



# Becoming a teacher

# Nation guide

England 2023/2024

Careers and Employability Services

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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 a career**

This nation guide is part of a series that includes teaching in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland, and has been produced by The Open University's 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 training (ITT). 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 the well-publicised workload issues have led the Government to develop its school workload reduction toolkit.

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, getting classroom experience will help you decide if teaching is the right career choice for you.

If you already have some classroom experience, you may want to consider other experiences that can add value. You'll find information about ways to build relevant experience on [pages 14-16](#).

## 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. In England we have the following phases:

- Early Years Foundation Stage: 0–5 age range
- Primary: typically, 5–11 age range
- Middle: typically, 7–14 age range
- Secondary: typically, across 11–16, 11–18 or 14–19 age range
- Further Education: typically, 16+
- Higher Education: typically, 18+

Your teaching specialism, where applicable, is also important. Both factors will also impact your degree and module choices at the OU. As a guide, in secondary schools you will normally specialise in one subject and in primary schools you will teach across the range of subjects. However, primary teachers can now develop a subject specialism such as English, geography and history, maths, modern languages, PE, and science.

## Availability of teaching posts and training places

The availability of teaching posts and the supply of qualified teachers across the age ranges to fill them is a complex picture in England, as factors such as location and subject both play a part. This is why we strongly advise you to check the likelihood of employment in areas where you wish to work before committing yourself to an initial teacher training course. You can do this by conducting a job search using vacancy sites such as [TES](#) (all age ranges), [Teaching Vacancies](#) (primary and secondary inc. 16–19), [eteach](#) (primary and secondary), [daynurseries](#) (early years), [AOC](#) (FE jobs) and [jobs.ac.uk](#) (HE jobs).

It's also worth being aware of the Teacher Supply Model (TSM) which is the system used by the Department for Education (DfE) in England to identify the changes in the labour market for teachers. This determines how many

training places will be needed and funded each academic year. The [annual targets](#) for the number of trainees to start postgraduate initial teacher training in the 2023 to 2024 academic year in England, by subject, have recently been released. Combining this information with the [funding available](#) for certain subjects allows you to build a picture of shortage areas within primary and secondary. There has been widespread concern of [teacher shortages](#) across early years, primary, secondary and FE but variances do exist by subject, region and city.

## **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 \(section 3\)](#) for ideas on how to gain experience.

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

If not, read [Training to teach in England \(section 4\)](#) for advice on your training options. Also read [Frequently asked questions \(section 8\)](#).

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

If not, read [Training to teach in England \(section 4\)](#) for advice on your training options. Also read [Frequently asked questions \(section 8\)](#).



#### **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 more 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 (ITT) 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.

Many ITT providers will ask for at least 50% of your degree to cover the subject knowledge they require. A degree in the specialist subject area you wish to teach is particularly appropriate for the secondary sector, further education, and higher education sector.

Please be aware that in assessing your suitability to teach, ITT providers may have differing views on your module and degree choice. You are strongly advised to check this out with each provider you may wish to apply to before embarking on your degree (or as soon as possible if you are already studying). You also need to ensure that you keep regularly up to date with the changing requirements in this area. You may need to do this **each year** that you are studying with the OU to ensure that you are still on the right track towards a career in teaching. You can find contact details for teacher training providers via the current course listings on DfE's

[Find Postgraduate Teacher Training Service](#), where you are able to search by location and subject for providers operating in your area.

OU students should be aware that, depending on when you take your final module, your degree may not be awarded until December. Most ITT providers will expect you to officially have your degree classification confirmed **before** you start teacher training. Please check the entry requirements, including expectations on your degree content, with any teacher training providers you are considering or have applied to, as these can change year on year.

If you have an overseas qualification, an incomplete qualification from another institution or a professional qualification and are not sure you meet the entry requirements for ITT, you should check this with your chosen teacher training provider.

If you are a current student, after reading this guide, you may want to talk in more depth to one of the OU's Career and Employability Consultants about your application for initial teacher training. You will find a range of materials and support on the [Careers and Employability Services website](#). Information and advice on choosing qualifications and modules at the OU can be accessed from the [Open University prospectus](#).

Wherever you are in your teacher training journey, you can always call the [Get into Teaching](#) Helpline for free on 0800 389 2500 (Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5.30pm).

You may also be interested in the following options:

- Sign-up for a one-to-one adviser via DfE's Get an Adviser service.
- Search for Teacher Training Events for your local area or in a phase/subject in which you are interested.
- Joining DfE's Get into Teaching Mailing List to get personalised guidance to your inbox.

## What are the entry requirements for a career in teaching?

Here we will focus on the main academic and non-academic requirements for teaching in early years, primary and secondary. For information about requirements for further education and higher education, go to [pages 26-28](#).

