

## Guide for Political Science Ph.D. Students on the Academic Job Market

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### I) Where do you find out where the jobs are?

#### Canada:

- Polcan, the CPSA listserve available at <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/polcan.shtml>
- *Careers* section of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) publication, *CAUT Bulletin*, available on-line <http://www.cautbulletin.ca/>.

#### United States:

- APSA E-jobs website ([http://www.apsanet.org/section\\_226.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_226.cfm)). You must be an APSA member to access it – your supervisor or other committee members might be APSA members who can arrange to provide you with access.
- ISA E-jobs listings: <http://www.isanet.org/ejobs/>.
- Chronicle of Higher Education.
- The APSA site does have other useful resources for job possibilities: [http://www.apsanet.org/section\\_412.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_412.cfm)

**United Kingdom** (Note that jobs in the UK are often advertised much later in the year than North American jobs):

- <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/>
- Times Higher Education Supplement ([http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/jobs\\_home.asp?navCode=84](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/jobs_home.asp?navCode=84)).

#### Australia and New Zealand:

- <http://www.unijobs.com.au/>.
- *The Australian* newspaper Wednesday higher education section.

#### Elsewhere/ Multi-country:

- Several of the above sites advertise jobs in other areas of the world (Asia, other Europe, South/ Central America). Below are a few other major multi-region job sites.
- Academic Careers Online: <http://www.academiccareers-job.com>. Universities and colleges in Canada, the US, and around the world, advertise faculty, research, and administrative jobs.
- HigherEdJobs (<https://www.higheredjobs.com/search/default.cfm>). Jobs all over the world (both faculty and staff positions).

#### Post-Doctoral Positions:

- Available as Scholarships through SSHRC: <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/index-eng.aspx>.

- Killam Post-Doctoral Fellowships which can be held at UBC, Dalhousie, University of Alberta, and University of Calgary: <http://www.killamtrusts.ca/>.
- European University Institute (Florence): <http://www.eui.eu/ServicesAndAdmin/AcademicService/PostdoctoralFellowships/MaxWeberFellowships/Index.aspx>
- Other universities may have their own internal Post-Doc positions, as UBC has had through Liu Institute, Centre of International Relations, so check relevant University Department website for information.

## II) Application Strategy: Where to Apply

1) Many people need **two rounds** in order to land a job. First-time around: apply **selectively** or to those positions that are plausible? Depends upon how advanced you are: it doesn't do you any good usually to apply when you are too early, as faculty's impression will be "she didn't have anything interesting to say...". For personal, family, geographic, linguistic and other reasons you may still want to apply selectively to particular positions even if you are not going fully on the market just in case.

If you are advanced enough, apply everywhere you can plausibly fit the position and that is a plausible place for you. Don't apply to places where you wouldn't go even if you were offered a position, or for which you're obviously not a good match (IR and your major is political theory or vice versa, etc).

Some professors / departments take the view that applicants should have publications to be seriously considered, which obviously puts you at a disadvantage if you are just putting your draft dissertation chapters together and don't have publications. From the perspective of a potential employer I personally think that is a silly position to take as it means you are taking yourself out of the running and won't consider potential excellent talent that is just at an early and appropriate point in their program. Bottom line: while having publications is always better all things considered equal, just because you don't doesn't mean you can't be competitive on the job market. However, after you have finished the dissertation, if you still are on the market without publications, it does start to count against you more and more; the longer you are on the job market without any success, the harder it generally becomes as people start to wonder why you haven't gotten any offers.

2) Note that there are many different kinds of positions that may be advertised: tenure-track Assistant Professor, 1 year visiting professor, sessional instructor, lecturer (equivalent in UK, Australia to Assistant Professor), as well as postdoctoral fellows. Advertisements for limited term positions and post-docs often come later in the academic year, sometimes quite late into the spring or even summer.

3) Department Support: The Poli Sci department will pay for the costs of mailing by regular mail and photocopying materials, though not for courier expenses. Keep all receipts and submit to Dory.

