



British Philosophical Association



# A Guide for Philosophers in Non-Permanent Employment in the UK

A report by the British Philosophical Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK

November 2017

## **Authorship & acknowledgements**

This document was devised after a SWIP/BPA conference on 'The Profession We Want' in May 2017. We are grateful to the organisers of that conference, and to Dawn Philips and Helen Beebee for their earlier work on this issue, and also to comments from Suki Finn, Ian Kidd, Simon Kirchin, Brendan Larvor, Joe Morrison and Jenny Saul.

Anna Bortolan  
Alison Fernandes  
Stephano Pippa  
Robert Stern

## Contents

1.	The Purpose of this Guide	1
2.	Structure	1
3.	Guidance	1
	(a) What to think about when applying	1
	(b) The Application and Interview Process	3
	(c) Responding to an Offer	4
	(d) Preparing for the Job	5
	(e) Starting the Job	7
	(f) Working on a Temporary Contract	8
	(g) Next Steps	14
	(h) When Things Go Wrong	15
	(i) Non-academic options	16
4.	Further Resources and Feedback	16

## 1. The Purpose of this Guide

This guide is aimed at all those either planning to work or currently working in non-permanent employment in the UK, including those on teaching only contracts, short-term teaching and research contracts, and those in post-doctoral positions. It is thus mainly intended for so-called 'early career' philosophy academics in the UK who do not have a permanent post. Some of what is said may also be relevant to those from outside the UK, but some aspects are specific to the UK environment.

The purpose in writing the guide is to provide information and advice for academics in non-permanent employment on the issues they may face, and how they can address them. The BPA in conjunction with SWIP has produced this document in recognition that the situation can be demanding and stressful for those without permanent positions, and that there could be value in receiving guidance in how best to handle this situation.

The guide may also be useful to those appointing and managing such academics, though more detailed advice from that perspective is provided in another BPA document: <http://www.bpa.ac.uk/uploads/2011/02/improving-careers-in-philosophy.pdf>

## 2. Structure

The guide is structured in roughly chronological order, from when you think about applying to a temporary position of some sort (section 3a), to the application and interview process (3b), to the job offer stage (3c), to preparing for the job (3d), to what to do on arrival (3e), to your role in the job itself (3f), to what to do as your contract is ending (3g), to advice on what to do if things go wrong (3h), and also advice on non-academic options (3i). There is also a concluding part on further resources and how to provide feedback on this document.

## 3. Guidance

### (a) What to Think about When Applying

It is rare these days to move straight from a PhD into a permanent position, and most people will first have a temporary post of some kind, and many will have a series of them. These mostly fall into four categories: (i) individual post-doc (ii) post-doc on a project (iii) temporary lectureship (iv) temporary teaching only post.

The main reason to apply for a temporary contract is to enable you to continue in the profession, and put you in a position to make a stronger application for a permanent position. The latter will require you to have clear research credentials (increasingly, these include a strong publication record, while a record of grant capture may also be listed as 'desirable'), as well as some teaching experience and also some evidence of administrative experience, as well as the possibility of generating 'impact' for your research (see below 3f for further information on

impact). The ideal early career job is therefore the one that will enable you to develop your CV in these directions as much as possible.

In this respect, each of the types of position mentioned above has its own benefits and disadvantages, which you might like to consider before applying.

(i) **Individual post-docs** are offered through various funding bodies (such as the British Academy or the Leverhulme Trust) and some institutions (such as Junior Research Fellowships at Oxford or Cambridge, or VC Fellowships at some universities). The advantages of these are that they tend to give the holder a lot of research time, and that research is pretty open-ended (though you will probably have to have committed yourself to some sort of research project when applying). The disadvantage is that you can be relatively isolated as you will not be part of a team, and you may not be able to gain much teaching experience (though some of these positions will allow you to do some teaching, and some may involve the assignment of a mentor). In general, however, this is probably the most beneficial form of temporary employment, as it should allow you to enhance your publication record. However, even with such a research-heavy position, researchers should try to ensure that they can present themselves at any future interview as being capable of teaching, and so take what steps they can to develop their teaching experience.

(ii) **Post-docs on projects** also generally allow a fair amount of research time, but often this will be more structured to the goals of the project, while you may also be given other responsibilities, such as an administrative role in running the project (such as organising project events). Positions of this sort are less isolating as you will be part of a team, but that makes you more dependent on the mentoring abilities of the principal investigator on the project. You may not be given any teaching experience as part of this position, which could be a disadvantage.