### Academic requirements

- For postgraduate teacher training programmes, you'll need to hold an undergraduate degree awarded by a higher education provider in England or Wales, or a recognised equivalent.
- You'll need to have achieved a standard equivalent to grade C/4 or above in GCSE English and mathematics.
- If you intend to train to teach pupils aged 3 – 11 (early years and primary), you must also have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade C/4, or above, in a GCSE science subject.

### Non-academic requirements

You will also need to consider:

- It is desirable (but not a requirement) to have classroom experience in the age range and setting you wish to teach. See [pages 14-16](#) on how to arrange this.
- Fitness to teach – declaration of health. Providers have a responsibility to ensure you have the health and physical capacity to undertake teacher training. See page 32 for more guidance.
- Undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. You'll need to disclose any criminal convictions, cautions, or bind-overs.
- If your first language is not English, please refer to the guidance issued by your training provider.

An option for OU students who need a GCSE in English, maths or science is to take this at the National Extension College via distance learning. It is also possible to sit GCSEs via an evening class at a local further education college or adult education provider. If you don't meet this entry criteria, your training provider may ask you to sit a GCSE equivalency test or offer other evidence to demonstrate your ability. Please note, for the purposes of initial teacher training, level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications **are not** considered as equivalent to GCSE Grade C or Grade 4 in English Language and Mathematics.

If you have qualifications from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), the [UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills \(UK ENIC\)](#) can give advice on whether qualifications are equivalent. They may also be able to provide certification (paid service). The [Get into Teaching](#) service can help you arrange a qualification check and/or a free Statement of Comparability to support your teacher training application. We recommend you try this first.

If you are in the position of having secured the necessary GCSE grades you require but cannot find proof of your results you will need to contact the relevant exam board to get a replacement exam certificate or certified statement of results. For more details, and to find out which exam board to contact if your old exam board no longer exists, visit the [gov.uk support pages](#).

PGCE providers may not accept OU modules as equivalent to GCSEs. Before you embark on study for any alternative qualifications, it is important that you check whether the institutions you wish to apply to will accept these instead of GCSEs.

### 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 Department for Education (DfE). You should familiarise yourself with the [teachers' standards](#) as they are used to assess both trainees and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) so are a useful reference when applying for initial teacher training.

It is worth noting that NQTs in England undertake a year-long induction period to become legally qualified to teach in state schools. The purpose of an induction programme is to offer professional and personal support to bridge the gap between initial teacher training and your first role in the classroom. It combines a personalised programme of development support as well as ongoing assessment of performance against the relevant standards.

Newly qualified primary and secondary school teachers are also given responsibility for delivering the curriculum material to their class and they also assume all the other duties of a teacher from the beginning of their appointment.

The Government's [early career framework](#) furthermore sets out what early career teachers are entitled to learn about and learn how to do when they start their careers. It underpins a new entitlement for two years of

professional development designed to help early career teachers develop their practice, knowledge and working habits.

## **Getting work experience**

### **Why do I need work experience?**

Above all else, getting classroom experience will help you decide if teaching is the right career choice for you. You'll develop valuable insight into the day-to-day duties of a teaching role. It is impossible to get a real flavour of the profession from research alone. Recent work experience in the age range and subject you want to teach in can also be helpful for your application and any interview for initial teacher training. You can often build your experience as you study. [Now Teach](#) have selected a library of articles, videos, reports, and podcasts to give you an idea of what it's like to work in school and be a trainee teacher (some of this content is focused on secondary teaching).

### **What additional experience would be useful?**

You aren't just limited to work experience in a formal education setting. You may wish to add to this with experience in different settings such as summer camps, after-school clubs and scouts. The list really is endless in the ways volunteering or paid work could enhance your suitability.

You could also try and get experience in more than one setting and age range. For example, if you are interested in teaching primary you could try and get experience in more than one school. You may also want to consider other experiences such as private tutoring, sport coaching, mentoring or volunteering that puts you in touch with your target age range. Some students have even completed TEFL training (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and taught both in the UK and abroad. There are also exchange programmes such as The [Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme](#) and the British Council scheme - [Teach abroad as an English language assistant](#).

In summary, you will need to start your planning on this early, before you apply to teach, as it can often take time to sort out arrangements and find the time to commit to these experiences. Do read through the [Prospects guide](#) for more ideas on securing teaching experience.

## **How much work experience do I need?**

You may have heard a minimum requirement of ten days experience in schools however school experience is not an entry requirement for initial teacher training (ITT). Although higher levels of school experience do make for a stronger application it is by no means an essential application prerequisite. Given the current climate, school experience has been difficult to organise over the last 18 months, so most providers are sympathetic and take this into account.

