



A Guide to Recruiting and Selecting Sessional Faculty Employees

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Purpose

This Guide has been prepared to assist with the successful recruitment and selection of sessional faculty employees of the highest calibre. The recommendations in this Guide are based on current best practices in Recruiting and Selection, as well as mandatory requirements as set out in the CUPE Unit #2 Collective Agreement (“CA”). Due to the large variety of academic fields, and therefore sessional faculty positions across the University, not all areas will follow all the recommendations set out herein for every recruiting and selection process.

Every interaction an individual has with the University has the potential to build or detract from the University’s reputation. For this reason we should aim for a fair, transparent and agreeable experience for all applicants throughout the recruiting and selection process.

A. Overview of Recruiting and Selection

The objective of the recruitment and selection process is to attract employees to the University who possess the skills, qualifications, abilities and relevant experience to perform their work to the highest standard.

During the selection process, all applicants will be provided with the same opportunity to demonstrate their skills, qualifications and abilities. As such, applicants requiring accommodation during the recruitment and selection process will be granted such pursuant to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

It is recommended that you work with your department administration throughout this process as they are familiar with the required form and processes as well as the requirements of the CA not captured herein.

B. Process for Recruiting and Selecting Sessional Faculty

1. Determining Whether or Not a Sessional Faculty Vacancy Exists

The work of delivering, and in some cases designing course material, is performed by a number of different employee groups including, faculty and sessional faculty. There are other limited exceptions as well, including teaching for non-degree credit courses such as those offered at the Centre for Continuing Education or in Executive Education. If you are unclear as to whether or not you have an available sessional faculty vacancy please contact your Employee/Labour Relations Advisor (“E/LR Advisor”). A contact list is available at: <http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/elr/contacts/>

2. Determining if a Posting is Required

If you have determined that a teaching position will be filled by a sessional faculty employee the next step is to determine whether or not the position must be posted. It is most likely that your department administration will be the first point of contact to determine whether or not a posting is required, or if an individual has first consideration rights for the course in question. If the vacancy will be posted, the position must be posted in accordance with the CA by using the appropriate form and location (See Articles 12.01 and 12.02 of the CA). Even if a position is not *required* to be posted you may wish to do so if a qualified applicant is not readily available.

Please note that Article 12.03 of the CA has specific exemptions from the posting process for sessional faculty appointments. A posting is not needed:

- after the date that is 4 weeks prior to the date the appointment commences - including after the appointment commences; or,
- in cases of first consideration or teaching experience for PhD students in accordance with articles 12.13 and 12.12 (12.12 is effective Sept. 1/15).

3. Completing a Posting Form

In completing the posting form, you will need to determine: the selection criteria; the documents required from the applicants; and, the deadline for applications. The requirements of the position should be described by the hiring manager and should include the skills, qualifications, ability, and relevant experience identified that are bona fide requirements of the job. You will need to consider what the **required qualifications** are (the minimum needed to perform the position at an acceptable level), and what the **preferred requirements** are for the position. It is important at this stage to accurately describe these requirements. An example of a completed sessional faculty posting (using the form required by the CA), is available at **Appendix A**.

Limitations: The CA states that:

- “No posting or Appointment shall be for less than 1 unit.”;
- appointments to be filled by more than 1 sessional faculty employee must follow a specific process and can only occur when there is no single qualified applicant for the position;
- we cannot ask for certain documents from applicants until they are ‘shortlisted’ and if the applicant submits these ahead of time we cannot consider them. These documents include: “course outlines, calendars of events, or reading lists”. If you intend to request any of these specific documents from the applicants that are shortlisted you may want to indicate this on the posting. Other relevant documents can be requested on the job posting as part of the required application. Be sure though that all information you ask for will be of assistance in assessing the applicant’s ability to perform the job functions.

In cases where a position is less than 1 unit or you feel it is essential to ask for a course outline at the initial phase¹ of the competition process, please contact your E/LRelations Advisor for assistance.

4. Posting a Position

A position will be posted online on the appropriate website, using the standardized template noted above. The Employer is no longer required to post vacancies on bulletin boards, although you may if you wish.

