MERCER UNIVERSITY / FACULTY CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Academic Job Market in Technical Communication

An evidence-based handbook for applications, interviews, campus visits, and offers

For doctoral candidates, early-career faculty, and applicants moving between academic appointments • Updated October 22, 2026

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The central principle

A competitive application is not a general argument that you are a good scholar. It is a **position-specific argument** showing how your research, teaching, and service address the needs named in the advertisement. In technical and professional communication (TPC), those needs vary widely across research universities, teaching-focused colleges, writing programs, and professional practice appointments.

> **Start here.** Read the job advertisement for its actual duties, required qualifications, evaluation priorities, and document instructions. Tailor everything to that evidence. Never treat research-intensive and teaching-intensive openings as interchangeable.

Use this guide in sequence

01 Understand the positions • 02 Find and evaluate jobs • 03 Assemble the application
04 Write the academic cover letter • 05 Build a persuasive CV • 06 Write research and teaching statements
07 Make your TPC expertise visible • 08 Prepare for first-round interviews • 09 Give a research job talk
10 Deliver a teaching demonstration • 11 Navigate the campus visit • 12 Ask good questions
13 Evaluate and negotiate an offer • 14 Plan your search and follow-up • 15 Checklists and source links

01 Understand the positions you are applying for

The field rarely hires under one job title. Relevant searches may be housed in English, writing studies, communication, engineering education, design, information science, or interdisciplinary programs. Search the responsibilities and qualifications, not just the title.

Appointment pattern	What usually matters most	What to verify in the posting
Tenure-track, research-active	Peer-reviewed research trajectory; funding where specified; undergraduate/graduate teaching; collaboration	Research expectations, tenure standards, teaching load, start-up, doctoral advising
Tenure-track, teaching-centered	Strong classroom evidence; broad curricular coverage; sustained scholarship appropriate to mission	Course load, scholarship expectations, advising, program service, tenure criteria
Clinical, lecturer, teaching professor, professor of practice	High-quality instruction; curriculum and applied expertise; sometimes program leadership	Contract length, renewal, promotion pathway, teaching load, research expectations
Writing-program or program-administration role	Service-course delivery, assessment, faculty development, budgets, curricular leadership	Actual administrative authority, release time, staffing and reporting lines
Visiting, postdoctoral, contingent	Specified teaching or research duties; immediate contribution	Term, renewability, compensation, benefits, ability to maintain research

Two real 2026 examples: one field, very different jobs

- **Virginia Tech, tenure-track technical and scientific communication.** The 2026 search emphasizes interdisciplinary research, publication, and external funding. Its advertised teaching load begins at two courses per academic year and is expected to rise to four after three years. This is a research-forward dossier. [1]
- **Purdue, clinical assistant professor of professional writing.** The 2026 posting emphasizes teaching, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and a four-course-per-semester load; it requests evidence of teaching effectiveness and a writing sample of no more than 25 pages. This is a teaching-forward dossier. [2]

> **Do not assume:** An R1 institution automatically means every position has an R1-style research expectation. A clinical appointment at a research university may be more teaching-intensive than a tenure-track appointment elsewhere. Read the particular contract and advertised duties.

What the committee needs to believe

- **Research roles:** You have a coherent independent agenda, credible publications or outputs, methodological capability, and a realistic plan for the next several years.
- **Teaching roles:** You can teach the courses students actually need, design usable learning experiences, assess learning, and contribute reliably to a program.
- **Program-building roles:** You understand recruitment, curricular pathways, industry alignment, service courses, partnerships, assessment, and sustainability, not just an individual classroom.

02 Find and evaluate positions

Search vocabulary

Rotate among: technical communication; technical and professional communication; professional writing; scientific communication; rhetoric and composition; writing studies; business/technical writing; UX research and design; digital rhetoric; content design; information design; communication design; engineering communication; rhetoric of science, technology, and medicine; writing program administration.

