

***Linguistics Careers: A Guide to  
Locating and Applying for Linguistics  
Jobs in both the Academic and  
Private Sectors***

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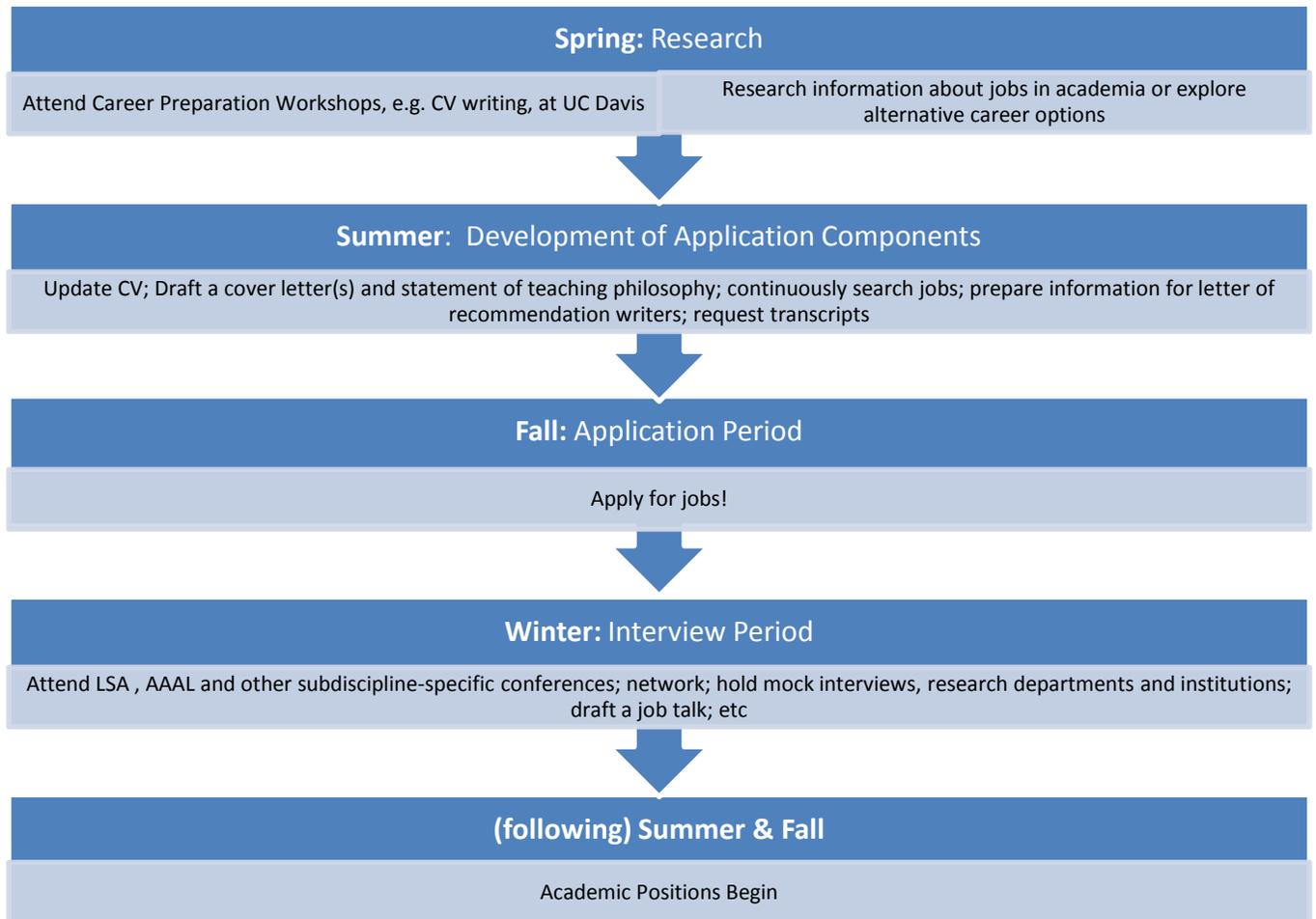
## Objective

