

A Guide for European Job Market Candidates

European Economic Association *

2018-2019 Edition

1 Introduction

This guide provides information and some advice on the economic job market, specifically addressed to junior job market candidates from European institutions. The main focus is on the primary market, the largest segment, with interviews taking place during the European Job Market in early December and the ASSA meetings in early January.¹

The goal of a job market search is to find a **good match** between candidates and jobs. Success is getting a job that you enjoy, in which your work is appreciated and where you can continue to improve, not necessarily getting an academic job or a job in a top-ranked university. Every year, there are more PhD candidates than academic positions, but there is high demand for economists and virtually all candidates will get a job (Cawley et al., 2016). In your applications, consider economics departments, business schools, public policy schools, medical schools (if you are a health economist), central banks, international organizations (e.g. World Bank, IMF), research centers, and the private sector.

2 Getting ready for the job market

Most applications will be due by the middle of November, with the fourth Thursday of November (U.S. Thanksgiving) as a hard deadline. Work your way back from this deadline and set your own mid-term goals according to your pace. Here below a suggested timeline.

- **Spring/Summer and before**

- **Job Market Paper (JMP):** The bulk of your job market paper should be already in good shape. Still, given its importance, you should work hard on it: write and re-write it, especially

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¹ Candidates specifically interested in jobs in Spain and the UK may also wish to attend the local job markets organized by the Spanish Economic Association and the Royal Economic Society. The secondary market (the so-called “scramble” market) occurs among institutions and candidates who remain unmatched. Most of the secondary market in Europe is through an informal network, but new job posts will be available on [EconJobMarket](#). The formal application for the US “scramble” market opens in March through the [JOE network](#).

abstract and introduction. Take advantage of writing tips, such as those in [Cochrane \(2005\)](#). Ask your advisors, colleagues, and friends to read it and give feedback. Continue to improve it.

- **Present** your JMP at your university. Ideally, you should present at least once in an informal seminar, and once in a ‘high stakes’ seminar with many faculty members. You should also present it in conferences and workshops.
- **Discuss with your main advisor** whether you should go on the job market: is the job market paper in good enough shape? Are you ready? If so, to whom should you ask for reference letters? Consider that the fixed costs (monetary, time, and psychological) are pretty high and you want to avoid going on the market for two consecutive years;
- **Conferences:** present your JMP at conferences and workshops in order to improve your presentation skills, familiarize with the questions typically asked, and build your network.² Some examples:³ [EEA Conference](#), [Econometric Society Winter Meetings](#), [IZA Conferences](#), field-specific conferences (e.g., [NEUDC Development Conference](#), etc.). A great opportunity for JM candidates is the Job Market Bootcamp at the [Petralia Workshop](#).
- **Grants and Prizes:** these are good signals on the job market, apply to all opportunities that match your profile. For instance, check the website of [Unicredit&Universities](#).
- **Website:** include a professional photo, your CV, research (with a clear indication of which one is your JMP), references, contacts. With one click from the first page, anyone should be able to get to your CV and your JMP. The earlier you do, the better. If you do not know how to code it yourself, you can use many free website templates (for example, [googlesites](#)). Think twice before including any links to private material on your job market webpage.

- **September/First Half of October**

- **Prepare your JM material.** Virtually all applications will require the following documents. The most important are your JMP, CV, and reference letters. The others are less pivotal, but can still signal that you are a careful and conscientious researcher.
 1. **Job Market Paper:** This is what matters the most. It signals your ability as a researcher, your potential, and what research topic you are interested in. It is a good idea to include a hyperlink to get the most recent version of the paper.
 2. **CV:** In a few pages you should give an overview of your scholarly profile, so that recruiters can easily understand all that you have done. It may be useful to look at the CVs of the previous year’s job market candidates from top programs. It should include the following:
 - * the contacts of your placement director and assistant (if any) and your contact (including the link to you webpage and your phone number);

²Notice the deadline for submission to many conferences is much earlier than spring/summer. This is a good commitment device to have a strong abstract and early draft of your JMP.

³For a more complete list, see the [AEA Conference Listing](#).

