

WELCOME TO ULFA

NEW MEMBER HANDBOOK





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ABOUT US

The University of Lethbridge Faculty Association (ULFA) is a democratic, membership-based organization of academic staff whose overarching goals are to promote the collective interests of its Members; to protect and enhance the freedom and quality of teaching, scholarship, debate, thought and research; advance equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as worksite health and safety within the University community; and to improve the overall quality of academic life at the University of Lethbridge.

ULFA is deemed a trade union by §58.3 of the Alberta Labour Relations Code and is recognized as the exclusive bargaining agent for all 600 academic staff at the University of Lethbridge in matters including salaries, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment pursuant to §84 of the Post-Secondary Learning Act.

ULFA IS YOU!

The principal purposes of the Association are to represent and support the collective interests of the academic staff; to promote and defend the independence of thought and freedom of expression in teaching, research, and community service; to ensure due process in matters of dispute between a Member and the Board of Governors with respect to the collective agreement; and to collaborate with provincial and national associations of university teachers in matters of mutual interest.



ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION

- Represents all academic staff at the University of Lethbridge;
- Negotiate and manage a collective agreement with the Board of Governors;
- Provides information and resources to Members;
- Protects the rights and interests of the academic staff through grievances
- Represents the academic staff in the Councils of the University.



THE ASCA

(Academic Staff Collective Agreement)

Our collective agreement is a legally binding and enforceable contract between the Association, which represents the academic staff, and the Board of Governors of the University of Lethbridge (the employer). The agreement is mutually negotiated as required by the Alberta Labour Relations Code and sets out all the terms and conditions of employment, including salaries and benefits, processes for tenure and continuing appointments, discipline, appeals, and grievances, as well as provisions for leaves (such as medical leave, maternity and parental leaves, as well as other leaves as approved). The collective agreement represents all academic staff, including Research/Teaching Faculty Members, Professional Librarians, Instructors, Academic Assistants, and Sessional Lecturers.

Collective bargaining is the foundation of ULFA's work. It involves periodic negotiation of salaries, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment that are legally binding until such time as the Board and the Association form a new agreement or job action (Strike and/or Lockout) occurs. On ULFA's side, the bargaining process typically involves: consultation with Members at special meetings, through surveys, and via advisory committees; the development of proposals and research to support those proposals; a Membership vote on the bargaining mandate; and then a series of meetings with a team representing the Board of Governors to consider proposals from both sides and attempt to reach agreement. Should the parties be unable to reach agreement, the Alberta Labour Relations Code's default options are lockout/strike, though mediation and/or arbitration may be possible.

Once a tentative agreement has been signed by the negotiating teams and recommended to the Membership via the Executive, it must be ratified by the Membership and the Board of Governors in order for it to become the new collective agreement. ULFA Members vote for ratification via electronic ballot, following a general meeting.



GOVERNANCE

The Association is governed by constitutional bylaws and by the democratically elected representatives of the Executive. Members of the Executive are responsible and accountable to the general Membership through the democratic process and adhere to a Code of Conduct. The Executive acts on behalf of the Association as a collective, subject to the direction of the general Membership. The Executive comprises the President, Past-President, Vice-President, Secretary/Treasurer, and five Members who are elected as chairs of each of the standing committees. The President is the senior official of the Executive and is chiefly responsible for the overall operation of the organization, external relations, supervision of the meetings, and for presiding over the general meetings.

Reporting to the Executive are five standing committees that assist with the overall mandate of the Association. Each standing committee comprises representatives from various faculties and includes a diversity of ranks to represent Research/Teaching Faculty, Professional Librarians, Instructors/Academic Assistants, and Sessional Lecturers.

The Association relies on the volunteer efforts of its Members. As a Member, anyone can run for elected office, volunteer on a committee, assist with expert research and advice, participate in debates in public fora and general meetings, or provide support in a variety of other ways. Work performed for ULFA counts as service work for the University in the evaluation of duties. If you are interested in helping with the work of the Association, please contact the office or your Shop Steward.



GOVERNANCE

Bargaining Resource Committee: an investigative, deliberative and advisory body whose proper sphere of action includes all matters relating to collective bargaining of the terms and conditions of employment of the Membership.

Gender, Equity and Diversity Committee: examines and documents issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) that affect the academic staff of the University with the intention of developing a profile of diversity, suggesting strategies to redress inequities, making recommendations to the negotiating team, and working with the general membership on EDI issues.

