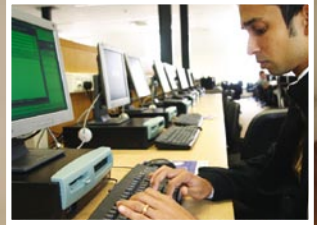


Getting a Teaching Job in Further Education



Introduction

This guide is designed to help you find your first teaching appointment. It contains useful information on application procedures and vacancy sources, geared towards those seeking appointments within the post-compulsory sector of education. It also includes suggestions on how to make effective written applications and how to prepare for selection interviews. If you require any further information or help, do not hesitate to visit the Guidance and Employability Centre on your campus.

You may also call in at one of the drop-in sessions at the Employability Centre. These are held at various times throughout the week; no appointment is necessary. Or you can contact a careers adviser by e-mail: careers.centre@gre.ac.uk. Alternatively, book an appointment by telephoning the Employability Centre at the Greenwich Campus on 020 8331 9111, at the Avery Hill Campus on 020 8331 9444 or at the Medway Campus on 020 8331 9794.

Our commitment to equal opportunities means that we wish to encourage all students to use the Employability Centre. If for any reason you would find access difficult, please contact us and we will do what we can to help.

Job hunting hints

The post-compulsory sector of education has changed dramatically in the last few years. Since incorporation, many more jobs are on fixed-term contracts, often of one or two years' duration, with the possibility of extension. Part-time work is the most common way for people to

begin their FE teaching careers, but you should also be on the lookout for full-time opportunities from January onwards. Some part-time jobs are paid by the hour, while others are fractions of full-time jobs (e.g. a 0.5 post is half a full-time job).

For advice on where to look for advertised vacancies, see page 3, but remember that many jobs will never be advertised. You should, therefore, also be making speculative applications to people who may be able to offer you employment.

After Christmas you should contact any colleges at which you are interested in working and enquire whether there is any part-time or full-time work likely to be available for September. The college may well have an application form for prospective lecturers, which you should request. If not, send them a CV and covering letter indicating your areas of interest and preference.

It would be very wise to be flexible with regard to teaching subject, level (this is most important) and location, if at all possible. Consider the widest possible range of subjects you could teach.

When you make this first approach, send your letter to the Head of Human Resources because most colleges now keep a centralised database of lecturers looking for work. It is also a good idea to send another copy to the relevant manager in the curriculum area you want to teach (i.e. the Head of School, Head of Faculty or Head of Department). Use the college prospectus to find out the name and correct title of the appropriate person.

Your placement college, providing things went well there, is the best place to

start, since they know you. However, bear in mind that they may not have vacancies when you apply. About a third of PCET students find work in their placement colleges. Use Guidance and Employability's Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) to get an idea of where last year's students went. If you don't already know the colleges in your area you can use directories such as the following.

- *The Education Yearbook*, published by Pearson Education, lists FE colleges, adult education institutes, independent secondary schools, and independent FE and other organisations within education.
- *The Directory of Further Education*, published by Pearson Education. This lists the different courses and tells you which colleges run them.
- *Floodlight*, published by the Association of London Government on behalf of the inner London boroughs and the Corporation of London. This lists HE and FE colleges and adult education institutes and tells you which part-time and full-time course they run.

These annual publications are available for reference in the Employability Centre or in the university libraries (you may have to ask at the Enquiry Desk). You will be able to gather useful names and addresses from them and check to see which colleges run the courses that interest you.

Timing

Vacancies can occur at any time but most do not appear until after Easter, when

colleges will know what vacancies they are likely to have for September – so don't be concerned if you find only a few jobs advertised earlier in the year. However, you should start to look out for jobs as early as January or February. Many colleges look for staff in September, after enrolment, when student numbers are confirmed, so it is always a good idea to ring round then.

When you contact colleges by telephone, it is important to try to get the names of department/section leaders. The best time to call is usually between 8.30 and 9am.

Remember that any major reorganisation or redeployment within colleges causes uncertainty and can cause delays in advertising vacancies.

Sources of vacancy information

The press

Most colleges advertise vacancies in *The Times Educational Supplement* (on sale every Friday). Alternatively, you can have a look at their website **www.tes.co.uk**.

The Education Guardian (part of Tuesday's *Guardian*) and *The Guardian* jobs website (**www.jobs.guardian.co.uk**) also have adverts for FE work. *The Society Guardian*, in Wednesday's *Guardian*, focuses on public service, care and community work. Some training opportunities may also appear in the national press.

It is worth keeping an eye on local papers in your area, particularly for part-time and temporary jobs. *The Voice* (**www.voice-online.co.uk**), on sale on

Tuesdays, carries a range of jobs, mainly in the London area, and can be useful for positions in welfare projects, local community schemes, etc.

It could be worth looking at *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk) for university jobs, and also in magazines serving your own subject specialism, e.g. *New Scientist* (www.newscientistjobs.com).

You may also want to try the Prospects website, www.prospects.ac.uk, for general careers information.

In the university

Copies of any individual vacancies notified directly to the School of Education & Training are placed on the noticeboards in the corridors near the School Office.

Making applications

The application pack

When you respond to an advertisement for a publicly advertised post you will usually be sent an application pack, which will contain all or some of the following:

- details of the selection process;
- details about the college;
- details about the section, department or faculty;
- a job description;
- a person specification;
- an application form;
- a disclosure form;
- an equal opportunities monitoring form;

- conditions of employment;
- salary information.

It is important to read about the selection process very carefully. Many colleges regularly review their recruitment and selection procedures to ensure good equal opportunities practice. This means that they will be selecting candidates on the basis of whether or not they meet the criteria that are set out in the person specification. It is therefore crucial that you address the skills listed; especially those identified as key or essential skills.

What employers are looking for: skills and qualities

Not forgetting what is stated above about the importance of the individual employer's person specification, a recent example suggested that applicants should pay particular attention to the following.

