

# Make more of what you know: teaching further education could be the opportunity you've been looking for

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If you love your job but are eager for a new challenge, a career in further education could be just the ticket. Here's the lowdown ...



FE courses have a much more vocational and practical emphasis than those taught in school sixth forms. Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

Perhaps you're an engineer. Or a social worker. Or a lawyer, or a care worker, or an accountant. You've worked in your industry for a number of years and now you're thinking about a change. Maybe you'd like to share your skills with the next generation, reinvigorate your enthusiasm for the job, or even just move away from unsociable working hours. If any of those apply, then a career in further education (FE) teaching could be for you.

The beauty of teaching in FE is that it doesn't have to be all or nothing: you can even teach alongside your current job. The skills you've honed over many years will be of just as much value in your new role, as the knowledge gained in industry is an integral part of the job.

Sounds interesting? Here's everything you need to know ...

### **So what exactly is FE?**

FE is study, usually for learners 16+, that takes place after secondary school. It can be the next step for young people and school leavers, but is equally accessible to adults looking to broaden their skills or change careers.

FE providers include (but are not limited to) sixth-form or specialist colleges, prisons and independent training providers, and there are a wide range of subjects and qualifications on offer, with a unique choice of technical and vocational courses that aim to equip learners with practical, work-based skills.

Students can gain qualifications in a broad range of subjects, including engineering, manufacturing, construction and trades, legal, finance and accountancy, digital and IT, and health and social care – to name but a few.

FE offers qualifications across many different levels, from basic literacy and numeracy to advanced and higher education qualifications in traditional academic subjects. The recently introduced T-levels are studied for in FE, for example. These two-year courses, equivalent to three A-levels, are delivered by FE providers in partnership with local employers and are accepted as qualifications for university admissions. They range in subject area from healthcare science to building services engineering. Apprenticeships also fall under FE. Combining work-based training with an employer with teaching at an FE college or other provider, they prepare students for work and can lead to a variety of qualifications, from chartered surveyor to data technician.

### **What does being an FE teacher entail?**

Vocational – ie courses closely related to jobs – can be taught by people who have hands-on experience of what they're talking about. This is where you could come in. Teaching in FE is an opportunity to change lives without changing your career, by sharing your industry skills with others.

Depending on the subject, you might be based in the classroom, a laboratory or a workshop. You might even do some of your teaching on the premises of employers where your students are undergoing work experience.



Students are able to learn from teachers who have recent real-world experience of their industry. Photograph: Ivan-balvan/Getty Images/iStockphoto

From day one, your students will be reaping the benefits of your expertise – and you’ll be learning too. In fact, many FE teachers find that their students’ questions not only keep them on their toes, but also reignite their passion for their industry.

A student who wants a career in healthcare or engineering, for example, will best learn what’s really involved in those jobs from someone who has recent – or current – experience of them. FE providers are equipped with specialist facilities such as science labs, engineering workshops and even hospital wards, so much of the teaching is as hands-on as it can get.

The other great thing about teaching in FE is the readily available part-time contracts, giving you flexibility over the number of hours you work. In FE, you can work full-time, part-time, evenings, or even on a casual, hourly basis. If you want the best of both worlds, you can continue with your existing job while teaching part-time.

### **So, how do you become an FE teacher?**

Unlike becoming a schoolteacher, as long as you have appropriate industry experience, you may not need a degree or teaching qualification to get started.

FE employers will usually want you to work towards a teaching qualification, but there is support in place so you can train on the job. For example, there are programmes that cover the cost for new industry recruits to undertake teacher training while they work as a salaried teacher, such as the government-funded Taking Teaching Further programme. You may also be offered the opportunity to do a teaching apprenticeship which will combine training alongside your teaching responsibilities. Alternatively, you could choose to train in your own time before getting a job in FE if that feels like a better fit for you.

### **What can you expect from a career in FE?**

People who have made the switch talk about the variety of the job, the satisfaction of passing on skills, and the energising feeling that comes from spending time with people who are committed and enthusiastic. When you've reached the stage of feeling comfortable in a well-established industry career, starting a new – or secondary – career as an FE teacher is the perfect way to challenge yourself and make the most of what you know. Passing your skills on to a new generation can be invigorating, inspiring and, quite possibly, the most rewarding thing you'll ever do.

*To find out more about a rewarding career as a teacher in further education, head to [teach-in-further-education.campaign.gov.uk](https://teach-in-further-education.campaign.gov.uk)*