(iii) **Temporary lectureships** should be equivalent in structure to permanent lectureships, so in this role you will get a full range of academic experience, including teaching and administration, as well as some research time. You will also gain more experience of working within a department, and engaging with colleagues. Temporary lectureships of at least one year are greatly to be preferred to nine month lectureships (which normally run from end of September to June), as in practice a nine-month position often means the position will terminate before the summer months, when more intensive research can be done. Nine-months lectureship are thus more similar, in practice, to teaching-only position (see section iv below), and many start on or very near to the first day of term, so preparation time is typically unpaid.

(iv) **Temporary teaching positions** (hourly-paid) will obviously give you teaching experience, but may not leave any time for much else, including research. Some of the drawbacks of this type of positions are that usually Universities do not pay much (rates of pay are variable); preparation is not always paid, or the number of hours for preparation you get paid for is insufficient; marking is not always paid (you should check when applying). On the positive side, these jobs will allow you to get some teaching experience while usually sparing you from any extra administrative duties, thus allowing you to concentrate on teaching only. A more general consideration is that temporary positions also entail a lot of disruption concerning travel (commuting), residence (moving house or finding places to live), financial (costs of travel),

personal (caregiving responsibilities, distance from loved ones and support networks), and the efficiency considerations of having to learn about a new department and institution.

As far as (iii) and (iv) are concerned, it is always a good idea to get to know why a Department is advertising a temporary lectureship or a temporary teaching position. It might be because a member of staff is on sabbatical, which means that s/he will return, or because the number of applicants to the course is increasing and more staff are needed. When deciding where to apply, these can be important aspects to consider as, in some cases, temporary positions such as (iii) and (iv) can lead to more permanent positions.

As well as these considerations, you should also think about the general strength of the department to which you are applying, and their reputation as a place to work. If you have a UK PhD and want to pursue your academic career here, you may also seek your first employment abroad, which can be a perfectly viable route to then coming back to a permanent position in the UK. In practice, of course, you may not have a lot of choice about where you take your first job, and our advice below is designed to help you whichever form of employment you take, and wherever it is.

## **(b) The Application and Interview Process**

There is likely to be some difference between applications to research-only postdocs, and to temporary lectureships or teaching only positions. Research positions are less likely to involve interviews, and will not involve teaching presentations. They will also not ask for teaching information in the application documents. Bearing these differences in mind, the following elements will form part of the process:

(i) Job advert: Once you have decided you want to apply for a position, you should obviously be checking regularly for advertised positions; job.ac.uk is a good source of information. You should probably also subscribe to the philos-I email distribution list, which regularly contains postings on jobs. Read the advert carefully, and consider whether you are eligible; your PhD supervisor and/or someone with experience of the UK market should be able to advise you on this.

(ii) Application: Almost all job applications use online application systems, which can take time to input data into (unfortunately you must often copy-and-paste data from your CV rather than uploading it). Submit the documentation required, which may include a covering letter explaining why you are suitable for the post. Be sensitive to the job specifications, and feel free to contact the department should anything be unclear – someone will usually be listed as a contact for informal inquiries. You should try to tailor your application letter and materials to the specific post, rather than write a generic letter, ideally conveying your enthusiasm for and experience relevant to the position and for the department or research project. Again, your PhD supervisor and/or someone familiar with the UK market should be able to offer advice. Some positions may ask for a US style ‘teaching portfolio’, which might include some reflection on your approach to teaching, any student feedback on your previous teaching, and sample syllabi or reading lists. If you are unsure about what is required, you should feel free to ask the employer for further information. You will also probably be asked to supply the names of two or three referees (though they may not be asked to supply references until you have been short-listed (see

below)). Normally you should choose your (main) PhD supervisor, and your external examiner – and then some other supervisor or PhD committee member if you need a third option, or your previous head of department or project leader if you have already held a position. If your thesis has not yet been examined, you should normally choose your supervisors if you have more than one, or some other member of staff who is familiar with your work. Avoid choosing non-academic referees for academic positions.

(iii) Long-listing and short-listing: For most positions, there is a process of 'long-listing' and then 'short-listing' in the department, where they first draw up a list of around 15 applicants, and then often take up references and read submitted work more closely (long-listing), and then draw up a list of around 5 candidates for interview (short-listing). If you make the short-list, you will then be invited for interview.

(iv) Interview: The final stage will usually involve both an interview, and also often a presentation of some kind, depending on the post: for teaching positions, it may be a 20 minute mini-lecture followed by 10 minutes discussion (with attendees trying to ask the sorts of questions students would ask), while for research positions it may be a research paper, and for lectureships it could be both. The focus of the interview will also vary depending on the type of post, but in general you should come prepared to talk about your past research and research plans, and also teaching experience and plans if relevant to the post. You should obviously think carefully about the requirements for the position, and come prepared to show you can meet them – e.g. prepare a sample syllabus for any courses that need teaching, or details of any publications you plan to submit. It helps to show that you have done some research into the position and the department - e.g. that you can mention colleagues you would particularly like to work with, or research groups you hope to fit into. Most departments have enough information on their websites for you to be able to prepare convincingly.

