

Application packages

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Photo: Julie DeWilde

Cover letters

- Absolutely no spelling or grammatical errors! Address it to the right person!
- 1-2 pages single spaced

Government

- ***use key words in the ad***. Sometimes can get a more detailed list of requirements from the contact. Will probably be scanned by computer.
- If you know people who have gone through the interview process, try to find out as much as you can about it from them.
 - They will have a grading system with “right” and “wrong” answers to each question, even those you think are qualitative

Industry / other

I am excited to apply for this position (etc. expand to 3-4 lines). I have all the skills you are seeking:

- Leadership: (outline skills in this area)
- Interpersonal skills (demonstrate skills)
- Expert in mammal tracking
 - I have 3 years of experience tracking coyotes in Texas
- Experience in R analyses
 - I have 2 years of experience in

I look forward to contributing my skills to ensuring the continuing success of XYZ (etc etc).

Academic

- Professional, grammatically perfect, use standard font as some fonts don't digitize well. Need to sound like someone who is highly competent and also would be a great colleague to work with.
- Generally 1 paragraph each:
 - Research experience; key findings and publications
 - Teaching experience; demonstrate that you have more than just t.a.'d before
 - (possibly) Service; demonstrate commitment to your field and that you're the kind of person the search committee members would want to work with
- Why you are a good fit for the department you're interviewing for – how you can contribute. Demonstrate that you know about the strengths of the department, majors or programs. You want to complement their skills without replicating them. Possibly, local research opportunities and how they fit into your research program.

What I am looking for in an academic application package:

- Around 10 or more publications,
 - something that stands out
 - yes, it does help to have papers in Nature or Proc B etc., but not essential
- Has taught or co-taught at least one university course;
- Some service contributions, e.g. membership and contributions to an academic society;
- Major (ie full) scholarships or awards.

CV / resumes

- Academic: CV (example)
- Full application for academic position requires both research and teaching dossiers (examples)
 - Generally 2 thick binders – lots of materials

Government

- For resumes, will probably need to enter all your information into a standard form (web-based).
- Not pretty and in Canada are not user-friendly.
- Be extremely careful with editing final version as the format / spacing between words may change, punctuation may be messed up, etc etc.
- Again, use key words from ad where possible.

Industry / standard resumes

- Pet peeve:
- I hate the “summary” section often found at the beginning (is very generic)

Examples... (don't do this...)

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent leadership skills and supervisory experience
- Ability to work in a challenging team environment or with no supervision
- Reliable, punctual, organized and articulate
- Mammal and vegetation surveys

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

- ...

CVs and resumes

- Use active, professional language; which is best?
 - Statistical modeling in R
 - Contributed to the development of an R package
 - Collaborated with two other colleagues to develop an R package, “XXX”
 - Designed, tested and distributed R package, “XXX”, in collaboration with research group

Interviews

- Dress so that you look the part – on the upper end of formal for your position
- If possible, find out from an “in” what the culture usually expects in terms of clothing (e.g. in Alberta consulting companies I find that people are very dressed up and formal)
- Women: Minimal or at least natural makeup, and practical shoes!!
- No brightly coloured hair or streaks – it’s probably ok, but not worth the risk
- Smiling, engaging, friendly, relaxed, make eye contact, practice but don’t memorize answers
- You want them to want to work with someone like you

Academic

- If appropriate provide handouts, e.g., an outline for a proposed course that would fit into the research program that you are applying for – must be perfect, well thought-out, and you should be able to discuss it if there are questions about the content
- Be familiar with the department, members and expertise, name of the department head or chair, programs, what your position is expected to accomplish, who you're taking over for or what courses you might be expected to teach, and bring those issues up in your answers
- Be on top of your field. If something interesting has come up in the news recently about your field (e.g. climate change / discovery of avian ancestor) consider integrating it into your mock lecture (if assigned).

Government

- Be aware of all the relevant names and positions of ministers / associate ministers etc. it may come up in questioning or be part of a formal test that is part of the interview.

Common questions

- 3-6 interviewers
- Why do you think you're a good fit with this department?
- How has your experience prepared you for this position?
- Can you think of an interpersonal conflict you've experienced, and tell us how you dealt with it? (don't say you haven't had any. Don't say you've had too many to choose from. Think of a professional example that you dealt with well).
- What was your favorite previous job experience? Why?
- What are you most looking forward to in this position?
- What is statistical power (or similar specific questions relevant to the position)?

Common questions: academia

- How do you envision your research program developing over the next 5 years? 10 years?
- What funding options do you expect to pursue?
- How would you integrate graduate students / undergraduates into your research program?
- What equipment or facility needs would you have?

Negotiations: Academia (mostly)

- You can ask for pretty much anything. Once they've offered you the job, they can't renege on the offer because they don't like your terms – they can just say no to your terms
 - (sure, you can be polite about it, though!)
- E.g., not unusual to ask for (and receive) as much as a year's deferment (e.g. to allow you to take a prestigious post-doc position)
- Usually start July 1 so have 2 months to prep for the fall
- Expect a teaching deferment of some kind in the first year – e.g. fewer than normal courses in both first term, or no courses in the first term

Negotiations: Academia (mostly)

- Should include start-up funding – approx. \$35,000 would be common, reasonable to ask more (even \$100,000). Include funding for publication costs, a research assistant or two for the first year, could include equipment including field vehicles, computers, funding to start and continue a website, travel for research and conferences for a couple of years, perhaps funding for a grad student to start up. They can always say no.
- Meet in person for the negotiations, and expect a written agreement
- Probably will start at the lowest step for salary, but if you have extra experience (e.g. job experience / government experience / previous assistant professorship) it's reasonable to negotiate a higher starting point.
 - You can also use other job offers to help you negotiate a higher starting salary.