
TO: All students (who think they are) on the 2020/21 job market
FROM: Placement Committee
RE: Frequently Asked Questions about the Job Market (#1)



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 2020, you should probably be on the market. When in doubt ask your advisors.

Q: What can I do to make the most of the job market?

A: Getting in a good healthy mindset from the get-go will be critical to how you navigate the next six months. The market is not about proving to others that you and your paper are “right”, instead it is about showing future peers what you can do and what type of person you are. This means you need to be critical of your own work, and not over claim. You also need to be practice being a good both enjoyable and interesting to talk to. This means you should take an interest in the work of others as well as your own.

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.

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. The better option is to refer to **EconTrack: Job Information Board** which now provides job candidates with reliable information about the status of open positions during the annual job market cycle. This service is hosted by the AEA and is intended to provide verified and up-to-date information in a professional climate. <http://www.aeaweb.org/econtrack>.

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. Given the current situation, we expect a reduction in the number of academic jobs available both this year and for several years to come. We do know that places will be hiring; both academic and non-academic and as the JOE ads appear, we will have more information.

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- 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, including possible preferences for private sector, public-sector and geographical constraints. We encourage you now to do some reflecting and gain some self-knowledge rather than figuring out what you like by trying everything on the job market and then turning down a good academic job in Ohio because you would rather live in Manhattan.

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 in September and then also in November to discuss general job market issues. Our website <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.”

6. The Importance of Mental Health and Wellness

Q: What mental health resources are available to support the job market process?

A: We recognize the job market is an incredibly stressful time and feel it is crucial that you manage the process in the best way possible. Aside from utilizing department resources, Harvard offers several resources to support improving wellbeing including; [The Center for Wellness, Harvard University Health Services](#), and the GSAS Student Services Office.

7. The AEA Meetings, January 3-5, 2021

Q: Do I need to Register if I am only planning to do interviews?

A: Due to the cancellation of the in-person meeting, the AEA will not be providing job interview services as part of the virtual meeting. Students should continue to take advantage of the [JOE Network](#) for your job listings and letter writing, as well as the application module that includes a tool for scheduling interviews with applicants. The AEA also continues to provide the [Signaling](#) and [Job Market Scramble](#) services as well as the [EconTrack Job Information Board](#). The [Ad Hoc Committee on the Job Market](#) offers guidance and periodic updates on conditions in the job market.