

Working as a Part-time Lecturer

getting paid, contracts and employment law

This section is aimed at those who are new to part-time lecturing, and gives a brief overview of some key practical issues. Details will vary from one institution to another, so do check how things work in your own department.

Part-time lecturers fill a vital role in Art and Design Higher Education. In a subject which combines creative practice with an academic framework, the input of practising professionals plays a key part in students' development, motivation and employability. As a part-time lecturer, therefore, your main role is likely to be teaching. You will also probably be involved in assessment, and as time passes you may find your role expanding – for example some part-time lecturers get involved as module leaders, writing course materials, going on field trips... but teaching as a subject specialist still remains the main element.

You are likely to be employed on a fixed-term contract and paid by the hour. This hourly rate is usually higher than an equivalent permanent fractional post; this is because each hour of teaching pay is expected to include a certain amount of back-up work. Exactly what this comprises will vary from one institution to another, so it's a good idea to check out what the expectations are, but it is likely to include preparation (which can take up a lot of time in the early stages), assessment, and possibly attendance at occasional meetings. It is also likely to include a payment in respect of annual leave.

In most institutions you will receive a fixed-term contract at the beginning of the semester, and you will need to claim payment for your time each month. Check the procedure and deadlines for doing this - who needs to authorise the form and to whom it should be submitted.

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For many practising professionals, as well as those with other commitments, part-time working offers flexibility and freedom. However, the combination of part-time work and fixed term contracts can also bring insecurity. Recent legislation has sought to improve this, for example The Part Time Workers Regulations (2000), The National Casualisation Agreement (2002) and the Fixed Term Work Regulations (2002). An employee on a fixed term contract (whether full or part time) can now compare their pay and contractual benefits with those of an employee on the same type of contract, but which is open ended, who is doing comparable work for the same employer. It should be noted that part time work (or Hourly Paid Work) is covered by national agreements and it is likely that the full range of academic duties are not required for this type of employee, and therefore it is unlikely that the roles will be fully comparable. Employers are not allowed to treat fixed term workers less favourably than comparable employed members of staff who are doing like work. The legislation also dictates that an institution cannot employ a fixed term worker on successive contracts (including termly contracts) for more than four years – after that the contract automatically becomes permanent unless the employer can prove "objective justification" for not doing so. Further information about this can be found on the NATFHE (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) website: www.natfhe.org.uk, AUT (Higher Education Union) website: www.AUT.org.uk or you can ask your local branch representative about the position of part-time staff at your institution.