

## Applying for a PGCE

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### Entry requirements

Trainee teachers must meet a set of professional standards determined by the government, before they can be awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). They do this by completing a period of initial teacher training (ITT) followed by an induction year in employment as a teacher. For an overview of the different routes into teaching, see [teacher training](#).

Universities offering the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) or PGDE (Professional Graduate Diploma in Education) use nationally agreed professional standards to determine their minimum entry requirements and may also employ additional criteria. The standards and requirements listed below apply to England. For variations in the other countries of the UK, see [teaching in Scotland](#), [teaching in Wales](#), and [teaching in Northern Ireland](#). Full details are available from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (<http://www.tda.gov.uk>)

Minimum requirements are:

#### UK degree or equivalent qualification

Secondary courses:

Your degree subject should be directly relevant to the subject you hope to teach. If it is not, you should contact the institution you want to apply to and ask if they will consider you on the basis of your current qualifications. You might consider studying some higher education modules in the subject you hope to teach. This can be done on a part-time or distance learning basis.

Primary courses:

Some ITT providers prefer that you have a degree in a national curriculum subject. If you don't, it is very important to stress in your personal statement the relevance of your education to the curriculum you will be teaching. You may want to highlight specific modules that relate to English, mathematics or science, or mention your A-levels if they are in national curriculum subjects.

Degree equivalency:

The final decision on whether your qualification is equivalent to a required degree rests with the ITT provider. The UK National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) (<http://www.naric.org.uk>) can provide advice on comparability of overseas and UK qualifications. There is a charge for this.

## **Grade C or above in GCSE English and Mathematics, and for Primary, also GCSE Science**

If you don't have the GCSEs required, check whether the ITT provider will view your qualifications as equivalent. Some may offer equivalency tests. Alternatively, study and take the GCSE examination. Further education (FE) colleges/adult education centres and distance learning institutions usually run one-year GCSE evening or day classes.

## **Fitness to teach**

All candidates must, by law, satisfy fitness to teach requirements before acceptance onto a course. The ultimate decision about a person's fitness rests with admissions tutors, but they will be influenced by recommendations from the college medical adviser (often a local GP). Medical fitness is assessed initially via a lengthy questionnaire completed by all students but, in exceptional cases or if doubts are raised about their ability to teach, students may subsequently be required to have a formal medical examination .

Many disabled people are medically fit to teach, and employers make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people to carry out their duties effectively. SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) (<http://www.skill.org.uk>) produces a useful booklet called Into Teaching. Advice from a relevant medical specialist or non-medical specialist (e.g. the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) (<http://www.rnib.org.uk/>)) could help you to prepare a case for admission.

## **Declaration of criminal convictions**

The provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which allow convictions for criminal offences to be regarded as 'spent' after a period of time, do not apply to the teaching profession. You are required to declare any previous convictions. All trainee teachers undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) (<http://www.crb.gov.uk>) check before starting school-based training, in order to establish that they do not have a record that would exclude them from work that involves contact with children.

## **Work experience**

Relevant work experience can greatly enhance your chances of making a successful application. Most ITT providers expect you to have substantial work experience, and many require it. You should aim to build up experience working with children of a relevant age, including some time spent in school. Find information about how to get relevant work experience under [teacher training](#).

## **For international students**

If you are an international student with a degree from a UK higher education institution (or equivalent), you can apply to do a PGCE course.

You must have a very good standard of written and spoken English and you must have the qualifications (or equivalent qualifications) that an ITT provider asks of all its applicants.

You should be aware that a teaching qualification gained in the UK may not qualify you to teach in your home country. If you are thinking of training in the UK and then teaching in your home country, check first in your own country to see whether UK qualifications are acceptable.

You will only be eligible for the government-funded bursaries to train as a teacher if you have been in the UK for three years or more and have a residency visa.

Once you have completed your teacher training, you may need a work permit if you wish

to teach in the UK. This could be challenging, especially if you have trained to teach at primary level.

## **How to apply**

### **Applying through the GTTR**

The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk>) processes most applications for places on PGCE courses, some distance learning courses, some further education (FE) courses, and the majority of school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) schemes in England and Wales. All Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs), except the University of Paisley, use the GTTR system. For initial teacher training (ITT) providers who do not use the GTTR system, you need to apply directly to the institution.

