Guidance

Recruit teachers from overseas

How schools can hire teachers who are not from the UK or European Union (EU), using a Department for Education (DfE) process.

Published 10 September 2019
Last updated 10 October 2025 + show all updates
Also available in Welsh (Cymraeg)

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What will change from 1 January 2021

The UK will introduce a points-based immigration system from 1 January 2021. Under the new system, EU and non-EU citizens will be treated the same. Recruitment of teachers arriving in the UK from 1 January 2021 will be affected by this change.

From 2021, EU and Switzerland will come under the UK's points-based immigration system. Immigration routes will be open to EU and Switzerland citizens who arrive in the UK for work. Teachers from EU countries can prepare for these changes now.

Until citizens will continue to be able to enter, work and live in the UK freely until 2021.

Teachers who are from the EEA and Switzerland may need a visa to work in the UK. Read the rules and the Step check tool under the current immigration system.

Recruit by becoming a visa sponsor

United Kingdom visa

Overseas teachers can apply for a Skilled Worker visa under the following conditions:

- you, the employer, are a licensed Home Office sponsor and have a vacancy for a suitable overseas teacher
- the overseas teacher can speak, read, write and understand English
- you can pay at least £26,200 or the relevant minimum rate for teachers in England, architects in Scotland, or teachers in Wales. The rate for teachers in Northern Ireland is set by the Department for Education and will apply as long as you earn at least £25,000 a year

Become a licensed sponsor

You can become a licensed sponsor to hire teachers from overseas on a Skilled Worker visa.

You can be the employing local authority, multi-academy trust or school to hold the sponsor licence.

Schools can also become sponsors if they are a charity or have a charitable purpose.

Those on a Sponsor visa will be able to study, work or look for work in the UK and can apply for settlement (sponsor for up to 5 years) after completing their studies. Those on a Skilled Worker visa can apply for settlement (sponsor for 5 years).

Teachers on a Graduate visa will be able to apply to stay in the UK for 2 years (3 years if they are a PhD holder) and without having to leave the UK if they meet the requirements for the other visa route.

Visa fees and other costs

The fees of visas for up to 3 years and up to 5 years are different. Visas can be extended or switched to a different nationality or visa from certain countries. Teachers can also be eligible for a reduced immigration fee.

Visa costs are available from sponsor UK. Other costs are under the current immigration system.

Other visas

Teachers on other types of visas may also be permitted to work in the UK. You can find out more about other visas in the Step check tool under the current immigration system.

You can find out more about the immigration documents that can be accepted when checking a job applicant's right to work.

EU Settlement Scheme

By 31 December 2020 the EU Settlement Scheme in the UK, 31 December 2020 will apply for the EU settlement scheme in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Applications for settlement status will close on 30 June 2021 without having to apply through the points-based immigration system.

International travel

Travel restrictions, including the UK, may be affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). Overseas nationals should check the Foreign Travel Advice before they travel. Travel advice is keep up to date with travel restrictions and self-isolation requirements. The UK government has published a list of countries and territories from which arrivals to England do not need to quarantine or complete a passenger locator form.

Check the Foreign Travel Advice guidance for those affected by changes to UK immigration rules due to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

International teacher recruitment programme

Overseas applicants will continue to recruit international teachers for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

To register your interest for the international teacher recruitment programme to start in January 2021 read the following guidance:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), we've decided to focus our recruiting international teachers to start in January 2021 on teachers who are already in the UK. Visa restrictions and the closure of visa application centres are still ongoing.

We will review this decision.

Schools currently recruit teachers and assistants in England on a pilot basis the international teacher recruitment programme to recruit maths, physics, chemistry, computer science and modern foreign languages teachers from:

- Australia
- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- Spain
- South Africa
- Spain

All teachers recruited through the programme will:

- be experienced teachers, qualified in their country or have been screened to meet safeguarding and quality requirements to teach in England
- have a good level of English and be able to keep with setting the international teaching standards and recommendation evaluation exact pass by DfE
- have a good level of English and be able to understand DfE programme, covering teacher conduct, behaviour management, safeguarding and the expected curriculum

Recruitment process

Recruitment process

Regional recruitment with one of our 4 recruitment agencies. They all offer the same high level of support and will help you recruit qualified teachers in England. The 4 agencies are:

- Frontier Recruitment Consultants
- Pioneers Recruiting
- Quantum Schemes
- Worldwide Education

The recruitment process

After you register with an agency, they will:

- contact you within 2 working days to give further information on the programme
- provide a consultation to understand your requirements
- give you access to candidates who match your requirements
- arrange a video/phone interviews with your shortlisted candidates, ranking the best candidates
- help you manage the contract ongoing process
- provide support and advice with immigration
- give you with an accreditation provider

Costs

DfE will fund:

- recruitment costs, including a DfE-approved recruitment agency
- an accreditation package and an ongoing CPD programme during the teacher's first year, delivered by a DfE-approved accreditation provider

Schools will need to fund:

- the teacher's salary
- visa costs (including the support CPD days (at least 2 days a term) and mentor training)
- relocation expenses
- Overseas and Returning Service (ORS) checks

Schools must support an experienced in-school mentor to support their overseas teacher.