- Demonstration of the ability to plan and deliver the curriculum in a way that allows the student to become an active learner.
- The creation of a positive climate for learning.
- An understanding of the relationship between good classroom management and student development.
- Demonstration of an understanding of and commitment to equal opportunities in your work as a teacher.

The following skills and qualities are also considered to be relevant, and most employers will be looking for some combination of these.

- **Motivation** – evidence of a strong motivation to teach.
- **Teaching ability** – the ability to draw out the latent talent of students, together with the imagination and creativity to devise new materials and capture the interest of students.
- **An interest in your subject** – an infectious love of your subject and the ability to put this across with enthusiasm.
- **Flexibility regarding the subject areas you will teach** – a willingness to teach across levels and to teach on a wide range of academic and vocational courses as appropriate.
- **Team work** – demonstration of good team-working skills.

If you can demonstrate all these, plus **patience**, an **equable temperament**, **stamina** and **energy**, you are likely to be the ideal candidate.

General points

The importance of presenting yourself effectively on paper should never be underestimated, as this is the first stage in the selection process and extensive pre-selection is done on the basis of written applications.

First impressions are all-important, as many applications are eliminated before being subjected to more detailed examination, for the following very basic reasons:

- poor or illegible handwriting, or typing errors;
- untidy layout and general presentation;
- bad spelling, grammar and punctuation;
- gaps in dates, inconsistencies or vagueness;
- inadequately answered or unanswered questions.

Your written application is the first step in the self-marketing process – selling yourself on paper – and will determine whether or not you are offered an interview. It is therefore worth planning applications in advance, drafting a good CV and a specimen covering letter, and completing one fairly complex form, which can then be used as the basic material for all your applications.

Before you complete an application form or write a covering letter you should study any available information about the job and the college. Although some of the information you provide will remain the same from one application to another, your supporting statement (see page 7) should be individually targeted towards the stated requirements of the college.

There are two main types of written application:

1. The employer's application form.
2. Your own CV.

A CV (see page 10) should always be accompanied by a covering letter (see page 16). When submitting a detailed application form, a brief covering letter is all that is required.

When sending in your application, remember to:

- use a large A4-size envelope so that you do not need to fold your application – this keeps it looking smart;

- send it off in plenty of time before the closing date;
- enclose a stamped addressed envelope if requested or if you want an acknowledgement of receipt of your application.

For more information about teaching in FE, contact Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), www.lluk.org. Lifelong Learning UK is the Sector Skills Council responsible for the professional development of all those working in community learning and development; further education; higher education; libraries, archives and information services; and work-based learning.

(Since January 2004, LLUK has taken over the work of three former national training organisations, FENTO, PAULO and isNTO, together with the NTO responsibilities of HESDA). Contact details: Lifelong Learning UK, St Andrew's House, 18–20 St Andrew Street, London EC4A 3AY; telephone 0870 757 7890 (reception), 020 7936 5798 (information and advice service); e-mail enquiries@lluk.org.

Application forms

Give yourself plenty of time to fill in an application form – it can take many hours.

Complete the form accurately, neatly, thoroughly and enthusiastically.

Remember to be positive throughout and to use active verbs such as "I researched, co-ordinated, managed, organised", with real examples from your teaching.

Basic points

- Read through the form before writing anything.
- Make a draft version. Photocopy the form and complete the copy first to check that your replies fit the space available.
- Your supporting statement is very important; make sure you complete it effectively by matching your skills to those required for the job, giving real examples from your teaching.
- Follow any instructions that are given, e.g. to use black ink, block capitals, etc.
- Make sure that your handwriting is legible and neat.
- Check for spelling mistakes.
- Do not leave sections blank. Answer all relevant questions or write N/A (not applicable) if appropriate.
- Check for any mistakes, gaps or inconsistencies in dates.
- Ask a friend or colleague to check for any errors.
- Keep a copy so that you can refer to it before an interview.

When sending an application form you do not normally need to send a CV as well, and you must resist the temptation to write "see enclosed CV" in any of the sections – you need to complete the form itself. Many colleges will use only the form to shortlist candidates for interview.

Education

Give the name of the university and your exact course title, together with details of your other education and qualifications. Remember to include details, either here or in your supporting statement, of any particular academic subject areas, especially those you gained from work

experience opportunities as well as from teacher training.

Teaching experience

You should include any teaching experience you had prior to starting the course, together with full details of the experience you have had during your course.

Employment

Both full- and part-time employment should be included, together with vacation and voluntary work of any length or relevance. If you have room, it is a good idea to give some indication of what your duties/responsibilities were or what skills you acquired, especially if these were relevant to teaching and/or to your specialism. You may be able to continue on a separate sheet if necessary, but check the instructions on the form first.

It is important that you emphasise the relevance of any previous work experience to your work as a teacher, not only to strengthen your application but also because this may enable you to negotiate additional salary increments (see “Salary and conditions of service”, page xx). If there is insufficient space in the employment section to cover all this, you can expand upon it in your supporting statement.

Leisure activities and interests

Not all application forms have a separate section for this. If the form does not, you could include the relevant information in your supporting statement. This information provides interviewers with a basis for discussion when trying to assess you as a “person” as much as a potential teacher, although it becomes much less

important if you are a mature student with a good deal of relevant work experience.

It is, however, important to mention any interests relevant to teaching (or your specialism), e.g. participation in sports or youth clubs; as well as skills that might be useful, e.g. first-aid or life-saving certificates, or computer expertise.

Supporting statement

Most application forms will have a section that invites you to write a statement in support of your application or a letter of application. This may be on the form itself or you may be encouraged to attach or continue on a separate sheet. You do not need to write “Dear Sir/Madam” and “Yours faithfully” when the letter of application is part of the application form.

Before completing this section you will need to analyse carefully the contents of the application pack, especially the person specification, job description and any other information on the college and/or area.

