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TO: All students (who think they are) on the 2016/17 job market  
FROM: Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, Placement Directors  
Date: July 25, 2016  
RE: Frequently Asked Questions about the Job Market (#1)



(Note: FAQ #1 covers the Job Market from now to early November. Later memos will cover applications, the meetings, and the interviews.)

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## 1. Being “On the Market”

*Q: How do I know if I should be “on the market” this year?*

A: If you have a strong paper that will make for a good presentation this Fall and that will be in good shape for wide distribution before Thanksgiving, and if you also have other papers that can be completed to form an acceptable dissertation by late Spring 2017, you should probably be on the market. When in doubt ask your advisors.

*Q: When can I pull off the market with no damage?*

A: If you pull off the market before the department posts the CVs, there is no damage. The posting is in late Oct. Have a “heart to heart” talk with your advisor(s) before mid-October. See timetable for when.

## 2. The Paper and Presentation

*Q: Should I worry about how my paper and the abstract are written?*

A: Absolutely. Even if your paper is highly technical, the introduction and especially the abstract must be accessible to a broad audience. A poorly written paper in any field reduces the credibility of its contents. What you make of your ideas—how you motivate them, how they are expressed—is almost as important as the content. Remember that there are only a few truly great ideas but a multitude of good ones. Chances are that yours is in the latter category. Almost any good idea can be made interesting, stimulating, clear, and accessible to all. Even great ideas can be made inaccessible and boring. To learn more, carefully read “The Ten Most Important Rules of Writing Your Job Market Paper” (to follow).

*Q: I have written several papers that are all in good form for circulation and presentation. Which should I say is my “job market paper”?*

A: Having more than one presentable paper is a plus, but it is *not necessary*. In most cases, you will want to identify as your job market paper the one that best displays your skills and is the best forecast of your research agenda. In special cases you can identify a job market paper for one audience (e.g., theory) and one for another (e.g., finance). You can *post* all of your papers, but note which is the job market paper. Readers will probably read one paper carefully and dip into another, so you need to signal which paper(s) they should read first.

*Q: Can I use a co-authored paper as my job market paper?*

A: Yes. It is fine to use a paper co-authored with another student so long as you are not both on the market with the same paper. It *may* be reasonable if the co-author is a faculty member, but you should discuss the situation with us because it depends on the degree to which the topic is closely identified with the faculty member.

*Q: Should I present my paper at one of the workshops in the Fall?*

A: Yes, except in special circumstances (such as having given the paper a few times already), you should sign up to give a presentation in the Fall, preferably before Tuesday, October 18.

### **3. The Market for Economists**

*Q: How good will the market for economists be this year?*

A: The academic market tends to depend on recent years' capital market returns and state fiscal positions. The private sector tends to depend on recent years' capital market returns and expected economic growth. We expect a good market, but we will know more when the JOE ads appear. On the whole, you should not worry about the macroeconomic state of the academic job market. Economists generally do very well, particularly Harvard PhDs. Your paper, presentation and skills are more important than aggregate market conditions.

### **4. The CV and Webpage**

*Q: What should my CV include and how long should it be? What about my webpage?*

A: A "style sheet" or "template" for your CV has been posted on the department website. You *must* follow it. A CV is generally 2-4 pages and should include your research fields, teaching interests, relevant work experience, education, contact information, reference names (generally 3; can be 4 or 5), and brief but informative abstracts of your papers. All of this is spelled out in the "style sheet." You *must* also have a webpage. A set of instructions for constructing your webpage is also on our website. The abstracts of your papers are extremely important and must be written for a general economics audience. Abstracts generally do not have references and are not the first and last paragraphs of your paper. Write them and then rewrite them many times. Give them to your friends and see if they can instantly figure out what your paper concerns (and be interested in it).

*Q: What are fields and how should I identify my research and teaching fields?*

A: Broader fields are better than narrow ones for both teaching and research fields. A narrow field can be listed as a second or third one. Your teaching fields should be ones that are given at the institutions to which you are applying. Broad fields (e.g., Applied micro-theory; Econometrics) can be listed as second or third teaching fields. Ask your advisors for advice.

### **5. Your Advisors and References**

*Q: When should I talk with my advisors about the job market?*

A: As soon as possible talk with your advisors about being on the job market. And talk with them again before October to discuss your paper and placement desires and needs.

*Q: Who should write my letters of recommendation and how many do I need?*

A: You should have at least 3 references, but you could have one or two more. References are generally your dissertation advisors, but could include others who know your teaching abilities or research skills. You should ask each of the individuals whether they consent to write a letter *before* you list them on your CV. Letters concerning teaching are important for liberal arts colleges.

*Q: Why does the department have a faculty "job market meeting" and when is it?*

A: As Placement Directors we need to know what you are working on to inform prospective employers. We also need to know your needs and desires. We could ask each advisor separately, but the least time-intensive way to collect the information is to have a meeting of all advisors. The best time to have the meeting is mid- to late-October, before we get calls from employers and after you have spoken with your advisors. We will also be meeting with each of you to understand your work and your special needs. These meetings will be set up the week of Oct. 10.

### **6. The AEA Meetings, Chicago, January 6-8, 2017**

*Q: When do I need to arrange hotel accommodations and where should I stay?*

A: You will need to register in advance for the AEA annual meetings to receive the negotiated hotel rates during the conference. Registration for the conference opens in late August and you may begin to book your hotel rooms in early September. You should make reservations early—generally in

September or October (check the AEA's website <http://www.aeaweb.org>). Stay in one of the nearby hotels (those giving special AEA rates). We advise staying in the main AEA headquarters hotel, but others are generally fine because they are usually geographically close.

## **7. What's next?**

*Q: What do the Placement Chairs do?*

A: The roles of the Placement Chairs are to keep you on track, advise you about logistics and provide the optimal placement for you. We will be having a meeting the week of Sept. 19 to discuss general job market issues. Our website (to be updated) <http://economics.harvard.edu/pages/job-market-information> will help you create your CV and webpage and has lots of other information including "The Ten Most Importance Rules of Writing Your Job Market Paper."

*Q: I have heard about a website called "Econ Job Market Rumors." Is it something I should look at?*

A: This website may have been instituted to provide information about jobs. But it has too often become a forum for hateful comments, inaccurate information and confusing advice. We advise you not to pay any attention to it and not to take seriously advice or gossip others may tell you came from *Econ Job Market Rumors*. It is probably best to ignore it altogether. If you have a question, just ask us.