



# AUFA Member Orientation

For Permanent Members

PICTURED: AUFA MEMBERS IN SUPPORT OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS

# What is AUFA?

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*The Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) is a union of approximately 440 members that includes both academic and professional members.*

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## Introduction

AUFA is a union of approximately 440 members including both academics and professionals. AUFA was established in 1976 and formalized its structure in 1983 to include both academics and professionals.

**Academics** are either tenure-track professors or teaching-stream professors (called academic coordinators).

**Professionals** are highly-skilled workers in various roles across the university including information technology, course development, library and archives, marketing, finance, and student relations.

Other unions on campus are CUPE and AUPE. CUPE members are primarily course tutors while AUPE members are primarily support staff. Both CUPE and AUPE members often report to AUFA members.

Your terms and conditions of work, salary, and benefits are all laid out in our collective agreement. You are also subject to labour law and university policy. University policy is determined by AU, but it may not conflict with the AUFA collective agreement.

## Equity

AUFA is committed to equity for all members. Equity includes fairness and justice in the way members are treated, the elimination of systemic discrimination, and

a commitment to principles of diversity that support the substantive representation of groups whose labour is systemically marginalized and extracted by neoliberal academic institutions.

AUFA's full equity statement is available [on our website](#).

## Structure

AUFA is a democratic body with yearly elections to fill the union executive. The executive consists of the President, Treasurer, and several Elected Leads who oversee the different portfolios of work within the union.

Members pay 1.5% of gross salary in union dues, which pay for AUFA staff, legal bills incurred representing members, events, travel, and other items in the association budget.

Community building is an important part of AUFA. We sponsor social events in Athabasca, Edmonton, and Calgary.

## AUFA Executive

The AUFA Executive is responsible for carrying out the wishes of the membership and making regular decisions about the affairs of the union. Major decisions, such as

ratifying bargaining packages, are taken to the membership for a vote.

There are two regular AUFA meetings per year, but additional meetings may occur as necessary.

## What AUFA Does

AUFA's primary purpose is to negotiate and to enforce the collective agreement, the contract that clarifies our terms and conditions of employment with AU.

Bargaining the terms and conditions of a new contract can be a long and strenuous process. If negotiations reach an impasse, the impasse can be resolved by arbitration, or a strike and/or lockout. Members vote on the results of bargaining and are engaged throughout the process.

Many AUFA members supervise staff represented by other unions. Please ensure you are familiar with their rights and benefits as well as your own.

## Your Contract and Benefits

The collective agreement can be downloaded on the [AUFA website](#) or [here](#).

Academics and professionals have distinct terms of work but have similar benefits.

### Salaries

Salaries are negotiated at your time of hire within a range set out in the collective agreement. Over time, salaries increase due to annual merit increases, negotiated increases at bargaining, or through reclassification.

## Salary Increases

Your starting salary is negotiated at the time of hire. It must be within the agreed-to range in the classification to which you are hired. Salary increases at AUFA typically occur in three ways. Both academics and professionals can apply to renegotiate salaries at the end of their first year of employment.

### Merit

All AUFA members receive a merit increment (typically 2.8%) on July 1 of every year upon a successful performance assessment.

### Negotiated Increase

Periodically, AUFA and AU negotiate an increase to salary grids and salaries. This increase is often called a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). The employer may also negotiate a decrease to the salary grid in this process.

### Promotion

AUFA members can receive salary increases when they successfully apply for promotion (academics) or reclassification (professionals).

## Hiring and Reclassification: Professionals

### Terms of Hiring

Professionals typically have a two-year probationary period. A member cannot be terminated during this time without cause. Discipline, layoffs, or redundancies are only ways to be removed from a position.

During the probationary review, committee members similar to those on the hiring committee, review performance assessments and feedback from colleagues, and decide to recommend permanent status, extend the probation, or terminate.