## **How can I arrange getting school experience independently?**

This is often the most effective route to getting work experience and usually requires some confidence and perseverance on your part in getting it organised. The [Department for Education](#) and [Targetjobs guides](#) are excellent for their advice, common sense and step-by-step approach to take in securing school experience. If you are looking for primary or secondary age experience the Department for Education's [school experience service](#) is well worth considering. This allows you to talk to teachers and observe teaching and pastoral work. As part of your placement, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be required but this will be organised by the school.

If you're unable to get into a school the [Oak National Academy](#) has produced a set of videos that help candidates to gain an insight into classroom teaching. These videos are not a claim of best practice but can help you get to know teaching better.

## **Making the most of your experience**

It's useful to break down your thoughts and activity into before, during, and after your work experience. Before any placement write down what you want to learn from the experience and what information you want to know. This might include researching the school you are going to and understanding the roles of teacher and support staff.

During your placement, make a record of any creative and innovative teaching styles you have observed and how lessons are tailored to cater for students with different abilities and backgrounds.

After your experience, decide if there are still gaps in your knowledge and whether you need further experience. Write a reflective account that can be used for a personal statement. Looking further ahead, the [Department for Education](#) produce a blog that includes real life stories and some great ideas on preparing for teacher training.

## **Getting paid experience**

As well as volunteering, many OU students are already working or seeking roles in education whilst they study such as [teaching assistant](#), [special educational needs \(SEN\) teaching assistant](#), [private tutoring](#) and [learning mentor](#). Some students may decide to delay applying for initial teacher training and look to gain additional educational experience to further develop their skills and confidence.

## **4. Training to teach in England**

To teach in a state maintained or non-maintained special school in England you must have a degree and qualified teacher status (QTS). Academies and free schools are excluded from this requirement, although in practice most teaching staff will have QTS. Schools outside the state-maintained sector are classed as being independent. Information about



independent schools is available from the [Independent Schools Council](#). QTS is not a legal requirement for independent schools although most teachers will still have this.

QTS is obtained by undertaking initial teacher training (ITT) with entry to all courses governed by [legislation](#). Initial teacher training providers may decide (or you may request) you need to take a [Subject Knowledge Enhancement \(SKE\)](#) course before starting training to acquire more subject knowledge. Courses are available in maths, physics, languages, chemistry, computing, biology, geography, English, design and technology, religious education and primary maths. Course length varies.

To become a qualified teacher, there are a number of courses centred on school-led or university-led training which confer QTS. We will now cover these in more detail but use the links to conduct further research.

## **University led routes**

[A qualifying degree](#). An option for primary teaching and a limited number of secondary programmes is to study for a Bachelor of Education (BEd) or BA/BSc with QTS which includes degree study and a teaching component.

[Postgraduate Certificate in Education \(PGCE\)](#). Courses usually last one academic year if completed full-time, but part-time and flexible learning options are also available, albeit in limited supply. You attend classes at the university or college where you're based and will also spend a minimum of 24 weeks on placement in at least two schools for both primary and secondary courses. Placements are usually arranged by the university with their partner schools. During your studies for the PGCE you can gain up to 60 masters-level credits.

## **School based routes: Unsalaries and Salaried**

[School-centred Initial teacher training \(SCITT\)](#). SCITT programmes are usually one year and lead to qualified teacher status (QTS). They are

designed and delivered by groups of neighbouring schools and colleges, taught by experienced, practising teachers and often tailored towards local teaching needs. Most also award you a PGCE validated by a higher education institution.

**School Direct (tuition fee)**. School Direct places are offered by a school or group of schools in partnership with an accredited teacher training institution.

**Important:** In December 2022, the Department for Education published guidance which said that accredited providers should cease marketing a 'School Direct' fee-funded route to candidates for courses starting from September 2024.

**School Direct (Salaried)**. This is similar to the School Direct route, but trainees are employed as an unqualified teacher with a salary subsidised by the Department for Education. This programme is open to graduates usually with three or more years' school-based experience. Check if this also includes a PGCE as some do not. Whilst all courses will result in an award of QTS, some providers may charge an additional fee if you decide to opt-in to their PGCE offer.

**Important:** At the time of publication, The Department for Education is considering how to consolidate the School Direct Salaried route and Postgraduate teacher apprenticeship into a single employment-based route under the apprenticeships banner.

**Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship (England only)**. Like the School Direct salaried route, you'll earn a salary on the unqualified teachers' pay scale. Apprentices will work towards attaining qualified teacher status (QTS). Search for training programmes with the DfE 'Find postgraduate teacher training' service. Check if this also includes a PGCE as some do not.