This report is intended to provide information about career opportunities available to linguists with advanced degrees, in both academic and non-academic settings. It includes a timeline for applying for academic jobs; a list of application components for academic jobs and resources for their preparation; information on where to search for academic, private sector, and government employment as well as resources to aid linguistics graduate students in each step of the academic job search, career resources available at UC Davis as well as information on how to convert your CV to a resume. A limited number of articles about linguistics jobs both in academia and the private sector are also included.

# Academic Jobs

## Timeline for Academic Jobs

Most academic jobs are advertised in the early Fall and continue through January. These jobs would usually begin the Fall after you apply. Temporary teaching positions tend to be announced later in the year, even into June for jobs beginning in the Fall. The summer before you begin applying for jobs is a good time to begin compiling job application materials, updating your CV, considering career options and attending workshops relevant to the (non)academic job search.



## Components of Academic Job Applications

- ✓ Cover letter
- ✓ CV
- ✓ Letters of recommendation/reference
- ✓ Teaching evaluations, teaching philosophies, evidence of “teaching effectiveness”
- ✓ Research Statement
- ✓ Sample of your work
- ✓ Description of your dissertation
- ✓ Academic transcripts

## Articles and Resources for Academic Job Application Components

### *General*

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/bookshelf.htm>

*A list of sources regarding the academic and non-academic job search.*

<http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/gradadvise/jobs.htm>

*A short guide to applying for linguistics academic jobs published by UCLA.*

<http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/bucholtz/sociocultural/jobtips.html>

*A short guide to applying for linguistics academic jobs published by Mary Bucholtz. Includes references for books about the academic job search.*

### *Cover Letter Resources*

<http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDcover.stm>

*Extensive and detailed information about what to include in a cover letter and how long cover letters should be.*

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2002/06/2002061101c.htm>

*“Beyond the ivory tower: What you don’t know about cover letters” Article by Mary Dillon Johnson providing solid advice on writing cover letters and finding your voice in your cover letter.*

<http://www.uwrf.edu/ccs/cover-letter.htm>

*General suggestions for writing cover letters for both academic and nonacademic jobs.*

<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/CareerServices/academic/coverletters/AcCoverLetters.pdf>

*.pdf on cover letters including samples from the University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana*

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/639/01/>

*Sample academic cover letter and pointers on how to write them.*

## ***CV Writing Resources***

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2002/10/2002101101c.htm>.

*"Career talk: The CV doctor returns" by Mary Morris Heiberger & Julie Miller Vick. General tips on polishing an academic CV as well annotated examples of social sciences CVs with comments and suggestions for improvement*

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/1999/12/99120301c.htm>

*"Career talk: From CV to resume" by Margret Newhouse. Tips for converting your CV into a resume. Of interest to those seeking non-academic employment.*

<http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDCV.stm>

*Detailed information on the various components of an academic CV and how to organize your CV into a clear, well-presented document.*

## ***Letters of Recommendation***

<http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDletters.stm>

*Discussion of the role of letters of recommendation and what makes them effective, who to ask, setting up a letter file*

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2004/01/2004011901c.htm>

*"First person: The academic pyramid club" by James Lang. Advice on getting the best letters of recommendation you can.*

## ***Teaching Philosophy/Portfolio***

<http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDportfolio.stm>

*Information about creating a teaching portfolio and what to include, such as evaluations, sample course syllabi, and list of courses taught*

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2003/03/2003032701c.htm>

*"What's your philosophy on teaching, and does it matter?" Article by Gabriela Montell.*

<http://www.ill.hawaii.edu/sltcc/tipps/philosophy.html>

*Tips for philosophy of teaching statements for linguists, especially those specialized in SLAD, TESOL, and foreign language teaching.*

<http://ftad.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Philosophy.html>

