

Items In A Typical Job Application

by David Braun, with cribbing from a previous version by Rich Feldman and edits from Tom McKay for SU

A. Application letter

Some schools insist on these, others don't mention them. You should include one. You should say what job you are applying for (especially in the case of departments advertising more than one job). This is your chance to introduce yourself. You want to explain why you are suited for the advertised job. Sometimes this requires bringing out information not obvious from your CV. You probably should say something about the current status of your dissertation. Mention that you will be attending the Eastern APA. Keep the letter simple and straightforward. It probably should be one page, maybe one and half pages.

For smaller colleges, you must make it clear why you are especially interested in being at their institution (and are sure to remain forever). Emphasize any special connections, the fit of their school to your teaching desires, etc..

B. CV (abbreviation for *Curriculum Vitae*, "academic life", "vita", academic resume)

See samples. It is easy to find some on the web. I would like to see something about the dissertation on the front page - at least the title, and maybe a one sentence description. Other formats are OK, but it's extremely important that they be very easily readable and that people can quickly find the information they want. This includes (in roughly the following order):

1. Name
2. Contact information, including phone numbers and email address. One of the phone numbers should have voice mail or a message machine. If you will be traveling in December before the convention, you should include information about where you'll be. If you have a cell phone, list it on the CV (this is good if an interviewer needs to contact you at a convention).
3. URL for a website, if you have one on which you post your CV, papers, syllabi, or teaching material. Make sure that the material on this website (including pictures!) is suitable for viewing by hiring departments.
4. Date (so as to distinguish newer versions of your CV from older versions)
5. Education, from undergraduate college onwards. Mention Latin honors for BA, if any.
6. Academic employment if you have had a full-time job at some college or university. For adjunct positions, consult with advisors about what to include. (Probably everything.)
7. Areas of Specialization (AOS) and Areas of Competence (AOC)–See below.
8. Optional: Additional teaching interests
9. Dissertation title, supervisor, maybe one-sentence description
10. Publications and presentations
11. Awards and Honors
12. Teaching experience
13. Professional and departmental service (such as organizing an epistemology conference)
14. Memberships in organizations (such as the APA) - not clear that this is necessary
15. List of graduate courses taken

16. Optional: Any information about yourself that you want hiring departments to know about (e.g., where you worked during the five years between your undergraduate and graduate schools, special skills, unusual accomplishments)
17. References, including their contact information (but include only those who you are *sure* have written letters for you that will be included in your application)
18. Dissertation Abstract—see below

Other items sometimes requested, which can be appended to CV:

19. Statement of teaching philosophy: I suggest that you say what your goals are in teaching your courses (e.g., to get them to reason well) and how your choices of topics and methods of evaluation help you to reach these goals.
20. Statement of research interests: Those who request this typically want to know what you will do *after* your dissertation, for the next five years.

AOSs and AOCs are tricky. Don't overdo it. Don't sell yourself short. Talk to your adviser about this.

AOS: Generally speaking, you should list an area as an AOS iff it is one in which you have done serious research (such as an area of your dissertation) or have a serious research interest (you have kept up with all the latest literature in the area, have opinions, some of which you've written up, etc.). You (probably) should be able to teach a graduate course in your AOSs. You should probably list one, or maybe two AOSs.

AOC: Generally, these are areas in which you are competent to teach fairly advanced undergraduate courses. You will definitely be asked how you would teach such courses in your AOC at interviews. Two to four areas of AOC is usually safe.

Additional teaching interests: you can list additional areas in which you are prepared to teach courses. Of course, you will have to be prepared to say how you would teach such courses at an interview.

C. Abstract (part of CV)

Spend at least a week on this. It's crucial. The hiring departments may receive hundreds of applications. They will first read the first page (or pages, if you are lucky) of your CV. If still interested, they will read your abstract and your letters of recommendation, in either order. The quality of your abstract may help determine whether your application gets to the next round. People reading your abstract will often not be in your field, so it must be intelligible to them. But some readers may know, or think they know, about your topic, and it must seem good to them as well. People differ about how long they should be. I say about a page, since people won't read more than that. If it's much less, it'll seem insubstantial. It has to be crystal clear, interesting, and show that you have a substantial thesis to defend.

D. Writing Sample

This will often be a chapter or smaller part of your dissertation. It can be some other paper you've written. (I advise that it be from the dissertation.) It should be highly polished. I lean toward smaller papers (e.g., 20-25 pages, but not over 30), but not everyone will agree. Whatever the length, the considerations that apply to the abstract carry over to this. You want people who read this to have two thoughts: "I'd like to have someone who works on this material in my department" and "This person knows this material well." **I think it's absolutely crucial that the paper have a good introductory paragraph, something that grabs the reader's attention.** I also think that its ending paragraph should be strong. Often readers will read the first page and the last page before deciding whether to read the rest of the paper. They may also read section headings to get an idea of what it's about. You can include more than one sample, but if you do, they should all be equally polished.

E. Letters of Recommendation

Three or four are common. A few more is ok. Beyond that gets annoying. At least one should be able to say something detailed and substantive about your teaching. The Director of Graduate Teaching may be able to write a substantial letter on your teaching. If you've taught for other programs or other departments (SU or elsewhere), a letter from someone in that program would probably be good. If you can find a philosopher from outside SU who can write a letter for you, that would probably be good (e.g., someone who commented on your conference presentation, or from whom you took a course and wrote a good paper, or someone you have been in touch with about your dissertation or other topics of mutual interest). The placement officer will read any letters that come in to determine whether they help you.

Ask potential letter writers soon and then pester them. Provide them with information about what you've done with them (e.g. when you TA'd for them, when you took courses from them, what you wrote on in those courses), what talents you are claiming, and what sorts of things you would like them to emphasize. Give them copies of your CV, abstract, and writing sample. Do not assume that they remember all the courses, TAing, etc, that you've done with them.

F. Departmental Cover Letter

We will send a cover letter with your letters of recommendation

G. Teaching Information

This can include syllabi. Some jobs specifically ask for them. It can include course evaluation summaries. It is a very good idea to be able to document your teaching excellence. If you have a website, you can post lots of stuff there and refer to it in your cover letter and vita.

H. Transcripts

Usually not requested, but some departments ask for them. They usually can be unofficial copies. (Some hiring departments are required to get official transcripts from you before they can hire you, but not usually before they interview you.)