The person specification will allow you to identify the selection criteria, which are usually based on qualifications, knowledge and experience, and skills and abilities. So, for example, a recent lecturer’s post in business studies included the following criteria:

- a degree in business studies and a formal teaching qualification;
- up-to-date knowledge of the relevant subject area, the requirements of examination boards and teaching techniques;
- experience of teaching business studies, including vocational courses;

- the ability to work as part of a team and to display flexibility in courses and levels offered.

You should also do some self-analysis in terms of your own strengths and weaknesses, past achievements and experiences. You will need to think and reflect on how you can use your particular experience, skills and abilities to match the criteria. It may help if you prepare a card or separate sheets of paper for each criterion and then list your skills and experience that match them. Remember all the transferable skills you have which are relevant for the job – e.g. you may have experience from raising children, other types of employment, or voluntary work. Remember your teaching placement experience too.

Make sure that you give specific examples and evidence, e.g. “I have three years’ training experience in the private sector...”, “On my teaching practice I taught GCSE, Access and GNVQ courses”.

Remember to make positive statements about yourself, e.g. “I am an enthusiastic teacher and enjoy working with adults and 16–19-year-old students...” rather than “Although I am not very experienced...”.

Make sure that you have said something to meet each selection criteria, but don’t make things up. Each candidate will have different strengths and areas for development. You may have less teaching experience than other candidates so you will have to show that you have particular strengths and advantages in other areas.

It is crucial that you make good use of this opportunity to “sell” yourself. It is unlikely that you will be able to do yourself justice

on less than one side of A4 (hand-written), but be guided by any instructions on the form. Don’t write too much – for most jobs two sides will be quite enough and more than three sides will be too long.

If you are not provided with a person specification there are no absolute rules as to what should be included in your supporting statement, but the following are possibilities.

- The reason why you are applying for this particular post, including any links with or knowledge of the area in which the college is located.
- A brief overview of your training course, including any special features or work you have done, such as your major assignment.
- An account of your teaching practice, or observations, covering:
 - when you did the practice;
 - the courses that you taught on;
 - the size of the groups for which you were responsible;
 - special features of the practice (e.g. open-plan, multicultural environment, team teaching, etc.);
 - an example of how you plan, deliver, assess and evaluate a learning outcome. This could be a brief description of one of your best sessions on your teaching placement, how you approached a particular theme or subject area, or how you organised the classroom.
- A brief description of any other teaching or training experiences you have had before or during your course.

- Any particular professional interests or strengths. A brief account of any classroom-based research projects or written assignments you have done as part of your course might help.
- An account of some of your visions and beliefs about further education and any principles that might ideally inform your practice. This paragraph tells employers about the kind of teacher you would like to become. Most colleges realise that it is unlikely that you will have formulated your “philosophy of education” in any final sense, but will expect you to have thought through your beliefs about learning and visions for the future.
- Any other aspect of your education and/or experience that is relevant to your professional future in the classroom, including information on previous work experience. Remember to include any training activities you may have carried out and ways in which your subject knowledge has been developed.
- Details of any particular competencies, experiences or leisure interests that match the person or job specification and will help the college to know more about you as a person.

References

You are normally asked to give the names and addresses of two referees, one from the university and one from your teaching practice. You should use the School Office as the university contact. The School Office will provide a reference that has been written by PCET School staff and is kept with your student records. By following this procedure you should

ensure that any request for a reference is dealt with immediately.

It is not a good idea to use the names of individual PCET tutors since letters addressed to them could lie unopened for some time if they are away for any reason.

The address you should use is:

School of Education & Training
University of Greenwich
Avery Hill Campus
Mansion Site
Bexley Road
Eltham
London SE9 2PQ

Your second referee could be your teaching practice mentor or link tutor. It should be someone who has seen you in a teaching situation. Alternatively, it may be someone from your previous work experience, or, in the case of students who have just graduated, a tutor from your degree course. Before giving an individual’s name as a referee you must obtain his or her permission to do so.

Testimonials

These are open letters, usually character references rather than academic reports. We do not usually recommend the inclusion of testimonials, except those obtained from work abroad, as they are generally regarded as being of little value compared with a confidential report.

Disclosure of criminal background

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 1986 requires applicants for employment who

will have access to children and young people to disclose all their previous criminal convictions, including “spent” convictions, bind-over orders and cautions.

School teaching obviously falls into this category, as do some FE posts. You may therefore find that application forms require the disclosure of any criminal background, as well as consent to the employer verifying the accuracy of responses with the police.

Your CV

Some employers require your application in the form of a CV. This is a summary of your personal details, educational background, qualifications, work and teaching experience and the names of two referees. Example CVs are shown on pages 12 and 14. The first type lists in chronological order the applicant’s education and experience and is designed for speculative enquiries; the second is honed to target a specific job. You will need a CV in order to make speculative applications, but (as discussed above) the majority of advertised teaching vacancies will require you to complete an application form.

Your CV should be word processed on white unlined paper and accompanied by a covering letter (see page 16).

You should keep your CV to two sides of A4 paper. It must not be longer, even if you feel you have a good deal of concrete information to contribute, such as plenty of previous, relevant work experience. Keeping the information concise is important, otherwise you risk the reader giving up halfway through.

You do not need to include the full postal address of all your education establishments

and previous employers on a CV, other than where you are listing them as referees.

Ideally, it should be possible to tell what sort of a job someone is seeking from their CV. Anyone intending to apply for work other than teaching will probably need to prepare two or more versions and may like to discuss their ideas with the careers adviser after referring to our handouts that detail general job-seeking strategies. However, when applying for teaching jobs the following information is suggested.

Personal details

This is self-explanatory, and does not require a heading, but make sure you include all the data in the example. Sometimes people like to include their nationality if they are overseas students with the right to work in the UK.