Grievance Committee: deals with complaints, appeals and grievances as set out in the collective agreement, makes recommendations to the Executive to pursue a grievance.

Shop Stewards Committee: responds to inquiries from fellow Members about their rights and responsibilities under the Collective Agreement and promotes ULFA goals and mandates in the workplace and union consciousness more broadly. Represents the interests of Association Members by assisting the Grievance Committee Chair, staff of the association, and Shop Stewards Chair in identifying and processing the initial stages of grievances, and by acting as an advocate on behalf of Members in grievances, complaints and accompaniments to meetings with a Member's supervisor. Shop Stewards assist the Bargaining Resource Committee Chair in identifying areas of improvement in the Academic Staff Collective Agreement. Shop Stewards will also promote upcoming elections and identify potential nominees for vacant positions.

Job Action Committee: it is the regulatory committee tasked with fulfilling the logistical duties associated with conducting job action (such as lockout or strike) in compliance with ULFA's Job Action Policy. During non-bargaining years JAC still serves to mobilize Members; whether that be towards a social event or collective action to improve the workplace.



MEMBERSHIP

Ultimately, the Association is organized and run by its 600 Members from all disciplines and units across two campuses (Lethbridge and Calgary). As the University is an institution that focuses on teaching, learning, and research, our Members play a pivotal role in the life and success of the institution. Members include all levels of the Research/Teaching Professoriate (Assistant, Associate, and full Professors), Professional Librarians (Grades II/III/IV), Instructors (I/II/III), Academic Assistants (I/II/III), and Sessional Lecturers (I and II) and, both collectively and individually, our Members contribute to the functioning and betterment of academia.

Job categories that are not part of the Association include visiting and adjunct faculty, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, graduate students, emeritus faculty, administrative professional officers (APOs). Senior academic administrators are inactive Members of ULFA and are represented by ULFA in their academic roles, but do not participate in Association activities.

All full- and part-time academic staff are automatically Members of ULFA, the provincial Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), and the CAUT Defence Fund. Currently, ULFA dues are paid on a mill rate basis and are deducted from each Member's monthly salary.

Ombuds Officer

In the event of a conflict between a statutory Member and any member of the Executive, the Ombuds Officer is tasked with assessing and investigating complaints. The Ombuds Officer is intentionally kept at arm's length from the internal goings-on of the Executive in order to preserve impartiality and adheres to the principle of confidentiality.



MEMBER ADVISING

In seeking assistance, Members are encouraged to contact the Association without delay should there be any concerns about an employment issue. The Executive members, members of standing committees, and staff are knowledgeable individuals who work with the collective agreement on a regular basis and are well-positioned to provide support and advice. The Association can often resolve issues in an informal manner without resorting to the grievance process; however, if an issue does come to a grievance, the Association will work hard on behalf of the individual and all Members in seeking a favourable result. For more information, or to obtain advice, please contact the ULFA office.

MEMBER ACCOMPANIMENT

The Association is committed to protecting the rights and privileges of its Members and, as such, Members may request to be accompanied by any ULFA Member in good standing, of ULFA staff member, to attend meetings with the employer as a witness or advocate in any matter connected to the collective agreement. Members are under no obligation to justify the use of accompaniment and there are no restrictions on who this accompanier may be with the exception of the ULFA President. If attendance is requested of a member of the Executive, staff, or standing committees, all reasonable attempts will be made to provide accompaniment.

Accompaniment is recommended for:

- Meetings with Human Resources, Deans, Directors of Schools, Vice-Presidents
- Meetings regarding Members' rights, as well as all supervisory or disciplinary procedures;
- Topics that can be individually negotiated between the Member and the employer

DUTY OF FAIR REPRESENTATION

The role of the Association is governed by the duty of fair representation. The duty of fair representation may be defined as the responsibility to represent each Member in the bargaining unit fairly, and in doing so the Association must act in a manner that is not arbitrary, discriminatory, or in bad faith. Representation shall not be capricious nor superficial, and shall be based on a thorough understanding of the situation with respect to grievable matters.

Confidentiality

The Association officers and staff will keep information in confidence. In some cases, it may be possible to resolve Member issues anonymously. Most times, however, the Association will need to share details with the employer in order to come to a resolution. Neither the Association nor employer will distribute this information further than needed to resolve issues.