Programme evaluation

Schools involved may be asked to participate in our evaluation to support ongoing development of the programme.

Recruiting teachers on a visa

Schools can also advertise teaching roles free on DfE's Teaching Vacancies service.

Getting qualified teacher status (QTS)

There are different arrangements for overseas teachers who want to get QTS.

Those in the EU have a degree but first limited teaching experience, or have a degree but no teaching experience, may from QTS. There is also guidance on the assessment only route to QTS for those who are not a graduate.

Those who have a degree but no teaching experience, or have a degree and teaching experience, may also be able to take a shorter assessment only route to QTS.

If they are a qualified teacher from the following countries, they can get QTS without having to be teaching training or assessment only:

- Australia
- Canada
- Pacific
- Iceland
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- USA
- Wales

There is more information about QTS and how overseas teachers can get into teaching in England.

Employing overseas teachers without QTS (Step 4)

Overseas teachers can teach in maintained schools and recognised independent schools (Step 4) without qualified teacher status (QTS) for up to 4 years. This is called the 'Step 4 pilot'.

It's illegal for overseas teachers to continue working in Step 4 after 4 years without getting qualified teacher status. Schools can't employ overseas teachers without QTS unless there is another legal basis to employ them.

The Step 4 pilot applies to overseas teachers who meet all of the following conditions:

- they have qualified as a teacher in a country outside of the UK
- they have completed a course of teacher training that is recognised by the competent authority of that country
- they are employed in maintained schools and non-maintained special schools, but not sixth form colleges

What you need to do

If you are employing an overseas teacher, you should:

- about the Step 4 pilot when you employ them
- that they need QTS for another assessment to teach longer than 4 years in some types of school

There is guidance for overseas teachers who want to get qualified teacher status (QTS).

When overseas teachers can teach for longer than 4 years without QTS

Secondary schools

Overseas teachers can teach longer than 4 years without QTS if, during that time, they have taken one of the following forms of leave:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave
- parental leave
- shared parental leave
- time off because of pregnancy

If they have taken statutory leave, then overseas teachers can teach for up to 4 years and 52 weeks, the equivalent period of the statutory leave that they have taken.

Primary schools

Overseas teachers can teach longer than 4 years without QTS if, during that time, they have taken one of the following forms of leave:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave
- parental leave
- shared parental leave
- time off because of pregnancy

If they have taken statutory leave, then overseas teachers can teach for up to 4 years and 26 weeks, the equivalent period of the statutory leave that they have taken.

Exceptions

Exceptions are 4 weeks of statutory maternity leave during their 4-year period, they can then teach for 4 weeks longer than 4 years before having to get qualified teacher status (QTS).

Safeguarding checks for teachers from overseas

Candidates from overseas must undergo the same checks as those from other schools, including obtaining an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list information. Schools can't wait for the candidate to have been in the UK.

When recruiting, schools:

- must follow part 3 of Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) and the safer recruitment guidance sets out the safer recruitment checks schools must conduct
- must make only further checks they think appropriate so that relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be taken into account, such as Office profiles guidance on overseas police checks for overseas applicants
- can ask candidates for their consideration to provide proof of their past conduct as a teacher in other countries, including information about any sanctions imposed on them in the country in which they worked where available. This can be considered together with other information provided by the appointment check to make a suitable judgement.
- should, until 1 January 2021, check for teacher sanctions or restrictions imposed by a EEA professional regulating authority.

Accommodation support and induction

Help teachers from overseas to become familiar with their surroundings and the local education sector in your school. You can do this by:

- helping to secure local accommodation
- educating overseas teachers with school arrangements (behaviour management strategies or year observations)

You may also want to offer a detailed induction that covers:

- details of key staff, timetables and school policies
- behaviour management strategies for the classroom, including rewards and consequences, sanctions, what support is available and when it should be used
- tour of the school
- health and safety
- fire procedures
- use of computers and software (for example, Secure Email, Microsoft Office, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts)
- management information system training (for example, how to record attendance, behaviour and rewards, student progress data, school day and calendar (for example, lesson times, breaks, lunchtimes, meetings, term dates, inset days, parent evenings)
- key school policies to include behaviour, sanctions and rewards, safeguarding, health and safety, special educational needs and disability, reading, recreation and etiquette to include professional dress, punctuality, attendance, lesson preparation, used board and markers, schemes of work and lesson plans, equipment, stationery)
- CPD and staff training
- protocols for absence and illness reporting
- information about the school's ethos and mission statement
- performance management and professional expectations

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