*Describes characteristics of a statement of teaching philosophy and its format and style. Also includes links to sample teaching philosophy statements.*

## ***The Job Interview***

<http://www.otal.umd.edu/~sies/jobadvice.html>

*Academic job interview advice by a professor of American Studies.*

<http://www.otal.umd.edu/~sies/jobquess.html>

*Sample interview questions and advice on how to answer them.*

<http://www.duke.edu/~amwhite/jobsearch.html>

*List of useful links related to the academic and non-academic job search.*

## [Article: Jobs and Interviewing in Linguistics](#)

by Christopher Manning and Bonnie McElhinny

At present academic jobs are scarce and they are likely to remain scarce for the remainder of the decade. On top of this, some people think that linguistics has been hit particularly hard. Getting even one job offer these days is an achievement. Do not allow academic elitism to deter you from taking a job that you feel fairly good about, or to make you dissatisfied with such a job. (You can increase your chances of getting job offers if you have done significant work within more than one subfield, within related disciplines, in more applied areas of linguistics and/or in an internship in a non-academic setting).

Getting a job offer in a tenure-track position is the best-case scenario. As a recent grad, it's likely that you won't get such a job offer. Students who have finished, or who have a postdoc (and thus more teaching experience and publications) are generally hired first. Remember that some students have landed quite good jobs after having been on the job market for 2 or 3 years. If you don't get a tenure-track job, there are other options. Temporary openings (some not advertised till late spring) will give you lots of useful teaching experience.

Postdoctoral fellowships provide a possibility for employment that most students drastically underestimate, perhaps because there have not traditionally been many postdocs in linguistics. However, in a tight job market, postdocs are a haven until you can produce a few more publications that will make you a stronger competitor the next time you apply for jobs. Do not just look for postdocs in linguistics - explore and exploit interdisciplinary connections, postdocs for people doing work on particular countries, etc. Start early - the application deadlines for many postdocs require that you submit proposals even before you know about your job prospects for the coming year. Applying for postdocs is time-consuming. You generally need to write a five-page statement describing the research you'll do. But if you don't do it, and find yourself without any job in June, you'll wish you had.

### **I. Tips for Interviewing (at the LSA or afterwards)**

Start thinking about how you'll answer job interview questions. Your faculty are probably willing to stage mock-interviews. Consider taking advantage of that. At the very least, talk to faculty members about questions to expect. You will probably be well prepared to talk about your own research. Make sure you're well-prepared to talk about teaching also. The faculty want a sense of what you are capable of and interested in. Research the teaching needs of your target departments, but don't pretend you are capable of teaching something that you are not.

Work out two ways to explain to interviewers who you are - a short one sentence description, and a longer five minute summary of your research and interests. Practice these synopses as much as you can. You also need to be able to convince interviewers that your dissertation will be done by the time the job starts. This is very important. Before are other specific questions that people tend to ask:

### **Research**

- Tell us about your dissertation. How does it contribute to the field?
- What are the most important developments going on in your subfield right now, and how do you see yourself fitting into them?

### **Curriculum and teaching**

- What would you include in a certain course?
- What concepts would you expect students to acquire in a certain course?
- What textbook would you use?
- Name five courses that you could teach, and tell me a little about each.
- What is the dream course you would like to teach?
- How do you like to structure/ organize courses? What is your teaching style?
- What is your preferred method of course evaluation?

### **Role commitments**

- How and what can you contribute to our faculty?
- In what areas do you see yourself making professional contributions in the next five years?
- How much are you willing to participate in department and outside committees?

### **Yourself**

- Tell us about yourself. (You can review your vita in conversational form, but you should go beyond that).
- Identify your greatest strengths and weaknesses.
- How would you think about living in this town/ region?
- What would you do if you were unable to find a University position?
- Do you have any questions for us? (You should!)

## **II Tips for Job Interviews on Campus**

A campus visit is not only an interview - it is an opportunity both for the faculty to find out how well you will fill their requirements, and for you to find out how the job fits yours.

