

Roundtable 6: The Academic Job Application Dossier

1. Timeline

- Most tenure-track academic jobs are advertised in the **early Fall** and continue through December-January (to start in the following Fall).
- Non-tenure-track positions tend to be announced later in the year, even into May-June for jobs beginning in the Fall.
- The **summer before you begin applying for jobs** (e.g., before your last year as a graduate student) is a good time to update your CV and website, and start compiling job application materials such as teaching evaluations, start drafting your cover letter, and teaching and research statements, and requesting for letters of recommendation.

2. Academic Job Dossier Components

- **Cover letter**
 - 2 pages max.
 - Official letterhead
 - Follow **formal letter etiquette**
 - Addressed to the 'Members of the Search Committee'
 - Include a **summary** of your educational background and your research and teaching experience. Make sure you sell yourself!
 - Include anything that you have not been able to include in the other materials.

- **CV**
 - No page limit (vs. 2-page max. for a resumé)
 - Make it as clear and as easy to read as possible so it can be glanced over quickly. Use spaces, bold, and italics. Be consistent. Do **not** make it too **dense**.
 - Model it after some junior faculty member who works in the same field (first language acquisition, second language acquisition, language processing...).
 - **Sections:**
 - Contact information: Department address, email, personal phone number, and website!
 - Education: From most recent or expected (in the near future) to oldest. Include Thesis and Dissertation titles and committee members.
 - Awards & Honors: Including grants/scholarships
 - Publications: From most recent to oldest, include work that is still in preparation or under review. Use bibliographic conventions of the field.
 - Presentations: From most recent to oldest, include anything you have been accepted for even if it has not taken place yet. Use bibliographic conventions of the field.
 - Teaching Experience: Courses taught and/or TAed

- University/Professional Service (e.g., conference organizer, reviewer...)
- Skills (languages, programs, machines...)
- References: Names, physical addresses, emails, phone numbers.
- Date of last update
- Have **subsections** if necessary (Teaching: Sole Instructor / Teaching Assistant; Publications: Journals / Book Chapters / Conference Proceedings).

▪ **3 letters of recommendation/references**

- Ask for the letters in advance (*definitely* no less than 2 weeks).
- Provide the recommenders with your application materials (or drafts of them).
- Although the reputation and **prestige of the writer does matter**, a boilerplate letter from a well-known expert that shows only a passing acquaintance with you/your research is unlikely to do you much good.
- The most effective letters are those where the writer **demonstrates an intimate familiarity with your work** (i.e., they've actually read some of it and/or watched you teach). So a letter from your advisor/dissertation committee chair is expected and in fact it would be a *huge* red flag if a candidate does not get a letter from them.
- California state law requires us to identify whether or not you have waived the right to see a given letter in your dossier. Most faculty prefer to write confidential letters, and some, as is their right, may not write an open letter. **Most people waive their right**, but the choice is yours.

▪ **Teaching evaluations:** You may include:

- *All* the **ratings** from each course you have TAed or taught as well as the **grand average**, plus *all* students' **written comments**.
- *All* the ratings from each course, as well as the grand average, plus *a few* (hand-picked) comments from students. In that case, you want to make them all available online, in case a committee member wants to see other unquoted comments. **Unedited evaluations** can be placed on its own page not linked to from anywhere else (either associated with your website, or on a Google docs or Dropbox folder). You can include the address of this page in your application.

