

Modern Foreign Languages Teacher

Introduction

Modern foreign languages (MFL) teachers help students to communicate well in the language, in a number of settings. They also teach students about the countries and cultures in which the language is spoken. Teaching methods include group work, discussions, audio-visual materials, role play and language games.

Also known as

- French Teacher
- German Teacher
- Spanish Teacher
- Teacher, Modern Foreign Languages



Work Activities

Modern foreign languages (MFL) teachers enable students to understand and use the language in everyday, real-life situations such as using public transport, eating in a restaurant, making friends and giving their point of view on a particular topic.

The most common languages taught in secondary schools are Welsh (in Wales only), French, German and Spanish, although others include Arabic, Bengali, Italian, Mandarin, Panjabi, Russian and Urdu.

In Wales, Welsh as a subject is taught as a first language in Welsh medium schools. In English medium schools it is taught as a second language and is compulsory for all pupils at Foundation Phase, through to Key Stage 4, which covers the ages between 3 and 16.

MFL teachers teach language features such as grammar and vocabulary, while getting the balance right between 'fluency' (the student's ability to make themselves understood, although perhaps with some grammatical mistakes) and 'accuracy' (choosing the correct 'form' of the tense, phrase or other language feature). If the lesson is about asking for help in a medical emergency, for example, then fluency will be more important. However, if the lesson is concentrating on, say, the present perfect tense, then the teacher will be looking for accuracy.

MFL teachers use a variety of methods and resources to create varied, interesting lessons that best help students understand the lesson's language features or themes. These include group and pair work, discussions, audio/visual materials, role plays, online language games and realia.

Other activities include:

- planning lessons and preparing resources
- marking students' work
- planning and leading exchange trips and hosting foreign students
- going to staff meetings and parents' evenings
- identifying underachieving students and giving extra support if needed.

Some MFL teachers are also form tutors, which involves duties such as taking a register and keeping attendance records, providing general information and giving guidance.

They might supervise one or more teaching assistants.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To be a modern foreign languages teacher, you'll need:

- passion, and the ability to inspire, encourage and motivate
- excellent communication skills
- imagination, to prepare interesting resources
- the ability to maintain discipline and deal with challenging behaviour
- tact, patience and sensitivity
- organisational and planning skills.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

Teachers in the state education sector are paid on a scale according to their qualifications, experience and responsibilities. The highest salaries are available in inner London schools.

The pay rates (per year) below are approximate.

- Unqualified teachers [who haven't yet received Qualified Teacher Status] earn in the range of £16,000 - £25,000.
- Qualified teachers earn in the range of £21,500 - £31,500.
- 'Advanced skills teachers' earn in the range of £37,500 - £57,000.
- 'Excellent teachers' earn in the range of £39,500 - £52,000.

In the private sector, salaries are generally higher, though they are sometimes linked to state sector pay scales.

Hours of work

Teachers normally work from 8:30 am or 9 am to 3:30 pm or 4 pm, Monday to Friday. However, most teachers work extra hours - marking work, preparing lessons and going to meetings. They often have to work in the evenings and at weekends to prepare lessons and mark work.

Where could I work?

Employers are state and private schools.

There are opportunities to teach in other countries.

Some teachers supplement their income by teaching privately, marking national exams or writing textbooks.

A significant number of people in Wales speak Welsh, so if you plan to teach in Wales, and are a first or second language Welsh speaker, you could improve your prospects of obtaining a teaching post by training to teach in Welsh.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised by local authorities and in the local and national press, including The Guardian and The Times Educational Supplement (TES). There are also job boards, such as eTeach.

Entry Routes and Training

To become a modern foreign languages teacher, you usually need to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through initial teacher training (ITT). There are several routes.

Most people follow their degree with a PGCE. Courses are usually one-year full-time and two years part-time. Most language PGCEs are in Welsh, French, German or Spanish, although there are courses in other languages, including Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Panjabi, Russian and Urdu. There are also PGCEs with general titles such as 'modern foreign languages', of which some courses allow you to specialise in more than one language.

If you're not very confident about your subject knowledge or don't have the qualifications to begin postgraduate training straight away, you might be able to take a modern languages subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) course first. For more information see the Department for Education website.

There is also the employment-based School Direct scheme: you'll train while working in a school. The expectation is that you'd go on to work in the school or group of schools where you trained, although there's no guarantee of employment at the end of your training.

