



Becoming a teacher

Nation guide

Republic of Ireland 2023/2024

Careers and Employability Services

This guide has been produced by The Open University's Careers and Employability Services.

The University wishes to emphasise that, while every effort is made to ensure accuracy, changes in regulations or in policy means you should not solely rely on the information in this guide. Please make sure you check all information carefully and regularly before making any final decisions.

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1. Introduction: Considering teaching as a career

This nation guide is part of a series which includes teaching in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland and has been produced by The Open University Careers and Employability Services (CES) to help prospective and current students who are considering teaching as a career. The contents are subject to change, so please make sure that you check all information carefully and regularly before making any final decisions.

Making the decision to train to be a teacher is just the start of your journey. There are entry requirements to meet, different routes to becoming qualified to consider as well as the process of applying for initial teacher education (ITE). Once qualified there are then the demands of finding your first role and this is all before being in charge of a group of students for the first time.

This guide outlines some of these issues but it is important that you continue to seek advice throughout your studies.

What makes a good teacher?

There are far too many attributes to list in establishing what makes an effective teacher and probably some subjectivity as well. Enthusiasm for teaching, although important, is not enough. The work of a teacher is complex, demanding and sometimes stressful. Additionally, teachers will know that the reality of the hours they work are beyond those that are timetabled, and workload issues are well publicised.

That said, there can be tremendous job satisfaction. However, you might want to consider the following questions.

- Am I passionate about education and making a difference to those I will teach?
- Can I demonstrate the consistent high standards of personal and professional conduct required to uphold the trust of my students, colleagues and profession?
- Am I reflective, resilient and open minded enough to adapt, embrace change and develop my practice as education evolves during my professional career?

Just remember that your age and background are not an issue. One of the strengths of the profession is that it attracts applicants from all walks of life who do a fantastic job. Mature entrants have life experience that is welcomed and of great value to the teaching profession.

You can learn what being a teacher is really like with the free OU FutureLearn course – [Becoming a Teacher](#). This course is for anyone thinking about becoming a teacher, it will help you to decide if teaching is for you, give you a sense of what teaching is really like and help you to start writing your application for initial teacher education.

Work experience will help you decide

Before you make your final decision to teach it is wise to gain some experience of working in the age range and setting you wish to teach. You'll also develop valuable insight into the day-to-day duties of a teacher as it is impossible to get a real flavour of the profession from research alone. Attaining relevant work experience is desirable prior to applying for the training routes into the profession so this is something you will need to start thinking about early on. Above all else getting classroom experience will help you decide if teaching is the right career choice for you.

What age range do you want to teach?

This is a really important question you'll need to answer before you apply for entry onto initial teacher training. Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from the ages of 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second-level education. The Irish education system is made up of primary, second, third-level and further education. In Ireland we have the following phases:

- Pre-school 0-4
- Primary: typically, 4-12 age range
- Post-Primary (second level): typically, across 12-16 age range
- Further and Higher Education (third level): typically, 16+

Your teaching specialism, where applicable, is also important. Both factors will also impact upon your degree and module choices at the OU. As a guide, in post-primary you will normally specialise in one subject and in primary schools you will teach across the range of subjects.

Availability of teaching posts and training places

In March 2023, following engagement with the relevant higher education institutions providing primary initial teacher education, the Minister for Education approved 610 additional places with 320 of these coming on stream in 2023, and the remaining 290 in 2024.

The new places are as follows:

- 90 additional places on the B.Ed. programme in 2023 and 2024, making a total of 1,090 each year.
- 30 additional places on the B.Ed. through the Medium of Irish (B.Oid) in 2023, making a total of 60 in 2023.
- 200 additional places on the Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching) (PME) programme in 2023 and 2024, making a total of 400 each year.

The total number of primary initial teacher education places at each HEI for the academic years 23/24 and 24/25 are as follows.

Higher Education Institution	Approved places B.Ed.	Approved places B.Oid.	Approved places PME
Dublin City University	432	-	120
Marino Institute of Education	133	60	100
Mary Immaculate College	435	-	120
Maynooth University	90	-	60
Total	1,090	60	400

So, you want to become a teacher?

