

Employment Insurance for Contract Academic Workers

For Sessional Lecturers, Writing Instructors, Post-Doctoral Fellows, non-student Course Instructors and other contract academic staff at the University of Toronto

Who is eligible for Employment Insurance?

All workers who have accumulated enough hours AND who are out of work for reasons beyond their control (like contract workers whose contracts end) are eligible to claim benefits.

How many hours do you need?

The number depends on several factors. If you live in the Greater Toronto area, the current* minimum is 700 hours (it varies by the unemployment rate) in the 52 weeks prior to becoming unemployed (this period is called the qualifying period).

How do hours work for sessional lecturers?

At UofT, the Union and the Employer have agreed as to how many hours of work each course is “worth”. Each full-year course counts as 460 hours and half year (H/S) courses count as 230 hours (other universities have different rules). As well, you can add any other TA/SIA/WI positions or any other work for any employer in counting your hours.

If you have worked more than this, it is possible to have this reflected on your Record of Employment. However, you would need to have kept track of your hours. Please contact the union for assistance.

How much do benefits pay?

Benefits are paid at 55% of your average weekly earnings (based on your earnings over the last 6 months) to a weekly maximum benefit of \$650. There are no benefits paid for the first week of unemployment (it is considered as a deductible).

How long do benefits last?

This also depends on the local unemployment rate and your total hours worked in the qualifying period. In Toronto for a sessional who worked 3 full courses would currently receive benefits for 23 weeks. If the same person had only worked 2 full courses, they would only be entitled to benefits for 17 weeks.

When did I start and stop work?

That depends on the contract. At UofT, there is a deemed weeks provision that stipulates when the contract begins and ends. It always begins the Monday of the first week of classes and ends the last Friday in each term. Please contact the union prior to filing for EI to confirm dates for other terms.

While on benefits, what do I do?

You look for work. You are required to be available for employment and are required to be actively seeking employment. These are separate criteria.

“Available” means that if someone offered you a job tomorrow you would take it. That is the reason you cannot claim benefits while outside the country.

“Actively seeking employment” means that you are doing everything reasonable to find work in the general area in which you have found work before. Since part-time academics have established a pattern of work as part-time academics, you are allowed to restrict your search to part-time academic work, at least for the first few months on benefits. After the first few months you should begin to broaden your search to related kinds of work that utilize your skills.

Are there any other EI benefits available?

Yes, if you become unemployed on account of pregnancy or childbirth or on account of sickness, you are eligible for “special benefits.” For special benefits, you only need 600 hours in the qualifying period, and you do not have to be available or actively seeking employment. Maternity and sickness benefits last between 15 to 26 weeks, depending on your situation, and parental benefits (which can be taken by either partner) last between 35-69 weeks depending on whether you split your leave time with your partner and/or whether you opt for extended parental leave.

When do I have to apply?

As soon as possible. If you do not apply within 4 weeks of becoming unemployed you may lose your entitlement to benefits. To request a Record of Employment from UofT, please visit:

<http://hr.webservices.utoronto.ca/about-hr-equity/Payroll/how-to-request-a-record-of-employment-roe.htm>

For members of Unit 5:

Your payroll/business officer will prepare a Record of Employment (ROE) which you will need in order to apply for EI. You should apply for EI benefits as soon as you stop working. You can apply even if you have not yet received your Record of Employment (ROE). If you delay filing your claim for benefits for more than four weeks after your last day of work, you may lose benefits.

For members of Unit 1:

There are some specific instances in which you can apply for EI benefits while on academic leave. Please refer to the Family Care Office for more information:

<http://familycare.utoronto.ca/family-leaves/leaves-for-graduate-students/>

Is there any help available?

Yes, the Union can help you through the application procedure (either in person or on the phone) and will assist in filing any appeals necessary. All help received from the Union is at no cost to the member. Give us a call! You can find detailed information provided by Service Canada at: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca>

Questions?

Contact CUPE 3902 at: 416.593.7057 or info@cupe3902.org