

Choosing secondary geography training

All teacher training courses today must be school-based to meet the government's requirements. This means you must spend at least 24 weeks in schools whatever route you choose. It is a myth that if you follow a university course you will spend time sitting in lectures! In university-led courses, and often in school-based courses, you will spend time in training sessions working alongside trainees of geography and of other subjects.

Teacher training is a very practical course leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), but it can also offer academic qualifications such as a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma in Education (usually known as a PGCE or PGDE); in most cases a PGCE/PGDE provides credits towards a Master's degree. The qualifications vary from course to course and you should consider the qualification you want to get from your training. QTS makes you a "qualified" teacher in England, but often schools prefer to appoint teachers with a PGCE/PGDE qualification. These courses enable you to increase your professional knowledge, understanding and judgement through wider reading and through written assignments. If you want the freedom to teach outside the UK, some countries and most international schools require a university-validated PGCE qualification. A further consideration should be the pupil age-range for which you will be trained. For example, if you want to teach A Level, make sure you choose a course that will prepare you to teach post-16.

As well as deciding whether you want to follow a school led or a university led course, explore the amount of training you will get in how to teach **geography**. There are significant differences between routes in the time given to training you in the subject compared to more general aspects of teaching, such as managing classes. The questions below are to help you choose the best geography training. Seek answers from the information on the UCAS site about the geography course, the provider's website and by asking questions at interview. You apply to several courses through UCAS and should use this opportunity wisely to choose a course that will give you the best geography training that is best suited to your needs.

Will the training give me a good grounding in geography pedagogy i.e. How to teach geography?

- How many hours of geography-specific training will I receive? How much generic training is there?
- What are considered to be the main strengths of this training?
- Is the training geography-specific or does it cover several humanities subjects?
- Who leads the geography training? What are their geography credentials and experience of training new teachers? Are they a Geographical Association member? How often will I meet them?
- Will there be practical training in how to undertake fieldwork with pupils?
- How does the training integrate theory with practice?
- What other geography experts will contribute to the training as well as the geography subject leader and mentors?

How is school experience organised?

- Will I get a broad experience of geography teaching in more than one type of school/geography department?
- Will there be opportunities for me to teach GCSE and AL classes?
- How will the provider guarantee that I am placed in good geography departments with high quality mentoring?
- How much bespoke geography training will I get every week from my school mentor? Will the mentor be experienced in ITE training?

Other aspects of geography training:

- Will I have opportunities to use any specific geography expertise that you developed in my degree study in teaching or in contributing to the development of the curriculum?
- Explore how the training will help you to develop expertise in any areas of geography where you have weaknesses.
- Does the training give me a PGCE/PGDE qualification as well as QTS? Are there Master's credits - how many?
- Will there be other geography trainees training with me? How often will we meet and work together for geography training?
- Can I meet/contact other geography trainees that have been trained by this course?
- What reading will I be expected to do as part of the training? Will I have access to academic texts and journals? What preparation should I do before I start?
- How am I assessed on the course?

(Last updated July 2016)