Here are some of the topics that may come up at interview (partly depending on the balance of teaching and research in the position), and which may therefore form the focus for discussion: the presentation in the morning; the paper you sent; research plans and what external grants you may have in mind to support them; impact and public engagement plans; discussion of administrative roles; approach to teaching; how far research informs your teaching (aka 'research-led teaching'); how you might get students to talk in a seminar, and engage generally; outreach programmes and student recruitment; what networks you have and how you can see them enhancing the life of the department in the future.

(v) Job offer: If you are successful, you will then be told after the interview - where sometimes this can be straightaway, but often can take a few days. If you are unsuccessful, it is appropriate to ask for some feedback on your application and the interview, which may help you improve in future applications. But don't be surprised or annoyed if the response is just that you did very well, but it was a very strong field, so you just lost out to someone with more experience, or fitted the position more closely - unfortunately, this can often be the case.

### **(c) Responding to an Offer**

If you are offered the job, the first thing to do is to double-check the details are as you expected them to be, in terms of salary, contract duration, and what the role involves. For teaching

positions, you will need to be clear about exactly what needs to be covered, and when. For research positions, you will need to be clear what the expectations are in terms of publications, and your role in the team if it is a research project and what your likely administrative load will be. It is a good idea to get a clear sense of the degree of autonomy you will have with regard to publications, and the degree to which these will be dictated by the project. You will probably need to talk this through with the Head of Department or project supervisor, typically by visiting the department before the position starts. Some Universities have formal probation plans that you and a mentor draw up in your first few weeks in the post that will help set your expectations and what the University can expect of you.

As regards teaching, this is the stage at which you might be able to tailor things to fit your needs as closely as possible. If you have any say over which topics are covered, try to use this to your advantage, in terms of minimizing preparation time, enhancing your CV, and giving yourself new experience (see further comments below under 3f). Depending on the timing of the start of the job, you may be asked to prepare some material at short notice (e.g. the course booklet), as departments may need to get these to students quickly if term is due to start soon.

## **(d) Preparing for the Job**

### **Practical Matters**

#### *Accommodation*

Try to get an understanding of what the housing market is like in the area you are moving to and what options are available. The University may have an accommodation office that is able to assist. Word of mouth can also be a great help: through your new department you may be able to liaise with future colleagues who know of opportunities and/or can provide you with other useful information. You might also get contributions to relocation expenses. If so, find out in advance what expenses will be covered and what the procedure is for claiming (e.g. timeframe, number of quotes required, etc.).

#### *Welfare*

Especially if relocating abroad, try to start gathering information as early as possible about the welfare system of the country you are moving to. Consider what services will be available for free and which it will be necessary/possible to pay for, and any particular healthcare or pension scheme you may be able to avail yourself of through your new employer.

#### *Visa and Employment Law*

If applicable, make sure you promptly get all the necessary information regarding visa requirements and application processes. If you are relocating to a different country, you will also likely be required to register with the relevant authorities for tax purposes (e.g. HMRC in the UK) and to obtain the relevant social security identification number (i.e. National Insurance Number in the UK). In addition, make sure that you promptly sign and return your contract to your new employer and request and obtain all the documentation which may be needed from your previous employer. This is important if the relevant administrative procedures are to be completed without delay. As immigration issues are particularly fraught in several countries at the moment, you should check the procedures and requirements carefully both by liaising with HR and through your own research.



### *Facilities*

It may be helpful to get information regarding the resources and facilities (e.g. office space) that will be made available to you once in the post. The research budget associated with some fellowship schemes may cover the costs related to the purchase of a laptop, books, software, or other research costs, and you may want to clarify in advance exactly what, if anything, you will need to purchase and with what funds it could be covered.

## **Academic Life**

### *Teaching*

Try to get information regarding the courses that you will have to teach and the academic timetable as soon as possible after having accepted your offer (if not earlier). If you are scheduled to start teaching shortly after the beginning of your contract, you may want/need to start preparing before your official start in the post. It may be helpful to liaise with the Head of Teaching and/or with colleagues who have taught in the areas in which you will be teaching and to ask whether relevant documentation (e.g. handbooks, syllabi, teaching induction materials) can be made available to you. It is also important to get an understanding of what training activities may be made available to you at the departmental and/or broader university level (e.g. new lecturers/tutors induction or seminars regarding particular aspects of teaching and assessment). It may also be useful to get information regarding library access and services, as you may have to arrange electronic resources or the purchase of books in advance. Find out how soon you get your computer account, since you often can't access online learning environments without this.

