**Assessment Only Route to QTS**

**A Guide for AO candidates and host schools**

The Assessment Only (AO) provides a route for those with considerable experience of working in schools or colleges to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). AO is a distinctive route to QTS and is appropriate for graduates who have a minimum of two years (FTE) relevant and successful teaching experience. **Potential candidates will be asked, at interview, to discuss a recent, observed, lesson they have planned, prepared and delivered.**

The AO route is designed for experienced, unqualified teachers, instructors, cover-supervisors and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs). It is also available for experienced FE lecturers who are now working in school and wish to gain QTS. Teachers who qualified in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA may apply to the DfE for qualified teacher status (QTS) without further training or assessment in England.

The maximum period for the AO route is 12 weeks. The AO route is not suitable for candidates who require training in order to meet the Teachers’ Standards. Candidates who require training are advised to consider the PGCE or Post-Graduate Teaching Apprenticeship Programmes.

Candidates for this route will normally be working, as an effective teacher, in one of the following settings: a mainstream school or academy, free school, independent school, PRU, Special Education or in Early Years settings.

Candidates should have a breadth and variety of experience teaching in at least two schools, early years and/or further education settings. Candidates will need to provide documentary evidence of the second school experience. They will have taught children and young people from a range of different backgrounds, across the age and ability range in their chosen age range. Candidates who are currently working in a Special School or a PRU will need to provide evidence that they have significant mainstream school experience.

Successful candidates are expected to demonstrate that they are a reflective practitioner who has met the Teachers’ Standards and are able to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding effectively and flexibly in a wide range of school settings. In addition, they will have clearly demonstrated their ability to relate theory to practice and to critically evaluate the fundamental aims and values of education, i.e. they are teachers who are:

* able to debate issues in education and formulate and justify their views;
* effective classroom managers, sensitive and responsive to the needs of pupils and thus able to promote learning;
* effective, confident, imaginative and flexible curriculum planners;
* knowledgeable, particularly in relation to the breadth of work in the National Curriculum;
* able to use ICT effectively in their teaching;
* astute, fair, self-critical assessors and evaluators of pupils' work and of their own teaching;
* well informed professionals in terms of the organisation of schools as institutions and the place of schools in society;
* committed professional teachers, able to set themselves and their pupils high standards;
* able to recognise the value of continued professional development.

**Entry Criteria**

Before applying, candidates need to:

* Hold a good Honours Degree, with a 3.0 classification or better, although we will consider candidates with other first degrees, particularly if they have additional qualifications and/or relevant experience. The DfE state “all candidates (must) hold a first degree or equivalent qualification granted by a United Kingdom institution or an equivalent degree or other qualification granted by a foreign institution.” There is no statutory requirement for primary candidates to have a degree in a national curriculum subject. In the case of qualifications that have not been gained in the UK, candidates will need to check equivalency with UK ENIC. ([www.enic.org.uk](http://www.enic.org.uk))
* Hold GCSE grade 4 (C) or above in Mathematics, English Language and Science. You will be required to send digital copies of GCSE certificates as part of a full application. Qualifications in key and functional skills at level 2 and OCR Level 2 Adult Literacy and Numeracy are not equivalent to GCSEs in terms of content**.** In the case of qualifications that have not been gained in the UK candidates will need to check equivalency with UK ENIC
* Be working in a role, which has provided sufficient opportunities to demonstrate that the candidate has the ability and expertise to fulfil the role of a teacher. The host school needs to have a proven track record in Initial Teacher Training. The host school will need to provide a named, experienced Mentor to support the candidate throughout the 12-week course.
* Have been observed teaching by the host school and their teaching is at least ‘Good’
* Be able to demonstrate that they have experience teaching in two or more schools/colleges, including the school they are currently working in. The experience should be relevant and recent (within the last 5 years) and across two key stages. The minimum teaching time requirement across the two or more schools is 2 years (FTE).

**Application Process**

Entry to this route is very competitive and all applications will be subject to a rigorous selection process, which includes:

* An application form, including the signed Partnership Agreement and Declaration section
* Completion of an Assessment Against Teaching Standards (AATS) by the school
* Copies of GCSE and degree certificates which meet the entry requirements
* A formal interview

**Teachers’ Standards**

Candidates should produce a folder of evidence demonstrating that they can meet the Teachers’ Standards at interview for preliminary review.

**Assessment Against Teaching Standards (AATS)**

Part of the reference request will include AATS to be completed by the headteacher.

**Interview process**

The interview process will consist off but not limited to the following and will take place virtually:

* ID check – candidates will need to provide photographic evidence of their identity, e.g. passport or driving licence
* Relevant safeguarding checks and confirmation of date and number of DBS
* Assessment of the candidate’s Subject Knowledge
* Communication skills
* Evidence of teaching experience in at least two schools, early years and/or further education settings
* Suitability to teach
* Provide evidence that the candidate can meet the Teachers’ Standards for QTS without the need for further training
* Preliminary review of initial portfolio of evidence

**Assessment**

Assessment is made via the production of a portfolio of evidence measured against the Teachers’ Standards, the observation of successful teaching by school and SCIL staff, a subject knowledge assessment and a final Viva, subject to current Covid guidance.

All candidates will need to provide evidence of meeting the Teachers’ Standards across two or more consecutive key stages selected from the following:

* Ages 3-5 (Foundation stage)
* Ages 5-7 (Key Stage 1)
* Ages 7-11 (Key Stage 2)

**School Expectations**

Host schools need to provide candidates with sufficient opportunity to meet the Teachers’ Standards during the 12 weeks of assessment. Schools are required to:

* Establish a teaching timetable that will enable the candidate to demonstrate competence against the Teachers’ Standards. The teaching timetable must provide the opportunity for candidates to work across two consecutive age-ranges (as identified above).
* Provide an experienced Mentor to support the candidate. The role of the Mentor is to provide feedback on lesson observations, planning and assessment, plus professional support.
* Provide support to the candidate during visits from the SCIL AO assessors for observations and verification.
* Sign the Partnership Agreement within the application form

**Induction Support**

SCIL will provide advice and guidance to all successful candidates in terms of preparation for the ECT Induction programme where necessary.

**Assessment Fee**

The assessment fee for the AO Route to QTS is as below, this can be paid either by the candidate or their host school, or a combination of both:

* September 2025 to March 2026 - £3250
* April 2026 to March 2027 - £3300

Visits outside of the South-West will incur additional travel costs.

The fee will be invoiced once the candidate has been accepted onto the AO course and has been given their start date.

Please note that if a candidate withdraws at a late stage in the application process, after SCIL has incurred costs, there will be an administrative fee of £250.00 to be paid by the candidate and/or the host school.

**Further Advice and Guidance**

Please see the link below for more information and to download the application documents on the SCIL website:

<https://www.sciltraining.co.uk/>

If, after reading this document, you have any further questions or queries relating to the Assessment Only Route, please do not hesitate to contact the AO team.

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