APPLYING FOR POSTDOC.

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Should I even do a postdoc?

YES

- Academic research: includes universities, research institute, non-profits.
- You have no idea what you want to do: a postdoc won't close any doors, but leaving academia makes it very hard to come back.

MAYBE

- Teaching: at the university level, it is usually required. In teaching colleges it may not be.
- Industry research: some industry positions require a postdoc. Others prefer "industry" postdocs.
- Some technical jobs (e.g., core facilities director).

NO

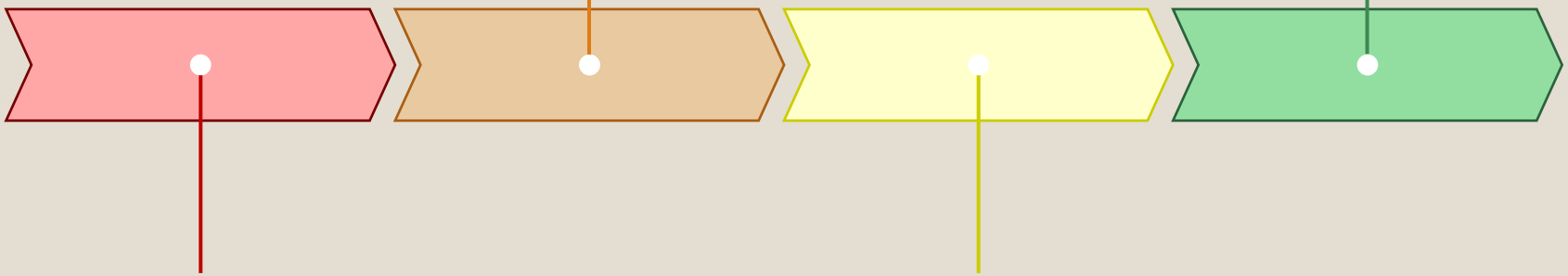
- Medical school: unless you are missing core requirements.
- Consultant: almost always not required.
- Journal editor: almost always not required.
- Sales, project management, and field application scientist.

When should I apply?

Defend

- Very common to apply before defense.
- Do you want downtime?

POSTDOC STARTS



Apply

- 6-12 months prior to ideal start.
- Give yourself time to weigh options with multiple offers.

Transition

- Finish final revisions.
- Start applying for fellowships.
- Relocation takes time.

Tips for applying for positions.

- When applying for a position:
  - Send emails directly to professors: job posts for postdocs are rare.
  - Your email will have 3 main things:
    - Body of email – short, concise.
    - Cover letter – more thorough.
    - CV – detailed "list" of experience and achievement.
- Quality over quantity:
  - Submit few good applications, not many mediocre applications.
  - Base it on the market.
  - 2021-2022 cycle is currently a "postdoc market." Many positions, few candidates.

Email to professor.

Subject Line	To the point: Application for postdoc position.
Greeting	Professional: Dear Dr./Professor X,
Who are you?	What makes you suitable for the lab? Educational experience, technical skills, research background, major achievements.
Why this lab?	What specifically about this lab makes it a good fit? -Research interests: be specific! -Your relevant skills and research experience.
Others?	What makes you unique? -DEI initiatives, teaching experience, management experience, etc.

Cover Letter.

USC Leonard Davis
School of Gerontology

Ryo Higuchi-Sanabria, PhD
Assistant Professor of Gerontology, Biological Sciences,

Dear Dr./Professor X.

- Who are you?
  - Undergraduate, Ph.D., and other educational background.
  - What makes you suitable for the lab?
  - What is your research and technical experience?
  - Major achievements: top publications, grants, awards, etc. **Do not make an exhaustive laundry list – your CV does this.**
- Why this lab?
  - Why are you specifically interested in this lab's research?
  - Why do your skills and background make you suitable?
- Extra credit
  - What project do you want to do in this lab?
  - What grants do you want to apply for and when?

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Curriculum Vitae.

- Send a good CV.
- **Make it easy on the eyes!**
  - Organize: bullet points, use bold wisely, consistent format, be cautious with bold colors.
- Content:
  - research experience
  - education experience
  - other relevant work experience
  - publications
  - grants & awards
- Tips:
  - Have as many people as you can look at it!
  - Do not false advertise.
  - Make sure you do not have grammatical or spelling errors.

Jack **Corden**

Associate Professor of English Literature

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Passionate researcher and lecturer with 10+ years experience in the field of English literature. Experienced in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students including supervision of MA and PhD theses. Author of two books focussing on the legacy of the Southern Gothic genre on contemporary literature and media. Regular contributor of paper and poster conference presentations in the UK and abroad.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2017-09 - present — **Associate Professor of English Literature**
University of Roehampton
- Undertook teaching of 10 undergraduate and three postgraduate courses, helping students to achieve a 10% year on year increase in average final results.
- Delivered lectures to classes of 60+ students, delivering material that was consistently rated as outstanding in student course assessments.
- Member of Internal Programme Examinations Board

2009-09 - 2017-08 — **Lecturer in English Literature**
Kingston University
- Assisted with delivering undergraduate English literature degree offering
- Undertook teaching of 6 undergraduate courses of 50+ students under direct supervision of department head

EDUCATION

2006-09 - 2009-08 — **Kingston University, PhD**
- Grayling Bursary funded research titled 'Steinbeck and Hemingway: Legacy of Legends in Contemporary American Literature'. Supervisor: Professor Sid Dershowitz, Kingston University.

