First of all, I’d like to thank committee members rotating off the committee: Debra Nails (Michigan State), Gualtiero Piccinini (University of Missouri, St. Louis), and Kevin Timpe (Northwest Nazarene) for their very helpful service.

Committee accomplishments this year include sessions on best placement practices at the Eastern, Central, and Pacific. Similar sessions are planned for this year; they seem especially helpful to job seekers at the meetings.

This year, we have also taken on the task of drafting a placement practices handbook for the APA. The document is in first draft form, but has gone through two rounds of discussion with committee members. We think we are ready enough to seek comment, and would welcome feedback from members of the Board of Officers. If possible, we’d also like to have the draft on the APA web page for comment. The remainder of this report consists of the current APA statement, and our proposed draft document. We should note that although much of the advice in the proposed document may seem obvious to many, our experience has been that many students report receiving very little help at all with placement.

**Current APA Statement on Placement Practices**

The APA discourages the nomination by graduate departments of job seekers for positions in philosophy, and the submission of their dossiers in response to announcements of positions, without their knowledge or interest. This may seriously mislead those who are conducting searches, and may have unfortunate consequences both for those who are not interested and for genuinely interested applicants.

Graduate departments using a nomination procedure or submitting dossiers on behalf of job seekers should either attest explicitly that the job seekers wish to be considered for the positions in question, or (preferably) ensure that the job seekers themselves submit personal letters of application for these positions.

Departments conducting searches are encouraged to recommend or require explicitly (in their position announcements) that each candidate, to be assured of full consideration, should submit a personal letter of application for, and interest in, the announced position.


This handbook of placement practices is prepared as a guide to both departments attempting to place their students and departments attempting to appoint new faculty members. It should be recognized that department needs and resources will vary and that different practices may be appropriate depending on the context. However, it is the judgment of the APA that the practices recommended below represent best practices for department to work to attain. There
are two sections to this document: practices for placing departments, and practices for hiring departments.

The primary responsibilities of a placing department are for their junior candidates. Departments should be encouraged, however, to offer continued support for more advanced candidates to the extent possible. The placement advice provided here refers primarily to junior candidates.

The timing of the recruitment cycle for (U.S.) philosophy departments is tightly constrained by the need to have all hiring for the Fall completed in the Spring, by the competitive nature of the recruitment process, and by the tradition of performing initial screening of applicants at the APA's Eastern Division annual meeting. These constraints in turn put a heavy burden on new Ph.D.s and ABDs on the market. Students will be finishing or only recently have finished their dissertations and will need help making the abrupt transition from student to faculty. It is important that departments that maintain Ph.D. programs to provide as much support for job candidates as possible. Naturally resources available to departments will vary, however every effort should be made to make this transition at least less mysterious if not less onerous.

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Best Practice for Placing Departments

A.1. Responsibilities of Placement Director

The responsibilities of the Placement Director include orienting each new cohort of graduate students; advising individual students about all aspects of jobs in philosophy; assisting job seekers with the preparation of dossiers, mock APA interviews, the APA process, and preparation for on-campus visits; and keeping up to date with current APA policies and placement statistics.

Orienting each new cohort of graduate students.

Each incoming group of graduate students should be made aware of the difficulty of finding jobs in philosophy. The ‘professionalization’ of graduate students should begin early: they should be advised about preparation of a curriculum vita, the need to publish, and the need
to seek possibilities for teaching. Given the tight job market in philosophy, graduate students should also be advised by the Placement Director to keep open minds about alternatives to a career in philosophy.

**Advising individual graduate students about all aspects of jobs in philosophy.**

Placement Directors should recommend that job seekers become members of the APA and aware of the APA’s placement services, statements, and literature. Placement Directors should advise job seekers to consult Jobs For Philosophers, as well as The Chronicle of Higher Education, web resources, and job-related publications from other disciplines, as appropriate.

Placement Directors should forward e-mailed job ads to candidates that are publicized via various professional listserves.

Placement Directors should advise job seekers about differences in job expectations, given differences in the kinds of jobs in philosophy (e.g., tenure track vs. multiple-year non-tenure track; community college positions vs. four-year college or university positions; teaching vs. research institutions). Placement Directors should also provide advice about collegiality, service expectations, what departments look for in a candidate, and so on. Placement directors should maintain, to the extent possible, good communication links with all graduate students. Good communication is especially important for those students currently on the market. Regular e-mail contact is often a source of moral support for job seekers, as well as of information for Placement Directors.