Where to look

- **Broad boards:** HigherEdJobs, The Chronicle of Higher Education Jobs, and the MLA Job List. Filter to faculty appointments, then confirm details on the employing institution's site.
- **Field networks:** ATTW, CPTSC, CCCC-related communities, disciplinary conferences, and colleagues working in relevant programs. Use them for networking and posting discovery, not as a substitute for the official advertisement.
- **Department websites:** Follow hiring in English/writing, communication, design, information science, and interdisciplinary programs. Title-only searches miss many relevant jobs.
- **Alerts and log:** Keep saved searches and a simple spreadsheet recording title, institution, link, deadline, contact, requirements, materials, status, and next action.

The 10-minute posting analysis

01 Underline the REQUIRED qualifications. If a qualification is genuinely required and you lack it, note that before investing days in the application.

02 Highlight the exact courses, populations, research themes, methodologies, or administrative duties named.

03 Identify the likely primary evaluation criterion: research, teaching, program administration, or a balanced workload.

04 Review the department curriculum, degree levels, faculty profiles, strategic initiatives, and public promotion/tenure guidance where available.

05 Make a two-column evidence map: "What they need" → "What I have done / can do," using concrete outputs.

06 Confirm the deadline interpretation: hard cutoff versus review-begins or full-consideration date; submit on time and early where feasible.

Red flags to investigate, not automatic disqualifiers

- **Ambiguous appointment:** "Faculty" or "clinical" with no clear renewal/promotion terms, unclear tenure eligibility, or inconsistent dates.
- **High demands, limited support:** Heavy teaching and advising plus grant and publication targets without protected time, staff, or research support.
- **Unclear program support:** Promises of building a major or graduate program without stable enrollment, lines, staff, budgets, or authority.
- **Opaque material requests:** Unusually extensive application tasks early in the process; ask what will be evaluated and whether work will be used.

03 Assemble the application dossier

The posting controls. Do not submit extra materials unless permitted, and do not substitute a link for a file the committee specifically requests. Keep a master version of each document and save a tailored copy for each opening.

Material	What it must demonstrate	Typical useful evidence
Cover letter	Why this precise position makes sense and how you would contribute	2–3 strongest fits, not a recitation of the CV
Academic CV	Record of research, teaching, mentoring, service, and practice	Verified publications, courses taught, outcomes, funding roles
Research statement	Significance, methods, independence, feasible future program	Projects, outputs, pipeline, collaborators, funding targets if relevant
Teaching statement	Beliefs translated into repeatable practices and learning evidence	Learning objectives, activities, feedback, assessment, revision
Writing sample	Quality of scholarly argument and methodological execution	Best completed published or accepted work; follow page limit
Teaching evidence	What students did and learned, with context and limitations	Sample assignment/rubric, annotated artifact, evaluation synthesis
Syllabi and portfolio	Course range, organization, accessibility, applied relevance	Representative accessible syllabus, project, rubric, outcomes
References	People able to document your scholarship, teaching, collegial work	Usually 3+; confirm letters vs contact details and timeline

Application integrity

- **Disclose status accurately.** Separate published, accepted/forthcoming, under review, and in preparation. Never label a submission "forthcoming" before acceptance.
- **Specify your contribution.** For funded projects list your actual role and amount if the award is real; distinguish submitted from awarded proposals.
- **Protect people.** Anonymize student and participant work, secure permission when needed, and avoid exposing confidential industry partner content.
- **Check accessibility.** Use heading styles, descriptive hyperlinks, real text (not screenshots), alt text for meaningful figures, and logical reading order.

