



Position Specification

Director, Labour Relations

Athabasca, AB

Confidential



Athabasca
University



Institution Description

As Canada's leading open university, Athabasca University's (AU) approach to accessible yet transformative education and research is truly distinctive. Its academic mission is to remove barriers to post-secondary education for learners, regardless of their age, location, career, or educational background.

Based in the beautiful region of Athabasca, AU is one of four Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities (CARUs) in the province. AU is a public, board-governed, open, and online university serving more than 37,000 students across Alberta, Canada, and around the world.

With faculties spanning health, science, humanities, and business—AU provides more than 70 undergraduate and graduate programs in ways that are uniquely accessible and responsive to today's demands of life and work.

AU seeks to be an agile and inclusive workplace in which all team members can grow, make their highest contribution, and each make a difference to our academic vision and mission.

Led by President Dr. Alex Clark, AU is embarking on its exciting next chapter with the launch of its new strategic plan. Drawing from five decades of growth in distance and online education, we aim to reinforce our position as Canada's foremost innovator in open and accessible learning. With the recent formation of an inclusive Senior Leadership Team dedicated to empowering every team member to contribute and thrive, AU stands poised for an exciting and ambitious next stage of development.

Almost 70% of undergraduate program students are the first in their families to get a degree.

Link to AU's Strategic Plan - [Like No Other](#)

To learn more, visit www.athabascau.ca



Scope and Responsibilities

Reporting to the Chief Human Resources Officer, this senior leadership position is responsible for the development and implementation of Athabasca University's long- and short-term Labour Relations strategy, framework and action plan by championing operational excellence and ensuring alignment with pertinent legislation, policies and procedures, collective agreements and AU's mission, vision, and values, while managing risk and financial liability for the organization.

The Director will act as the University's lead negotiator and oversee the collective bargaining process for all unions to ensure consistency and stability in delivering reasonable outcomes that are informed by the University's strategy and the best interests of its employees.

The Director is responsible for developing collaborative strategic relationships with unions and AU leadership, advising on collective agreement administration, employee relations matters and providing training, education, and support to AU's managers and supervisors.

Specific Responsibilities

This is a critical role in AU's continued success and growth. The role is accountable for the following:

- Lead labour relations functions including collective bargaining, grievance administration, collective agreement interpretation, employee relations, workplace investigations, and responses;
- Represent Athabasca University at grievance and arbitration hearings, working on behalf of the organization with legal counsel and other relevant stakeholders;
- Lead annual budget process for the labour relations unit. Ensures that budget strategies are operational, fiscally responsible, and proactively identifying hidden/underlying costs associated with budget decisions;
- Monitor and audit legal and grievance costs and provide advice and options to the CHRO to support cost effective decision making by the organization, to maintain the prudent use of the University's resources, while protecting the organization from legal and financial risk;
- Monitors grievance and arbitration trends and identifies the potential monetary impact, monitoring or amending the University's labour relations policies and HR practices to mitigate financial risk;
- Manage the design of the labour relations team structures and resources to ensure that priorities and standards are reflected in the services delivered in alignment with HR's service delivery model and mandate;
- Continued implementation of AU's Designation as Academic Policy;
- Develop and deliver policies, frameworks, and processes to enable effective and consistent labour relations practices across the organization;
- Ensure consistent application of collective agreements and HR policy throughout the organization;
- Develop and implement quality improvement and leading practice initiatives that deliver enhanced value to stakeholders;
- Establish their role as a strategic partner providing expert consultation to all faculties and services and HR to ensure consistency and efficiency in the resolution of complex labour relations matters while ensuring adherence to collective agreements and all relevant legislation;
- Lead the design and development of education strategies and training to further develop the knowledge and skills of the University leadership team, the HR team, supervisors, and managers, in the areas of employee management; including attendance, discipline and conflict resolution; labour relations, collective agreements and interpretation, LR policies and processes, employment legislation, and workplace investigations to minimize grievances and establish a culture of transparency and accountability;
- Collaborate with key internal and external partners across Human Resources, review institutional Risk Management as relating to labour, collaborate with Internal and external legal counsel, proactively identify enhancements across employment policies and frameworks to mitigate risk and recommend efficiencies;
- Promote client relationship management to develop credibility and influence decisions and foster a positive labour relations climate with academic and unions partners;



- Ensures confidential information relating to labour relations cases is properly protected and not disclosed to third parties, unless permitted or required under relevant law or regulation; and,
- Will comply with all statutory and internal disclosure requirements on a timely basis and ensures to the best of their ability, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information.



Desired Candidate Abilities, Background and Experience

Given the role this individual will play in AU's continued growth and success, it is essential that the successful candidate possess the following education, experience, and personal characteristics:

Education

- Four-year undergraduate degree in Business, Commerce, Human Resources and/or Labour Relations/Industrial Relations. Master's degree in Human Resources and/or Labour Relations preferred; and,
- MIR, Labour Relations Professional Certification and/or Designation as a Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP).

Experience

- 7 to 10 years progressive leadership experience, demonstrating advanced scope, authority, and output, in a complex multi-union setting;
- Demonstrated success in developing labour relations strategies and programs;
- Experience acting as the chief spokesperson and has sat at the table and led collective bargaining;
- Experience handling Human Rights, Employments Standards complaints, and Labour Board applications;
- Knowledge of harassment and workplace investigations, grievances, and arbitration preparation;



- Experience with collective agreement interpretation, labour/employee relations issues, and legal challenges;
- Strong business acumen, an understanding of the needs of the business and the ability to link policies and programs to business objectives;
- Supervisory and leadership experience required; and,
- Broader HR functional knowledge including talent management, succession planning, organizational effectiveness, workforce planning & analytics, total rewards, and/or performance management would be an asset.

Personal / Professional Attributes

- Strong leadership, communication, and negotiation skills with demonstrated written, verbal, facilitation, and presentation skills are essential;
- Effective communication (written and verbal) skills as well as strong analytical skills and attention to detail. Strong organizational skills, prioritization skills, ability to adhere to inflexible timelines, and the ability to work proactively and independently are essential;
- Demonstrates sound judgment and decision making;
- Innovative and creative with new ideas;
- Strong interpersonal skills to effectively interact with and build strong relationships with stakeholders at all levels of the organization; and,
- Proven ability to collaborate and build strong internal and external effective working relationships at all levels of the organization.

Attractions

This role provides an opportunity to join a post-secondary institution that is poised for continued growth. Other attractions include the opportunity to:

- Work with an institution that is transforming the lives of others through open education and innovation;
- Develop and implement an organization wide framework that supports and builds collaboration;
- Work virtually, while still building community engagement in Athabasca; and,
- Be part of a team that is inclusive, effective, and collaborative.

Contact Information

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