¹ In some cases, i.e. with upper year ‘special topics’ courses the union has granted exceptions to allow a course outline to be used as part of the initial short-listing process.

Further, there is no obligation for the hiring manager to review applications received after the closing date of the position.

- Sourcing Qualified Applicants

Consider how your ideal applicant might hear about your opportunity and follow these avenues for advertising. **While we are required by the CA agreement to post on McMaster's centralized posting site**, this does not preclude us from posting elsewhere as well. For example, specific fields often have websites that experts in the field would look to for available positions e.g.: www.mathjobs.org, Professional Associations; List-serves of alumni, departments, faculty and/or degree programs; and professional networks such as LinkedIn.

5. 'Shortlisting' Applicants

In some cases the department administrator may complete the shortlist, or this could be done by the hiring manager or selection panel. To complete a shortlist, resumes and other applicable supplemental materials (except course outlines, calendars of events or reading lists) are reviewed to develop a "shortlist" of the most qualified applicants that you wish to explore further.

The short list may consist of those applicants that meet or exceed the minimum requirements for the position. You may want to have a higher 'cut-off' for the shortlist for those positions with many potentially qualified applicants. For example, if your position requires a PhD and previous academic teaching experience and you have a significant number of applicants that meet these requirements, you may want to shortlist only those applicants who have these minimum requirements and in addition have some or all of your preferred qualifications. It is a good idea to take note of what criteria is used to develop the shortlist.

6. Assessing Applicants

The more robust your assessment mechanisms are, the better the hire should be. It is important to use accurate and reliable selection tools, and ensure that they are administered in a fair and consistent way with all applicants e.g.: ensuring the criteria selected measure bona fide job requirements; and, using the same criteria to assess each applicant.

In some cases there may be no qualified applicant to a position. The best choice in these circumstances may be to repost the position to a broader audience and/or to fill the position with a non-sessional faculty employee, such as a qualified faculty member.

i) Selection Panel

It may be appropriate for a selection panel to be chosen by the department Chair and/or the Faculty member who oversees the course in question. The panel may include Faculty members, and staff who work in or are expert in the specific academic area. You will want to choose people who are well qualified to judge the suitability of the applicants for the position in question. The ideal number of panelists is usually 3. This is not too cumbersome in terms of the availability of the panelists but, should be enough to get a good cross-section of perspectives.

The duties of the selection panel will usually include reviewing the application materials of all applicants (or only shortlisted applicants) and individually ranking them against the required criteria. In some cases, the selection panel may also be tasked with jointly establishing the

appropriate ranking criteria to be used, although this can also be appropriately done solely by the hiring manager. Selection panelists would also participate in interviews, should these be held as a part of the selection process.

ii) Selection Criteria

There are a number of broad categories of criteria that **must** be included according to Article 12.05 the CA. These are: **Seniority; Academic Qualifications; Teaching Competence; Ability to perform the various duties of the Appointment; and, Previous academic employment experience.**

These criteria are very broad and evidence of their presence or absence can take many forms. ***Additionally, the specific weight given to any one criterion is not circumscribed by the CA. Therefore, the hiring manager or selection panel is highly encouraged to specify what factors would be considered under each criteria and to give the appropriate weight to each of these factors, with specific regard to the position in question.*** At Appendix B you will find a list of potential selection criteria from amongst which you can select and apply weighting as appropriate.

As an example, a specific position might require demonstrated experience in leading students in field research. Whatever criteria one selects, one must be able to justify the decision in the context enabling the selection panel to effectively select the best qualified applicant for the specific position.

iii) Ranking the Applicants

The Selection panel should first independently assign each applicant a score/ranking, based on the applications materials submitted by the applicant, according to the selection criteria (see Appendix B). Then the panel as a whole can aggregate the responses to choose the most qualified applicant. Use the meeting to aggregate the responses to identify any inconsistencies in ratings and/or determine need for further selection tools. This meeting can occur after the review of the resumes and written documents, or after interviews (if interviews are being conducted). It is essential that the panel use the same rating criteria for each applicant.

