Teaching – Frequently Asked Questions

September 2012

Teaching and Related Professions Task Group

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A. ENTRY TO TEACHING – GENERAL

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A1. Is it possible to go into teaching if your degree isn’t in a national curriculum subject?

You are expected to have a good knowledge of your subject, normally to degree level; teacher training providers generally expect at least half your degree to be in your chosen school subject.

For primary teaching, you normally teach across the whole national curriculum; you should show a good understanding of national curriculum subjects, even if you may not have studied some of them beyond GCSE, and even if your degree is not in a national curriculum subject. Increasingly, primary teachers will have subject specialisms such as science or languages.

For secondary teaching, you may still be able to teach even if your degree is not in a national curriculum subject; it helps if you can show that your degree included a lot of content which does relate to a national curriculum subject (e.g. statistics for a prospective maths teacher). It may also be possible to study additional modules in a national curriculum subject (e.g. if your course offers ‘free elective’ modules, or by taking Open University modules); and there are Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses to bring your knowledge up to the required level in certain subjects (currently Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Modern Foreign Languages). It is advisable to contact admissions tutors at the teacher training institutions you are thinking of applying to, in order to find out how they would consider your particular qualifications.

For more information see: http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/subjects-age-groups/

A2. Can you train as a teacher if you have a Foundation degree?

Not straight away. Your main options would be:

- top up your foundation degree to an honours degree, followed by a PGCE course or Graduate Teacher Programme (check that your foundation degree and top-up modules have sufficient national curriculum content to be accepted onto a PGCE);
- take a two-year degree course with qualified teacher status (QTS) (these are mainly in shortage subjects and can be found by searching for ‘QTS’ on the UCAS website Search facility http://www.ucas.co.uk/students/coursesearch/)
- obtain a post as an unqualified teacher (possible in independent schools or Free Schools) and gain QTS through an assessment route (http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/teacher-training-options/experienced-teachers/assessment-only.aspx). This may be more feasible if you want to teach a shortage subject or want to work in an area of the country with shortages.
A3. How much classroom experience is needed to get into teacher training? How do you find it?

All applicants for teacher training are advised to have recent classroom experience prior to applying (or failing this, to have arranged to get experience in the near future). The exact amount required varies from institution to institution (some specify a minimum number of hours required; others are less specific); and from subject to subject (you will generally need more in a competitive area like English or primary, than in a ‘shortage’ area like Maths); check the websites of individual institutions.

There are various ways of finding work experience, from making direct contact with individual schools, to participating in university outreach activities involving local schools, to the government’s School Experience Programme: [http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/school-experience.aspx](http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/school-experience.aspx). For contact details of schools in any area, see the Edubase website: [http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase](http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase)

A4. What are the shortage subjects for teaching?

The Teaching Agency recognises the following shortage subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry, modern foreign languages. For these subjects, higher levels of bursary are provided for PGCE courses, and Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses are available to attract applicants from a wider range of first degree subjects. SKEs are also available for design & technology and for information & communications technology, [http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/subjects-age-groups/age-groups/teaching-secondary/boost-subject-knowledge.aspx](http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/subjects-age-groups/age-groups/teaching-secondary/boost-subject-knowledge.aspx)

A further group of subjects are defined as priority subjects, still attracting a bursary, but at a lower rate: art and design, design and technology, economics, engineering, English, dance, drama, geography, history, information and communications technology (ICT), computer science, classics, music, biology, physical education, primary, and religious education.


In Wales, the same lists of shortage and priority subjects apply, with the addition of Welsh as a shortage subject: [http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/training-in-wales.aspx](http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/training-in-wales.aspx)

The list for Scotland is similar, with the addition of Gaelic, home economics and PE ([http://www.teachinginscotland.com/704.455.497.html](http://www.teachinginscotland.com/704.455.497.html)).

No specific shortages are reported for Northern Ireland.

A5. How do you train to teach in Further Education or Sixth Form Colleges?

This has changed considerably in recent years. It is still possible in some cases to obtain a job teaching in the post-16 sector with no formal teacher training, and then to obtain qualifications once in the job. In England and Wales, teachers starting in the sector undertake a process of Professional Formation leading to Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS), or Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status. For the former, they will need to complete a Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) or equivalent, either full-time pre-entry or part-time in-service; for the latter, the Certificate (CTLLS) is required. There is also a short course available, Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS), which is recommended as a taster and a minimum entry qualification for those wishing to qualify in-service. For more information see the website of the Institute for Learning, the professional body for teachers, trainers and assessors in further education: [http://www.ifl.ac.uk/qtls-atls](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/qtls-atls).
There are a number of PGCE courses for teaching in post-compulsory education, which confer QTLS. PGCE applicants need a degree in the subject they intend to teach, with many institutions preferring at least a 2:1. Some (but not all) of these are in the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR), and can be found by selecting the Further Education age range on the course search (http://www.gttr.ac.uk/students/coursesearch).

