

How to Apply for an Academic Job

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An essential guide covering interpreting job adverts, tailoring applications and interview tips

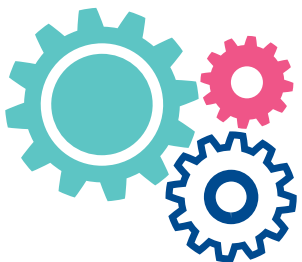
Introduction

This ebook will help you to become more attractive to employers when applying for an academic job. It will show employers what you have to offer at the application, interview and salary negotiation stages.

This ebook offers step-by-step advice and also provides exercises that will get you thinking about your career development and will show you how to improve your chances of landing that dream job.

This ebook will cover:

- How to interpret a job advert
- Tailoring your application, covering letter and CV
- Best advice on getting through the short-listing stage
- How best to sell your skills, experience and future plans in interviews
- Top tips on how to behave during the entire interview day
- The process of salary negotiation.



Understanding job adverts

Reading a job advertisement may seem like a fairly simple and obvious task, but the language of job adverts can in fact be rather baffling, especially for academic jobseekers just starting out on their career. This section is intended to give a brief guide on interpreting what adverts actually say and targeting your application accordingly.

Changes in the law

In recent years numerous changes have been made in how adverts are written. Part of this is to do with fashions in recruitment, but also employers now have to be extremely careful to follow the latest employment legislation on discrimination. These laws are designed to prevent race, religious, sexual and age discrimination. Where employers may once have asked for 'junior' or 'senior' applicants, they now have to refer to skills sets and experience levels. Being 'energetic', 'active' or even 'tireless' is now not sought because all three of those descriptors could be interpreted as requesting someone able-bodied. So the language of the advert has been tightened up and should only refer to qualifications and skills needed to do the job.

Changes in recruitment practice

Whereas previously many individual heads of department wrote their own adverts based on the sort of person they were looking for, today's adverts are the result of input from HR teams, recruitment agencies and even PR companies. Universities are concerned to present themselves in a consistent manner so all adverts are subjected to central checking and university branding. This can make all adverts seem very similar. It is harder to see what that specific job requires as adverts are becoming more generic.

Job title and salary

Some academic job titles are very specific so you know exactly what they are looking for, but in other cases they seem very broad. You may see an advert for Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in History for example. Only by reading the body of the text can you see which area of specialism is required and even then the description can be unfocused.

This is often the case when a post is a new position rather than a direct replacement. The department, in effect, want to see who applies before deciding what sort of scholar they want. This is common practice in the U.S. too. In these cases it is important to find out from a member of the department whether they would be willing to consider someone with your area of expertise.

The job level and salary bands are often not fixed for the same reason - they are willing to hire at lecturer or senior lecturer level, depending on the experience of the successful candidate. If you get through to the interview stage you will be able to ask someone whether you would be considered for entry above the basic salary level. Most academic adverts still carry a salary scale, although some senior posts follow the commercial sector model and do not publish a salary at all, often meaning that salary is negotiable for the right candidate.

Informal contact

Some adverts (although it seems, fewer and fewer) include the phone number or email address of what is called an 'informal contact'. This will almost always be a member of the academic staff in the department where the job is available, usually someone with responsibility for hiring. You can contact them and ask them for more details about the job. Make sure that you have some constructive questions, and recognise they are probably very busy.



Tip:

Questions to ask the informal contact

- Give brief details of your research/teaching interests and ask whether this fits with what the department is looking for
- Ask what the department considers the most important duty will be for the scholar who is hired
- If the job is temporary, ask whether there is any chance of it being made permanent
- If you don't fulfil all the criteria on the person specification, ask whether there is a chance that you will be considered

It is definitely worth making the call to the informal contact. If you impress this person with your enthusiasm, you may find you stick in his or her mind. Unfortunately quite a few adverts do not include this information, and you will probably find that the address you have to send your application to is in the HR department. It is unlikely they will be able to offer you advice on your application.

Job description



Most of the vital information you find will be in the accompanying job description rather than in the body of the advert itself. This is usually available at the click of a mouse if you are accessing a job online, but if you have seen the advert in a newspaper, you may have to send off by post or telephone to get your job description.

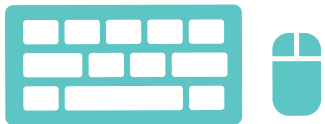
Definition: a job description is

- A list of the duties and skills required of the new member of staff.

It is your job to address each one of these points somewhere in your application, either in your covering letter, your personal statement or your CV. If you can prove that you can match (if not exceed) every one of their requirements, you will be well on the way to being interviewed for the position.

