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Guidance

Recruit teachers from overseas

Check what you need to do to employ teachers who are non-UK citizens.

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Applies to England

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1. Check the rules on visas and immigration

Applicants for teaching jobs from overseas, including those from the [European Economic Area \(EEA\)](#) and Switzerland, need a visa or other immigration status allowing them to work in the UK.

Applicants already have the right to work in the UK if they:

- are Irish citizens
- have [settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme](#)
- have indefinite leave to remain in the UK

Most other applicants will need a [skilled worker visa](#), which their employer must sponsor. The sponsor can be the school where they work, the local authority, or an academy trust. Sponsors must have a 'worker licence', sometimes referred to as an 'employer licence'.

Your school or organisation may already be a licensed worker sponsor. Check the [register of licensed sponsors: workers](#).

If you're not already a sponsor, you can either apply to become a sponsor, or recruit applicants who don't need to be sponsored.

Apply to become a licensed worker sponsor

Related content

[Recruit trainee teachers from overseas: accredited ITT providers](#)

[Teach in England if you qualified outside the UK](#)

[Qualified teacher status \(QTS\): qualify to teach in England](#)

[Train to teach in England: non-UK applicants](#)

[High Potential Individual visa: global universities list](#)

Collection

[The schools sector and the EU](#)

[Non-UK teachers and trainees](#)

You can refer to [UK visa sponsorship for employers](#) to learn more about how to become a licensed worker sponsor.

To become a licensed worker sponsor, you will need to:

- show you're suitable to be a sponsor
- appoint a member of staff to manage the sponsorship process
- supply supporting documents
- pay your licence fees
- meet your responsibilities as a sponsor

Recruit applicants who don't need to be sponsored

Applicants with the following visa or immigration status will not need to be sponsored.

Graduate visa

International students in the UK can apply for a [graduate visa](#) on successful completion of their degree. To apply, they'll need to have been sponsored by an eligible Home Office licensed student sponsor over the course of their studies.

The graduate visa allows holders to work, or look for work, in the UK for up to 2 years after completing their studies (3 years for PhD students) without a sponsor. This includes working as a teacher, as well as training to teach on a salaried course or through a teaching apprenticeship.

They can switch from a graduate visa to another visa (such as the [skilled worker visa](#)) without having to leave the UK if they meet the requirements for their new visa.

High potential individual visa

To be eligible for a [high potential individual visa](#), teachers must:

- have a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or PhD from a university listed in the [global universities list](#)
- have been awarded their qualification no more than 5 years before they apply

- have English language skills to B1 intermediate level
- have personal funds of £1,270
- pass a security and criminality check

They do not need an offer of a teaching job to apply for this visa and they'll be able to stay in the UK for 2 years with a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and 3 years with a PhD.

Youth mobility scheme visa

The [youth mobility scheme](#) allows young people from certain countries to come to the UK each year to study or work without a sponsoring educational institution or sponsoring employer. This includes working as a teacher.

A youth mobility scheme visa lasts up to 2 years. Holders can switch from the youth mobility scheme visa to another visa (such as the [skilled worker visa](#)) without having to leave the UK if they meet the requirements for their new visa.

Family, UK Ancestry and British National (Overseas) visas

Applicants with the following types of visa will not need to be sponsored:

- [Family visas](#)
- [UK Ancestry visa](#)
- [British National \(Overseas\) visa](#)

Dependents

People who have permission to live in the UK as a dependent (usually partner or child) of someone on a student visa or a skilled worker visa will not need to be sponsored. They can work without a sponsor for the duration of their partner's or parent's visa.

2. Check visa and immigration charges

The cost of international recruitment depends on the size of your school and is made up of the following charges.

Skilled worker licence

This costs from £536 to £1,476 depending on the size of your school, and is paid every 4 years. It covers all teachers recruited in that period.

Certificate of sponsorship fee

This is a one-off payment of £199 for each teacher sponsored and is only paid again if the visa needs to be renewed.

Immigration skills charge (ISC)

This costs from £364 to £1,000 depending on the size of your school and is paid upfront for each year of a teacher's visa (unless they are switching from a student visa).

Total costs

For example a small school is likely to incur a one-off payment of £735 (£536 + £199) plus an annual fee of £364.

Multi academy trusts are charged a single fee (not a fee per school within the trust).

