



Workshop

Do's and Don'ts in appointment lectures

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Disclaimer

- **My experience:** basically computer science
 - Active commission member
 - Word of mouth
- Different disciplines: **your experiences...**
- Examples are not meant to hurt!
 - But they did actually happen... 😊

*Whatever you say during appointment lectures
can and will be used against you...*

What's the deal?

Application process

- Application
 - Introduction letter, CV, list of publications, resume, credentials, list of references (international universities)
- Invitation
 - Date and time, agenda, questions
- Your audition = **last obstacle**, give it all you've got!
 - Auditions need time and a lot of preparation
 - Do it or Don't... there is no trying...
 - **90% preparation is a waste of time!**

Your Chance

- There are lots of researchers in early career stages
- ~ 50-200 applications match the job profile
- ~ 8 are invited for auditions
- ~ 3 are shortlisted
- **Only a single one will be Nr. 1**
- Actually, a 1/8 quota is not that bad...
- x-times in 2. place is useless (if No. 1 takes it)
- They read your resume and want a personal impression
 - Don't take it to heart too much... you never know what the seeking committee's constraints are...

So, you want to be a professor...



At least some planning was involved...

- Show that you have a **plan**! This is not a random process!

„... and then a professorship seemed like a good idea...”

- Show your **intrinsic** motivation
- It's my primary goal, because...

*„Oh, that's something I always wanted to do...
but there never was time for it...”*

- Seminars on didactics
- Application for third-party funding
- How are your teaching evaluations, and how did you build on them...

Where am I – where do I want to go?

- **Honest** self-assessment!
 - International standing?
- But focus: Not every detail counts!

„1. publication: ... , ABI Journal, 1997“
- **Understatement vs. self-praise**
 - Me-slide: H-index, Google citations,...???
 - Printed slides for committee members???
 - But don't be too modest! You've made it so far...

Reality vs. ambitions!

- **Am I authentic?**

„... and this result will go to Nature...”

- Did you actually publish there?
- (Ambitious) „under submission“ entries in your publication list?
Or not (yet) peer-reviewed pre-prints?

„My short-term goal as an assistant professor is to build a group of 20 PhD students. This is easy with EC-funding.”

- Are ambitions realistic or even productive?
- And do they resonate with the place? Stanford vs. Out-in-the-Sticks

- **Is that what they want?**

„... well, it's hard to name my research topics for the next year, since the EC-topics have yet to be published!”

How to reconcile family- and work-life..?!

- Longstanding discussion in university settings...
 - Is there something like a “**half-day scientist**”?
 - Breaking through traditional role models
 - Family (care work, etc.)
 - Of course everybody is sympathetic and perfectly agrees...
 - But do they want a **nine-to-five..?!**
 - Can they afford it..?!



How to reconcile family- and work-life..?!

- Make it clear where and how **parental leave, care periods, etc.** have affected you!
 - How **did** it actually work in practice?
 - Make clear-cut time frames where your productivity suffered transparent (holes in the CV)
 - And show how you **got back on track!**

The Casting...



Agenda

- Research talk (typically 30 min + questions)
- Lecture talk / teaching concept (ca. 15 min)
- Question time with the committee (ca. 60 min)
- Sometimes second talk and/or site visit (labs, etc.)
- Assessment center (more and more)
- Then there is silence (several months, improving 😊)
- **Stick closely to the agenda and the timeline!!!**

Basics

- Don't use your university template...!
 - ... how about a junior research group template?
 - ... and a special thanks slide to all your funding agencies for the beautiful funds you got... 😊
- Proofread your slides (spelling, grammar, style,... 😞)
- Respect time constraints and intended topics!!!
 - Cut to the chase, be concise, don't get side-tracked,...
- Prepare a back-up stick, in case your device fails
- Be on time, dress for the occasion, a little small-talk

Who is to be thrilled?

In general all status groups: give 'em something!

