



December 2011

Connect2...Teaching

This factfile is for any adult who would like information about training to teach in a primary or secondary school in N Ireland. It will tell you what qualifications and experience you will need and signpost you to other sources of information and advice.

What training is required?

You will need a degree to qualify as a teacher in N Ireland. There are two options:

- A four year degree called a Bachelor of Education (BEd)

or

- A degree in a relevant subject **and** a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). This will also take a minimum of four years.

A **relevant subject** is one that is taught in primary or secondary schools and is part of the NI school curriculum.

If you would like to teach in a **Primary** school your options are:

- BEd at Stranmillis or St Mary's
- PGCE at University of Ulster (Coleraine), Stranmillis or St Mary's

If you would like to teach in a **Secondary** school your options are:

- BEd at Stranmillis or St Mary's
- PGCE at Queen's University, University of Ulster (Coleraine and Jordanstown), St Mary's and the Open University

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What are the general entry requirements?

BEd

- at least GCSE grade C or acceptable equivalent in English and Maths
- at least GCSE grade C or acceptable equivalent in a science subject (not including Psychology or Geography) – **Primary school only**
- A levels or an Access course in a relevant subject area (check what Access course percentage mark you will need, as these can be as high as 80%-85%)

PGCE

- at least GCSE grade C or acceptable equivalent in English and Maths
- at least GCSE grade C or acceptable equivalent in a science subject (not including Psychology or Geography) – **Primary school only**
- An honours degree in a relevant subject area. Most PGCE teaching courses will require a 2:1 degree.

Please note: you will normally need to have completed your English, Maths and Science qualification (if required) **before** you apply for the BEd or PGCE.

Always contact the providers of courses directly to make sure you will meet the specific entrance requirements.

I have no qualifications – what are my next steps?

If you have no qualifications and haven't studied for some time, you could start with a short, leisure class in a subject that interests you. Alternatively you could enrol on an Essential Skills English, Maths or computer class. These subjects in particular could be a useful place to start and may help you progress towards the entry requirements for Teaching. The Essential Skills tutors will help you decide which course is right for you and your career plans. Courses are offered by your local college and some community groups.

If you feel more confident about returning to study, you can apply for an Access course at your local college – see next section for details. However, if

you haven't studied in some time, it is important to think about how you will cope with classes, coursework and exams.

I already have GCSEs or other Level 2 qualifications – what are my next steps?

You can apply for an Access course at your local college. Access courses are aimed at adults who want to move on to degree level study. You can complete an Access course in 1 year full time or 2 years part time.

Access courses are offered in different subjects. You will normally complete a variety of modules, including a compulsory study skills option. It is very important to pick an Access course that is appropriate for the subject you wish to teach. For example a Humanities Access course would **not** be acceptable if you wanted to teach Science.

There are no formal entry requirements but you may need to attend an informal interview. Some colleges will require you to have been out of full time education for 2 years before you can enrol. Check with your local college for details.

If you don't already have English Language and Maths at Level 2 or acceptable equivalent, you must make sure your Access course includes these two modules. If you aren't sure, check with the tutor before you start the course.

What is meant by acceptable equivalent?

If Maths and English GCSE are required for entry onto a degree and you do not already have these qualifications, you can choose one of the following options:

- Complete an Access courses which includes Maths and English modules.
- Complete Level 2 in Communication and Application of Number.
These Essential Skills are generally regarded as equivalent to GCSE English and Maths. However not all universities recognise them, so it is

very important to check with the University that they will be regarded as an acceptable equivalent.

In practice many adults with few or no qualifications, who wish to go to University, complete an Access course. This is because the Maths and English modules are built into the course and enrolling on an additional Essential Skills course is not necessary. Find out more about Access courses in our Connect2...Access to University factfile.

I already have A levels or other Level 3 qualifications – what are my next steps?

If you have recently completed an Access course, A levels or other acceptable Level 3 qualification **and** meet the other general entrance requirements listed on page 1, you can apply for a BEd or a relevant degree subject if you want to take the PGCE route.

Always check with the providers to make sure your Level 3 qualification is acceptable and that you meet all the entry requirements.

I already have higher education qualifications – what are my next steps?

If you already have a degree you will need to check that the subject is relevant for entry onto a PGCE **and** meet the general entry requirements listed on page 1.

If you have other higher education qualifications, such as an HND, you can apply for a BEd or top up to a degree first if you want to take the PGCE route.

Check with the providers to make sure your higher education qualification is acceptable and that you meet all the entry requirements.

