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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 hurdles 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 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.

**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 for the profession from research alone. Work experience is almost always a mandatory requirement 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.

If you already have sufficient 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 11-14.

**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 of these factors will also impact upon 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, in England primary teachers can now develop a subject specialism such as maths, PE and English.
Availability of teaching posts & 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), eTeach (primary & 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 2019-20 allocations 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 further support visit OU’s Careers and Employability Services.
2. Where to start

Many OU students enter teaching and, in general, an OU degree 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.

Many initial teacher training (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, initial teacher training 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.

OU students should be aware that, depending on when you take your final module, your degree may not be awarded until December. Most initial teacher training 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 requirements can change year on year.

If you have an overseas qualification, an incomplete qualification from another institution or a professional qualification and you are not sure you meet the entry requirements for initial teacher training 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 & 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.

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 21-23.

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 be expected to have:

- Classroom experience in the age range and setting you wish to teach. See pages 11-14 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 28 for further guidance.
- Undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. You’ll need to disclose any criminal convictions, cautions, or bind-overs.

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 sit GCSEs via an evening class at a local further education college or adult education provider. For more information about the OU maths modules and their equivalence to GCSEs and other qualifications, go to OU Maths Choices.
If you have qualifications from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC) can give advice on whether qualifications are equivalent. They may also be able to provide certification.

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 website or with our new 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.

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 for the profession from research alone. Recent work experience in the age range and subject you want to teach in is almost always a mandatory requirement for the training routes into the profession. You can often build your experience as you study.
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 with activities such as mentoring, 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 programme such as The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme and the British Council scheme - Teach abroad as an English language assistant.

In summary, your planning on this is something you will need to start thinking about 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 further ideas on securing teaching experience.

How much work experience do I need?

The requirements on prior school experience varies between initial teacher training providers which is why all applicants should check these expectations first. You may have heard a minimum requirement of ten days experience in schools and many providers will request this although there is no formal guidance on the number of days. Your school-based experience should predominately be in the age range and subject (if applicable) you want to teach. Experience should also be “recent”. Ideally the last 12 months but providers will consider the last 2-3 years.

How can I arrange getting school experience independently?

This is often the most effective route to getting work experience and usually requires some chutzpah and perseverance on your part in getting it organised. The Department for Education and Tes Institute Team 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 Get
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.

Making the most of your experience

It’s really useful to break down your thinking 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 role of a 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 UCAS have produced some great ideas on preparing for teacher training that includes tips you could make use of right now.
Getting paid experience

As well as volunteering many OU students are already working or seeking roles in education whilst they study such as teaching assistants and learning mentors. Some students may decide to delay applying for initial teacher training and look to gain further educational experience to develop their skills and confidence further.

If you’re in your penultimate year of a STEM related degree and are interested in teaching secondary maths or physics, then the paid internship programme could be of interest. We are hoping this will run again in 2020 where internships take place during June and July. Check Get into Teaching for further updates.
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 many 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 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. Can be 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.

Troops to Teachers. From September 2018 a bursary will be available to eligible veterans who study for an undergraduate degree with qualified teacher status (QTS) in England, in secondary biology, physics, chemistry, computing, maths or modern foreign languages.

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 for both primary and secondary courses on placement across two schools. 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: Unsalaried & 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. You can expect to undertake placements and training in schools with experience of initial teacher training, including teaching school alliances. School Direct programmes may also include a PGCE.

**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.

**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.

**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).** Assessment only provides a route for those with considerable experience of working in at least two schools or colleges to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). 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. Applications are made directly to Teach First and not UCAS.

**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.

**Premier Pathways.** A paid two-year programme, Premier Pathways is school-based teacher training for graduates with a 2:1 or above. Participants complete the course at a school of their choice, graduating with QTS and a PGCE.

**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. You also need to pass professional skills tests in numeracy and literacy.

There are four routes to achieving EYTS:

- **Graduate entry:** a 12-month full-time academic course with school placements.
- **Employment based graduate entry:** a 12-month part-time programme for graduates already working in an early years setting.
- **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.

Just remember 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 further information on 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
- design and technology
- English
- geography
- history
- computing
- mathematics
- music
- physical education
- ancient or modern foreign languages (at Key Stage 2, age 7–11)
- science

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 (240 credits) would be an advantage.
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 & 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 this 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 KS3 (11–14 year olds) and KS4 (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’ equivalence of subject study your degree should have. However, we recommend that for an OU degree (360 credits) you take at least 240 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/NVQ level 3, you may want to consider taking more than 240 credits in your chosen subject.

Applying for primary & secondary initial teacher training

Applications for the majority of initial teacher training courses in England should be made through UCAS but to find programmes you’ll first need to use DfE ‘Find postgraduate teacher training’. For 2020 entry this goes live on 1st October 2019. You will also be able to track your application and respond to offers within the UCAS system. Exceptions include Teach First, HMC Teacher Training, Researchers in Schools, Premier Pathways, Now Teach and the Graduate Teaching Scheme which require direct applications through their websites.

