

Before Signing a Contract

Important Information to Know and Questions to Ask for Faculty Members

Congratulations on being offered a contract at the University of Lethbridge.

Remember: This contract represents more than just a job; it represents the starting point for your entire career and will have implications throughout your life, even into retirement.

ULFA can offer you information regarding the local climate that will help you to become better equipped while you are negotiating your contract. Please contact us by phone at 403-329-2578 or by email at antson@uleth.ca or stop by our office.

At the UofL “Faculty Members” is an umbrella terms that refers to Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Professors, and Professional Librarians. The Professoriate generally receive contracts that share a large portion of the workload between teaching (40%) and research (40%), with a small focus on service (20%). The Faculty Handbook details the benefits that are guaranteed for Faculty Members. Faculty Member appointments can either be offered on a term basis, (having a set end date), or probationary (having a set date that the Member must obtain a continuing position by), and tenured (have no set end date).

As you begin to negotiate your contract at the UofL there are a number of questions that are helpful to keep in mind in your discussion with the Dean/University Librarian.

Salary & Money

- Are they willing to negotiate a different starting salary?
- Are they willing to negotiate additional support for relocation, help establishing research projects, or employment benefits?
- What salary does the Faculty Handbook guarantee?
- Can the salary be renegotiated in subsequent years?
- Is the salary offer fair
 - for someone with your training and background?
 - fair when compared to your colleagues at other universities?
 - when compared to your colleagues at the University of Lethbridge?
- Will the university provide moving costs and assistance with finding a new home?

Benefits

- Are there additional benefits offered other than salary?
- What kinds of leaves are available at the UofL?
- When can you apply for study leave? Is this negotiable?
- Is lab space provided in addition to office space?
- Are lab assistants or teaching assistants available?

Contract Language

- Is the language ambiguous or confusing?
- Does the contract contain all the commitments that were verbally agreed upon?
- How long do you have to consider an appointment offer before the contract must be signed and returned? Is this timeframe negotiable?
- Are there references to the Faculty Handbook in the contract? Do you have questions about any of the references?

Workload

- How many courses are you expected to teach each semester and each year?
 - Is this amount specified in your contract?
- Is there course relief offered for the 1st year of the appointment?
- Can you have an assignment of duties that deviates from the traditional 40% Teaching, 40% Research, and 20% Service for Faculty Members?
- What is the maximum class size that you are expected to tolerate?
- Are you expected to teach graduate level courses?
- What is acceptable committee work and service within the department?
- What assistance does the university offer to aid you in your committee work and service?
- How much focus is placed on service prior to receiving a continuing appointment?
- How much focus is placed on service for a term-position?

Term Appointments

- Is the rank negotiable? Example, Lecturer verse term Assistant Professor?
- Are they willing to offer you a longer term contract?
- What happens when the term contract has reached its end date?
 - Will you be informed in advance of the end date if there will be another contract offered?
- Are you given any recognition for previous appointments at the UofL?
- What happens if a tenure-track position is offered after you have accepted a term contract?
- Can you be converted to a tenured-track contract?
 - If yes, on what conditions would the conversion take place?

Tenure-Track Appointments

- What are the processes for contract renewal and obtaining a tenure-track appointment?
- How does the Salary, Tenure and Promotion (STP) process affect you?
- What things can you start doing now to prepare yourself for the STP process?

Retirement & Pension

- What pensions do you become a part of?
- How will your pension contributions be paid?
- How will your pension contributions be paid if you are on leave?
- Are your previous pensions transferable?
- Is your new pension transferable?

Please remember that your contract, along with the Faculty Handbook, will award you your rights and privileges at the University of Lethbridge. Take your time and ensure that you are making an informed decision. Should you have any outstanding questions and/or would like an additional source of information please contact the ULFA office by phone at 403-329-2578 or by email at antson@uleth.ca.