

## Academic Job Interview Preparation

The time and effort you spent preparing your application materials was good practice for the questions you will be asked during the interview. During the interview, be prepared to:

- Discuss your dissertation research and future research interests
- Discuss your approach to teaching and ideas for new courses
- Convey interest and enthusiasm for the institution and the position
- Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses in teaching and research
- Demonstrate adaptability, openness and administrative skills

### Potential Interview Questions

- Research
- Teaching
- Fit

#### Research

Tell me about your research.

What's important about your research?

How does your work contribute to the field?

Where will your research take you next? What are you working on next? or, What is your research agenda? or, Walk us through the next five years in your research.

What kind of [support/start-up/lab space/equipment] will you need for your research?

How will you fund your research program?

How will you involve students in your research?

What is your approach to supervising [undergraduate/Masters/Ph.D.] student researchers?

How would you go about recruiting talented students to [the major/your research program]?

How do you define X hotly contested term in your field? (e.g., "digital humanities," "new media," etc.)

How will you bring your research into your teaching?

Tell us about your grant experience; or, How will you bring your grant experience to bear at our school?

#### Teaching

What courses would you like to teach [in addition to the one or two specialty courses specified in our job advertisement]?

How would you teach [name of a course]? What approach would you take?

How would you deal with the challenge of [a large lecture class, teaching non-science majors, teaching a mix of science and non-science majors, students with poor writing/math skills, limited resources]?

How would you teach an introductory course in your field?

How do you get students excited about learning \_\_\_\_\_? (18th-century literature, for example, or composition, or linguistic semantics, etc.?)

How would you teach a survey course that also includes the century before or after the one you work in? (for literature applicants)

How would you teach a senior seminar/capstone in the major?

How would you teach the introduction to the major?

What courses do we offer that most interest you?

How would you teach X kind of student (continuing learners, first-generation college students, speakers of languages other than English, engineering/computer science/etc. students, differently abled students, etc.)?

We have a 4-4 teaching load with one possible course release a year: how will you adjust to this?

If you could teach anything you wanted, what would it be?

What courses do you not see in our curriculum that you would be interested in adding?

What online teaching experience have you had?

Do you use electronic resources or tools in your teaching and, if so, how?

How do you implement your teaching philosophy in X kind of class?

#### Fit

What attracted you to this particular job advertisement?

Where would you like to be five years from now?

How do you feel about living in [a big city/a small town/the middle of nowhere/the opposite side of the country from where you've been living]?

How do you see yourself fitting into a department such as ours?

How do you see yourself fitting into our institution? Variations:

- At a liberal arts school: how will you contribute to our liberal arts mission?
- At a church-affiliated school: how will you contribute to our [name of religion] tradition?
- At a women's college or historically black institution: how do you feel about teaching at a historically women's/historically black institution?
- At a public university: how do you feel about teaching at a public university?
- At a community college: what do you see as the role of community colleges in today's changing educational landscape?
- At many different kinds of schools: how will you make your classes accessible to students from a broad (racially, economically, academically) spectrum of backgrounds?

We have a fairly heavy teaching load here. How will you make time for research, on top of all of your other responsibilities?

#### Miscellaneous

What do you think "service" means or entails?

What has been your most fulfilling service role?

What leadership role would you take on in our department?

How would you recruit students to X new program?

Are you interested in administering X new program?

What do you know about our university?

Why do you think you would be a good fit in our department?

Have you heard about our program/certificate/center on \_\_\_\_\_? Do you see yourself contributing to that?

It is wise to be prepared to ask some questions yourself. It shows that you have done some research about the institution, the department, and the position, and it demonstrates that you are interested enough to want to know more. Here are some questions appropriate to each of the people (or groups of people) you are likely to talk to. There is some overlap of questions, as more than one person may be able to answer a particular question. In some instances, it's helpful to see whether you get the same answer to those questions from different people.

#### To the department chairperson

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the department? the institution?

Is the administration supportive of the department and its program? How does that support manifest itself?

What are the immediate needs of the geology program? How do you see me fitting into those needs?

Where do you see this department, five years from now?

What are the relationships like among the various departments in the college/university?

How are departmental decisions that affect the faculty made?

What behaviors are valued in this department?

What are the procedures for promotion and tenure?

How many faculty in the department have been denied tenure in the past ten years, and what were the reasons?

What is the salary range for this position?

Are salary raises computed on a percentage basis or a sum increase? What has been the past "track record" for raises?

What kinds of monies are available to cover professional convention expenses?

What other resources are available, such as research assistants, teaching assistants, computer services, research space, and secretarial assistance?

How do you handle transportation for field trips? How does that work?

How would you characterize the students here, both geology majors and the general student population?

#### To the college dean

How do you perceive the department in relationship to other departments in the college/university?

How do you perceive the college in relationship to other colleges in the university?

Five years from now, where would you like to see the college? the department?

How is the economy affecting the financial budget for the university? the college? the department?

What are the strongest departments on campus? the "up and coming" departments? What do they do particularly well?

At a publicly-funded institution: What is the legislative atmosphere in the state regarding funding for higher education? How does this state compare with other states in terms of funding for higher education?

What have been the enrollment trends in your college? In the university? Why?

#### To the search committee

Where is the committee in the job selection process? How many people are you bringing to campus?

What is your timetable for making a decision? When can I expect to hear from you?

How did this position become open?

Who was in this position previously? Why did they leave? What did this previous person do well in their job? What do you wish he/she had done differently?

If you had magical powers, and could create the perfect person for this job, what would that person be like?

What does the work load consist of in terms of courses, advisees, etc.?

#### To the department faculty

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

How do you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

What are the challenges currently facing the department or program?

How would you describe the ideal candidate for this position?

What kind of research is being done within the program? within the department?

Do you do collaborative research with other faculty members, either in this department or in other departments?

What is the expected courseload? number of advisees?

What are the students in the program like? How are they selected/recruited? What have your graduates gone on to do?

What is the history of the program? the anticipated future direction of the program?

What do you like best about working here?

What are the areas of conflict in the department? How is the conflict handled?

How would you describe [name] as a department chair? For how long is he/she going to continue to be chair? What will happen after that?

What are the support services like (e.g., secretarial assistance, teaching and research assistants, travel monies, field trip logistics)?

What do you do for enjoyment?

#### To the students

Students can be very informative, as they are usually not inhibited in offering their honest opinions.

What are the strengths of the program here?

What do you wish for, that you don't have, as a student in this department?

What are your professional goals? after graduation? in five years?

If you know some recent graduates, what are they doing now?

Who amongst the faculty do you think does a great job? What do they do particularly well?

Especially for graduate students, or some highly competitive undergraduates: How many of you have published an article in a professional journal? presented at a national convention? belong to national professional organizations?

How frequently do you socialize with faculty? with other students in the program?

Is the program atmosphere conducive to your learning and development? Would you recommend it to a friend?

If I were a good friend of yours, what would you tell me that I might not ordinarily find out about this place?

**Resources:**

Academic Jobs Wiki [https://academicjobs.wikia.org/wiki/Academic\\_Jobs\\_Wiki](https://academicjobs.wikia.org/wiki/Academic_Jobs_Wiki)

Science Magazine Careers <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers>

Tomorrow's Professor <https://tomprof.stanford.edu/>

ChronicleVitae <https://chroniclevitae.com/resources>

CRLT University of Michigan <http://crlt.umich.edu/academic-job-hiring-process>

Duke University Academic Job Search Series <https://sites.duke.edu/academicjobseries/>