Grand mean and average standard deviation for the 15 sections (over 11 quarters) I have served as a teaching assistant during the academic year or discussion session responsible during summer sessions in *classroom* courses:

Questions Regarding TA	(Scale: 1 to 9)	AVG	SD
The T.A. was knowledgeable about the material		8.54	0.89
The T.A. was concerned about student learning		8.59	0.83
Section presentations were well prepared and organized		8.48	0.99
The T.A. expanded on course ideas		8.30	1.12
Students felt welcome in seeking help		8.55	0.99
The teaching assistant had good communication skills		8.46	0.90
Value of the sections justified time and effort		8.31	1.11
Your overall rating of the T.A.		8.51	0.90

Linguistics 130: Language Development, Section A
 Winter 2016
 Enrollment: 20 students; 15 evaluations

Questions Regarding Instructor (Scale: 1 to 9)	AVG	SD
The T.A. was knowledgeable about the material	8.93	0.26
The T.A. was concerned about student learning	8.87	0.35
Section presentations were well prepared and organized	8.60	0.83
The T.A. expanded on course ideas	8.40	1.06
Students felt welcome in seeking help	8.93	0.26
The teaching assistant had good communication skills	8.93	0.26
Value of the sections justified time and effort	8.67	0.62
Your overall rating of the T.A.	8.87	0.35

▪ **Teaching philosophy**

- 1, 2 pages max.
- A description of the central ideas behind what and especially **how you teach**.
- Frame your discussion in terms of how your teaching style addresses salient problems or issues such as enhancing students' **analytical skills** and ability to understand theoretically sophisticated material or how to avoid teaching to the lowest common denominator, i.e., how do you push the students?
- Illustrate your points with **examples**.
- Avoid coming across as too self-praising by mentioning how your students surprise you with their (specify).
- Do mention any experience with **technology** in the classroom: online teaching, web-based resources...
- Do mention what courses you would be **ready to teach** in the target department. Show them you have done your research.
- Some positions may request **sample syllabi** of classes you have taught or that you may be teaching in the future.
- Some positions (particularly those that are more teaching-oriented) may ask for a 30-minute video demo.

▪ **Research Statement (research institutions only)**

- 2 full pages
- Do not *just* talk about your dissertation.
- Do not copy-past summaries of all the research projects you have been involved in. Try to tell a story of **how all these projects fit together**—what is the big research question behind them all?
- Tailor it to the audience! If it's a big department with several experts in your subfield, you may be able to be pretty specific. If it is a small department or they have few experts in your subfield, make sure your statement is understandable to outsiders.
- "Five-year plan": Discuss **future research** directions (beyond dissertation).
- Discuss any past, present, potential future **funding sources** (again, show you have done you research).

- Discuss who you see yourself **collaborating** with in the target department (give names) and outside.
- On self-praise: One way around the problem is to express delight at how well things are turning out for you. For example, your dissertation project turned out to have all sort of fascinating angles you had not anticipated (specify).
- **3 Writing samples (research institutions only)**
 - Ideally include at least **one published paper** and one draft of your **dissertation** (or just a completed chapter).
 - Although you may include more than the requested number, you do *not* want to include anything that is not your best just to make a bulkier dossier.
- **Diversity Statement (sometimes)**
 - 1-2 pages
 - Document explaining your experiences and commitments to diversity in the past, present, and future.
 - Questions to address:
 - Are you diverse in any way that might be relevant to your work?
 - How do you work to ensure your classes are inclusive and welcoming to all students?
 - Do you do any work or service with diverse or underrepresented populations? This could involve either working with research assistants who belong to some minority (linguistic, racial, ethnic, cognitive/intellectual/emotional ...) or investigating minority populations.
 - Does your research help our understanding of diverse populations?
- **Academic transcripts (sometimes)**

3. General Tips

- Kindly ask older colleagues for their materials.
- **Solicit feedback from your advisor!**
- Although **a lot can be recycled**, do your research and **tailor your materials** in each application.
- If a file is **long** (e.g., teaching evaluations, writing samples), have an **index/cover page**.
- Keep the style consistent across materials (margins, font style and size...) and **proofread** it all! No typos.
- The first round is the hardest! But it gets easier every time/year.
- I cannot emphasize this enough: Keep your **website updated** and make everything you can available online: CV, links to papers, research summaries, course summaries and syllabi... Some search committee/faculty members may only focus on the information available there.
- Useful website: <https://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDAcademic>