

Guidance for Placing Departments

This document offers guidance for philosophy departments and placement directors who seek to place their graduate students in academic positions in philosophy. In any given year, there may be more philosophers hired into non-academic and temporary academic positions than into full-time, tenure-track academic positions. Job seekers should recognize that the number of academic jobs in philosophy is exceeded by several times the number of candidates. Philosophy PhDs should be open to seeking either non-academic careers, for which the APA's guidance document [Beyond Academia: Professional Opportunities for Philosophers](#) should be consulted, or pre-college (K-12) teaching careers, which may be pursued through fast-track programs offered by some schools of education.

This document, along with the related "[Guidance for Philosophy Job Seekers](#)," attempts to offer guidance for applying for the five basic kinds of academic positions: positions at elite private and flagship state universities, positions at regional comprehensives (i.e., second-tier public institutions), positions at liberal arts colleges, positions at two-year colleges, and online positions. That said, the differences between various kinds of positions are often a matter of degree, not in kind. Liberal arts colleges and regional comprehensives often require active research programs from their candidates, while elite institutions often care deeply about teaching effectiveness, as the key to maintaining the major. In the end, the hiring department's needs depend upon the nature of the institution and the purpose that the open position serves for that institution.

In recent years, many institutions have offered fewer tenure-track positions and more teaching-track positions that come with little or no research expectations but higher teaching loads. In most cases, the process to apply for both full- and part-time, and both temporary and continuing adjunct positions at an institution is similar to that for tenure-track positions at that same institution. This document will indicate differences between applications for temporary positions, and applications for both renewable and tenure-track positions, where appropriate.

All aspects of the hiring process must conform to the APA's [Statement on Nondiscrimination](#).

All aspects of the hiring process must conform to the APA's [Statement on Sexual Harassment](#).

Anyone concerned about violations of the Statement on Nondiscrimination should refer to the APA's [Discrimination Complaint Procedure](#). For assistance with discrimination and sexual harassment issues, placing departments should consult the APA ombudsperson. For further guidance, placement directors are encouraged to consult the APA's [Good Practices Guide](#).

Faculty should not let their personal relationships with candidates affect the advice they give to candidates about positions. Only a candidate's (1) philosophical ability, (2) work ethic, (3) teaching ability, and (4) any other information that can affect the candidate's ability as a professional philosopher should influence this advice. Personal information such as race, gender identity, religion, political conviction, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, and actual or perceived medical condition is irrelevant.

The timing of the recruitment cycle at many philosophy departments at US universities and colleges has traditionally been based on the desire to have all hiring for the fall completed in the spring, on the competitive nature of the recruitment process, and on the tradition of performing an initial screening of

applicants at the APA's annual Eastern Division meeting. In recent years, however, only a handful of departments have chosen to interview candidates at the Eastern Division meeting, and the hiring cycle is becoming more flexible. The timing of recruitment at teaching-focused institutions and for adjunct positions is more varied, and it is not uncommon for positions to start in January and for the recruitment cycle to essentially go on year-round. Candidates face the burden of juggling multiple searches with different sets of deadlines while they are finishing their dissertations, and they need help to make the abrupt transition from graduate student to faculty member. It is important that departments provide as much support for job candidates as possible. Naturally, resources available to departments will vary; however, every effort should be made to make this transition at least less mysterious if not less onerous.

A. Before the Hiring Cycle

Departments should stay up to date with APA statements and statistics about placement and placement procedures. Each incoming group of graduate students should be made aware of the difficulty of finding academic jobs in philosophy. Faculty should not assume that their own experiences on the market are representative. Faculty at elite PhD-granting departments may need to make an effort to become knowledgeable about the hiring practices and needs at regional comprehensives, small liberal arts colleges, two-year and community colleges, and online institutions. In order to be well informed about the evolving hiring landscape in philosophy, graduate departments could invite back to campus some of the alumni from their graduate programs who teach at these kinds of institutions.

Departments should recommend that job seekers become members of the APA and that they review the APA's placement services, statements, and literature.

The "professionalization" of graduate students should begin early. They should be advised about preparation of a curriculum vita, the need to have teaching experience, and the need to publish and to present research in order to prepare to apply for a range of positions.

In preparing graduate students to apply for positions in which research is emphasized, departments should find ways to assist them to demonstrate their potential. Some research institutions prefer candidates who have at least one publication before completion of the PhD dissertation. While the APA does not condone such an expectation, the APA recommends that placing departments provide formal and informal education to support their students' ability to meet any such expectation for certain positions. Formal support may include coursework specifically dedicated to philosophical writing, while informal support may include regular writing workshops available to both graduate students and junior faculty.

In preparing to apply for positions in which teaching is emphasized, departments should find ways to assist their graduate students to evidence pedagogical expertise. Some teaching-focused institutions look for candidates with teaching awards, publications in the scholarship of teaching and learning, innovative teaching, service to the public (public philosophy), and concrete evidence of success in the classroom.

Departments should be familiar with special issues that candidates from underrepresented groups, including candidates with disabilities, may face as they seek a position. They should be ready to speak frankly and supportively to candidates about these matters. Placement directors or other designated faculty should offer concrete assistance in addressing particular needs or concerns of such candidates. For instance, they should be aware of the effects of experiencing stereotype threat, and the range of material challenges that a disabled philosopher might find involved in a campus visit. Departments should be familiar with protocols for reporting problems if they should arise.

Given the challenging job market in philosophy, graduate students should be encouraged to be prepared for alternatives to a career as a philosophy professor. Again, departments might invite back successful graduate program alumni who have pursued alternative career paths. For additional suggestions, see the APA's [Good Practices Guide](#), section 3.

Finally, given the challenges of the job market, placing departments should consider the length and type of support they are prepared to offer long-time, recurring, and once-again job seekers: past graduates who have held a series of adjunct positions, but still aspire to a tenure-track position; graduates who are seeking a new position after a tenure denial; graduates who are returning to academia after raising a family or managing a health issue; etc. Placing departments are encouraged to respond to these issues.

B. Preparing Candidates to Apply

Departments should make sure that their practices with regard to the nomination of candidates and submission of dossiers conforms to the APA's [Statement on Placement Practices](#).

Departments should know the APA's [Statement on Academic Freedom and Questionable Employment Practices](#). They should review the censure lists of the [APA](#) and [AAUP](#) and inform candidates if they are considering applying to institutions on this list.

Departments should communicate with each candidate to outline the process of hiring in the profession. This communication should address key moments of the process and the production of dossiers. Regular email contact is often a source of moral support for job seekers as well as of information for departments.

Departments should advise job seekers to consult [PhilJobs: Jobs for Philosophers](#) as well as [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), web resources, and job-related publications from other disciplines, as appropriate. Many adjunct and two-year college teaching positions are advertised only locally, if at all. Departments should advise jobs seekers to check regularly with the human resources websites of the institutions where they would like to work.

Note that ads in [PhilJobs: Jobs for Philosophers](#) must indicate whether the hiring process will conform to the APA's [Statement on the Job Market Calendar](#); if it will not, an explanation for the departure from the standard calendar must be provided.

Departments should advise job seekers to have realistic expectations and to be open to the variety of careers that may be pursued in philosophy. Departments should help job seekers understand the different types of academic positions: tenure-track vs. non-tenure-track positions; two-year vs. four-year college or university positions; teaching vs. research positions, temporary vs. continuing adjunct positions; etc. Departments should also provide advice about collegiality, service expectations, what departments look for in a candidate, and so on.

Departments should hold placement workshops for students planning to go on the market in the next academic year, and encourage the attendance of all students who might be entering the market. Workshops should give students an overview of the search process, and information specific to local practices about when materials need to be prepared, submitted to letter writers, and so on. Departments should encourage students to be aware of their web presence. Members of hiring committees and university officials often search the web for information about candidates. Personal web pages should be professional and graduate students should reflect on the fact that items put on the web are often difficult to remove. Candidates should be encouraged to review the privacy settings on their social networking accounts.

C. Dossiers

Departments should be aware that students do not have experience in compiling a dossier. Departments should advise students about appropriate content and format of the materials in their dossiers.

Job seekers will usually need to have two dossiers: one for positions that are teaching-focused, and one for positions that are not. The CV, research interest statement, and teaching statement should be revised for these two different types of institutions.

A standard dossier will contain the following:

1. Cover letter templates for different types of positions
2. A CV with contact information, higher educational history, AOS(s) and AOC(s), the title of the dissertation and the committee membership, a list of publications, a list of conference presentations, list of service to the department and/or the profession, graduate courses taken, and courses the candidate is now prepared to teach
3. Letters from research advisors and teaching mentors
4. A teaching statement outlining the candidate's approach to teaching, areas of teaching interest, and experience in the classroom
5. Syllabi for courses taught as well as for courses the candidate is now prepared to teach
6. Course teaching evaluations, if available (both quantitative and qualitative, along with a summary of data)

The following are additional items that job seekers will need in their dossiers in order to apply for positions in which expert scholarship is expected:

7. A writing sample that reflects the candidate's special expertise but which is accessible to general audiences
8. A statement of research interest

The following are additional items that applicants will need in their dossiers in order to apply for teaching-focused positions:

9. A complete teaching portfolio, which may include the following:
 - (a) Teaching Statement (as in item 5 above)
 - What is distinctive about your approach to teaching?
 - What are your learning objectives for students?
 - Areas of teaching interest
 - Courses taught with paragraph-long descriptions
 - Examples of successful teaching
 - (b) Training in Teaching
 - Development workshops (NEH Institutes, and AAPT, experiential learning, and writing-across-the-curriculum workshops)
 - (c) Recognition of Teaching Expertise
 - Teaching Awards (with some context: departmental award, university-wide award, etc.)
 - SoTL publications
 - SoTL conference presentations
 - Leadership positions (graduate TA mentor or leader, AAPT officer, APA teaching committee member, etc.)
 - (d) Teaching evaluations (as in item 7 above)

- Summary of data (formatted for easy reading)
 - Qualitative feedback (refer back to your teaching objectives and demonstrate how the student feedback bears out these objectives)
 - Quantitative feedback (copies of original documents)
 - Testimonials or recommendation letters from students (no more than two)
- (e) Sample Syllabi, handouts, and assignments
- Intro-level course: Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Ethics, Critical Thinking or Logic
 - Intermediate-level undergraduate course with writing instruction
 - Advanced course in your area of specialization, including area listed in job ad
10. A letter of recommendation from a pedagogical professional or teaching mentor (e.g., a director of teaching center, graduate teaching director, or teaching mentor) who has observed and advised you in your teaching

Some hiring departments request transcripts, which may at early stages be unofficial copies.

Some departments ask candidates for a diversity statement describing how their skills and experience could contribute to campus equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts.

Some departments now request that dossiers be formatted for anonymous review. Departments should prepare candidates for this possibility.

Letters of recommendation and teaching letters are two important pieces of the dossier, and students and faculty alike should have an understanding of what makes for good letters.

Letters of recommendation should be honest evaluations of a candidate's philosophical and professional abilities. Faculty should only write letters of recommendation when they have good knowledge of a candidate's abilities. Faculty who write letters of recommendation should limit their statements to the candidate's (1) philosophical ability, (2) work ethic, (3) teaching ability, and (4) any other information that can affect the candidate's ability as a professional philosopher and member of an academic community.

An important part of the dossier is evidence of teaching effectiveness. At a minimum, each candidate needs a letter from a teaching mentor or other faculty member who has observed and can report on a candidate's abilities. It is best if departments can arrange for candidates to have multiple teaching observations over an extended time, allowing for a more complete evaluation and for candidate growth in response to feedback.

For further information, see the APA's [Good Practices Guide](#) on Letters of Recommendation and Teaching Letters.

It is preferable for departments either to hold copies of the candidate's letters of reference to be sent out to schools at the candidate's request or to inform candidates about dossier services. This will give candidates some measure of control over the timing of letters being sent out (rather than relying on multiple faculty to send many letters with a variety of deadlines) and ease the burden on faculty (who are otherwise required to send many copies of the same letter with a variety of deadlines).