**Assisting job-seekers in the preparation of their dossiers.**

Placement Directors should advise job seekers about appropriate content and length of cover letters, when and how to solicit letters for their confidential files, and the creation of a curriculum vita, a teaching folio, and research statement.

Confidential letters of reference should be reviewed for consistency about important dates (e.g., the date of the dissertation defense) and for inaccuracies (e.g., in statements about when the candidate entered the program or what courses the candidate has taught); these should be corrected if possible. Placement Directors also should review letters for inappropriate material (e.g., intentional or unintentional "poison pills," unprofessional comments) and confer if possible with the author of the letter about the advisability of removing or revising this material.

**Arranging mock interviews and mock job talks for candidates.**

Placement Directors should arrange at least one mock interview for job candidates, and ensure that appropriate feedback is provided. At least one mock job talk should also be arranged, again, with appropriate feedback.

**Attending APA meetings where the Department’s graduates are seeking jobs.**

Placement Directors should try to attend APA meetings, should attend receptions, and be available to candidates as needed at these events. If placement directors are unavailable to attend these meetings, they should attempt to identify other faculty members who will be present and provide them with information about department candidates seeking placement at the meeting. When no faculty members from a department are attending a given APA meeting, any candidates seeking jobs at that meeting should be informed of this fact and counseled in advance about what to expect at the meeting, what resources are available at the meeting (e.g. the APA placement
ombudsperson), and how to contact the department should the need arise for advice during the meeting.

*Staying up-to-date with APA statements and statistics about placement, as well as placement procedures.*

Placement directors should be aware of the current situation in the philosophy job market, as well as current APA placement procedures, and should be able to advise job seekers accordingly.

### A.2 Candidate and Dossier Preparation

**Dossier Preparation.**

Candidates should be made aware of the contents of a proper dossier and should work with the placement director to ensure that all needed materials are included.

A standard dossier will contain: CV with contact information, the title of the dissertation and the committee membership, higher educational history, AOS(s) and AOC(s), a list of publications, graduate courses taken, and courses the candidate is now prepared to teach; letters from advisors and teaching mentors; waivers of the candidates' right to examine letters of reference to the extent that these waivers are legally recognized; writing sample(s) that are stand alone documents indicating the candidate's special expertise but which are accessible to general audiences; research interests statement; teaching statement outlining both the candidates approach to teaching and areas of teaching interest; syllabuses for courses taught as well as for courses the candidate is now prepared to teach; course teaching evaluations if available (numerical and written); transcripts, which may at early stages be unofficial copies, and which are needed only at a small number of departments.

It is preferable for departments to hold at least copies of the candidate's letters of reference to be sent out to schools at the candidate's request. This will give candidates some measure of control over the timing of letters being sent out (rather than relying on multiple faculty to send many letters with a variety of deadlines) and ease the burden on faculty (who are otherwise required to send many copies of the same letter with a variety of deadlines).

In addition to managing letters, departments can help candidates by keeping the entire dossier ready for copying and shipping. This does, however, substantially increase the administrative burden on departments. As an alternative to direct management of dossiers by departments, there are also now commercial dossier management systems online which will store and ship dossiers at candidates request. These can be pricey for candidates applying to many positions, but do save work for home departments.

Cover letters are best kept separate and written by the candidate for each individual school.

**Candidate Preparation:**

The placement director should at a minimum communicate with each candidate regarding the process of hiring in the profession. This communication should address: key moments of the process, especially APA and campus interviews; letter solicitation and timing; CV preparation; cover letter writing; selection of writing sample(s); the production of statements regarding teaching and research. Preparing these documents is a demanding task and junior candidates will
often lack necessary experience in their preparation. Oversight by the placement committee is an important part of preparing candidates for the market.

*Letters of reference:* Many students do not have experience asking faculty for letters of reference, and indeed many are unsure whom they should ask to write letters. With first applications now due at the end of October students will need to be approaching their faculty for letters at more or less the beginning of Fall term.

*Interview preparation:* Interviews are daunting, especially the first few times. If resources allow, candidates should be offered mock interviews (both convention and phone, and later campus style) and feedback on these interviews. At a minimum, candidates should be acquainted with the basic structure of these interviews.