4) Differences between Canadian and other markets. Complexity of US market:

- Large, elite research universities (Harvard, Berkeley, etc.)
- Smaller elite research universities (Stanford, etc.)
- Large or medium-sized upper / middle-ranking universities (e.g, Big Ten schools, Villanova, etc.).
- Large mediocre universities, many state schools. Many of these more teaching-oriented (e.g., Univ of Louisville).
- Smaller, teaching-focused universities and colleges. Public or private liberal arts colleges.

Jobs at Teaching-Oriented Colleges.

- Somewhat of a different world.
  - teaching is number 1
  - institutional culture more important
  - fit as a colleague more important
  - people teach a wider variety of subjects
  - generally heavier teaching load, less research expected. The most elite colleges are exceptions to this.
  - In sum, smaller institution, smaller departments, more student-focused.
- Implications:
  - If you apply, you must sell yourself as a teacher first and foremost. Cover letter is key in this – first few paragraphs all about teaching. Just one or two on research.
  - Must convince them that you are serious about the job, that it is plausible for you to take the job. Again, cover letter. Investigate the college and show evidence of this knowledge.
  - Also, they are looking for good colleagues, people who are service-oriented.
  - You will probably be asked to give a job talk and a lecture to undergrads.
  - Reference letters from faculty- faculty should be made aware that you are applying to liberal arts college.

### **III) Application Package: Cover letter**

Don't make it too long – about 2 pages. If it's three or 4+ people may think you're long winded and will be like that in teaching / writing (and they may be right) and might skim, missing things: be focused, sharp.

Tell them why you're a **good fit** with their position and excited about their position – training (your coursework) / teaching interests / background.

Tell them a paragraph or two about your dissertation and other research interests

Include key claims of dissertation (not what it will do, but what it did do if possible).

Don't tell them how wonderful YOU are – 'I'm really really smart'; tell them how wonderful your **WORK** is: contributions of your dissertation: what do we know now that we didn't before / what empirical findings or theoretical innovations you have made / what the discipline gains from your work.

Tell them **what courses you *could* teach** (not just what you *want* to teach); do some homework also and where appropriate tailor this to the advertisement and/or unique features of an institution. Include brief statement of your TA evaluations or a few well-chosen quotes from evaluations if you have any.

Mention any distinctions / awards.

Edit / proofread – make sure it's addressed to right place / persons. Careless errors don't reflect well (if you can't get it right in applying for the future 40 years of your life...).

#### **IV) Application Package: Academic CV**

Begin with personal information (name, contact address, status (Ph.D. candidate, or Ph.D.) then include sections with the following

- **Post-Secondary Education**

Begin with most recent (Ph.D. Candidate, University of British Columbia), include dissertation title and supervisor / committee members, major and minor fields

Then on to M.A., B.A. and any other training you may have received such as a summer statistics program, language training, etc.

- **Research**

List projects if you have some draft articles in process, or at least areas of research interest

- **Publications** – Don't worry, many (most) Ph.D. candidates in their first job search don't have any; but if you don't, just don't include this category: don't put a section for Publications and then leave it blank!

- **Presentations / Conference Participation**

You want to demonstrate that you have already been professionally active at conferences and professional meetings; indicate whether you have been a paper presenter, chair of a panel, discussant, etc.

- **Teaching Experience and/or Interests**

List courses taught, lectures given, courses you TA'd. Also provide a list of courses you would be interested in teaching, at undergraduate and graduate levels; this can be tailored for specific jobs.

- **Awards and Distinctions**

It's fine to list undergraduate awards here, and sometimes secondary school level awards (most outstanding abc or bursary/scholarship for university, etc.).

- **Languages and/or other skills**

Proficiency in various languages / statistical or other technical competences, etc;

## **V) Application Package: Research Statement**

Requirements vary, but either in the cover letter or as a separate document you need to clearly convey your research. If it's not mentioned in the job announcement, you should put it in the cover letter, though again it should be very concise – you'll need to boil down your present (dissertation) project to perhaps two paragraphs, maybe another paragraph of implications and future directions. The statement should include:

- Clear articulation of the questions you sought to address in your work.
- Why they are important (substantively – cure the world's ills – and disciplinary: intended to address major debate, etc.)
- How you did it (method), what skills you have (method, language, stats, modeling, etc.)
- Focus, as above, on what your chief claims / findings / theoretical contributions are.
- Give them a sense of what your research agenda looks like. Do you project turning the dissertation into book / articles? Spin-off projects? Unrelated projects? Long-term research agenda?