- * research fields: list 1 or at most 2 primary fields that are well recognizable – not too broad, not too narrow – so that a group can claim you and make the case to invite you to an interview or make you an offer during the recruiting process. Mention 1-2 secondary fields that are either somewhat narrower in terms of topic or signal skills. Example: primary field = labor; secondary field = education, applied econometrics;
 - * references;
 - * Publications, working papers (with title, abstracts, and link to papers), and work in progress: working paper means that a draft exists, usually the JMP plus two or more papers (e.g. the 3 chapters of your dissertation). Work in progress is an idea only, or some work but no paper yet. Include only projects for which you are able to have an intelligent conversation for 5 minutes or more. Abstract should still be in present tense but describe intended work.
 - * scholarships, grants and awards, professional activities (seminars, refereeing, conference organization, teaching and research experience).
3. **Reference letters** are also very important: they will get you a foot in the door, and help recruiters decide whether to select you for an interview. After that, it's up to you to convince them. The standard is three reference letters, but sometimes only two are required or more than three are allowed. Ask your advisors a reference letter by September to avoid delays in your applications. In particular, the timing of the European JM is such that ideally *your letters should be ready by early November*. If you plan to attend the European JM, please *alert your advisors about this deadline*, as this is a new initiative and they are probably not aware of the earlier timing. Your advisors (or their administrative staff) can upload the letters on the websites of the [European Job Market](#) and [JOE/ASSA network](#). Try to make sure your advisors take it seriously: letters are very important and usually European scholars write more luke-warm letters than American ones. Other things equal, letters from senior faculty are more influential than those from junior faculty.
 4. **Cover letter:** it should be short (max one page) and it should include the position you are applying to, your research interests, the title of your job market paper, your availability for interviews at the European Job Market and/or at the ASSA meetings. If you are particularly interested in moving to Canada, signal your availability to go to the Canadian job market (even if most institutions will be present at the ASSA meetings). Not all letters need to be tailor-made for the institution, but do it if you are particularly interested in a specific position. It is an additional way of signaling your interest.
 5. **Research Statement:** it should include your research agenda, what you have worked on during your PhD, and what you are planning to do in the immediate future. Avoid a disconnected list of papers, but try to organize your research statement connecting your papers and research ideas within a meaningful framework.
 6. **Teaching Statement:** describe your teaching experience and philosophy in about one page. Include teaching evaluations if available (sometimes they are explicitly required).
 7. **Additional Papers:** they are usually not compulsory, but you are often allowed to include additional papers.

8. **Diversity Statement:** it is required only by some US universities (mainly in California). If required, you should discuss past and/or potential contributions to diversity through teaching and research.

– **Create your profile on the job search websites:**

- * [European Job Market \(EconJobMarket\)](#)
- * [JOE website](#)
- * You may use also [Interfolio](#) (even if it is less common).

You will find there most of the job posts and you will be able to apply directly from there. When your JM material is ready, upload it on your profile (and ask your advisors to upload reference letters there). It will be faster to apply for jobs.

● **Second Half of October/November**

- **Prepare your spiel:** this is a polished opening statement and structure of the discussion you may follow during the interviews. You should be prepared from many questions and challenges at any time, but also be able to talk for 30 minutes uninterrupted, keeping the interest alive. In the first 2-3 minutes, you need to state your field, a brief motivation, what you do in your JMP, and outline the main results. Usually you can go uninterrupted in this part, so try to say all of the important information that you want them to know and remember. The next 10 minutes are devoted to elaborating on your methodology and results. It is possible that you will be interrupted by questions during this part. It is very important to *signpost*: there are no slides and you need to have a clear structure of your discussion: “First, (...). Second, (...). Third, (...)”. Prepare also a short spiel on your research agenda, avoiding a dry list of papers. Break your spiel into 3-5min blocks that you can compose in different ways. A good strategy is to memorize the outline or mental list of things you want to say during the interview: this helps you go back to your main points after you are interrupted by questions during the interview. Practice your spiel out loud when alone, with other PhD candidates, and with anyone willing to listen. Practice until you can mask the fact that you know it by heart: you must sound natural. Practice a lot, it is more difficult than expected to organize an effective spiel.
- **Mock interviews at your university:** make sure your university organizes mock interviews with faculty members to practice your spiel. Ask for feedback after your mock interview and adjust your spiel. Practice with your friends and colleagues, as well as former PhD students from your institution who have just found a job (if needed, via Skype).
- **Mock job market talk at your universities:** make sure your university organizes a mock job market talk to get feedback on your presentation from all the faculty (also outside your field). Write down a list of questions frequently asked and prepare thoughtful answers.
- *Personal suggestion:* toward the end of this period, it is common to get diverging opinions on your spiel, on the introduction of your JMP, or on your presentation. At this point, it is often a matter of personal taste. Go with one opinion (likely – that of your main advisor). Remember, *you* will need to use those slides and say that spiel. *You* need to like them.

