INTRODUCTION

The Bristol Guide is written for all professionals working with children and young people in schools and other settings in England. It provides guidance about the law and general advice related to their professional responsibilities, duties, and rights. It also provides a comprehensive overview of the English education system.

Trainee Teachers, Early Career Teachers (ECTs), and Experienced Teachers

The Bristol Guide is an essential resource for trainee teachers working towards the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS). It also supports ECTs and more experienced teachers, all of whom are required to ‘have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities’ [Teachers’ Standards, 2012].

Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Teaching Assistants (TAs)

HLTAs and TAs working towards HLTA status will find the Bristol Guide invaluable in developing knowledge of how ‘statutory and non-statutory frameworks for the school curriculum relate to the age and ability ranges of the learners they support’ [HLTA Professional Standards, 2012, Standard 13].

The Bristol Guide will also enable them to fulfil the requirements of Standard 16, to ‘know how other frameworks, that support the development and wellbeing of children and young people, impact upon their practice.’

We endeavour to ensure that the Bristol Guide provides up-to-date information throughout. All information presented in this publication was correct at the time of writing.

Helen Aberdeen
Director of the Education Policy and Research Service
University of Bristol
School of Education

For further information about the Bristol Guide and ordering copies see: www.bristol.ac.uk/education/expertiseandresources/bristolguide or contact Service Administrator on email eprs-admin@bristol.ac.uk

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1.1 Routes into teaching

To teach in a maintained state school in England, it is necessary to have a degree and to gain qualified teacher status (QTS) by following a programme of initial teacher training (ITT). Academies, free schools, and independent schools can employ teachers without QTS; however, having QTS is generally preferable and will improve a teacher's career prospects. Applicants to ITT must have achieved minimum requirements (at least a grade 4 GCSE) in English and maths. The most common ITT routes to QTS are outlined below.

Undergraduate routes

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc) with QTS, Bachelor of Education (BEd)

BA and BSc with QTS routes allow students to specialise in a certain subject (maths, physics, computing, or languages) while gaining an honours degree and QTS. Bachelor of Education (BEd) is an honours degree course in education. BEd degrees are available for both primary and secondary teaching but are a particularly popular choice for those interested in teaching primary school pupils.

Postgraduate routes

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

PGCE courses last for one year full-time or up to 2 years part-time. They focus mainly on teaching skills, so applicants are expected to have a good understanding of their chosen subject (normally degree level) before they start training. PGCE courses are available at universities and colleges throughout the UK. It may also be possible to study for a PGCE via flexible distance learning or through a School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), or a School Direct (SD) training programme. PGCE courses typically contain up to 60 credits towards a Master’s degree. The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE) is similar to the PGCE in that it leads to QTS. It does not, however, contain credits at Master’s level.

SCITT

SCITT programmes are taught by neighbouring groups of schools and colleges. All SCITT courses lead to the award of QTS, and many also award a PGCE validated by a higher education institution. SCITT courses cover primary and secondary years and the whole range of secondary subjects.

SD

SD is available in primary and secondary schools in England and programmes generally last for one year. Successful completion of a SD course will lead to the award of QTS, and some SD programmes may also include the award of a PGCE. The SD Training Programme (salaried) is an employment-based route which is available to high-quality graduates with at least 3 years’ work experience. These students are employed by the school as an unqualified teacher.

Teach First

Teach First is an educational charity with a vision that no child’s educational success should be limited by their socio-economic background. It offers 2 programmes. The first is a 2-year Leadership Development Programme leading to QTS and the award of a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) which is worth 120 Master’s credits. The course begins with an intensive 6 weeks of training, and trainees then spend 2 years in a school in a low-income community. They are paid as unqualified teachers in their
first year and then as Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in the second year. The one-year course is an unsalaried course with tuition fees which enables students to train with one of Teach First’s partner SCITTs.

Postgraduate teaching apprenticeship

This route is available to prospective primary and secondary teachers. Trainees are paid a wage on the unqualified teacher scale. Funding comes by way of the Apprenticeship Levy. The overall structure of the apprenticeship is decided by ITT providers and schools, but the apprentice must spend 20 per cent of their time in off-the-job training.

Apprentices work towards attaining QTS. They also need to pass an end-point assessment (EPA) as is the case with all apprenticeships. The assessment usually takes place in the fourth term, i.e., in the autumn after they have begun the induction year, although it can sometimes take place immediately after QTS is awarded. The assessment consists of a professional discussion and a lesson observation. Some apprenticeships include a PGCE along with Master’s credits.

Other routes

Experienced teachers with a degree can achieve QTS by following the Assessment Only (AO) route. In order to achieve QTS, participants need to present detailed evidence that they meet the Teachers’ Standards (see section 2.1). Teaching is assessed in a school by an accredited AO provider. This route is only available to unqualified teachers who have taught in at least 2 schools, early years, and/or further education settings. AO programmes typically last for 12 weeks. Fees range from around £1,500 to £4,000 and may be paid by the trainee or by the school. The AO programme does not lead to a PGCE qualification.

In addition to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) maths and English requirement, those wishing to qualify to teach pupils aged three to 11 must also have a GCSE (at least Grade 4) in a science subject.

A new international training route, international qualified teacher status (iQTS), was launched by the Department for Education (DfE) in February 2022. This route is suitable for aspiring or inexperienced teachers who are located outside England and who wish to train abroad to English standards with a DfE-accredited teacher training provider. iQTS is recognised by the UK government as meeting the same standards as English qualified teacher status. At the time of writing, 14 providers have been approved to run the iQTS and 4 more have been approved for 2024-25.

Funding for teacher training

Many postgraduate routes such as the PGCE, SCITT, and SD attract bursaries for trainees who are not employed as teachers. Bursary amounts for secondary teaching vary depending on the teaching subject, phase, and degree class, or highest relevant academic qualification. The highest bursaries (up to £28,000) will be awarded in 2024–25 for courses in physics, chemistry, computing, and maths. Bursaries of £25,000 are available for courses in languages (French, German, and Spanish), geography, biology, and design and technology. Trainee teachers in physics, chemistry, computing, and maths with a 2:1 or first are able to apply for scholarships of up to £30,000 with the relevant subject scholarship body, and those applying for languages can apply for a scholarship of £27,000. The scholarship bodies are listed on the Get into Teaching website. Trainees cannot receive both a scholarship and a bursary. Lower bursaries of £10,000 are available for courses in art and design,