Added extras

One of the advantages of checking out adverts online on sites such as www.jobs.ac.uk is that you can instantly see more information about the job you want to apply for or the institution where you hope to work. This is not available in paper resources where advertising space is at a premium and the only information you get is a brief section on the post itself and where to contact to apply. In some adverts now you can see information about the employer through the medium of video, you can see employees describing what it is like to work there, something which is especially useful if you are applying for a job somewhere that you are not familiar with.



Job Application Record Example

Job title	Institution	Where advert seen	Informal contact made: date and response	Date applied	Response recieved

Job advert checklist



**Have you understood what a job advert is?
Test yourself with the following checklist:**

- What is a job description? How can I use it?
- What is an informal contact? When should I contact him/her?
- How is discrimination legislation useful to me?

Finally, make sure that you record which jobs you have applied for and print off a copy of the advert for each (the advert might disappear once it has expired). If you get an interview you will find these useful to refer back to.

Tip:

Enter this information into an excel spreadsheet or use this quick Job Application Record table below

Filling in application forms

It sounds a little odd that highly qualified applicants might need advice on filling in application forms, but according to feedback from employers including academics and human resources staff, applicants often overlook even the most obvious points when applying for a job, and therefore can do with all the help they can get. Also if you are applying for a large number of jobs on a regular basis it can be easy to get sloppy so here is some advice on how to maximise your chances by completing the application form in a most professional manner.



Paper or Online?

Pros and Cons: paper

If you have a paper application form you have to wait for it to arrive and then nervously wait hoping that it reaches its destination once complete. You also have only one shot: if you fill the form in incorrectly there will probably not be time to wait for the employers to send another form. It is possible to fill in the document electronically and then print it out and send it. This gives the flexibility of being able to edit it while you are working but also having something concrete in your hand to send off.

Pros and Cons: online

Many people are wary of online applications because they have nothing tangible, no proof that the application has arrived. If you do go down that route, it is worth asking for a reply to acknowledge that your application has arrived.

When filling in online application forms, try to ensure that your answers are readable. Sometimes the formatting (i.e. font, point size etc) becomes corrupted and your answers come out very small or very large! You have to make sure that your form is easy for human resources staff to process giving it a more professional appearance.

Your Contact Details

Would you believe that some people apply for jobs and don't leave their proper contact information? Your prospective employers will not want to spend a long time trying to get in touch to discuss interviews, extra information and so on. If you know you don't answer your emails regularly include a mobile phone number and highlight which is the best method of contacting you. Make sure this information is accurate; if it isn't, the employers are not going to spend a lot of time trying to trace you. Don't miss out on opportunities due to silly mistakes.

Education/Job History

These sections are very important; it's where you have the opportunity of listing your education and job history. Do not simply write 'see attached CV'. This will give the impression that you have not spent much time preparing your application or that you are sending off a number of generic applications. This is the opposite to the impression you want to give: you want to make the employer feel that you are really keen to work for them specifically, not just desperate to get any job at all, never mind whether the latter is true or not!

Double-check whether the form asks you to list your achievements with the earliest or most recent first. Also, make sure you present these sections neatly, whether handwritten or typed. If you are filling in a form electronically make sure the dates, qualifications and institutions line up. The formatting sometimes gets mixed up in these forms. You want prospective employees to be able to see the information at a glance.



Any Other Details?

On the majority of application forms you will see a large box asking for any other relevant information that will support your application. Unlike a UCAS undergraduate application this is not asking for you to discuss hobbies or outside interests in order to prove you are a rounded individual. The purpose of this box is for you to show exactly how and why you would be suitable for the job.

Tip:

The best way of doing this is to relate your skills directly to the person specification you should have received with your application pack. Work through this systematically, point by point. Explain how you have already demonstrated the skills required to match each of the requirements. Again the idea is to make this easy to read, so bullet points or headings are fine as they will bring the reader's eye to the relevant section.

Avoid:

Under no circumstances write 'see attached CV', this will look lazy. The idea is to relate yourself to that particular job so do not write a generic statement and use it for many different applications.

Further Reading

Not sure who to include as your referees?
[Check out this useful article that can help you.](#)



Covering Letters and CVs

Even if you have had to fill in a massive application form, always include a covering letter and CV as well. Otherwise your application will look rushed and unprofessional.

Length of CV:

CVs for jobs in the commercial sector are supposed to be two pages or less. As an academic you can get away with something slightly longer as it will take more room to list your teaching and publication record, but try not to exceed four pages at the most.

Covering letter:

Try to find a person's name to address it to rather than 'Dear Sir/Madam'. If no one is listed in your application pack then address it to the head of department to which you are applying. Use the covering letter to write a summary of your most recent research/teaching experience and why you will be good for the job. Some of this may duplicate material on the application form, but that doesn't matter. Also mention in a covering letter if someone has recommended you to apply, or if you know someone in the department whom you hope to work with.