04 Write the academic cover letter

In TPC and writing studies, a clear, tailored letter of approximately two pages is a useful starting point, but the advertisement and disciplinary expectations take priority. A cover letter is an argument, not an autobiography. Its audience may include colleagues who do not work in your subfield. [3–5]

Paragraph	Job to do	Evidence to include
Opening (short)	Name the position and present your strongest 2–3 points of fit	Current appointment/degree status; research area; one teaching/program strength
Research contribution	Explain the problem, approach, findings or contribution	Specific publications/outputs, methods, stakes; not a dissertation abstract
Next research phase	Show momentum and a realistic agenda	Next project, collaborations, publication plan, funding where relevant

Paragraph	Job to do	Evidence to include
Teaching contribution	Show course readiness and student learning practices	Two named courses, one meaningful assignment/assessment example
Institution/program fit	Explain what you can contribute here	Actual courses, majors, mission, students, interdisciplinary links
Closing (brief)	Reaffirm interest and thank the committee	Materials enclosed; readiness to discuss the role

Use a sharper opening

Weak: "I am passionate about teaching and research and have always wanted to work at a prestigious institution."

Stronger: "I am applying for the Assistant Professor of Technical Communication position. My research examines **[specific problem]** through **[method or theoretical approach]**; I have taught **[two relevant courses]** and led **[one program-level contribution]**. These experiences align with the department's stated priorities in **[specific priority]**."

Make the evidence legible to TPC readers

- **Research:** Explain what your work changes in scholarly understanding or professional practice. Name methods and audiences: interviews, usability tests, ethnography, corpus analysis, participatory design, rhetorical analysis, mixed methods, or another actual approach.
- **Teaching:** Connect a specific activity to learning outcomes. "Students tested and revised an instructional document using participant observations and an assessment rubric" is better than "I use active learning."
- **Program fit:** Name real course titles and explain the contribution. "I could support the technical-writing service course and develop a user-centered content strategy elective" is testable; generic enthusiasm is not.

Retarget the emphasis rather than rewriting the story

Research-intensive opening	Teaching-intensive opening
Lead with your research question, contribution, momentum, and methods. Place teaching next; show graduate mentoring, funding plans, or interdisciplinary links only if genuinely relevant.	Lead with the courses you can teach, your pedagogical approach and evidence of learning. Research remains visible but should support the institution's teaching and service expectations.
Do not list every course; select those linking your expertise to a department need.	Do not promise a major grant program if the appointment cannot reasonably support it.

Cover letter quality check

- □ The first paragraph identifies the exact advertised role and my three strongest points of fit.
- □ Every paragraph adds evidence rather than repeating CV entries.
- □ The research contribution is intelligible to a colleague outside my specialization.
- □ Teaching claims include courses, activities, or student-learning evidence.
- □ The letter names a real local program, curriculum, research initiative, or institutional need.
- □ The institution name, position title, date, required attachments, and degree status are correct.

05 Build a persuasive academic CV

An academic CV is a documented record, not a two-page industry resume. Its first page should establish your disciplinary fit and strongest accomplishments. There is no universal page limit; completeness and scanability matter more than an arbitrary length. [3, 6]

Research-forward order	Teaching-forward order
Name/contact; appointment; education; peer-reviewed publications; grants; research experience; teaching; mentoring; service; practice	Name/contact; appointment; education; teaching appointments/courses; course design; pedagogical evidence; publications; mentoring; program service; practice

Sections worth including when you have evidence

- **Education:** Degree, institution, completion or expected date, dissertation title and adviser if relevant. Clarify ABD status and scheduled defense realistically.
- **Academic positions:** Rank/title, employing institution, dates; identify visiting, clinical, tenure-track, or lecturer appointments accurately.
- **Publications:** Peer-reviewed journal articles; books and chapters; edited work; other publications, as appropriate. Use coherent citation style and group items by type and status.
- **Grants and awards:** Sponsor, project title, year, award amount when useful, and your exact role. Separate awards, submissions, and unfunded proposals.
- **Teaching:** Courses and levels; instructor-of-record versus TA/co-instructor; modalities; advising and course development if relevant.
- **Mentoring and program work:** Theses/projects, internship coordination, curricular revision, assessment, advisory boards, professional partnerships, accreditation work if completed.
- **Presentations, editorial and professional service:** Selectively include meaningful conferences, journal reviewing, committees, outreach, and field leadership.
- **Relevant industry work and tools:** Translate professional practice into curricular or scholarly value; describe work and outcomes, not a shopping list of software.

