

The Open University PGCE – Frequently Asked Questions

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1. General Enquiry - for more information

An overview of the 2-year PGCE programme can be found in the Prospectus. To request a copy please click [here](#)

More information about the PGCE Programme can be found [on our website](#)

The Application Form and Detailed guidance notes can be found [on our website](#)

2. How to apply

What is the application process?

Detailed guidance notes on how to apply can be found [on our website](#)

What is the deadline for applications?

The deadline for submissions each year will be published on our website and can be found [on our website](#)

I am a career changer without an endorsing school, how do I apply for the salaried route?

If you don't currently work in a state school or want to change careers, you can still apply for the salaried route in **secondary shortage subjects only**. You will need a secondary school willing to endorse you, which we can help you find.

We do not recommend that students contact schools directly to try to find an endorsing school. Only in situations where there are close professional relationships (for example, as a former employer) should potential applicants consider approaching schools.

3. GCSE Qualifications

What GCSE grades do I need?

- GCSE Grade B in English or Welsh First Language
- GCSE Grade B in Maths.
- GCSE Grade C in a Science subject for teaching Primary

If you hold an equivalent to a Grade B (GCSE or equivalent) in either English Literature or Welsh Literature, a minimum of a Grade C (GCSE or equivalent) must be achieved in the corresponding GCSE examination in English or Welsh First Language.

You may already hold a qualification of equivalency to GCSEs. Please contact Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk for advice on the qualifications we can accept as equivalent.

If you do not currently meet the GCSE requirements (or an equivalent) you can either re-sit your GCSE to obtain the required grade or if you have a C grade in English and/or Maths or a

D grade in Science, you may be able to take an equivalency test* via a testing company or another approved University. Please note that we do not accept equivalency tests to upgrade from a grade D or below in English or Maths or a E grade in Science, you will need to re-sit a full GCSE. If you are re-sitting your GCSEs please indicate this on the application form.

****For Primary Part-Time Applicants: Please note that due to extremely high demand for primary places, entry to our part-time programme is limited to applicants who possess a 2:2 or above at degree level, and who require a maximum of 1 GCSE equivalency test at point of application.***

Students who require a GCSE equivalency test will be required to achieve the necessary pass grade before or during the PGCE programme or will have to withdraw from the course.

It should still be noted that the application process is competitive, and that GCSE grades are one component of how we consider your application.

How do I sit equivalency exams?

You can take the equivalency tests via a testing company such as www.equivalencytesting.com. Please ensure that you select Maths and English Higher (not Foundation) to obtain the equivalent B grade. We accept both the Combined Science and Biology as equivalent to Science GCSE.

We will also accept equivalency tests managed through other Higher Education institutions. However, you will need to ask the HEI to email the results of the equivalency tests to us directly at Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk

I didn't complete all/part of my education in the UK, how do my qualifications compare?

The UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC – previously known as NARIC) provides guidance on whether an overseas qualification is comparable in standard to a given UK qualification. They can supply a Statement of Comparability to show whether your qualifications meet the requirements for admission. Please obtain a ENIC certificate to ensure you meet the requirements before applying. See the link for ENIC here: <https://www.enic.org.uk>

If English is not one of your native languages and you wish to study a PGCE in the UK, you must be able to demonstrate a high level of English language ability. You will need to achieve an International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) score of 7+ in each section of the test.

4. Undergraduate Degrees

Do I need to have a full honours degree?

All applicants who wish to undertake a PGCE must have a full Honours Undergraduate Degree e.g. a BA (Hons) or a BSc (Hons) or equivalent with classification e.g. 1st, 2:1, 2:2, 3rd.

We can consider some equivalencies to a degree – e.g. a Masters or ACCA qualification (these must be equivalent to a level 6 qualification and recognised). We treat these on a case-by-case basis.

What are the minimum entry requirements for Primary Part-time?

For Primary Part-Time Applicants: Please note that due to extremely high demand for places, entry to our part-time programme is limited to applicants who possess a 2:2 or above at degree level, and who require a maximum of 1 GCSE equivalency test at point of application.

I want to teach Secondary, is my degree relevant?

For Secondary applicants, it is expected that the content of your degree will contain a significant proportion of the subject in which you wish to train to teach or be closely related to the subject. There is flexibility in some subjects, whilst other degrees may require very relevant subject knowledge. Where your degree title does NOT directly match the curriculum subject you want to teach, please send us a transcript of your degree with your documentation. Detailed guidance notes can be found on our [website](#)

Do I need to have a degree in Welsh to teach Welsh at Secondary?