### **Preparations**

Since the job talk is probably the single most important aspect of the campus visit, it is very important to make arrangements for your talk before you go. When they call to make arrangements, ask questions!, e.g.:

- What kind of talk is expected (a 'research' or 'teaching' lecture, or both)?
- Who is the audience (faculty, students - what level?, members of other departments)?

- Should you bring handouts (if so, how many?), or will they be made there?
- If you use overhead, slides, etc., be sure to ask that they be available.

Once you have answers to these questions, give a dry run at your home institutions if at all possible, or at least outline the talk to your adviser, with your handout. Keep in mind that though the search committee may have read your work, most of the rest of the audience will not have, and even if they have, they want to know how you present it orally, how you field questions, how well you can explain your theoretical assumptions or defend your methodology, how energetic you are, how much of what you wrote is really your idea rather than your committee's, etc. So ask for and expect a tough grilling from your home campus audience.

Learn as much as possible about the campus you are going to visit. Who are the faculty, what is their main work? What kind of linguistics degrees does the department offer (Linguistics, cognitive science, Master's only, Ph.D. only)? To determine this, ask your adviser or others who might know, and get a recent catalog from your library or student advising center.

Travel arrangements will be largely your responsibility, but don't second-guess what the department you are visiting may have in mind. Again, before you go be sure to ask a lot of questions about general arrangements, e.g.,:

- How long is the visit (1 or 2 days? - think about whether you want to stay an extra day on your own to check out the campus and town, housing, etc.,)?
- Who will you meet (search committee, chair, undergrad and grad students, dean)?
- How many people are being interviewed?
- Will you be met at the airport, bus station, etc.? How will you be reimbursed for travel? (It is advisable to have a sizable amount of money or credit available for transportation, since reimbursement often takes several weeks).

### **The visit itself**

Be sure to get a schedule of your visit when you arrive if you do not have a specific one beforehand. Check it over and if you specifically want to visit with some group not on the schedule see if you can get the schedule changed to accommodate that wish. Check out the room where you will give your talk, and any equipment you may need.

Be prepared to answer the same kinds of questions as in the conference or telephone interview. You may find yourself asked the same question many times by different people, but treat it as a new question every time.

Aim to learn as much as possible about the department and the campus:

- Is there any major ongoing discussion of changes in the Linguistics curriculum, or in the campus-wide undergrad curriculum? If so, what could you contribute?
- What are the department's long-term goals?

- What is the teaching load? Does it differ for junior and senior faculty?
- Are there TAs? What is the campus' approach to training TAs?
- What kind of research support is there (computers, research and equipment grants, travel funds for conferences, field work)?
- What is the sabbatical policy?
- What kind of committee work or campus service is expected of faculty?
- What are the expectations for tenure? When is the tenure decision made? Are moving expenses covered?
- Is there general support, e.g. e-mail, secretarial help?
- What kinds of retirement, health, and other benefits are there?
- What is the campus community like?
- What is the local community like (job opportunities of spouses, partners, childcare)?

### **After the interview**

You may have been asked to send proposed course outlines, further samples of your writing, etc. Be sure to do so right way.

Often appointment decisions may take longer than either you or the campus would like. It is appropriate for you (or your adviser) to call at intervals to find out your status once the decision date that the search committee has been given is passed.

If you have a job offer from one campus and are interested in another that has not yet reached a decision, be sure to let the latter know, and tell them what your deadline is.

### **III A Final Word**

If you get a job offer, you'll need to decide for yourself whether you're happy with the department, the region, the salary, etc. You should definitely talk to as many people as possible about whether or not to take the position.

Many of us won't get a first job at an institution of the same stature as that in which we're doing our graduate training. Few of us will in fact ever have such jobs. There just aren't that many of them. But there are numerous other configurations of teaching, research, and service available in other institutions. If you are able to define your interests as a scholar and as a teacher fairly broadly, then you are more likely to obtain a position - and a position that you're happy with. Good luck!