You will need to ask yourself some questions about your experience and goals in relation to getting into teaching. Whatever your current situation, you should thoroughly research the appropriate choice of modules for your degree and check the entry requirements with each initial teacher training (ITT) provider you are applying to.

Question 1: Do you have experience in the age range and setting you want to teach and feel confident this is the right career for you?

If not, read [Skills and experience](#) for ideas on how to gain experience.

Question 2: Do you meet the entry requirements for teaching?

If not, read [Training to teach in Ireland](#) for advice on your training options. Also read [Frequently asked questions](#).

Question 3: Do you know which training route you will take?

If not, read [Training to teach in Ireland](#) for advice on your training options. Also read [Frequently asked questions](#).

Question 4: Are you happy with your study pathway and module choices?

If not, contact your Student Support Team if you are a current Open University student.

Finally, do make sure you understand the timescales of when you will need to apply for initial teacher training. If you need further support visit the OU's [Careers and Employability Services](#).

2. Where to start

Many OU students enter teaching and, in general, a degree from the Open University is very appropriate preparation. However, the choice of what you study can be critical in ensuring that you gain entry into initial teacher training and ultimately get a job in the teaching profession. The BA/BSc Open (Honours), tailored to your own requirements (also known as the Open degree), might be a useful choice for teaching but you must ensure that the modules within the degree are appropriate for the age range and setting you wish to teach.

In Ireland the [Teaching Council](#) oversees the accreditation of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and the registration of qualified teachers. Consequently, the Teaching Council lays down the requirements that applicants to ITE programmes need to meet. There is no variation in the approach of individual colleges, as is the case in England.

What are the entry requirements for a career in teaching?

In Ireland, teachers must hold a degree and teacher training qualifications to teach in a state-maintained school at primary 5-11 and post-primary 12-18. This can be through the concurrent route (Bachelor of Education) or consecutive route studying for the Professional Masters of Education (PME) which takes 2 years. This replaced the PDE/H.Dip.

For all teacher training pathways, minimum entry is via an honours degree – this is cited as a Level 8 degree in line with the National Framework of Qualifications in Ireland. For second level teaching, you must be able to teach at least one curricular subject to the highest level within the post-primary curriculum as specified by the Teaching Council.

This requires that your degree must carry at least 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits (or equivalent) and 60 ECTS of the curricular subject area you want to teach in. You are strongly advised to check how your degree and modules map onto your proposed teaching subject as soon as possible. For more information see the [Teaching Council](#) website.

3. Skills and experience

As well as the knowledge gained from OU study, students develop many transferable skills and attributes that are highly valued by employers. Being able to juggle OU study with work and family commitments involves time management, self-reliance, problem-solving, resilience and prioritising tasks effectively. You may want to do a more in-depth analysis of your skills and achievements using the resources on the [Careers and Employability Services](#) website or with [Your Career Planning Guide](#). This will help you identify and evidence your strengths. Teachers must also meet the professional standards and competencies agreed by The Teaching Council.

4. Training to teach in Ireland

In Ireland, teachers must hold a degree and teacher training qualifications to teach in a state-maintained school at primary 5-11 and post-primary 12-18. This can be through the concurrent route (Bachelor of Education) or consecutive route studying for the Professional Master of Education (PME) which takes 2 years. This replaced the PDE/H.Dip. [The Teaching Council](#) publish criteria for primary, post-primary and further education in order to ensure initial teacher education meets the council's accreditation requirements.



Primary teaching

Apart from having an honours degree, there is no subject content requirement for entry to a Professional Masters in Education – Primary, although many providers specify a 2.2 result or higher or a major award at level 9 or 10. However, OU students are well advised to consider the advantages of being able to offer subjects such as IT, maths and science

as part of their degree, as teaching subjects at a very early foundation stage become vital to the economic development of the country.

In 2020, higher minimum entry standards to primary programmes of initial teacher education for Leaving Certificate Maths and English at Ordinary Level and Irish at Higher Level were introduced.

See [Department of Education and Skills](#) for details of the minimum grades required.