The ‘Talent’ database includes all post-16 teacher training courses: http://www.talent.ac.uk/courses.asp. Entrants wishing to teach Skills for Life (Literacy, Numeracy, and English for Speakers of Other Languages) need additional qualifications, which can also be found on this database.

Anyone with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for teaching in schools is recognised as qualified to teach in further education. They need to undertake Professional Formation leading to Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS). The government has recently changed the regulations to allow those with QTLS to be appointed to teaching jobs in schools (in England only).

The situation in Scotland is different. In-service lecturers complete the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) through one of three approved universities (Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling). Entrants must be in employment for a minimum of 120 hours during the course and must hold an HNC, HND or professional qualification, or a degree. Further information can be found on the Professional Learning and Development Forum (PLDF Scotland) website: http://www.pldfscotland.ac.uk.
B. PGCE / PGDE COURSES

**B1. Is it possible to get on a PGCE course without the required GCSEs?**

“If you don’t have the necessary GCSEs in mathematics, English or science, you may be able to take a pre-entry test set by your ITT provider. Some providers may also accept skills developed through other, related work experience. If in doubt, you should contact your chosen ITT provider to find out what their requirements are.”

http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/faqs/becoming-a-teacher.aspx#a2

**B2. Is it possible to get on a PGCE course with a 3rd class degree?**

While it is theoretically it is possible to get onto a PGCE with a third class degree, the government has stated its requirement for most trainees to hold at least an upper second, and has announced that anyone starting postgraduate teacher training from 2012 onwards will need to hold at least a second class first degree in order to receive a training bursary from the Department for Education. Many providers will not consider applicants without at least a 2:2, and those applying for competitive areas, such as Primary, history or PE, are unlikely to be accepted. Other providers look at what skills and school experience the applicant brings, and may give credit for studying additional (e.g. Open University) modules, or undertaking postgraduate study. So for the right person with really good school experience, it may be possible to get onto a PGCE, though you would have to support yourself. Researching and contacting the institutions before applying is essential.

**B3. Some PGCEs are at Masters level, others are not – will this affect my job prospects?**

The GTTR explain the difference between the two levels of PGCE course:

“The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education is the same level academically as the final year of an honours degree course (H level). The Postgraduate Certificate in Education contains some credits at master’s degree level (M level credits) and H level credits. The number of M level credits in postgraduate awards varies significantly from one training provider to another. Many providers will give you the opportunity to study for the additional M level credits required to obtain a full master’s level qualification after you have completed your PGCE course. The successful completion of either type of course will give the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) that you need to become a fully-qualified teacher.”

(https://gttr.faq-help.com/?label=gt113)

The GTTR Course Search allows you to specify professional or postgraduate PGCEs (or either).

The previous government’s move towards making teaching a masters-level profession appears to have been halted with the ending of Masters in Teaching and Learning courses; this would have been one possible advantage of taking a PGCE with masters-level credits.
B4. What financial support is available for PGCE/PGDE courses?

As the situation is fluid at present, and tends to change from year to year, the best way to answer this is by referral to the official websites.


For Wales: http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/training-in-wales.aspx

For Scotland: http://www.teachinginscotland.com/642.455.497.html
http://www.saas.gov.uk/student_support/special_circumstances/postgrad_pgde.htm

For Northern Ireland: http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/finance-for-initial-teacher-training
C. ALTERNATIVE ENTRY ROUTES

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C1. I've heard you can do a school-based teacher training course?

All teacher training routes combine teaching practice in schools with academic study through a higher education provider, but the balance may vary between different options. The main school-based alternatives to a PGCE are:

- School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT)

- School Direct Training Programme

- Teach First

- Overseas Trained Teacher Programme (OTTP)

The Graduate Teaching Programme (GTP) has been discontinued after the 2012 entry, and is replaced by the School Direct Training Programme (salaried). The Registered Teacher Programme is also closed to new applicants; possible options for those with two years higher education would be to apply for an undergraduate teacher training qualification claiming credit for your previous HE experience, or to complete your first degree and then apply for a postgraduate teacher training route; or if you have experience as an unqualified teacher, to consider assessment-based training or the assessment-only route to QTS.

C2. Where can I find out about School Direct?

School Direct is available as a teacher training route for the first time from September 2012, and is being expanded in 2013/14 as the School Direct Training Programme. It allows schools to select their trainees with a view to employing them at the end of the programme (though this is not guaranteed). There are two types of training places for September 2013 recruitment; the School Direct Training Programme and the School Direct Training Programme (salaried).