How to avoid CV misrepresentation

Unhelpful entry	Better entry
“Journal article (forthcoming)” when only submitted	“Manuscript under review at [journal]” in a separate non-publication pipeline section, if listing submissions is useful
“Grant: $150,000” when a proposal was submitted	“Proposal submitted, $150,000 requested; role: co-PI,” separate from funded awards
“Professor of UX Design” when you were guest speaker	“Guest lecture: Introduction to UX Research, [course], [date]”
“Taught Technical Writing” without role or context	“Technical Writing, instructor of record, 3 sections, undergraduate, face-to-face”

First-page audit

Ask a colleague to read only the first page for 30 seconds and answer: What kind of scholar-teacher are you? What have you actually published/taught/built? Why might you fit the ad? If those answers are unclear, change category order and labels before adjusting typography.

06 Write the other major statements

Research statement: contribution → program → feasibility

Aim for an organized narrative rather than a list of unrelated projects. Many ads specify length; otherwise about 2–3 pages is a common planning target, not a rule. [4]

01 Name your central problem and why it matters to TPC and to relevant social, technical, or institutional contexts.

02 Describe one or two completed projects: question, methods, evidence, principal contribution, resulting publications or practical impacts.

03 Explain the next coherent stage: planned studies, outputs, collaborations, student participation, and feasible timing.

04 Address funding only where it matters, and distinguish a credible funding strategy from speculative awards.

05 Explain why the proposed work is feasible at the target institution: partners, students, time, infrastructure, and ethics approvals.

> **For interdisciplinary TPC scholarship.** Explain how rhetoric/communication, human-centered design, UX, accessibility, or AI governance methods contribute something the collaborating domain could not easily deliver alone.

Teaching statement: a claim supported by practice

A useful teaching statement answers: What should students learn? What do you ask them to do? How do you assess the result and adjust? A brief example of an assignment and its revision often carries more weight than a catalog of pedagogical theories.

- **Learning outcomes:** Connect concepts to authentic performances: analyzing audiences, planning studies, testing documents, composing accessible content, defending design decisions.
- **Teaching design:** Demonstrate scaffolding, feedback cycles, project constraints, iterative revision, and realistic workplace genres.
- **Evidence:** Triangulate assignment results, revisions, student reflections, peer observation, and course evaluations as available; explain limitations instead of presenting ratings alone.
- **Access and inclusion:** Give actual practices: captioned media, accessible documents, flexible participation modes, culturally responsive examples, ethical recruiting and consent.
- **AI literacy:** State when tools are permitted, what human judgment remains essential, how students disclose AI use, and how you teach verification, privacy, and accountability.

Teaching portfolio: evidence, not bulk

Curate a small set of well-labeled samples: syllabus, representative assignment, rubric, anonymized student work with permissions when needed, brief evidence of learning, and a one-paragraph reflective explanation. Include accessible PDFs or HTML as appropriate, but follow the requested file formats. Do not post private student, research-participant, or industry partner work publicly.

07 Make your TPC expertise visible

Unlike some fields where the course portfolio is relatively standardized, technical and professional communication spans service teaching, degree programs, industry-facing projects, scholarly research, and applied design work. Make your particular value legible to the program hiring you.

