

Remote Hiring for Faculty Positions

College of the Environment | Postdoc Remote Panel Discussion | Wednesday, April 29, 2020

How is the job market for post docs looking in the fall?

There is a general anticipation of fewer hires in the next year as university budgets (many tied to state budgets) decline. University departments that are in a position to search for candidates will be excited to do so. Given the state budget situation, this is a great time to be more open to a variety of career paths – government positions are funded from federal budgets and there are lots of great opportunities there.

Many folks are not going to be able to adapt, or be productive at this time (childcare, eldercare). How do you recommend addressing those things?

A diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement is essential to all academic job applications at this point. Include your personal experience, and how you have strategically helped professional peers, students, faculty, the public, etc. Your DEI statement is the space for conveying what you've learned about balancing multiple really important aspects of your life.

How does the short, structured online interview work? What were the “surprises”?

One model: give the candidate 20 minutes for a presentation + Q&A, and then have the candidate answer questions provided in advance. The “surprises” were: 1) some candidates struggled to respond to questions provided in advance - they hadn't prepared 2) some could ace a phone interview, but in-person their “best 20 minutes” of presentation was their “only 20 minutes.”

Will these online finalist interviews will be an attempt to cram the normal 2-day campus visit into an online format? Should postdocs expect two, 10-hour days on Zoom? What if that schedule just does not work with kids at home?

Departments will likely move to a longer, more interspersed process (e.g., schedule meetings with faculty over a week instead of confined to one day). As a candidate, determine the schedule you can accommodate. If you see a schedule that will not work for you, be assertive and say so. For instance, if you are booked for an after-hours event but you just cannot make it happen, you don't need to say why. If you politely decline a portion of your schedule, be willing to give somewhere else (e.g., suggest coffee hour instead of happy hour).

What kind of background/camera height and position should you choose for your interview?

Choose a plain, non-distracting background. In general, avoid green screens, especially if you talk with your hands. Avoid background videos. Place the camera at or slightly above eye level and sit or stand at a place where your chest and head fill the screen.

How are “test lectures” or “guest departmental seminars” evaluated remotely? What advice do you have for presentations and preparation?

Do not try to duplicate the in-person experience online. Use the features available to you in a virtual setting. When you want the audience to focus on you, make your screen/slides go away. When you want them to focus on the slides, stop sharing your video. Use polling. Committees may evaluate how candidates use a hybrid teaching environment, with synchronous and asynchronous learning, and how to build a learning community online.

What technical aspects should candidates consider prior to the interview?

For videos and bandwidth during an interview, [test](#) your connection (3 mb/s suggested for Zoom). Use an ethernet cable (wired connection to modem) instead of wifi. Use a headset for the best audio quality.

How are candidates asked to summarize their research?

Candidates who were able to package their best research accomplishment and where their research is headed within 5 minutes (i.e., their elevator speech) were all chosen for the final pool (3-5 interview candidates from 25 “good” candidates). This is a powerful thing – practice, refine, seek feedback!

How do you talk about covid-19 impacts on research and scholarly work?

Rephrase this to show how you tackle barriers of all types, e.g., “facing these barriers, this is how I responded and was able to. . . .” This is part of a larger conversation about how you deal with difficulties, how you “roll with it.” Although this pandemic is a situation unlike anything faced previously, you are going to face personal and research obstacles multiple times in your career. In addition to the “here’s how I adapted” stories *show* how this has shifted and inspired you to think creatively about the ways you communicate, teach, and do research. Take action by signing up for virtual research conferences to show your adaptation, or giving guest lectures to online courses to try out techniques and receive feedback.

In what portion of your application should you mention covid-19 impacts? In the research statement? Cover letter?

Avoid putting this information up-front in the cover letter – include this information in the space set aside for diversity, equity and inclusion (see above). Complete your cover letter and research statement well ahead of the deadline so you can receive essential feedback from early/mid-career faculty