## **VI) Application Package: Teaching Portfolio / Teaching Philosophy Statement**

As part of any application, you want to show that you are a good teacher, have great promise as a teacher and that you are committed to teaching. The degree to which this is important will vary by institution. What could be included – what makes up an effective teaching portfolio?

- Evidence of teaching effectiveness
  - provide numerical result of evaluations
  - type up some exemplary comments
  - Include all written comments, positive and negative? Might save examples of latter for bringing up in an interview as something you've learned from teaching
- Statement of teaching philosophy
  - Vague statements with jargon will fall flat.
  - Make it your own; personal experiences, history
  - Concrete examples of techniques that have worked.
  - What you have learned, how you learned from a failure
  - Show that you are flexible and that you are a learner, always looking for ways to improve rather than digging heels in with one rigid form.
- Syllabus/syllabi or descriptions of courses you would be prepared to offer, given as examples. Tailor this to positions: if they say "IR / Canadian with Canadian Foreign Policy" and you've never taught the latter, go on the web and find some syllabi to use as models, though be careful: if you put on material you've never read, in an interview you may be asked what you think of it and why it's on your syllabus – you need to defend everything that's there, even if you just say "it's widely regarded as a staple / classic in the field," "is good for generating controversial discussion and thus gets the students to really think," and so on.
- What do you need to include?
  - Two schools of thought: include everything or include only what they ask for.
  - No need to cook up multiple syllabi or descriptions for application stage. Just one example. And only for more teaching-focused places. If you get an interview, then do more.
  - Fine line between providing enough information and overwhelming the reader of the file. Every piece of info should have a clear purpose. A committee members might be reading 80 files.
- Provide this material to your supervisor and other reference-letter writers so they can say something about your teaching abilities. Even better:
  - 1) ask instructors for whom you have served as a TA to speak to your supervisor and provide them with information so they can write about your teaching abilities in their recommendation letters; and

2) ask your supervisor to visit your classroom if you are a teaching assistant or teaching your own course.

## **VII) Application Package: Writing Sample**

Some advertisements will ask for a writing sample, some will not mention it, and some will pointedly ask you not to send a writing sample (if so, they usually will ask for one if you make short list). Unless it is specified what or how much you are to send, a good rule of thumb is to send the equivalent of two dissertation chapters or articles (no monster chapters of 60 pages, it will not get read). You should look to have a polished introductory chapter or perhaps overview article of your dissertation ready for the job application process, as well as an additional more polished substantive chapter of the dissertation or other article. Papers presented at professional conferences or even better, ones accepted for publication would obviously be a good choice as well. Send your best work and choose it carefully as this sample is the crucial piece of information for many of the committee members who will be looking closely at your file.

## **VIII) Preparing for an Interview**

Congratulations! You've been notified that you will have an interview. How do you prepare?

**A) Preparing for the Visit:** Do your homework and get a sense of who is in the department and what they do, and what the environment of the department might be (ask your committee members or other faculty members if they have any information on the department that might be useful). Don't wade into Department politics yourself during an interview, but knowledge of any particular divisions that may influence preferences for a job can be helpful for you to avoid stepping on toes. Sometimes if you meet with graduate students during an interview they may clue you in on such issues; it's generally not professional to ask yourself about department controversies, though can be acceptable to inquire during the interview "is the Department a collegial atmosphere"?

### **B) Professionalism and Ethics**

Dress professionally. You want to be comfortable rather than contribute yourself to being stiff and uncomfortable throughout the interview process, but you also want to project an image of being professional and even authoritative to potential colleagues and students.