All applications are made online. You can apply online from September 2009 for entry to courses starting in 2010. You are encouraged to talk directly to ITT providers about any specific queries you have regarding their courses. Telephone numbers are available on the GTTR website.

### **Deferred entry**

There is no deferred entry system for full-time, one- and two-year postgraduate teacher training courses. If you are planning to travel, contact the ITT providers to discuss your plans as some may agree to defer your place when they make an offer. If you accept a deferred place for 2011 entry, you must still meet all the conditions of the offer by August 2010.

### **Closing dates**

Middle years and secondary applicants can apply up to 30 June 2010 for 2010 entry. Popular courses (such as PE and history) may fill up quickly, and courses can become full as early as January. Applications are processed by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk>) in the order in which they are received and are dispatched daily to ITT providers from early October 2009.

For primary PGCE courses, the GTTR must receive your completed application and reference by 1 December 2009, but you are strongly advised to apply early. Competition for places is stiff, and candidates are often interviewed and selected before the closing deadline. On the other hand, ITT providers are still able to receive applications after 1 December if they have places available.

Give yourself plenty of time to ask your referee for a reference and to confirm that the referee will provide your reference online. You will not be able to submit your application until the reference is completed.

### **Late applications**

If you are applying late, check that courses you are applying for are not full before you put them on the application. The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk>) course search facility (on their website) provides the latest course vacancy information.

If the GTTR receive your application after 30 June 2010, they will not send it to any of your chosen providers. You will be entered directly into clearing. You can then apply directly to ITT providers with places.

The GTTR accepts applications for PGCE courses in England and Wales. For more information about applying in Scotland and Northern Ireland, see [teaching in Scotland](#) and

[teaching in Northern Ireland](#). Also, see the section on [completing the form](#).

## Completing the form

- Follow the step-by-step instructions carefully and use the help facility and FAQs.
- When you first register on the system, make sure the details are correct, as these are transferred to the online application when you start to apply.
- Don't rush the application. This is your chance to persuade the initial teacher training (ITT) providers to invite you for interview. Use it to provide evidence of your motivation, experiences, qualifications, and understanding of teacher training and the role of a teacher.
- You can log in and out of your application so you don't need to fill in everything at once.

## Selecting courses

You can apply for up to four courses, of which a maximum of two can be primary teaching courses. The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk>) will send your application to one ITT provider at a time, following your stated order of preference. For secondary, middle years (Key Stages 2 and 3) and some primary courses, you must also choose a subject specialism.

## Content of first degree

- Include all the individual subjects that make up your degree course. They should add up to 100%. If there is not enough room for all the subjects, group related subjects together under a main heading and provide a percentage for each group.
- If you are applying for a secondary course, this section helps admissions tutors assess whether your degree course covers enough of the subject you will be training to teach.
- If you are applying for a primary course, this section helps admissions tutors identify any specialist knowledge relevant to teaching the range of subjects in the national curriculum. For primary, it is especially important to include skills courses, such as IT or statistics, and modules that illustrate your knowledge of cross-curricular themes being developed in primary schools, e.g. environmental education, community or citizenship, health education, equality and diversity.

## Personal statement

This is a crucial part of the application. You have 47 lines in which to persuade the ITT providers to offer you an interview. It must be concise and sell your potential to be a successful teacher.

Your personal statement should reflect the courses you have applied for. Each ITT provider will want you to show commitment to the age range for which you have applied. If you decide to apply for both primary and secondary courses, use the personal statement to explain why.

Write your draft personal statement in Word so you can check it for spelling and grammatical errors and then copy and paste it into the application.

Note that the GTTR uses the UCAS Similarity Detection Service (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk/students/howtoapply/personalstatement/similarity>) to ensure that each personal statement received is entirely the candidate's own work.

## Making the best use of the limited space

The online application asks:

*'Describe briefly your reasons for wanting to teach, giving the relevance of your previous education and experience, including teaching, visits to schools and other work with young people.'*

- Ensure you give evidence of your experiences and education to support your arguments.
- Think about what skills make an effective teacher. Which of these skills do you have?
- Reflect on what you have observed in any work experience in state schools. What did you do? What did you learn from it?
- What else have you done to show you enjoy working with young people or children? In a team? With parents?
- Comment on work experience in other settings, such as voluntary work and extracurricular activities, and show how the skills you gained will help you become an effective teacher.
- How will the skills, as well as the knowledge, gained from your undergraduate degree help you in the classroom?