3 Applying for jobs

Timing. Vacancies are posted from around August and deadlines are generally in November or December. The general advice is to apply from the second half of October to Thanksgiving (for the US market) – earlier for the European one. Most of the job posts will be available on [EconJobMarket](#) and/or [JOE website](#). Some additional job posts are available on [Interfolio](#).

Process. For most positions, you need to submit the material described in Section 2 online through one of the job ad websites. Sometimes, employers have their own website and require that you apply also –or exclusively– on their own website. Occasionally, they may require that you send the material by email. All information is provided in the job post.

It is a good idea to create a spreadsheet with the list of applications done, the link to the job post, and the way in which you applied (i.e., through econjobmarket/JOE; website of the university; email). If you want, you can download an XLS file from the JOE website. For each application, write down whether it is complete or references should be sent separately by your advisors (and, if so, include the deadline and the email/website).

How many places should you apply to? Apply to a wide range of job posts, including post-docs and private sector jobs. Depending on your field and profile, consider applying also to business schools, public policy schools, and health policy schools. However, do not apply to a job you would never take. Show your letter-writers the list of jobs for which you plan to apply and ask for their advice.

3.1 Signaling

Through the [JOE website](#), you can send a signal to two institutions from mid-November. The signal makes your application credible and interesting to employers. It improves the probability that your JM package will be read more carefully. Use it wisely to maximize the probability of a good match (and maybe ask for recommendation to your advisors).

4 Interviews

If employers want to invite you for an interview, they will typically schedule them during the European Job Market (this year: December 6-7, 2018 in Naples) and ASSA meetings (this year: January 4-6, 2019 in Atlanta). Some institutions may schedule a Skype or phone interview.

- **Before the interviews:**

- Scheduling: try to leave at least 30 min between interviews to go from one to another (especially at the ASSA meetings). Hotels are often not very close to each other.
- Ask who will participate in the interview so that you can prepare by reading their profiles. Remember which field they are working in, and read carefully the profile of people in your own field. Think about how to connect your research to theirs.
- Gather information on the department, seminar series, who else works in your field, potential coauthors
- Find out the place of the interview (e.g., the disclosure code for the ASSA meetings).

- **What general questions may be asked during the interview:**

- Tell us about your JMP (This is the *easy* question, to get you started and comfortable. They may allow you around 10 minutes for your spiel).
- How did you get the idea for your JMP?
- What else are you working on?
- Where do you see yourself in next 5-10 years?
- What would you like to teach? (*For instance, you could answer: “At the undergraduate level I can prepare to teach almost any course. At the graduate level, I would like to teach something in [insert your primary field here]”*)
- Why would you like to work at our university/ move to our city? Why did you apply here? Who could you work with in in our department/university?
- Do you have questions for us? (*Feel free to answer: “No, thank you.” Specific questions are better asked if you are invited for a fly-out.*)

- **Other tips:**

- Bring water, a paper copy of your schedule, a map with all hotels where you have an interview, snow boots (for ASSA), a nice bag (better to avoid backpacks), a few copies of your CV and JMP (they will usually not be asked). If you have a busy schedule, you may have no time for lunch: bring power bars.
 - Be calm and talk slowly. Avoid jumping around different projects or different section of the paper. If you get a specific question, answer directly and then go back to your outline. Make sure the person who asked the question is satisfied with your answer, but also make sure everybody else can follow your interview. Most people are very nice, some people may be rude. Keep calm and never be put off: think that if they are rude it is their problem, not yours.
 - Be aware of time: interviews last 30 minutes. If you do not talk about something important, the interview will be over in any case.
 - Be clear. Many people in the interview team will not have read your JMP entirely (and if they divide up the candidates, some may not have read it at all).
- If possible, try to schedule the interviews with your favorite match in the (late) morning. By the afternoon you will be tired, and your interviewers will be tired. If possible, your very first interview should not be with your favorite match: warm up before!
 - **After the interview:** use a notebook and keep track of all the people you met, your impression, whether they asked questions you did not know the answer to (if so, it is great if you find the answer and send an email to the person who asked).