No, you can have any degree, but you must be a fluent Welsh speaker to teach Welsh as a second language in an English medium secondary school. To teach Welsh as a first language in a Welsh medium secondary school a degree in Welsh is desirable, however a related degree may be considered.

If you wish to complete any aspect of your course in the medium of Welsh, you must as a minimum complete your supporting statement in Welsh, or ideally use the Welsh application form to complete the whole application in Welsh. All candidates for PGCE Secondary Welsh must complete their application in Welsh and be taught through the medium of Welsh.

5. Fees and funding

How much does the course cost?

The course fee is £2,625 per year, which is payable on an annual basis. The total cost for the PGCE will be £5,250*. If you are on the Part-time route, you will pay the fees yourself directly to the OU. If you are on the Salaried route, your fees are paid by a training grant from the Welsh Government.

* 2022/23 prices; fees normally increase annually in line with inflation and the University's strategic approach to fees.

How much will I get paid on the Salaried route?

The salary received by students will ordinarily be set at the minimum of the unqualified teacher pay scale (£18,487 for the 2021/2022 academic year). This is a full-time salary (not term-time), paid to you by your Employer School.

Is there funding available for the Part-time route?

Please see our Fees and Funding website for more information on funding available on the Part-time route: <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding>

If you are on the Part-time PGCE route you can apply for a student loan. Visit Finance Wales for more information <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/postgraduate-students/postgraduate-initial-teacher-education.aspx>

You can also apply for up to £3,000 in funding to help with living costs while you're studying. <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/help-with-living-costs.aspx>

Additionally, you may be entitled to bursaries from the Welsh government. These are dependent upon your degree classification, the PGCE level and (for secondary students) the subject you choose.

<https://gov.wales/initial-teacher-education-priority-subject-incentives-guidance-students.html>

There are additional funds available – please see the Prospectus for more information.

Is there funding available for the Salaried Route?

On the Salaried Route, you will be employed by your school and will ordinarily receive a salary of the minimum of the unqualified teacher pay scale (£18,487 for the 2021/2022 academic year). You will not be able to access a student loan as the fees are already paid for by the Welsh Government. The maintenance grant and the bursaries from the Welsh Government are not available to students on the salaried route.

For other funding please see <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding>

What teacher training incentives are there?

Graduates with certain degrees may be eligible for incentives of up to £20,000, if they want to train to be a teacher in Wales. These are only available for the part time route.

Find out more about teacher training incentives in Wales.

<https://gov.wales/initial-teacher-education-priority-subject-incentives-guidance-students.html>

6. Course Outline

How is the PGCE taught?

You can follow one of two routes: the salaried route or the part-time route. Both include a mix of online and face-to-face sessions with mentors and practice tutors. You'll also have practical experience in two schools

Across the two years of study, you'll have 120 days of school placements; 60 school days per year. In the first year you would expect to spend approximately 50% of your time in a support role and 50% of your time studying or undertaking practical activities such as planning and delivering lessons. You'll move from classroom support and planning and teaching of single lessons in PGCE 1; to planning and teaching of a sequence of lessons in PGCE 2; to responsibility for planning, resourcing and solo teaching a range of lessons in PGCE 3.

For your academic study, you'll use our virtual learning environment to access compulsory live tutorials, module content such as textbooks, video and audio, and practice learning activities. It's also where you'll interact with tutors and other students in online forums.

What is the Part-time route?

The part-time programme allows student-teachers to continue with part-time employment or commitments whilst studying the programme. You can apply for a student loan and part-time maintenance grants to help with the costs of this self-funded route.

On the part-time route, you complete three separate periods of practice learning following your study of the online units. These three periods of practice learning will enable you to draw together your theoretical study with practical experience and will involve a total of 120 days over the 2 years (60 practice learning days per year). It is not recommended for students to work full-time whilst studying this programme.

- In Year 1, Module 1, you will need to complete 25 days practice learning between November and January
- In Year 1, Module 2, you will complete 35 days practice learning between April and July.
- In Year 2, Module 3, you will complete 60 days of practice learning between October and Mid-May. 30 days of must be completed on block i.e. 5 days a week for 6 weeks.

What is the Salaried route?

