

Contingent Faculty Minimum Standards: Guidelines for Political Science Departments

These standards set ethical guidelines for best practices in the profession toward contingent faculty. They do not, however, impose legal obligations on departments of Political Science, universities or colleges, or APSA. Nor do they confer legal rights to contingent faculty. They are pedagogical guidelines that lay out the principle that all faculty members, regardless of rank, should enjoy the conditions necessary for flourishing in the profession.

Today, a large and increasing share of college classes in the United States are taught by contingent faculty.¹ The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines contingent faculty as:

Both part- and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track. The term calls attention to the tenuous relationship between academic institutions and the part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members who teach in them. For example, teachers hired to teach one or two courses for a semester, experts or practitioners who are brought in to share their field experience, and whole departments of full-time non-tenure-track English composition instructors are all “contingent faculty.” The term includes adjuncts, who are generally compensated on a per-course or hourly basis, as well as full-time non-tenure-track faculty who receive a salary.²

Contingent faculty tend to have lower salaries, poorer benefits, limited (to no) research support, higher teaching and service workload, little input into institutional or departmental governing decisions, and often experience greater threats to their academic freedom. As such, institutions employing political scientists should prioritize reducing their dependency on part-time and contingent positions in favor of tenure-track positions or positions with multi-year contracts. When faculty are hired into contingent positions, they should carry full academic status, commensurate rank, promotion opportunities, rates of pay, departmental participation, and fringe benefits, including access to research resources.

While we recognize that there often exists a wide variation in how contingent faculty are treated across departments and institutions, APSA’s Committee on the Status of Contingent Faculty in the Profession has developed the following minimum standards to guide how Political Science departments—and all academic departments—treat contingent faculty.

These standards are designed with the assumption that every institution, regardless of material or administrative constraints, can work toward improving the status of contingent faculty under the umbrella of three normative values: fairness, voice, and respect.

- 1. Transparency in hiring, firing, and evaluation procedures.** Upon being hired, contingent faculty should receive an explicit explanation of what their prospects are at any institution, whether their job has an opportunity for continuation, and what any review process will include. Likewise, if a faculty member is non-renewed this faculty member should receive proper notice. As laid out in the AAUP’s 1940 Statement, to which APSA is a signatory, faculty members, even those working on a year-to-year or part-time contracts, should receive

¹ American Association of University Professors, “Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed,” October 11, 2018. Available at: <https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency>

² American Association of University Professors, “Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession,” *AAUP: Policy Documents and Reports*, 11th edition, 170-71. Available at: <https://www.aaup.org/file/Contingent%20Appointment.pdf>

notification of their non-renewal no later than: March 1st if they have less than a year of institutional service; by December 15 with less than two years of service; and a full year's notice of non-renewal after they have worked at an institution for two or more years.³ Furthermore, every faculty member should have the opportunity to receive notice of their non-renewal in writing and to appeal this decision before the relevant committee.

2. **Equal pay for equal work.** Contingent faculty should receive at least the same pay as course-buyout policies for tenured/tenure-track faculty as well as the same salary increases, commensurate with years of experience and/or service.
3. **Benefits.** Departments or responsible bodies should, on a pro-rated or higher basis, provide contingent faculty with health insurance, access to retirement savings plans, unemployment insurance, and sick leave. Achieving this goal may require converting multiple per-course adjunct positions into full-time positions.
4. **Access to the resources necessary to teach political science.** Departments or responsible bodies should ensure that contingent faculty are provided with office space (i.e., shared or personal), technology (e.g., computers, printers, and email), and access to libraries and research materials.
5. **Research grants, professional development, and conference travel.** To enable continued participation in the academic field, contingent faculty should, on a pro-rated basis or higher basis, be eligible for the same departmental and institutional funding available to their colleagues.
6. **Teaching support.** At institutions with graduate programs, contingent faculty should receive the same teaching-assistant support granted to tenured/tenure-track faculty. Contingent faculty should also be given preferential considerations in course selection, based on continued service. Contingent faculty, in other words, should not be forever expected to teach exclusively introduction and service courses.
7. **Participation in faculty governance.** In keeping with AAUP guidelines, contingent faculty should be invited to participate in relevant departmental and faculty meetings (with appropriate compensation for their time and service).⁴
8. **Full membership in the campus community.** Contingent faculty should be invited to participate in relevant faculty and institutional committees (e.g., curriculum, student assessment, and budgetary and program planning), with appropriate compensation. Contingent faculty should be invited to departmental and college events, professional as well as social.
9. **Orientation and support.** Departments should make sure that contingent faculty receive orientation materials, which include information about accessing all available resources. If

³ American Association of University Professors, "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 Interpretive Comments." Available at: <https://www.aaup.org/file/1940%20Statement.pdf>

⁴ AAUP, "New Report on Contingent Faculty and Governance," January 2013. Available at: <https://www.aaup.org/news/new-report-contingent-faculty-and-governance>

desired, contingent faculty should also receive formal mentorship, which may include course-observation, sharing course ideas or materials, and letters of recommendation.

- 10. Academic freedom.** Political science often entails teaching contentious topics. However, a precarious employment status often means that contingent faculty face greater threats to their academic freedom. Contingent faculty should have the same rights as their tenure-line colleagues, including their right to decide upon the texts to read and grades to assign, their freedom to conduct research without fear of institutional retaliation, and their freedom to speak freely as a public citizen or even on issues of institutional governance.

Approved by the Committee on the Status of Contingent Faculty in the Profession on November 14, 2022