

Survival Questions to Ask Your Department Chair

The answers to the following questions are not closely-guarded secrets. In fact, you will be told much of the information without having to ask. However, you should feel comfortable asking your chair these questions (and any others) in a timely manner. If your chair doesn't know the answer to a question, he/she should be able to find out the answer or direct you to the right source--often, the department's administrative support staff.

Retrieved from <http://www.csun.edu/~newfac/Questions.html> on 7/20/11

Faculty roles and responsibilities

1. What are the department's expectations of me this year--and in subsequent years--regarding:
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Advisement
 - c. Department/College meetings
 - d. Committee work
 - e. Curricular improvement
 - f. Research or creative activity
 - g. Extra-curricular/student activities
2. What are the department's policies for retention, promotion and tenure (RPT)?
3. What is the department deadline for submission of my Working Personnel Action File (WPAF)? What format is used? Is there any example of a WPAF that I can examine?

Classroom-related issues

4. Is there a faculty dress standard?
5. What is the department's policy on syllabi? Are there sample syllabi available that are indicative of what is taught in this course and what is normally expected of students in this type of course?
6. What are the University and department policies/procedures for adding students? What is the policy for dropping students from class at various times during the semester?
7. What does an Incomplete signify? Under what circumstances might I decide to assign an Incomplete?
8. What is my responsibility for arranging coverage for my classes in case of unpredicted absence (if I'm ill)? What is my responsibility for arranging coverage for my classes in a predicted absence (if I'm going to a conference)?
9. What campus resources are available to help me with my teaching? CTL, Library 4th floor, room 4026, X85945.

Grading, advising and student behavior

10. What is the department's grading policy?
11. What is the acceptable range of class G.P.A.?
12. I know the University's policies on academic dishonesty are in the current University Catalog. Are there department policies or procedures that elucidate or augment this discussion?
13. What do I do if a student is a behavior problem in class?
14. What do I do if a student is injured in class?
15. In what areas am I expected to advise students? Who can be assigned to show me the ropes vis à vis advising?

Department office policies/procedures

16. What is the department procedure for having course materials (syllabi, exams, etc.) typed and/or duplicated?
17. What is the department procedure for making copies?
18. What clerical help is available?
19. What is the department procedure for petty cash reimbursement?

Equipment and research funding

20. What computer facilities are available to me from the department, college and university?
21. What is the procedure for requesting new or additional instructional equipment?
22. What is the department policy for asking for research equipment or funds?
23. Is there money for professional travel to conferences? How do I apply for it?
24. Are other travel funds available?
25. What intradepartmental, College, or University grants are available to me?

Miscellaneous

26. What is the department policy regarding office hours?
27. If I have a Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday teaching schedule, am I expected to be on campus one or more of the other weekdays? What if I teach three days per week?
28. How are decisions made about course offering, faculty assignment to courses and scheduling?
29. How do I apply to teach in Winter Session and/or summer Session?

And, perhaps, the most important question to ask:

30. Can you suggest other faculty in the department who could mentor me?