a) Role of Seniority

In addition to being considered as one of the broad criteria, seniority is to be used as a tie-breaker where 2 (or more) applicants have relatively equal qualifications. In these cases the one with the most current seniority will be selected. If this results in a further tie, the individual with the most aggregate seniority will be selected. Definitions of seniority are detailed in the CA at Article 20. Since there is no seniority list, department administration will usually have the best information on this. In addition, applicants are required to submit information regarding their seniority at McMaster with their applications.

b) Teaching Evaluations

Some applicants may have previous experience teaching at McMaster. If so, you are encouraged to review their previous teaching evaluations as part of the selection process, specifically as it relates to criteria of teaching competence and previous academic employment experience. Evaluations could be from student and/or managers.

c) Course Outlines and Other Supplemental Materials

If a course outline, statement of teaching philosophy or other item is included as part of the selection criteria it is recommended that the standards on which these are to be evaluated are

set, similarly to how the overall selection criteria are set. For example, in a course outline you may want to look for overall quality of document, cohesiveness and flow of topics to be covered, realistic timelines, appropriateness of assessment tools etc.

iv) Interviews

While it is not required at McMaster, interviewing prospective employees, including sessional faculty employees, is a best practice. If the selection panel chooses to interview applicants, your E/LR Advisor can assist with developing and the scoring and/or weighting of effective behavioural based interview questions.

v) Testing

While it is not required at McMaster, doing skills testing for prospective employees, including sessional faculty employees, is a best practice. The testing must be used to assess bona fide occupational requirements for the position, and must be accurate and valid, and administered fairly and consistently. Testing, such as a mock lecture would likely be appropriate for most sessional faculty positions and could be included as a portion of the interview process if desired.

vi) References

It is recommended to ask for an applicant to provide professional references. Reference checks must conform with McMaster's Guidelines on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy. Written authorization from the applicant should be obtained before contacting **external** references. The best practice in the employment context is to contact only the references of the top-ranked applicant and to ask only employment related questions to verify the information that has been obtained during the recruiting and selection process. Any information received from a reference which is not work-related should be disregarded. For internal applicants, hiring managers should speak with the individual's current and/or previous supervisor(s) at the University.

7. Offer of Employment

Every individual in receipt of earnings from McMaster University requires a signed employment agreement prior to the first day of employment. According to the CA, sessional faculty employees must receive an offer of employment based on the appropriate template (the sessional faculty letter of appointment). Your department administration will be familiar with the required forms and processes.

Any modifications to the above templates, except those modifications contemplated by the template itself, requires the review and approval of your E/LR Advisor.

An offer of employment may be made contingent upon certain items including, but not limited to, the authorization to work in Canada (Visa/Work Permit). Conditional offers of employment require the review and approval of Employee/Labour Relations.

If the successful applicant declines the position, you may offer it to the next best applicant and so forth. At any point you may decide to repost the position if the remaining applicants are not sufficiently qualified. Another option under the CA is to consider those applicants who applied to the position when it was last posted. Finally, if the successful applicant does not, within 2 weeks, indicate their acceptance of the appointment by signing back a copy of the letter, the Employer may withdraw the offer and offer the position to another applicant who has applied. It is a best practice to ensure that any successful applicant(s) receive clear unequivocal

communication on the disposition of their offer. E/LR Advisors can assist with the communications required if you find yourself in this circumstance.

8. Conclusion of Process

It is a best practice to email or otherwise notify unsuccessful applicants of the result of their application, although it is not required. A suggested email is attached at Appendix C. Applicants may also be interested in feedback on their applications. Please contact your E/LR Advisor if you receive a request of this nature and need assistance with the response.

For a complete overview of the sessional faculty posting and hiring process see:

<http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/med/document/CUPE-Posting-Hiring-Flowchart-Aug-14-v3-1-42.pdf>

D. Hiring a PhD Student for Teaching Under Article 12.12

The above process may result in the selection of a McMaster PhD student to teach a course as a sessional faculty employee. However, in recognition of the fact that PhD Students often lack experience, and are therefore not always able to successfully compete with seasoned sessional faculty employee for available positions, new language in the CA at Article 12.12, was negotiated in the last round of collective bargaining.

