Teacher - Secondary School - English

English teachers prepare and give lessons in English language, communication and literature. They follow guidelines set up by the Curriculum for Excellence and prepare pupils, aged 11 to 18, for national examinations.

The Work

You could be:

- using a variety of teaching methods such as whole class lessons, small group work, individual projects and discussions
- using a range of materials including textbooks, novels, plays, audio-visual aids and computers
- organising and directing class activities and encouraging self-expression in pupils
- setting assignments, projects, tests and exams, preparing and carrying out continuous assessment, marking pupils' work and writing reports
- keeping good order in the classroom and dealing with discipline issues
- doing administrative work which includes keeping a register of pupils
- preparing for and attending parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings
- sometimes supervising out of hours activities such as visits or social events
- meeting regularly with other departments to plan interdisciplinary projects.

Pay

Teachers in Scotland are paid on a national salary scale. The starting annual salary for a probationer teacher is £36,159.

If you do your probationary period on the Teacher Induction Scheme, and are prepared to work anywhere in Scotland during that probationary year, you can also apply for the Preference Waiver Payment. For secondary school teachers, the payment is £8,000 before tax and national insurance.

After your probationary year, your salary will increase to £43,383 and increase an increment each year up to £54,453.

Where a teacher is employed in a remote school on a distant island both the remote schools allowance and the distant islands allowance are paid, in addition to the teacher's normal salary.

Lead teachers earn between £61,818 and £87,810.

A principal teacher earns between £59,367 and £76,617 a year, while the scale for depute head teachers and head teachers ranges from £67,332 to £124,365 a year, depending on the size of school.

(August 2026)

Salaries in independent schools may differ slightly.

Conditions

- You would work in a classroom.
- Your working hours are based on a 35-hour week, working in a classroom 9.00am to 3.30pm or 4.00pm. You would use the rest of the time for preparation and marking.
- You may have to do some preparation and assessment work at home, in the evenings or at weekends.
- You would have 13 weeks holiday each year, but would probably use some of this time to prepare next term's work.
- You would have to prepare for and attend parent-teacher meetings, which are usually in the evening.
- You should be aware that teaching is a mentally and physically demanding job.

Getting In

To become a secondary school teacher of English, you must have a degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in English plus a Professional Graduate Diploma (SCQF Level 11) in Education (PGDE) OR a degree from the University of Stirling which combines Professional Education (Secondary) with English Studies, English Studies and History, or English Studies and Religion (SCQF Level 10).

Your degree

- For entry to a degree course you normally need 4-5 relevant Highers at good grades, including English.
- You must also have English and National 5 Maths. National 5 Applications of Maths is accepted in place of Maths.
- For entry to a degree in Professional Education and English Studies (which can also be combined with Religion) at the University of Stirling you need 4 Highers at ABBB (first sitting) or AABB (two sittings) including English plus National 5 Maths or Applications of Maths at B.
- Your degree should normally contain 80 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credit points in English of which at least 40 credit points must be in literature (including English translation) or Scottish literature, and a maximum of 20 credit points in Media Studies. In addition, 40 of the credit points must have been studied at SCQF Level 8 (second year undergraduate level) or above.

PGDE

- For entry to the PGDE, you need an approved degree together with Higher English plus Maths or Applications of Maths at National 5 - some institutions specify at B.
- Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highlands and Islands (at a number of colleges), Strathclyde, and West of Scotland (UWS) universities offer the PGDE in English.
- There is a lot of competition for places in all PGDE courses. It helps if you have experience of working with children or young people.
- For PGDE courses, apply through UCAS.

Alternative Routes

- There are a number of new teacher training programmes available, most linked to local authorities. See Teach in Scotland for full details and to see which subjects are covered.

You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact Disclosure Scotland for details on the type you would need.

Newly qualified teachers who want to teach in local council schools must complete a probationary period to demonstrate that they meet the Standard for Full Registration of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland). Those who wish to teach in independent schools may also require to be registered.

You are guaranteed a teaching post with a Scottish local authority for a full school year to complete this probationary period.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- an interest in child development and an understanding of how children learn
- patience and adaptability
- enthusiasm and energy
- confidence
- a firm and assertive approach when necessary
- good organisational skills
- a sense of humour and a positive outlook.