### **Sources**

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## Non-Academic Jobs

### Job types for advanced linguistics degree holders (beyond professorships)

Below are just some of the types of careers advanced degree holders in linguistics recently advertised on linguistics job sites.

- Language Teaching
- Direction and Coordination of Language Programs
- ESL/Foreign Language Content Development
- Accent Reduction Training
- Computational Linguistics, Speech Recognition, Speech Generation, Artificial Intelligence/Programming
- Speech Pathology/ Communication Disorders
- Lab Management
- Writing, Technical Writing, Editing
- Forensic Linguistics
- Government Careers, e.g. analyst
- Espionage/Surveillance
- Onomastics; Professional Naming
- Lexicography
- Interpretation/Translation
- Anthropology; Corporate Anthropology
- Consulting (for industries, government agencies, marketing firms)
- Market Research
- Law

### Article: No Longer Just Eggheads, Linguists Leap to the Net

Daniel Golden, Staff Reporter of [THE WALL STREET JOURNAL](#), May 30, 2000

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. -- Near Harvard Square, in the cramped, sweltering office of Lexeme Inc., five former graduate students in linguistics can't stop laughing.

They've just come across a pun in their research -- someone describing a delicatessen as "unforgetabagel." Beneath the hilarity, they're also delighted to have abandoned academic wheel-spinning for the practical challenges --and potential windfalls -- of an Internet start-up.

"It's like you're a biologist studying frogs. Then somebody who's building a big jumping car comes to you and says, 'You know about jumping things. I need your help,' " says Lexeme's Eric Groat.

Traditionally, a linguistics degree has been among the least marketable of academic credentials. Jobs, when they were available, paid about \$35,000 a year on the high end, usually in academia.

But now dozens of technology start-ups are commercializing linguistics research, and competing to hire the relatively small pool of specialists on the topic, which isn't even taught at many U.S. universities.

Suddenly, linguists have their pick of jobs as lexicographers, "knowledge engineers" and "vocabulary-resource managers." For those with doctorates, the typical starting salary is around \$60,000, plus some stock. More highly trained talent is drawing more than \$100,000.

Mr. Groat received his doctorate from Harvard in 1998. But the 35-year-old couldn't land a tenure-track position in the Northeast, where he preferred to live. He taught for a year at the City University of New York and then at Harvard's extension school, his career seemingly stalled.

Then this spring, Mr. Groat tripled his income by joining closely held Lexeme, which counts 15 with doctorates in linguistics among its 30 employees. They're building a sophisticated database -- including neologisms like "unforgetabagel" -- to help e-commerce customers navigate the Web.

Linguistics experts help e-businesses improve customer service by building so-called natural-language processing systems that can respond meaningfully to requests for help or information. With linguists developing the database or "lexicon," a system can distinguish between multiple meanings of words, relate groups of words by concept, and narrow the scope of a search by asking questions of the site visitor.

For instance, an online customer asking about shaving products might be asked whether he needs razors, blades or shaving cream before being directed to the appropriate Web site. As the Internet grows, such systems offer an alternative to the keyword searches done by conventional search engines, which can turn up hundreds of irrelevant responses.

To gain a recruiting edge, some employers are resorting to underwriting academic conferences, adding linguistics professors to their advisory boards, and holding pizza parties in university lounges. Or, they make financial contributions to the [Linguist List](#), the premier job-referral Web site in the field, where postings are running nearly double over last year.

"Is there a demand? You bet there is," says Stanley Peters, chairman of linguistics at Stanford University. "Is there a supply? Heck no. The supply is extremely limited."

Linguists aren't accustomed to being wooed. A 1997 survey by the Modern Languages Association showed that only 28.4% of new Ph.D.s in linguistics found tenure-track positions, and only 52.5% received full-time teaching appointments -- worse than in such fields as English, classics and foreign languages. Nearly a fourth of the linguistics Ph.D.s were either unemployed or looking for a job.