TPC area	What committees may need to see
Technical writing/documentation	Audience/task analysis, structured authoring, procedures, editing, content operations, documentation testing
UX research and design	Research design, recruitment/ethics, interviews, usability studies, synthesis, accessible design, evaluation
Content strategy/design	Information architecture, governance, content modeling, UX writing, metrics, editorial systems
Instructional design	Needs analysis, learning objectives, assessment, learning technology, iterative evaluation
Rhetoric of science/technology/medicine	Theory-driven inquiry, careful methods, high-stakes contexts, ethics, interdisciplinary translation
Program administration	Curricular mapping, service-course coordination, faculty support, assessment, internships, advisory boards

Ways to translate industry experience into academic value

- **Turn practice into pedagogy.** Explain how authentic constraints inform assignments, portfolio work, accessible deliverables, and assessment.
- **Turn practice into research.** Identify theoretically and methodologically meaningful questions instead of assuming professional experience is itself peer-reviewed scholarship.
- **Turn partnerships into sustainable programs.** Describe realistic arrangements for internship oversight, community-engaged work, client projects, confidentiality, and ongoing partner relationships.
- **Show interdisciplinary fluency.** Prepare to explain your work to faculty in computer science, engineering, education, health, design, or communication without diluting the disciplinary contribution.

Current disciplinary conversations to address carefully

Relevant areas in 2026 include AI-assisted writing and its governance, accessible and inclusive communication, human-centered design, health and science communication, content and documentation operations, platform labor and ethics, and the relationship between programs and employment. Mention these only when you can connect them to scholarship, teaching evidence, or a credible future agenda. [1, 2]

08 Prepare for the first-round interview

Early interviews are often conducted by video and commonly run about 20–40 minutes, but confirm the format. Some committees are constrained to the same approved questions for all applicants. Answer first, then develop one concrete example; do not bury the point. [7]

Prepare three versions of your research introduction

- **30 seconds:** One sentence on the problem, one on the method, one on why it matters.

- **90 seconds:** Problem → project design → central finding or contribution → next research step.
- **3 minutes:** Add an example, a scholarly conversation, and a fit link to the department.

Common questions and what they test

Question you may hear	What a strong answer demonstrates
Tell us about your research / dissertation.	Clear question, significance, methods, contribution, scholarly identity
What is your next project?	Independent, realistic, publishable agenda beyond the dissertation
Where will you publish, collaborate, or seek funding?	Field literacy, credible venues and realistic planning, not promises
Which of our courses could you teach?	Preparation for their actual courses plus reasonable curricular breadth
Describe a course or assignment that worked, and one you changed.	Concrete pedagogical judgment, evidence, reflection
How do you teach AI, accessibility, or ethics?	Specific policies and practices suited to TPC
How would you contribute to our major/service course/program?	Program literacy and willingness to do collective work
How do you mentor varied learners?	Student-centered practices, boundaries, evidence
Tell us about a challenging colleague or collaboration.	Professional conflict resolution and shared accountability
Why this department and institution?	Specific, researched fit and awareness of mission

A durable answer structure

Claim (one sentence) → example (what you did) → evidence (what changed or what you learned) → relevance (how this will help their program). When the question is about a weakness, talk about how you identified it and what changed. Do not invent a happy ending.

09 Design the research job talk

Ask for the assigned length, expected audience, room setup, technology, and whether the institution wants a past-project talk, future agenda, or both. A good job talk makes the core contribution understandable to an intelligent audience outside the subfield and invites substantive questions. [7, 8]

A useful 35-minute model, only if the host approves that length

Time	Purpose	What to show
0–4 min	Problem and stakes	Real-world context and precise research question; avoid a dense literature slide
4–9 min	Scholarly conversation	What others know and the gap your work addresses
9–17 min	Study and methods	Recruitment/data, analytic choices, ethical controls and limitations
17–26 min	Findings and contribution	Two or three defensible findings with legible evidence

Time	Purpose	What to show
26–31 min	Implications	Consequences for TPC scholarship, teaching, design, policy, or practice
31–35 min	Next research stage	A coherent plan, collaborators/outputs, and a brief close

Do

- **Practice for a mixed audience.** Define discipline-specific vocabulary and explain why communication expertise matters.
- **Show the evidence.** Use readable data displays, short excerpts, concise figures, and an honest account of limitations.
- **Leave the right amount of time for questions.** Honor the committee's assigned structure and stop on time.
- **Make your next step plausible.** The future agenda should logically extend the demonstrated work, not appear on an unrelated final slide.

