



Getting an academic job in the UK

Three main types of post-PhD job:

Postdoctoral researcher / Research Fellowship

Teaching Fellowship

Lectureship



Postdoctoral researcher / Research Fellowship

Very often funded by external sources (charity, research council). Usually fixed-term. Research only, limited career progression within role.

Postdoc: the PI applies for the grant, sometimes but not always for a named researcher.

Fellowship: the researcher applies for the grant, sometimes but not always with a named supervisor.



Teaching Fellowship

May be permanent (continuing) or fixed-term, possibly funded by HEFCE.

Teaching position, very little research, although scholarship is necessary and teaching is expected to be informed by up-to-date research.

In some universities, it is possible to progress to Senior Teaching Fellow or Principal Lecturer then Professor.



Lecturership

‘Classic’ academic position: continuing or fixed term, usually funded by HEFCE.

Research, teaching, administration.

Often a three-year probationary period; no tenure-track or tenure.

Career progression: Senior Lecturer/Reader, Professor.



The UK academic job market

Patchy and unpredictable: driven by retirements, student numbers and external research funds.

Competition intense for lectureships and teaching fellowships but varies by discipline and department.

Sometimes a struggle to find good quality postdoc applicants.

But 'got to be in it to win it'!



Appointments process

Nearly every job (including postdoc) has to be advertised, whether written for you or not.

HERA: role analysis. Salary determined on a set of fixed criteria. Some (but not much) room for negotiation.

Rigid appointments process. Often the same process for all academic and admin jobs.



Job adverts

Jobs.ac.uk; University websites

THE (Times Higher); national newspapers

Specialist publications

Will give brief description and usually a link to further particulars

Further particulars

Job description: what the role involves, the main duties and responsibilities of the post (used for HERA)

Person specification: qualifications and skills necessary for the post

Essential and desirable criteria: what you **MUST** have and what they would **LIKE** you to have (but if you can't tick every box, don't worry)

Applications

Application form and equal opportunities monitoring form

CV (often the most important part of the application for an academic post)

Personal statement or covering letter

Meet the deadline but sometimes opportunity for late applications



Making a decision: the interview panel

Panel convened when the job is advertised;
candidates may not be told who is on the panel

Must comprise at least two people, usually more

Aim for gender balance

Specialists and sometimes an external evaluator
and / or HR officer; panel usually trained



Making a decision: shortlisting

Panel shortlists ('sifts').

Assess which candidates fit person specification and match essential and desirable criteria (application form, CVs).

May draw up a 'long list' and ask candidates to send further information or publications before they make a decision.



Making a decision: shortlisting

Panel must justify decisions and keep evidence.

Often asked to rank candidates on each of the essential and desirable criteria and add up scores; some groups may be automatically shortlisted if they fit all criteria (stated on advert).

May take several weeks to inform shortlisted candidates; many universities **ONLY** contact successful candidates.

Candidates who do not hear can contact HR and ask for feedback.

Making a decision: interviewing

Often a 'public' presentation and a closed panel interview.

Presentation very important: other members of the department might be asked to comment informally. Time varies.

Interview will usually last between 30 minutes and an hour.

Making a decision: interviewing

Candidates will have a broadly similar interview: general and technical questions.

Chair makes introductory remarks, then panel members will ask questions. Often the first question they ask will be the same for all candidates.

Supplementary grilling; candidate gets chance to ask questions at end.



Making a decision: final stages

All candidates are seen before panel formally discusses appointment.

Candidates often scored per question then ranked on basis of interview performance and CV. Identify employable candidates, first and second choices. Evidence kept.

Panel will discuss: can they do the job, how well will they do it, could we work with them?

References usually only read after decision made; offer might be made pending references.



The appointments process

Panel chair will often telephone successful candidate to offer them the job informally; this often (but not always) happens quickly. HR then write formally; may take several weeks.

The second choice might also be contacted.

Unsuccessful candidates usually have to wait for the letter..! Should then ask for feedback.

And finally...

If you're offered a job

NEGOTIATE!!!