



# Planning a Career in Philosophy: The Frequently Asked Questions

Third EECP W-Shop, Slovak Academy of  
Sciences, Bratislava, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

# The Frequently Asked Questions

1. What **typologies of post-docs** are available, and how do they help my career advancement?
2. What are the most important **things to plan in advance**, when thinking about an application?
3. **How many applications** is it appropriate/best to send?
4. Will **publishing during my Ph.D** give me better chances of success for a post-doc?
5. What should I take into account when **writing my cover letter and CV**?
6. How could I **present my research** at best in an application?
7. How could I **present my teaching** at best in an application?
8. How could I best **handle a job interview**?

# 1. What typologies of post-docs are available, and how do they help my career advancement?

- Non-tenure track faculty member
  - Research, Teaching and Administrative experience.
- Member of a third-party funded research team
  - Research experience, team experience (+ optional external teaching).
- Own third-party funded project
  - [Lise Meitner, Humboldt, equivalent fellowships in other EU countries, Marie Curie]
  - Research experience, demonstration of third-party funding (+ optional external teaching).
- Teaching position
  - Teaching, Administrative Experience.

## 2. What are the most important things to plan in advance, when thinking about an application?

### 2.1 - Timing

- Plan with a **one-semester** or **one-year advance**.
- **Constantly monitor** mailing lists and websites where job-ads are published.
  - **PHILOS-L**: The main mailing list for (broadly construed) analytic philosophy worldwide.
  - **Philjobs**;
  - **HigherEd Jobs**;
  - **jobs.ac.uk**
- Look for institutions accepting applications **year-round** (e.g. Lise Meitner, Humboldt).
- Learn about the **next deadlines** of the main European funding institutions (e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie, British Academy, ERC starting grant).
- **Departments tend to advertize jobs in the Fall** (Sept-Feb), in order to make the hire at the end of the Spring semester. (But there are lots of exceptions!).
- Check, in the call for applications, whether you may **delay the starting date**.

## 2.2 – Whom to approach first

- Your **supervisor** (for advice, letters of recommendation).
- **Advisors** who might write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Potential **host institution** (for expressions of interest, joint project draft).

- Rely on **prior contacts** (from Ph.D committee, past visiting stays, past events).
- **Collect information** about the would-be employer in advance.
- Read carefully the call for applications/the guide for applicants, to **make sure you meet all the pre-requisites**.

## 2.3 – Preparing the recommendation letters

- Be sure to provide the letter writer with **details** as to:
  - The **position** you are applying for;
  - The **institution**'s name and contact details;
  - The **submission method** (e.g. contact person e-mail, online platform, etc.);
  - The submission **deadline**;
  - Your CV and Research Plan.
- Make sure your request for a letter is sent with a **proper advance**, so it fits with the letter writer's plans (**2-4 weeks**).

### 3. How many applications is it appropriate/best to send?

Should you **send as many applications as possible**?

- You might perceive that you are increasing your chances of employment.
- In fact, there is a concrete chance that (i) some of these applications do **not fully fit** the job description (not exactly your AOS); (ii) you are **not interested** in some of these jobs, after all.

It might be better to **pre-screen the job-ads** based on:

- The jobs that **really interest** you.
- The jobs for which you have a **reasonable chance of success**.

## 4. Will publishing during my Ph.D give me better chances of success for a post-doc?

In general, having publications before the end of your Ph.D is considered **a good thing**.

- In the **UK**, quality and quantity of publications matter for being assessed within the Research Excellence Framework (**REF**).  
(Especially if one applies from a non-UK or non-US university).
- In the **US**, quality matters more than quantity.  
(However, high-quality publications may not necessarily be an advantage in more peripheral colleges, where more stress is attached to teaching.)
- In the **EU**, quantity matters, because it increases chances of success with funding agencies (e.g. **ERC**).

## Where to publish?

- Where did the people you refer to publish?
- Generalist journals may not always be the optimal option.
- Take rankings into account (NB: refer to the most recent ranking.)
  - SCImago ranking: <http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=1211>
  - APA Journal Survey Project: <https://airtable.com/shrWKotYTw0ezNN4N/tbl9E479DxjIJf2zJ>
  - The Brooks Blog: [http://the-brooks-blog.blogspot.co.at/2011/09/journal-rankings-for-philosophy\\_29.html](http://the-brooks-blog.blogspot.co.at/2011/09/journal-rankings-for-philosophy_29.html)
  - Leiter Reports: <http://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2015/09/the-top-20-general-philosophy-journals-2015.html>

# Types of publications (cf. Brooks 2008).

- Original article in peer reviewed journal.
  - Peer reviewed papers, especially in highly ranked journals, show that your work meets **standards of scientific excellence**.
- Response in peer reviewed journal.
  - Publishing a response can be **easier** than publishing an original article in a top journal, although it requires having a good response to a paper/author that is important enough for the editors of the review.
- Invited contribution (in a special issue or volume).
  - Invited papers in collections show that you are **well connected within your scholarly community**. However, if the publisher/journal has a poor reputation, that could do more harm than good.

