

Education

Education is one of the most popular sectors for Oxford graduates. Diverse areas including publishing, policy, administration, charities and NGOs, psychology, arts and heritage and academia may be relevant if you're interested in education. Here we look at teaching.

Teaching demands communication skills, energy and a commitment to inspire students. It offers an opportunity to make a difference, to use your subject and to advance your career in a variety of directions.

Teachers can rapidly specialise into managerial, pastoral or training roles in schools. Many also move into education roles in other areas.

Getting in and entry points

Teacher training options divide into two main types:

School-led: One- or two-year programmes based in school, some salaried, others funded by loans and bursaries.

Examples are: Teach First, School Direct, Researchers in Schools, some School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Premier Pathways, Engage Education, and some independent schools.

University-led: Usually one-year programmes based in university but with extended periods in partnership schools. For example, PGCE, PGDE, SCITT. Funded via bursaries (level varies with teaching subject) and tuition fee loans.

Whichever route you choose to follow, it is important to gain some relevant experience prior to application.





Applications for most UK teacher training courses are via the Department for Education Apply portal; others take direct applications.

There is no formal requirement for a teaching qualification in the independent sector and some will employ new graduates and offer on-the-job training. Others recruit recent graduates through graduate assistant roles, particularly in boarding schools. CareerConnect and the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) are good sources of vacancy listings for independent schools.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and private tutoring are popular short-term occupations on leaving Oxford, but can also be longer-term careers. A degree from Oxford may be the only qualification needed for some teaching jobs, but experience is always helpful for applications, and a TEFL qualification may make it easier to find work abroad.

There are a few graduate training programmes in education policy and administration, some are run by universities. For example, Imperial College has a long-standing graduate management and finance scheme. Education policy could form part of the Civil Service Fast Stream or local government schemes such as the National Graduate Development Programme. The TES and the Guardian are key publications for opportunities in the education sector.



Extra-curricular ideas

- Observe teachers at work in local schools. The government-run School Experience Programme offers time in schools. Alternatively, approach schools directly to ask if you can observe lessons, or help in other ways.
- Get international teaching experience in the summer vacation through The Summer Internship Programme.
- Volunteer your time with local children through organisations such as Jacari, KEEN, Splash at Oxford or Oxford Hub's Schools Plus programmes.
- Develop pastoral skills by helping with Oxford University Scout & Guide Group, or volunteering with Sexpression Oxford to promote sexual health.
- Offer mentoring for UNIQ Summer School participants, volunteer with Oxford University Admissions or work with Target Schools to promote access to university, or with OxFizz to give interview practice, mentoring, or to run summer camps.

Moving into teaching has been the best career decision I could have made. It was challenging to begin with but I'm so glad I embraced it and gave it a go. That sense of unfamiliarity soon wears away and you feel like you can really make a difference.

Saskia Geddes, BA Modern and Medieval Languages (Spanish), St Peter's College, 2022; Secondary Maths teacher with Teach First

Next steps

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tefl

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/teaching-in-schools

Alumni profile

Saskia Geddes

What: I'm in my first year of training with Teach First to become a Maths teacher. This is a programme in which graduates are trained on the job to become inspiring teachers in disadvantaged UK schools. This involves teaching in the classroom from day one whilst also completing a PGDE (Postgraduate Diploma in Education). I'm currently teaching at a mixed secondary school in North Kensington, where I teach 19 lessons a week to 11 to 16-year-olds. I completed five weeks of online training during June and July prior to the start of the school year in September. Over an average term, we have three training seminars online and one in-person training day. We also have several observations, essays and reviews over the year, which go towards gaining the QTS (Qualified Teacher Status).

Why: I'd never really considered teaching until I spoke to a Teach First rep at the careers fair. My two criteria for a job were not to be sat in front of a desk all day and to help people, so the programme seemed to fit the bill. I applied to teach Spanish and when I was offered to teach Maths I was really surprised. However, I am so happy I gave it a go – now I feel like I'm making a difference to someone's life every day at the school. I have gained so much confidence and people skills, which I believe will help me advance in my future career, whether I decide to stay in teaching or try something else!

Advice: The main thing I would advise to succeed in a Teach First application is to get some sort of teaching experience. For example, being a member of the university's mixed lacrosse team gave me the opportunity to coach the women's lacrosse development squad, where I taught beginner players. During my year abroad in Spain, I also chose to work as a teaching assistant of English with the British Council. Through this, I got a good idea of what it takes to work in a classroom. Experience counts – you may even want to drop your old school an email and ask to volunteer there for a few weeks over summer.



Position

Secondary Maths teacher with Teach First.

Background

BA Modern and Medieval Languages (Spanish), St Peter's College, 2022.

Alumni profile

Joseph Drakeley

What is a PGCE?: A PGCE is a postgraduate certificate in education. I entered my PGCE at the University of Oxford straight out of graduating from my Physics degree here. There are quite a few different options for teacher training, but there were a couple of aspects that drew me to the Oxford course. The first was the opportunity to stay in Oxford for another year. More importantly, however, was the impression I got during my interview that the department would be a friendly and supportive environment.

Luckily, I was correct, and the department is indeed very supportive; both my mentor and other staff are always happy to chat, not only about the course, but also about life generally.

Why a PGCE?: When choosing a PGCE, the most important motivation is obviously wanting to become a teacher. The course is tough at times and does require long working hours, and it is always helpful to be able to keep that original motivation in mind. Those long nights are very worth the struggle when you get to teach students a new concept and see them brighten up. Not only is the course super rewarding, but it has also helped me improve my written skills, which, as a STEM grad, were in dire need of help. Whilst the PGCE is far and away a more challenging workload than my undergraduate degree, the sense of success you get every time you step into a classroom makes it worthwhile.

Advice: Go into the PGCE with an open mind. I initially thought that I would only want to teach Sixth Form, but throughout the course I have found that I actually prefer to teach KS3 groups. Go into teaching being prepared that your plans might change and you will be setting yourself up for a much more enjoyable experience. When preparing for an interview, be aware of what you bring to the table. As a new graduate, for example, I focused on being the same generation as students and therefore being able to relate to them. Everyone can bring something to teaching. It is just about identifying what your 'thing' is.



Position

Trainee Secondary School Teacher (PGCE).

Background

BA Physics, Oriel College, 2021.