Job Market Practice Interviews
Instructions for Faculty Interviewers and Committee Members
2011 - 2012

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The first round of the practice interviews will be on Tuesday afternoon, November 29 and Wednesday morning, November 30. The second round will be on Tuesday, December 6 and Wednesday December 7. If necessary, there may be a third round on the reading days of Tuesday, December 13 and Wednesday December 14, but that will be scheduled after the second round is completed. I have attached the schedule with your time slots as an interviewer or a committee member. The purpose of this memo is to provide the format and rules for the first and second round interviews.

The practice interviews will be held in [WHAT ROOM?] Each practice interview is scheduled for one hour. The interviewers will conduct the formal practice interview for 30-35 minutes. The remaining time will be for comments, first by the interviewers, then by the committee members. Marty will be watching the time to make sure the formal interview is ended with time for comments.

With this memo, we have also attached the memos to the students about the format of the interviews and how they should prepare.

Instructions for the Interviewers

Just as you would at the AEA meetings, the lead interviewers should begin the interview by introducing themselves and the other interviewers. This may sound needless, but we want the lead interviewer to create an immediate formality for the interview. The lead interviewer can then set the agenda for the discussion and ask for a discussion of the job market paper. The students have been instructed to prepare a five minute presentation of their job market paper. The interviewers are free to interrupt this presentation and ask questions at any point. That said, the interviewers should interrupt only if they have a genuine question, and should not interrupt simply to distract the student. The students will have to answer the question and try to return to their presentation as best they can. The
interviewers need not help the student return to his/her presentation. This transition is part of the learning process.

The interviewers do not need to read the job market paper of the students that they are interviewing. Indeed, it may be better to have not read the paper. But that said, the interviewers are expected to do much more that sit through the interview and make comments at the end. Instead, the interviewers are expected to be actively engaged in the interview by asking questions that naturally arise to them, informed by either looking at the paper or by listening to the presentation. However, if the interviewers want to glance at the job market papers, they can be found on the department webpage.

In addition to the presentation about their job market papers, the students have been told to prepare other discussions related to their job market paper. In particular, they have been instructed to prepare more detailed discussions about the techniques, data, intuition, and related literature. In addition, they have been instructed to prepare for the tough questions that they might receive about their choice of approach, techniques, or data. The interviewers should proceed with questions that naturally arise to them while listening to the student. In the past, the strangest questions often created the best learning experiences.

Beyond the job market paper, the students have been instructed to prepare a discussion about the other chapters in their dissertation, and about their future research interests. The lead interviewer should decide when to end the discussion of the job market paper and proceed to a discussion of these other research topics. The students will be weakest in discussing their future research interests so the lead interviewer should ask this question in some manner.

For the first round of practice interviews on November 29 and November 30, we will ONLY ask the students about their research. Thus, we will NOT ask the students about their teaching interests (academic jobs) or their project skills (non-academic jobs). However, in the second round of practice interviews on December 6/7, the lead interview will save some time to ask these questions about teaching and skills. These questions are extensively discussed in the preparation memo to the students. If a third round is necessary, we will also work on these questions then. The preparation memo also has an extensive discussion of the questions that the
students should ask their interviewers. We will not practice these questions during the practice interviews, but the committee members can discuss these questions with their students.

The lead interviewer should end the formal practice interview after about 30-35 minutes. Marty will also be watching the time. At the end the interview, the interviewers will make their comments and suggestions first. The discussion will then open up to include the committee members. This discussion should focus on how to improve the presentation and the response to questions. The committee members will quickly take the lead role in this discussion. This discussion can also involve asking the student to make another attempt to answer some important question.

**Instructions for the Committee Members**

The committee members will be sitting at the table in the back of the room. The committee members are NOT permitted to intervene in the formal practice interview for any reason. If their students become disoriented in response to a question by the interviewer, the lead interviewer is responsible for helping the student recover.

In the past, the committee members have shown considerable anxiety at the responses of their students during the practice interview. These reactions must be withheld during the formal interview and the comments of the committee member discussed later during the closing discussion. Interruptions and advice from the committee members will make it impossible to recreate the formal atmosphere of an interview.

The first responsibility for the committee members is to take extensive notes for their student. In particular, the committee members should take notes about the student’s presentations, about the student’s response to questions from the interviewers, and about the discussion afterwards. The students should NOT have to worry about taking notes at any point during the hour. We want them to listen intently. Marty will also be taking notes which he will provide to the students in some manner. But Marty will not fully appreciate many of the research issues involved. So again, the committee members must take detailed notes. They can then review these notes with their students before the next practice interview.
The second responsibility of the committee members is to focus the closing discussion on the most important mistakes that the student made either during the presentation or in response to a question. This is the best time for the student to be reminded of what happened and what they said. For example, the committee member will typically say: “Remember when Prof. Deltas ask you the question about ____ and you said _____. Well, that is not the right response to that question. You should have said ____”.