In addition, you should use this space to explain anything not made clear elsewhere on the application, such as reasons for restricted geographical mobility.

Show your personal statement to a careers adviser or tutor to get their feedback about the content. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (<http://www.tda.gov.uk>) produces a useful Teacher Training: Application Form Assistant (<http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/thetrainingprocess/makingyourapplication/applicati...>) that can help you write your personal statement.

## **Work experience**

You have 20 lines in which to list where you have worked (paid and unpaid), dates, job titles, employers and responsibilities. Use the personal statement to elaborate on how this [work experience](#) is relevant to teaching.

## **Referees**

- You are asked for two referees. The second referee is often not taken up by ITT providers.
- You will not be able to pay for your application or submit it until your principal referee has provided an online reference.
- Most delays with applications are the result of references not being provided. You may need to check and chase your referee yourself.
- Your principal referee can view all the information on your application online when providing your reference.

## **Before you send your application to the GTTR**

Once you have completed the application, print out a copy so that you can remind yourself of the content before any [interviews](#).

## **The interview**

All short-listed candidates are invited to an interview or selection day. The process varies with each institution but normally includes an individual interview and other selection activities. These may include:

- written tests;
- presentations;
- group discussion;
- teaching mini-lessons;
- subject-specific practical exercises, e.g. music audition, drama or sports activities;

- a visit to a local school.

The selection process should last at least half a day and will be intensive. Details of topics for presentations, or notes on how to prepare for the selection process, may be sent to you in advance. You may be asked to complete a subject knowledge profile or to read an article in preparation for a written exercise. A great way of preparing for interviews and presentations is to go on the Times Educational Supplement (TES) (<http://www.tes.co.uk>) web forum for prospective student teachers. In the past, this has contained threads on likely questions, what to wear for your interview, and how to handle presentations and group interviews.

## Selection tests

- *Primary*: As entry to primary courses is particularly competitive, many primary interview days include a written exercise designed to assess your spelling, punctuation and use of grammar. Mathematics tests are also used to assess candidates, regardless of their GCSE grade. You may also be asked to do an ICT test or audit.
- *Secondary*: Selection tests are less common at secondary level. You may have to complete a subject knowledge test. Applicants for modern languages may be asked to do a written test (or conduct part of the interview) in their chosen language. Candidates for subjects such as PE and music may have to do a practical exercise.

## Presentations

The interviewers will be looking for your ability to structure a presentation (with an introduction, main idea and conclusion) and communicate your ideas clearly.

When preparing, ask yourself:

- Have I tailored my presentation to the audience?
- Have I used appropriate language?

Providers want students who are enthusiastic and can provide stimulating activities for young people. Course providers may welcome opportunities for interaction, even within a relatively short presentation task.

Don't fall into the trap of getting too hung up on perfecting presentation content. Instead, think about your body language and whether your presentation gives a flavour of how you will perform as a teacher in a classroom setting.

## Group and individual interviews

The individual interview is likely to last around 20 minutes, although it may range from just five minutes to over an hour. The interview may follow directly on from a presentation task or a test and may involve follow-up questions about the subject you have presented. Some institutions may interview candidates in pairs or in a larger group.

## Interview selection criteria

The selection process is designed to assess your suitability for teaching against criteria such as:

- communication skills;
- personal, social and intellectual qualities;
- commitment to teaching;
- subject-related competencies;
- relevant prior experience.

Whether you are interviewed individually or in a group, remember to demonstrate your ability to reflect on what your experience has taught you about the realities of teaching. Ideally, you should start to pre-empt interview questions during your pre-application work experience. When you are on work experience, ask questions and note down the answers as well as your own observations. Draw on that material when you get to interview.

## **Interview tips**

### **How can I prepare for my interview?**

Preparation will help you to feel more at ease and able to manage the process with confidence. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (<http://www.tda.gov.uk>) has useful information on preparing for teaching interviews, and you might like to read more about interview preparation generally.