### *Research*

You may want to start familiarizing yourself with the work of your colleagues and of the relevant research groups. This may help you to get an understanding of what possibilities of collaboration may be available and to make the most productive use of your time in the job from the very beginning. If you are working as part of a specific research project and you do not have one yet, try to get a copy of the project proposal. This will enable you to get a better understanding of the context in which you will be working, including the project objectives and the expectations associated with your position and that of other members of the project.

### *Academic Associations and Networks*

If your university is not the only one in the region/city/town you are moving to, you may want to get some information regarding the other academic institutions, networks, and groups active in the region prior to arrival. This too may help you become an active member of the academic community and make collaborating easier.

Initiatives and groups aimed at fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion may be present inside and/or outside the institution you are joining. You may want to start considering in advance whether you could take part in these initiatives and groups and what you could contribute to them. In some regions also early-career researchers networks may be available for you to join. In addition, your institution may have a dedicated postdoctoral association or postdoctoral office that you can contact.

## **(e) Starting the Job**

If you have not done so already, try to meet in person with your Head of Department and mentor as soon as possible, and to get an opportunity to meet with colleagues both within and outside your research area.

Try to get an understanding of what meetings and activities that you are required or encouraged to attend, or that may simply be interesting or useful for you to take part in (e.g. departmental research seminars; research cluster or group meetings, etc.). Make sure your calendar includes all scheduled essential meetings.

Make sure that all the relevant administrative processes which have not or could not be completed before the start of your appointment are promptly finalized.

Get information as to what type of training is available within your department, faculty, and at the broader university level. Career development programmes are often offered by the university HR and research support teams, and activities aimed specifically at or of particular interest to early career academics may be on offer (e.g. grant application advice and support; project management, and digital skills training, as well as mentoring by more senior staff). You will likely also have the possibility to attend a variety of teaching training activities in your department, or at the broader university level, and to undertake a higher education teaching qualification. It is very important that you consider taking part in some of these activities even if your position is not teaching focused, as teaching experience and training are an integral and very important part of the development of an academic career.

Work out if there are any induction events (general or research or teaching focused) that you could attend or have to attend. Non-academic members of staff in your department, faculty, or at the university level more broadly may also be able to show you around and assist with regards to a variety of practical and administrative matters. Finding other friendly academic contacts, through word of mouth or otherwise, can also be a big help.

Make sure that you get your university e-mail address, intranet, internet, and library access activated as soon as possible, and that you are on all the relevant mailing lists. You will most likely be able to set up one or more personal pages on the university/department/research group web site. In order to keep your activities visible and to be easily contactable, it may be useful to get those live early on and to update them regularly. It may also be a good idea to e-mail your new contact details to people in your network who may not be aware yet that you have got a new position.

If there are other universities, research networks, or groups active in the area, and you haven't done so already, it may be useful to get in touch with them, join their mailing lists, and/or attend some of their meetings.

## (f) Working on a Temporary Contract

In general, whichever position you have, you should use it to try to build your CV in the best way, ideally coming away with a balance of expertise and achievement in research and teaching, and some experience of administration and impact, perhaps also with some evidence of success in gaining grant funding.

### Research

You will almost certainly need to maintain your research output while on a temporary contract, whether or not your position is research-focused. Write a research agenda, find a maintainable routine, and try to stick to it. While teaching and taking part in the life of the department are important, and can contribute to your research profile, philosophers on temporary contracts are often more at risk of neglecting their own research work. There are other factors in play too. When you leave this post, the department will probably be happy if you've done a sufficiently good job of your teaching, administration, and supporting work. Getting hired in a new position is a different matter, even at the very same department. Particularly for permanent positions, you'll need to have a strong research profile, and remain actively publishing. If you think you may forget the importance of your own research work amongst trying to please your colleagues, students and department, engage someone to *regularly remind you of the importance of your own research* (see next section).

### Supervision and Mentoring

The European Charter requires researchers in their training phase to 'establish a structured and regular relationship with their supervisor(s) and faculty/departmental representative(s) so as to take full advantage of their relationship with them'. No matter what kind of position you are in, try to establish relationships within the department such that your work, and particularly your research work, is supervised. This may include finding opportunities to share and discuss research with colleagues and faculty, receiving feedback on papers, setting goals and timelines, receiving advice on where to publish, grants to apply to, etc. Setting up a reading group, writing group (see below), or offering to exchange papers may be useful ways to get feedback and perhaps develop more supervisory or mentoring relationships.

