

Teacher - Secondary School - Physical Education

Physical education (PE) teachers prepare and give lessons in gymnastics, athletics, dance, swimming, team sports, outdoor pursuits and other physical activities. They encourage all young people to take part in activities. They work to guidelines set up by the Curriculum for Excellence and prepare pupils aged 11 to 18, for national exams.

The Work

You could be:

- using a variety of teaching techniques such as whole class lessons, group work and demonstrations
- using a range of materials including gymnastics equipment, sports equipment, audio visual-aids and work sheets
- organising and directing games, coaching sessions and sporting events, and refereeing matches
- helping and encouraging individuals, some of whom might not like physical activities
- setting assignments, projects, tests and exams, preparing and carrying out continuous assessment, marking pupils' work and writing reports
- keeping good order 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 training sessions, competitions, matches, outings or social events.

Pay

Teachers in Scotland are paid on a national salary scale. The starting annual salary for a probationer teacher is £35,022 (April 2026).

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 £42,018 and increase an increment each year up to £52,740 (April 2026).

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 £59,871 and £85,047.

A principal teacher earns between £57,498 and £74,205 a year, while the scale for depute head teachers and head teachers ranges from £65,214 to £120,450 a year, depending on the size of school.

(April 2026)

Salaries in independent schools may differ slightly.

Conditions

- You would work in a gym or outdoors on playing fields, sometimes in bad weather.
- 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 physical education, you must have: a degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in a suitable sports subject plus a Professional Graduate Diploma (SCQF Level 11) in Education (PGDE) OR the MA Hons degree in Physical Education (which provides Qualified Teaching Status), from the University of Edinburgh OR a BSc with Honours in Sport, Physical Education and Professional Education from the University of Stirling (SCQF Level 10).

You must also demonstrate that you are involved in sporting activities at a high level.

Your degree

- For entry to a degree course in sports subjects you normally need 3-4 Highers, sometimes including science subjects.
- You must also have Higher English and National 5 Maths. National 5 Applications of Maths is accepted in place of Maths.
- For entry to the MA (Hons) at the University of Edinburgh you need 4 Highers at ABBB (first sitting) or 4/5 Highers at AABBB/ABBBB (two sittings) including English plus National 5 Maths or Applications of Maths at C. Widening Access entry is 4 Highers at ABBB (by end of S6).
- For entry to the BSc at the University of Stirling you need 4 Highers at AAAB (first sitting) or ABBBB (two sittings) including English at B plus National 5 Maths or Applications of Maths at B.
- You must also have evidence of practical ability.
- Your degree must include at least 80 credit points. 40 credit points must be at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 8 (second year undergraduate level) or above.
- 80 credit points must normally be from subjects involving practical performance, such as sport, dance or outdoor pursuits and subjects involving the analysis of aspects of physical education, such as movement analysis, choreography, sports coaching, biomechanics, sports science, exercise physiology, sports psychology, studies in sports or dance or outdoor pursuits, sports development, health and fitness or special needs in movement education.

PGDE

- For entry to the PGDE, you need an approved degree together with Higher English plus National 5 Maths

at B. National 5 Applications of Maths is accepted in place of Maths.

- The Universities of Edinburgh, Strathclyde and the West of Scotland offer the PGDE in Physical Education.
- You must demonstrate that you are competent in practical skills and are involved in relevant physical activities.
- There is a lot of competition for places in these 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 awareness of differing physical abilities
- patience and adaptability
- enthusiasm and energy
- confidence
- a firm and assertive approach when necessary
- good organisational skills
- a sense of humour and 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 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 a 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

X: @EducationScot

General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)

Tel: 0131 314 6000

Email: gtcs@gtcs.org.uk

Website: www.gtcs.org.uk

X: @gtcs

Teach in Scotland

Tel: 0845 345 4745

Email: teachinscotland@gtcs.org.uk

Website: teachinscotland.scot

University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

Tel: 0371 468 0 468

Website: www.ucas.com

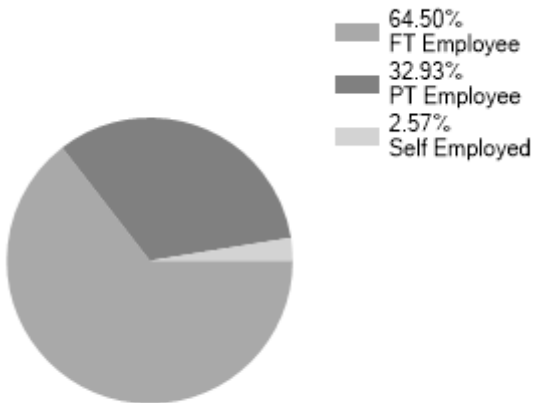
Website (2): www.ucas.com/postgraduate/teacher-training/train-teach-scotland

X: @ucas_online

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ucasonline

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.