Education

Under this heading, give brief details of your education from the age of 11, including dates. List your qualifications, stating the level, subjects and grades and including any part-time or distance-learning courses and professional qualifications. Describe your current course and your special-method subjects. You should include some information on the content of their degree and the class obtained.

Teaching experience

Give details of your teaching practice, with the names of college(s) and length of time spent there. Include details of all teaching and tutorial responsibilities and try to highlight your more responsible contributions. You should record all other teaching experience and do this quite fully, again emphasising responsibilities taken.

Other work experience (or “Employment”)

Give brief details, with dates, of any previous employment, or vacation work of any length and relevance, together with any substantial voluntary work experience. It is a good idea to give some indication of what your duties/responsibilities were or what skills you acquired.

As already stated in the section on application forms, it is important that you emphasise the relevance of any previous work experience to your work as a teacher. Not only does this strengthen your application but may also enable you to negotiate additional salary increments (see “Salary and conditions of service”, page 23).

Interests and activities

This section should tell an employer something about your personality. It should help give some insight into you as an individual, e.g. are you sociable, are you likely to work well as part of a team, can you take responsibility and show initiative, are you fit and active, and do you have a wide range of interests? List any positions of responsibility that you have held and include information on your interests. As mentioned earlier, this section is less important for those with plenty of relevant work experience.

Other information/additional skills

Give details of any special skills or qualifications that you can offer, e.g. first aid, languages, sport coaching, computer expertise, driving licence, administrative skills.

Referees

You should put two, one from your course (see “References”, page 9), and the other from someone who knows you well, ideally in a teaching situation, e.g. your teaching practice mentor. Remember to ask his or her permission first.

Alternative approaches

There are many different ways of presenting information in a CV and following this example will result in a something fairly traditional. If you would like to try a more modern approach you might want to include a skills profile, highlighting skills you have that match the job you are applying for. You would need to identify those most appropriate to lecturing, such as planning and organisation, communication, team work – you could use as a guideline the skills identified in the person specification for a job that was recently advertised for your subject.

You may also find it useful to refer back to the section on completing application forms (page 6), and remember that the careers adviser is always happy to discuss your draft CV with you.



Sample chronological CV

Kathleen Walker

12 Oakley Road
London SE9 2PQ
Tel: 0181 850 1234
E-mail: wk34@greenwich.com

JOB TARGET: Science lecturer within the further education sector

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

2007–2008 **University of Greenwich:** PGCE (PCET) courses included Professional Practice of Teaching; Supporting and Tutoring Learners; Managing the Learning Environment and developing teaching specialism in Science.

Options: Developed a set of learning resources for A-level Chemistry and incorporating Key Skills.

1996–2000 **City of London Polytechnic:** BSc Honours Applied Chemistry (Class 2.2).

Course included organic and inorganic chemistry, classical methods of analysis and agrochemical research. Dissertation on “The effects of organophosphates on rape crops”.

1989–1996 **Bolton Park Comprehensive School**

1996 GCE A-levels: Biology (C), Chemistry (D), Physics (E)

1994 GCSEs: English Language (B), Chemistry (B), Biology (B), Physics (C), Mathematics (C), History (C)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2006–2007 **South London College:** Teaching Practice (three days a week for semester 1; four days a week for semester 2). Taught on a wide range of courses including Chemistry 1st year A-level, GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Science, and Health and Social Care. Also GCSE Chemistry, Biology and Physics, as well as Safe Laboratory Practice. Wrote manual for laboratory safety course. Also taught aspects of Information Technology as part of an RSA CLAIT. Spent 3 hours a week individually tutoring students with partial hearing.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

2000–2006 **University of Westminster:** Senior Chemical Stores Technician.

My work included two hours a week teaching balancing chemistry to undergraduates.

1998–1998 **DERA:** Government Laboratory Chemist (Industrial Placement): six months in the Toxic Organics in Air Section and six months in the Food Section.

1995–1998 **Vacation jobs** included: playground supervisor (three summers) and postal worker.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Good keyboard skills and competent knowledge of a wide range of computing packages. Full, clean driving licence. Last summer I completed a short CACDP course in BSL Sign Language for the Deaf.

INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

While studying for my degree I was elected as the course representative for two years, representing students' issues at Faculty Boards. I also acted as Treasurer of the Chemical Society. My other interests include travelling and I have spent several holidays camping in Eastern Europe and North Africa.

REFEREES

School of Education & Training, University of Greenwich, Avery Hill Campus, Mansion Site, Bexley Road, Eltham, London SE9 2PQ

Dr F. Bloggs, Head of Chemical Sciences, Chemistry Dept., University of Westminster, London S12 3ZZ

Targeted CV

Ade Akinolu

18 Riefield Road
Norwood, London
SE19 2UG
0181 331 1234
E-mail: Adeakinolu@hotmail.com

Education

2007–2008 University of Greenwich

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PCET)

Curriculum specialism: Business Studies with particular reference to accounting and information technology. Studies included Professional Practice of Teaching; Supporting and Tutoring Learners; Managing the Learning Environment.

2004–2007 South Bank University

BSc Hons Accountancy and Finance (Class 2.2)

Subjects included Accounting and Audit Practice, Corporate Reporting, Strategic Management, Corporate Finance, and Financial Modelling.

1999–2001 Lewisham College

AAT Technician Foundation Course (Pass)

Part-time accountancy course studied while working. Units included Payroll, Credit Transactions and Business Administration.

Teaching Experience

2007–2008 Newham College

Taught a wide range of programmes on teaching practice, including Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ in Business (covering Recording Financial Information, Operating Administrative Systems and Financial Services). Also lectured part-time teaching AAT evening classes.

Work Experience

2002–2006 **Select Accountancy Agency**, Lewisham. Part-time Bookkeeper

Worked with various local companies to fund my studies; mainly in reconciliation and adjustment of end-of-year accounts. I was also responsible for the production of statutory accounts.