- Major group: professors (also chair)
 - Maybe unrelated to subject (vacant position, bias)
 - Close to subject, often from other universities
 - External counselors
- Research assistants
- Students
- Non-scientific staff (oftentimes as counselors)
 - Technical and administrative staff
- Equal opportunities officer
- HR representative (as counselor)

Dealing with difficult committees

- Worn out after x talks
 - Sleep deficits...
 - Uninterested...
 - Appalling manners (rude)...
 - Chatting and Giggling...
 - Random attacks...
- Favorites might be in the mix
- Important: Be mentally prepared
 - Putting a good face on the bad game
 - Be a better committee member later...



Your behavior

„When you appoint a new colleague ask yourself whether you would go camping with them.“

- Take the process seriously
- Show appreciation
- Don't be too easygoing
- Don't introduce humor (but react to it)

„And after my presentation you'll finally have understood this topic!“

Your talk

- „My topic“ vs. „Their interest“
 - How do I fit the job offer?

Applicant for Automotive Informatics: *„To demonstrate this process let's look at a Hot Dog stand ...“*

- Show references
 - Whet audience's interest
 - Show cooperation opportunities
 - No poaching in future colleagues' topics

Your talk

- Don't forget related work
 - Might be in the room!
- No offense to anybody (in the room)
 - Know the committee's methodology and school of thought

... so in a nutshell the methodology of X (your future colleague) is now obsolete!"

Your Talk

- Breath vs. Depth
 - Don't lose your audience too early
 - But don't be too trivial
- The three stages of a talk
 - 1st part: tailored to everybody
 - 2nd part: tailored to specialists
 - 3rd part: tailored to me
- Didactics (if no lecture talk)
- Most important: **Your enthusiasm!**

Lecture Talk ...



General

- Subject
 - Oftentimes set (for comparison)
 - Sometimes not
- Lecture setup (if not set define it in the beginning)
 - Target group
 - Prerequisites: Bachelor or Master
- Opportunity to score points with students
 - Students may/will chime in here
 - Risk of different background knowledge ...

Didactics

- Media use, maybe media break
 - E.g., Blackboard? Slides? Talk only?
 - Must be fluent
- Q&A
 - Prepare fallback options in case of silence!
 - Must be authentic
- Applications and examples
- Be up-to-date

Be prepared ...

... to not fall apart at the first question

- What is my teaching concept?
 - Vision & Aims: Be approachable, Open Door Policy,...
 - What does this mean: Text book, labs, experiments...
- My stance on e-learning
 - What (critical) experiences do I have?
- What about my teaching evaluations?
 - How did I put them into practice?
 - How do I improve?

... best-case scenario: provide examples

Do your homework ...

- How do I contribute to the curriculum?
 - Avoid surprises – do your research!
 - Again: no poaching!

„I will do the same lecture as XYZ but better...”

- Which lectures are expected?
 - Rotating fundamentals lectures?
 - Which lectures add to the mix?
 - Are my ideas compatible to the course of study?

Question Time ...



Tactics

- Cooperation opportunities
 - Inter-disciplinary
 - Default question:

„Any ideas with whom you want to cooperate?“

- Name + concrete topic
- Joint third party funding
- Mention current topics: Horizon Europe, etc.

Tactics continued

- What can I contribute to the department?
 - Plans for research groups, GRKs, SFBs, SPPs, ...
 - Besides DFG (GRF), etc. look at state programs
- Know the university's development plan
 - Be knowledgeable, ask questions on a deeper level
- How can I make the university a better place?
 - Lecture room equipment, computer and working rooms, library
- Events, e.g., recruiting
 - Familiarize with TechBuffet, Girl's Day, MINT initiative, etc. and offer your participation

Even more tactics

- Typical question „*What about the dowry..?!“*
 - Leftover money from junior groups?
 - Transferable third party funds
 - Established working group (really..?!)
- Again: do your **homework**
 - Structure, topics, persons, projects, teaching, rankings, excellence programs, professional communities, the faculty, institutes, ...

Research

- „*What is your long-term vision?*“
 - „*What is your goal **here**?*“
 - „*What topic is close to your heart?*“
 - „*What is your next project?*“
 - „*Where do you want to publish next?*“
 - „*Which conferences will you host here?*“
-
- Comprehensible, be realistic
 - Stable ideas, USPs if applicable
 - Don't be arrogant, don't be the smart aleck

Second rate department...

... looking for third rate Prof...