You need to be able to:

- hold the attention of pupils of all abilities and encourage them
- work on your own and as part of a team
- stay calm under pressure
- get on well with other staff members, parents and carers.

Training

- You will do in-service training (often provided by local councils) throughout your teaching career.
- You might also take part time courses in specialist aspects of education, run by universities.

Getting On

- You may be promoted to be principal teacher or head of department.
- You may then become a depute head teacher and then a head teacher.
- You might move into related work such as learning support teaching, further education lecturing, advisory work, education authority administration or schools inspection.

More Information

Most teachers work in local authority schools but there are also jobs in independent schools, British schools abroad, such as schools for the children of British armed services and in private tuition.

Job vacancies are normally advertised on local authority websites or look on the myjobscotland website.

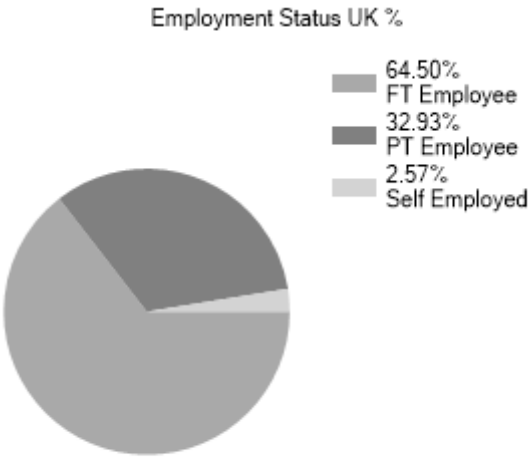
Contacts

Education Scotland
Tel: 0131 244 4330
Email: enquiries@educationscotland.gov.scot
Website: education.gov.scot
Facebook: www.facebook.com/EducationScot

General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)
Tel: 0131 314 6000
Website: www.gtcs.org.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/QueenMargaretUniversity

University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
Tel: 0371 468 0 468
Website: www.ucas.com
Website (2): www.ucas.com/postgraduate/teacher-training/train-teach-scotland
X: @ucas_online
Facebook: www.facebook.com/ucasonline

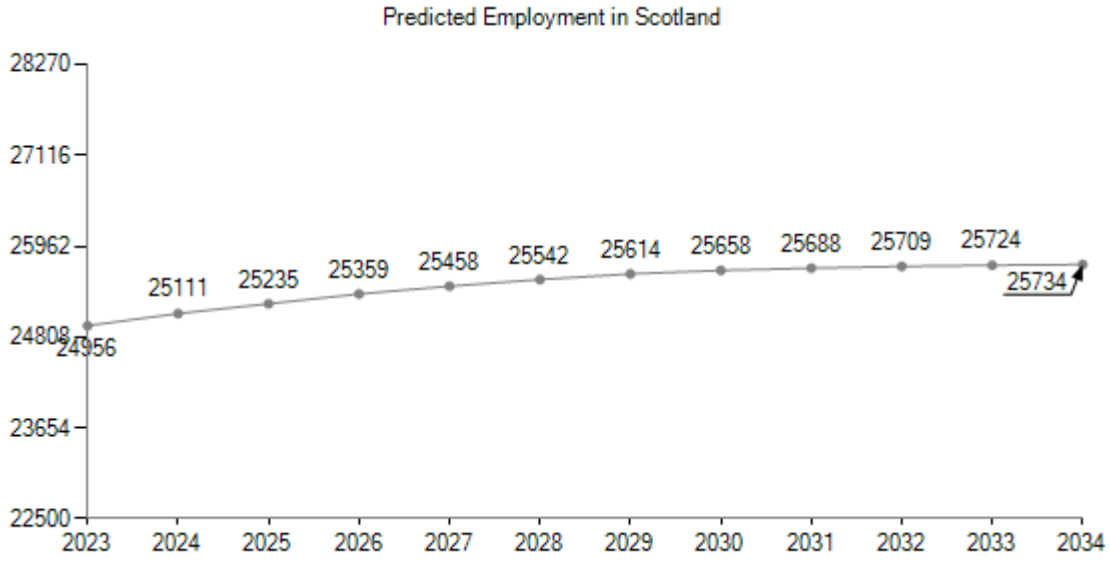
Statistics



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by LMI for All



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