If you already work in a state school as a teaching assistant or in a non-teaching role, you can apply for your school to endorse you. You'll work in school full time and study around your existing duties. Your school must apply to become a partner school and provide an endorsement letter as they will pay your salary. Your course fees are covered by a training grant from Welsh Government.

If you don't currently work in a state school or want to change careers, you can still apply for the salaried route in **secondary shortage subjects only**. You will need a secondary school willing to endorse you, which we can help you find.

7. Course Commitment

How much time will I need to spend studying?

Each PGCE module involves academic study through online seminars led by your curriculum tutor; a period of school experience; and the submission of a portfolio of evidence that includes responses to academic tasks and reports from your school experience. In each module, you'll be assessed through a range of tasks, including written essays.

If you're on the **salaried route**, we work with your school to create a combined timetable of activities. This includes your normal work, protected study time and dedicated PGCE practice learning periods. If you're on the **part-time route**, you'll study 2–3 days a week, either in academic study or on your school experience.

How much time will I need to spend teaching?

In the first year you would expect to spend approx. 50% of your time in a support role and 50% of your time studying or undertaking practical activities such as planning and delivering lessons. You'll move from classroom support, and planning and teaching of single lessons in PGCE 1; to planning and teaching of a sequence of lessons in PGCE 2; to responsibility for planning, resourcing and solo teaching a range of lessons in PGCE 3. In the second year, subject to successful progression through the course, you can be teaching for up to 70% of the school week.

The actual teaching time will vary as you progress through the course, and you will be supported in your development to ensure you are ready for an increased timetable as you move into year 2. On PGCE 3 you must commit to 30 full days of teaching (five days a week over six consecutive school weeks).

Students' timetables will be decided at the outset of the placement through discussion between the employer school, curriculum tutors and the student and will be reviewed periodically.

How much time will I have for my normal job?

On the **salaried route**, your online module study time and practice learning element will be incorporated into an agreed timetable.

- a. During the first module (PGCE 1, Year 1), you will complete 2.5 days per week in your current role; 1.5 days per week for dedicated practice learning periods and 1 day per week for online module study.
The focus during the practice learning period is on observation in the initial phases through to team teaching activities or small segments of supervised teaching activities building to whole lessons towards the end of the module. Student teachers should not be left to teach independently during PGCE1.
- b. In the second module (PGCE 2, Year 1), 2.5 days per week in your current role (but this can be reduced to 2 days to increase the practice learning period); 2 days per week for

practice learning (can be increased to 2.5 days) and 0.5 days per week for online module study.

Between March and May the focus is on undertaking more extended periods of teaching graduating to independent practice. Between Easter and end of May the student-teacher may undertake extended periods of teaching, including beginning to teach no more than 2 days independently. Frequent lesson observations should be undertaken.

In the second module you will also require to complete a second school placement during June and July where you will be at another school for 3 or 4 days per week for 6 weeks, and during this time, student-teacher should teach no more than 60% of their timetable at their second school.

- c. In the third module (PGCE 3, Year 2), you should have a teaching timetable equivalent to no more than 3.5 days per week and 0.5 days for online module study. The remaining time will be for enhanced PPA.

On the **part-time route**, you'll study 2–3 days a week, either in academic study or on your school experience. You would need to fit this around your paid employment in agreement with your placement school. The advantage of the part time route is the flexibility this affords to those already in paid part time employment (or with other responsibilities such as parenting or caring). However, it is not recommended for students to work full-time whilst studying this programme. You'll complete three separate periods of practice learning towards the end of your study of the online units. These three periods of practice learning will enable you to draw together your theoretical study with practical experience and will involve a total of 120 days over the 2 years (60 practice learning days per year).

- a. In Year 1, Module 1, you will need to complete 25 days practice learning between November and January
- b. In Year 1, Module 2, you will complete 35 days practice learning between April and July in a second school.
- c. In Year 2, Module 3, you will complete 60 days of practice learning between October and Mid-May. 30 days must be completed on block i.e. 5 days a week for 6 weeks.

8. School Placements

How do the placements work?

Salaried students will undertake practical experience at the same time as studying.

Part-time students will undertake their practical experience in their placement schools towards the end of their academic study in each module.

All students are expected to attend placements in two different schools in order to gain QTS.

