Contingent Faculty Quality of Work Life Survey

OCTOBER 2019

This report is based on the first nationwide survey of adjunct and other contingent faculty to be circulated since 2013. The 52-question survey was completed by 3,076 contingent faculty—adjuncts/part-time faculty, full-time nontenure track faculty, and graduate employees—between May 22 and June 30, 2019. AFT and our affiliates advertised the survey via email and social media. While the resulting sample is not random, taken together with other sources of feedback from and information about contingent faculty and their work/life conditions, we believe that the size of the sample allows us to draw some robust conclusions about the conditions faced by this new majority of college faculty in the United States.

LACK OF JOB SECURITY

• Job security remains elusive for contingent faculty, regardless of the number of years of experience they have in the classroom. Most respondents indicate they have been teaching for 10-plus years, but often don’t know until days or weeks before an academic term whether their employment contract will be renewed.

How many years have you been teaching in higher education/postsecondary education, including time as a graduate employee?

![Pie chart showing percentage of years taught in higher education/postsecondary education]

More than 15 years
10-15 years
7-9 years
4-6 years
1-3 years

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%
• Forty-one percent reported not knowing whether they would be appointed to teach a class until a month before the academic term began, and 5 percent learned of reappointment after the term had already began.

For your most recent contingent appointment, how far in advance of the first day of classes did you receive an appointment (or appointment renewal) letter or contract from the institution?

- Did not receive
- After semester started
- More than 2 months prior
- 7 to 8 weeks
- 5 to 6 weeks
- 3 to 4 weeks
- 1 to 2 weeks
- Less than 1 week prior

• For 3 in 4 contingent faculty members, employment is only guaranteed from term to term. This leaves instructional faculty in a perpetual state of anxiety and uncertainty about whether they’ll still be employed in six months, and this anxiety affects every decision they make, in and out of the classroom. This can mean delays in starting families and buying homes, but it can also mean being unsure of their ability to support and mentor the students they’re teaching. Only 10 percent of the survey-takers had contracts across multiple years.

What is the length of your average employment contract?

- Multiple academic years
- Academic year
- Academic term
- Less than an academic term