It states:

- the Employer will be able to offer, without posting, an appointment to 1 section of a course to a McMaster University PhD student – in a total number up to 11% of the total number of course sections taught in each faculty, by sessional faculty employees, in the previous year;
- no single student can teach more than 2 sections (up to 6 units) over the duration of their doctoral studies;
- a person entitled to first consideration cannot be replaced by a PhD student assigned under this article;
- while the PhD student is a bargaining unit member for appointments made hereunder, they do not earn first consideration entitlements by virtue of these appointments.

Each Faculty will be informed by Employee/Labour Relations, in February/March of each year, how many positions are available, under Article 12.12, to PhD students. Each Dean, in cooperation with department Chairs and Directors will work together to distribute these appointments equitably. Departments may then wish to select courses to advertise to PhD students.

The specific process to be used to select students for the available teaching positions is not circumscribed by the CA. However, a fair and transparent selection process, similar process to that described in this Guide, is recommended. ***These appointments must abide by the terms of the CA, specifically, people who hold first consideration rights for specific courses cannot be displaced from these courses by assigning PhD students to teach in under this article. Department administration should have records indicating which courses are not earmarked as first consideration.***



Appendix A

NOTICE OF POSTING For Sessional Faculty

The Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia invites applications for the following teaching position to be offered in the 2015-16 session.

Date of Posting: Jan. 20 to Feb. 20, 2015
Course Name(s)/Number(s):MM1A03
Number of Section(s) Available 1
Location (on/off campus):on campus
Wage Rate* \$8000.00

Applications to: Department Administrator
Term: Spring/Summer
Number of Units per Section: 3
Projected Enrollment: 30 Projected TA Support: 0
Start Time & Duration: Wed. 3-6pm

Course Description/Relevant Employment Duties

This course examines the impact of digital technologies on contemporary life. Lectures, readings, discussions, and multimedia projects will enable students to both reflect upon and participate in today's digital society.

Required Qualifications

A Master's Degree in Communication Studies and Multimedia (or related field) and demonstrated experience in the utilization of current multimedia technology.

Preferred Qualifications

PhD in Communication Studies and Multimedia (or in a related field), professional experience in field and/or original research regarding the impacts of digital technologies in contemporary life.

All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply. However, those legally able to work in Canada and at McMaster University will be given priority. McMaster University is strongly committed to employment equity within its community, and to recruiting a diverse faculty and staff. Accordingly, the University especially encourages applications from women, members of visible minorities, Aboriginal persons, members of sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities

**Supplemented Fees- 15.02(a) The employee may be eligible to receive supplemented fees in accordance with Schedule C of the Collective Agreement. The actual rate of pay when in excess of the base rate of pay is deemed to include any supplemented fees owing, to the extent of the excess amount. If the actual rate of pay is less than the sum of the base rate of pay and the supplemented fees owing, then the employee shall receive the difference.*

Application Procedure

Please submit the following by **February 20, 2015**:

1. A cover letter stating your intent to apply for the position (including your address, phone number, and email address) and emphasizing your experience with the material to be taught.
2. A resume listing your academic qualifications and relevant employment experience.
3. For current or previous McMaster sessional faculty, information necessary to determine your current and aggregate seniority (as defined by Article 20 of the Unit 2 Collective Agreement). Questions may be directed to CUPE 3906 (905-525-9140 Ext. 24056).
4. Names and contact information of two references

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact Nina Bovair, Employee/Labour Relations Administrator at extension 23850.