### Professional Reclassification

Professional jobs are classified by letter from A to E, determined by a weighted classification system. Professionals are entitled to ask for position reviews after being employed for one year, and on each year afterwards. We recommend asking for position reviews when your duties significantly change, particularly when they are more senior than in your job description. A position review may result in a reclassification that moves you up to the next level.

Performance assessments are performed annually in May and June. AUFA members have a pass/fail system with satisfactory or unsatisfactory ratings. A pass typically results in a 2.8% salary increase while failure results in no salary increase. Members can appeal these ratings.

Managers may elect to award a rating of outstanding, but these do not carry an additional salary increase beyond that awarded for a satisfactory performance rating.

Asking for a position evaluation and potential reclassification early in your career helps your salary prospects.

## Hiring and Promotion: Academics

### Terms of Hiring

Like many post-secondary institutions, AU has two categories of academic workers: tenure-track academics (professors) and teaching academics (academic coordinators).

Most professors are hired at the rank of assistant professor, but sometimes, depending on years of experience, they may be hired at the associate or full professor rank.

Teaching academics are academic coordinators who do not have a promotion track.

Both research and teaching academics are hired as probationary employees with typically a four-year probationary period.

### Tenure and Promotion for Professors

Research professor may become permanent (i.e., tenured) employees and receive a promotion (i.e., a change of rank) in two ways. During this process, tenure-track academics are reviewed according to their teaching performance, their research and scholarship, and their service to both the university and to the wider society.

## One-Stage Process (recommended)

1. Professor initiates a promotion application any time after 25 months of service. If this promotion application is approved, the professor also receives tenure (i.e., becomes a permanent employee).
2. A promotion committee comprised of one person nominated by the academic, one person nominated by the vice-president academic (VPA), and one person jointly chosen by the nominees reviews the application.
3. The promotion committee recommends to the VPA that AU
  - a. grants tenure and promotion, or
  - b. denies promotion.

## Two-Stage Process

### Stage 1: Tenure

1. HR initiates tenure review at the end of the probationary period specified in the letter of hire (typically four years).
2. A tenure review committee, usually the same as the academic's hiring committee, performs the review.
3. A tenure review committee can recommend to the VPA that AU:
  - a. grants tenure,
  - b. extends the probationary period, or
  - c. terminates employment.

## Stage 2: Promotion

1. Tenure-track academic initiates promotion application.
2. A promotion committee comprised of one person nominated by the academic, one person nominated by the VPA, and one person jointly chosen by the nominees reviews the application.
3. The promotion committee can recommend to the VPA that AU:
  - a) grants promotion, or
  - b) denies promotion.

## Tenure for Academic Coordinators

Academic coordinators have a single pathway to achieving tenure. During this process, teaching academics are reviewed according to their teaching performance and service to the university, their profession, and to the wider society.

1. HR initiates tenure review at the end of the probationary period specified in the letter of hire (typically four years).
2. A tenure review committee, usually the same as the teaching academic's hiring committee, performs the review.
3. A tenure review committee can recommend to the VPA that AU:
  - a. grants tenure,
  - b. extends the probationary period, or
  - c. terminates employment.

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*Because of the protections we have as AUFAs members through our collective agreement, your employment at AU is protected. You cannot be fired without cause or due process. Redundancies, discipline, or failing a probationary review are the only ways you can lose your job, other than you deciding to resign. All these processes are outlined in the collective agreement, and you have the right to union representation in all cases.*

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## Benefits

New hires can access benefits immediately. Benefits and leave descriptions are covered in detail on the [Human Resources site](#).

Economic benefits include dental, vision, paramedical, etc. Pharmaceuticals are reimbursed through Blue Cross.

Contributions to the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance are paid until a dollar threshold is hit, at which point they cease for the rest of the calendar year.

## Pension

All permanent AUFA members are in the Universities Academic Pension Plan (UAPP).

This is a defined benefit pension plan where your contributions vary but your payout is guaranteed. The money you contribute to your pension is matched by the employer.