**Assessment only (AO)**. Provides a route for those with considerable experience of working in at least two schools or colleges to gain Qualified

Teacher Status (QTS). Candidates must meet the same entry criteria as ITT programmes. The route is designed for experienced unqualified teachers, instructors, cover-supervisors and HLTAs. It is also available for experienced FE lecturers who are now working in school and wish to gain QTS.

**Teach First.** A two-year, salaried leadership development training programme. Teachers work in challenging early years, primary or secondary schools in England and Wales.

**Now Teach.** Now Teach was set up in 2016 to encourage people who have already had one successful career to retrain as teachers. Currently offer unsalaried places in secondary schools in London, Hastings, East Anglia and the West Midlands.

**HMC Teacher Training.** This is a two-year training route in HMC independent senior schools across the UK. Trainee posts are salaried, and you work towards QTS and a PGCE as soon as you start in school.

**Researchers in Schools (RIS).** RIS is a salaried two-year teacher training programme based in non-selective state schools across England for researchers who have completed or are about to complete their PhD.

## **Early Years Teaching**

If you want to teach children aged 0–5 you need to complete early years initial teacher training (EYITT) leading to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS). You need a degree and at least a GCSE C/4 grade (or equivalent) in English, maths and science. There are four routes to achieving EYTS:

- Postgraduate training: a 12-month full-time academic course with school placements for degree holders.
- Postgraduate employment based graduate entry: a 12-month part-time programme for graduates already working in an early years setting.

- Postgraduate assessment only: taking place over three months, this self-funded route is for graduates with experience of working with children from 0–5 and who meet the Teachers’ Standards (Early Years) with no need for further training.
- Undergraduate: a full-time, three to four-year route leading to EYTS for those studying for a degree in an early childhood-related subject.

EYTS status is different to QTS, allowing you to specialise in working with children up to five years old. Applicants apply directly to the provider. The [Department for Education](#) website has more information about how to become an early years teacher including a link to a full list of providers offering training programmes leading to EYTS.

## Primary teaching

Primary schools cover Key Stage 1 (5–7 year-olds) and Key Stage 2 (7–11 year-olds). So, it is important you feel confident about teaching the wide range of national curriculum subjects. Maintained schools in England are legally required to follow the statutory national curriculum. However, academies and free schools do not, although they still have to teach a balanced and broadly based curriculum that includes English, maths, science and RE. Although not essential, it is advantageous to have a degree which is clearly and substantially relevant to at least one of the subjects of the primary curriculum. These are:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| • art and design        | • music  |
| • design and technology | • physical education   |
| • English               | • ancient or modern foreign languages (at Key Stage 2, age 7–11) |
| • geography             | • science  |
| • history               |  |
| • computing             |  |
| • mathematics           |  |

All schools also need to make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and religious education.

It is also possible to train as a specialist in subjects such as physical education, mathematics, computing, modern foreign languages and other subjects. Use DfE '[Find postgraduate teacher training](#)' to find the available training programmes and specialisms.

All institutions offering PGCE courses must satisfy themselves that the content of applicants' previous education provides the necessary foundation for work as a primary teacher. It is therefore very important that you check with a primary PGCE provider that your proposed degree will be appropriate. This does not mean that your degree has to have covered all, or even most, of the subjects in the primary curriculum. But if you intend to train in a specialist subject, for example in primary mathematics, then a named degree or degree with significant mathematics content (at least 180 credits) would be an advantage. A level maths can also be taken into account.

It is for you to decide whether to take your remaining credits in other school subject areas, or further strengthen your subject expertise in your main area of study. We strongly advise you not to spread your modules too widely across the school curriculum, but to cluster them in one or two areas so that the specialism you offer to any future employer is clear.

Please note, that many initial teacher training providers accept non-curriculum-based degrees, e.g. psychology, social sciences, childhood and youth. However, you are strongly encouraged to check this out with the initial teacher training providers you may wish to apply to. In these cases, you may have to provide evidence of strength in other areas such as A-levels in national curriculum subjects and/or school experience or working with young people.

An honours degree (360 credits) with a 2:2 classification is usually considered the minimum requirement for entry to teacher training. Many

initial teacher training providers will stipulate a 2:1. If you do not meet these criteria, for example if you have an ordinary degree (without honours) or a third-class honours degree we highly recommend you contact the initial teacher training providers you intend to apply to.

However, you should ensure that you meet all the other requirements for entry to primary teaching. You must have a GCSE (or equivalent qualification) of grade C/4 or equivalent in English language, mathematics and science.

If you are in any doubt, you should seek advice from the institution you are applying to for initial teacher training. Your student support team is also available to help you should you wish to discuss your programme of study.