Some departments will have formal arrangements for mentoring and supervision, such as optional or required mentoring schemes within the department (or university). There may also be a departmental research representative who can advise you on funding (see below). There may be an annual personal review which you're required to participate in, as well as probationary meetings for new appointments. While not all of these may seem immediately helpful, they can be very useful in helping you make contacts, establish work priorities, and have these agreed upon by your supervisor and others in the department. Departments should bear in mind that it benefits the profession to ensure that philosophers on temporary posts are well-supported by their supervisors and institutions (see section 5 of [BPA's \*Improving Careers in Philosophy\*](#)).

Some supervisors and departments will be quite receptive to the fact that you have important personal life projects and commitments outside of philosophy, including family responsibilities, relationships, care responsibilities, and whatever else matters to you for a flourishing life. Many

of these commitments can become difficult to balance with a stress and precarious nature of temporary contract positions. Ideally you would want to set up a relationship with your supervisor and department such that your needs can be openly addressed if required. The [BPA's Good Practice Scheme](#) encourages employers to be aware of philosopher's responsibilities outside the profession, particular with regarding to times at which meetings and colloquia are scheduled and teaching schedules.

It may be helpful to have a mentor who is not your direct supervisor, particularly if your priorities for your own work (or other commitments) don't align with the needs of your department or project. It's also worth maintaining mentoring-relationships outside your university, such as by keeping up ties with previous institutions. It may be particularly worthwhile to set up further mentoring relationships if you face challenges as a member of an underrepresented group. This need not be anything too formal—even just a couple of coffee meetings can help you negotiate difficult territory. Resources on mentoring can be found at the [European Mentoring and Coaching Council](#) website and at the [SWIP-UK website](#). Specific mentoring for the job-market is available [here](#).

### **Workshops, Conferences and Talks**

Workshops and conferences can be a great way of staying actively engaged in your research area. Such engagement can be particularly important if you find yourself in a department that does not specialize in your area, or if you otherwise might become isolated in your research. For getting inspired, developing research contacts, sharing your ideas, and getting feedback, prioritize conferences and workshops, even small ones, that are in your area. For professional reasons, it is also a good idea to prioritize large regional conferences. These allow you to maintain 'presence', keep an eye on research trends, and stay in touch with a broader community. Attending large conferences is, arguably, particularly important if you're new to the region. If you're new to the UK, the main general philosophy conference is [The Joint Session](#) (of the Aristotelian Society and Mind Association), with the [British Society for the Philosophy of Science](#), and [British Society for Ethical Theory](#) run in close conjunction. Other large regular conferences include [European Society for Analytic Philosophy](#) and [European Philosophy of Science Association](#). That said, it may not be a good idea to submit to (or attend) all the events you can. Presentations are no substitute for published work on a CV.

You can seek funding for presenting (or even attending) conferences, including travel, registration fees, and accommodation (see 'Research Funding'). At non-national workshops and conferences, registration fees for speakers are often waived. When attending a conference for which you have no funding, it is acceptable to write to the organizers to ask if any bursaries might be available, or if there are any other ways to minimize costs (such as by sharing accommodation).

If you have time and funding, you might consider running your own workshop. You may also be required to organize workshops, conferences and seminars in conjunction with a research project. Here are some philosophy-specific funding sources for hosting a conference: the [Mind Association](#), the [Aristotelian Society](#), [The Analysis Trust](#), the [British Society for the History of Philosophy](#), the [British Society for Aesthetics](#), and the [Society for Applied Philosophy](#).

You may find yourself invited to present at conferences and workshops, themed seminars series, and departmental colloquia. These are obviously great opportunities to share your work, meet others, and get to know departments. Being invited usually means you'll have your travel expenses covered, as well as a night's accommodation, if required. Depending on the situation, you may wish to present your best work, or more recent work in progress. It's also quite acceptable to get in touch with former colleagues, or other acquaintances, and let them know you'll be in the area and are interested in presenting—particularly if you're home institution is far away, and you're travelling for other reasons, or if you're newly arrived.

If there aren't reading groups or seminars on topics of interest to you in your department or the surrounding area, consider starting one—either drawing from people at your university, or those further afield. Also consider finding or starting a reading/writing group whose members take it in turn to read each other's work and provide feedback. These activities can also be taken online—particularly useful if your research network becomes dispersed.

### **Research Funding**

You might be interested in seeking funding for activities such as attending or presenting papers at workshops and conferences, running your own event, or arranging visits from philosophers at other universities, particularly from overseas. A track-record of gaining funding can be particularly valuable when applying for permanent positions. Funding sources available to you might include funding directly from the department, from a project, university schemes, as well as external bodies. The departmental research contact is likely to be your first port of call for information on this. They may direct you to further university contacts to complement what you can find online. Not all funding will be available to everyone, but don't assume it's not (and don't assume you'll be told about what is).