Dress appropriately - usually a smart outfit. Candidates for PE and drama courses should check with the institution whether there are likely to be any selection activities that require other clothing/sportswear.

Be aware of current education issues. These are very likely to come up at interview.

You should:

- find out about [hot topics](#) in education
- read national curriculum documents;
- read the Times Educational Supplement (TES) (<http://www.tes.co.uk>) and broadsheet newspapers, especially The Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>) on Tuesdays;
- check BBC Education News (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education>);
- watch the national news on television;
- check TeacherNet (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>) and BBC Teachers (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/>).

Reflect on and be prepared to talk about:

- your own schooling;
- your visits to state schools;
- your motivation to teach;
- your degree, its relevance to teaching and your particular interests within the course;
- your potential contribution to a school outside your subject area.

## **Interview technique**

Initial teacher training (ITT) providers want evidence that you will be an effective teacher. They are looking for the closest match between your style and personal skills and those needed by the teaching profession.

Be prepared to talk and to take some risks by revealing your opinions, ideas and attitudes about education.

Extend your answers briefly, to cover closely related points not specifically raised in the question. This makes more for a conversation rather than a question-and-answer session, and the interviewer may pick up the next question from your added information.

[Your university careers service](#) may also have videos about teaching or offer workshops on interview techniques.

## What if I don't get offered a place?

It may be very disappointing, but there are things you can do:

- Ask the admissions tutor for feedback on your interview and your written application. It can take some time for admissions tutors to reply, so be prepared to chase this information. There is also the facility within the GTTR system for tutors to provide feedback.
- If you have the results of an unsuccessful application before mid-March, it is possible to make new choices through the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) (<http://www.gttr.ac.uk>). Between mid-March and 30 June, the GTTR operate an 'Extra' service to allow you to apply to other training providers that still have places. After that, a clearing system operates, allowing you to apply directly to other training providers with places still available.

Some students who are unsuccessful the first time round choose to spend time gaining more classroom experience by working as teaching assistants.

## Contacts and resources

### Publications

The following AGCAS publications should be available in your university careers service.

#### AGCAS publications

*Education Alternatives*, AGCAS Information Booklet, 2009

#### Other publications

*Education Yearbook*, [Pearson Education](#), Annual

*The Independent Schools Yearbook*, [A & C Black](#), Annual

*Into Teaching*, [SKILL \(National Bureau for Students with Disabilities\)](#), 2008

*Primary Education Yearbook*, [Pearson Education](#), 2007

### Websites

*BBC Education News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education>

*BBC Teachers*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/>

*Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)*, <http://www.crb.gov.uk>

*DCSF School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables*,  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables/>

*Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)*, <http://www.bis.gov.uk>

*Eteach*, <http://www.eteach.com>

*extended schools*, <http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/extendedschools>

*General Teaching Council for England (GTC)*, <http://www.gtce.org.uk>

*Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR)*, <http://www.gttr.ac.uk>

*The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>

*Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS)*, <http://www.iaps.org.uk>

*The Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk>

*Independent Schools Council*, <http://www.isc.co.uk>

*International Baccalaureate Organisation*, <http://www.ibo.org>

*NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers)*,  
<http://www.nasuwt.org.uk>

*National Agreement*, <http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/nationalagreement>

*UK National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)*, <http://www.naric.org.uk>

*National Union of Teachers (NUT)*, <http://www.teachers.org.uk>

*The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)*,  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

*Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)*, <http://www.rnib.org.uk/>

*Schools Web Directory*, <http://www.schoolswedirectory.co.uk>

SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities), <http://www.skill.org.uk>  
TeacherNet, <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>  
Teachers TV, <http://www.teachers.tv>  
Teacher Training: Application Form Assistant,  
<http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/thetrainingprocess/makingyourapplication/applicati...>  
The Telegraph, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>  
Times Educational Supplement (TES), <http://www.tes.co.uk>  
Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), <http://www.tda.gov.uk>  
UCAS Similarity Detection Service,  
<http://www.gtrr.ac.uk/students/howtoapply/personalstatement/similarity>  
UK Independent Schools Directory & Guide, <http://www.emetis.com>



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Written by Abby Evans, AGCAS, July 2009.  
Edited by Amy Newton, AGCAS, July 2009.

The work of writers and editors is gratefully acknowledged

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