Oral Irish Examination

Candidates are required to take the oral component of the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) Meánleibhéal 1 (B1) Irish examination before applying to their preferred institution(s) for the Professional Master of Education (PME).

The Irish oral examination will be administered by the Centre for Irish Language Research, Teaching and Testing in Maynooth University, which is linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The Irish oral will commence January and February 2024 at venues throughout the country. More information, including examination guidelines, is available from [Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge \(TEG\)](#).

PME – Primary courses are offered in two ways – college based or online.

College based:

- Maynooth University – Froebel Department
- Dublin City University
- Marino Institute of Education
- Mary Immaculate College (Limerick)

Application forms and further details are available on relevant College websites in September, DCU applications via the [PAC website](#).

Online: Hibernia College.

Various intakes are available. Contact [Hibernia college](#) for further information. Eligible applicants will be required to undergo interview and Oral Irish Examination.

All students who gain entry to a Primary ITE programme will be required to attend a two-week residential placement in the Gaeltacht.

Full information on the entry requirements to primary teaching can be found at: [The Teaching Council of Ireland - How to become a primary teacher](#).

Post-Primary teaching

The relevancy of your degree content cannot be overstated: the requirements of the Teaching Council are quite prescriptive. It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the subject criteria before applying to a Professional Masters in Education programme. Ensure you check the Teaching Council document [Curricular Subject Requirements \(Post-Primary\)](#).

The major difference with applications to post-primary teacher training in Ireland is the process. National University of Ireland (NUI) universities use a centralised application – [Postgraduate Applications Centre \(PAC\)](#). This system is a points system, where applicants are evaluated on:

- Performance in primary degree
- Additional academic qualifications
- Additional paid professional experience.

Applications for the 2024 intake will open in October 2023. The closing date is usually January but please do check this in advance.

Other universities like Trinity and Limerick accept direct applications and conduct interviews. Closing dates vary, but are usually in February or March, so do check this in advance.

Hibernia College offer an online PME with start dates in April and September. On completion of a two-year PME, registration with the [Teaching Council of Ireland](#) is then required before applying for full-time or substitution (temporary) posts.

Full details of how to become a post-primary teacher can be found at: [Teaching Council of Ireland - How to become a post-primary teacher](#).

Applying for primary and post primary initial teacher education

Applications for concurrent (undergraduate) programmes are made through the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#) and selection is based on the CAO points system. Mature applicants should check with the relevant college/university regarding application procedures. In concurrent (undergraduate) programmes, academic subjects are taught collectively with education and school placement components.

Applications for consecutive (postgraduate) programmes are made through the [Postgraduate Applications Centre \(PAC\)](#), the central application system for NUI colleges and Dublin City University. For other institutions, applications are made directly to the individual institution. Places on the programme are awarded on the basis of qualifications, an interview and an oral examination in Irish.

Further education teaching

Further Education teaching qualifications are offered in a variety of colleges throughout Ireland. See the [Teaching Council website - Further Education teaching](#) for current listing.

Entry criteria in accordance with Teaching Council Regulations. The following two criteria must be met.

- An Honours degree with 180 ECTS credit at Level 8 on NQF of Ireland **or** an Ordinary Bachelor degree – Level 7 NQF **and** an appropriate additional qualification or minimum 3 years' experience in a workplace or instructional setting relevant to the qualification.
- A [Teaching Council accredited](#) Further Education teaching qualification (TEQ)

Higher education lecturing and research

To become a university lecturer, you will normally need to study for masters or PhD qualifications in the area you want to teach. Lecturers for more specialised or vocational subjects can often enter with experience of that field, and a teaching qualification, rather than a PhD.

Some research students undertake part-time teaching responsibilities while still registered as students, which is a valuable way to build up teaching experience. In the early stages of a career, it may be very difficult to gain a permanent contract as an HE lecturer and many are on sessional and fixed-term contracts.

There are a range of websites to help you understand the competitive academic jobs market. We recommend you visit the [Vitae](#), [Jobs.ac.uk](#) and [Prospects](#) websites.