5 Fly-outs

- **Before the fly-outs:**

- Preparation: download and skim the CVs of all faculty members you will meet. Think about something you want to bring up during the conversation and write it down on your schedule. A couple of sentences per person are enough in order to be sure you remember who they are and what they do.
- Scheduling: be eager to get Monday, Wednesday, and Friday slots. This will allow you to do three fly-outs per week, if needed. If possible, avoid having your first fly-out to your favourite school. If you have multiple fly-outs to the US, do your best to combine them in one trip.

- **During Fly-outs:**

- **Job Talk:** Give both breath and depth to your talk. Start and end broad, but use details to show you are not shallow. Manage your time wisely, answer questions by going right to the point, be smart but nice. Don't oversell. It is fine to acknowledge the limitations of your work (even better if you are planning to work on these limitations in your future research). In your last slide, give a sense of your future research agenda related to your job market talk.
- **Individual meetings:** Be prepared to get more questions about your JMP. If they were at your JM talk and they don't have questions, talk about a different project. Everyone will ask you if you have questions for them. Do ask questions, show interest and enthusiasm. Some examples: *Seminars (formal and informal)? Mentoring for young faculty? Teaching? Tenure clock? Funding? Where do people live? Ask about the community.*
- **Lunch:** most likely it will be a working lunch. Expect more research-related questions than at dinner. Sometimes faculty who did not manage to meet with you one-on-one will use the lunch to understand who you are as a researcher.
- **Dinner:** this is when they get to know you as a person and a potential colleague. Be nice, avoid drinking more than one glass of wine, enjoy (and start thinking whether *you* would like to have them as colleagues).
- Remember: they are looking for a colleague, someone they will have conversations about research, but also lunch and dinner with seminar speakers. Be courteous and willing to engage.
- *Be honest:* there are no secrets on the job market about fly-outs and offers. Furthermore, remember that this is a great opportunity to meet people in your field and potential coauthors.
- Use restroom breaks, it will be a very long and tiring day.
- You will spend a lot of money: remember to keep boarding passes and receipts and send the originals to universities to get the reimbursements as soon as possible. Request increases on the limits for your credit cards if possible, or ask for a loan.

6 Offers and negotiation

After fly-outs, you will start to get some offers (if everything goes well). This process is not coordinated and you may get exploding offers. Share the information about offers and deadlines with schools that you prefer to those from whom you received the offers. It is usually possible to negotiate, but avoid over-pushing. Advisors may have very useful suggestions at this stage.

For some, waiting for offers is the worst part of the job market. Try to keep yourself busy with something while waiting.

7 Additional information

7.1 How to dress/ what to buy or do before the job market

- Be professional: get a good suit/tailleur, several non-wrinkle shirts and ties (for men), a nice pair of shoes. You need to look professional, and at the same time feel good and confident with what you are wearing.
- Get a good carry-on bag and a nice bag for your laptop.
- Buy a laser pointer for your presentations.
- Cawley et al. (2016) provides summary statistics on several aspects of the job market – it is a useful read.

7.2 The ‘two-body’ issue

The ‘two-body’ career problem, i.e. the issue of couples with professional aspirations trying to end up in close geographical proximity, can be hard to solve – but there are some solutions. Search committees are fully aware of the difficulties of dual career couples and, if they can, they will try to help you in finding a solution.

If your partner or spouse is an academic, you should strongly consider revealing this information to the search committee during the fly-out. Many departments and universities have policies to help academic couples and they will try to resolve two jobs search fast. It may be particularly easy if one of you is willing to do a Post-Doc.

If your partner is not an academic, you should strongly consider discussing job prospects for him/her in the vicinity of the institution during the fly-out. The department may also be able to refer your partner to local job market resources.

References

Cawley, J. et al. (2016). A guide (and advice) for economists on the us junior academic job market. (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=869>).

Cochrane, J. H. (2005). *Writing Tips for Ph. D. Students*. University of Chicago.