You will not pay any fees to recruit someone with a visa or immigration status that doesn't require sponsorship.

Visa fees are paid to the Home Office. You will pay:

- the licence fee when you make your sponsorship application
- the certificate of sponsorship fee and ISC when you assign a certificate of sponsorship to that teacher prior to their visa application

3. Advertise your teaching job

You can use DfE's [Teaching Vacancies](#) service to advertise teaching jobs and other school roles to applicants from all over the world. It is free to use for schools and applicants.

You can recruit teaching and education support staff from

overseas for any subject or age range, as well as SEND practitioners.

To attract high-quality overseas applicants, you should be clear English schools require teachers with qualities beyond academic excellence and subject knowledge, for example:

- the ability to offer pastoral care
- an appreciation of the ethos of your school
- soft and communication skills
- willingness to participate in the extra-curricular life of the school

4. Shortlist and interview

Many schools now shortlist overseas candidates for potential employment using remote working technology.

You can:

- set written tasks for candidates
- ask to see lesson plans
- request a video portfolio of applicants' teaching practice
- talk to referees over a video conferencing service like Zoom

Qualification requirements for teachers from overseas

[Qualified teacher status \(QTS\)](#) is a legal requirement in maintained schools in England. The majority of teachers in academies and free schools also have QTS.

The 4-year rule exemption

Overseas applicants do not need QTS to teach in maintained schools in England for the first 4 years of their stay in the UK, an exemption known as the '4-year rule'. ([In academies and free schools, there is no legal requirement for teachers to hold QTS](#), at any point in their employment.)

To be eligible for the 4-year rule, the applicant will need to have:

- qualified as a teacher in a country outside the UK
- successfully completed a course of teacher training recognised by the organisation that regulates teachers in the country where they qualified

If you are employing a teacher under the 4-year rule, note [their salary will have to meet the minimum requirement for a skilled worker visa](#), which is slightly higher than an unqualified teacher's minimum pay outside London.

The 4-year rule exemption does not apply to pupil referral units (PRUs), alternative provision academies, or alternative provision free schools, where QTS is required from the beginning of their employment.

Extending the 4-year rule period

If overseas teachers take maternity, paternity, adoption, parental or shared parental leave, or take time off because of pregnancy, they can extend this 4-year period by the amount of statutory leave taken.

Exemptions for instructors and teaching assistants

Overseas teachers do not need QTS to teach if they are employed as instructors teaching vocational subjects that require special qualifications or experience. It is up to the school to decide whether an overseas teacher is suitable for an instructor role.

Overseas teachers do not need QTS to work as teaching assistants.

Routes to QTS for overseas teachers

Teachers who qualified overseas, or have teaching experience overseas, can [apply to the Teaching Regulation Agency for QTS or undergo assessment only QTS](#).

Teachers working in England under the 4-year rule can apply for [assessment only QTS alongside their work in school](#).

You can check whether an applicant has QTS using [Teacher Services](#) through DfE Sign-in.

Interviewing and appointing overseas teachers

Our research shows schools take a variety of approaches to final selection. For some schools interviews conducted online, taken together with all the other information provided, are a successful and reliable way of ensuring candidates are a good fit.

Other schools will make an annual visit to university recruitment fairs in their target country or countries. This generates a shortlist of candidates who can then formally apply.

Schools will also use recruitment agencies to support them through the whole recruitment process, including sifting and interviewing candidates.

When recruiting high calibre international candidates, in-person lesson observation may not always be possible. Especially in shortage subjects, schools may want to consider an alternative, online approach - for example, a lesson delivered via Zoom or another video conferencing service.

5. Make a conditional offer and check suitability

Any applicant you wish to employ will need a job offer from you before they apply for their [skilled worker visa](#). They can apply up to 3 months before they start work in the UK as long as:

- you as their employer are a licensed worker sponsor
- you have offered them a job
- they have met the [English language requirements for a skilled worker visa](#)
- their teaching role pays at least £20,480, or the relevant minimum rate for teachers in England, whichever is higher (minimum rates for teachers can be found in [School teachers' pay and conditions](#))
- any part-time role pays at least £20,480 (pro-rata rates will then apply)

Safeguarding checks for teachers from overseas

Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK must

undergo the same checks as all other staff in schools. They should also undergo additional checks related to international recruitment and training.