You can also train in a school after your degree through school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT). These

programmes are delivered by groups of neighbouring schools and colleges and often aim to meet local teaching needs.

Teach First is a charity that recruits and supports graduates to teach in schools in low-income communities in a number of UK regions. The programme takes two years to complete.

To achieve QTS, student teachers need to pass tests in English and maths.

Welsh medium applicants will also complete a literacy test in Welsh.

Training

Once employed, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) must complete a three-term induction period, usually within a single school year.

Progression

There are opportunities for teachers to move into teacher training, advisory work, educational research or schools inspection.

Teachers can become heads of department, heads of year, or co-ordinators of special needs or careers education.

Rehabilitation of Offenders

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. You must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

Qualifications

All candidates for secondary school teacher training need GCSEs (or recognised equivalent qualifications) at grade C or above (B or above in Wales) in English Language and Mathematics. Students studying to teach in Welsh medium schools will also need a GCSE grade C or above in Welsh (first language).

In England, if you want to teach at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14), you must have a GCSE (or recognised equivalent qualification) at grade C or above in a science subject.

If you don't have the GCSEs that are usually needed, you might be able to sit a pre-entry equivalency test; you should contact individual course providers to discuss your situation before making your application.

To achieve Qualified Teacher Status, student teachers need to pass tests in English and maths.

To enter a modern foreign languages PGCE, you'll usually need a degree in a language or a subject with at least 50% language content. If you're a native speaker, you might be able to enter with a degree in another subject. You will need the right level of knowledge of your language to teach it in secondary schools, along with English language skills (some course providers ask for a degree in English).

It can be possible to enter without a directly relevant degree. For example, universities might suggest that you increase your knowledge through a language subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) course.

Adult Opportunities

Skills/experience

To enter teacher training courses, you'll usually need to have at least observed some classes in a mainstream secondary school. For some courses, you'll need paid or voluntary work experience in a secondary classroom, or other relevant experience with young people.

Courses

There are a number of part-time PGCE courses.

If you're not very confident about your subject knowledge or don't have the qualifications to begin postgraduate training straight away, you might be able to take a Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) course first. Your course provider will assess whether you need to increase or refresh your knowledge.

Distance learning

Some PGCE courses are available on a flexible learning basis. For example, you might be able to train by distance learning in combination with classroom-based teaching practice and campus study.

Employment-based training

Instead of going to university to do a PGCE, graduates can follow an employment-based route. This is where you train in a school. Employment-based routes include School Direct, school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) and the scheme offered by Teach First. For more information, please see 'Entry Routes and Training'.

Funding

For funding information, see the GOV.UK website, or www.studentfinancewales.co.uk if living in Wales.

Further Information

Contacts

- **UCAS Teacher Training**
Website: www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/teacher-training
- **Teach First**
Website: www.teachfirst.org.uk
- **Department of Education Northern Ireland**
Northern Ireland Enquiries
Email: DE.DEWebMail@education-ni.gov.uk
Website: www.deni.gov.uk
- **General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)**
Scottish enquiries
Email: gtcs@gtcs.org.uk
Website: www.gtcs.org.uk
- **GOV.UK**
UK government services and information
Website: www.gov.uk
- **Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol**
Information on Higher Education courses and scholarships through the medium of Welsh
Email: gwybodaeth@colegcymraeg.ac.uk
Website: www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk
- **Welsh Government Education and Skills Department**
Email: customerhelp@gov.wales
Website: www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en
- **Teacher Training & Education in Wales**
Website: www.teachertrainingcymru.org/

Related Careers

- Nursery Nurse
- NVQ Assessor
- School Lunchtime Supervisor
- History Teacher
- Geography Teacher
- Teaching Assistant
- Music Teacher
- English Teacher

- Maths Teacher
- Science Teacher
- Education Welfare Officer
- Playworker
- Special Educational Needs Teacher
- Art and Design Teacher
- Design and Technology Teacher
- Early Years Teacher
- Physical Education Teacher
- Primary Teacher
- Secondary Teacher
- Training Manager
- Higher Education (HE) Lecturer
- School Business Manager
- Teacher of English as a Foreign Language
- Lecturer
- Teacher
- Welsh Teacher
- Nursery Assistant
- Headteacher