Writing a personal statement

Many job application forms include a large space for candidates to write something about themselves that will convince the employers to take them on. This can be quite daunting: what should you include in your personal statement and, more importantly, what should you NOT include?

What is a personal statement?

A personal statement refers to a particular type of information needed on an application form. This is required on the application form for teacher training positions and on the UCAS undergraduate and postgraduate application forms. Some CV advisers also recommend including a very small 'personal statement' in the heading of a CV. This is rarely found on academic CVs though.

What not to include

It is very important that you tailor each personal statement for the specific job you are applying for. **Do not simply copy and paste an old personal statement into your new application.**

Although it is often called a 'personal statement' this section of an application form does not require you to give 'personal' information about things such as your hobbies. While your interests might make you sound like a rounded individual (whether you enjoy the theatre, scuba diving or whatever), employers in a competitive job market do not actually care about such things.

They want to know why you are the best person for the job. So unless the form specifically requests you to do so, don't reveal details of your life outside the world of work

Personal statements written by those hoping to get on an undergraduate or postgraduate course are slightly different, so do not be misled by the large numbers of websites advertising help with writing personal statements. These are aimed at high school and college students and are less relevant to you as a jobseeker.

How to structure it



It is important not to make a personal statement into a dense, unreadable block of text. You need to write good prose in full sentences and break it up into small paragraphs. Use headings to help guide the reader's eye to the most important information.

Try to write in a style that makes your statement fresh and slightly different to the formal prose of most of your application materials. **You are trying to sell yourself as an attractive personality as well as a professional employee.**

Include such things as:

- Events from your education/career to date that make you especially suited to the job (including volunteer work/work experience): it is important to be able to write about these events enthusiastically
- What it is about the job that especially attracts you to it
- The skills/knowledge base you have that is **relevant to the job**
- What is the **unique contribution** you can make to the university/company? Check online for their mission statement and refer to that when describing how you can contribute
- Refer directly to the job description using the same language and then **relate that to your own experiences**
- What are your career aims? You might have to be creative here! **Tailor your answer to the job you're applying for** and make it seem as though you are desperate to pursue a career in that area! However, try to make your statement as honest as possible; you want to come across as a real person and not simply parroting what you think the employers want to hear. It is a difficult balance to achieve

And don't forget!

As with all parts of your application, make sure as many people as possible proofread your personal statement. Nothing says 'unprofessional' like a personal statement full of typos or grammar mistakes. Also, while you may think you have expressed yourself very clearly, other readers may be able to highlight sentences or words that are incorrect, irrelevant or could be more clearly expressed. A good personal statement passes through many drafts, so make sure you give enough time to the writing and re-drafting process.

The CV itself: what to include

Introduction:

Include your name, address, email address and phone number. Do not include your date of birth or gender as taking these factors into consideration means that employers are breaking employment legislation rules.

Qualifications:

List your qualifications in reverse date order. Make sure you provide names of institutions, dates and grades. Give the titles of all research projects but avoid jargon and lengthy prose. Mention any specific training that you have received that is relevant for the job, for example a Postgraduate Diploma in Post-compulsory Education.



Experience:

Divide your experience into three categories – **teaching, research and administration**. Most academic jobs contain elements of all three, so consider the importance of each for the job you're going for by examining the job description and person specification. Create headings for each, placing the most important first.

The **teaching section** should include tutoring, demonstrating, lecturing, supervising students' projects, marking, designing sessions and contributing to curriculum design.

The **research section** should include details of your projects, funding, conference presentations and publications. Prepare a full list of your conference presentations and publications and if it seems too long then curtail the list by presenting only the most recent (perhaps two or three years' worth).

The **administrative section** should include information about posts held at university and outside. Administrative roles within your department might include being exchange co-ordinator, admissions tutor, exams secretary or running an entire programme or degree. Outside of university life, list any organisations whose committee you belong to or for whom you act as professional consultant.

Don't forget to include any 'hard skills' that you think might be relevant to the post too, such as IT competencies, foreign languages or first aid qualifications. Interests and activities outside of your professional life should also be mentioned if they demonstrate a quality or skill that would be useful to the role. For example, if you run your local scout troop this demonstrates leadership responsibilities.

CV Activity

Step 1: Fill in your name and contact details

Step 2:

Fill in your qualifications, most recent first (**Top tip:** for academic jobs go back no further than A levels)

Step 3:

List your teaching, research and administration experience in the relevant sections, including places and dates that you acquired this experience.

Once you have completed this activity you are ready to build a top class academic CV.

