

Fair Employment Quick Reference

Mount Royal Faculty Association
October 2022

Fair Employment Week is
October 17-22!

High reliance on contract appointment categories at MRU and beyond

- Of the MRFA's ~800 members, approximately half are employed under short-term appointment categories. The vast majority of these are employed through course-by-course "sessional" contracts.
- University data indicates that more than half of all credit instruction is provided by contract academic staff, whether measured by contact hour or course registrant.
- Although there is no systematic, regular data collection on use of short-term appointment categories across Canada (unlike what is provided by Statistics Canada for [full-time academic staff](#)), reports by the [Canadian Association of University Teachers](#) and the [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#) suggest that somewhere between one third and half of all academic staff in Canada are employed in short-term capacities.

The experiences of contract faculty at MRU

- In MRFA surveys of contract members, one quarter report teaching workloads equal to or higher than a full-time course load.
- Almost all report spending a large number of hours each week on the MRU campus, outside of scheduled instructional contact hours.
- MRFA annual census data suggests that about 60% have been teaching at MRU for more than five years; almost 40% have been teaching at MRU for more than a decade.
- On the annual census, 45% of contract faculty indicate that they would be unable to pay their monthly bills if their contract academic staff pay was interrupted.
- On the annual census, 45% self-describe as early-career academics or working academics attempting to sustain an academic career without a full-time appointment. Two thirds of all respondents indicate that they would apply for a full-time position at MRU if one was posted in their area. Of contract academic staff respondents, 26% believe that contract faculty are not seriously considered by full-time hiring committees.
- On the census, significant numbers of contract faculty report participating in research/scholarly activities (38%) and in service activities (42%), despite these not being part of the terms and conditions of contract employment. Most self-report as not believing that MRU demonstrates a strong commitment to improving their discipline-specific knowledge, despite this being a criterion for appointment and reappointment.

Equity issues

- Responses to the MRFA annual census suggests gendered differences between full-time and contract appointment categories. For example, response data suggest that members who identify as women make up about two thirds of contract academic staff, whereas the proportion is about half for the full-time complement.
- The [Canadian Association of University Teachers](#) reports that the overuse of contract appointment categories tends to entrench systemic inequities across multiple dimensions. It is difficult to know the extent of the problem at MRU due to the lack of equity-related data collection by the employer.