

How to find a job at the ASSA meetings: Navigating the Labyrinth

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Preparation:

Departments typically advertise in Job Opportunities for Economists (JOE)

(<http://www.aeaweb.org/joe/>)

usually in the October (perhaps November) issue of JOE. Application process often has a Dec 1 or early December application deadline “for full applicant consideration.”

Expectations of recruiting departments:

1. Application and resume (be sure to include cell phone #)
2. Letters of reference
3. Job Market paper

All of this is conducted electronically.

Departments will likely convey to you if “application file is complete” but be sure to check with your “letter writers” to be sure they have completed their task.

Indicate (in your application letter) how far along you are and when you expect to complete. “Three chapter” dissertations are now very common. How many chapters are completed; say a little about what you plan to do in each of the three. Regular dissertations (4-6 chapters): say where you are in the effort to complete.

What to do during the application phase (pre Dec and Dec):

1. Make your hotel reservation early (can always cancel). Reserve (if possible) at a convenient location (often meetings are at 3 or 4 hotels so you may have to walk from hotel to hotel for interviewing; be somewhere in the middle). Register for the conference.
2. Market paper should be very polished prior to Dec 1. as it will be included in your application packet of information; have others (particularly your committee and other faculty) review it and give you feedback.
3. If possible, have a member(s) of your committee (or a faculty member who is alumnus of the department you are applying to) call the department around the time you have applied to put in a good word for you. This is particularly good if your faculty have personal contacts there. This may not help, but it won't hurt: Networking
4. Practice typical interview questions so you are comfortable with answers (not memorized)
5. Prepare and practice a “summary speech” of your dissertation efforts.

Cost of applying is low but if job opportunity is outside your field, expect not to get a call for the ASSA interview.

Recruitment is “full time” at the ASSA meetings for the recruit and the recruiters!

The Interview at the ASSA meeting:

1. Departments will likely contact you in mid December. They will give you their ASSA recruitment registration #. This is how you will contact them once you get to the meetings. They will know their hotel but won't know their room number until the check in.
2. Get to recruitment center to find out which hotel the departments you are interviewing with are staying at. Connect with departments.
3. Arrive on time for interview (depts. may be running late, but don't you be late). Use cell phone to let department know you are there. Have copies of your resume in hand.
4. Departments typically try to interview 15-20 persons at ASSA. Then invite 3-5 back for a campus interview. These ASSA interviews may be 30 minutes, perhaps 60 minutes.
5. **Have a 10 minute summary speech prepared (practiced) of your dissertation efforts. Do a practice interview in your home department.** Do your homework on the recruitment committee for each university (if you can get that information).
6. Recruiters might not be experts in the field of the job vacancy so you need to be able to explain your research effort in terms that any PhD economist can understand.
7. If you describe methods or theory that you are using, be prepared to explain why you are using that particular approach. Worst answer: “My advisor told me to do it this way.” Better answer: “This is the approach often used in the most current literature and I am using this approach to isolate ... effects on”
8. Have at least one question to ask the recruiters about the department to show that you are interested in them. “What might my teaching load be like?”, “Do new faculty typically get any “assistance” in the form of Research Assistants (grad students)?” Don't ask about salary!
9. Always be polite. Some faculty are jerks and may try to intimidate you or may behave badly. Remain calm and focused on answering their questions to the best of your ability.
10. If you don't have many interviews scheduled prior to meetings, contact (via recruitment center) those departments who have jobs available that you are interested in and leave some sort of message (email, voice mail) of your availability. It is possible that the department has a cancellation (by a candidate) and will be able to meet with you. Be sure to bring extra copies of your resume for this purpose.

Campus interview:

1. **Practice your seminar presentation at your home department.** It's better to receive critical feedback from your professors than from the interviewing department. Also, consider recording your practice session and then review it to see where improvements are needed.
2. **Do your homework!** Study the departmental website, read about what faculty in the department are doing, and look up pictures of persons so you recognize them.
3. Show a lot of interest in the department.
4. Talk to faculty in your department about where you are going before the interview. Ask them about the department.
5. **Be yourself!**