



Starting a Permanent Academic Job in Philosophy

Securing a permanent academic job in philosophy is a major accomplishment that often takes years. It can be difficult to know what to do next. New obligations and opportunities can be overwhelming.

This tip sheet offers a quick overview of some key considerations when starting a permanent academic job in philosophy including contractual obligations, community building, career planning, time management and balance, documentation, and general tips and advice.

Contractual obligations:

A new job comes with a new contract which specifies both what you owe to the organisation and what they owe to you. You should read it carefully and clarify any ambiguities before signing.

Your contract will likely include general descriptions of obligations to be specified by or in consultation with your head of department, line manager, or others in your organisation.

Once your contract is signed, find out your teaching allocation and how your teaching will be evaluated. Make sure that you are paid for any required course preparation.

Once you are in post, arrange a meeting with your line manager to clarify the further details of your obligations. This will typically include teaching, research, and administration. Further obligations may also be included e.g. concerning impact (UK) or grant activities. Beyond these, find out the details of any early career probationary schemes, required teaching certifications, mandatory trainings, or other requirements attached to your post.

It is expected that you will engage in many optional activities and opportunities beyond the strict requirements of your contract. Clarifying these expectations, including their strengths and significance, takes time and varies across institutions. Many things may also have been suggested both by and to you during the application process. There will be reasonable expectation on both sides that at least some of these will be realised.



Ensure your obligations are satisfied and continually reflect on which further activities to undertake.

Community building:

People are your most important resource for starting a job and developing an academic career. While 'community building,' like 'networking,' may have negative connotations, relationships are good.

You should intentionally develop positive relationships with people who can support you. Including:

- They can advise concerning institutional procedures, policies, contacts, and all manner of practical essentials.
- Your head of department or other line manager. They can advise on your obligations. They often have decision-making powers relevant to supporting or thwarting your goals.
- A trusted senior colleague or mentor. Some universities have mentorship programmes. Through this mechanism or otherwise, you should develop a relationship with a trusted, knowledgeable member *of your new institution* with whom you can speak candidly.
- Other new colleagues. Building community with other colleagues new to the institution, ideally at a similar career stage, can be invaluable for problem-solving and comradery.

The best way to build community is to participate! Participate in any events or other activities outwith philosophy that look attractive. Attend as many conferences, regular seminars, and other events within philosophy that you can. Seek an early opportunity to present your research. Stay attentive to potential collaborators.

It can sometimes be useful to organise a workshop or other research event in the first year. This will safeguard research time and require you to familiarise yourself with some of your organisation's structures, processes, and people.



All organisations, including Universities and philosophy departments, have local politics. Be collegial and respectful to everyone, without being afraid to voice an opinion. Take time to find your place.

Career planning:

The start of a permanent job is an opportunity to strategically approach building your academic career. Having succeeded on the job market, you likely have relative freedom: no longer seeking a post, but unburdened with many obligations beyond the contractual. Use this opportunity wisely.

A key part of career planning involves promotion, including passing any probationary early career schemes. Identify the promotion criteria and procedures at your institution (often available online) and speak with your line manager as soon as is reasonable. Take this into account in your planning.

Opportunities will arise to apply for posts within your institution involving various service, management, or other administrative work. These *may* provide relief from departmental obligations. As with any opportunity, carefully reflect on how they may contribute to your career plans.

Consider how you want to spend your time in the short-, medium-, and longer-term. While most academic careers involve all of research, teaching, administration, service, and impact to some extent, different careers are differently focused.

Think about both your ambitions and your values. Consider how you might maximise your time doing things at which you excel *and* which you find valuable. During your first year of permanent employment, reflect on which aspects of your post that turns out to be. Consider what you think you will find meaningful to have accomplished by the end of your career.

Attempt to start as you mean to go in, pursuing opportunities and prioritising in ways which reflect both your goals and values.



Time management and balance:

A new job means new roles and responsibilities, new people, new norms, and new structures. Navigating all this novelty takes *time*. It is common to feel overwhelmed.