## Secondary teaching

For admission to a secondary PGCE course in England (for pupils aged 11–18) you will need to ensure a clear core of study in your degree in subjects relevant to the one you wish to train to teach (although relevant experience will also be taken into consideration). Although initial teacher training providers may decide (or you may request) you need to take a Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) course, should there be concern about your subject knowledge.

Secondary schools cover Key Stage 3 (11–14-year-olds) and Key Stage 4 (14–16 year-olds) and sometimes post-16.

Compulsory [national curriculum subjects](#) are:

- English
- maths
- science
- history
- geography
- modern foreign languages
- design and technology
- art and design
- music
- physical education
- citizenship
- computing



Schools must also offer religious education (RE), sex and relationship education (SRE) and careers guidance. Some schools additionally offer personal, social and health education (PSHE).

Schools also offer subjects outside this core list, for example, drama, dance, and media studies, and initial teacher training courses exist to accommodate them.

The most recent regulations do not specify how many years of equivalent subject study your degree should have. However, we recommend that for an OU degree (360 credits) you take at least 180 credits' worth of modules that are appropriate to the subject you intend to teach. Furthermore, to ensure your modules give you a good grounding in the subject, especially for the requirement to be able to teach up to A-level/BTEC National/T Level/NVQ level 3, you may want to consider taking more than 180 credits in your chosen subject.

## **Qualifying overseas**

[International qualified teacher status](#) (iQTS) is a new teaching qualification backed by the Department for Education (DfE). iQTS is equivalent to qualified teacher status (QTS). You can train where you live and work, with no need to visit the UK.

Following an initial pilot in 2022, the DfE is now preparing to roll the qualification out more broadly and has approved eight providers.

Once awarded iQTS by their provider, if a candidate wishes to gain QTS, they will apply to the DfE alongside other teachers who are already eligible for QTS on the basis of having an overseas qualification. Please refer to the accredited training providers for more details including entry requirements, selection and how to apply. Please note, one key difference is that some providers will expect you to be employed in a school as a teacher whilst others may support placements (non-employed).



No DfE funding is available for participation in the provision of the iQTS qualification. Trainee fees for iQTS are decided by individual training providers.

## **Applying for primary and secondary initial teacher training**

You will need to use The Department for Education '[Apply](#)' service, although exceptions include Teach First, HMC Teacher Training, Researchers in Schools, and Now Teach which require direct applications through their websites. The information requested for your application is much the same as was used for UCAS. It does not need to be completed all in one go. You can find tips on writing your application, finding referees and preparing for interviews on the [Get into Teaching](#) website.

Before applying you'll first need to use the Department for Education (DfE) '[Find postgraduate teacher training](#)' website.

All students can make up to **four choices** in their initial application. Remember that places are allocated on a first come, first served basis. The Apply system runs from 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at 6pm.

Training providers have **30 working days** to reply to your application. You can withdraw an application at any time and apply to a different course if you want to. You can also amend and add to these choices at any time until you submit your application. If training providers do not respond within 30 working days, you'll be able to apply for another programme while you wait for a response. You can only accept one offer.

You should apply as soon as possible to give yourself the best chance of getting the teacher training place you want. For many OU students, they will be applying for initial teacher training whilst they study their final module. Your degree result will need to be confirmed prior to commencing teacher training. Most OU students will have their classification confirmed

by late July, however for some students, depending on when you take your final module, your degree may not be awarded until December.

## **Changes to the professional skills tests**

Professional Skills Tests were replaced with provider-led assurance for all new entrants into teacher training from 1 April 2020. Initial teacher training providers will assure a candidate's fundamental English and mathematics either before or during their course. This applies to all routes into teaching.

## **Further education teaching**

Teachers in further education (FE) work mainly with post-16 and/or adult learners. They teach at all levels including basic skills, academic teaching and vocational training. To teach vocational courses you'll be expected to be an expert and qualified in your professional field. For academic subjects you will have at least a degree or relevant subject in the qualification you will teach. To teach basic skills you will be expected to have experience and qualifications in numeracy, literacy, ESOL or Special Educational Needs (SEN).

There is a broad consensus that the further education and skills sector is facing a growing crisis in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff, with high levels of persistent vacancies in priority areas such as construction, engineering, health and social care and science and maths. The report, [Developing Industry-Expert Teaching For Higher Skills](#), provides a detailed commentary on the current FE landscape.

Formal qualification requirements for FE teachers were revoked in September 2013, but the sector still recognises the need for good teaching qualifications. For new entrants to the profession in England the usual route is a PGCE in Further Education or Post Compulsory Education. This can be a full-time university-based course, or part-time in-service course. It may be possible to secure a job in FE without obtaining a PGCE with the

expectation of qualifying in-service, but it will be up to employers to decide what qualifications they require their staff to have and what professional development is appropriate.