And until recently, only a handful of companies hired any linguists at all, Microsoft Corp. the most prominent. Its linguists helped develop the grammar-checking function for Windows software. As the Internet becomes increasingly global and multilingual, they are now trying to improve the quality of automated translation.

"When I came here in 1992, the attitude was, 'You're here for life, there's nowhere else to go,' " says Bill Dolan, a Microsoft researcher and linguistics Ph.D. from UCLA. "That's no longer true by a long shot."

Part of the problem: For decades, linguistics researchers in academia and government labs labored to create a computer with a human level of understanding of language. With that goal so elusive, some in the field have shifted to making systems that understand and converse within limited domains, such as finance or technology. In other words, commercially viable.

The heavily visited [Ask Jeeves Inc. site](#) has 10 linguists among its 600 employees. And the Emeryville, Calif., firm is trying to hire more. Smaller natural-language processing firms lean more heavily on linguists. Thirteen of 18 technical employees at closely held InQuizit Technologies Inc. in Santa Monica, Calif., hold

linguistics doctorates or master's degrees. Ten of the 30 employees at closely held Cymfony Inc. in suburban Buffalo, N.Y., have linguistics Ph.D.s, including David Sanderson.

After receiving his doctorate in 1995 from the University of Toronto, Mr. Sanderson bounced from translating hockey news into French for a Stanley Cup Web site to teaching English as a second language, while his wife's insurance job paid most of the bills. Then he applied for a Cymfony opening posted on the [Linguist List](#). He started working there a month ago, doubling his income, and plans to buy a house and car this summer.

The price is right, for both sides. What may seem a pittance in the New Economy amounts to a fortune for the long-suffering scholar. "We can go out and get linguists, sometimes with a master's education, for \$40,000 to \$45,000," says Michael Murphy, chief operating officer of Answerfriend.com in Los Angeles, where half of the 24-member technical staff have advanced degrees in linguistics. "They think they've died and gone to heaven. They're underpriced. Don't tell anybody."

Computational linguists -- who have a hybrid background in linguistics and computer science -- command the highest salaries: \$80,000 to \$130,000, and usually have an advanced degree. "I counsel a lot of linguistics graduate students," says Kent Clizbe, a former vice consul of the US Embassy in Malta who is now a headhunter specializing in recruiting linguists. "I tell them, 'You did your dissertation specializing in Cherokee semantics. Great. Now get as much of a computer background as you can.' "

Closely held AnswerLogic Inc., which is backed by Internet incubator CMGI Inc., is hiring and training what it calls "language lovers" -- recent college graduates with bachelors' degrees in linguistics or related fields. At \$30,000 a year plus stock options, they're cheaper than Ph.D.s, and the supply is larger. The Washington, D.C., firm uses natural language processing to automate customer support for technology companies.

The widespread emigration to business has shaken some colleges. Steven Chang, a graduate student in phonetics at the University of California at Berkeley, recently took a job at closely held BeVocal Inc., a Santa Clara voice portal that provides automated traffic and weather reports, news and stock quotes when subscribers dial its toll-free number.

Mr. Chang applied for a summer internship and was offered a full-time position "tweaking" BeVocal's system to recognize common mispronunciations. At the urging of his adviser, Prof. John Ohala, Mr. Chang intends to return to academe -- but only after his stock options are vested. "I'm concerned these companies may siphon off my students before they finish their degrees," Prof. Ohala says.

Michael Meacham expects to finish his dissertation at Berkeley this summer on the function of "-ma," a single word fragment that means "but" in Hittite, a dead language preserved on clay tablets from 1650-1200 B.C. Mr. Meacham, 37, hasn't started job hunting. But he's already received three feelers from tech companies, including AnswerLogic. The job market, he says, is "miyanz" -- the Hittite term for "abundant."

