

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Contract Academic Staff in Nova Scotia

Lead researcher:

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Introduction:

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Dr. Karen Foster, who is a professor in the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University. Taking part in the research is up to you; it is entirely your choice. Even if you do take part, you may leave the study at any time for any reason. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience or discomfort that you might experience.

Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have any questions later, please contact the lead researcher.

Purpose and outline of the research study:

This research looks at the occupational experiences of contract instructors in Nova Scotia universities. Through an online survey distributed to contract instructors (i.e., university teaching staff whose jobs are in some way *not permanent*), it will document the working conditions, and the personal, political, social and educational consequences of these conditions.

Anecdote, empirical evidence from other provinces, and comparisons of collective agreements suggest that the proportion of contract instructors, relative to tenure-track and lecture-stream professors, is increasing, and that working conditions (pay, benefits, etc.) are generally very different from those of regular faculty members. However, at present, there is no official, publicly-available data on any of these issues.

Another component of the project will provide an estimate of the number of contract instructors employed at Nova Scotia universities, using the Fall academic term of 2015 as a reference period. The online survey, in which you are being asked to participate, will gather additional data on wages, hours of work, office space, teaching loads, and other objective qualities of contract jobs. It will also ask respondents about their experiences as contract instructors, probing for information on job satisfaction, stress, overwork, work-life ‘balance’, and other measures typically considered in evaluations of job quality.

Who can take part in the research study?

You may participate in this study if you are currently teaching at one or more Nova Scotia universities and your job is in some way *non-permanent*. Your title might be “contract instructor”, “contract academic staff”, a “limited-term appointment”, “part-time faculty”, “adjunct”, “sessional”, or similar. You are eligible to participate whether you are paid on a per-course basis or, as is the case in some limited-term appointments, on an annual salary. You might have to apply individually for every course you wish to teach, or you might be employed for more than one course and more than one term. The sole criteria for eligibility is that you are not regular faculty, you are not on the tenure-track (or the newer “lecturer stream”), and your job is *not permanent*.

How many people are taking part in the study?

We are aiming for a minimum of 500 people to complete the survey.

What you will be asked to do:

To help us understand the working conditions of contract instructors in Nova Scotia universities, we will ask you to take part in an online survey consisting of approximately 60 questions—some multiple-choice and some open-ended—that should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The survey will be available to complete from October 20th to December 31st.

Possible benefits, risks and discomforts

There are minimal anticipated risks associated with participating in this research. Conceivably, you could become upset reflecting on your experiences at work, or possibly through reporting a traumatic work-related event. To mitigate the possibility of this, the survey is completely voluntary and you can decline to answer any question or stop at any time without giving a reason.

Because your participation is confidential, and your responses are kept anonymous, there is little to no professional risk of participating in the survey.

In contrast, your participation may have some personal benefits for you. The survey is an opportunity to reflect on and make sense of your experiences, and to contribute to greater knowledge about contract instructors working in our universities. This knowledge will be used to inform the organizations that seek to represent contract instructors’ interests (e.g. ANSUT, CUPE and other labour associations), as well as to contribute to public debate about the use of contract academic staff in university teaching. When the final results are published, you will be able to see how your experiences compare to others in the province.

How your information will be protected:

Information that you provide to us will be kept private. In most cases, only the research team will have access to this information. In some cases, other authorized officials at the University such as the Research Ethics Board or the Scholarly Integrity Officer may have access as well. If a workplace computer is used to respond to the survey, the employer *may* have access to these responses. We will describe and share our findings in publicly available reports and academic articles, which we will publicize on social and traditional media. We will be very careful to only talk about group results so that no one will be identified. We will never, in any published material, connect any single response to any one department, faculty or university. Thus, statistical data will always be reported in aggregate form (e.g. “25% of respondents”) and long answers will be detached from *any* identifying information (e.g., “one respondent wrote...”).

This means that *you will not be identified in any way in our reports*. The people who work with your information have an obligation to keep all research information private. Also, we will use a participant number (not your name) in our written and computerized records so that the information we have about you contains no names. All your identifying information will be kept in a separate file, in a secure place. All electronic records will be kept secure in a password-protected, encrypted file on a Dalhousie University secure server.

If you decide to stop participating:

You are free to leave the study (i.e., stop answering questions) at any time. However, because your responses are anonymous, it will not be possible to remove any of the information that you have contributed up to that point. Please note that by consenting to participate in this survey you have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of harm induced by the research.

How to obtain results:

You will be able to access a summary and full report on the ANSUT website when the survey and analysis have been completed. No individual results will be provided.

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Dr. Foster (at 902 494-6751, karen.foster@dal.ca - email is most reliable) at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study (if you are calling long distance, please call collect). We will also tell you if any new information comes up that could affect your decision to participate.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact the Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email: ethics@dal.ca