Do not

- **Read a journal article aloud.** The format needs a narrative arc and a claim that can be followed orally.
- **Overload slides.** Small text, decorative graphs, and inaccessible color coding undermine your own design credibility.
- **Become defensive under pressure.** Treat a hard question as a chance to distinguish evidence, inference, limitation, and future work.

10 Deliver a strong teaching demonstration

Find out whether this is a real class of enrolled students or a simulated session with faculty, who the learners are, what they already know, and the exact length. Do not simply repurpose a conference talk. A teaching demo should demonstrate learning design and responsiveness, not presentation polish alone. [8]

Sample 40-minute technical communication class

Topic: Evaluating a set of software instructions for usability and accessibility. Learning outcome: Students will justify at least two revisions using an audience/task analysis and observation-based evidence.

Minute	Activity	Assessment signal
0–4	Quick scenario: user, task, consequence of failure	Students can name the task and user need
4–10	Instructor models one analysis of a procedure	Students see criteria applied explicitly
10–23	Pairs review a short document and note two problems	Pairs identify issues linked to observable criteria
23–33	Groups propose and defend revisions	Evidence-based rationale, not aesthetic preference alone
33–38	Class compares competing revisions	Tradeoffs and constraints are discussed
38–40	Exit ticket: one change + justification	Fast evidence of intended learning

Key teaching-demo behaviors

- **State a measurable outcome.** Tell students what they should be able to do by the end.
- **Design a complete learning arc.** Model, practice, check, debrief, and transfer, scaled to the assigned time.
- **Plan a low-tech fallback.** Carry a PDF or handout, accessible materials, and a way to continue if the projector fails.
- **Respect students as students.** Speak to them, learn names when possible, and avoid turning the session into performance for faculty observers.
- **Adapt in the room.** If learners are confused, clarify and proceed; do not rigidly rush through every slide.

11 Navigate the campus visit

Campus visits may run a day or more and commonly include faculty meetings, student conversations, a research talk, a teaching demonstration, administrative meetings, and meals. The committee is assessing your ability to do the job and work with colleagues, while you should assess whether you can succeed there. [7–9]

Before traveling

- □ Request the schedule, participants, presentation requirements, audience descriptions, classroom technology, and contacts.
- □ Ask about travel booking, reimbursements, approved expenses, meals, and when you should receive reimbursement.
- □ Request disability-related access, dietary, or other reasonable logistical accommodations early as needed.
- □ Read faculty work, course catalog, program outcomes, publicly available policies, and institution mission.
- □ Rehearse talks with both field specialists and non-specialists, including challenging question periods.
- □ Prepare offline slides, accessible handouts, chargers/adapters, water, and a small meal or snack.

Do / do not during the visit

Do	Do not
Treat students, support staff, contingent faculty, and administrators with the same courtesy as senior faculty.	Behave as if meals, shuttle rides, hallway conversations, or dinners are outside the evaluative process.
Ask concrete questions about curricula, mentoring, evaluation, workload, governance, and resources.	Criticize current faculty, the program, your current employer, or another candidate.
Discuss your own contributions clearly while showing genuine curiosity about others.	Dominate meetings, interrupt, recite your CV, or pretend to know a topic you do not.
Be honest about capacities and interests, including when a course would require preparation.	Promise you can teach every course, secure major grants immediately, or solve structural staffing problems alone.
Handle a difficult question with evidence, intellectual generosity, and appropriate boundaries.	Treat disagreement as a personal attack or become evasive about methodological limitations.
Keep alcohol consumption minimal or decline; hydrate, rest, and pace yourself.	Over-share personal grievances, become intoxicated, or use gossip as research.
Make space to evaluate the people and expectations you encounter.	Ignore warning signs because an invitation feels like a guaranteed offer.

