

Preparing for Academic Interviews

The key to successful interviewing is effective preparation. It is critical for you to be prepared to talk about yourself and your understanding of an institution to convince a hiring committee of your ability to do the job.

ABOUT YOURSELF	PROSPECTIVE INSTITUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current research • Future research plans • Teaching skills and interests • Accomplishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History/mission of the institution • Research interests of the faculty • Knowledge of courses offered, student population • Understanding of the position

Researching Institutions

To prepare for upcoming interviews, collect information on:

- Department's course offerings
- Institutional mission
- Research/teaching ratio
- Student population
- Faculty interests

Sources of institutional information:

- Internet
- Your faculty advisor or other mentors
- Any friends/family/acquaintances with connections to the institution
- Online college/university newspaper
- College guides

Preparing for Questions about Yourself

Current research

- Prepare to talk about your dissertation/research to a variety of people
- Develop two synopses of your research: one for experts, one for non-experts: PRACTICE THESE!
- Think about the impact your work has had on the field

Teaching

- Prepare to talk about general philosophy as well as classroom methods
- Think about how you might incorporate technology in the classroom
- Be ready to talk about what you *can* teach as well as what you would *like* to teach
- Consider specifics of how you would teach introductory courses (texts, materials, etc.)

Future research plans

- Critical to consider your research plans for the next year, 5 years, 10 years
- Give consideration to plans to apply for grant funding
- Be ready to express your plans in a convincing way, even if they are preliminary

Sample Questions

Research:

1. Describe your current research.
2. Why did you choose to focus on this area?
3. What is the broader significance of your research?
4. What limitations exist in your current project?
5. What will your next research project be? Are you planning to make changes to your current project?
6. Tell me where your research will be in 5 years.
7. What are your plans for applying for external funding?

Teaching:

1. Describe your philosophy of teaching.
2. How do you motivate students?
3. Describe a course you have taught in the past and how you evaluated the students' learning.
4. How would you teach this (introductory level, intermediate, advanced level) course? What primary and secondary texts would you choose?
5. How have you used technology in the classroom?
6. How would you increase enrollment in this major?
7. Describe your ideal course. What does the syllabus look like? What texts would you envision using?
8. How do you plan to bring the insights of your research into courses at the undergraduate level?
9. Given your research work at a large, prestigious research university, what attracts you to teaching at a small liberal arts college?

Willingness to participate in the department and school:

1. Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our department?
2. Are you willing to become involved in committee work?
3. Why are you interested in our kind of school?
4. What institutional issues particularly interest you?
5. How would you see yourself contributing to mission of the college and to the campus atmosphere?

Career and personal choices:

1. If you have more than one job offer, how will you decide among offers?
2. How do you feel about living in a small college town like this (in an isolated rural area, etc.)?
3. I understand your spouse is also seeking a tenure-track position. What if you receive job offers in different locations?
4. Where else are you interviewing?
5. What will it take to persuade you to take this job?
6. What kind of salary are you looking for?

Questions you might ask the interviewers:

1. What is the largest single problem facing your department right now?
2. What is the usual promotional time frame?
3. What do you like most about this college/university?
4. What is life like in this city/town?
5. What are the next steps? When can I expect to hear from you?

Final tips

- Do not accept campus interviews to “practice” your interviewing skills
- Do your homework to anticipate departmental needs, both in terms of research and teaching
- Review sample questions and practice your answers
- Bring extra CVs/resumes to the interview
- Dress appropriately
- ALWAYS bring a list of questions you have for the interviewers
- Don't volunteer negative information—even if you have plenty to give
- Address faculty (and all interviewers) as they were introduced (i.e., use first names if this is how one is introduced)
- Be ready to sell your candidacy to students
- Exercise good manners and display collegiality at all times
- Send follow-up thank-you letters or emails
- Remember: departments are seeking a **colleague**....so consider the interview a conversation among colleagues!