## Other Benefits

AU tuition is waived for six credits per year, less student union fees. Additional course tuition over this maximum is reimbursed upon completion.

The professional development (PD) fund provides \$2,000 per year for conferences, books, courses, and computer hardware. Funds can be carried over each year up to a maximum of \$10,000. See [list of allowable expenses](#).

The discretionary benefit fund provides \$875 annually. You can elect to receive a taxable cash payment, transfer into your PD fund, or transfer into your health spending account.

Members moving to the Athabasca region have access to an interest-free home loan program of up to \$25,000.

AUFA is a part of the CAUT defence fund, which is an insurance policy that provides strike pay in case of a work stoppage.

New professors have access to a grant of up to \$15,000 per year for three years. The exact amount is subject to negotiation.

## Protections

All AUFA members have contractual protection from discrimination and harassment. View the [AUFA Employee Anti-Harassment and Harassment Prevention Policy](#) on the AUFA website.

## Professional Freedom

Professional freedom is the right for AU professionals to freely pursue excellence in their field of competence and contribute to the intellectual life of the University community and to professional associations. This includes the right to speak openly within the member's area of professional expertise.

## Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the right for AU academics to engage in scholarly pursuits such as but not limited to teaching and research without constraint by their employer or the government. This includes the right to be critical of their employer.

If you suspect you are being investigated for discipline, please contact the AUFA office immediately at [aufahq@aufa.ca](mailto:aufahq@aufa.ca)

## Layoff and Redundancies

Layoffs occur when AU cannot afford your position. Redundancies occur when your position is eliminated for structural reasons.

AUFA members receive a one-year notice period and one month of severance pay for every year served up to six years. The employer can opt to pay out the notice period.

In both cases, AUFA members are placed on a recall list for two years if probationary and

## What can AUFA do for me?

### Please contact us if:

- You have questions about your salary, benefits, or terms of work.
- You feel you are being treated unfairly, inequitably, or being harassed.
- You are struggling with your work and fear you may be at risk of discipline.
- You want to volunteer and help. AUFA has paid staff but much of our work is done by volunteer members just like you!

four years if permanent. During this time, you are granted the right-to-first-refusal for all new AUFA job postings. AUFA does not have seniority.

## Grievances

Grievances occur when the employer violates contract, policy, or labour law. In a grievance, AUFA will meet with HR and try to resolve the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved, it may be settled by an arbitrator who is a neutral third party, similar to a judge. Grievances are a lengthy process but can result in favourable outcomes that strengthen the contract and improve terms of work.

## Appeals

If decisions are made over your terms of employment that you disagree with, which include merit increments, promotion, reclassification, and probation, AUFA members have access to an appeal by a committee of peers. In the case of a discipline appeal, the decision is made by a committee of three, selected between AUFA and AU.

## Discipline

Discipline occurs when there is a violation of policy or failure to do your job. Discipline investigations are performed by the supervisor who then works with HR to assign a punishment which, depending on the offence, may include a warning, suspension, or termination. AUFA members are entitled to AUFA representation during discipline and can appeal the results.

AUFA members can be fired like any other employee, however, unjust or unreasonable discipline is extremely expensive for the employer. If you are suspended without pay or terminated, the penalty is held in abeyance until an appeal has been completed.

## AUFA Contacts

AUFA Office: [office@aufa.ca](mailto:office@aufa.ca)

AUFA President: [president@aufa.ca](mailto:president@aufa.ca)

## Links and Resources

[AUFA Website](#)

[Collective Agreement](#)

[Equity Statement](#)

[AUFA Blog](#)

[Summary of allowable PD expenses](#)

[Benefits Summary](#)

## Employer Contact

HR General: [hrcp@athabascau.ca](mailto:hrcp@athabascau.ca)

## Links and Resources

[AU Staff Resources Website](#)

[Performance Assessment & Merit](#)

[Time Sheets and Balances](#)

[Pay and Deductions](#)

[IT ServiceNow](#)