Primary school teaching: what courses are offered?

BEd (Hons) Primary

- Stranmillis University College, Belfast
This is offered as a degree without any specialisms and students will cover all subjects from the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- St. Mary's University College, Belfast
Subjects offered: Art and Design, Irish, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Science.

St Mary's also offers Irish Medium Education as an optional route. This offers BEd students the opportunity to take the course bilingually (Irish and English).

PGCE (Primary)

- University of Ulster at Coleraine
Your degree must be in a subject from the NI Primary curriculum.

PGCE Early Years

- Stranmillis University College, Belfast
This course specialises in the 3-8 age range (contact Stranmillis for specific entry requirements).

PGCE Irish Medium Education

- St. Mary's University College, Belfast
This option is intended particularly for graduates who want to teach in Irish-medium primary schools and is mainly taught in Irish.

Can I study part time or by distance learning?

There are no part time or distance learning routes into primary school teaching in Northern Ireland. For information on distance learning primary PGCEs offered by colleges or universities in England, please contact the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (see Contacts section).

Please note: there may be residential requirements, attendance at college and teaching practice placements to consider with distance learning, so discuss all aspects of this option with the providers directly.

Secondary school teaching: what subjects are available?

BEd (Hons) Secondary

- Stranmillis University College, Belfast
Subjects offered: Business and Enterprise, Religious Studies, Technology and Design, Mathematics / Science.
- St. Mary's University College, Belfast
Subjects offered: Business Studies, Mathematics*, Religious Studies, Technology and Design**
(* must study Science as a subsidiary subject
** must study ICT as a subsidiary subject)

PGCE Secondary

- Queen's University Belfast
Subjects offered: English, Mathematics, Information Technology / Computing, Modern Languages (normally two languages from French, German, Irish and Spanish), Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), Religious Education, Politics, Sociology.
- University of Ulster
Subjects offered at Coleraine: Art and Design, English with Drama and Media Studies, Geography, History, Home Economics, Music.
Subjects offered at Jordanstown: Physical Education, Technology and Design.

Religious Education is also available as a subsidiary subject at both campuses.

- Open University in Ireland (OU)
Subjects offered: Design and Technology, Geography, Mathematics, Modern Languages (Spanish/French/German), Music, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics).

PGCE Irish Medium Education

St Mary's University College, QUB and UU have formed a partnership to offer a one year PGCE course to students interested in becoming teachers in Irish Medium secondary education. At the application stage students should express an interest in Irish Medium Education. An A level or equivalent qualification in Irish is normally required – this will be in addition to the general PGCE entrance requirements.

Can I study part time or by distance learning?

The Open University (see above) offers the only flexible route into secondary school teaching in Northern Ireland.

When and how do I apply for teacher training courses?

Closing dates for teacher training applications are well in advance of the course start dates:

BEd

Applications for BEd degrees are made through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). The normal closing date for applications is usually around 15 January but candidates are advised to apply by the end of the previous November/beginning of December, particularly if the course includes an interview in the selection criteria.

PGCE

Applications for PGCEs are made directly to the relevant institution and closing dates can be as early as the 1st of November of the **previous** year. For example, for entry to a PGCE in September 2012, you would need to have applied by November 2011. Check details on university websites.

What else do I need to know about teacher training?

Interviews and your Personal Statement

If you are shortlisted you will be asked to attend an interview. It is an important part of the selection process and you should prepare for it in advance. The purpose of the interview is to assess your personal and professional suitability for teaching.

You may want to consider the following questions before your interview and when filling in the personal statement on the application form:

- Can you show that you have a realistic expectation of completing a full time degree? (remember that your training will be classroom and placement based, which could involve travel).
- Why have you chosen teaching?
- Why have you chosen to study at the particular institution?
- Are you interested in any particular aspects of teaching?
- What personal qualities do you think are important for teachers?
- Why have you chosen a particular subject or area?
- What additional skills and experience do you have? For example; music, drama, sports coaching.

University Open Days

Open Days are a useful way of finding out more information about teaching degrees and give an opportunity to talk to staff. They are usually held between May and September. Check university websites for details.

Teaching practice

All teacher training courses include substantial blocks of teaching practice and it is important to note that placements may not always be available in your local or nearest school.

Specialising in Primary or Secondary level teaching

Although you will specialise in either primary or secondary level teacher training, you will in theory be eligible to teach in both types of school.

