

AFTER THE PH.D.

Although increasing numbers of Ph.D.s in English now seek jobs outside academia (see below), many still pursue employment at colleges and universities. The Department of English cannot guarantee such employment, but it can promise vigorous and wholehearted assistance. Each year, a Ph.D. Placement Director is appointed to provide mentoring to graduate students who are on the academic job market. The Placement Director maintains a detailed job placement guide, replete with deadlines, sample applications, and advice on everything from generating the job application letter to negotiating one's first job contract. Students are encouraged to set up meetings with the Placement Director to discuss topics such as interviewing, writing samples, and professionalism. The Placement Director is also available to set up mock job interviews in preparation for the MLA convention and mock job talks. Each student should also expect their advisor to work with them on job materials. Professor Adam Hooks has generously shared his own expertise and vast collection of resources for job placement here: <http://www.adamhooks.net/p/placement-practicum.html>. Whether you are just starting the program or nearing graduation, here you will find a wealth of advice for navigating the job market and application materials.

In addition to working with the Placement Director and their advisor, students can take other practical steps to enhance their opportunities for academic employment. Probably the most important advantages are to have the dissertation close to completion when seeking employment and to build a record that includes presentation of papers at conferences, publication of essays and reviews, and evidence of distinction in teaching and scholarship. Recent experience shows that most students at Iowa who receive job offers have completed the dissertation at the time the offer is made. Because employers are hesitant to hire persons whose dissertations are incomplete, students should aim to complete the dissertation between December and mid-spring of the academic year in which they seek a job. It is important, then, to predict your rate of progress from the Comprehensive Examination through the completion of the dissertation, to hold a prospectus meeting promptly, and to allow sufficient time for the writing of the dissertation.

It is crucial to cultivate expertise in a broadly defined historical and/or critical field as well as in the narrower area(s) of your dissertation. Because most Ph.D. candidates plan to pursue careers in teaching, the department strongly advises all doctoral candidates to gain experience, whether through college-level teaching done elsewhere or through teaching assistantships in Iowa's Rhetoric Department and/or General Education Program. Training and experience in teaching significantly strengthen a student's position in today's job market and enhance intellectual engagement with the study of literature. The best general advice is to begin to develop the skills and qualities that will make you attractive to potential employers well before the final year of study. Strong course work will ensure strong letters of recommendation, wise planning will create coherence and definition for your program, and an excellent dissertation will be read by academic employers as representing both your achievement and your promise.

English graduate students sometimes run a **Summer Placement Collaborative**, a week-long workshop designed to help students prepare and polish their job application

documents. The sessions are typically divided between a visit from faculty/professionals and time to workshop materials with peers. In the course of the collaborative, students work on documents including teaching philosophy statements, dissertation abstracts, CVs, and diversity statements. For more information about the Summer Placement Collaborative, contact the Placement Director.

Because there is no certainty that all Ph.D.s in English will find continuing academic employment, it is crucial to remain open to job opportunities outside the teaching profession. A number of Ph.D.s are now pursuing careers in academic administration, nonprofits, business, and government. Students are strongly encouraged to explore these “Alt-Ac” and nonacademic career opportunities. The Graduate College Career Services office, which is headed by one of our Ph.D.s, offers excellent programming and advice on the full range of career opportunities for our graduates. See <https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/career-exploration-planning>. We strongly advise our students to take full advantage of this resource.