# Types of publications

- Edited volume.
  - Being the editor of a volume shows that you are **well connected** within your academic community, especially if the contributors are renowned scholars. However, the **reputation of the journal/publisher** is also important.
- Monograph.
  - Matters differently in **different national contexts**. (For instance, it matters for a Habilitation in the German-speaking world, maybe less elsewhere).
  - In general, it shows the **academic «maturity»** of your work.
  - **Should your Ph.D thesis be written** to become a monograph or to become several papers? In general, publication standards for papers are higher, so you might want to place different parts of your thesis in good journals first, and then work out a volume based on those.

# 5. What should I take into account when writing my cover letter and CV?

## 5.1 The cover letter: main sections

	(1) Research	(2) Teaching	(3) Motivation
<b>Past and Present</b>	Research interests.  Thesis topic and abstract.  Summary of research project.  Outcomes so far.	Teaching experience.	Relation between your profile and the department.  [Show you are informed about department's activities, staff, research directions. Try to envisage specific interactions.]
<b>Future</b>	Publication plans, conference plans, funding applications plans.	Teaching plans/ availability to teach.	How does this post fit into your career plans?

The cover letter:

- No more than **2 pages**.
- Try to “**tailor**” every cover letter.
- **Don't underestimate** the importance of the cover letter!
  - This is the first source of information about you for the selection committee.

## 5.2 The CV: main sections

- Name, Current Affiliation, Education, Past Appointments.
- **Publications** (Emphasis on e.g. peer reviewed articles).
- **Grants**.
- **Teaching** (Emphasis on solo-teaching).
- **Talks** (Emphasis on main conferences in the field and peer-review).
- Service to the profession (Admin tasks, referee tasks).
- Other (E.g. language skills, further training, names of references).

# 6. How could I present my research at best in an application?

## 6.1 – The research statement

- 1-2 pages.
- Provides **more details** than the cover letter.
- Summary of **thesis** (briefly cover chapters topics).
- **Contribution** of thesis to the relevant debate.
- **Publications** or publication-plans (e.g. book proposal).
- **Next research project(s)** (topic, method, expected outcomes).
- Conclusion: general academic import of your research.

## 6.2 The Research Project (cf. De Cruz 2013, Kelsky 2015)

- 1) State of the art.
  - 2) Gap** of knowledge in the current literature.
  - 3) Research questions.
  - 4) Main argumentative strategy.
  - 5) Expected conclusions.
- Kelsky: The project should be **structured as a narration**, whose apex is **point (2)**.

## Structuring the Research Project

- **short, numbered** sections.
- section **titles** should **capture section content**.
- emphasis on **keywords**.
- avoid technical jargon (unless it is strictly necessary).

## Research Project: Publication Potential

- show how the proposal **departs from current accounts**.
- stress on **originality** (e.g. emphasize unprecedented elements).
- stress on **timeliness** (e.g. engage with recent publications).

## Research Methods: What are they?

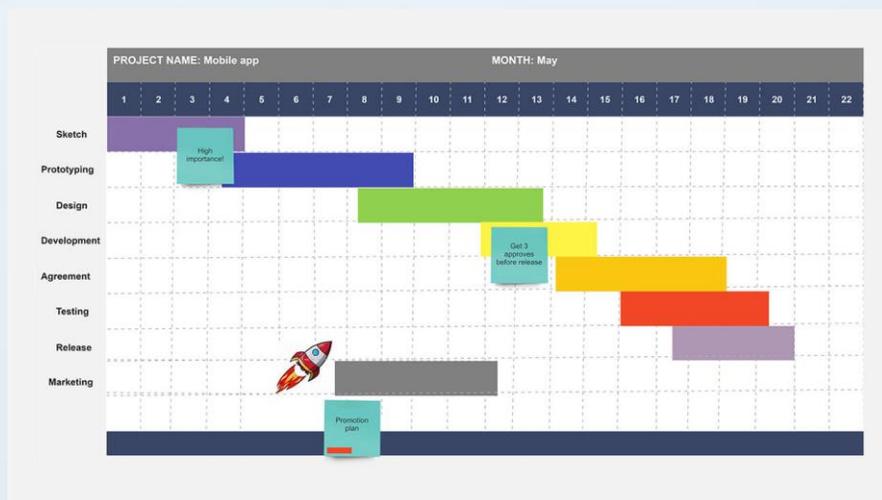
- Researching bibliography.
- Critical thinking, appeal to intuitions, empirical investigation.
- Writing and revising.
- Discussing in a group (e.g. research seminar, with mentor).
- Submitting to and presenting at conferences.
- Submitting to journals.