Schools can use a range of information sources and evidence as part of their safeguarding procedures for international recruitment, including the items included in this section.

We expect schools to draw on a varying range of sources on a case-by-case basis, depending on the individual in question. It is good practice to carry out a risk assessment, recording the evidence you have gathered to reach your decision and showing you have no grounds for concern about the applicant.

Schools must:

1. Follow the statutory guidance in part 3 of [Keeping children safe in education](#).
2. Apply for an [enhanced DBS certificate](#) with Children's Barred List information on behalf of the applicant, even if the applicant has never been to the UK. Note that a DBS check can only be performed if the applicant can submit proof of right to work, for example a visa. This means that schools may need to make a conditional offer in order for a visa application to be approved and a DBS check performed.
3. Check that the applicant is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State for Education in England, (the 'Prohibited List') via the [Teaching Regulation Agency](#).
4. Make further checks appropriate to applicants from outside the UK. This could include [Criminal records checks for overseas applicants](#). Where this information is not available, schools should seek alternative methods of checking suitability, some of which we list below.
5. Perform an online search on shortlisted applicants – anything you're concerned about can then be raised at interview. This is particularly important as non-UK countries have different policies relating to the types of offences on a criminal record, and how long they are stored for.

Schools should also:

1. Request at least 2 references, one of which should be from the trainee's most recent employment. References must be obtained directly from the referee, who should be a senior person with appropriate authority. 'To whom it may concern' references must not be accepted unless they are validated as genuine by the referee. References obtained via email must be sent from a verifiable email address. Concerns arising from the reference should be discussed with the referee and, where appropriate, the applicant.
2. Request an employment history to investigate any inconsistencies and unexplained gaps in employment and, if the applicant is currently unemployed, contact their most recent employer to find out why they left their last job. Recent graduates do not need to supply an employment history, unless they have carried out part-time work, which they should declare.
3. Request evidence of professional standing – for example, a letter from the organisation that regulates teachers in the country where the applicant qualified, confirming their status as a teacher. Ideally, this document should also confirm that the applicant's authorisation to teach has never been suspended, barred, cancelled, revoked or restricted and that they have no sanctions against them. For countries where teachers are automatically eligible for QTS, [Teacher Qualifications, Professional recognition: evidence required](#) lists relevant documentation. For everywhere else, the [UK Centre for Professional Qualifications](#) can give advice on the organisations to contact.

Recruiting teachers from Ukraine

If you're carrying out safeguarding checks on Ukrainian citizens, it may be helpful to know that they can apply to the [Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine](#) for a criminal record check, which will be emailed to them. They can then contact the [Ukrainian Embassy in the UK](#) for a translation of the criminal record check and a letter confirming its validity.

You can find information about the Ukrainian education system at [Enic-Naric - Ukraine](#) and at the [Ukrainian Ministry of Education](#).

Checking your applicant's right to work

Whatever your successful applicant's visa or immigration status, you are responsible for [checking their right to work](#). You can do this online, or by checking their documents.

You do not need to do checks for existing employees from the EU, EEA or Switzerland if they came to the UK before 1 July 2021.

Irish citizens can use their Irish passport and passport card to prove their right to work.

6. Improve retention

You may wish to consider the following checklist as you prepare for the arrival of an international teacher.

As they plan their move, you can help with information about:

- [finding somewhere to live](#)
- [opening a bank account](#)
- [registering with a GP](#)
- [setting up utilities](#)
- [applying for a national insurance number](#)

Overseas teachers may be unprepared for pastoral duties, the English curriculum and teaching to different abilities. Before term starts, you should:

- allocate a mentor to offer personal and professional support
- share teaching resources, lesson plans, exam specifications
- put together an induction pack including:
 - your school's ethos and values
 - expectations related to SEND, pastoral care, extra-curricular activities and other non-pedagogical responsibilities
 - school policies on safeguarding, behaviour management, data protection etc
 - professional expectations

- school calendar and staff
- performance management and probationary procedures

Overseas teachers can find information about English education at [Train to teach in England if you're a non-UK citizen](#).

Contact us

For more information, to give us feedback or to take part in user research, please email us teach.inengland@education.gov.uk. We aim to respond within 5 working days.

The [Get into Teaching website](#) contains helpful information for non-UK teachers.

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