The qualifications for the sector are complicated with legacy qualifications still being referred to such as The Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS), Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) and Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). These have now been replaced by a new suite of teaching qualifications approved for the sector and are offered by universities, colleges and other training providers.

### **Level 3 Award in Education and Training**

A short introductory course including peer-to-peer teaching practice, which you can take without the need to have a placement or be employed as a teacher.

### **Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training**

Develops practical teaching skills and includes a minimum of 30 hours of teaching practice.

### **Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training**

Training for a full teaching role which includes educational theory and a minimum of 100 hours of teaching practice. It's possible to include specialist training at this level in literacy, English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), mathematics or teaching disabled learners.

**PGCEs in post-compulsory education** continue to be offered by higher education institutions either directly or through associated colleges. The PGCE incorporates the requirements of the level 5 diploma but offers additional units at a higher level. The PGCE can be undertaken as a full-time one-year course, incorporating teaching practice, or on a part-time basis. It should also enable you to apply for [Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills \(QTLS\)](#) status which is

recognised as equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in schools for [SET members](#).

### **Level 5 FE teaching apprenticeship**

The Learning and Skills Apprenticeship is an existing high-level qualification which has a teaching/training practice requirement. It is an **'in service'** qualification designed for those working or wishing to work as teachers/trainers. The apprenticeship has included a Level 2 Certificate in Safeguarding and Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training. In January 2022 an [updated teacher apprenticeship](#) for the further education sector has been proposed which would meet the eligibility criteria for Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status and remove the mandatory qualifications (level 5 diploma in education & training and level 2 safeguarding).

If you would like information and guidance about becoming a teacher in the FE and training sector, please visit the [Teach in Further Education](#) website. If you are currently working in the FE and training sector and want some more information and advice the [FE Advice](#) service can help with a range of topics including teaching qualifications for the FE & Training sector.

### **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 job market. We recommend you visit [Vitae](#), [Jobs.ac.uk](#) and [Prospects](#).

## **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**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) involves teaching English, either in the UK or overseas, to students whose first or main language is not English. TEFL teachers work in commercial language schools, primary and secondary schools, in FE and in the community. There are also opportunities in development organisations, government departments, volunteer organisations, multinational companies and The British Council. Some may also teach in industry while others are self-employed. Students may be of all ages and levels, and in various class sizes, depending on where you teach. Classes are usually taught in English, even with beginners.

TEFL is increasingly a graduate role, and it is now more difficult for those with no formal qualifications to obtain posts, and almost impossible in the UK. If you have a good basic education and an excellent command of English, it is still sometimes possible to find work in the private sector abroad with no training or experience, but a degree is often required.

Many language schools in the UK and abroad offer training courses ranging from short introductions lasting a couple of days to intensive certificate courses lasting four to six weeks.

Deciding which course to take depends on whether you want a dedicated career in TEFL or if you want to use your qualification to gain experience and see the world. The two most commonly accepted courses are:

- [Trinity College London CertTESOL](#) (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
- [Cambridge CELTA](#) (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults).

There are lots of courses out there so make sure you're getting something that meets the international standards of **100 course hours and 6 hours of live practice teaching**. Be very wary of online only courses that do not offer this. It is worth noting that CertTESOL and CELTA are the only two TEFL qualifications that are listed by the British Council as an acceptable introductory teaching qualification that meets their standards and requirements.

## **Special education**

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) education covers a wide range of additional support needs for learners. Two roles we frequently get asked to provide advice on entry requirements are [Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) teacher](#) and [Special Educational Needs Coordinator \(SENCO\)](#).

### **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Teacher**

To become a special educational needs (SEN) teacher in a mainstream school, qualified teacher status (QTS) is required. Many SEN teachers move into this area once they have been teaching for a few years and have gained experience. There are a very limited number of teacher training providers offering postgraduate initial teacher training with SEN as an

additional specialism to national curriculum subjects. You can find these using the DfE programme finder.

### **Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)**

A SENCO is responsible for the daily implementation of the SEN policy across mainstream schools. It is also a requirement that all mainstream schools have a SENCO.

The National Award for SEN Co-ordination (60 Credit Masters level) course is recognised in England as a high-quality professional qualification which must be held by school-based co-ordinators of SEN (SENCOs) within three years of appointment to the role. By law, SENCOs must also be a qualified teacher (QTS, EYTS or QTLS).

### **Other education-related careers**

The focus of this guide has been on mainstream teaching roles across a variety of age ranges although we recognise the education sector is diverse. For this reason, you may want to explore teaching in alternative settings to mainstream education or even explore broader roles in the education sector. Community, environmental, health and heritage education are just a sample of the settings you could explore.

