

Interview Questions

Here is a list of interview questions, as reported by some of our 2007-2008 candidates.

1. Standard questions on research and teaching: a few places asked for a detailed description on how I would teach an econ XXX class.
2. One school (just right after hellos) said: "Forget about your spiel and just with one or two sentences give your paper's most important contribution." And they really interfered after two sentences.
3. In your opinion, what are the three most important papers in game theory?
4. What percentage of your time would you allocate to research and teaching in your dream job?
5. "Why did you send an AEA signal to us?" This was asked when I was about to leave the room, so in a sort of informal setting...
6. Universities that are not located in the US asked: "Why did you apply to us?", "Why England/Spain/Australia?", "What do you know about us?"
7. Why did you choose "this paper" as your job market paper instead of the "other"?
8. What do you like in particular about our department?
9. What can we do to convince you that we are a good place for you?
10. How do we rank in your preferences?
11. Where did you get the idea of your job market paper?
12. Tell me the last applied paper you read. (This question came after I said that I regularly attend the applied reading group).
13. What type of econometrician are you?
14. Liberal Arts/Teaching Schools: What course I would teach if I was given a completely free hand (a general outline, then some specifics on syllabus, teaching methods etc).
15. Describe your future work.
16. The consulting interviews asked about my research, but I got the distinct impression that they really only care that you are smart and enthusiastic, while being able to hold a decent conversation about your work. They are looking for empirical people, so they like to hear about how you prepared your data and things like that. They always, always asked why you are interested in consulting instead of academia, and the answer is very important. So if people are applying to the private sector, they should have a good answer to this ready. If someone is viewing a consulting job as a back-up (which many people do) then they better lie otherwise there is no chance of a flyout! I think that they like to know that you could go into academia but that you would still choose them. I was honest and told them all that I didn't know too much about what they do, but from what I do know (strict deadlines, working in teams, accuracy essential), I think that I would be a good fit. They were happy to fill me in on specifics and cases. A couple of them gave an outline of a case and asked me how I would approach it. Finally, it is very important to have some questions ready for these guys, it shows that you are interested.

17. Tell me about your research.
18. What (type of) schools or non-academic jobs are you applying for? What do you prefer?
19. What other research do you plan to work on? What areas do you plan to work in?
20. Why do you think you would do well in our department/firm (given our idiosyncrasies)?
21. Why do you think you're qualified to teach here (especially teaching schools)?
22. What classes would you be willing to teach?
23. Why did you send a signal to us?
24. Do you believe the empirical results (of your job market paper)?
25. Why would you want to work at a college in a small town in rural Iowa (or other geographic preferences)?
26. If you were advising a student on a research project involving (insert specific topic here), what would you say?
27. Is it common for others to assume what you've assumed (requiring you to know specifics of other papers)?
28. Also, it's important to be prepared to listen attentively to (and make compelling interjections during) the interviewer's discussion/description of the school/firm. A lot of interview time was taken up by these "presentations."
29. Most of the questions I was asked (approx 90%) were about my job market paper.
30. How do you collaborate with Macro professors? (Premise: I am an econometrician, and said that I was interested in applying my methods to Macro fields)
31. Why do you think your Markov assumption is useful? (Premise: I am an econometrician, and I considered Markov processes in my job market paper)
32. How is your method significant in economics? (Premise: I am an econometrician, and my paper was methodology/theory-oriented)
33. To which journal are you going to submit your job market paper?
34. Do you have any questions about our school/department? (Typically asked at the end of interviews)