

Guidelines for Writing Letter of Offer for Faculty Appointments

The letter of offer is a critical document that is used not only to secure agreement to accept employment but also to serve as a benchmark for faculty evaluation throughout the individual's career. Consequently, it is vital that the content of the letter be clear and on point.

While not a contract in the technical sense, letters of offer spell out conditions of service, general performance expectations, and commitments from the department, college, and university. Language should be general enough to allow for flexibility over time but specific enough to be certain that appropriate guidelines and potential outcomes are established. Avoid vague statements that can be misinterpreted and avoid inadvertently making commitments that cannot be honored (any unique or special commitment is to have clearance of the dean's or provost's office).

The letter of offer contains several sections. These sections are areas to be covered in the letter, not separate headings within the letter. Example language is provided, though with no expectation that that exact language would be required.

Introduction

Thank the faculty candidate and make apparent that this is a letter of offer.

Thank you for interviewing for the faculty position in the Department of XX. The faculty members were very impressed with your qualifications and performance during your interview and with what you would bring to the Department, the College of Human Sciences, and Texas Tech University. We believe that your abilities, background, and experience are an excellent match with the opportunities we have available.

Initial general offer

This section makes the first general offer, mentioning the need for transcripts and background checks. It also gives initial instructions for actually accepting the offer.

We are recommending that you be offered the position of Assistant Professor in the Department of XX in the College of XX. This offer is contingent upon passing a state-required background check and submission of original transcripts for all degrees earned (in accordance with university and accreditation requirements). Please submit original transcripts to [specified person] to verify receipt of the doctoral degree on or before September 1, XXXX.

The formal offer of the position will be issued by the Provost once the above conditions are met. However, this letter will clarify the position and will allow you to identify any questions that you may have. Two copies of the letter are enclosed for your review. Please sign and return one copy to indicate that we are in agreement concerning the responsibilities for the position and that you wish to pursue to the final stages the terms of your hire here at Texas Tech.

Language concerning Tier 1 Aspirations

This is general boilerplate language describing the expectation of Tier 1 like performance.

You will be joining our department at a time when the institution has a clear mandate, as described in our strategic plan, around the effort to have TTU be a Tier 1 research institution. Our intent is to recruit outstanding and collegial faculty who fit into our academic culture and can adhere to the

integrated scholar model, whereby faculty effectively fuse their teaching, research, and engagement activities for marked impact. It is our collective wish that your focus will be on outstanding scholarship, externally funded research, graduate student support, teaching, advising, guiding undergraduate research, and engaging in local, state and national service and outreach. Based on these broad guidelines, you will undertake a variety of duties detailed below.

Expectations of faculty

The next sections detail expectations in teaching, research, service and outreach. If the candidate will have administrative duties, those should be explained in a similar manner as well.

1. *Teaching – The normal teaching load is nine credits on the workload formula per long semester. In some instances, a three credit hour teaching release may be available for special research projects or grants or as part of an initial startup agreement. This course release will be granted if requested so that you can focus on the research and funding efforts outlined in the research section below; however, this release will be contingent upon ongoing approval by the department chair based on consistent progress and success in your research and funding efforts. Even with this teaching release agreement, it is intended that you will teach a minimum of one course per long semester, with the usual expectation being two courses. Class assignments are determined by the department chair in consultation with the program director and the faculty member.*

Some departments choose to be more specific about the workload credit that can be granted to new faculty members and include language such as this, to be followed by a statement about actual teaching load, as above.

In the first two years, the department chair has the option of granting a one-course release from teaching to provide additional time for the faculty member to further develop their program of research. You will receive two course releases over the Fall XXXX/ Spring XXXX and/or the Fall XXXX/Spring XXXX years to focus on developing your research program.

2. *Research - Research and publication are essential faculty responsibilities at Texas Tech. Success in these areas is critical to third year review, tenure and promotion review, post-tenure reviews, and subsequent promotion. In addition to publishing in respected journals, you will be expected to be successful in obtaining external support for your scholarship from organizations external to Texas Tech University such as private and corporate foundations, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes for Health, the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Agriculture, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (or their equivalents in state agencies).*

You are also expected to be successful in advising, and in some cases supporting graduate students under your supervision, especially doctoral students. We also expect you to engage in activities through your department, the Honors College, and various centers or other programs at Texas Tech that encourage and foster undergraduate participation in your scholarship. By virtue of your research activities, publication of your research in peer-reviewed journals and presenting your research within state, national and international venues is expected.

3. *Engagement (Service and Outreach) – Service and outreach activities are expected of all faculty members. These include support to the department, college, and university through active service on committees and involvement in professional organizations. Service within the community and at the state and national level are also expected. Engagement activities that foster mutually beneficial partnerships with external entities through teaching and research are especially*

valued. Working to build a community presence as part of the Department of XX will be important.

Optional

- 4 *As we discussed, you will also hold an administrative position as _____ in the Department of XX. Specific duties will be defined as you transition into this position, but generally will entail _____. You will receive a monthly stipend of \$XXX per month for twelve months to serve in this role. Teaching and research expectations may be adjusted accordingly. Continuing in this position is at the discretion of [specify whom]. Returning to a regular faculty position may entail an increase in teaching or research expectations.*

If the potential faculty member is to hold a significant administrative position such as chair person or associate dean, the description would be more specific.