OU Associate Lecturer

Students on OU modules organise their own study time, which can be a difficult skill to master. As an Associate Lecturer you become the 'face' of the OU for a group of students whose learning you support. They make a vital contribution to the quality of teaching and learning and support students by:

- Teaching and assessment (online and for some modules by post).

- Individual contact by email, phone or post.
- Group tutorials and day schools (face-to-face or online).

To become an Associate Lecturer with the OU you will need to have a degree or a professional or vocational qualification in the subject area you wish to teach. Your academic specialism or professional experience must be complemented by a personal commitment to the education of adults, and an appreciation of the challenges for adult learners who are studying at a distance. It is essential that Associate Lecturers understand and accept the diversity of OU students and their learning needs. In addition, many Associate Lecturers teach full or part-time at other education institutions.

Not all OU modules ask for previous teaching experience, so it is important that you read the person specification to find out if it is a requirement for the module(s) you apply to tutor. For more information see [Teaching with the OU](#).

You can register your interest in working for the OU by completing the [expression of interest form](#). Please note, however, that the expression of interest service does not form part of our formal recruitment process and that it is your responsibility to identify suitable vacancies.

You can also apply for other externally advertised [OU Jobs](#) including [residential school teaching posts](#).

5. Specialisms in teaching and other education-related careers

This section contains information on other areas of teaching such as alternative settings and broader roles in the education sector that you might want to consider. You should ensure that you carefully research how

you can train for these and what the implications might be for planning your OU study.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

In Ireland, some form of higher-level qualification is usually essential for those seeking a long-term career teaching English as a foreign language.

To teach English at MEI-RELSA schools (commercial language schools), a minimum of a Level 7 qualification on the National Qualification Framework.

For the purposes of employment in the recognised English language teacher (ELT) sector in Ireland, all academic staff need to hold:

- A Level 7 qualification, normally an ordinary bachelor's degree in any discipline.
- An ACELS recognised ELT certificate.

Examples of English language teacher training courses available include:

UCD Graduate Diploma in TESOL – a one-year graduate programme designed for appropriately qualified English language teachers with a minimum of one year of relevant teaching experience in Ireland or overseas.

ELT Preparatory Course – for state qualified teachers in Ireland and final year education students (40 hours) – qualifies teachers to teach English to school-going pupils in language schools in Ireland up to age 18, usually in summer schools. This is also a very useful qualification for teachers to have in primary schools in Ireland, which have a significant number of pupils whose first language is not English. Note: **not** internationally recognised and must be provided by a language school which is recognised by [ACELS](#) (Advisory Council for English Language Schools).

CELT Course (Certificate in English language Teaching) 120 hours duration with teaching practice. Recognised for teaching the full age range, including adults, in language schools in Ireland. An approved CELT qualification is recognised internationally and is required by recognised language schools overseas and by some summer schools, such as TECS in Spain for their TEFL teachers. Please note, camp monitors at TECS would not be required to have an ELT qualification but it would be regarded favourably. Additionally, a CELT course must be provided by a language school which is recognised by [ACELS](#) (Advisory Council for English Language Schools).

Special education

Whilst a pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not required to work in SEN, the Combined Post Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs is a one-year, part-time postgraduate programme of training in inclusive special needs education for teachers working in special schools, special classes, or as resource and learning support teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools and other educational services. The course is offered by:

- St Patrick's College.
- Church of Ireland College of Education.
- St Angela's College.
- Mary Immaculate College.
- University College Dublin.
- National University of Ireland Galway.
- University College Cork.

This programme is open to all serving teachers who are employed in a position funded by the Department of Education and Science, and who provide learning support and resource teaching in recognised educational services. Teachers serving in special schools and special classes are also eligible to apply.

Applicants to the Combined Post Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs should have satisfactorily completed their probationary period and hold a position in a sanctioned post in an area of special education or learning support or be about to take up such posts.



Other education-related careers

The [Education Alternatives publication](#) by AGCAS is also a recommended read to understand and explore your options further as well as our webinar on [Educational Alternatives to Teaching](#) on the OU careers website (only available to OU students, please sign in to access these resources).

