

How do I become a teacher of adults?

1. What is adult and further education?

Teaching adults is a specialist area. Current education policy defines adult learners as those over 19. However these days if you teach in some parts of the further education sector you may find yourself teaching students from age 14 upwards.

Education and training for adults takes place in a wide range of settings and many different types of provider are involved. Together they make up what is known as the "learning and skills sector" or the "further education sector". Adults can be found learning in FE colleges, in community education centres, in the workplace, in libraries or online, possibly at home. Learning opportunities for adults can be provided by colleges, local authorities, private training providers, voluntary organisations and trade unions. This list is not exhaustive.

2. Who are the learners?

Adult learners may be studying to improve their skills and qualifications for work, or to progress to further study, or they may have chosen to learn for their own personal development in their own time. Some people are learning at college as part of the 'Train to Gain' opportunity for adults in the workplace; some as apprentices. Many adults are now taking the opportunity to improve their skills in literacy, numeracy or English language, through the government-funded *Skills for Life* programmes. Adults may engage in "family learning" at their children's school. Learning is also an important strand of the rehabilitation of offenders in prison.

Adult learners have very varied backgrounds and life experiences. They may be employed, unemployed, parents, carers, homeless; the range is wide. They may have degrees or have left school early with few qualifications. Groups of learners therefore are not homogeneous in terms of background, age, past experiences of learning or current motivation to learn. Some will be in their twenties, others in their eighties.

3. What skills does a teacher of adults need?

The principles of good teaching, such as careful preparation, stimulating materials, and clear aims and objectives apply in any context. However teachers of adults also need particular skills that are different from those required for teaching in a school. Many adult learners are attending because they have chosen to be there, so they are able to "vote with their feet" if they are not satisfied with their experience. However some may be attending because they are required to do so, for example on some workplace training or where employability training is required as a condition of receiving benefits. Adults generally bring a wide range of life experience to their learning which the teacher will want to build on.

4. What work is available?

Work for teachers of adults can be full-time or part-time. There are full-time career opportunities available, particularly in colleges, where there are more opportunities to combine teaching with wider areas of responsibility for coordinating and managing provision. Most full-time teaching posts are in vocational subjects or *Skills for Life* (Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL). Part-time options may suit people who have other commitments. For example artists and crafts-people may supplement their income with teaching their subject to adults. Others fit teaching round their childcare responsibilities.

5. What qualifications do I need?

You will need a qualification in the subject you wish to teach - this may be at degree level or the equivalent vocational level. Alternatively you will need substantial practical experience in your field.

Teaching in the further education sector at whatever level is becoming a recognised profession, and, following the Further Education Workforce Reforms in 2007, new teachers are required to gain the status of QTLS (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills) or ATLS (Associate Teacher Learning and Skills), depending on their role, and existing teachers are being strongly encouraged to do so. There are a variety of possible routes to obtain this status.

Teachers new to the sector need to follow a course of initial training, which can be full-time or part-time, pre-service or in-service, followed by a period of "professional formation". There is a professional recognition scheme for existing teachers to follow.

Full details of the qualifications required and the processes involved are best obtained from the following organisations:

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the independent employer-led sector skills council for the learning and skills sector. It is responsible for the professional development of staff working in the UK lifelong learning sector. It has now established standards and qualifications for people working across the sector. Follow the links below to find out more:

Main website - <http://www.lluk.org>

'I'd like to work in the lifelong learning sector' - <http://www.lluk.org/2762.htm>

The **LLUK Information and Advice Service** can provide full details of qualifications required to work in the sector, including qualifications to become a Skills for Life teacher (literacy, numeracy, ESOL) : email advice@lluk.org or telephone 0207 936 5798

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the **professional body** for teachers, trainers, tutors, student teachers and assessors in the further education and skills sector. It has responsibility for the registration and regulation of licensed practitioners through awarding Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status. Find out more here: [IfL - The Institute for Learning - Professional Formation - home](#)

6. How can I find an initial training course?

Each region of England has a **Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training** for the learning and skills sector, which should be able to give you information about training opportunities in your area. Follow this link to find out more: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/cett>

You can also contact the **LLUK Information & Advice Service** for regional lists.

The **Talent website** is also useful, particularly for anyone looking for courses in London. Their FAQs section is particularly useful, and includes information about funding available for people who want to train to teach adults. There is a comprehensive range of course information, including information for people who want to qualify as **Skills for Life teachers** (adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL). <http://www.talent.ac.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=751>

7. Once I'm qualified, how do I keep up-to-date?

Once you have completed initial training you will want to keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date. This is where Continuing Professional Development (CPD) comes in.

Full-time teachers in any role within provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council are now required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) every year, with a pro rata requirement for part-time teachers, subject to a minimum of 6 hours a year.

Teachers are required to register with the Institute for Learning and to record their CPD. The Institute for Learning has developed the online **Reflect** recording tool for this purpose, and teachers are encouraged to use this, but other methods of recording are also acceptable. To find out more go to: www.ifl.ac.uk. Teachers are also required to adhere to a code of professional practice which is being developed by the Institute.

8. What counts as CPD?

CPD needs to address the "dual professionalism" of teachers across the sector, by including:

- knowledge and skills in the teacher's subject specialism
- knowledge and skills in teaching.

The teacher's CPD record is expected to show a mix of learning and skills development in both these areas.

The IfL has adopted a broad definition of CPD, as follows:

"Teaching practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their current practice and to articulate their development needs in terms of actions that impact on their practice. This moves the emphasis of CPD from attending a course or seminar to how it impacts upon teaching practice, and allows a wide range of activities to be described as CPD."

So what defines an experience as CPD is what the teacher has *learnt* and *put into practice* and the *impact* this has had upon learners. This learning can arise from reading and reflection, discussion with colleagues or staff development activities, as much as from courses and seminars. Detailed guidance can be found here:
[http://www.ifl.ac.uk/services/docs/582/J1553%20IfL%20CPD%20Guidelines%20leaflet%20v7%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/services/docs/582/J1553%20IfL%20CPD%20Guidelines%20leaflet%20v7%20(2).pdf)

9. What's in it for me?

Teaching adults can be very rewarding. Many adults coming back into learning have had poor experiences in school, and they are looking for a second chance to achieve. Once they start to gain confidence and skills many adult learners realise that they have talents and potential that they had never been aware of. Some adults who start in classes at a basic level go on to take degrees. Others get promotion at work or start their own businesses,. Adult learning also contributes to general well-being, and many adult learners gain new friends, enjoy improved health and develop new hobbies and interests. Some become very effective "learning champions" encouraging other adults into learning. As a teacher of adults you will have made a contribution to this process. That's a great feeling!

10. Key contacts at NIACE

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This series of briefing sheets aims to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues. Other titles are available.

Requests for briefing sheets in other formats, such as large print or brail are welcomed; we will be pleased to consider your request. Copies of this and other sheets are available from NIACE:

21 De Montfort Street
Leicester, LE1 7GE
Tel: 0116 204 4200
Email: information@niace.org.uk
They are also available on the website at:
<http://www.niace.org.uk/services/information-services/briefing-sheets>

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties, or insufficient resources. Registered charity number 1002775; Company registration number 2603322.