However, it may be difficult to achieve this in practice, due to the generally high level of competition for teaching posts in Northern Ireland. Schools need to ensure that teachers are suitably trained for the required age group and subject, particularly in practical and physical subjects where there is a potential health and safety risk.

What qualifications are needed to teach children with special needs?

If you want to train in special needs you will need to qualify as a teacher first and then take further qualifications as part of your professional development. A range of postgraduate qualifications is available. Previous experience of working with special needs children may be required by some providers. Please note: QUB offers an optional Special Needs module in their PGCE Secondary.

What qualifications are needed to teach in a nursery school?

If you want to teach in a state Nursery School, you will need a teaching qualification as outlined in this factsheet. It is not essential to specialise in Early Years, however this may be seen as preferable if competition for posts is high.

Where can I get a Certificate in Religious Education?

If you want to be considered for a permanent teaching post in a Catholic maintained nursery or primary school, you will need a Certificate in Religious Education or its equivalent.

Courses are available at St Mary's University College, University of Ulster or by distance learning through:

- Life-light Home Study

T: 01926 810798, E: lifelight@btinternet.com

See www.onlineccms.com/teachers (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools) for further information.

How do I train as a teacher in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland?

If you are interested in training to become a teacher in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland, please see the Contacts section at the end of the factsheet.

What funding is available for teacher training courses in Northern Ireland?

BEd

Students taking a BEd will be eligible for funding support similar to other full time higher education students.

PGCE

PGCE students will be eligible for funding support similar to BEd students.

Money for Life Project

As part of this project, EGSA can offer advice if you are concerned about financial support and/or how this might impact on your benefits. For further information contact Paulette Lennon on T: 028 9024 4274 or E: moneyforlife@egsa.org.uk.

Money for Life is a unique partnership between Lloyds Banking Group, the Money Advice Service and the Further Education sector partners in the four nations of the UK. EGSA is the lead partner for Northern Ireland.

We also produce a series of student finance factsheets. You can download them from our website at: <http://egsa.org.uk/downloads/student-finance-factsheets/>

If you are ready to apply for the BEd or PGCE, please see our Connect2...Full Time Higher Education factfile.

I'm still not sure if Teaching is right for me – where can I get further advice?

You can discuss your career and learning options with an EGSA adviser. Our services are aimed at adults and our advice is confidential and independent. Visit our website to find out more: <http://egsa.org.uk/helping-you/>, phone us on T: 028 9024 4274 or E: info@egsa.org.uk.

Related Connect2...Factfiles

If you are interested in training to become a classroom/teaching/nursery assistant or teaching in a Montessori school, please see Connect2... Caring for Children.

Download factfiles from our website: <http://egsa.org.uk/downloads/connect-2-factfiles/>

For details of teaching qualifications required in the further/adult education sector, visit the DEL (Department for Employment and Learning) website at www.delni.gov.uk and search for the Circulars listed below:

- FE12/09 – Qualifications Required to Teach in Institutions of Further and Higher Education
- ES02/04 - Essential Skills Tutor Education Policy
- ES02/04 - Essential Skills Tutor Education Policy Addendum No. 3

Contacts

Universities

The Open University in Ireland

T: 028 9024 5025

www.open.ac.uk

Queen's University Belfast

School of Education

T: 028 9097 3323 / 5941

www.qub.ac.uk/edu

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St. Mary's University College

Tel: 028 9032 7678

www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk

Stranmillis University College

T: 028 9038 1271

www.stran.ac.uk

University of Ulster

T: 08700 400 700

www.ulster.ac.uk

Other

Department of Education Northern Ireland (DE)

T: 028 9127 9279

www.deni.gov.uk (click "Teachers")

GTTR (Graduate Teacher Training Registry)

T: 0871 468 0 469

www.gttr.ac.uk

Handle applications for most PGCE providers in Great Britain

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

T: 0871 468 0 468

www.ucas.com

For applications to BEd degrees

Teaching in England and Wales

TDA (Training and Development Agency for Schools)

T: 0845 600 0991

www.tda.gov.uk

Teaching in Scotland

www.teachinginScotland.co.uk

If you don't have internet access, telephone 0845 345 4745 for a brochure.

Teaching in Republic of Ireland

Department of Education and Science

T: 00353 (0) 1 889 6400

www.education.ie (click 'Students and Trainees', then click 'Teacher Training')

While EGSA makes every effort to ensure that the information in this factfile is correct at the time of going to print, we can't accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. Before enrolling on a course, please check full details with your choice of learning provider.