN EARLY

- participate on hiring committees in your own unit
- network at conferences and by email so that your research becomes familiar to more scholars
- become accustomed to connecting your particular research to the larger questions or problems in your field
- practice talking about your research to academic and non academic audiences (3MT)
- extra curricular involvement - teaching and careers training
it may seem basic but ....

• Eye contact/ Handshake/ Smile
• Luggage/coats/boots
• Check/clean teeth
• Cold hands/Sweaty hands
• Watch rings/death grip
Anatomy of an academic interview

• Car/hallway/lunch/lab chit-chat
• Interviews with departmental colleagues
• Interviews with administrators
• Interviews with student reps
• The “Talk”
• Wining and Dining
• Travel, Hotels and other logistics

KNOW THE DEPARTMENT!
chit-chat tips

- Focus on the other person
  - (look & listen)
  - “What has your work involved here at ....?”
  - “What do you like best about living in...?”
Preparing for the interview

- DO RESEARCH: faculty profiles, undergraduate and graduate programs, the university and town/city - find out who you will meet within/outside department

- Prepare material: course syllabus, ‘job talk’, sample lecture. Ask questions if requirements not transparent.

- Practise ‘job talk’ - Ask your program for a mock interview (phone, skype or in person).

- Prepare a 5 year plan for the position
what to bring

- slides/materials (with you, not in suitcase, multiple formats)
- papers, teaching dossier, thesis/publications
- water, kleenex, business cards
The Presentation

- clarify requirements and expectations before your visit
- explain your plan for the presentation, i.e. the different parts of your talk - provide signposts throughout the talk “I will now turn to ...”, “to sum up this part of the talk, ...”
- highlight a few major points/arguments (not your whole thesis!)
- plan to take slightly less time than allotted
be energetic, confident and engaging - know the first few pages of your talk by memory but don’t sound rehearsed

aim to speak plainly, avoiding jargon and technical language

test of communication abilities - teaching

address the larger significance of your work and its implication for researchers in cognate fields
Q and A

- anticipate and practise responses to questions
- ask for clarification of question if needed
- be open about what you don’t know instead of ‘faking’ an answer - talk about the problem and how to explore it
- demonstrate a lively engagement, well-read and versatile, and ready to ask questions
Interview audiences 1/2

**With faculty**

- How will you add to what we’re already doing?
- What interesting work are you doing?
- How will you help us with our teaching?
- Why do you want to be part of our community (institutional and wider)?
- How will you help us expand/continue what we’re doing?
- Will you be willing to help with administrative duties?
Interview audiences 2/2

• ?

With administrators

• What do your funding prospects look like?

• What sort of resources/lab space will you need to get up and running?

• What kind of profile do you bring/will you bring eventually to our institution?

With students/grad students

• What can I learn from you?

• What’s your teaching style?

• Do you bring new perspectives that seem appealing and exciting?

• Are you interested in my research?
QUESTIONS - RESEARCH

• What are your publication plans? Are you currently working on any publications?

  • How has your research contributed to your teaching?

  • What, if anything, would you modify now in your dissertation and/or research project?

  • What is the unique contribution of your research to the field?

  • Are you working on any grant proposals at the moment?

  • What would you describe as your most important academic accomplishment?

  • What trends do you see for the discipline in the next few years?
Questions - Teaching

- How has your research contributed to your teaching?
- What are you looking for in an academic appointment?
- What would you put on a reading list for an introductory course/advanced undergraduate course/graduate seminar in our field?
- What do you think your particular contribution would be to our department?
- Are there any particular courses in our departmental catalogue that you would be interested or well-qualified to teach?
- What do you consider to be success in the classroom?
- How would you describe your pedagogical style?
- What makes a good dissertation supervisor?
QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK

- What kinds of undergraduate and graduate students do you attract? Could you tell me more about the students?

- What sorts of programs does the university have for integrating new faculty?

- What kinds of internal grants, travel or set-up funds are typically available to new hires?

- What's your policy on teaching loads and teaching relief for new faculty? Are TAs available?

- Can you outline for me your process for tenure review? For other academic promotions?

- What are the norms for administrative and committee service for new faculty?

- How would you describe the long-term plan of this department/faculty/institution?
Questions you don’t want to be .....asked .

- What question do you really NOT want to be asked?
  - Impertinent vs illegal
SKYPE interviews

- importance of background (uncluttered professional, no light directly behind you, avoid white wall, ensure quiet)

- look at the camera to establish eye contact - sit obliquely and at some distance, practise camera angle

- dress professionally: avoid white shirt or bold patterns

- strive to be animated, engaged and engaging (be aware that this is harder via SKYPE)

- PRACTISE - to test lighting, position, background
Finishing with finesse

- Leave a lasting impression
- Thank you email and cards
- provide further materials promptly if requested
After this workshop

- review your cover letter and cv
- arrange a consultation with Career Services (specify that you are a graduate student so that you are slotted in the peer tutor undergraduate program)
- request a mock interview with your supervisor or graduate coordinator/chair
- use resources in Career Services or on the web