*Teaching observations.* Students will need to present evidence of their teaching abilities in the dossier. An important part of this evidence is a letter from a teaching mentor or other faculty who has observed and can report on a candidate's abilities. It is best if there are multiple observations over an extended time, allowing for a more complete evaluation and for candidate growth in response to feedback.

**Applying**

In general, candidates should realize that hiring departments will receive a great many applications and it is in their interest to make their dossiers as clear and complete as reasonably possible. Candidates should take seriously the areas of specialization and competence noted by the hiring departments. While candidates understandably want to apply broadly, it is a waste of money and time to apply for positions if one has to “shoehorn” oneself into the AOS/AOC. Candidates should carefully follow the instructions for applying and be sure to submit all requested material in a timely fashion. Candidates should be aware that, due to human limits on attention span, dossiers that arrive in the last minute rush immediately before the deadline sometimes do not get reviewed as carefully as dossiers that arrive a bit before the deadline.

In general, hiring departments prefer to receive one and only one writing sample. Members of hiring committees are sometimes annoyed by candidates who send it several samples and request that departments pick the one they like best. Given time constraints, it is usually not possible for hiring committees to do this. However, it is to candidates’ advantage to make all works mentioned on their CV easily accessible. Personal web pages are ideal for this purpose.

Candidates should be aware of their web presence. Members of hiring committees and university officials sometimes search the web for information about candidates. Personal web pages should be professional and graduate students should reflect on the fact that items put on the web are often difficult to remove. Candidates should review the privacy settings on their social networking accounts.

A.3 Unethical Practices for Placing Departments

*Favoritism:*
Placement officers should not let their personal relationships with candidates affect the advice they give to candidates about positions. Only a candidate’s (1) philosophical ability, (2) work ethic, (3) teaching ability, and (4) any other information that can affect the candidate’s ability as a professional philosopher should influence this advice. Personal information such as race, gender identity, religion, political conviction, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, and actual or perceived medical condition, is irrelevant.

**Placement Records:**
Departments should publish complete and accurate placement records on their websites. Placement records should include information concerning all students who enrolled in a degree program, those who graduated, and the graduates’ respective professions and locations. Departments should not mislead prospective students by reporting only those successful candidates who found jobs.

Departments should submit a candidate’s dossier and information only for positions which the candidate is interested in and has given his/her consent for. Applying for positions which the candidate is not interested in can not only harm the university conducting the search, but also the chances of those candidates who knowingly apply for the position. Graduate departments submitting dossiers on behalf of job seekers should either attest explicitly that the job seekers wish to be considered for the positions in question or (preferably) ensure that the job seekers themselves submit personal letters of application for these positions.

**Letters of Recommendation:**
Letters of recommendation should be honest evaluations of a candidate’s philosophical and professional abilities. Faculty should only write letters of recommendation when they have good knowledge of a candidate’s abilities. Faculty who write letters of recommendation should limit their statements to the candidate’s (1) philosophical ability, (2) work ethic, (3) teaching ability, and (4) any other information that can affect the candidate’s ability as a professional philosopher and member of an academic community.

**B.1 Advertising Positions**
Job advertisements should be consistent with the APA Nondiscrimination Statement. The statement is available at [http://apaonline.org/publications/jfp/discrim.aspx](http://apaonline.org/publications/jfp/discrim.aspx) and should be followed carefully. The advertisements should list all of the key criteria that will be used by the search committee and the department in evaluating applications. For instance, for the sake of transparency the advertisement should specify whether the department has a preference for candidates with a particular pedigree. The APA's statement on Clarification of Qualifications is available at [http://www.apaonline.org/governance/statements/clarification.aspx](http://www.apaonline.org/governance/statements/clarification.aspx). Information for preparing a job advertisement is available at [http://www.apaonline.org/publications/jfp/advertise.aspx](http://www.apaonline.org/publications/jfp/advertise.aspx). It is strongly recommended that prospective employers prepare an advertisement that covers all of the items listed in the APA's Advertiser's Checklist, [http://www.apaonline.org/publications/jfp/advertise.aspx#checklist](http://www.apaonline.org/publications/jfp/advertise.aspx#checklist).

**B. 2. APA interviews**
Practices for Hiring Departments

Upon arrival at the APA meetings to interview, hiring departments should register with the APA placement service and indicate where interviews will take place. While emailing and calling candidates to provide this information can be useful, they are not a substitute for official information held with the APA placement service.

