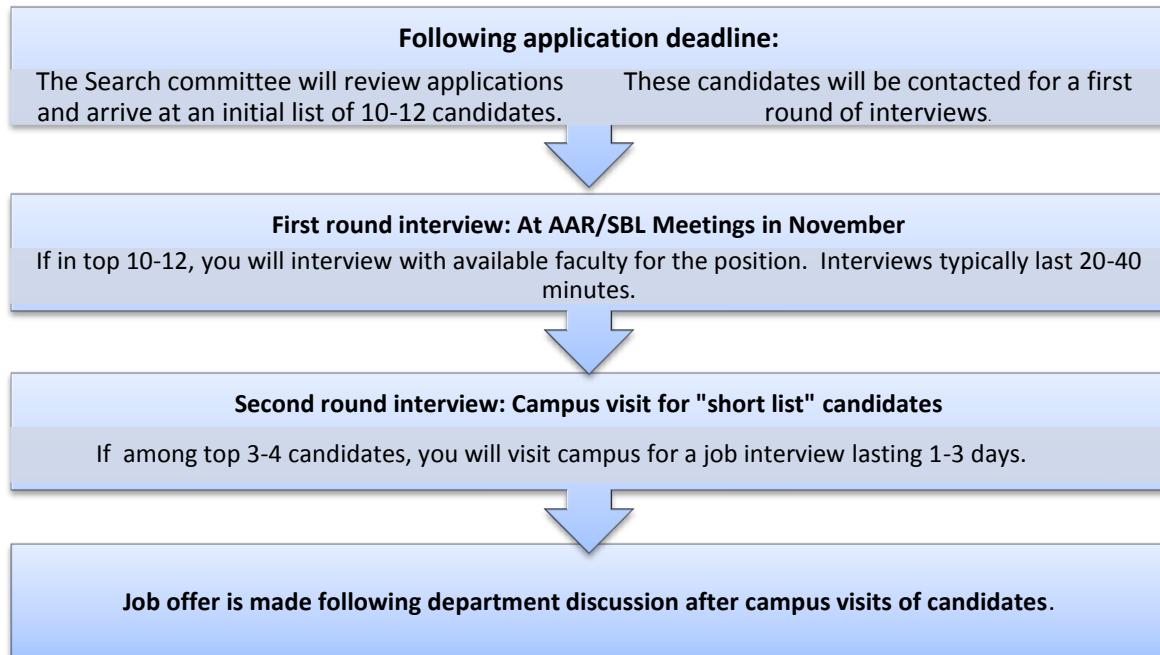


Stages of the Job Interview Process
for Graduate Division of Religion Students
(from Pam Hall, GDR, Emory University)

The academic job search process usually follows a traditional timeline of stages, with a winnowing of the candidate pool at each stage. (Nowadays, one or both of the interview stages can use Skype or other technologies instead of physical, face to face, meetings. This is more common for one year or temporary positions.)

[If you plan to interview at conferences other than the AAR/SBL, it is important to review the timing of the conference and the expectations for those interviews. There are many subcultures within the profession. Your dissertation committee and advisor can help.] The discussion below applies to the AAR/SBL calendar and a more typical schedule of interview stages.



This final stage of the offer can move swiftly, as departments do not want to lose desirable candidates. Often, more than one candidate can be judged acceptable, and departments may press for a rapid decision from their top candidate in order not to lose possible back up candidates.

There are some tried and true strategies for enhancing your performance at both rounds of the interview process, initial and short list. Below you will find some advice for job interviews. Please note:

- It is important to supplement and check what is here in conversation with your advisors and committee.
- It can be crucial to ask departments for guidance at the time they issue invitations. Especially for the campus visit, it is appropriate to ask questions about your itinerary and the department's wishes for presentations.

Advice and information for the First Round Interview: at the AAR/SBL meetings:

1. These interviews usually last between 20-40 minutes. There may be a small number of interviewers present or all department faculty available. They may do a number of these meetings in a back to back schedule, so *bring your energy*. Show good humor, poise, and genuine interest in them. These attitudes will go a long way towards making you stand out as a candidate.
2. Expect questions about what your research is: have a short summary of what you are writing on in your head ready to go. Be able to convey what you are doing to a general audience and to say what is interesting and rewarding about it. Do not focus on minutiae but on the whole structure of your project and its rewards.
3. Faculty may ask about what you would like to teach, and have some responses ready in mind as well. Their position ad may give you some indication of what they need you to teach, and you may want to look at what has been offered in their department atlas as well --but it is also nice for them to know about what you are just interested in, beyond their needs. They may really be excited about what you can also bring to their teaching line-up, beyond their articulated requirements.
4. More on teaching: Departments often have general education requirements they must support, as well as specialist needs. Bear in mind that they may be very interested in how you can support introductory or general ed courses of various kinds--e. g., in world religions, in religious histories, in religious ethics, in religion and science. These kinds of courses can be very exciting as well as important for the well-being of the department. Think creatively.
5. Faculty may ask about *how* you would teach a certain class--have some texts and insights ready to share. They are just trying to glean what sort of teacher you would be, what your goals and approach might be....your suggestions do not have to be comprehensive, just interesting and rewarding.
6. This may not be a good time to hand out additional material like syllabi; you will have a short time with them for this meeting, so keep their eyes on you. Do not distract them.

