

Contracts in archaeology

What you should get from an employer

” Your contract with your employer is the single most important document you have for that job.”

All employees have the right to know the terms and conditions of their employment with a company. It is vital that you are provided with a document that sets these out to prevent confusion and mis-understanding between you and your employer.

You can be employed on a verbal contract (which can be legally binding); however an employer must legally provide you with a Written Statement of Employment within 2 months. This should cover the general conditions of your employment, such as pay, working hours and holiday provisions. They should also include the location of your contracted office. These are generally not as detailed as contracts, which will set out in more detail what your employer will provide for you and what you are expected to do. Additionally further terms and conditions may be set out in a Staff Handbook with references in the contract.

Written Statements of Employment are generally used by small (1 or 2 person) businesses or for short term employment, as they are not exhaustive in detail and leave a lot of room for mis-understanding, which ACAS suggests is one of the main causes of employment tribunal claims. The vast majority of archaeological contractors do or should provide full contracts to their employees. Changes to contractual terms and conditions cannot be made without the agreement of the staff member (or trade union if recognised).

A full contract will set out:

- Pay, hours of work, holiday pay, conditions of travel time;
- Location of contracted office/workplace;
- Start date and length of contract;
- Job title and job description;
- Sick pay, pensions and other work benefits; and
- Notice, expenses, deductions and assessments.

ACAS info on contracts <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1577>

Government info <https://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions>

Your contract with your employer is the single most important document you have for that job. Most employers will send out the contract prior to the employment beginning. Read through it and make sure you are happy with the contents. If you are a union member you are allowed to send it to an advisor to check it or to phone the union legal line with any queries. You should not sign anything you are not happy with.