1999–2002 **Rich and Quick Accountants**, Lewisham: Audit Senior

Responsible for planning and supervision of audit programmes. As supervisor of a small team I developed systems and budgetary controls for internal and external audits.

Additional skills

Competent computer skills. I am able to use Microsoft programmes to analyse, record and retrieve both numerical and non-numerical data, and am familiar with Sage Accounting packages: Financial Controller and Sage for Windows.

Currently hold a clean and current driving licence.

Referees

School of Education & Training, University of Greenwich, Avery Hill Campus, Mansion Site, Bexley Road, London SE9 2PQ

Ms J. Jones, Head of Department, Business Studies, Newham College, High Street, London E6 6ER

Covering letters

It is essential to send a covering letter when submitting a CV but requirements differ when submitting an application form. Some colleges will not accept covering letters with applications as this works against their equal opportunities policy of assessing every candidate in the same way. Other institutions regard a covering letter as essential. Look for instructions on the application form and follow them to the letter. For more information, please pick up a covering-letter booklet from your Employability Centre.

The letter you write is important when you are sending it with a CV, because it becomes your supporting statement. In other words, it is your opportunity to match you as an individual – your qualifications, interests and experience – to the particular abilities, skills and qualities that the job seems to require. If you have already had an opportunity to do this in some detail on your application form then the covering letter may be much shorter.

You should of course mention the post you are interested in, why you are applying for it, your current course and any other appropriate information, such as relevant subjects/courses taught, and any experience you may have of the geographical area.

The following general points may seem obvious but are worth remembering when writing letters.

- Use white unruled A4 paper of good quality.
- Put your address at the top right-hand side of the letter and the name and address of the college on the left-hand side or at the bottom of the page.

- If you know the name of the person to whom you are writing put “Dear (name)” and end the letter with “Yours sincerely”; if not then use “Dear Sir/Madam” and end with “Yours faithfully”, However, you should always try to write to a named person. Make sure you use his or her correct title.
- Always quote any reference number and the source of a job advertisement.
- All letters should be typed or word processed – no photocopies.

A covering letter or letter of application should reflect your own personality and style and there is therefore no standard format, but you might start from the two outlines below. More detailed advice is given in the earlier section on supporting statements (see page 7 and it is strongly recommended that you also refer to this.

A. Letter if applying for a particular post

Dear Ms

I wish to apply for the post of Lecturer in advertised in the Times Educational Supplement on 1st April.

As you will see from my CV/application form

Then in what you think is a logical order you might cover:

- the reasons why you are applying for a post in this college/geographical area;
- What your qualification is and its relevance to this post;
- any special features of your course and your interest in these;

- the significance of your teaching and any other experience, especially relevant industrial experience;
- what you could contribute as a teacher of the subjects or on the courses specified;
- what else you might offer and your level of interest/commitment and experience, e.g. other subjects, educational technology, clubs, music, sport, organising trips, etc. You might tie in your hobbies and interests here;
- any other special circumstances, e.g. disability, family commitments;

I would be pleased to expand on these points at an interview and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

B. Letter making a speculative enquiry

Dear Mr

I am writing to enquire about the possibility of a vacancy in your college for a lecturer. I enclose my CV, which highlights my educational qualifications and relevant work experience. I should like to draw your attention to.....

Then you might cover:

What the job seems to demand and what you feel you can offer, backing up your claims with evidence from your performance on the course, your teaching placement and any other teaching experience, your employment, leisure interests, general strengths, etc.

I hope that I have provided the information you need and would be delighted to be called for interview.

Yours sincerely,

Interviews

Preparation

Make sure that you confirm as soon as possible that you will be pleased to attend the interview.

In preparing for an interview it is important to remember the following key point. The interviewers will be looking at the evidence you present and assessing its relevance to their selection criteria for the post for which you have applied – your task is to ensure that you get across effectively the information that you consider relevant. In doing so you must at all times be positive and emphasise your strengths.

Colleges should adhere to rigorous equal opportunities policies, which means that in the interview all candidates will be asked the same questions. Interviewers judge candidates on the quality of their performance on the day.

Many colleges now ask candidates for lecturing jobs to prepare a short presentation for the start of the interview. This is often a task relating to lesson planning which, after your micro-teaching and teaching practice, you should be in a strong position to do well. Interviewers will be looking at your planning skills, how you present yourself, the quality of your resources and your ideas for the assessment of student learning. Often you will be asked to teach a short lesson to a small group of students.

You will be given a topic before your interview date and asked to prepare a session to meet the students' needs. During your preparation make sure you plan a variety of activities and write a lesson plan, which you should also take with you to the interview. Practise delivering the session. Briefly evaluate the session at the end, making sure that you address the topic set. It is advisable that you also reflect on your performance so that you are ready for any interview questions linked to the session.

If you worked hard on your supporting statement and showed the relevance of your skills and experience to the vacancy, then you have done much of the groundwork in preparing for the interview.

Read through the advertisement again and any other information you have regarding the post (e.g. the college prospectus), together with the copy you kept of your application form/CV and in particular your supporting statement and any notes you made when preparing it. Is there additional evidence of your suitability that you want to bring out in the interview but did not have room to mention on the application form?

Just as there are sections in application forms, an interview may well cover the following:

- preliminaries (introductions, etc.);
- your education, your teaching practice and any other teaching experience;
- your industrial/commercial experience;
- your interest in the job for which you have applied;
- general questioning on professional issues;

- any interests and relevant leisure activities.

In your preparation you should identify questions that are likely to arise (there are many examples further on in this booklet) and prepare some outline responses.

Draw on your experience not just from your teacher training course and teaching experience, but also from other areas of your home and working life. Try imagining yourself as a member of the interviewing panel and look critically at your application – ask yourself what your weak spots are and what questions might arise from them and then decide how you would handle these. If at all possible practise your responses with a tutor, colleague or friend. Be brave, ask him or her for honest constructive feedback, and if necessary go back over some of your weaker responses. You could even try speaking your answers into a tape recorder so you can hear what they should sound like out loud.

