



How to get a job in FE and training

Looking for a career that's satisfying and rewarding? One that will challenge and stretch you? One that offers a vast array of job opportunities and professional development? One with the potential to change lives and enhance communities? Further education (FE) could be the perfect choice.

Why teach in FE?

The FE and skills sector is the largest and most varied area of education in the UK, with over 4m people currently engaged in vocational training or further education. From hairdressing to horticulture, painting to plumbing, first aid to French, young people and adults across the country are learning new skills and developing professional expertise – and they all need tutors, trainers and assessors.

Think of further education, and chances are you think first of FE colleges. There are more than 370 of them around the UK, employing over 130,000 staff. But the FE and skills sector is much broader than this, encompassing workplace training, adult and community education, sixth form colleges, offender learning, special needs education, apprenticeship support, and much more.

Those working in the sector deliver training at all levels, from basic literacy and numeracy and beginners'

languages to foundation degrees and professional qualifications. Some work closely with industry, while others lead academic, arts or hobby-based courses.

Working environments vary widely too, from lecture theatres and classrooms to workshops and laboratories, to outdoors or even online. And while a full-time working week of around 37 hours (typically including 25 teaching hours) is the norm, there are plenty of opportunities for part-time, evening and temporary work.

How can I get into FE teaching?

The range of routes into a career in FE or training is almost as varied as the range of roles available. Some people come through an education background or interest in teaching, others through industry or a keenness to pass on their professional expertise. And while some enter the sector soon after graduation, others have decades of experience in another profession – perhaps hairdressing, childcare, carpentry

or performing arts – and may never have previously considered a teaching career.

“The sector is good at taking people from different backgrounds and training them up,” advises Andy Forbes, Executive Director, Business Development, at Central Sussex College. “If you're interested in FE, FE will probably be interested in you, so visit your local college for a chat, think about your transferrable skills and life experiences, and start applying for jobs.”

How much will I earn?

Salaries start at around £19,000 for unqualified teachers and £24,000 for those with relevant qualifications, rising to around £36,000 for experienced teachers, and up to £80,000 for those in leadership and management roles. Pay varies depending on the role, subject and area of the country. Some FE teachers supplement their income through exam-marking, private tuition, offering evening classes or writing textbooks.

What qualifications will I need?

Since 2013, teachers in the FE and training sector have not needed specific qualifications. It's now up to employers to decide the appropriate qualifications, skills and experience for any teaching post they want to fill.

Despite the less stringent requirements, most employers prefer tutors to have, or be willing to gain, a teaching qualification. If you're a UK schoolteacher then you're already qualified to work in FE and training. Otherwise there are two types of training you could consider: pre-service and in-service.

Pre-service means you undertake relevant training before getting a job. You'll usually need at least a level 3 qualification (i.e. A level standard or equivalent) to be accepted. Courses typically last a year and tend to be largely classroom-based at the start, with work-based placements as the training progresses.

In-service training is the preferred route for over half of FE teachers. After securing a job in the sector you undertake training part time alongside your work, normally for a half a day or an evening each week for two years. Your employer may support you by funding some or all of your training and/or giving you time off to study.

Whichever route you choose, there are three levels of qualification. You don't need to

work through them in succession; instead choose whichever best fits your needs:

Level 3 Award in Education and Training (12 credits)

This introductory teaching qualification has no minimum teaching practice requirement, so can be undertaken by people not already in a teaching role.

Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training (36 credits)

Suitable for those who want a qualification focused on practical teaching, or who are currently teaching and want their experience and practice accredited.

Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (also called PGCE or CertEd) (120 credits)

This is the full FE teaching qualification, suitable for anyone who has – or aspires to – a role with extensive teaching or training responsibilities.

Recent years have seen a focus on improving English and maths skills across the FE and skills sector. The qualifications listed above all require would-be FE teachers to be proficient in English literacy and language, numeracy and ICT to support their students.

Initial teacher training (ITT) bursaries are available for graduates who want to teach maths or English in FE. These are worth up to £25,000, tax-free, for maths graduates and up to £9,000 for English, depending on your degree classification.

What is QTLS?

Once you have the Level 5 Diploma, you can work towards Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS), a post-qualification professional status that has parity with Qualified Teacher Status in schools.

Administered by the Society for Education and Training (SET), QTLS enables FE teachers to demonstrate, through their professional practice, that they have the skills and knowledge to be an effective teacher and are applying the **professional standards** in their work.

Tricia Odell, SET's Head of QTLS, explains that it is awarded after a period of 'professional formation' during which participants, with the support of a mentor, spend four to six months putting together an online portfolio to demonstrate how they've developed their skills and knowledge. The process involves self-assessment, devising a professional development plan, undertaking Continuing Professional Development, and reflecting on the impact of the QTLS journey on their practice, learners and organisation.

"It's a badge of professionalism," she says. "Participants tell us: 'it helps me stand out from everyone else'; 'it demonstrates that I'm committed to my professional development'; 'it's something that shows I'm doing a good job'."

Elyssa Campbell-Barr is a freelance writer and editor specialising in all areas of education, from pre-school to postgrad.

Further reading

FE careers advice:
www.feadvice.org.uk

Qualification requirements:
www.feadvice.org.uk

QTLS and professional formation:
<https://set.foundation.co.uk/professionalism/qtls/>

