



Contract Academic Faculty in Canadian Departments of English A Best-Practices Checklist

Contract academic faculty make an enormous contribution to postsecondary institutions: in teaching, in research, and in administrative service. And yet they inhabit an uncertain, and sometimes perilous, space within the Canadian university system. For the most part, they lack job security. Their salaries are usually low. Many receive few, or no, health benefits. Most have no access to a pension plan. Full-time contract faculty teach more students, and over longer hours, than do their tenured and tenure-track colleagues: this can create challenges in staying current with changes in their disciplines and staying competitive in the narrowing job market. Many contract academic faculty report lack of access to meaningful decision-making within their Departments. Many perceive themselves to be unprotected by the basic protocols of academic freedom. The Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE) seeks the support of our association members, our fellow scholarly associations, and Canadian English Departments in establishing more equitable, humane and respectful working conditions for Canada's contract faculty professionals.

The following “best practices” checklist does *not* address the many contract, salary, and benefits arrangements that pertain to collective agreements – these differ widely across the country, and we urge all English Departments to work with their unions, faculty associations and institutions to improve contract faculty employment within those agreements. This checklist is designed simply to assist in the furtherance of recognition and respect for contract academic faculty at the Departmental level.

In this document, the term “equitable” is meant to connote equivalence in treatment with tenured and tenure-track faculty members.

1. There should be a transparent process by which teaching is assigned within the Department, and by which teaching contracts are discontinued or not renewed.
2. As professional educators, contract faculty need to be aware of their teaching assignment (and changes to their teaching assignments) as soon as possible.
3. Contract faculty should have equitable control over course design, assignments, and text selection in the courses they teach.

4. Contract faculty should where at all possible have meaningful participation in Departmental decision-making, including participation in Departmental standing and ad-hoc committees, Department Council, etc. *Note: the job description for contract academic faculty, unlike that of most tenure and tenure-track faculty, does not usually carry an administrative component. Participation should be made possible by Departments, but not mandatory.*
5. Contract faculty should be afforded equitable representation on Departmental websites (including the representation of research interests, publications, etc.), in Departmental self-studies, and in Departmental promotional material. Departmental course listings should include the names of contract faculty teaching them, not left in the literature as "TBA." *Note: although the job description for contract instruction does not normally carry a research component, many contract faculty do conduct and publish research – as teachers who need to keep up with their pedagogical commitments, and as dedicated members of the profession – and this research makes a valuable contribution to Departmental profile and intellectual life. Nevertheless, many Departments list only the research interests of their tenure and tenure-track faculty members on their websites and in their promotional material. Contract faculty who wish to be recognized as researchers should be accorded this respect.*
6. Contract faculty should have equitable (and timely) access to institutional library resources, letterhead and stationery, photocopying, telephones, office-door signage, etc. This access should be extended through bridge periods between teaching contracts.
7. Contract faculty should have equitable access to teaching equipment, to support for grant-proposal preparation and submission, and to institutional prizes and awards, etc. Their need for viable office space, for office supplies, for computers and computer technical support, should be recognized, and – to the extent possible – met.
8. Prior to the start of teaching, contract faculty should be provided with competent background information on administrative staff contacts and resources, photocopier access codes, office keys, etc., with clear information on library access, transportation, parking, etc., and with detailed information about the terms of their contracts (including specific information on how and when they will be paid, on benefits, etc.)

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