

Before Signing a Contract

Important Information to Know and Questions to Ask for Instructors

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 Instructors are teaching staff, with contracts that place a large focus on teaching, a small focus on service and no focus to research. Instructors receive many of the same benefits as Faculty Members, with important differences. Instructor 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 continuing (have no set end date). There are three different ranks of Instructors: Instructor I, Instructor II, and Instructor III (being at the top of the scale).

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 discussions 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, developing courses, or employment benefits?
- What salary does the Faculty Handbook guarantee and allow?
- Can the salary be renegotiated in subsequent years?
- Is the salary offer fair:
 - for someone with your training and background?
 - 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?
- What sections of the Faculty Handbook apply to your appointment? Are there references to sections of 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 80% Teaching and 20% Service for Instructors/Academic Assistants?
- 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, Instructor I verse Instructor III?
- 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 or benefit for previous appointments at the UofL?
- What happens if a continuing position is offered after you have accepted a term contract?
- Can you be converted to a continuing contract?
 - If yes, on what conditions would the conversion take place?

Continuing Appointments

- What are the processes for contract renewal and obtaining a continuing 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.