## Research Outcomes: What are they?

- Journal publications.
- Book contract/book publication.
- Conference talks.
- Convening research seminars.
- Dissemination.
  - public lectures, podcasts, blogs.
- Third-party funding.

# Research Project: Timing

- It has become customary to include a **GANTT chart** in research projects, outlining the phases of research with a high level of precision.



Several online tools are dedicated to helping the design process of GANTT charts. [Here](#) is one.

- Contingency plan, a.k.a., what to do if things do not go as planned:
  - What if I do not manage to publish my research in journals X, Y, Z?
  - What if I do not get a publishing contract with publisher X?
  - What if I do not manage to secure funding from third-party X?

## Fit with career plans

- How is this project going to help you achieve your career goals?
  - What are your **career goals**? (e.g. top-tier publications; enhance scholarly status through citations, network contacts; a tenure-track job).
  - **What can help** you? (e.g. working with scholars at host institution; interacting with project advisor(s); delivering seminars; organizing conferences with grant money; speaking at conferences; support for open-source publications).

## Ask for support

- Your institution might offer:
  - **Information** about the main national and international postdoctoral grants.
  - **Workshops on application-writing.**
  - **Administrative support** (e.g. calculation of budget) may also be provided by your own institution.

# 7. How could I present my teaching at best in an application?

## 7.1 – Providing evidence of teaching

- **Sample syllabi** (send syllabi that match teaching expectations).
- Course **proposals** (short description, tentative timetable, reading list).
- List of **courses taught** (academic year, name and level).
- Summary of student **evaluations** (what did the students like about your teaching?).
- **Evaluation sheets** (emphasis on solo-teaching).

## 7.2 – The teaching statement

- **Max 1 page.**
- Expose your general teaching **goals** and **methods**.
  - Goal: E.g.: enhance the students' ability to think critically.
  - Method: E.g.: having students analyze philosophy excerpts for the rest of the class.
- Cite **specific examples**.
  - *During my Rhetoric and Argumentation course, I instructed the students to...*
- Cite **evidence** of their effectiveness.
  - E.g. marks improved during the course; students expressed satisfaction.
- General conclusion.

## 8. How could I best handle a job interview?

### 8.1 – The Mock Interview

- Brain storm with your colleagues about possible questions/answers, ask about their past experiences.
- Try to arrange a mock interview with other members of the department and/or your research group.

## 8.2 – Job interview: typical questions

(1) Research	(2) Teaching	(3) Motivation
“What is your thesis about?”	“Which classes would you develop for the department?”	“How do you see yourself contributing to this department?”
“What are your plans for turning your Ph.D thesis into a book?”	[ <u>Consider</u> : Which classes are normally offered, and by whom? Which areas need to be covered?]	[ <u>Consider</u> : How does your work connect with the research of current faculty? Who works on what? What are their recent publications?]
“Describe your research project.”		
“What are your publishing plans with regard to your project? What are the expected outcomes?”		[ <u>Consider also</u> : are you willing to take up administrative duties: e.g. as regards the planning of teaching, search committees, international exchanges... etc.]

## Job Interview: Other Questions

- “What are your plans concerning application for third-party funding?”
- “How would you increase gender balance and/or minorities representation in your research and teaching?”

## Job Interview: The Questions Question.

- “Do you have any questions for us?”

### Questions about the department:

“What do you think are the main **research-related challenges** in this department?”

“What do you think are the main **teaching-related challenges** in this department?”

### Questions where you convey positive information about yourself:

“How would the department receive the idea of organizing research reading groups, conferences or workshops that bring together bachelor, master and Ph.D students? I was **previously involved in a similar initiative** and have experienced it as very beneficial to all parties.”