Information on initial teacher training programmes is released ahead of time usually by the start of each academic year.
The application process for UCAS Teacher Training operates in two phases; Apply 1 and Apply 2. All students can make up to three choices within Apply 1. If you do not hold any offers from the first phase you can enter Apply 2.

Apply 1 opens on 8th October 2019 for you to apply for training courses that start the following autumn in September 2020 and you can begin making applications as soon as this window opens.

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. The majority of OU students will have their classification confirmed by late July although for a minority of students, depending on when you take your final module, your degree may not be awarded until December. The UCAS Teacher Training website has a range of guides and video resources to take you through the application process step by step.

Changes to the professional skills tests

The government announced a new approach to assessing the numeracy and literacy of prospective teachers in July 2019. Professional Skills Tests will be scrapped for the academic year starting in 2020. This means you will not be required to take national professional skills tests prior to the start of your initial teacher training which would usually be during the 2019/20 academic year. Instead, the current skills tests will be replaced with a new system where trainees will be assured against a set of fundamental maths and English skills by the end of their initial teacher training.

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).
Shortage areas in FE are maths, English and STEM. There will also need to be recruitment related to the new T level subjects coming in September 2020.

According to the latest FE sector workforce report for England the three largest subject areas being taught are: arts, media and publishing; health, public services and care; and engineering and manufacturing technologies.

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.

The FE advice line 0300 303 1877 and www.feadvice.org.uk remain the main resources for those interested in working in this sector in England. You can also email them: feadvice@etfoundation.co.uk.

**Higher education lecturing & 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 to be notified of any future vacancies by email. Simply complete the expressions of interest request 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, and in FE. 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 becoming a Special Educational Needs (SEN) teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Further details on both roles is provided by the TES Institute.

**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 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. It is 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 as well as our webinar on Educational Alternatives to Teaching on the OU careers forums and webinar.
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 document available below and make informal enquiries as part of an information gathering exercise to find out how the disability guidance relates to you.

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. ITT providers must ensure that only trainees who have the capacity to teach remain on the programme.

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 so to help you to make your decision we have produced support materials on disclosure within our two guides:

- Your Career Planning Guide
- Job Seeking Resources and Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

You will also find some helpful information on our services for disabled students webpages and two recorded webinars:

- The Access to Work programme
• **Demonstrating your Potential: Adjustments and Openness**

Initial teacher training providers do have a responsibility to ensure that individuals have the health and physical capacity to teach and will not put children and young people at risk of harm. This means all successful applicants are likely to be asked to complete a fitness questionnaire prior to commencing teacher training.

**Additional resources**

• **The Dyslexic Teachers’ Association**
  A charitable organisation that aims to provide support for teachers and trainees with dyslexia.

• **Disabled Teachers Network**
  A US-based organisation but welcome educators with disabilities from any country. Resources include discussion forums and an E-newsletter.

• **TES Connect Forums**
  Join online forums to connect with like-minded professionals and a great opportunity to ask for advice and learn from others. Useful discussion threads include training to teach with a disability.

• **National Union of Teachers**
  Represent and support disabled teachers and holds an annual disabled teachers conference.

• **Get into Teaching**
  Further 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 will access. Also remember there are salaried routes into teaching which are detailed in section 4. Your personal circumstances are also taken into account. For further information on the financial help you could receive across the age ranges please visit the following links:

- [Early years](#)
- [Primary & 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. Further information on financial support is available from GOV.UK: [Teacher training funding](#) & [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 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 if you are teaching primary or secondary and you will need to take into account 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 general 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 may perhaps be 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 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 has also written a useful article on this subject: [Which qualification do I need to teach abroad?](https://www.tes.com/news/teaching-abroad/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 what the conviction is. Teaching is exempt from the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/46) and as a potential trainee teacher, you will be subject to enhanced checks by the [Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)](https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-and-barring-service-check). 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](https://nacro.org.uk/) for further advice.

**Is it possible to teach in primary schools if you have trained in secondary (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.
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

Our advisers are available to take your call Monday to Friday 08:00 to 20:00, Saturday 09:00 to 17:00 UK time excluding bank holidays.

For Welsh speakers

If you would prefer to discuss your study needs in Welsh, please contact The Open University in Wales 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 are able to 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

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 lythyrau, galwad ffôn neu neges ebost, neu, os yw hi’n well gennych, mae
croeso i chi ymweld â ni. Byddem yn argymell 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

**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.

TARGETpostgrad

TARGETpostgrad 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 further information about teaching and the routes into teaching.

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

Tel: +44 (0)800 085 0971 for Welsh speakers

Minicom: +44 (0)117915 8161

You’ll find also find information about postgraduate teacher training courses in England.
UCAS Teacher Training

UCAS Teacher Training offers information and advice on university and school-based routes into teaching as well as support around the application process.

Education & Training Foundation

Education & Training Foundation contains comprehensive information about the further education and training sector in England.

Tel no: 0300 303 1877

Email: feadviceline@etfoundation.co.uk

TeachVac

TeachVac helps teachers search for jobs and schools list vacancies. Registration and use are free for teachers, trainees and schools.