

Guidelines for Contingent Faculty in the Discipline of Political Science

The term contingent faculty encompasses a wide variety of appointments, settings, hiring mechanisms, and tenures. The term applies to any individual teaching for institutions of higher learning on a limited contractual basis. What the status denotes is the stark distinction between these individuals on the one hand, and permanent, full time faculty on the other. Creating a list of instances in which an individual “qualifies” as contingent or not is an exercise in futility. Rather than do this, it is better to summarize contingency as such: contingency is a status endured by faculty who do not enjoy equality in employment practices, a voice in academic affairs, professional recognition, or access to the same resources as their peers in full-time, permanent positions.

The Committee on the Status of Contingent Faculty in the Profession recommends that the American Political Science Association adopt the following guidance regarding the treatment of contingent faculty by universities.

Fairness in Employment Practices

1. Adopt transparent policies in hiring, firing, and evaluation procedures;
2. Provide equal pay for equal work;
3. Ensure prorated benefits such as health insurance, access to retirement savings plans, unemployment insurance, and sick leave;
4. Give preferential consideration after continued service for teaching the same course; and
5. Formalize promotion, parental and other leave procedures, and other informal practices as they relate to employment and promotion.

Voice in Academic Affairs

1. Ask contingent faculty to participate in faculty governance meetings and grant them voting rights (with appropriate compensation for their time and service);
2. Invite contingent faculty to participate in relevant faculty and institutional committees (such as curriculum, student assessment, budgetary and program planning panels), with appropriate compensation; and
3. Invite contingent faculty to departmental and college events.

Professional Recognition

1. Ensure access to funds for research grants and conference travel;
2. Offer teaching assistant support when a course meets student-teacher capacity, or if other criteria would otherwise grant this support to TTT faculty;
3. Introduce faculty to the school, department, and show them how to access all available resources; and
4. Record and make available to the college/university and APSA data showing the number and proportion of contingent faculty.

Provide needed Resources

1. Formalize and encourage mentorship within the department or program (e.g., peer evaluation, access to course syllabi, etc.); and
2. Provide office space (shared or personal), technology (computers, printers, email, etc.), and libraries and research materials, including during summer and other academic break periods.