Different people are evaluating different things

- **Search committee:** Depth of scholarly and teaching fit; whether you can explain your work clearly and meet stated duties.
- **Department chair/program director:** Scheduling needs, collaboration, workload, assessment, curriculum, service, and long-term viability.
- **Dean/administrators:** How your work advances the unit mission and whether your plans fit institutional resources.
- **Faculty outside TPC:** Whether you can collaborate and communicate across disciplinary boundaries.
- **Students:** Approachability, clarity, respect, effective teaching, and advising expectations.

Handle an inappropriate or very personal question

You can redirect to job-relevant facts: "I can meet the schedule and responsibilities described in the position. Could you tell me more about the department's expectations for [teaching/availability]?" If an interaction raises serious concerns, document it privately and seek appropriate advice. Rules and procedures vary by institution and jurisdiction.

12 Ask questions that reveal the job

Use questions to evaluate actual working conditions, not just to signal interest. Target the right person and ask the most important questions when time is limited.

For faculty and the chair

- Which courses would the new hire teach in the first two years, and how often?
- How are service courses, majors, graduate programs, and experiential projects staffed and coordinated?
- What is the expected balance among research, teaching, mentoring, and service for this particular line?
- How are teaching effectiveness and student learning evaluated?
- What are the department's biggest curricular or program challenges, and what authority would the new hire have to address them?
- How are new faculty mentored, and who has successfully earned promotion or tenure recently?

For the dean or research leadership

- What are the written promotion/tenure standards and the normal timelines?
- What counts as high-quality scholarship in this interdisciplinary appointment?
- What research support, course releases, student assistance, travel funds, or grant administration can faculty access?
- What is the appointment's budget and staffing basis; how stable is the program?
- How are cross-department teaching, collaboration, and jointly advised research recognized?

For students and junior faculty

- What kinds of projects and mentoring have been most valuable in the program?
- How are internships, portfolio-building, accessibility, and emerging tools handled?
- What supports help new colleagues manage the expected workload?
- What would you want a new faculty member to understand about students here?

13 Evaluate and negotiate an offer

A verbal offer is a starting point for clarification, not the complete agreement. Obtain written terms and read faculty policies before committing. Negotiation can address the conditions needed to teach, research, and serve effectively, not salary alone. [10]

Issues to verify in writing

Appointment	Workload and resources	Life and career terms
Rank, title, tenure status, contract length, renewal conditions, promotion criteria	Regular teaching load, first-year assignments, course releases, advising/service, research support, office/lab/technology	Base salary and nine- vs twelve-month basis, benefits timing, relocation assistance, start date
Tenure-clock credit (if any), evaluation schedule, departmental bylaws	Travel and development support, grants infrastructure, student assistants, accessibility resources	Leave policy, dependent support where applicable, local cost, any relevant partner-hire process

A useful negotiation sequence

01 Express sincere interest and request the complete written offer, benefits information, applicable faculty policies, and a reasonable response window.

02 Compare the package with actual duties and research/teaching expectations; identify two to four high-priority needs.

03 Frame requests as conditions for success: “To develop the community-engaged UX research agenda described, I would benefit from...”

04 Negotiate with the person authorized to make commitments; distinguish what is flexible from what is set by contract, policy, or collective bargaining.

05 Get agreed revisions and specific commitments in the formal appointment letter or an attached written agreement; do not rely on memory of a friendly conversation.

> **Questions worth asking before accepting.** How are promotion and tenure decided in this unit? Who owns the service-course workload? Are course releases and promised research resources recurring or one-time? What happens if an interdisciplinary initiative or program changes leadership?