# Job Search websites and resources

## Academic and Private Sector Job Websites:

[Academic Careers Online](#): An academic and administrative job search engine. Listings of faculty, teacher, research, post doc, adjunct, library, administrative and senior management positions at colleges, universities, research institutions, and schools worldwide. You can search jobs by region, keyword, discipline, and position type; receive email notifications of jobs which match your criteria, and post your resume. Some functions require registration, which is free.

[Academic Keys](#): An academic and administrative job search engine. Search jobs by discipline, job category, and region. Post your resume. Receive university job announcements via email. This site lists linguistics under humanities.

[American Anthropological Association Job Search Engine](#): Brows (linguistic) anthropology job listings, receive job announcements via email, post your resume and save jobs that interest you for easy access later.

[American Association for Applied Linguistics](#): Listings of jobs related to language acquisition and language pedagogy.

[American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Career Center](#): Career center for foreign language related careers. Browse job listings, receive job announcements via email, post your resume and save jobs that interest you for easy access later.

[Cameron Halifax Associates](#): A recruitment firm which specializes in placing linguists in non-academic settings.

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#): Not just a job search engine. Besides searching for jobs, you can read articles relevant to careers and life in academia pre- and post- the dissertation. A superior site to many of the others listed.

[Higher Education Recruitment Consortium \(HERC\)](#): An academic and administrative job search engine. Website is regionally organized, with locations including Northern California, Greater Chicago, New England, and more.

[Linguist List](#): Job listings for linguistics positions in both academia and industry.

[Modern Language Association](#): This site requires is a paid subscription, however, it contains links to articles and research reports on job placement post-Ph.D.

[Monster](#): monster.com allows you to search jobs all over the world by keyword. You can post your resume on this site, create a free account, and search career advice on varying topics including salary negotiations and interviewing. This is useful for those seeking industry jobs outside of academia.

[Times Higher Education](#): A UK-based search engine for jobs in academia. Browse jobs around the world with a particular focus on jobs in Europe, read news and articles related to jobs in higher education.

[Top Higher Education Jobs \(Ted Job\)](#): An academic career job search engine. Browse academic job listings and articles on all aspects of the job search process.

[UCLA page on applying for jobs in Linguistics](#): A how-to guide for applying for academic jobs in linguistics

## Resources for Private Sector Employment

[National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife](#): The National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife (NCAW) provides resources to help faculty, graduate students, administrators and higher education researchers understand more about all aspects of modern academic work and related career issues, including tenure track and non tenure track appointments, benefits, climate and satisfaction, work/life balance, and policy development.

[WRK4US](#): An email discussion list on nonacademic careers for people with graduate degrees in Humanities, Education and Social science disciplines hosted by Duke University's Franklin Humanities Institute. WRK4US is a regular unmoderated email discussion list, open for freeform discussion. Several times a year, Guest Speaker Discussions, are organized during which outside speakers join the list for a week to share their experiences with a particular career or issue and answer questions from subscribers. All Guest Speakers have graduate degrees in Humanities, Education or Social Science disciplines and all have forged successful careers outside of the traditional realm of faculty work. Recent guest speakers included those working in the non-profit industry, grant writing, academic administration and writing careers.

<http://groups.google.com/group/lingcareer> : A google group on creative careers in linguistics.

## Resources for Academic Jobs

[National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife](#): The National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife (NCAW) provides resources to help faculty, graduate students, administrators and higher education researchers understand more about all aspects of modern academic work and related career issues, including tenure track and non tenure track appointments, benefits, climate and satisfaction, work/life balance, and policy development.

## UC Davis Resources

[UC Davis Internship and Career Center](#): “provides career advising services to all UC Davis graduate students and postdoctoral scholars for careers in academia, the public and private sectors. In addition, the ICC provides a variety of workshops & symposia on topics such as CV writing, applying and interviewing for faculty positions, career opportunities beyond academia, and transferable skills among other topics relevant to advanced degree holders. An excellent resource.