In 1994, the Board of Officers of the APA adopted a policy of banning job interviews in sleeping rooms as quickly as adequate alternatives can be provided. It is the view of this Committee that as fifteen years have passed since this policy was adopted, departments have had adequate time to make alternative arrangements (e.g., interviews in hotel suites or in the APA’s interview space). No interviews may take place in sleeping rooms.

If the interview takes place in a hotel suite, it should be orderly. Interviewees should be offered water and be seated in a chair (not, e.g., on a coffee table).

Evidence indicates that interviews with a definite (but flexible) structure are more likely to provide good information. Hiring departments should take some time before the interviews to set up a structure for the interviews. As a courtesy, they should run over this structure with each candidate at the start of each interview.

Practices for Candidates

Candidates should arrive on time to interviews. To avoid disturbing other interviews, if the interview is in a suite, candidates should not knock on the door until the time scheduled for the interview. Dress should be professional but need not reach the level that might be required for a job interview with, for example, a bank. Candidates should be prepared to discuss their research with philosophers who do not know their area. In particular, it is important that candidates be able make the importance of their research clear and be prepared to offer arguments for their views that are accessible to a wide range of philosophers.

Candidates often fail to prepare adequately for questions regarding teaching. Many departments spend more than half the interview discussing teaching. Candidates should have reviewed the web site of the hiring department before the interview. They should be prepared with two or three questions about the hiring department that reflect knowledge of that that department.

Candidates should be aware that hiring departments are usually on strict interview schedules so their answers to questions should be reasonably brief. It is normal for members of the interview team to interrupt and candidates should not take offense at this. (In fact, it is often a sign that the member of the team is interested in the candidate’s point.) Due to time constraints, interviews often end abruptly and candidates should quickly (but politely) leave the interview room so that the next interview can take place on time.

B. 3. On-Campus Interviews and Offers

Suggestions for Candidates

In general, candidates should be aware that on-campus interviews, while primarily focused on a particular job, are also part of developing ones reputation. Even if not hired in a
position, a candidate’s performance at on-campus interviews and/or in the offer process can lead to future contacts (e.g., invitations to conferences).

Inviting a candidate to campus is significant outlay of resources (in both money and time) for the hiring department. Candidates should respect this and try to minimize expenses. For example, candidates should keep travel expenses to a reasonable level and should not order extravagantly at restaurants.

Candidates who receive offers should make their decisions as quickly as possible. Candidates should be aware that other candidates are affected by their decisions and slow decisions on offers can have negative impacts on others.

Suggestions for the Hiring Department

Successful campus visits require advance planning. These visits may involve a variety of activities, depending on the interest of the hiring department. Typical activities might include some or all of: meetings with members of the department, meetings with the dean or other members of the institution’s administration, meetings with graduate and undergraduate students, a job talk based on the candidate’s research, a sample course session of the candidate’s choosing, a course section of an existing course, tours of the campus or the local area, and social activities such as meals. Hiring departments should clearly communicate to candidates what is expected during the visit—e.g. length of time for the job talk, content of class session, likely audience size, and so on.

The host institution should arrange for candidates’ visits to occur over a short time frame. Candidates should meet with a variety of faculty and students in both formal and informal settings, keeping in mind a candidate’s specialization and interests. A candidate will appreciate an agenda for the visit well in advance, specifying the audiences (size and nature) for any presentations. The agenda should include meals and breaks for the candidate, and restaurants should be chosen according to the candidate’s dietary restrictions. At meals, the host should balance the conversation so that the candidate has time to eat. The agenda should pay attention to the timing of early and late meetings, leaving adequate time for the candidate to sleep at night in comfortable accommodations. It is practical to designate a faculty member as host for a candidate’s visit. The candidate may then, for example, contact that faculty member in case something goes wrong during transit.

A hiring institution customarily pays the travel expenses of a candidate invited to its campus for an interview. These expenses include airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals. A new Ph.D. is generally short of funds for campus visits, and an institution that desires such visits before making an offer is better positioned to cover expenses. A host department should make it clear in advance how reimbursements will be handled, and then reimburse promptly after the visit.

