

## **Tips for Applying to Faculty Positions**

Applications for faculty positions consist of

1. A cover letter
2. A resume
3. A Research Statement
4. A Teaching Statement
5. A list of potential referees, with contact details, if requested.

Each of these is discussed under the headings below.

### **A. Cover Letter**

The cover letter is your first chance to make a strong impression as a promising researcher and teacher. A typical cover letter is about one to two pages long (**do not** send a longer letter – people will not read it thoroughly) and should include the following:

#### **Opening Paragraph**

In opening your letter you need to convey some basic information, such as what specific position you are applying for (using the title given in the job notice) and where you learned of the opening. Since a cover letter is a kind of persuasive writing (persuading a hiring committee to include you on a list of candidates for further review), the first paragraph of your letter should also make the initial claim as to why you are a strong candidate for the position.

#### **Main Body of Letter**

The main body of the letter, which will consist of 2 to 3 paragraphs, needs to be tailored to the specific position that is being advertised and the academic institute that is seeking to hire. Most graduate students have studied a broad range of material within their discipline before specializing in a narrower field for the PhD dissertation. Since it is rare to find a job notice specifying your exact qualifications, you need to emphasize those areas of your expertise that seem particularly relevant to the position advertised. You also need to emphasize which of your skills are likely to be most appealing to the academic institute itself. For example, for a job at a small liberal arts college that focuses on undergraduate teaching, you should emphasize your relevant teaching experience and pedagogical philosophy before mentioning your relevant research qualifications (1 to 2 paragraphs). On the other hand, for a job at a large research university you should provide at least one detailed paragraph describing your PhD work, and its relevance to the advertised position -- even indicating your plans for future research, before mentioning your teaching and other experience (2 to 3 paragraphs). If you have any teaching or research materials available on the web, you can refer to them.

#### **Other things to consider**

You should mention any leadership roles you have assumed as a graduate student and any awards that you have received.

If you're still working on your dissertation, you should mention when you expect to be awarded the Ph.D.

If you have some special connection to the institute, such as having attended the school as an undergraduate or having grown up in the area, you may wish to mention that also.

#### **Final Paragraph**

Refer the reader to the materials that you have enclosed with the cover letter for more information about your qualifications, including research and teaching statements. Mention your willingness to forward upon request additional materials such as copies of publications, teaching evaluations, and letters of recommendation (if you have not already been asked to provide the names of referees). Conclude with a statement such as “I look forward to hearing from you”, which clearly gives the job-search committee the responsibility to contact you.

## **B. Resume/ CV:**

For academic positions the résumé is referred to as a CV. The CV must concisely convey key information. Keep in mind that the first task of a search committee is to reduce the applicant pool to a more manageable list of the most qualified candidates. At this stage in the process, a thirty to sixty second scan of your CV is probably all you can expect. In order to make it to the short list of candidates, your CV must be attractive, easy to read (establish a consistent form), and should succinctly present the qualifications and experience that qualify you for the position. **Do not** send a lengthy document that details everything you have ever done. Five pages is a adequate length for a concise CV at the junior level. For senior academic positions, CVs will be longer.

The general order of information on a CV is:

### ***1. Contact Information***

Provide your full name, address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail.

### ***2. Education***

List in chronological order your educational history, starting from your undergraduate degree through to your current position.

### ***3. Professional Experience***

List in chronological order any professional experience you have had. If you have not had any, **do not** include this section. State any professional qualifications that you have.

### ***3. Honors and Awards***

List and honors and awards you have received, including fellowships. **Do not** include this section if you have nothing of note to place in here.

### ***4. Society Memberships***

List any professional or student societies that you are a member of and any leadership roles that you have played in these societies.

### ***5. Publications***

List all of your research publications in a consistent style. One style is to follow chronological order – starting with your first publication and ending with publications that are currently under review. You can chose to include publications that are in preparation – however these will generally be discarded by the selection committee. Strictly speaking, you should only include publications that are refereed – meaning only refereed journal and conference papers. However, if this section looks a little lean you could include poster presentations or reports to research sponsors, etc.

### ***6. Presentations***

If you have given any “invited” presentations of your work, list these together with the talk title, talk date and location.

### ***7. Teaching Experience***

List all of your teaching experience in chronological order. Include course evaluations if they are good. Also include any outreach/ teaching that has involved youth groups, citizens groups or K-12 education.

### ***8. Other Information***

Some people chose to list their interests and hobbies. If you are fluent in another language or have a special skill that you think is relevant to the position this can also be included.

## **C. Research Statement**

This should be about 2 to 3 pages in length. **Do not** provide an exhaustive essay as it will not be read. The statement should consist of:

### **Opening Paragraph**

State the broad problem domain of your research and emphasize why it is important. Tie the importance of this domain to the specific job description of the faculty position.

### **Main Body**

The main body of the statement should be about 3 paragraphs long. Provide an initial paragraph that specifically states how your research is contributing to the problem domain you have identified in the opening paragraph. Try to emphasize how your research is moving the field forward. Follow with a

paragraph that summarizes your research approach, the important contributions that you have made to date and those that you expect to make. Refer to papers that achieve these contributions. In the next paragraph state your ideas for future research directions. Identify why these directions have promise and, if you can, mention potential funding sources for these areas. If you have any experience with proposal writing mention it.

### **Collaborations**

If you can identify faculty/ research groups at the institution you are applying to with whom you could collaborate, or facilities that you could make use of, highlight these facts in a closing paragraph. Your aim is to convince the search committee that you will both strengthen existing research at the institution and nucleate new exciting research directions.

### **C. Teaching Statement**

This should also be about 2 pages in length. The statement should consist of:

#### **Opening Paragraph**

State how important excellence in education is to you, and how important it is to the future of your profession. Emphasize your desire to be a good teacher.

#### **Main Body**

The main body of the statement should be about 2-3 paragraphs long. Provide an initial paragraph that specifically states your teaching experience. Give some information about your pedagogical approaches. Emphasize any successes you have had. Mention any curriculum development activities that you have been involved in. Follow with a paragraph that summarizes how you will develop your educational program at the institute in question. Mention specific courses that exist and which you can teach. Mention any new courses you would like to develop. Discuss teaching strategies that you would use (hands-on-learning, problem-based learning, etc) and highlight they would improve undergraduate and graduate education in the area you are applying to.

#### **Research and Teaching**

If you can, finish with a paragraph that identifies ways to tie your research into teaching. Emphasize the importance of bringing your research into the classroom and providing students with research opportunities. If you can identify specific educational initiatives at the institute where you are applying, state your willingness to contribute to these initiatives.

### **D. List of Referees**

Contact all referees before including them on a list. If possible, meet with them (or talk to them on the phone) so you can inform them about the specific position and highlight the reasons why you are an excellent candidate. **Do not** give the names of people who do not know your work, or who have not agreed to be named.

It is helpful if your referees do not come from the same institution. If you can't avoid this, try to at least include people from different departments. Senior people will carry much more weight than junior people.

Speak to your advisor about your choice of referees. He/She may be able to suggest colleagues to include, or suggest people who will write supportive letters.