Try to find out all you can about the college beforehand. Many institutions welcome a preliminary visit, but don't turn up without telephoning first. At least try to see the district, etc. if possible. It may be worth checking with tutors to see if they have any knowledge of the college or area.

Preparing a portfolio

If you are training to teach a practical subject and have photographs or materials from teaching practices that might be useful to illustrate certain aspects of your work, these can be presented in a portfolio. Selective use of photographs with brief descriptions under each picture, or folders of well-presented

items, can provide excellent evidence of your work.

When using portfolios be selective, plan carefully what you include and be clear about what each piece of material illustrates. Remember that interviews are normally scheduled around specific time slots of 30 to 40 minutes, so you need to be sensitive about how you intend to use your and the interviewers' time.

What are they looking for?

In the interview you will be assessed on your answers, on the impression that the interviewers gain of you and on your past record. The areas that are important are as follows.

- Motivation/interest – do you really want to work there?
- Qualifications/experience – have your course and your teaching practice given you the right skills, knowledge and experience to do the job?
- Acceptability – will you fit into the team, with other colleagues and with students?
- Adaptability/flexibility/stability/toughness – will you be able to cope (classroom management); could you teach other subjects? Could you deal with a flood, an accident or other emergency?
- Circumstances – can you work there? (Or are there personal reasons why you might move after a short time or always be keen to get away as soon as possible to your family and friends?)

The interview procedure

The interview procedure may last half a day or a whole day and usually comprises:

- “informal” talks with the Head of Department and perhaps other members of staff, which can sometimes sway the balance for or against you. However, most colleges now follow good recruitment practices and will tell you whether any informal aspects of your interview day are being assessed;
- a tour of the college and possibly lunch;
- a panel interview, which may last up to an hour.

Interview panels can be large, ranging from three to eight people, and may include the Principal, the Head of Department or Head of School and other lecturers, a Governor, a student representative, etc.

Offers are very often made on the same day and in this case you are normally expected to give an immediate verbal acceptance or rejection (see “Acceptance of offers”, page 23).

The interview will also be your opportunity to negotiate your entry point on the salary scale and, particularly if you are offering a shortage subject, you may want to prepare your justification for your claim to start at the level you are seeking (see “Salary and conditions of service”, page 23).

At the interview

Initial impact is of great importance and interviewers tend to form an overall impression at a very early stage, i.e. during

the first few minutes. It helps to smile and, if you can, try to look relaxed and at ease. Remember that the interviewers themselves may be nervous and that they may also wish to make a good impression on the other members of the panel.

It is advisable to play safe and dress neatly and even conservatively. Try to appear confident, avoid irritating physical mannerisms and verbal repetitions, and maintain eye contact with the panel. Don't talk too much – if you are afraid that you may be being too long winded you can always pause and ask “would you like further details?” On the other hand, don't simply answer “yes” or “no”.

Many interviews will start with a brief presentation by the candidate of five to ten minutes with OHP slides or a flip chart. The topic is usually something about planning and managing teaching, such as:

“Explain how you would plan and deliver a lesson in ...(your subject) with a group of intermediate GNVQ/A-level/HND students”. The panel will expect to see evidence of lesson planning, a variety of teaching strategies, good time management and awareness of differentiation.

It is obviously difficult to anticipate precisely the kind of questions you will be asked. However, if the college is following equal-opportunities guidelines the questions should relate closely to the job description and selection criteria, so you should be able to prepare answers to probable questions.

Most interviews will focus on your application form and supporting statement, including your course and teaching practice,

previous work experience, interests, why you want or feel you are suited to this particular job in this particular college, what you feel you can contribute, etc. This is why the work you did before completing the application form is so important, since if you prepared well you will be able to put across your ideas, aims, motivations, interests and strengths with more honesty and conviction at the interview.

Don't be afraid to repeat information you put on your application form – you cannot assume that all of the panel have read it thoroughly, let alone will remember what you said in it.

The degree of specialist knowledge of the areas you are discussing will inevitably be very varied around the interview table, so beware of underestimating what they know and seeming to talk down to them.

Be prepared to be constructively critical of yourself and others: perceptive, balanced criticism of your training course and what you made of it is far more impressive than either excessive praise or blanket criticism.

Above all, when suffering from pre-interview nerves, try to relax and be yourself and remember that you are qualified for the job or you would not be called for interview. Somebody has to be appointed – why not you?

Questions you might be asked

The course

- Tell me about your previous studies in ... (your intended teaching subjects).
- When did you decide to apply for a place on a teacher training course and why?

- Why did you choose this particular course? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
- What parts of the course did you find most interesting and why?
- How does the study of education relate to your work as a teacher?
- Could you tell me about your experience of schemes of work and plans of assessment?
I was interested to read about your project on ... Tell me about it.
- What do you think the issues of access are – related to your specialist subject?

Teaching interests

- When and why did you decide you wanted to teach?
- What type of course would you prefer to teach and why?
- Is further education about passing examinations or giving an all-round education? (Argue the merits of each approach.)
- What are the criteria for judging the achievement of students in your subject?
- Are you interested in information technology? How might you integrate the use of computers into your own subject area?
- What do you understand inclusive learning to be about?
- What does “widening participation” mean to you?
- How do you think we can widen participation in FE in your subject area?
- How has Curriculum 2000 affected the delivery of your subject?

The college

- What do you know about the type of work carried out in this college?
- What do you think some of the key issues are for us, from our recent inspection report?
- What knowledge do you have of the local employment situation?