*„I rather focus on an international level...
can't be bothered with local stuff!“*

- Tread carefully:
 - How good is the department in **your view**?
 - How good do they assess **themselves**?
 - How do you **fit in**?

The bottom line...

„I don't do industry stuff!“

VS.

„Money does not stink...“

- Show ambition, but be authentic!
- Look at the other institutes' sizes?
- What kind of funding do they go for?
- What are local funding schemes?
 - E.g., Loewe in Hesse, VW-Vorab in Lower Saxony
- Diversity means resilience: DFG, BMBF, EC, Industry, ...
- Is there relevant industry around?

All you need is love..? Nope, money..!

- Very discipline-specific, broad range...
 - All-time classic: „*Give us a figure..?!“*
 - „*What do you need to get your plans on the road?*“
- There is a risk to **alienate** people
 - Much too high: K.O.
 - Much too low: Lacking ambition, no experience
 - Talk to locals, ask the DHV, talk to the head of the appointment committee
 - In any case: Have good reasons why you need the money
- Don't forget about office and lab space! Get a tour...

Do you plan to move to X-town?

- Standard question, which may be tricky:
„Yes, for a professorship I would even move to Eastern Germany...”
- Show interest:
 - In and out for the talk, or did you see a little bit of the place?
 - Careful: local people may like the place...
- More subtle „What do you like about your current place..? Why do you want to move?”



Do you plan to move to X-town?

Actually, it's easy:

- Your question: „How is living in X-town and in what areas would you look for housing?“
- Or try smalltalk:
 - „I already arrived yesterday and had some time to look at the town/university. The market place is beautiful...“
 - „Before my talk, I went to the cafeteria for coffee and passed by the lecture halls – very modern...“

The danger of hiring DiMiDo profs...

Often a problem, thus know your answers:

„What is your current situation regarding family?“

- Partner's profession
 - Will you move? Are there dual-career offers?
 - Realistic look at the job market...
- Kids
 - Maybe in the past grandparents helped – what happens now, what's the plan?

Moving the research group



Will they move? Sure,...!?

- A matter of loyalty: Do they care about your career?
- A matter of money: What funds are transferrable?

How can I communicate the change to my group..!?

- They need an idea, but maybe not all the details...
 - A group in limbo may be less productive
 - How do they feel if you fail?
- Everybody knows that you are going to move at some point... do they see themselves as part of the process?

What is your current status?

- Are there concurrent application/offers?

„I'd rather not comment on this...”

- Appointment committees need to assess their chances
 - Fruitless negotiations take a long time...
 - What if the list runs empty?
- It's not a bad thing to apply at several places
 - Don't talk about places, rather about the current status/phase of applications

Do you have questions?

- Questions = Showing Interest!
 - Better avoid sore points
 - For example, don't ask whether there is a problem, but rather about current experiences with problems...
 - And don't stretch it out...
 - Know your committee (tapping fingers, signs of attention)
 - Especially do not ask about obvious shortcomings...

„I looked at the department's output and...
Hmm, well... How can I phrase it... “

And then there is silence...



Appendix: Often asked questions

Typical examples

- Which of your publications is your pride and joy?
- Which one was most influential or most important for the community?
- What is the typical mark of your work?
- What do/can people expect reading your name on a publication/proposal?
- Assume we give you 1 million Euros. How would you spend it?

More examples...

- How do you connect to other researchers in this department/the university?
- What about active national and international cooperations?
- Do you have experience with different funding agencies? Which ones?
- What type of funding do you go for (DFG, BMBF, EC, Industry)?
- Since you seem to be working on quite practical issues, why do you want to do this in academia and not in the real world?

Even more examples...

- What does a typical PhD thesis in your group look like?
 - How often do you meet your PhD students?
 - How do you actually supervise them?
 - How long does a PhD thesis take?
- How many PhD theses, Bachelor- or Master-theses did you supervise?
- What lectures do you currently offer?
 - Basic lectures?
 - How many students?
 - How many teaching hours?
 - Did you contribute to the curriculum?
- Ho about student evaluations? Any teaching awards?

Organizational questions

- Why should you be interested in a W2 position?
- What is a good starting time? Do you have current engagements?
- How about concurrent offers or other running applications?
- What is your family situation?