Many OU students also decide to develop their experience in the classroom through support roles, such as [Teaching Assistants](#), before committing to initial teacher training. The [Education Alternatives publication](#) by AGCAS is also a recommended read to understand and explore your options further.



## 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 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.

It is a requirement under The Education Act (2002) for the health of all applicants to teaching courses to be assessed. In England the [Initial teacher training: criteria and supporting advice](#) section C1.3 covers health and character requirements. The activities that a teacher must be able to perform are set out in the [Education \(Health Standards\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#). Initial teacher training providers must ensure that only trainees who have the capacity to teach remain on the programme.

In practice this means initial teacher training providers will ask candidates offered a firm or conditional place to complete a health questionnaire also known as a 'fitness to teach' questionnaire. This is to assess your physical and mental fitness to meet the demands of teaching. Information from your health assessment can also help the provider arrange reasonable adjustments to help you with your studies and school placements. More information may also be requested from an occupational health professional or your GP.

Additionally, [The Equality Act 2010](#) and [Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001](#), require teacher training providers to ensure they are not discriminating against applicants with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN). Applicants with disabilities are under no obligation to disclose these.

The decision to disclose is a personal one, please refer to our downloadable guide for more advice:

- [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 the following recordings:

- [The Access to Work programme](#) (webinar)
- [How to explain a disability with employers](#) (podcast)

## **Additional resources**

- [Supporting Dyslexic Trainees and Teachers](#)  
This guide from the University of Southampton explores strategies for dyslexic teachers and useful resources.
- [Disabled Teachers Network](#)  
A US-based organisation but welcome educators with disabilities from any country. Resources include discussion forums and an E-newsletter.
- [The National Education Union](#)  
Represent and support disabled teachers and holds an annual disabled teachers conference. The NEU have produced guidance on good practice that should be put in place by all employers including their [disability equality toolkit: Reasonable adjustments and case studies](#).

- [Get into Teaching](#)  
More advice and support if you are training to teach and have a disability.

## 7. Funding for teacher training

There are a range of grants, loans, bursaries and awards available to trainee teachers in England. The situation is complex, as the level of tuition fees and support you can access is contingent on the age range, subject and training route you decide upon. Also remember there are [salaried routes](#) into teaching which are detailed in [section 4](#). Your personal circumstances are also taken into account. For more information about the financial support you could receive across the age ranges please visit the following links:

- [Early years](#)
- [Primary and Secondary](#)
- [Further Education](#)

The amount of support available can change each academic year, so it's important that you consult the relevant websites for the most up-to-date information. More information on financial support is available from GOV.UK: [Teacher training funding](#) and [Student finance](#).



## 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?**

There are many teachers with an Open degree, but it is important you have a good knowledge of the subject you will be teaching, which also depends on the setting and age range. This means there will be different expectations between early years, primary, secondary, FE and HE. Contact your preferred initial teacher training providers for specific advice.

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

This will depend on whether you teach primary or secondary, and you will need to consider the views of the providers you are applying to. For primary teaching, you should show a good understanding of national curriculum subjects, although you may have a subject specialism such as PE or maths which means higher level subject knowledge is required. As a rule, at least half your degree should be in your chosen school subject, although this can relate specifically to content and module choice rather than the title of your degree.

### **Is it possible to get on a teacher training course without the required GCSEs?**

You will still need to demonstrate GCSE grade C/4 (or standard equivalent) in mathematics and English, and a science subject for primary education. Initial teacher training providers will make the final decision on whether you meet their conditions – if you don't, they may ask you to sit a GCSE equivalency test or offer other evidence to demonstrate your ability. GCSE

equivalencies are required regardless of any higher qualification in a related subject.

### **Can I teach with a third class or ordinary degree?**

Most initial teacher training providers will not consider applicants without at least a 2:2, so you are highly unlikely to be accepted if you have an ordinary degree (without honours) or a third-class honours degree. In exceptional cases there may be providers who are more open and will look at what skills and school experience an applicant brings, or if they are undertaking postgraduate study. In this scenario, researching and contacting them before applying is essential.

### **Are some teacher training routes recognised as better than others?**

No training route is externally recognised as more favourable than another. There are likely to be factors within your individual circumstances that will mean you have a preference. There is roughly a 50/50 mix of students entering school based and university-based routes. For this reason, make sure you understand your options and research each pathway to help you decide.

### **Are UK teaching qualifications valid abroad?**

They may well have equivalence and currency, but this answer is completely dependent on the country, institution, curriculum and regulations. For these reasons we recommend that once qualified, if you subsequently decide to work overseas, that you independently research the requirements for the country you are interested in moving to and that you contact schools in the region. The TES Institute also has useful article on this subject: [Which qualification do I need to teach abroad?](#)

### **Can I still teach with a criminal conviction?**

There isn't a definitive yes or no answer to this, as it depends on what the conviction is. Teaching is exempt from the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act](#)

[1974](#), and as a potential trainee teacher, you will be subject to enhanced checks by the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS). This means you must disclose any convictions. Your first step is to get advice based on your individual circumstances. We recommend contacting the national charity [NACRO](#) for more advice.

