



QAA

Information on staff teaching qualifications

A student guide

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Introduction

There are lots of different places you can get information about higher education.

Universities and colleges have their own websites, publish prospectuses and run open days, all of which are designed to tell you about them and what they offer. There are also a number of independent sources of information, like comparison websites such as www.unistats.com and <http://university.which.co.uk>, as well as the information provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on its website. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also released an animation which you might like to watch that tries to explain things a bit more (www.youtube.com/qaatube: 'How to choose where to study higher education').

All of this information is intended to help you make a confident decision about what and where to study. One thing that will probably be important to you is what it is actually like to study at the university or college you are thinking of going to. In particular you might want to know about issues like how much time you will be expected to commit to your studies, how you will be taught and who will teach you, how many people will be in your class, and how you can make your views known when you get there. This series of four short guides helps you answer those questions by explaining some of the key pieces of information you could look for, grouped into four themes:

- **Information on staff teaching qualifications (this guide)**
- Information on class size
- Information on workload
- Information on how you can comment on your course.

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Staff teaching qualifications

Unlike in school, there is no requirement for those teaching in higher education to have a specific teaching qualification (though most will have a postgraduate academic qualification or significant professional experience). You should expect the university or college you are thinking of attending to provide you with clear information about how you will be supported during your course, and how staff are qualified to undertake that role.

Universities and colleges take different approaches to making this information available, depending on how they are organised. A well established way of doing this is through staff profiles published on their website. Good staff profiles will tell you about the staff member and their research interests, their experience and which courses they teach on.

Of course it is worth remembering that many university and college courses offer considerable choice about what you study, so you might not know exactly who will be teaching you until you choose from the modules available for your course. (Frequently, all first-year modules are compulsory.)

When looking at information published by universities or colleges about staff teaching qualifications, it is worth bearing in mind that in higher education students are seen as partners in learning. This means that students share responsibility for their education with the university or college they are attending. While you should expect support and a well organised course, a key aspect of this partnership is you taking control of your own learning and developing your ability to learn and study independently.

Key points to remember

When looking at information about teaching qualifications, there are some key things you might want to bear in mind.

Different roles require different skills

Your course will be supported by lots of different people, including teachers, technicians, visiting experts, support staff, computer support and postgraduate students who have been trained in the role.

There are many different ways to be taught and to learn

You won't always just be sitting in a classroom and listening. Your learning experience might include online learning, discussions with other students, placements in workplaces and sessions focusing on learning particular skills (like academic writing). Vocational subjects benefit particularly by input from current practitioners.

There are many different types of teaching qualification

The university or college should tell you what qualifications their staff have, what they mean and why they are relevant. Staff members may be qualified by holding:

- qualifications gained from attending training courses run by the university or college where they teach
- Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) - a body set up to help support teaching in higher education
- a National Teaching Fellowship individual award
- a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in higher education, secondary education, further education or lifelong learning
- accreditation as a teacher of their subject from a professional UK body or other relevant organisation.

Further information

If you have any questions about staff teaching qualifications then the best thing to do is to get in touch with the university or college using the contact details on their website or in their prospectus.

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2013

ISBN 978 1 84979 902 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786