It is not appropriate for Faculty at UBC and many places elsewhere to ask - and generally not appropriate for you to be asked - questions of a personal nature, such as whether you have a partner or not, whether your partner could work in the country / city you are interviewing in, what religion you are, whether you are expecting or want to have children and so on. However, if someone asks such a question, it is a delicate issue of how to deal with it, as you want to protect your rights since such information could be to your strategic disadvantage, but at the same time you don't want to alienate potential future colleagues by seeming unfriendly or prickly. You might say "my understanding is

that in most jurisdictions / at most institutions questions concerning my personal life are not appropriate for interviews, and/or in any case they don't bear on my qualifications for the position which I'd love to talk more about..."

### C) Questions to Ask in an Interview

Be sure to ask questions when given the opportunity. You will project being engaged and engaging, motivated, interested and interesting, rather than apathetic and passive. You likely won't have time or desire to ask ALL of these questions, but they give a sense of relevant questions to consider.

Curriculum	What grad and undergrad courses do you expect the candidate for this position to teach?
Promotion/Tenure	<p>Bases for promotion and tenure?</p> <p>By what methods are faculty evaluated?</p> <p>Schedule for faculty review?</p> <p>How many faculty members were tenured / denied tenure over the last five years?</p> <p>What % tenured and how long have they been tenured?</p> <p>What has been rate of and reasons for faculty turnover?</p>
Dean	<p>Long term plans for Faculty / Department?</p> <p>How does poli sci department fit into university's long term plans?</p> <p>Who applies, who accepted, where do they go after graduating?</p> <p>What sort of programs for new faculty? Formal mentoring?</p> <p>Orientation? Written handbook?</p> <p>What resources for student research?</p> <p>Competitive grants within university?</p> <p>Sabbaticals available? How do they work?</p> <p>Who would I be negotiating with?</p> <p>What is time frame for making a decision?</p>



Head	<p>Vision for department? 5 years? 10 years?</p> <p>When was last planning exercise? Can I get copy?</p> <p>How does this position fit into planning exercise?</p> <p>Is the department growing/shrinking? What areas?</p> <p>Plans for future hires?</p> <p>Programs for new faculty?</p> <p>Legislative atmosphere regarding funding?</p> <p>Strongest departments at the University? Place of your department?</p> <p>How big is department?</p> <p>Much cross sub-field interaction? Is department unified/split across disciplinary borders?</p> <p>How often does department meet?</p> <p>How is chair determined?</p> <p>What kind of students do you attract? Where do they go when finished? Enrollment trends?</p> <p>Do students have role in decisions about hiring?</p> <p>Student role in department decisions?</p> <p>How many undergrad majors come through the program each year?</p> <p>What is available research money?</p> <p>How many courses? Which courses?</p> <p>What are the teaching expectations for this position? What is the usual number of courses taught, according to what annual schedule (often expressed as 2-2, 2-1, 3-2, etc)? Is there a start-up period with a reduced teaching load?</p> <p>How big are classes?</p> <p>Are TAs available?</p> <p>How do new ideas for courses get processed?</p> <p>What are non-teaching expectations?</p> <p>How does undergraduate and graduate advising work?</p> <p>Annual reviews for tenure?</p> <p>Who decides on tenure?</p> <p>What % tenured? Are likely to be tenured in future? Up for tenure?</p> <p>Sabbatical policy?</p> <p>What is anticipated salary? What non-salary benefits exist with position?</p> <p>How is salary determined after year 1?</p> <p>Is there collective bargaining?</p> <p>Moving expenses?</p> <p>When will decision be made?</p>
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Faculty	<p>What research is being conducted?</p> <p>What interdepartmental and intradepartmental collaboration exists?</p> <p>What support for research? Including in-house funding?</p> <p>What major funded research projects are under way now?</p> <p>What do you like best? Least?</p> <p>What are you looking for in this new position?</p> <p>Hiring priorities for department?</p> <p>Your experience as new faculty?</p> <p>Have you received sufficient mentoring by senior colleagues? What did it include?</p> <p>What do you wish you had known?</p> <p>How is higher administration?</p> <p>How often does department meet? How are decisions made?</p> <p>Students: motivated? Placements? Support for graduate and undergraduate students? Funding?</p> <p>Library?</p> <p>Collegial?</p> <p>Collaboration with department and university members?</p> <p>What do you teach?</p> <p>What would you like this position to teach?</p> <p>Size of classes?</p> <p>TA's?</p> <p>Ideas for new courses – how they get processed?</p> <p>Secretarial support?</p> <p>How is advising allocated?</p> <p>Admin responsibilities?</p> <p>How much time do you spend on teaching, research, advising?</p> <p>Annual review before tenure? Who decides about tenure? What criteria? What is unwritten criteria?</p> <p>The city – housing, crime rates, locations, cultural events?</p>
School and community	<p>What are admission requirements for grads and undergrads?</p> <p>Characterize student pop'n in terms of geographic, economic, ethnic and scholarship range. Where do students tend to come from (local/ across country/ international/ what kind of past education?)</p> <p>Cost of living?</p> <p>Childcare availability (if you're comfortable asking about it; can ask after offer if you prefer)?</p>
Search Committee	<p>What do you expect from the ideal candidate?</p> <p>Where is committee in selection process? How many candidates are being brought in for interviews? When is a decision being made?</p> <p>Work load in terms of courses, advisees, case load?</p>