You'll work with your mentor, and school staff members to take on increasing teaching responsibility. You'll move from classroom support, and planning and teaching of single lessons in PGCE 1; to planning and teaching of a sequence of lessons in PGCE 2; to responsibility for planning, resourcing and solo teaching a range of lessons in PGCE 3. Whether you're on the

salaried or part-time route, you'll undertake an individual classroom research project in PGCE 3.

For students on the part-time route, you'll have 120 days of school placements; 60 days per year. In year 2 half of the school placement (30 days) must be completed in a continuous block and students must commit to 30 full days of teaching (five days a week over six consecutive school weeks).

Mentors will support you throughout your school experience. They'll mediate and facilitate regular school-based tasks, which feed into your studies.

When do the placements take place?

Salaried students will undertake practical experience at the same time as studying. On the salaried route you would be working full time from September. All students are expected to attend placements in two schools. On the Salaried route, the majority of your time will be spent at your employer school, but in June and July of year 1 you would be expected to undertake a second placement in a lead partner school.

Part-time students will undertake their practical experience in our Partner Schools towards the end of their academic study in each module. Over the 2-year course you'll spend 120 days on placement. This amounts to 60 days per year of placement time (30 days across the first half of the year, 30 in the second half) and will include one period during your second year of 30 days which must be worked in a continuous 6-week block.

Can I do my placements in my current school?

Yes. If you are employed by a school and they are not able to offer you sponsorship for the salaried route, it may be possible for you to choose the part time route in your current school. In order to do this your school has to apply to become one of our Associate Partner Schools with the understanding that you have to complete a second placement in a different school. More information can be found [here](#)

Students must also commit to 30 full days of teaching (five days a week over six consecutive school weeks) in year 2. This would need to be agreed directly with your current school. The second school will be one of our partner schools, who have to meet strict criteria to enter into partnership. They will be selected by the partnership and that decision will be based on whether they complement the original placement, geographical location as well as other factors.

What is a Partner School?

A partner school is one that has applied to join the programme and has meet the strict criteria to enter into the partnership.

There are 3 types of Partners:

Lead Partner School – members of the Partnership Committee with key strategic and decision-making responsibilities, leading associate and employer schools within their cluster and playing a central part in all aspects of the programme.

Associate Partner School - support the development of students on the Part Time PGCE programme, providing placement opportunities of up to 120 days per year.

Employer Partner School - those who wish to support the development of an employed student enrolled on the Salaried PGCE route.

Schools can have more than one status e.g. an Employer School can also be an Associate School if they are sponsoring their own employee on the Salaried route and offering placements to students on the Part-time route.

For more information – please see our [Schools pages](#)

9. Already working in a school?

My current school have agreed to sponsor me, how does that work?

If you already work in a state school as a teaching assistant or in a non-teaching role, you can apply for your school to sponsor you to do the PCGE. You'll work full time and study around your existing duties. You will be on the Salaried route and will be employed by your school and will ordinarily receive a salary of the minimum of the unqualified teacher pay scale (£18,487 for the 2021/2022 academic year). Please see our prospectus and [website](#) for more information.

Please ask your headteacher to apply to become an Employer Partner School with our programme before you apply. Your school must be approved by the OU partnership and provide you with an endorsement letter. Click [here](#) for more information.

My current school are unable to sponsor me, can you help find me another sponsor school?

For **secondary shortage subjects only**, you can apply to the salaried route without a sponsor school and we can potentially match you to a state school who are seeking a secondary salaried student. The secondary school will then interview candidates we have put forward using their own employment procedures and decide whether to offer the student a contract of employment (we cannot guarantee you employment). Employment would be expected to start in September. **Please note that this route is no longer offered for Primary candidates.**

My current school are unable to sponsor me, can I do the part-time route?

If your current school is unable to sponsor you and you wish to remain employed in this school, you could apply for the Part-time route.

This route offers some flexibility as you can gain part-time practical teaching experience in a school alongside your existing commitments. Across the two years, you'll have 120 days of

school placements; 60 days per year. In the second year, half of your school placements (30 days) must be completed in a continuous block. If your school has been accepted as one of our Associate Partner schools, then you will be able to do 2 out of 3 of your school placements in your current school. You'll study 2–3 days a week, either in academic study or on your school experience. You would need to fit this around your paid employment in agreement with your placement schools.

How does my school apply to become a Partner school?

Please see our [School facing website](#) for information on how your school can apply to become a partner school. Please ask your Headteacher to send us an Endorsement letter using the template provided on our [website](#).