### **Teaching**

Teaching can be rewarding in itself, and can provide you with important skills and experience to secure your next position. In an ideal case, you would be teaching some courses in your own area, as well as being able to enhance or broaden your Areas of Competence by teaching in surrounding areas. Your teaching would ideally be monitored by someone with your best interests at heart, who might be able to recommend resources and approaches, observe or find someone else to observe your teaching, and also perhaps provide teaching reference, if that's something you need. It is often a good idea to take part in any 'peer review of teaching' schemes in the department, particularly if they involve generating any paperwork, and also ensure that you get hold of any 'student evaluation of module/teaching' responses, as these can also be useful in any future job applications.

In practice, philosophers on temporary contracts can have very little say in what they're required to teach, and often resources will need to be hunted down. As early as possible, see if there's any room for negotiation in what you teach. Can you take an established course in a somewhat new direction that will suit your needs as well as the department's? Can you minimize the amount of new material you'll need to prepare for each semester or year? Might someone else even be willing to swap a course with you? (See section 5 of [BPA's \*Improving Careers in Philosophy\*](#).) Regarding resources, previous instructors are generally willing to provide previous syllabuses. Depending on your time constraints and familiarity with the material, you may want

to hew closely to an established model for the course. Ask for details on the department's styles of teaching, since these can vary (for instance, some students won't be used to variations away from the standard lecture-seminar format, so if you have different teaching styles, bear this in mind).

If you'd like to teach, but are not required to teach (typically because you're on a research-only contract), discuss this with the department. It might be possible to design an original course module. While it's additional work (and typically needs to be approved the year before), it does give you a chance to teach material that may be more relevant to you, and demonstrate your ability to design courses, as well as the ability to handle the assessment of students. If teaching a course isn't a desirable option for you, consider co-teaching a course with someone else, or offering to guest lecture, and have your lecture observed by the instructor. You may also acquire some help with teaching in a new area by sitting in on a relevant course.

You may also be interested in supervising students. While this is unlikely to be formally possible at the graduate level, you may be able to supervise undergraduates doing final year projects or theses, or assist in the supervision of graduate students. Typically one would approach the department's teaching coordinator about such possibilities.

A more likely scenario is that you face the challenge of not letting your teaching take over. There are various ways to minimize this possibility. Consider assigning only the required time to prep for your courses, just before you teach. This will force you to not take longer than strictly necessary for preparation. While you shouldn't skimp your students, being over-prepared isn't necessarily a good idea either. Indeed, over-preparation is generally the norm for new lecturers and it's also important to inform your expectations about what students are capable of, since this can vary between institutions. Sometimes you can inspire a good investigative atmosphere by not having ready-prepared answers to all students' questions.

Don't be shy about approaching other staff for advice on dealing with situations as they arise, particularly if concerning methods, students, administration or anything else they may be more familiar with.

## **Administration**

Philosophers on temporary contracts, including those involved in projects, teaching or in visiting positions, are likely to be required to or choose to engage in various sorts of administration activities. This may include organising workshops, conferences, seminar series, visiting speakers, reading groups, and project meetings. There may also be administration related to teaching, such as coordinating other instructors, keeping track of student progress, and meeting to assign final grades. In some cases, philosophers on temporary contracts may become more heavily involved in the administration of the department. Some of these administration activities have important benefits, allowing one to demonstrate collegiality, network both within and outside the university, and learn various application and funding procedures. While such activities can also be added to your CV, it is also important, as far as possible, not to become overburdened with such duties, or be taken advantage of as a junior colleague.

## Impact

Funding for departments in the UK is partly based on whether they can show ‘impact’: contributions to non-academic sectors in the UK. This might involve community activities engaging the public in philosophy, collaborations with museums and science centres, engaging with government or other agencies concerning policy, or other activities that demonstrate how philosophy makes a positive difference to those *outside* the academy. You might be required to engage in impact activities as part of a project, or be interested in doing so anyway. Experience of engaging in impact activities can be particularly valuable when applying for permanent positions in the UK. Impact is often a long-term activity, though, so bear this in mind when you are thinking about it. Most universities will provide advice and support on this topic, so look out for training courses and workshops if you plan to develop this further.

## Professional Development

There may be formal or informal training available to you under the broad banner of ‘professional development’. This may include workshops and courses (both in person and online), with topics such as career planning, research, teaching, presentation skills, impact, etc. Some are discipline-specific, which are often more useful, while others are pitched at a more general level. Some activities can be suggested to you. Others you will have to find for yourself, such as through the university’s research and training centres or teaching centre. Try to find out from supervisors, mentors and others about what qualifications might actually be useful for you in your current work, or when applying for subsequent positions. It may be particularly useful to take a teaching qualification: increasing numbers of universities require that lecturers take (at some stage during their ‘probation’ period) a formal (and often HEA accredited) teaching qualification. If time permits, it can therefore be helpful to complete this as soon as you can; this can also be a valuable addition to your CV, and to your teaching expertise.

