

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS

The Ultimate Questions to Ask Before Accepting an Adjunct Position

Before You Sign the Contract: Essential Questions for Adjunct Professors

Asking the right questions before you accept an offer can help you make informed decisions and avoid common pitfalls. Here's your ultimate guide to the critical questions every adjunct should ask.

Salary & Payment Structure

- What is the per-course pay? Is it a flat rate, or does it vary by subject/department?
- When and how will I be paid? Biweekly, monthly, or at the end of the semester?
- Are there additional stipends for large class sizes or extra responsibilities?
- Are there pay increases based on experience or seniority?
- Am I eligible for faculty development funds or research grants?

Course Load & Scheduling

- How many courses am I guaranteed per semester? Is there a risk of courses being canceled due to low enrollment?
- Can I teach at multiple departments or campuses to increase my load?
- What is the likelihood of teaching summer or winter session courses?
- Will I have priority for course assignments in future semesters?
- How are course assignments determined? Based on seniority, need, or departmental discretion?

Workload & Institutional Support

- Am I expected to create my own syllabus, or is there a standardized curriculum?
- Will I have access to past syllabi, textbooks, or course materials?
- Is there an expectation to hold office hours? If so, how many per week?
- Are there resources like TA support, grading software, or academic advisors?
- Do I have access to professional development opportunities?
- Technology & Campus Resources

Technology & Campus Resources

- Will I have access to a university email account and internal systems?
- Do I get access to campus resources like libraries, research databases, or faculty lounges?
- Is there IT support for online or hybrid teaching?
- Will I have an office space, or will I be sharing a common adjunct workspace?
- Is there printing or photocopying access for instructional materials?



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Contract Terms & Job Security

- Is this a semester-by-semester contract, or does it cover multiple terms?
- What is the process for contract renewal? Are there criteria to be met?
- Is there any path to a full-time or long-term position?
- What happens if a class is canceled last minute? Will I receive partial compensation?
- Does the institution have adjunct faculty unions or representation?

Benefits & Additional Perks

- Am I eligible for health insurance, retirement plans, or other benefits?
- Are there tuition discounts or educational benefits for adjuncts?
- Do I qualify for travel or commuter reimbursement?
- Are there faculty meal plans, gym access, or wellness programs available?
- Is there a policy on professional development funding for adjuncts?

Teaching Environment & Student Expectations

- What is the typical class size for my courses?
- Are there grading expectations or policies I should follow?
- What is the student demographic like? Are most students full-time, part-time, or adult learners?
- Is there institutional support for handling student issues (e.g., complaints, plagiarism, mental health)?
- Are there clear policies on academic freedom and classroom management?

Bonus: Red Flags to Watch Out For

- The pay rate is unclear or varies significantly between instructors.
- The school is hesitant to put course assignments in writing.
- You are expected to do unpaid work beyond teaching (e.g., advising, curriculum development).
- There's a high turnover rate among adjuncts, or negative reviews from past faculty.
- You are discouraged from discussing contract terms with other faculty members.

Final Thoughts: Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Taking an adjunct position can be a valuable experience, but knowing what you're signing up for is key. By asking these questions before accepting an offer, you can avoid surprises, negotiate better conditions, and set yourself up for success.

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