## **D) Questions You May be Asked**

### **1) Teaching**

What undergraduate and graduate courses would you want to teach?

Among the courses you might teach at UBC would be undergraduate courses in (interview field) and a future course in (interview field). How would you go about teaching those courses?

Have you successfully employed any innovative teaching methods that you would bring to the department?

What is a problem you have encountered in past teaching/ TA duties, and how did you address it?

Imagine that a student in one of your classes approached you outside of class and told you that she thought your course was racist. How would you respond? (Or similar questions about negotiating diversity among students.)

How would you teach course X? In some interviews the candidate has been asked if they have a syllabus for a prospective course or course already taught.

What have been the most successful and most challenging experiences you have had teaching students?

### **2) Research**

Status and completion of dissertation

What are your plans for publishing the dissertation: book or articles? Where?

What conferences will you be attending this year?

What is your next project?

If I wanted to get a good sense of field/ topic X (something related to your research), which scholars/ books would you recommend I look at?

### **3) Miscellaneous**

What is best / most important book / article you have read (in Political Science / your field) in the last year / 10 years?

What are the major influences on your life that made you want to study political science?

Why have you always been interested in studying X?

What is your ideological orientation? What assumptions do you bring to your work?

Why does (University of xyz) interest you?

Do you see yourself as engaging with the policy community on applied policy questions in the future? If so, how? Any concerns about tensions between role as scholar and activist (or consultant)?

### **5) Inappropriate questions:**

It is illegal for potential employers to ask about your marital status or family plans. You should feel empowered to decline to answer if such questions are asked. In the vast majority of cases, a good-natured “That’s not really an appropriate question, is it?” will stop the line of questioning. If you feel like answering questions along these lines or volunteering information because you think it will not hurt or could help your candidacy (e.g., assuring with “my partner grew up in this area/ has relatives in this area”), feel free to do so.

## **IX) The Job Talk**

Most positions depend on the job talk more than any other single element. Faculty are looking to assess your work (most won’t read it), see how well you communicate (thus likely teach), what kind of colleague you might be (don’t want to seem combative/ obnoxious, not confident enough, etc.).

- **Practice:** contact the Grad Director or your supervisor (or in future, new Professional Development Director) to set up a practice job talk. Usually about 30-40 minute talk followed by questions. Then, revise in response to feedback, and...
- Practice again.
- Biggest mistake = trying to put too much into talk and rushing to squeeze it all in. You can’t say everything in the talk, so narrow it down to the best elements of your project (your best case study, e.g., not all of them) and have a good but not frenetic pace to the talk. Be clear to the audience that you are only including detail on certain parts of your dissertation research and are leaving others (happy to answer in question and answer) aside for this presentation.
- Choose parts of your project you are most confident about. Remember you are likely to have the most expertise on your topic of anyone in the room, so run with your advantage.