If you are an OU student and considering these options, then consider arranging an individual [careers consultation](#) with one of our careers and employability consultants.

6. Resources and support for potential teachers with a disability

It is regrettable that individuals with disabilities are under-represented in the teaching profession, but this should not stop you from considering teaching. Many disabled students and graduates are able to work without the need for specific adjustments or support, but for some students, additional support can help to enable access to work.

Your individual circumstances

We recommend that you read the appropriate guidance documents available below and make informal enquiries as part of an information gathering exercise to find out how the disability guidance relates to you.

- [Your Career Planning Guide \(Section 5: Equality and Diversity Issues\)](#)

You will also find some helpful information on the OU's [disability support](#) webpages and our podcast [How to explain a disability with employers](#).

[AHEAD](#), the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation. AHEAD outlines the [support available](#) for students with disability in Irish Universities.

7. Funding for teacher training

Most teacher training students who have been working or studying part-time will self-fund their way through their PME, as funding is limited and means tested. Details on Student Grant Scheme and other supports are summarised on [Ireland Citizens Information website](#).

8. Frequently asked questions

This section provides basic advice on some of the frequently asked questions relating to teaching from OU students. However, we recognise each student's circumstances are different which is why there are times our general advice may be inaccurate and not apply, so always make sure you complete your own research.

Can I still teach with an Open degree?

Yes. In Ireland there is no subject requirement for primary and at secondary level. It is the content of your degree, how it maps onto individual curriculum subject requirements, that matters. Your degree must have 180 ECTS and a Level 8 on NQF.

How much of my degree needs to relate to the national curriculum?

At primary there are no requirements, but it may be desirable for employability. At secondary level, 60 ECTS, or 120 OU credits must be in curriculum subject you seek to teach. In addition, you need to meet the individual subject requirements the Teaching Council has established.

Can I teach with a third class or ordinary degree?

No. See Teaching Council Regulations.

Can I still teach with a criminal conviction?

The Teaching Council considers applications for registration, and this involves the Council carrying out a fit and proper person assessment. Garda Vetting is required and submitting further information to help them to assess if you are fit and proper to teach. Essentially this is an individual assessment. Further details can be found in The Teaching Council publication [Guidelines – Fit and Proper Person Assessments](#).

Appendix 1: OU contact information

For advice about choosing OU qualifications and modules visit [The Open University website](#) or call Student Recruitment.

Student Recruitment

The Open University PO Box 197
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BJ

Phone: +44 (0) 300 303 5303

Email via www.open.ac.uk/contact

Republic of Ireland

Enquiry and Advice Centre in Dublin

Tel: +353 (1) 678 5399 or

The Open University in Ireland

Tel: +44 (0)28 9032 3722.

Email: ireland@open.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Careers information

The Open University

For careers information and advice visit the OU's [Careers and Employability Services](#). This website also contains a number of case studies of current and former OU students who have gone into teaching. OU students can also access forums and webinars related to teaching and education. You will need your OU login details to view these.

For details of OU qualifications and modules, visit the [Open University prospectus](#).

Prospects

[Job sectors on Prospects](#) provide comprehensive guides to different career areas including teaching and education.

[Job profiles on Prospects](#) enable you to search for careers such as early years teacher, primary/secondary school teacher, further/higher education lecturer, English as a Foreign Language teacher or special educational needs teacher.

Gradireland

[Gradireland](#) provides detailed information and advice on routes to becoming a teacher, choosing and applying for a teacher training course and funding.

The Teaching Council

The [Teaching Council](#) is the professional standards body for the teaching profession, which promotes and regulates professional standards in teaching. It acts in the interests of the public good while upholding and

enhancing standards in the teaching profession. Email:
info@teachingcouncil.ie

Department of Education and Skills

The [Department of Education and Skills](#) is a department of the Irish state with responsibility for education and training.

The Department of Education's Teaching Transforms page is an excellent source of information:

www.gov.ie/teachingtransforms

Teaching Council and Department of Education staff regularly attend career fairs in various Irish colleges and universities. Keep an eye on social pages for updates on events @teachingcouncil / @Education_Ire.