Some tasks may take more time than anticipated.

- Time devoted to administrative tasks may be surprisingly substantial. You may be assigned an administrative role that takes up a significant amount of time and, in any case, you must come to grips with a range of structures and platforms in any new institution.
- Permanent posts typically come with obligations to teach new courses. Anticipate time needed for preparing, delivering, and marking. Requirements on philosophy staff for administering their courses vary across institutions, but some should be expected.

Some new posts come with initial teaching or administrative relief and you should speak explicitly with your line manager about this possibility. Going forward, continue dialoguing with them about how much new teaching material you are preparing. Aim to teach the same material multiple times.

Especially in a new post, it is easy for research to be crowded out by teaching and administration. Do not wait until everything is done, as it may never be. Instead, it can help to set aside time specifically devoted to research, e.g. one day a week or two hours a day. As soon as is reasonable, apply for funding schemes granting relief from other obligations, especially if your post has no initial relief.

To help manage your time in ways which align with your career aims:

- Have a *realistic* and *flexible* work schedule. Be mindful and intentional of how you are spending your time, while giving tasks the time that they need.
- Establish early and clear boundaries with staff and students. For example, are they welcome to drop by any time, only when your door is open, or only by appointment?
- Consider boundaries around email. For example, restricting it to certain times of day or personal policies for student email, e.g. not to expect an answer within 48 hours.



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- Get comfortable saying 'no' to things. Have a clear and compelling reason to say 'yes'.
 - Remember that you simply can't do everything. You must prioritise.

The demands of a new post must also be balanced against your priorities *beyond* your career.

A new post can entail new negotiations of domestic responsibilities, including caring responsibilities. Think carefully about these and aim to arrive at a fair and sustainable arrangement.

In general, aim to have a personal/professional balance that is sustainable and which reflects your values. Consider e.g. friendships and hobbies, along with exercise, sleep, and eating habits. If you're in a new location, consider participating in community events and activities to build a social community outside your institution.

Managing your time in ways which align with your personal and professional goals and values is a constantly negotiated aspect of every academic career. Be flexible and keep reflecting.

Documentation:

You should begin (or continue) to keep careful records of your professional activities.

Information about any activities that may be usefully mentioned in further applications (including promotions) within or beyond your institution should be recorded. This includes itemised lists of e.g. courses taught; postgraduate students advised; research presentations; grants applied for or evaluated; published work in any outlet within or beyond the academy; services to the profession e.g. committee work; administrative roles; books reviewed; and so on. Also collect and save documentation including any positive feedback e.g. teaching evaluations, book reviews, and so on.



In addition to any of the above, your institution may sometimes ask for information about how you have been spending your time, and your line manager may ask for estimated time on certain tasks. Note that this needn't be down to the minute. For time management, especially in a new role, rough estimates of time spent on different tasks can also be personally helpful.

Any documents created or which may be useful in fulfilling your new obligations should be saved, at least temporarily. This includes e.g. teaching syllabi, meeting notes, administrative task instructions, and so on. You may be initially flooded with information that you will want to access later.

Be sure to create a system of organising your information that is sustainable and intuitive for you. Use folders and sub-folders and clear, descriptive labels.

Further general tips and advice:

- Don't expect to know everything all at once. Ask for help.
- Remember that change takes time and existing faculty may be resistant to your revolutionary ideas. Be respectful, taking one step at a time, as you come to learn about your institution.
- Give yourself time to get to know your new colleagues, without passing quick initial judgements. Be prepared to be both disappointed and surprised by others.
- Avoid comparing yourself with others or getting lost in what may be a competitive environment. Stay focused on *your* career goals and who *you* want to be as an academic.
- Consider what kind of reputation you are building for yourself and whether it reflects who you want to be in your institution and in the philosophical community more generally.
- You might think that securing a permanent job means that you will no longer suffer from insecurities or "imposter syndrome." This is rarely the case. Be kind to yourself.