### **Is it possible to teach in secondary schools if you have trained in primary (and vice versa?)**

In theory it is possible with QTS to teach any age range (5-16) and subject, but schools are likely to make a judgement on your suitability based on your knowledge of the national curriculum and content of your academic qualifications. Additionally, if you have QTLS status from teaching in further education and membership with the Society for Education and Training, you will be eligible to work as a qualified teacher in schools in England.

The Government's Teacher Subject Specialism Training Programme is now closed. It was designed to improve the subject knowledge of non-specialist teachers and returning teachers and was open for example to primary teachers looking to teach secondary subjects. In its place, support for non-specialist maths, physics and languages teachers has been assigned to new delivery partners and you can [contact them](#) directly to access support.

### **Am I too old to teach?**

Definitely not! There is no age limit, so it is never too late to train. For example, [Now Teach](#) say their oldest teacher is 72 and the average age of their cohort is currently 51. [Initial Teacher Training Census data](#) show a significant proportion of trainees are 40 and over. The profession is also keen to [support career changers](#) and benefit from their experience. Both [Now Teach](#) and [Transition to Teach](#) are bespoke teacher training support programmes developed exclusively for career changers.

# 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](http://www.open.ac.uk/contact)

## For Welsh speakers

If you would prefer to discuss your study needs in Welsh, please contact The Open University in Wales, based in Cardiff, where we will be pleased to offer personal guidance as well as information about the services available. You may contact us by letter, phone or email, or you are welcome to visit us. We recommend that you make an appointment first to make sure an appropriate adviser will be available.

Although we can offer a range of services for Welsh speakers, our study materials and teaching are normally in English.

Phone: +44 (0) 29 2047 1170

Email: [wales@open.ac.uk](mailto:wales@open.ac.uk)

## I siaradwyr Cymraeg

Os yw hi'n well gennych drafod eich anghenion astudio yn Gymraeg mae croeso i chi gysylltu â'r Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru yng Nghaerdydd lle byddwn

yn falch o roi cyfarwyddyd personol i chi yn ogystal â gwybodaeth am y gwasanaethau sydd ar gael. Gallwch gysylltu â ni drwy lythyr, galwad ffôn neu neges ebost, neu, os yw hi'n well gennych, mae croeso i chi ymweld â ni. Byddem yn argymhell i chi wneud apwyntiad gyntaf i sicrhau y bydd arbenigwr priodol ar gael.

Nodwch, os gwelwch yn dda, er ein bod yn gallu cynnig ystod o wasanaethau i siaradwyr Cymraeg, bod ein deunyddiau cwrs ac addysgu fel arfer yn Saesneg.

Rhif ffon: + 44 (0) 29 2047 1170

Ebost: [wales@open.ac.uk](mailto:wales@open.ac.uk)

## **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](mailto: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.

### TARGETjobs

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

### Department for Education

[The Department of Education](#) for more information about teaching and the routes into teaching.

Tel: +44 (0)800 389 2500 for English speakers

Minicom: +44 (0)117915 8161

You'll find also find information about [postgraduate teacher training](#) courses in England.

## **Teacher Training Advisers**

The Department for Education also have teacher training advisers who are experienced teachers that can provide you with additional support when preparing and applying for teacher training. [Register](#) for this **free service** to be allocated your own dedicated adviser who is on hand to give you any extra help you need.

There's also support available if you want to start teacher training in 2023/2024, with their early engagement team.

## **Facebook - Aspiring Teacher Forum**

This [Facebook group](#) set up by the Department for Education has over 15,000 members. It is for anyone thinking of becoming a teacher in England to come for advice and discussion - whether you're just thinking about it, have an application in progress or are actually in training.

## **UCAS**

[UCAS](#) continues to offer information and advice on undergraduate university- and school-based routes into teaching, as well as support around their application process.

## **Education and Training Foundation**

If you would like information and guidance about becoming a teacher in the FE and training sector, please visit the [Teach in Further Education website](#).

Tel no: 0800 389 2502.

Email: [Teach.FE@education.gov.uk](mailto:Teach.FE@education.gov.uk)

## **Gov.uk Teaching Vacancies**

[Search](#) for teaching, school leadership and education support jobs in England. You can also apply for jobs, set up job alerts and read advice for jobseekers.

## **TeachVac**

[TeachVac](#) helps teachers search for jobs and schools list vacancies.

Registration and use are free for teachers, trainees and schools.

