



HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Job Market (#3)

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### 1. Packets and their submission

*How many packets should I submit?*

- We advise at the very least 70. As a general rule: apply to any job you would take if you had no other offers.

*When should I submit them?*

- The first two weeks of November. You will want to submit your applications prior to the holiday so you should aim to have all your applications done by Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> at the latest. However, be mindful of deadlines as some will come before that date.
- Another issue concerns your letters of reference. Unless some of your letters have arrived, your materials probably won't get read. Therefore, you should tell your advisors (Faculty Assistants) when you will be sending out your packets.

*Do I clear the list with my advisor?*

- Yes. You don't want to apply to places that are *considerably* higher than your advisor thinks are reasonable. In most cases, your advisor will ask that you bring (or e-mail) the list and that you go over it together. Your advisor will probably want to know which places have already solicited packets from you.

*What happens if my packet is solicited?*

- Send it out immediately. If you are still working on your paper, then answer the e-mail (or phone call) and tell the staff assistant that the packet will be in the mail soon. If you have already sent your packet to that particular place, call the staff assistant and explain that "it is in the mail." This is important so that the packet can be shifted from the unsolicited to the solicited pile.
- If your application is solicited and you are not interested, be sure to communicate this with the placement committee as it may indicate a mixed signal.

*What do I include in my mailing?*

- You should include the generic letter of introduction (unless this is a solicitation or a letter to a liberal arts college or other special academic or non-academic institution), your CV, and your paper(s). If your packet has been solicited, the cover letter should say something like: "I am responding to your request for my CV and job market paper" or "Professor <Smith> requested that I submit my CV and job market paper for consideration." Don't spend time on the cover letter (unless it is to a liberal arts college, etc.). No one of consequence to the decision ever reads it, certainly not Professor <Smith>.

*Should I include teaching evaluations?*

- You should if the advertisement asks for them or if the packet is going to a liberal arts college or another that values teaching highly. In general you do not have to and probably shouldn't.

*What happens if I have already sent a packet and then the school or institution solicits it?*

- Just call (or e-mail) the staff assistant and alert him or her to this fact. Your packet will then be plucked out of the "unsolicited" pile and placed in the "solicited" pile, if the place uses that type of designation.

*Should I apply to schools (or institutions) that advertise for field X if I'm in field Y?*

- If the fields are close, then apply. If the school advertising isn't interested in a researcher in that field and you can teach it (for example, if a liberal arts college advertised in econometrics and your secondary field in applied econometrics) then apply. But if the place is a large research university and the advertised field is Macro and

you are in Public Finance, it will be a long shot. There are some exceptions. Your advisor might tell you that s/he has lots of friends at “Gooney State” and will be calling them. Then apply. If in doubt, then apply.

*Do any schools still accept paper applications?*

- The general answer is no. Most all job postings will require that you submit your application through econjobmarket. Some Universities, including the University of California schools have their own on-line system so you will need to apply through that system directly.

## **2. Letters of reference and their mailing**

*How can I make life easier for my advisor?*

- Provide your advisor with a polished draft of your completed job market paper as soon as possible. Providing a draft in September rather than two weeks before the letter is due is going to significantly decrease the chances that your letter arrives late.

*How can I make life easier for my advisors' staff assistant?*

- Ask him/her how they would like you to format the information and then follow the instructions of the Faculty Assistant. This is very important. Each has a system that works so just follow their lead.

*Will my references tailor their letters to the schools/institutions to which I apply?*

- Generally not. The usual rule is “one letter fits all.” This occasionally means that if you apply to places that are higher than your advisor thinks are appropriate, the letter will be scaled. (This isn't always the case, but it is often true.) There are instances in which a paragraph will be altered. For example, if a student applies to a few liberal arts colleges, a paragraph could be added explaining that the student is a dedicated teacher. This is, of course, up to your advisor. It creates more trouble for both your advisor and the staff assistant. But it is routinely done by some people.

*How do you check up on whether your letters were sent and whether your packet is complete?*

- If you are concerned about your solicited files, you can call the staff assistant at the beginning of December and inquire. When solicited files remain incomplete during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December, staff assistants often send e-mails informing the applicant.

## **3. Interviews**

*If I send out my packets in mid-November, when should I expect to hear back from places?*

- A few places will begin scheduling interviews around the end of November, but the vast majority of universities and institutions will not make up their schedule until the first or second week of December. Interviews continue to be scheduled until the last week of December. (See also the answer to “When should I send out my packets?” above.)

*What is the right number of interviews? What is a number that is too low and what do I do if I am not getting enough interviews?*

- Although it varies by field, you should have at least 10 to 12 interviews by the time you go to the meetings. You should not have more than 22 to 24 unless some are scheduled on Thursday and Sunday or you are a tri-athlete.
- If you don't have at least 6-8 interviews by around December 9<sup>th</sup> you should tell us and your advisors. Getting the interview is the key. It is rarely the case that someone who hasn't been interviewed gets a fly-out although it does happen.

*Do universities/colleges/institutions have constraints on how many people they interview?*

- The answer to this question is fairly obvious. But let's go into some detail because it will bring the process into sharper focus. The same constraints that you face when you are scheduling your interviews face the interviewing schools when they schedule theirs. The only possible way that their time constraints differ from yours is if they “double interview” (i.e., have 2 interview rooms and 2 interview teams). Therefore, just as you couldn't schedule more than 24 interviews (and that is far more than one person can endure), they cannot either.

*What happens if I discover in mid-December that I have more interviews than I can handle and want to cancel a few of the marginal cases?*

- By all means cancel the interview. The interviewing school will be more than pleased to be able to schedule another interview. Remember that their interviewing constraints are the same as yours and they would rather

interview candidates who have more than a 10% probability of accepting an offer than one who would rather be watching Saturday morning cartoons than come to the interview.

#### **4. Other items**

*My fiancé wants us to visit relatives in December. Can I go and, if so, when?*

- If the relatives are in cell phone range and if there is Internet service, then you can go just about anytime. You should have someone in Cambridge check your snail-mail box and be prepared to send out more packets. The bottom line is that we are no longer tethered to our phones in Cambridge and can move around (most of) the world with little loss of information.

*When are most of the interviews settled?*

- Most will be done by December 23<sup>rd</sup>, although some interviews are set up as late as just before New Year's.

*When will the practice interviews be held?*

- Practice interviews are scheduled for December 1 and 2. We strongly recommend that you practice and polish your spiel and conduct at least 3 other practice interviews prior to the faculty mock interview. This will help you to get the most out of it.