



Becoming an Adjunct Instructor

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In these times, we can all use a little extra money (okay...maybe a lot). One great option to explore is becoming an adjunct instructor. If this is something that you think you may be interested in, let's run down the necessary qualifications. Adjunct instructors are required to have at least a Masters degree in the area they would like to teach. Additional experiences such as work-related duties are also helpful in making the case that you are able to teach a given subject. Schools may require you to write a course justification (an explanation of why you think you are qualified to teach a particular class) as a part of your application packet. Some may even require you to provide course descriptions for the courses that you have taken in the past that may be applicable to what you are trying to teach. Though the application process can be lengthy or seem a bit tedious, it is a necessary evil. As an adjunct, you serve as an expert on a given subject matter and influence the students you encounter in the classroom. If the application process isn't enough to scare you away, your next step is to research the institutions for which you are possibly interested in teaching. Visit the Employment/Career page on each website to see if they are advertising any open adjunct positions. If not, try to contact someone within the department you would like to teach in to see what opportunities are available. If there are schools in your immediate area, you can even drop by the office to inquire about their positions. If you live on or near a military installation, the schools that are affiliated with the military Education Office might be a great place to start. Once you have done your research, figure out which type of institution(s) works best for you and apply for the position(s).

Face to Face vs. Virtual Classroom Opportunities

Nowadays, we live in a technically savvy society, and the classroom has grown beyond the traditional face-to-face setting. With the introduction of the virtual "classroom", instructors and students can take a class together via computer no matter where they are in the world. Decide which teaching environment works best for you. Some people enjoy the more structured environment of the physical classroom setting and/or thrive

off the personal interaction that takes place. Some also believe that teaching online requires much more work than teaching face to face. Others have the discipline that it takes to teach classes online with the less structured atmosphere and enjoy the flexibility that it offers. You may conclude that you can handle both settings. Depending on the institution, however, online teaching opportunities may be hard to obtain. These positions are extremely coveted, and sometimes, there may be a waiting list for instructors to teach particular classes. You may fare better in disciplines with very few instructors. If you have the opportunity to teach online, you also have the potential to make more money than you may make in face to face courses (depending on how the institution pays).

Adjunct Instructor Benefits

There are definite benefits to becoming an adjunct instructor. The experience alone is extremely advantageous. Teaching can give you the opportunity to hone your public speaking, presentation, and training skills. Who doesn't want to add great resume material? A second benefit of teaching as an adjunct is the possibility of tuition remission or reduction for the adjunct and sometimes his or her immediate family members. This is when some universities either pay a certain percentage of an instructor's tuition or offer 100% tuition remission (where the instructor pays no tuition to take courses at their school). By taking advantage of this, you can take classes that you've always wanted to take, obtain a certificate to boost your career, or even pursue that PhD that you always wanted to get (if the school offers the program). More goodies to add to your resume!!! Another bonus is that you can also teach for more than one institution. If you work as an adjunct for a few different institutions, you can increase your chances of teaching regularly. Finally, job mobility is an excellent perk of being an adjunct. Since life in the military is never predictable, having a career that is mobile is key. The great thing about serving as an adjunct is that you can be an adjunct just about anywhere (especially if you teach online as I mentioned above), and even if you move, you still may be able to teach for the same institutions elsewhere or virtually.

The Downside of Being an Adjunct

Although there are some great things about being an adjunct, there are also some not-so-great things. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees that you will receive a teaching assignment just because you have been hired as an adjunct. In applying for these positions, you are basically submitting your name to a pool of possible instructors to call upon **if** the need arises. This tends to be a major point of contention for many who would like to teach but the opportunities just aren't there. And even if you get that phone call requesting your services, whether you will actually teach or not may be contingent upon the class's student enrollment. For example (and this does not necessarily apply to every adjunct position), an instructor's class may only go through if there are *at least* five students enrolled in that class. Otherwise, your class will be cancelled. Often times, adjuncts may fill in by teaching introductory level courses that the regular faculty has no desire to teach. Also, some wonder whether it is worth the time and effort to become an

adjunct instructor given the sometimes low pay. The bottom line is that you do not become an adjunct for the pay (that should be an added perk). You become an adjunct because you love teaching...you become an adjunct because you want to make a difference in your students' lives.

The information provided in this article offers an overall view of becoming an adjunct and addresses some of the issues pertaining to this position. Please keep in mind that each institution has its own system regarding their adjuncts. Some may pay better than others. Some may offer additional incentives (i.e. a retirement plan) that others do not offer. There may be a plethora of teaching opportunities at one place with very limited numbers at others. All in all, you have to take the good with the bad. Ultimately, you need to do the necessary research to find the institution that is the best fit for you. Good luck in your search!

For more information or questions on becoming an adjunct instructor, please e-mail us at askus@msccn.org.