

The Interview Process

PDCO Career Resources

If you are selected as one of the top candidates for a position, you will be invited to begin the interview process. This usually starts with a screening interview completed by phone or video conference with members of the search committee. If the initial interview goes well, you will be invited for an on-campus interview.

Telephone/Video Interviews

If you are selected for a screening interview, you will receive an e-mail from the search committee indicating that they would like to schedule an interview with you over the phone or via video conference (Skype, WebEx, etc.). If possible, you will want to ask who will be involved in conducting the interview. Knowing this information will help you to better prepare for the kinds of questions you might be asked (see below for some examples).

Before the Interview

- Confirm the time that the interview will take place and remember to account for time zone changes.
- Ensure that you can take the phone call or make the video call in a location where you will not be disturbed. Pick an area with a simple background to place your laptop and ensure there is enough lighting for the interviewers to see you.
- Make sure you have the contact information of the individual(s) who will be interviewing you, in case you need to reach them before the interview.
- Conduct a mock phone/Skype interview with PDCO or a friend to receive feedback on your tone, eye contact and engagement.

Research the institution and department

- Review your application materials and the job advertisement to remind yourself of what the department is seeking and how you fit their needs.
- If you haven't already done so, take the time to learn about the school and department. Knowing the institution's mission statement can be helpful in answering the question of why you want to work at that institution.
- Conduct web and library searches for information on publications by department members.
- If you are applying for a predominately teaching position, research the department's current course catalogue. Be prepared to tell the search committee about courses you

would be willing to teach that are already on the books, and what courses you would like to offer that would expand the department's course offerings.

During the Interview

- Take the time to write down questions you may have or any other information you might want accessible during the interview. On a phone interview, no one will see you refer to these notes. For a video interview, consider having sticky notes on your screen to remind you of relevant information.
- For a video interview, make sure you look at the camera, not the faces on the screen. This will make it appear that you are making eye contact or looking at the interviewers rather than looking down.
- Be sure to have some questions ready that you want to ask the interviewers. These questions can show your interest in the position and your knowledge of their department or institution.

After the Interview

- Since you can't shake hands over the phone or through a computer screen, try to say goodbye to each person individually.
- Send a 'thank-you' e-mail within 48 hours of the interview. If possible, send one to each person you interviewed with. Reiterate (briefly!) your interest in the position and why you are qualified for it. If there were any follow-ups discussed in the interview or memorable comments, mention those in the note as well.
- If all goes well, you may be asked to attend an on-campus interview within a few weeks.

On-campus Interview

The on-campus interview will typically be 1 or 2 days, where you will meet with the department chair, faculty, dean, and potentially students and postdocs. Usually, there will be social engagements that occur during this time, such as meals and car rides, as well as formal meetings and talks, such as job talks, chalk talks, and teaching demonstrations.

Be prepared to have formal and informal conversations with your future peers about your research, educational background, and interests. This is a time for them to learn about you, but also for you to get to know them. At this stage, the search committee is confident you are qualified for the position. They are now searching for a colleague they will enjoy working with.

Do your research before the interview

Research the Institution

Johns Hopkins Medical Institute Professional Development and Career Office

<http://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/>

Make an appointment to develop a career strategy and optimize your job search tools

Before you step into your interview, you will want to research the institution. Collect information on the department's course offerings and the research expertise of the faculty. What are their teaching and research strengths? Learning this information makes you more knowledgeable and confident before the interview. Furthermore, it allows the interviewers to see that you genuinely care about this position and their department.

Preparing for the interview

Current research

As a general rule of thumb, there will be more specialists in your discipline in a larger department than in a smaller department, so prepare your job talk appropriately. Develop two synopses of your research: one for experts, and one for non-experts. Make sure to practice them both.

Teaching Experience

Think about your general teaching philosophy as well as well as your methods in the classroom. Be prepared to talk about what you have been teaching, what you can teach, and what you would like to teach. Consider discussing specifics about how you would teach introductory courses; such as the texts, materials, and technology that would be used in the classroom. For teaching-intensive schools, you may be asked to do a teaching demo; and in some cases, committees have asked candidates to do both a teaching demo and a traditional, research-oriented job talk.

Future Research Plans

Prepare to show the search committee and your future colleagues what your research interventions are and the impact they can make on your field and their department. Sketch out your research plans for the next year, the next five years, and the next ten years. Give thoughtful consideration towards applying for appropriate grant funding and show the department that you are capable of fully carrying out the scope of your research plans. Be ready to express your ideas convincingly, even if they are preliminary.

Read your potential colleagues work

Research the work of your colleagues and other individuals in your prospective department. This shows that you are serious about working with them and contributing to their department. Demonstrate why you want to work with these scholars, and why working with them would be essential to your research.

Key piece of advice – When you meet one on one with your potential colleagues, have a conversation about their science instead of talking about your science. Do not make the meeting

about your research, as they have already been to your talk and read your papers. Show them the type of colleague you will be, this interview is about fit.

Sample Questions

Research Interview

- Why did you choose your dissertation/postdoctoral topic?
- Why did you choose to focus on this area?
- What is the significance of your research?
- What will your next research project be?
- Tell me where your research will be in 5 years.
- What are your plans for applying for external funding?

Teaching Interview

- Describe your philosophy of teaching.
- How do you motivate students?
- Describe a course you have taught in the past.
- How have you evaluated student learning in the past?
- How have you used technology in the classroom?
- Describe your ideal course. What does the syllabus look like? What texts would you use?

Illegal Interview Questions

It may be helpful to know that employers cannot lawfully ask you questions that lead to unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, physical disability, or sexual orientation. However, these questions still may be asked, especially in social situations such as during meals. Try to respond to such questions calmly, answering the concerns they have without volunteering the information they request. For example:

Question: Do you plan to have children?

Answer: I see that you're concerned about my commitment to this position. Let me tell you about my research plans for the next few years. I plan to pursue them, regardless of what personal decisions I make.

Asking the search committee questions

At the end of every interview, the search committee will ask: "Do you have any questions for us?" The right answer is yes, or you risk appearing uninterested and underprepared for the interview. Prepare some questions in advance after doing some research on the institution and department,

but make sure only to ask questions that were not already discussed in the interview. Questions about salary and benefits are not appropriate to ask at this time; wait until you have been offered the position.

Questions to ask at Research Universities

- "I'd like to know more about sources of travel support on campus."
- "Could you tell me about teaching-release possibilities on campus?"
- "I'm interested to know how the graduate students are supported. Could you tell me more about that?"

Questions to ask at Teaching-Oriented Colleges

- "I'd like to know more about the students; what do they tend to do after graduation?"
- "I'd like to hear about opportunities for collaborative (and/or interdisciplinary) teaching on campus."

Additional Resources

- UCSF provides a [good set of tips](#) for preparing for your academic interview
- [Cornell University, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs- 'Interviews for Academic Positions'](#)
- [Making the Most of a Skype Interview](#)