# Appendix

## List of Funding Institutions (in Europe)

Updated to May, 2019



# Online Ads for Philosophy Jobs

Most clicked by philosophers:

- Philos-L (newsletter)
- Philjobs (Mostly USA ads)
- <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/jobs/academic-disciplines>

General Academic Job-Ads

- <http://www.academickeys.com/>
- <http://academicpositions.eu/>
- <https://www.globalacademyjobs.com/>
- <https://www.academicjobseu.com/>

# Funding Institutions

## European Union

- Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (Ph.D or at least 4 years as “researcher” – including prae-doc)
  - [https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/how-to/apply\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/how-to/apply_en)
- ERC Starting Grants (2-7 years of post-Ph.D experience)
  - <https://erc.europa.eu/funding/starting-grants>
- Horizon
  - <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/area/funding-researchers>

## UK

- Arts & Humanities Research Council (within 8 years from Ph.D)
  - <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/skills/earlycareerresearchers/definitionofeligibility/>
- Analysis Trust (3-5 years of post-Ph.D Experience)
  - <http://www.analysistrust.org/society/analysis/studentship.html>
- British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (within 3 years from Ph.D)
  - <http://www.britac.ac.uk/british-academy-postdoctoral-fellowships>
- Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship (Ph.D holders, within 4 years from Ph.D)
  - <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/early-career-fellowships>

## Ireland

- The Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowships (within 5 years from Ph.D)
  - <http://research.ie/funding/goipd/>

# Germany

- DFG - Deutsche Forschung Gemeinschaft
  - Individual Grants Program: Offers a variety of instruments for researchers who either reside in Germany or are committed to continue their career in Germany. For example:
    - Research Fellowships (for individual projects).
    - Emmy Noether Programme (for early career leadership in a project).
- DAAD (for Ph.Ds and junior researchers within 3 years from PhD)
- Humboldt Foundation (within 4 years from Ph.D)
- Further programs: <http://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/overview-postdocs.html>

## Austria

- Lise Meitner Fellowships (Ph.D holders)
  - <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/meitner-programme/>
- FWF Start Grant (2 to 8 years of post-Ph.D experience)
  - <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/start-programme/>
- Austrian Academy of Sciences
  - Post-doc Track (Ph.D close to completion or completed no longer than 6 months before deadline).
    - <https://stipendien.oeaw.ac.at/en/stipendien/post-doctrack/post-doc-track-statuten/>
  - Max Kade Fellowships (within 10 years from Ph.D; implies USA visit)
    - <https://stipendien.oeaw.ac.at/de/stipendien/max-kade/>
- Hertha Firnberg Programme (Women only)
  - <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/application/firnberg-programme/>
- Elise Richter Programme (Women only)
  - <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/richter-programme-incl-richter-peek/>

## **Danemark** – Danish Council for Independent Research

- Sapere Aude – DFF International post-doc (completed or soon to be completed Phd), DFF Starting Grant (within 8 years of post-PhD experience).

<https://dff.dk/en/application/overview-of-instruments>

## **Sweden** – Swedish Research Council

- International Postdocs Grant (within 2 years from Ph.D)

<https://www.vr.se/inenglish/researchfunding/applyforgrants/callforproposals/opengrants/internationalpostdoc.5.753cc09616008e1195e788f3.html>

**Norway** – [The Research Council of Norway](#) (issues calls for proposals).

**Finland** – [Academy of Finland](#) (issues calls for proposals).

## **Belgium** – FWO - Research Foundation Flanders

- Junior Post Doctoral Fellowships (within 3 years from Ph.D)

<https://www.fwo.be/en/fellowships-funding/postdoctoral-fellowships/junior-postdoctoral-fellowship/>

## **Netherlands** – The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

- VENI Grant for early career researchers (within 3 years from Ph.D)

<http://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/our-funding-instruments/nwo/innovational-research-incentives-scheme/veni/index.html>

## **Switzerland** – Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships

- <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/scholarships-and-grants/swiss-government-excellence-scholarships.html#782754137>

## Spain

- Fellowships «Juan de la Cierva Formación» (within 2 years from Ph.D)
- Ramon y Cajal Fellowships (approx 2-10 years of post-Ph.D experience): <https://sede.micinn.gob.es/ryc/>
- Beatriu de Pinos Fellowships (approx 2-7 years of post-Ph.D experience)

# References

Brooks, Thom (2008). "Publishing Advice for Graduate Students". Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1085245> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1085245>.

ESF (2017) "Career Tracking Study for Doctorate Holders", downloadable from: <http://www.esf.org/scientific-support/career-tracking-of-doctorate-holders/2017-career-tracking-survey-of-doctorate-holders/>

De Cruz, Helen (2013) "Tips for writing a successful philosophy grant proposal", <http://www.newappsblog.com/2013/09/tips-for-writing-a-successful-philosophy-grant-proposal.html>

Kelsky, Karen (2015). *The Professor is In*, Three Rivers Press (CA).

Karen Kelsky's Blog: <https://theprofessorisin.com/>