Don't forget that jobs.ac.uk have Academic CV Templates arranged by job title you can use as a starting point.

Academic CV preparation record

Follow the instructions in the ebook to complete this template to help you gather all the information you will need to create a great academic CV.

Qualifications:

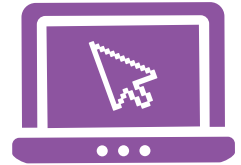
Name of qualification	Place	Date	Grade

Teaching Experience:

Name of course/event	Place	Date	Cohort/other details



CV Activity



Research Experience:

Project name

Outputs (publications)

How funded

Other publications:

Title

Co-authors

Place/date publication

Conference papers:

Title

Conference

Date

CV Activity

Administrative roles in university

Role	Place	Date	Key duties

Administrative roles in other organisations

Role	Organisation	Date	Key duties

Other skills

Skill	How demonstrated	Date

Relevant hobbies

Hobby	Skill/experience demonstrated

How to tailor your CV to the job you want

An important aspect of applying for an academic job is to be able to map your own skills and knowledge profile onto what employers are looking for. So this will require you to examine the job advert, and particularly the job description and the person specification in great detail. Remember that you cannot only claim that you fulfil each of the criteria, you also have to provide concrete evidence to that effect.

How your application is judged:

The selection panel judging the applications will probably have a tick-box system in place by which they rank each applicant. If you can show that you have already achieved every one of the criteria that they are seeking, you have a good chance of being shortlisted for interview.

First let's look at the **job description**.

Requirements of the job will be listed as follows:

- Facilitate student learning through lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials
- Collaborate with colleagues on course development

You need to **follow these steps** on your CV:

- Demonstrate how you have fulfilled this requirement before
- Give examples of times when you have been innovative
- Emphasise areas in which you have adopted decision making and strategic planning roles
- Demonstrate transferable skills such as self-motivation or being a good time manager



To illustrate these points you have to examine your career development critically and analytically. For example, excellent time management is displayed by those recently graduated PhD students who are holding down several jobs at once in order to build a career in academia. In this example, explain in detail how you divide your time between the different roles, perhaps giving an outline of a typical week.

You will also be required to:

- Describe times when you contributed to a safe working environment by following health and safety procedures
- Explain how you contributed to the development of equality and diversity within the workplace.

The former can be illustrated by, for example, being responsible for first aid or fire evacuation in your building, or having taken students on trips and having to fill in reports, or taught students about safety while studying, for example in a laboratory. The latter can be harder to demonstrate. Perhaps you have contributed to an event designed to widen participation in university life or to highlight issues faced by minority students or staff. Even attending a training course in these areas will show that you have a commitment to the development of a safe and equal workplace.

Person Specification



This document outlines clearly what the selection panel are looking for, and where you are required to demonstrate this (i.e. on application form, in cover letter or at interview). Again, you will be ranked via a tick-box system so it is vital to show that you fulfil all the criteria. These criteria are divided into 'essential' and 'desirable' skills and knowledge. If you are unsure whether your application will be accepted because you do not fit all the essential criteria try sending an enquiry to the informal contact (usually the head of department) to find out whether your application will be considered. But usually if you do not fulfil all the 'essential' criteria, then you will be beaten to interview by many other candidates.

Desirable versus essential criteria

The desirable criteria are used to differentiate between applicants in the event that many candidates fulfil all the essential criteria, and so clearly illustrate the cases in which you match the desirable criteria too. Following this technique of skills mapping for every job that you apply for (time consuming, I know!) will ensure that you have the best chance of being shortlisted for interview.

Selling yourself: the basics

'Unique Selling Point' (or USP) is a marketing idea developed to help people in business improve their sales. As a job seeker you also have something to sell: YOURSELF!

By developing your USPs learn how to sell yourself when applying for a job and stand out from the crowd.

These five tips will help you to improve your CV by using your USPs and help you get an interview

1 What does the employer want?

When reading a job advert you have to work out what your audience (i.e. the employers) are looking for. Read the

- Job title
- Advert content
- Person specification

These will show the qualifications, experience and skills that the employers require. How does your career history fits these requirements? (Further reading: see our article on [Four easy ways to fit your CV to the job advert](#))

2 Get your message out there

This is really important. You might be a brilliant candidate, but if the key people do not know that you are available then you will lose out.

How to let employers know you're looking for work:

- Apply directly for jobs advertised on [jobs.ac.uk](#) and other sites
- Network: use your supervisor, colleagues, academic contacts and let them all know you're on the job market (Further reading: see our article on [Academic Networking](#))

3 Respond to feedback

If you've been job hunting for a while, you might have had a few interviews already. Even if you fail you can still get feedback on your performance. This feedback can be used to improve your chances of getting a job in the future. Either change your CV to make it more attractive or improve your interview skills (Further reading: see article on [Interview Technique](#))

4 Know your competition

Job hunting, just like selling, is a competition. If you are constantly knocked back then perhaps you need to learn from your competition on how they succeed when you have not.

