

TO: All students on the job market
FROM: Professors Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, Placement Directors
Date: July 30, 2009
RE: Frequently Asked Questions about the Job Market (#1)

(*Note:* This FAQ covers the Job Market from now to early November. Later memos will cover applications, the meetings, and the interviews.)

1. Being “On the Market”

Q: How do I know if I should be “on the market” this year?

A: If you have a strong paper that will make for a good presentation this Fall and that will be in good shape for wide distribution before Thanksgiving, and if you also have other papers that can be completed to form an acceptable dissertation by late Spring 2010, you should probably be on the market. When in doubt ask your advisors.

Q: When can I pull off the market with no damage?

A: If you pull off the market before the department posts the curriculum vitas of our job market candidates, there is no damage. This is done in late October. It is more costly to pull off later. Have a “heart to heart” talk with your advisor(s) before late October.

2. The Paper and Presentation of It

Q: Should I worry about how my paper and the abstract are written?

A: Absolutely. Even if your paper is highly technical, the introduction and especially the abstract must be accessible to a broad audience. A poorly written paper in any field of economics reduces the credibility of its contents. What you make of your ideas—how you motivate them, how they are expressed—is almost as important as the content. Remember that there are only a few great ideas but a multitude of minor ones. Chances are that yours is in the latter category. Almost any minor idea can be made interesting, stimulating, clear, and accessible to all. Great ideas can be made inaccessible and boring.

Q: I have written several papers that are all in good form for circulation and presentation. Which should I say is my “job market paper”?

A: Having more than one presentable paper is a plus, but it is *not necessary*. In most cases, you will want to identify as your job market paper the one that best displays your skills and is the best forecast of your research agenda. In special cases you can identify a job market paper for one audience (e.g., theory) and one for another (e.g., finance). Now that everyone has a web-page, you can *post* all of your papers, but note which is the job market paper and the field associated with other papers. Readers will probably read one paper carefully and dip into another, so you need to signal which papers they should read first. Your packet can include more than one but should *not* include papers that are considerably lower in quality than your job market paper.

Q: Can I use a co-authored paper as my job market paper?

A: Yes. It is fine to use a paper co-authored with another student so long as you are not both on the market with the same paper. It *may* be reasonable if the co-author is a faculty member, but you should discuss the situation with us because it depends on the degree to which the topic is closely identified with the faculty member.

Q: Should I present my paper at one of the workshops in the Fall?

A: Yes, except in special circumstances (such as having given the paper a few times already), you should be signed up to give a presentation in the Fall, preferably before Tuesday, October 20.

3. The Market for Economists

Q: How good will the market for economists be this year?

A: The academic market tends to depend on recent years' capital market returns and state fiscal positions. The private sector tends to depend on recent years' capital market returns. We therefore expect a moderate market possibly more depressed at public institutions, but we will know significantly more when the October JOE appears. On the whole, you should not worry about the state of the market. Your paper, presentation, and skills are more important than the aggregate market conditions.

4. The CV and Webpage

Q: What should my CV include and how long should it be? Do I need a webpage?

A: A "style sheet" or "template" for your CV has been posted on our website. You *must* follow it. A CV is generally 2-3 pages and should include your research fields, teaching interests, relevant work experience, education, coordinates, reference names (generally 3; can be 4 or 5), and brief but informative abstracts of your papers. All of this is spelled out in the "style sheet." You *must* also have a webpage. A set of instructions for constructing your webpage is also on our website and must be followed.

5. Your Advisors and References

Q: When should I talk with my advisors about the job market?

A: By mid October, discuss your paper and placement desires and needs with your advisors.

Q: Who should write my letters of recommendation and how many do I need?

A: You should have at least 3 references, but you could have one or two more. References are generally your dissertation advisors, but could include others who know your teaching abilities or research skills. You should ask each of the individuals whether they consent to write a letter *before* you list them on your CV.

Q: Why does the department have a faculty "job market meeting" and when is it?

A: As Placement Directors we need to know what students are working on so that we can inform prospective employers. We also need to know what the needs and desires are of those on the job market. We could ask each advisor separately, but the least time-intensive way to collect this information is to have a meeting of all advisors. The best time to have the meeting is mid- to

late-October, before we get calls from employers and after you have spoken with your advisors. We will also be meeting with each of you to understand your work and your special needs. These meetings will be set up after the first Job Market Meeting.

6. The AEA Meetings, Atlanta, January 2-5, 2010

Q: When do I arrange hotel accommodations and where should I stay?

A: You will need to register in advance for the AEA annual meetings to receive the negotiated hotel rates during the conference. Registration for the conference opens in late August and you may begin to book your hotel rooms in early September. You should make reservations early—generally in September or October (check the AEA’s website <http://www.aeaweb.org>). Stay in one of the nearby hotels (those giving special AEA rates). We advise staying in the main AEA headquarters hotel, but others are generally fine because they are usually geographically close.

7. What’s next?

We will be having a meeting on September 15 (Tuesday) at 5pm (Littauer Lounge; a light dinner will be provided) to discuss general job market issues. Our website will help you create your CV and webpage <http://www.economics.harvard.edu/jobmarket/cvandwebpages> and has other information.