The chairperson facilitates a balance within the department that recognizes the importance of teaching, research, and service and that addresses the needs of undergraduate and graduate students and faculty. The chairperson is responsible for working with each faculty member to encourage the development of their full potential. The chair also supports advancement of the department and college, enabling the department and college to reach their goals.

The position of Chairperson of the Department of XXX provides the challenging opportunity to be involved in further development of our academic and research programs. I know that you will be an innovative leader and supportive team member to help us reach ambitious goals. I am also confident that the College of XX offers a rich environment for your own professional growth.

Faculty evaluation

This section explains a bit about the faculty evaluation process that includes third-year review, promotion and tenure, and post-tenure reviews.

The duties listed above will be evaluated during annual faculty reviews, the third-year comprehensive review, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure reviews. Annual faculty reviews by the department chair will address your respective annual report of accomplishments in teaching, research, and engagement activity. The chair will provide a general assessment along with guidance on specific needs moving forward. The first three annual reviews will be critical in the more comprehensive third-year review process. The third-year review will entail feedback from the tenured faculty in the department and provide an assessment of progress toward tenure. If any of these reviews determines that you are not meeting the expectations outlined earlier in this letter, your specific responsibilities may be adjusted but in keeping with general department, college, and university criteria for tenure and promotion. All annual reviews, the third-year review, and any adjustments to responsibilities will constitute important evidence in consideration of tenure and promotion.

Faculty new to Texas Tech must be reviewed for tenure no later than their sixth year of full-time employment. Your official tenure review would occur in the academic year 20XX-20XX.

If the potential faculty member already has a strong academic background but has never been tenured at a peer university, this person may be offered the opportunity to be considered for tenure before the beginning of the sixth year, but not before the successful completion of the comprehensive third-year review.

Because you have been in a research position for several years prior to this tenure-track position, you may choose, in consultation with the department chairperson, to apply for tenure and promotion before the sixth year but after successful completion of your third-year review.

If the potential faculty member is currently or has been tenured by a peer institution, that faculty member may be hired with tenure. However, they will still need to submit a tenure dossier and undergo an accelerated tenure review process. It is preferable if this process can be completed prior to the first day of employment, but it can take place within the first semester.

This offer is being recommended with tenure, and we do not foresee any issues with your tenure approval. The required process for tenure begins in the department, proceeds through the Dean, Provost, President, and finally the Board of Regents for approval. This process will be initiated on your acceptance of the Provost's official offer and may be completed possibly as early as the XXX Board of Regents meeting.

The money

In this section, the salary, startup, and moving expenses are discussed. Immigration verification is also included.

This offer of a position as Assistant Professor effective September 1, 20XX carries a nine-month base salary of \$XXXX. Additional salary is possible for summer teaching, although the availability of summer teaching is determined on a year-to-year basis and depends upon the summer school budget and summer course demands. Any other summer monies would be from your extramural funding that allows for faculty compensation.

Start-up funds in the amount of \$XXXX have been approved to assist you with establishing your research program. These funds can be used for research equipment, conference travel, and graduate student support. Faculty office needs such as personal computer equipment, software, and furnishings are also provided as part of the start-up funding. A more detailed description is attached. Allocation of the second- and third- year funding is contingent on your good-faith efforts to build a productive research agenda. We expect you to submit proposals to external funding agencies and continue to sustain a healthy externally-funded research program throughout your career.

To assist with your relocation, we will provide you up to \$XXXX in personal moving expenses allowable by university policy.

Texas Tech University is required by the Federal Immigration Reform and Control Act to have documentation that each new employee (both citizen and non-citizen of the U.S.) is authorized to work in the United States. Within the first three days of your employment you will be required to complete the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form. You must meet the Act to qualify for employment.

Final information

This section provides final important information.

Though your appointment does not officially begin until September 1, faculty members are expected to be on campus [day], August XX, 20XX. The College of XX faculty meeting and the department meeting are scheduled that week. The university's "Foundations for Teaching" workshop and New Faculty Orientation will also be offered that week. These experiences are important in assisting your transition to Texas Tech and learning about its academic culture.

We are enthusiastic about the possibility of you joining our faculty in the Department of XXXX. We have tremendous pride in XXX and have ambitious goals for the continued success of the Department. Please sign and return a copy of this offer letter to indicate that we are in agreement with conditions stated and that you wish to pursue finalizing the appointment. We would like to hear from you within five days after receiving this letter. If you require further time or discussion before accepting our offer, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The letter should be signed by the department chair and the dean. Below that should be a place for the candidate to sign.

ACCEPTANCE

I wish to accept the position of Assistant Professor in the Department of XXX beginning September 1, 20XX and request that procedures for official appointment be finalized.

Signature

Date

Optional language

Some programs opt to include this language in the letter – either with the research section or as part of the final information.

To clarify any questions you may have about additional compensation from grants, consulting policies, and royalty payments, the following has been included:

"Additional compensation is allowable only when work is across departmental lines or involves a separate or remote operation, is in addition to normal workload, and is approved by the sponsoring agency. Federal cost principles allow compensation in excess of base salary for faculty members only in limited circumstances."

Texas Tech policy for all sponsored projects is consistent with federal regulations. In addition, you have indicated that you may be transferring research project funds to Texas Tech University. Office of Research Services should be consulted for further

clarification.

The consulting policy of 10 hours per week is covered in OP 32.07 (see 1e of the OP).

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/opmanual/OP32.07.pdf>

The distribution of royalties is covered in OP 74.04 (see 17a of the OP).

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/opmanual/OP74.04.pdf>