So, share job hunting techniques with your peers. Speak to people in your field who have been recently hired. But don't give too much away to people who will be applying for the same jobs as you!

5 Eliminate weaknesses

If you know that the profile you present to employers is weak in some way, work hard to improve it.

- Polish your CV
- Improve your interview technique
- Write better cover letters
- Present your skills/knowledge base better
- Develop your own career by going on courses, learning new skills.

Knowing your USP will make writing a CV and cover letter and preparing for an interview much easier.

To find out what your USP is, break down what you can offer into three categories: qualifications, experience and skills.

For each one work out what makes you stand out. If you know that other candidates will all have PhDs, write enough detail about yours to show why your research interests are more attractive.



Skills

Defining your skills can be difficult for jobseekers used to thinking about qualifications and experience. But in today's job market selling your skills is vital.

A range of skills you may have include:

- Communication (personal/face to face AND in writing)
- Planning/time management
- Information gathering
- Teamwork/interpersonal skills
- Management/leadership
- IT skills
- Language skills

But it's not enough to say you have these skills. You have to demonstrate that you have them by GIVING EXAMPLES

- What exactly have you done?
- What were the outcomes?
- How did you achieve success?

So, to illustrate that you have good teamwork skills you might say:

'In my last position, I was one of five fellows in a research centre. The fellows all worked together to plan and run a large three-day conference, to showcase our own research outputs but also to network with others and provide a forum for international scholars in our field to present their work. Our team completed our organisation of the conference ahead of schedule, the event ran successfully with all of us involved during the three days and we had positive feedback from the delegates and speakers.'

Essential or desirable?

It can be daunting when you're faced with a list of skills that you must or might have to fulfil the role. This example shows how these documents are often worded by employers and give you a chance to check whether you have them. Think about examples of where you might have the experience they're looking for and make a note of them next to the skills.

Attribute	Essential	Desirable	Example of your skills
Educated to degree level or equivalent	3		
Experienced in relationship management and customer care	3		
Pro-active approach in seeking new opportunities, both from companies and public bodies		3	
Awareness of regional strategies and their impact upon academia		3	
Experience of working in the HE sector		3	
Experience in commercial or business development activities.		3	
Management/supervision experience, including line management.	3		
To be personally well organised and able to prioritise own workload	3		
ICT literate	3		
Good communication skills	3		
Ability to think strategically, influence policy-making and manage change in systems and procedures.	3		
Networking and relationship management skills with external organisations	3		
Ability to communicate effectively, both oral and written	3		
Ability to learn independently and to master and apply new knowledge and skills quickly.	3		
Full driving licence		3	
Willingness to work unsocial hours including evening, weekend and overnight activities throughout the year.	3		

Preparing for interview: what to expect

For a permanent academic position you should expect to be present at an interview for 3-4 hours at least. You will be given a range of activities to do during this time. Remember that you are on show and therefore being judged all the time, even during seemingly informal, chatty sessions.



Programme for the day

The two main parts of the interview will be a presentation and the panel interview, more on these later. However, you may be provided with the opportunity to have lunch with members of the department and given a tour of the facilities. During these times try to seem as interested and enthusiastic as possible! Do not treat this as 'downtime' as the colleagues that you meet will often report their thoughts back to the interview panel. But at the same time, try to be yourself and relax. One of the things that you will be judged on is whether you are a friendly person, so if you come across as nervous and uptight you might do your chances some harm.

Preparing for interview: academic presentations

You should be provided with basic information about the presentation when you are invited to interview. The things that you need to know are:

- What topic do you present on
- How long for
- Who will your audience be
- Will AV equipment be available

If you do not have this information then you should contact the HR department for clarification.

Of course the content of your presentation is important but you will also be judged on whether you are an engaging public speaker (so practice eye contact and speaking slowly and clearly beforehand) and also whether you can stick to a time limit. If you are told to speak for 10 minutes try to hone your presentation so that it is within a few seconds of that length! Make sure you tailor your presentation to that particular interview. Refer directly to the institution, explain your previous experience but also look to the future and discuss your new directions too.

The panel

You will also have a formal panel interview. Expect this to last anything from 20 minutes to an hour. Panels usually involve at least three people; each university has its own rules about membership of interview panels. They often include a senior member of the department, usually the Head, a senior manager from the university from another department and a representative of Human Resources. The HR representative ensures that selection is fair and no discriminatory practices take place. Your potential immediate boss will have the most power on the panel and it is vital that you convey to him or her that you will be able to develop a good working relationship.