For trainees, the first of these works like a Schools-Based Initial Teacher Training programme (SCITT) – you pay tuition fees to the training provider (UK and EU students receive a tuition fee loan), and may be eligible for a bursary and/or maintenance grant or loan; the programme lasts for one year, leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and in some cases also conferring a PGCE.

The salaried programme replaces the discontinued Graduate Teacher Programme, but will be restricted to graduates with at least three years career experience. The trainee is employed as an unqualified teacher by a school. The Teaching Agency (TA) provides funding, which the school can use to subsidise the trainee’s salary and/or training.
For further information, and to register for a list of schools currently recruiting, see the Teaching Agency website:


C3. Where can I find out about Teach First?
Teach First offers a route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) including a PGCE through its two-year Leadership Development Programme, which places well-qualified graduates into teaching roles in schools facing challenging circumstances; it operates in seven regions across England. See their graduates’ website for details: http://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/

C4. I've been teaching in an independent school – how can I get QTS?
It is possible to work as a teacher in an independent school (or in a Free School) and then to gain Qualified Teacher Status based on your experience. This may be through Assessment-based training, requiring a minimal period of training and a portfolio of evidence, or Assessment Only for very experienced teachers already meeting all the standards. These options are available in England only.

For further information see the Teaching Agency website:

C5. Is there any help for someone wanting to return to teaching after a career break?
The Return To Teaching (RTT) programme provides support to qualified teachers wishing to come back to teaching in England. For those wishing to teach Maths, Physics or Chemistry, this can include a Subject Knowledge Enhancement course; for the same subjects and modern foreign languages, it can also include the School Experience Programme and Teaching Advocates programme.

For further information see the Teaching Agency website:
http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/returning-to-teaching/

If you are returning to teaching in Scotland, please contact the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) on 0131 314 6000 or at gtcsc@gtcs.org.uk.

If you are returning to teaching in Wales, please contact the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) on 0292 055 0350 or Teach Again on 0292 026 2770

C6. I've heard that there’s a new route into teaching for Armed Services leavers?
The government has announced that its proposed Troops to Teachers programme is likely to provide opportunities for both non-graduate and graduate Armed Service leavers to enter teaching. Full details of the new Troops to Teachers programme are not available yet, but those interested are invited to register on the Teaching Agency website for information:

http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/troops-to-teachers/
D. TEACHING JOBS / EARLY CAREERS

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D2. Is it possible to teach in primary schools with a secondary PGCE (and vice versa?)

D3. Do you need to be a member of a faith to teach in a faith school?

D1. Can supply teaching count towards induction?

Qualified teachers who are employed in maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units in England must, by law, complete an induction period after gaining qualified teacher status (QTS). Periods of long-term supply teaching can count towards the three-term induction period provided that it is clear from the start that it will last for at least one term, and that the headteacher agrees.

NQTs can undertake short-term supply work (less than one term) but cannot count this towards induction. From September 2012, there is a limit of five years (from the point of award of QTS) during which NQTs can undertake short-term supply work. There is no time limit on starting or completing an induction period.

In September 2012, new Teachers’ Standards are being introduced, which will apply to newly qualified teachers (NQTs). NQTs who qualified before this date but complete their induction on or after 1 September 2012 will be assessed against the new standards at the end of their induction.

For more information on induction, see: http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/deployingstaff/newstaff/b0066959/induction-newly-qualified-teachers

D2. Is it possible to teach in secondary schools with a primary PGCE (and vice versa?)

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is required to teach in any maintained school (or non-maintained special school) in England; but in theory it is possible with QTS to teach any age range (5-16) and subject. In practice, it is for each school to decide whether an individual has sufficient subject knowledge or experience of the age group to be appointed to any specific position. It may be more feasible in areas with recruitment difficulties and/or in shortage subjects, and undertaking additional subject study may improve the chances.

Teachers with QTS are also allowed to teach in the post-compulsory sector (further education and sixth form colleges etc.); under new regulations, teachers in the further education sector can work in maintained schools in England as qualified teachers if they have achieved the full professional status of Qualified Teacher Learning and Kkills (QLTS) with the Institute for Learning (http://www.ifl.ac.uk/) (or if they undertake an assessment based route to QTS: http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/teacher-training-options/assessment-only.aspx).

D3. Do you need to be a member of a faith to teach in a faith school?

Most teachers in faith schools are members of that faith, but the proportion varies from school to school and anecdotal evidence suggests that school governing bodies do differ in their recruitment policies. For example, about 70% of teachers in Catholic schools in England and Wales are Catholic. All faith schools will expect their teachers, regardless of whether they have no religious faith or a different faith, to
support the religious ethos of the school (as indeed any teacher would be expected to support their school’s ethos).