Appendix B - Selection Criteria/Ranking Chart for Sessional Faculty

Selection

Panelist: _____

Required Selection Criteria (per Art. 12.05a)	Examples of Criteria Rating Scale: 5 = Meets all required and preferred criteria 4 = Meets all required and some preferred criteria 3 = Meets all required criteria 2 = Meets most, but not all, required criteria 1 = Meets some required criteria 0 = Does not meet required criteria	Applicant A	Applicant B	Applicant C	Applicant D
Academic Qualifications Teaching Competence Ability to Perform the Duties of the Position Previous Academic Employment Experience	Qualifications- Formal Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term/Research Papers related to course material • Courses in Teaching Methodology • MA/MSc/PhD thesis related to course material • Formal academic qualification (may specify MA/.MSc or PhD required or preferred) 				
Seniority	Pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant engages all students in meaningful learning by using a variety instructional strategies, resources, and technologies to make subject matter accessible to all students, inclusive classroom practices • Uses effective teaching techniques (e.g. Suitable to subject matter, innovative classroom practices, distinct approaches to courses and curricula) • Establishing a classroom learning community -- develops respectful 				

Required Selection Criteria (per Art. 12.05a)	Examples of Criteria Rating Scale: 5 = Meets all required and preferred criteria 4 = Meets all required and some preferred criteria 3 = Meets all required criteria 2 = Meets most, but not all, required criteria 1 = Meets some required criteria 0 = Does not meet required criteria	Applicant A	Applicant B	Applicant C	Applicant D
	<p>relationships with students while creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for students' success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and appropriateness of course outline • Ability to design effective and engaging courses • Uses effective and appropriate assessment and reporting techniques, gives meaningful feedback • Developing as a professional educator -- reflects on and improves his/her practice, ongoing pedagogical development/enhancement such as development to enhance one's own teaching, evidence of a scholarly approach to teaching 				
	<p>Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Teaching Assistant Evaluations- ability to engage and inspire students in learning and original thinking- same or similar course material • Positive Teaching Evaluations- students and supervisors - ability to engage and inspire students in learning and original thinking 				
	<p>Strong Understanding of Course Subject Matter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal academic qualification in relevant area (may specify MA/.MSc or PhD required or preferred) 				

Required Selection Criteria (per Art. 12.05a)	Examples of Criteria Rating Scale: 5 = Meets all required and preferred criteria 4 = Meets all required and some preferred criteria 3 = Meets all required criteria 2 = Meets most, but not all, required criteria 1 = Meets some required criteria 0 = Does not meet required criteria	Applicant A	Applicant B	Applicant C	Applicant D
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent publications and/or relevant research • Relevant courses (strong grades)- strong understanding of course content knowledge course material 				
	Currency in Topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent publications and/or research relevant to course material • Recent courses taught or taken 				
	Seniority Date- In accordance with Art. 20, as provided by Applicant in application				
	Qualifications – Previous Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement and Training in field-involvement in peer reviewed conferences and community work 				
	Skills and Abilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates professional communication -- shows respect for human diversity and effectively interacts with students and colleagues with tact and diplomacy • Experience with Avenue to Learn • Experience with McMaster University and/or Departmental/Faculty policies and procedures 				
	Contributions to the University/community at large <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives to support learners and/or colleagues, community partnering, 				

Required Selection Criteria (per Art. 12.05a)	Examples of Criteria Rating Scale: 5 = Meets all required and preferred criteria 4 = Meets all required and some preferred criteria 3 = Meets all required criteria 2 = Meets most, but not all, required criteria 1 = Meets some required criteria 0 = Does not meet required criteria	Applicant A	Applicant B	Applicant C	Applicant D
	assisting with professional publications, presentations, service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical contributions outside the classroom such as contributions to curricular initiatives, work with teaching/learning committees or centres) 				
TOTAL SCORE / RANK:					

Appendix C - Text of Email or Letter to Unsuccessful Applicant

DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD

Date

STRICTLY PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Name

Address

Dear X:

Thank you for your application to our recently advertised position of sessional faculty employee for course X in the department of/program of X.

We have carefully reviewed your resume and applicable supplemental materials based on the requirements for this position. Unfortunately, we will not be pursuing you further as an applicant.

Thank you again for your interest in working with the department of/program of X.

Sincerely,

Position responsible for Hiring

Title

McMaster University