14 Organize the search and follow through

A practical preparation calendar

When	Priority actions
3–6 months before applying	Update master CV; identify target position types; draft statements; prepare writing sample; ask references; review ads and curricula.
When a position posts	Make evidence map; tailor documents; confirm materials and date; ask for reference letters as required; submit before cutoff.
After interview invitation	Research committee and program; practice answers and job talk; request logistics and accommodations; prepare questions.

When	Priority actions
Within 1–2 business days after interviews	Send brief individualized thanks to the chair and key contacts as appropriate; record questions and notes; retain receipts.
On offer	Request written terms; review policies; negotiate high-value conditions; confirm changes in writing before acceptance.

Your job-search tracker

Recommended columns: institution; unit; role/rank; tenure status; job-ad URL; required degree/status; research expectation; teaching load; primary priority; complete materials; deadline and time zone; references; submission date; stage; contacts; travel reimbursement status; follow-up date; notes; decision. Keep it private and factual.

How to respond to silence or a rejection

- **After submission:** Honor stated timelines. Do not send repeated status messages simply because weeks have passed. A concise inquiry is appropriate when a promised notification date passes or when another offer creates a real deadline.
- **After a campus visit:** Record strengths, questions, workload signals, and any discrepancies between the ad and conversations while details are fresh.
- **If rejected:** Treat it as information about this search, not definitive evidence about your future as a scholar. Where feedback is offered, look for specific changes to documents, presentation, fit, or strategy.
- **If your application is repeatedly stalled:** Have colleagues independently review the fit argument in the cover letter, the first CV page, your research trajectory, and your institutional targeting. Change what the evidence indicates.

15 Final checklists and reference links

Application: last check before submission

- □ I meet the required qualifications or can clearly explain the status the advertisement permits.
- □ The letter makes a specific, evidence-based claim about this position.
- □ The first CV page highlights the accomplishments most relevant to the target institution.
- □ Research and teaching statements use concrete examples and agree with the CV.
- □ All listed publications, grants, roles, and teaching appointments have accurate statuses.
- □ The file names, attachment types, page limits, references, and portal entries match the ad.
- □ I have proofread institution names, checked links, and confirmed accessible formatting.

Campus visit: before walking into the room

- □ I can explain my research in 30 seconds, 90 seconds, and three minutes.
- □ I know the time limit, audience, and technical setup for every presentation.
- □ My teaching demo includes a learning outcome, student activity, and evidence of learning.
- □ I have questions for faculty, students, the chair, and the dean.
- □ I understand the research/teaching/service expectations and know what I still need to verify.
- □ I have a backup for technology problems and I know how travel and reimbursement will work.

Reliable resources and illustrative 2026 advertisements

Use original employer postings for each application; third-party summaries may be incomplete or outdated. The examples below illustrate different appointment expectations, not a comprehensive list of open jobs.

1. Virginia Tech. (2026). Assistant/Associate Professor in Technical and Scientific Communication [job advertisement].

2. Purdue University. (2026). Clinical Assistant Professor of Professional Writing [job advertisement].

3. Harvard Mignone Center for Career Success. (2026). GSAS CV & Cover Letter Guide.

4. University of Chicago, UChicagoGRAD. (n.d.). Job Documents.

5. University of California, Berkeley Career Engagement. (n.d.). The Cover Letter.

6. Mercer University Center for Career and Professional Development. (n.d.). Create a Resume / Cover Letter.

7. University of Chicago, UChicagoGRAD. (n.d.). Interviewing.

8. University of Toronto Career Start. (n.d.). Academic Job Search: Navigate the Process.

9. American Philosophical Association. (n.d.). Handbook on Academic Job Market Practices.

10. American Association of University Professors. (n.d.). Beginning a Faculty Appointment.

Academic-job discovery portals

HigherEdJobs

Chronicle of Higher Education Jobs

MLA Job List

Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)

Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC)

Editorial note: Guidance reflects published university career resources, AAUP appointment guidance, and reviewed 2026 faculty advertisements. Advertisement-specific requirements and institutional policies always take precedence.