7. Dress professionally but also comfortably. You do not have to wear a designer suit, but you need to show you have a sense of what is appropriate. Do not dress in a way that makes too bold or provocative a statement. This is not a date; it is a job interview.
8. The goal of this interview is to make it to the next stage. Give it your best and do not try to over-interpret the response you are getting during the interview. Often interviewers themselves could not tell you who they will choose until all the interviews are done and their discussion takes place.
9. No matter what you discuss, one thing the interviewers are always considering is what sort of colleague you would be. So project what is desirable: intellectual energy, good humor, tact. If you enjoy the conversation, chances are they will too. This can only help.

Advice and Information for the Second Round Interview: the Campus Visit.

1. Making it to this stage indicates a department's very strong interest in you. During this interview, they are as interested in appealing to you as you are in making a good impression on them. Evaluation goes both ways, so keep your eyes open.
2. Prepare for this campus visit by doing some solid online research on the interests of the faculty, on the department curriculum, and on the school. Some people suggest reading something by each faculty member you will be speaking to. You may certainly still have questions (which is good), but it is important to appear to have taken the trouble to be informed. Always have a pen and a notepad with you, to write down information and to jot down helpful questions.
3. Ask prior to the campus visit about guidelines for whatever presentations you will be asked for. How long will you have? Are they wanting a paper which is a piece of your dissertation? Or a more sweeping talk-through of the project as a whole? Either way, be sure to leave plenty of time for questions. Aim your talk at a general academic audience--this is not a presentation for your dissertation committee faculty. Make the talk enjoyable and interesting. Show enthusiasm and good humor in the presentation and in your responses to questions. You can show confidence and commitment to your project without grandiosity. Be open to learning from the questions you get.
4. Be very astute about the use of AV technologies for your presentation (e.g. PowerPoint). If these malfunction, they can scuttle the energy and focus of the presentation. Even when they perform as planned, they may be dry and encourage passivity in the audience. Presentations are not just for understanding your research better; they can be clues to how effective and engaged a teacher you are. *Be sure* to tell your interview arrangers in advance what your AV/presentation needs will be and ask for some time to test the equipment prior to your talk.

5. These campus interviews can be very intense in scheduling. You will be speaking to many people over the course of a day, sometimes over meals and into the evening. Go into the interview well rested and take things as they come.
6. Special tip: always carry a “comfort pack” with you of things you may want: a travel size toothbrush and toothpaste, hand sanitizer, protein bars, water, tissues, chap stick. Even when you sit down for a meal, you may be too keyed up or too engaged in talk to eat fully. The snack bars can really help tide you over.
7. Do not over-caffeinate -- this can make you irritable and lead to energy “crashes.” Be aware of how much alcohol you are drinking at dinners--you want to keep your wits about you. This is a job interview.
8. It is again very important to dress professionally but also comfortably. You will be working hard. Layers can help you adapt to unpredictable changes in temperature. Shoes should be comfortable and keep you sure-footed.
9. Let your interviewers bring up questions of salary and other possible areas of negotiation. Take your cues from them. Salary may not be raised until an offer is tendered.
10. You may be asked certain sorts of (inappropriate) questions: are you married? Will your partner relocate with you? Are you pregnant or do you plan to become pregnant? What are your religious commitments? *Decide in advance how you will handle these and do so with graceful firmness ...* When in doubt, we suggest you smile and say “I am confident I can meet my professional responsibilities.” Some questions may be inappropriate, but they can still come your way.
11. The campus visit is again an opportunity for the interviewing faculty to consider you as a long term colleague. Be willing to share in a friendly way what your interests and hobbies are, even beyond the parameters of the job. This can help them to develop a more complete picture of you as a person. It is good to know your colleagues have lives beyond the department.
12. You can expect questions over the course of the visit about what your research *trajectory* will be: where do you see your work going in the future, beyond the dissertation? Think over some substantial remarks you might offer as a response.
13. Departments need to consider what sort of “citizen” you will be: can you organize things? Can you do certain sorts of service when the time comes? Do you have leadership potential? They will consider temperament in this, of course, but also may look for evidence that you have talent or experience in this area.

Following the Job Offer:

1. It is fine if you want to accept on the spot, but you do not have to. Whether you do or not, show pleasure and thank them.
2. You may also want to take a few days (or a week if possible) to think over the offer or to ask for advice from your advisor or to speak with significant others.
3. You may want to raise the issue of travel money, research money, etc, as part of the negotiation. This is a very contextual decision, depending on the sort of position you are looking at and the school's expectations. Always show tact and do not overplay your hand.
4. Bear in mind that schools may push you for a rapid decision, as they do not want to lose other possible acceptable candidates if you then turn them down.
5. Be cautious about how much to ask for and how long to drag this out: you do not want to lose good will. If you accept the job, these colleagues will then be evaluating you.