2003-09 - 2006-08 — **Kingston University, MA English Literature**
- Thesis titled 'The Development of the Anti-Hero in Mythopoetic Southern Literature'. Supervisor: Associate Professor Jane Grey, Kingston University.

Kingston University, BA English Literature (Hons)
- Achieved 1st-class honours.
- Modules included Literature of the New World, Contemporary Literature of Central Europe and Literary Influences on Popular Culture.

LANGUAGES

German — C1

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2010 British Comparative Literature Association

2011 British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies

2011 Royal Society of Literature

What to expect in an interview.

- Interviews usually consist of four things:
  - Meeting the PI.
  - One on one with lab members.
  - Research seminar.
  - Lab lunch or dinner (or both!).

Meeting with the PI.

- Be prepared for:
  - What made you interested in the lab?
  - What projects do you want to work on in the lab?
  - What are your career goals?
  - What technical skills can you bring into the lab?
  - What grants do you plan to apply for?
  - Are you interested in teaching/mentorship?
  - Are you open to performing lab maintenance duties?
- What you can ask:
  - What is the dynamics of the lab – social, personal, work, competitive/supportive?
  - Mentorship style – more/less involved?
  - How much scientific freedom is in the lab?
  - Career trajectory – what % go in what direction, and what is the general feeling of someone pursuing that track?
  - Students – can you choose who you want to bring in? Will you be assigned students?
  - Deadline – very important to know how much time you can be in the lab, fellowship expectations, etc.
  - Timing – when to expect to hear back.
  - Are there any concerns that you can address in person?

One on one.

- Usually more casual.
  - Expect repetitive questions.
  - Lab managers ask typical "interview" questions (e.g., weaknesses)
- **Ask questions.**
  - Work environment, social environment, **are you happy?**
  - Ask multiple people the same thing! Get different opinions.
  - Cost of living is a great question for trainees – keep in mind the person's socioeconomic status.
  - Ask about the PI: mentorship, relationship, support, etc.
- Things to think about:
  - Do you want to be in a friendly and social lab?
  - Do you want to be in a hard-working or more relaxed environment?
- Extra credit:
  - Read up on each person's research interests.
  - Find where you fit in – some lab websites list hobbies, favorite movies, etc.
  - Who can you collaborate with?

Research Seminar

- Introduction and background is the MOST IMPORTANT.
  - Assume that everyone in your audience is a layman.
  - It's better to bore some than to lose all.
- DO NOT DATA DUMP.
  - An understandable talk is far more impressive than a ton of data.
  - If you can't talk about the data in detail, don't include it.
    - what is the X axis
    - what is the Y axis
    - what do the dots/bars/lines mean
    - why is this data significant?
- Talk SHOP.
  - Technical/difficult skills are good to mention.
  - Avoid jargon and highlight significance/practicality.
- Give the audience time to breath.
  - Summary/conclusion slides.
  - 1-question slides.
  - Blank slides are great to invite back people who may have zoned out.
- Do a "future direction" slide – incorporate what you want to do in the lab.

Thank you emails.

- Politeness is a rare quality.
- Send a thank you email to **everyone.**
  - Make it personable!
  - Highlight unique connections.
  - Don't reuse a generic email.
- To the PI: can reiterate your strengths and why you're a good fit.

Things for you to consider.

- These are all important things to consider but be careful how/who you ask.
- Are there technicians in the lab and what do they do?
  - It's important to keep in mind how much technical support you will have versus what you have to do yourself.
- What is the financial situation of the lab?
  - Is the lab on a tight budget?
  - How much funding does the lab have and how much longer do they last?
- What is the current status of the PI?
  - Will the PI be going up for tenure soon? Are they in a good position for tenure?
  - Almost all fellowships will score your PI and your research institute. Make sure your applications have a chance.
  - Does your PI have good relationships for co-mentorship?
- What is the lab dynamic?
  - Social levels, work dynamics, competition, support, etc.
- Are there expectations and/or opportunities beyond research?
  - Teaching, mentorship (undergrad, graduate students, etc.).
- Administrative support (less important but can be a deal-breaker to some).
  - How is the HR team – very important for visas!
  - How is the grants office? How much time do they need to process grant submissions?
- Geography is very important!
  - Weather, personality, politics, cost of living, etc.
  - A postdoc is hard, don't live somewhere you will absolutely hate.

Grants and fellowships.

- If you have the mental capacity/time to submit a fellowship before starting, it is highly recommended.
- All American citizens/permanent residents should apply for an F32 NRSA postdoctoral fellowship from the NIH.
- Ask if the research institute has training grants or internal grants you can apply to.
- Some private fellowships include: EMBO, Zuckerman STEM Leadership, Helen Hay Whitney, Human Fronter Science, Life Sciences Research Foundation, Gruss Lipper, Larry Hillblom, Damon Runyon, Jane Coffins, Glenn/AFAR, Society of Fellows, NSF, Nathan Shock, Victor A McKusick, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association.

Alternative careers.

- Consultant – many consulting firms have specialized tracks for science PhDs regardless of whether they have a science division (Bain, McKinsey, C1, etc.).
- Journal editors – almost all journals require a PhD to become an editor.
- Education – teaching colleges may not require a postdoc, but most research universities will.
- Core managers – many research universities hire highly trained scientists and require PhDs and some postdocs to run core lab services (e.g., microscopy, animal, computation, etc.).
- Industry – can go into both research and non-research jobs (including sales, admin, management, field application scientist, etc.).