## Being Active in the Department

There’s a balance to be struck between being so active in the department that you neglect your own priorities, or being so absent that others barely know you exist. Prioritize events and relationships that you find genuinely rewarding, or that are directly helpful to your current work or future aspirations. If you find yourself asked or tempted to do service for the department, be prepared to say no—particularly if it’s not something that fits your needs well. Focus on areas where you feel you can make a real difference. You may be required to attend departmental meetings. If you’re not, find out whether you can (and if you’d like to). They can give good insight into the workings of the department. Don’t neglect the social life of the department. Joining others for coffees, lunches, dinners and drinks, can be very important to a happy and productive departmental and personal life.

Philosophers on temporary contracts occupy a middle-ground between permanent faculty and students. This can have its advantages—you can be welcome in both groups. But some may be less motivated to get to know you because you’re temporary, and not quite part of their established groups. So you may have to be willing to reach out more.

Reading groups and research seminars can be a great way to get involved. Offer to present some of your own work, particularly if you're new to the department. As suggested above, if there aren't reading groups or seminars on topics of interest to you, consider starting one.

### **Work Space**

Philosophers on temporary contracts often have to use a shared workspace, perhaps holding office hours in meeting rooms, or even setting up more informal arrangements. If you haven't been given a dedicated space for teaching related activities or research, consider petitioning the department, staff, or members of the department for access to some. If some members of the department aren't in regularly, they may even be willing to give you access to office space. When petitioning for more space, forefront the needs of the department—it's best for them if their students have good space for office hours, if you get your research done, and if you're present in the department (rather than working from home). Other on-site workplaces to investigate include libraries, research centres (in libraries or elsewhere) and cafes. Make sure you also have access to online services, including the university intranet, an email account, mailing lists, and printing, as well as to the library, photocopying, a mailbox, and a phone (if required). It is also important to get to know the administrative staff, to know who to approach to get practical, financial, and organisational things done.

### **Diversity**

Working on a temporary contract can be particularly challenging if you're a member of an underrepresented group in philosophy. Being on a temporary contract can already make others unsure of your status within the profession, and these uncertainties can be heightened. Temporary work also can mean moving around and having to resettle multiple times in new departments. Consider whether there are particular people you can reach out to to help you navigate new environments and positions, including those in your new department, as well as previous institutions.

You might also consider becoming involved in diversity initiatives yourself (keeping in mind not becoming overburdened). Consider inviting a speaker to talk about their experiences; liaising with the relevant faculty representative on diversity; engaging with existing groups for members of underrepresented groups, such as [Minorities and Philosophy](#), or a [Society for Women in Philosophy](#); or starting one in your department.

### **Health and Well-being**

Even with temporary jobs that provide adequate wages and research time, being on a temporary contract of any type can be a tough experience. Some of the strains on your physical, social, financial and emotional resources might include: shifting locations to take up new work, settling into new workplaces, uncertainties about work and living conditions in the future, constantly applying for jobs, financial pressures, living and working without a strong community, difficulties maintaining social life and relationships due to time pressures and distance, feeling uncertain of one's progress, and feeling judged in comparison to one's peers.

As much as possible, take care of yourself actively on an ongoing basis, rather than just respond when crises arise. Look after your physical health (diet, exercise), take time to relax



(meditate, go for long walks), keep up with old social contacts, and make new ones, including those beyond the academy. Most universities provide some sort of free counselling to staff. It's worth finding these resources early. Often appointments can take weeks (or even months) to secure. Some support can also be obtained through the NHS. Make sure you register with a GP (which can take some time to process) so that you can start accessing support when you need it. If you can't afford one-to-one counselling, group sessions might be an alternative. Other options include charities and religious organisations (which you need not be religious to make use of). You might also want to keep in mind emergency contact people—those who would be happy to take a random phone call or visit from you when you need it.

## **g) Next Steps**

Temporary work inevitably comes to an end. From the time you arrive, you should be thinking about your next steps.

### **Career Planning**

Your institution and department should be able to help with career planning and job placement. Consider professional development programs (see 'Professional Development' above), and career services. If at all possible, bring your supervisors and mentors on board with your future plans. Find out if there are any placement activities in the department, including workshops, that you can participate in. You may find that your perspective is welcomed as you can advise on the job market based on your own experiences. If you're considering leaving your current position early, consider how and when to talk about this. It will obviously be easier if those at your current institution can be on board, and so able to help out with planning, interview preparation, etc. Some programs keep track of the placements of their temporary staff (particularly research postdocs). You might use this to incentivise supporting you in finding your next position.