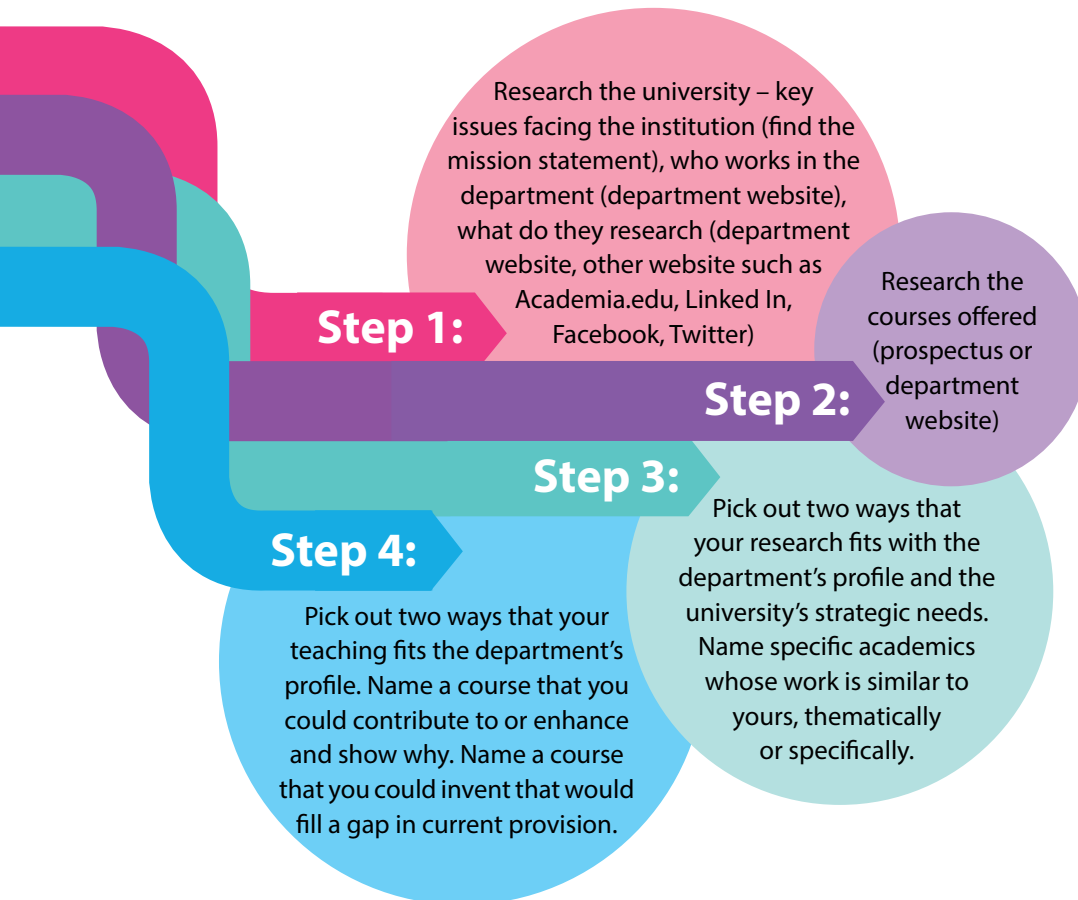


The 'why' question

As well as being prepared to talk about your teaching and research experience, plan for the 'why' question: why you want to work for that institution. Do not prepare a long answer talking about yourself. This question provides a chance to relate your expertise to the needs of the university and department. Complete this activity to find out the best answer to the 'why' question.

Activity: the 'why' question.

Use this flow chart to find out how to build your answer to the 'why' question:



The interview: last few minutes



You will need a few questions prepared for the end of the interview because you will be given the chance to ask the panel a question. Have several in reserve in case your first choice question has already obviously been answered. It is not appropriate to discuss salary at this point and be careful when asking about sabbatical arrangements: it might sound as though you're planning how to avoid your teaching responsibilities! Instead focus your questions on aspects such as:

- Why is this institution a good place to work?
- What are the challenges this department faces during the next 5 years?

Interview questions: the STAR approach

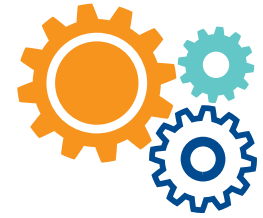
Your interviewers may invite you to discuss particular challenges that you have faced in certain parts of the job: teaching, research or administration. To come across well, keep in mind the STAR approach.

- Explain the **SITUATION**
- Describe the **TASK** or activity involved
- Demonstrate the **ACTION** that you took
- Sum up by stating the **RESULT** that you achieved

Further reading: see our article on [competency-based interviews](#).