The host should maintain a professional relationship with the candidate. Job candidates are apt to agree to requests from the host, so the host should make only requests considerate of the candidate’s interests. For example, it would be inappropriate to suggest impromptu late night activities when the candidate has early morning commitments. If the host knows someone in the department is likely to behave inappropriately, the host should take steps to minimize harm, for example, by warning the candidate and by not scheduling the candidate to meet that person alone.
The host institution should volunteer to candidates full information about the institution, in particular, the faculty handbook, expectations that apply to the hire and also available resources such as career development opportunities and opportunities for modified duties. It should explain the institution’s policies and procedures for evaluation and promotion, mentoring resources for junior and tenured faculty, policies concerning parental leave and spousal and partner accommodation. It should provide this information to all job candidates regardless of gender, partner or parent status, and race or ethnicity.

The host institution also gathers information about candidates. Those conducting interviews should be aware of laws regarding questions about race, ethnic background, religion, marital or familial status, age, disability, sexual orientation or veteran status. In general, hiring institutions should not request information that feeds discrimination, even unintentional discrimination. The information the host gathers is primarily, but not exclusively, about the candidate’s qualifications. Hiring institutions have a legitimate interest in a candidate’s likelihood of accepting an offer if made and likelihood of continuing employment if started. Making an offer and hiring are institutional investments that an institution rightfully strives to make successful.

A candidate may not want to reveal conditions of acceptance of an offer, for example, a job for a spouse, until after receiving an offer. However, if a candidate has a partner who will need placement help, taking steps early in the hiring process may have advantages for both sides. The hiring department should explain how the negotiation process works at its campus, so that the candidate knows what to expect if an offer is made.

The host institution should have prepared in advance a method of evaluating the candidates invited to campus. It should solicit feedback from faculty and students who met the candidates and should gather comparable information from all candidates so that it can evaluate them all using the same criteria.

Offers

Candidates and hiring institutions alike seek a good match but have some divergent interests. The candidate’s position, especially if the candidate is a new Ph.D., is likely in many cases to be weaker than the hiring institution’s position, and fairness requires that the hiring institution not exploit the candidate’s being in a weaker position.

The circumstances under which offers are made are so various that no rule will cover all cases, but norms of professional courtesy suggest some helpful advice. Employer and prospective employee should be respectful of one another’s legitimate concerns. Employers are properly concerned about planning for the contingency of making another offer in a timely fashion if one is turned down. Prospective employees are properly concerned to make important career decisions in the light of fairly complete information about which offers they are actually going to receive. In some cases such concerns may set employer and prospective employee at cross-purposes unless both parties exercise professional courtesy. Ideally, at the time an offer is made, employer and prospective employee should discuss their concerns with the aim of arriving at a mutually agreeable deadline for response. In normal circumstances a prospective employee should have at least two weeks for consideration of a written offer from a properly authorized administrative officer, and responses to offers of a position whose duties begin in the succeeding fall should not be required before January 15. When an employer is unable to honor these conditions, the prospective employee should be given an explanation of the special circumstances that warrant insistence on an earlier decision. By the same token, a prospective
employee should not delay unnecessarily in responding to an offer once it has been made. When a prospective employee requests more time to consider an offer than the employer is inclined to give, a candid statement of the reasons for the request is in order.

Negotiations after receipt of an offer are normal, although time pressure often limits negotiations. A candidate may, for example, request modifying an offer’s provisions concerning salary and benefits, reimbursement of moving expenses, provision of computer and peripherals, teaching duties, course release time, research assistants, clerical or administrative support, and office space. The hiring department should have told the candidate in advance what items are negotiable.

Oral offers and acceptances are highly problematic and inappropriate, given the availability of email as an official means of communication. Informal communication that an offer or acceptance will be forthcoming may be reasonable, but should not be relied upon by either party. At least two distinct types of situation cause difficulties with oral offers and acceptances. One is the case in which a prospective employee received what appears to be an oral job offer and on that account forgoes other opportunities only to learn later that the prospective employer has no job to offer because, for instance, a position does not receive final administrative approval. In order to prevent misunderstandings on this score, the prospective employer should make it very clear to the prospective employee whether a formal offer is being extended or not. If a prospective employer is only in a position to say that a formal offer will be forthcoming provided a departmental recommendation received administrative approval and to predict such approval, the prospective employee should be told explicitly that this is the situation. Another kind of difficulty arises when a formal offer is orally made and accepted and the prospective employee later receives and accepts another offer. Such cases can present both legal and moral problems. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that there are circumstances in which oral contracts are legally binding (this is a matter of state law, and will vary). In addition, oral acceptance of a formal offer, like making a serious promise, generates a strong prima facie obligation to take the job thus accepted, and weighty reasons are needed to justify not doing so.