Supervisors, mentors, and others in the department can assist in placement. They may be able to advise you of upcoming positions, name you as a postdoctoral researcher when applying for project funding, provide letters of recommendation, or assist with applications for external postdoctoral funding.

Advice on postdoctoral funding may also be available from the research office of your University; they should be able to advise on specific schemes, and also on the details of applications. They may also run workshops on these issues. Postdoctoral funding can be applied for through institutions like the [Leverhulme Trust](#), the [British Academy](#), the [European Research Council](#), the [European Commission](#), and the UK's [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#).

### **Staying Connected**

Whether or not you're going on directly to a new or permanent position, consider ways that you can stay connected to your current department. Can your institutional email address be extended for a year or two? This is particularly useful if you've been applying for jobs—you may get emailed out of the blue if something comes up. You might ask the department to give you a status such as that of an 'honorary fellow': this may allow you to retain library borrowing rights,

email access, and an institutional address (see section 5 of [BPA's Improving Careers in Philosophy](#)).

If you're interested in temporary teaching, tutoring or other positions that may come up at short notice, make sure the department knows about this. You might also advertise your interest in work as a research assistant, private tutoring, or editorial work. You can also consider the range of 'post-academic' career options, such as ['Doing Things With Philosophy'](#) and the American Philosophical Association's [guidelines](#) on non-academic careers for the academically trained.

## **h) When Things Go Wrong**

While in many cases, temporary contracts are completed successfully and with few problems on either side, nevertheless, on some occasions, things can go wrong. This can involve a range of issues, from unexpected personal or health issues, to misunderstandings or conflict with colleagues or management, to difficulties with students.

In cases involving personal issues, it is usually best to consult the Head of Department or project leader, who may also liaise with the Human Resources department if this is required; or you could also contact the HR department directly (contact details will be available on the University website, where each Faculty will usually have a dedicated HR adviser).

In cases involving students, it is usually best to consult the Director of Teaching in the department, or some other relevant colleague. If matters are more serious, it might be necessary to consult the Head of Department.

If the problems arise because of departmental colleagues, you should draw this to the attention of the Head of Department if possible. If the problems involve the Head themselves, or the department as a whole, it may be necessary to go to the head of the Faculty or School, and/or bring in HR. There is also useful advice from [SWIP](#).

### **The Role of the Union**

Whenever matters cannot be settled simply by HR Departments, or in the event of poor support, you can turn to the Union. The Union is there to help you with a variety of issues that may arise, so it is always a good idea to contact the Union representative in your department immediately after you have taken up the job, even if you are not a member. Recently, UCU has launched a campaign for junior staff, recognising that staff on temporary contracts often have minimal job security, and can face exploitative working conditions. As part of this campaign, UCU offers (from October 2017) free union membership to postgraduates teaching in higher education and to instructors, assessors and teaching assistants not on lecturing contracts. What the Union can do in each individual case depends on many factors, but joining the Union is surely a good way to ensure that you receive support for many of the problems that can arise during the time of your employment.

The [UCU website](#) also has a specific page dedicated to early career members, where you can find useful documents providing detailed information on the rights of early careers (including a useful ‘survival guide’) and information on how to join.

### **i) Non-academic options**

For various reasons, it may of course not be possible or desirable for you to continue to pursue an academic career – but nonetheless, your philosophy training and experience should be useful to you in other ways. You might therefore like to consider the range of ‘post-academic’ career options, such as [‘Doing Things With Philosophy’](#) and the American Philosophical Association’s [guidelines](#) on non-academic careers for the academically trained.

## **4. Further Resources and Feedback**

### **Useful links:**

European Charter for Researchers:

<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/european-charter>

BPA Policy on Casual and Temporary Staff:

<http://bpa.ac.uk/policies>

BPA’s Improving Careers in Philosophy:

<http://bpa.ac.uk/uploads/2011/02/improving-careers-in-philosophy.pdf>

BPA/Society for Women in Philosophy Good Practice Scheme:

<http://bpa.ac.uk/resources/women-in-philosophy/good-practice>

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, UK:

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf>

American Philosophical Association Good Practices Guide:

<http://www.apaonline.org/page/goodpracticesguide>

The Philosopher’s Cocoon [‘a safe and supportive form for early-career philosophers’]:

<http://philosopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/>

And on the job market specifically:

<http://philosopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/job-market-boot-camp/>

### **Feedback:**

Please send any comments or suggestions to [admin@bpa.ac.uk](mailto:admin@bpa.ac.uk)