Top 10 general interview tips



1 Arrive on time, but not too early

If you are invited to an interview for 9am say, arrive between 8.45 and 9am, no earlier. You might inconvenience the staff who are meeting you: it's just as stressful preparing to interview candidates as being interviewed yourself! So if you arrive early, walk around outside to clear your head and get some fresh air.

2 Be prepared to meet other candidates

In many academic interviews the American all-day format is used, which means that you will meet and have to interact with the other candidates. Try not to let yourself be intimidated by them, conversation will naturally move towards your current position, your jobseeking history, how many interviews you have attended recently and so on, but try to play things close to your chest, while remaining calm and friendly. Be open about your area of specialism for example, but not about what makes you stand out from the crowd.

3 Speak slowly

In both the presentation and the interview, speak more slowly than you would normally. You will probably have good public speaking skills from lecturing experience and giving conference papers, but because you are unusually nervous you might speak too quickly.

4 Maintain eye contact

Again nerves can lead presenters to stare at their notes or the projector screen rather than their audience. Remember, as with a lecture, seminar or paper, make eye contact with your audience, especially when answering question. You will come across as confident and assured. But equally, don't stare at people! Be natural.

5 Admit when you don't know

In the presentation and the interview if you are faced with a question that you are unsure of, admit it. Do not try to bluff your way out of it 'politician-style' by changing the subject or answering a different question. It is much more professional to ask the speaker to rephrase the question, or to be light-hearted and admit you don't know the answer. Your interviewers will respect you more for being honest.

6 Discussing your research confidently

It is important to discuss your past, present and future research plans confidently and if you have prepared well for the interview this should be no problem. Make sure you take time to explain your plans without rushing, and always relate them to the post they are interviewing for. Remember that the panel are highly educated but not necessarily subject specialists in your field, so pitch your research plans accordingly.

7 Offering teaching

For a teaching post you will have prepared some relevant responses about what you can offer in terms of teaching, but in some cases this may be 'sprung' on you unexpectedly. It is important to come across as a confident, enthusiastic teacher. Under no circumstances discuss the confidential history of any students (although you can use general examples of, say, where you have given pastoral care) nor should you be critical of your current or previous institutions.

8 Show enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is key; make sure you smile a lot! Because of nerves, some people can appear subdued at interview, whereas in fact they are just naturally quiet. Don't let this be mistaken for lack of confidence or even being aloof. It is worth going that extra mile to show how enthusiastic you are about the job. For example, visit the university library or research labs during a break in the interviewing, show that you have researched something relevant to your field.

9 Be friendly

Being friendly sounds obvious, but it is easy to forget that above all, the interviewers will be looking for a human being who will fit into their department. You will be spending a lot of time working with them and they want to know that you are down-to-earth and approachable. Academic interviews are incredibly competitive, all the candidates will be very highly qualified (if not over-qualified), so it is the personal touches that can make a real difference.

10 Finish on a positive note

Even if you feel the interview has gone badly, try to leave on a positive note. Thank the panel for their time and say that you look forward to hearing from them soon. Perhaps say that you have found the day very challenging but rewarding. Give a firm handshake and look the panel members in the eye. This will linger in their minds and will leave a better impression than slinking off with barely a word.