Voluntary Aided schools (VA) may fill all of their teaching staff places from staff that are of their particular faith and may apply a faith test for appointment of support staff if there is a genuine occupational requirement. Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Foundation faith schools are required to reserve up to a fifth of their teaching posts as religious posts, where those teachers are specifically appointed to teach religious education. These schools may not discriminate in relation to support staff or teachers who are not reserved.

The picture may be different when applying for leadership positions – in Catholic schools for example, each appointment has to be approved by the diocese, who in the past, with a few exceptions, have expected heads, deputies and heads of RE to be practising Catholics.

With the expansion of Academy schools and the advent of Free Schools, the number of faith schools is expected to increase, and their autonomy in appointing staff will be greater.

In Northern Ireland, teachers can only be appointed to a Catholic maintained nursery or primary school if they hold a recognised Certificate in Religious Education; and for all Catholic maintained schools, all applicants must be committed to the religious and pastoral development of a Catholic school. For more information see the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) website (http://www.onlineccms.com)

In Scotland, the relevant legislation on denominational schools states that: “A teacher appointed to any post on the staff of any such school ... shall be required to be approved as regards religious belief and character by representatives of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school has been conducted”.

In addition, to teach RE in a Catholic school in Scotland, you are required to take an extra Certificate in Religious Education by Distance Learning. You can sit this externally through Glasgow University: http://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/religionseducationbydistancelearning/
E. INTERNATIONAL AND UK CROSS-BORDER ISSUES

E1. Can an international student apply for a PGCE?
You can apply to do a PGCE course if you are an international student with a degree from a UK higher education institution, or with a recognised equivalent qualification.
You must have a very good standard of written and spoken English, and you must have the qualifications (or equivalent qualifications) that an ITT provider asks of all its applicants.
You should be aware that a teaching qualification gained in the UK may not qualify you to teach in your home country. If you are thinking of training in the UK and then teaching in your home country, check first in your own country to see whether UK qualifications are acceptable.
You will only be eligible for the government-funded bursaries to train as a teacher if you have been in the UK for three years or more and have a residency visa. See the Teaching Agency website for further information: http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/training-in-england/postgraduate-funding.aspx
Once you have completed your teacher training, you may need a work permit if you wish to teach in the UK. This could be challenging, especially if you have trained to teach at primary level. See the UK Border Agency (UKBA) website for more information: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/

E2. Can you teach in Europe if you have a UK teaching qualification?
The answer to this will vary with the country where you want to teach and the type of school (private or public). Assuming you want to teach the subject/age range relevant to your training in a school in Europe, the following information may help:
The teaching profession is covered by the general system for the recognition of professional qualifications across European Economic Area (EEA) member states. Although covered by the general system, teaching qualifications are not automatically recognised by EEA states, so you have to apply for recognition in the country where you want to teach.
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=457
Getting recognition does not mean you will find it easy to get a job, as competition may be high. You will find most jobs require at least one year’s experience. Language fluency will be expected in most countries, except in English medium schools. For further information on these schools see http://www.cois.org and http://www.cobis.org.uk. You can search for job vacancies in Europe at: http://ec.europa.eu/eures and http://www.tes.co.uk/jobs/.

E3. Is a PGCE valid abroad?
A PGCE and the achievement of qualified teacher status do not necessarily qualify you to teach in another country. All countries have their own rules and regulations as to who can and who cannot be accepted as a qualified teacher. Most, but not all,
overseas schools will require applicants for teaching posts to have a recognised degree and in practice, most jobs would require you to be a fully qualified teacher with experience.

In Europe the teaching profession is covered by the general system for the recognition of professional qualifications across EEA member states. Although covered by the general system, teaching qualifications are not automatically recognised by EEA states, so you have to apply for recognition in the country where you want to teach.

For non-European countries you will need to contact the teaching professional body for the countries you are interested in to find out specific requirements. Also, be aware that in some countries, e.g. Canada and the USA, different regions or states have different policies so you will need to contact local education departments for information. In some cases, PGCEs are recognised but non-PGCE routes to qualified teacher status are not. You will need a working visa or permit for certain countries.

**E4. If you have qualified in one country in the UK, can you teach in other UK countries?**

Generally speaking, yes. There is mutual recognition of QTS between England and Wales, and teachers trained in Scotland and Northern Ireland are generally eligible to teach in England and Wales.

In Scotland, the General Teaching Council for Scotland require a reference and documentation to support an application for registration from teachers who qualified outside Scotland: [http://www.gtcs.org.uk/home/qualified-outside-of-scotland/teacher-qualified-outside-scotland.aspx](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/home/qualified-outside-of-scotland/teacher-qualified-outside-scotland.aspx)

For Northern Ireland, teachers who trained elsewhere in the UK are required to register with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland: [http://www.gtcni.org.uk](http://www.gtcni.org.uk).