Members have a right to appear before the Grievance Committee to explain their case. Otherwise, the identity of a grievor is only revealed to the Grievance Committee or Executive when pertinent and necessary to make a decision. Members are consulted when it is necessary to reveal their identity to either the Grievance Committee, Executive Committee, or employer to advance or resolve a grievance. The Association may report broad information about issues to the membership at large, or our CAFA and CAUT counterparts, including the issue itself and how it was resolved. If a grievance progresses to an arbitration hearing, the arbitrator's decision and the names of those involved will normally become a matter of public record.

GRIEVANCES

The Association claims a grievance when alleging that the employer has violated any of your rights or a rule under the collective agreement, legislation, or employer policy, be it accidental or intentional. If there are concerns of a violation or improper application of the collective agreement, or other rules related to employment, Members are encouraged to contact the ULFA office for assistance.

Many grievances are individual Member grievances in which only one person is affected; however, the Association also deals with group and policy grievances in which groups of people or the entire Membership may be affected. Typically, issues that arise are first handled informally through discussions between the Association and the employer. When we are unable to resolve an issue informally, the Association has the ability to file a grievance.

The grievance process in the collective agreement has three stages:

- Stage 1: Informal Meeting
- Stage 2: Submission of formal written grievance and receipt of a written response
- Stage 3: Arbitration

Each stage is governed by specific timelines and so it is important to inform the Association of an issue in a timely manner. Settlements or the withdrawal of the grievance can occur at any stage. For information on any of the stages, please contact the ULFA office and refer to the Academic Staff Collective Agreement. The Association has its own internal procedures for handling a grievance and ultimately decides whether to pursue, withdraw, settle or arbitrate a grievance. However, the union does extensively consult with impacted Members about their preferred course of action.



YOUR BENEFITS

In addition to being the sole bargaining agent for its Members, the Association provides various other services designed to support academic staff in all aspects of their academic careers, from candidacy for academic positions through to retirement. Complementary to the benefits in the collective agreement (see schedule B of the Academic Staff Collective Agreement) the Association offers a number of great opportunities.

ULFA Academic Scholarship: This scholarship is available to any full-time student who is the spouse or dependent child of a dues-paying statutory Member, whether they attend the University of Lethbridge or another recognized post secondary institution. For more information, contact the Scholarships and Student Finance office of the University of Lethbridge.

Study Leave Relocation Fund: This fund is intended to subsidize relocation costs for professors and librarians during a study leave. The Study Leave Relocation Committee oversees the distribution and approval of applications for eligible Members going on study leave. For more information, contact the ULFA office.

Workshops: The Association offers a variety of workshops on topics related to salary, tenure, and promotion (STP), as well as performance review (PAR). The STP Workshop for prospective applicants is held each year in the Spring and the STP Workshop for chairs and committee members of the adjudicating committees is held in the Fall. The Association also keeps Members informed with jointly offered workshops with the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) on topics including negotiation training, grievance handling, and media relations.

Newsletters: The Association produces an email newsletter for Members that includes updates from the President and chairs of the standing committees and contains relevant information about the goings-on of the Association and upcoming events and deadlines. News and events are also published on the website at www.ulfa.ca.

Social Events: The Association hosts social events throughout the year for all academic staff, including the fall social that introduces new Members to the broader Membership and the socials at the Annual and Fall General Meetings.

General Communications: The Association communicates with its Members primarily through its list-servs and the www.ulfa.ca website. As a dues-paying statutory Member, you should automatically receive all communications. For any concerns or questions, contact the ULFA office.

STAFF FOR ULFA

AARON CHUBB

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ED@ULFA.CA

(403) 329-2328

The Executive Director (ED) oversees the implementation of elected members' decisions. This includes coordinating the ULFA office and standing as a member on ULFA's Committees as an ex-officio, non-voting member. The ED assists with ULFA's external relations, including communications, grievances, collective bargaining, solidarity efforts, and our participation in the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). The ED also provides guidance on the Academic Staff Collective Agreement and serves as staff support for the returning officer in ULFA's elections.

ULFA's Labour Relations Officer is primarily responsible for member relations and grievance matters. If you have any questions about the Collective Agreement, your rights and responsibilities as a member of ULFA and the University of Lethbridge, or about grievance matters, please contact our Labour Relations Officer.

BRENDAN BRUCE

LABOUR RELATIONS OFFICER

OFFICER@ULFA.CA

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MEGHAN McCRAE

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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The Administrative Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Association is provided with the necessary information and support to conduct its affairs in a timely and effective manner, performing duties that support the Executive and standing committees, management of the day-to-day operations of the office, and liaising with the membership.

CONTACT US

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