Keeping the entire dossier of each candidate ready for copying and shipping can impose a substantial administrative burden on placing departments. And there are some hiring institutions that require job applicants to submit their materials using a specific online dossier service. Placing departments should be aware that some online dossier services can be expensive for candidates who use them. Where possible, the departments should consider assisting candidates with those costs.

Confidential letters of reference should be reviewed by placement directors for consistency about important dates (e.g., the date of the dissertation defense) and for inaccuracies (e.g., in statements about when the candidate entered the program or what courses the candidate has taught). Any clear inaccuracies should be brought to the attention of the letter writer and corrected if possible. Placement directors also should review letters for significantly inappropriate material (e.g., intentional or unintentional “poison pills,” unprofessional comments) and confer, if possible, with the author of the letter about the advisability of removing or revising this material.

Departments should be aware that the letters of reference prepared for institutions that expect research may be inappropriate for some teaching-focused institutions. Letters that focus on research and include a line such as “while I have never seen her teach, Dr. X is an outgoing person so I am sure that she will teach well” can be unintentional “poison pills.” The best practice is for candidates to have two sets of letters, one for teaching-focused institutions and another for other institutions. The best letters of reference for teaching-focused institutions will show a solid knowledge of a candidate’s teaching abilities based on review of course materials (e.g., syllabi, handouts, etc.), analysis of teaching evaluations, and multiple personal classroom observations.

Departments should be aware of coded language that invites biased assessments of candidates. For example, describing women as “hard-hitting,” but men as “brilliant” tends to exacerbate stereotypes and does not have much informational value.

D. First-Round Interviews

Departments should arrange at least one mock first-round interview for job candidates and ensure that appropriate feedback is provided. The best practice for candidates planning to apply for both teaching-focused positions and those that are not teaching-focused is to arrange two mock interviews. Departments should consider asking faculty at local teaching-focused institutions (e.g., a local liberal arts or two-year college) to participate in a mock interview. The teaching-focused mock interview offered by placing departments should not merely be varied from the non-teaching-focused mock interviews by a single extra question: “Tell us about your teaching.” Some effort should be made to distinguish among the various kinds of teaching-focused institutions. There are significant differences in expectations at elite liberal arts colleges which require a 3-2 teaching load, and at regional comprehensives which require a 4-4 teaching load.

Since most first-round interviews will be telephone or internet-based, departments should help candidates prepare for interviews in these formats. Whenever possible, placing departments should arrange for job seekers to use their institution’s video conference room for internet-based interviews and offer an opportunity to conduct a test run.

A few schools still conduct first-round in-person interviews at the APA Eastern Division meeting, so placement directors should be aware of the APA’s [Statement on Hotel Room Interviews](#) and assist candidates when there are violations of this policy.

Placement directors should be aware of the APA’s [Best Practices for Interviewing](#).

E. On-Campus Interviews

Departments should help candidates prepare for on-campus interviews. For example, they should assist candidates in arranging mock research presentations and help them prepare for their teaching

demonstrations. The APA Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy, from time to time, offers a workshop as part of the AAPT-APA Teaching Hub on how job seekers can prepare for the teaching demonstration.

F. Job Offers

Departments should be aware of the APA's [Statement on Offers of Employment](#) and be prepared to assist candidates as they consider offers.

G. Placement Records

Departments should publish complete and accurate placement records on their websites, subject to protections for privacy of students.

The APA recommends that published statistics should include the following (not all of this information is specifically related to placement; these items also include useful information for prospective students):

- the number of students applying to the program by year
- the number of students accepted into the program by year
- information about the profile of accepted students (GRE scores, sending institution, etc.)
- the number of students enrolling into the program by year
- the graduation rate of each cohort of incoming students
- the placement of each and every graduating student, including placements beyond the academy

Departments should not mislead prospective students by reporting only those successful candidates who found jobs, but should make available all placement data, including placements beyond the academy. Individual student identities should not be made public, although hiring institutions should be identified.