

Research on the Job Market: What Does It Tell Us?

Critical reflection on your teaching experience is expected.

Though hiring committees, in the initial stages of the academic job market search process, simply ask that you list your previous teaching experience as part of the application process, critical reflection on this experience is expected at all stages thereafter.

In most cases, hiring committees across institutional types will ask for a candidate's teaching documents as a next step in the application process. As part of this request, candidates are generally asked to submit a philosophy of teaching statement and often 'evidence of teaching effectiveness' as well. To respond to these requests, we recommend that candidates write two reflective essays: one outlining a general teaching philosophy, based on one's experiences in teaching, and another essay that evaluates a candidate's effectiveness in the classroom, based on feedback from third parties and self-assessment of a course's successes and failures. In the first essay, candidates are expected to match their teaching strategies to goals for student learning in order to assess the effectiveness of the strategies chosen. The second reflective essay involves determining what counts as evidence of pedagogical success and providing an overview of lessons learned about teaching based on such evaluations.

Though some job candidates might be tempted to simply list all of the positive aspects of a course they have taught, committees are also interested in what did not work well in the classroom and how a candidate will approach future teaching assignments. In other words, a demonstrated

investment in developing as a teacher based on previous teaching successes and failures shows a hiring committee that a candidate has the capacity for continuous self-evaluation and improvement based on this ongoing process. Job candidates should therefore approach the critical reflection required in these essays with honesty and precision, using real classroom examples as evidence of both a teaching philosophy and the ability to assess one's own effectiveness as a teacher.

During later stages of the application process, candidates may also be invited for interviews at their fields' annual convention and/or at the hiring institution. Throughout these interviews, candidates should expect questions specifically about teaching: past teaching experiences, one's overall approach to teaching, and topics a candidate would teach at that institution are all likely issues for discussion. Candidates invited for campus visits also are sometimes asked to conduct a teaching demonstration in addition to giving a job talk.

With all of this in mind about the role of teaching in the job search process, we strongly recommend that job candidates start the process of critical reflection on their teaching experiences as early as possible. The Center for Teaching and Learning holds seminars and workshops on teaching portfolios every quarter, in addition to those on course design, which all play a crucial role in the development of university teachers and in preparation for entering the job market.