Professional issues

- What are the main qualities of a good teacher?
- What are your particular strengths as a teacher? How would you develop them further?
- What are your areas for development and how do you aim to achieve them?
- Do you have experience of working with a classroom assistant? And have you planned your teaching differently to take into account another presence in the room?
- What are the issues facing a teacher working in a location other than a classroom setting? (Think about workshops, field work, resources-based learning, health and safety.)
- Do you have any knowledge of the inspection framework of FE?
- How would you ensure differentiation of activities in a mixed-ability class in your subject area? How would you ensure that you respond effectively to the differing needs and abilities of individual students?
- Describe a successful lesson you have taught.
- Can you give us examples of where you have integrated key skills development into your subject?
- What would you do if ... (range of specific problems).

- What has been your most challenging teaching experience?
- What skills would you bring to working in a team?

Pastoral

- How would you assess your ability to build relationships with students?
- What is your experience of contact with parents in college? To what extent should this be developed?
- Have you had any experience of being a group or course tutor?

Career development

- How will you develop yourself as a professional teacher?
- What are your plans for the future?
- How would you like to see your career develop?
- Are you prepared to go on courses?
- How long do you expect to stay here? Would you aim to widen your experience by seeking posts in other colleges after a reasonable period here? (You should commit yourself to at least two year, providing of course that you and the college are satisfied with your progress.)

The extras

Occasionally someone may ask whether, outside the formal teaching situation, you would like to be involved in sports or other clubs and activities (e.g. displays, competitions, marketing courses, careers evenings, school liaison) and what you could bring to these. Say what interests you have but it is unwise to commit

yourself irrevocably until you have had time to see how you cope with the rest of your teaching load.

Yourself

- What are your interests outside college work and how involved are you?
- What is the relevance of your previous experience to teaching? (Think particularly about commercial/ industrial experience or self-employment, but don't forget voluntary/vacation work, or bringing up a family). How might your work experience enable you to contribute to activities such as marketing courses, work placement, community liaison?

Personal considerations

- How easy will it be for you to get here by 8.30am? Could you stay late occasionally?
- Can you teach at night (or would it conflict with family or personal commitments)?
- This is a temporary post but there is a possibility that it may become permanent; are you still interested?

Equal opportunities issues

You may find that you are asked some personal questions that you feel may be contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of equal opportunities legislation, e.g. the Sex Discrimination Act or Race Relations Act. You are not obliged to answer such questions, but you may want to prepare a polite answer in case you find yourself in this position. For example, if asked about childcare, a possible response would be to say that you have made all the

necessary arrangements to accommodate your professional career.

Your own questions

Interviews should be reciprocal affairs, providing you with the opportunity to learn more about the job, the working environment, colleagues, etc. You will almost certainly be asked if you have any questions towards the end of your interview. Ask questions only if you really want to know the answers, don't ask them solely to impress. Honest questions can, however, indicate a genuine interest in the post, the college and the area.

Be aware of time constraints and do not ask too many questions. One area you may want to ask about is the matter of resources. If you genuinely have no questions, reply "No thank you, all the points I wished to raise have already been dealt with (either in the interview or earlier in the day)".

Finally, of course, remember that you are not going to be asked all the above questions and there are many others you may be asked, but these will give you a flavour of the possibilities. It can be difficult to think of "on the spot" persuasive answers to some of these questions, so time spent beforehand considering the likely questions and your responses will be time well spent.

Salary and conditions of service

Although there are national guidelines on pay and conditions of service, their implementation varies from college to college. Therefore it would be wise to ascertain what system operates at the college to which you are applying before

the interview. If you are a UCU member, contact UCU HQ (telephone 020 7837 3636 or e-mail hq@ucu.org.uk) to get the details of the local union officers.

If you have decided to attend the interview, be aware that the point at which you start on the scale is open to negotiation. Note also that it is possible to negotiate increments based on previous work experience, particularly if it is relevant to your work as a lecturer. How you describe your past experience on an application form, and to some extent at interview, is therefore important in justifying your claim to start at the level you are seeking.

It is up to you to decide at what stage you want to raise this issue. It will depend on how much you want that particular job and what the competition is like. In the past it has been common for people to accept a teaching post and be told some time later, when the college has looked at their experience etc., what their starting salary will be. If you feel you are in a strong bargaining position, you may want to negotiate immediately after your interview when you are offered the post. However, it is usual to negotiate your salary when you receive a formal offer.

Acceptance of offers

Many colleges will notify the successful candidate by telephone. However, it is still a common practice within education for applicants for a post to be asked to wait around after their interview for the panel to make their decision. The successful candidate is then called back into the room and offered the job, and is expected to say then and there whether or not he or she accepts the offer.

It is also normal practice for colleges to require applicants to confirm acceptance of an offer in writing. Remember that even a verbal acceptance constitutes a contract and it is considered unprofessional behaviour to continue applying for other lecturing posts once you have accepted an offer, even if a job is advertised which you much prefer.

Please note that if you have other interviews arranged with colleges you prefer, you will have to think carefully about how to respond to the offer.

However, in practice it is not uncommon for people to say yes and later change their minds. The probable consequence is that you would not be considered for a job in that college again.

Expenses

Expenses are paid for travelling to interview, and this can include basic (not five-star) overnight accommodation if it is essential in order for you to get there on time. Colleges have their own rules about expenses and differ a little in their degree of generosity. If you have to travel a long distance you may want to check in advance whether your accommodation claim is likely to be approved and whether receipts are required. Whatever the case you will receive the appropriate forms with your letter calling you to interview or at the interview itself. If you are offered a job and decline the offer, the college may not pay your expenses.

Other useful points

The induction period

Your first year in teaching is regarded by many colleges as an “induction”

period and normally lasts for one year, although there has never been a statutory “probation” requirement in the same way as in school teaching. At present there is no time limit on when you should commence your teaching. However, it could be difficult to begin a teaching career following a gap of several years after your training course unless you have been involved in the meantime in work that is in some way connected with education or young people.