- A successful talk should have the following:
  1. Clear statement of the question / puzzle (not, “I’m going to talk about this issue...”).
  2. Set up its importance: practical / theoretical (situate it in the literature).
  3. Give a brief roadmap of where the talk will go, including your answers. “In this talk, I’m going to first situate this project within the broader literature and show why that literature doesn’t explain..... Second, I’ll give a brief overview of how I conducted my study. Third, I’ll demonstrate the findings of one of my case studies..... before ending the talk with my chief conclusions.”
  4. Make clear your contribution.
- Be careful of getting into small details, getting too technical, using jargon. Your audience will typically span the gamut from political theorists to quantitative scholars – you do want to connect with faculty in your subfield as often (though not always) have the most say in hiring, but you must be able to speak to the vast majority of the audience and them to you.
- **Powerpoint:** Don’t put everything you want to say on powerpoint slides so the audience has to read. They should just be bullets to help guide them through by highlighting the **structure** of your argument, not the content. You want them to listen to you, and you want to engage them. You should not have 30 PP slides - perhaps 10, maybe 15. You don’t want to provide a substitute for your talk with PP – use it only to do things you can’t do with your talk (present data, show graphics, etc.). Don’t talk if the audience is giving something on a slide they do have to read (which they shouldn’t!).
- Look audience members in the eye, change the intonation of your voice to emphasize important arguments etc.
- Set up questions by the way you structure your talk. You may lead the logic of the analysis to naturally raise an issue you don’t speak to, but that you have a lot to say about. Or you may lead the audience and give audience members a question who might not have one otherwise as they might not know your field at all: “This is an important issue, but I can’t go into it here in any detail, so I’d be happy to discuss it further in the question period...”
- When handling questions, don’t dig in defensively, but don’t back down so much that you give away the store. Don’t bull#\$%, avoid long rambling responses. Be crisp.

Complement your questioners (but don’t obviously pander to them), especially if they give you a tough question you don’t have a ready answer to. “That’s a great question that I hadn’t thought of yet. I’m not sure I’m able to give a convincing

answer right now, but I'd go in this direction to try to answer it / I'd want to do additional research to find out abc in order to answer it" etc.

If you get a question that is off-topic, confrontational, or doesn't make sense, try to reconstruct the question in a constructive way. "I hadn't thought of that before, and while it might not answer your question directly, it brings to mind the related issue that abcd...., which similarly....." Or, ask for clarification if you're not sure you understand the question: "Am I correct in interpreting your question as asking whether....?"

Remember: NO ONE has the perfect, complete comprehensive project that does all things, so just reinforce the contribution you do make, and perhaps suggest many things left unanswered are indeed what you'd like to do (or hope others will do) for further research, which shows what a productive research program you are embarking on.

## **X) The Offer**

Congratulations – you have received an offer. Now you need to negotiate – don't do this alone! Consult with your supervisor and our Department Head to get advice on:

- What a good offer looks like: is anything missing, like start-up research funds, details on teaching load, moving expenses, and so on.
- What things you may have room to negotiate on. Typically you have little room to bargain with a first job, but if you have other offers, then that changes the situation. Often one-time or short-term costs are more negotiable than ongoing concessions (e.g., short-term teaching reduction, delay of start date, start-up research fund, moving costs, temporary position for partner, timely access to childcare facilities).
- If you have a partner, ONLY raise the issue of their relocation AFTER you have received an offer, unless for some reason it could actually play to your strategic advantage beforehand (e.g., "just so you know, my partner is of a particular nationality / profession such that they could easily move here should we be offered a position, so we don't pose any headaches for you in that department"). In some cases it can be part of the negotiation process to ask if the Department / University where you have an offer to see if they can find a position for your partner.

- If you are already in a job and are on the market looking for another position, use your discretion regarding informing your existing Department of your being on the market – sometimes that does not help your existing situation, at other times it may be assumed say with a limited term position so isn't problematic at all. Similarly, use discretion on whether you would be in a position to ask your existing Department Head or colleagues to write letters on your behalf for other positions elsewhere – sometimes those can be extremely helpful, sometimes such a colleague may not want to write such a letter on your behalf, so just be diplomatic and use your judgement.