Negotiating salary



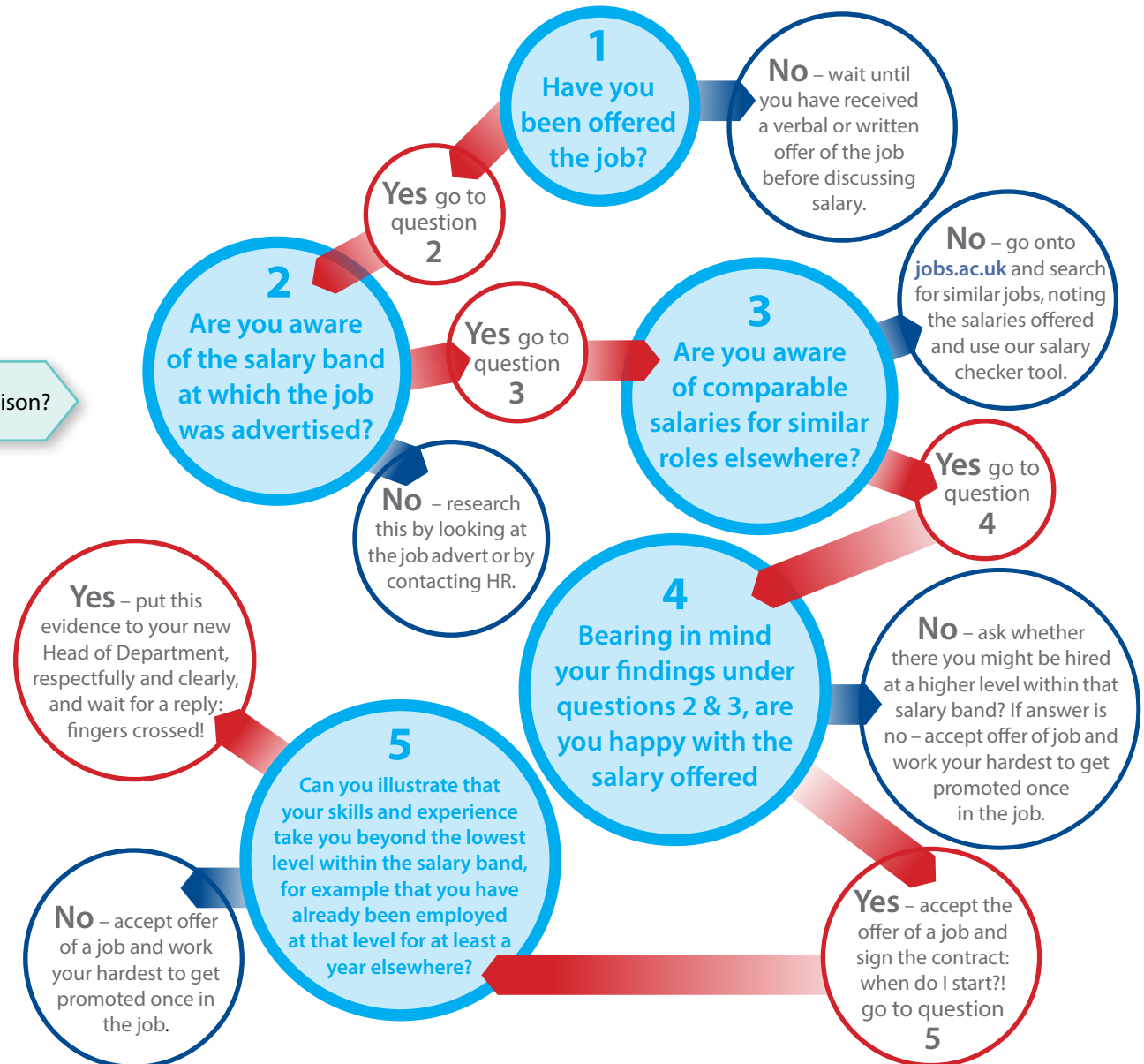
Congratulations! You've been offered the job. Now is the chance for you to negotiate your way into a higher salary. In order to be in a strong negotiating position you need to know what the industry average salary is and how salary banding works in the organisation that wants to hire you. Fix in your mind the lowest salary that you will be prepared to accept before you go in to the negotiations. In some institutions you do not have to start at the bottom of the salary band, but you'll need to be able to convince your new employers why you deserve that higher starting salary.

Tip: Why not use our [Salary Checker Tool](#) to get a comparison?

Without appearing arrogant, you need to show that you know how much you are worth. Perhaps you have already commanded a higher salary at a previous job than the one they are offering. Or perhaps you know 'off the record' that the university has hired another lecturer with similar skills to you at a higher rate. Explain calmly and rationally that you have specific skills and experience that you believe are worth a higher starting rate. These aspects can be used as leverage in your favour, but do not come across as aggressive or you will alienate the employers before you've even started! Be reasonable and flexible. It's also advisable not to talk about how much money you need (e.g. for commuting or family commitments) but how much you are worth. In jobs outside academia it is often possible to negotiate holiday entitlement or health benefits, but for university-based jobs, these are usually fixed and offered similarly to every employee.

Salary game:

Work out how to negotiate a salary by picking yes or no.



Summary

To summarise, the most important aspects are to analyse the important skills and knowledge that you have that might be attractive to employers and to be able to tailor that information in application and interview contexts. Also vital is to learn as much as you can about the job for which you are applying, demonstrating your enthusiasm and suitability.

Finally, throughout the jobseeking process, present yourself in an honest and straightforward manner, concentrating on your future plans and what you can offer to the role both as a scholar and a friendly colleague.

We hope the exercises contained within this ebook have acted as triggers for you to begin thinking about your career development and exploring ways to improve your performance as a job seeker.

Good luck!



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About the author

Dr Catherine Armstrong is a Senior Lecturer in American History at Manchester Metropolitan University. She has previously held positions at the University of Warwick and Oxford Brookes University. Her first monograph 'Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century' was published by Ashgate in June 2007. Her previous jobseeking experience means that Catherine is in a great position to understand and offer her knowledge and experience to those developing an academic career.

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