Part-time work

Part-time work is a good way of “getting known” and developing contacts within colleges. For some subjects where there are few full-time vacancies, such as art, it may be the only way to start your career in FE lecturing. Most part-time jobs are advertised in local newspapers, and some colleges put out a general advert for part-time staff, usually in May. In many cases jobs are obtained by sending a CV to the Head of Department or Head of School (in person) on a speculative basis, any time from January onwards. As mentioned in the job hunting hints on page 1, you can find out the name of the Head of Department from the college prospectus or reference books listed there.

Your CV will usually be kept on a file and you may be called in at the very last moment once the college knows how many students have enrolled for each course – this can be as late as mid- to end of September.

In most cases you will be offered part-time work for a term at a time, although it can be for a whole year. A disadvantage of sessional work is that the colleges can usually let you go at short notice because

they include clauses in your contract such as “if circumstances change”, which tend to mean “if student numbers drop too low”. New employment legislation for part-time working has been introduced recently to protect the rights of part-time workers, but it is very complex. If you find yourself in this situation, contact your union and ask for information or advice about your employment rights.

However, part-time work gives you an opportunity to gain experience and expand the “teaching experience” section on your CV/application forms. Also, with the recent change in employment rights for part-time staff many colleges are trying to group together part-time work and turn the teaching hours into a fractional appointment. People who are successful in getting a full-time job at one college while working part-time at another generally find that, because full-time jobs usually start at the beginning of a term and part-time contracts are renewed each term, there is no problem of overlap.

Fixed-term and fractional appointments

If you see a job advertised that is a job-share or fraction (e.g. 0.5) of a post, then this will carry a proportion of the same kind of benefits as a full-time post in terms of sick pay, holidays, pension scheme, etc.

These posts are becoming increasingly common in FE. The length can vary between one term and several years but is often for one year. They have the advantage over part-time jobs in that they offer secure employment for a known period together with the benefits associated with a permanent post.

Being flexible, adaptable and able to teach on a range of courses is essential for these jobs, since a college will need to know they can make full use of you during the period of the contract despite any possible fall-off in demand for the courses they had recruited you to teach.

Agencies

A number of private recruitment agencies for part-time lecturers have been established. The most well known of these is Education Lecturing Services (ELS). These agencies recruit lecturers direct on to a national database. Colleges pay a fee to ELS which directs individuals to colleges when vacancies arise. Lecturers who work for these agencies are usually paid less than those employed by colleges direct.

You should be aware that UCU and ATL urge their members to be extremely cautious about working for such agencies because of the lack of security and lack of certain entitlements, such as pension. However, some colleges now rely on agencies to fill all their part-time vacancies, so it is worth getting more information and deciding for yourself. For more information from UCU call National Headquarters on 020 7837 3636. ATL (telephone 0845 4500 009) has created a useful information pack for supply teachers, *A Guide for Supply Teachers in England and Wales*. This can be obtained from the ATL website at www.atl.org.uk.

You are likely to find that most of the supply teaching agencies that advertise in the press want supply teachers for maintained schools and therefore require people to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) – see below.

Teaching in maintained schools

The PGCE (PCET) course at the University of Greenwich is designed for intending teachers in further education and other parts of the post-compulsory sector. Although it is sometimes possible for holders of the PGCE (PCET) to obtain posts in schools under certain conditions, the course is not recognised by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) for the purpose of teaching in maintained schools and does not confer QTS. If you wish to transfer into the state schools sector you must meet the requirements of the DIUS as stated in the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1989. Under these regulations QTS can only be obtained by:

- successfully completing an approved initial teacher training course leading to a PGCE, BEd, or BA/BSc with QTS degree in England and Wales;
- satisfactorily completing an employment-based graduate or registered teacher programme, or school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT);
- being trained or recognised as qualified to teach in schools in Scotland or Northern Ireland;
- being a recognised teacher from other member states of the European Community.

All other routes to QTS, such as for those who graduated before January 1974 or who have taken the Certificate in Education (Further Education), are now closed.

There are several routes into teaching within the maintained schools sector that meet the needs of FE staff. The most common include part-time PGCEs and school- or employment-based routes, as described below.

Postgraduate programmes

Some universities offer part-time PGCEs for secondary teaching over two years.

School-based schemes

The school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) scheme is for postgraduates wishing to gain QTS whilst working and training within a school. The programme lasts a year, includes theoretical and practical elements, and has a significant amount of classroom work. Most programmes are linked to universities and lead to a PGCE.

Employment-based routes

The graduate and registered-teacher programmes are two new routes to QTS, offering a chance to be paid to train and work in a school. They are designed for adults over the age of 24 with teaching or other relevant experience (e.g. FE teaching). The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) is for those with a relevant degree and lasts a year or less, depending on experience. The Registered Teacher Programme (RTP) is a two-year scheme for those without a degree who have successfully completed at least two years of higher education.

Further information on all these different ways of gaining QTS is available from the Teacher Development Agency's Teaching Information Line on 0845 6000 991, or see their website, www.tda.gov.uk.

Sixth-form colleges

From 1 April 1993, sixth-form colleges ceased to be part of the Maintained Sector and became part of the new, expanded Further Education Sector. This means that they are subject to FE regulations as far as the recruitment of teaching staff is concerned. It is therefore possible for someone with the FE qualification to teach in a sixth-form college.

Teaching in independent schools

The requirement for QTS does NOT apply to teachers in independent schools, although most schools now prefer teachers with QTS. Posts are advertised in *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Guardian* (Tuesday issue) and *The Daily Telegraph*.

You may wish to consult *The Independent Schools Yearbook* (see www.isyb.co.uk), published by A&C Black Ltd. You can obtain general information on independent secondary schools from the Independent Schools Council (ISC), www.isc.co.uk; St Vincent House, 30 Orange Street, London WC2H 7HH; telephone 020 7766 7070; e-mail office@isc.co.uk.





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