

## chapter 3

# The Job Hunt

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So, you've decided that you want to teach in London. Yay you!

The next step is to figure out how to get the job of your dreams. There are two ways of going about your job hunt: alone or with a teacher recruitment agency.

## Going it Alone

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You could try to get a job independent of an agency. In fact, you can see all the jobs available to teachers in the UK at [www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk).

If you do decide to try to find a job without the help of an agency, then you will have to prove to your potential employers that you already know the UK curriculum (including the terms they use like Key Stages), have your visa, and have references who are easily contacted and frankly, outstanding.

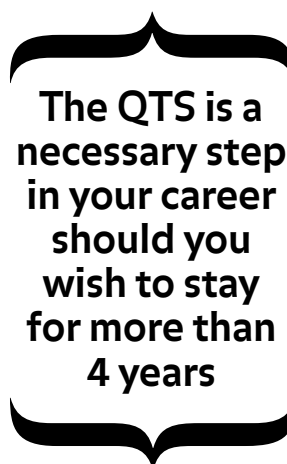
If you send off your resume and cover letter, you may be contacted by a school to have an interview with them. But your chances of this happening while you are in Canada are very slim. Think of it this way: why would a school interview you over the phone when they can see someone teach in the UK and actually observe that person's teaching style, as well as have an in-person interview with that candidate?

But let's say instead you decide to just go to London and take your chances.

You know the school year starts in September, so you show up a couple of

weeks before school starts, or even in June or July and hope to get an interview yourself. Let's say you get the interview, you do your trial lesson and it all goes really well. You get offered the job. You accept. You get your contract and see your salary is listed as an "Overseas Qualified Teacher without QTS" and it's 20 000 pounds. Plus or minus a grand or two. You think to yourself, "Well, hey! I got the job!"

Yes, you got the job. BUT you're missing out on a whole lot of stuff here. First, let me explain what QTS is and why you get less money without it on your own. Then, I'll explain why teachers go through agencies instead, how their salary then is increased (or decreased depending on the agency, more about that later).



**The QTS is a necessary step in your career should you wish to stay for more than 4 years**

## What is QTS?

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### **QTS stands for Qualified Teacher Status.**

It's the UK's way of dealing with their teacher shortage and their need for overseas trained teachers. They have teachers from all around the world teaching in the UK. But how can they tell if one country's education system is the same as the UK's? What if someone can become a teacher in another country without having any training whatsoever?

To make it fair and legally acceptable, they came up with the QTS system. Every teacher that works in the UK is legally allowed to teach on their overseas teacher qualifications for up to 4 years. Within their first four years, they must take their QTS training, pass the course and receive their QTS. Then, they become an "Overseas Trained Teacher with QTS," which puts them in the same pay category as UK trained teachers.

The QTS program is fairly simple, and is certainly works just fine for Canadians because our training is actually very similar. You will have to take a few courses (on UK curriculum, behaviour management, assessment for learning, etc), create a portfolio of evidence of your teaching practice, and be assessed a number of times (through observations of your teaching). It is time consuming, but a necessary step in your career should you wish to stay more than 4 years.

So how does this affect you?

In your wallet.

See, schools have to follow their own pay scheme for teachers.

Agencies don't.

So agencies charge schools a certain rate (usually between 160-189 pounds/day, and no, they won't tell what they charge schools) and then pay their teachers a certain rate (anywhere from 90-150 pounds/day).

**When schools go through agencies, they expect the agency to verify your:**

- CV
- References (at least 2, and they have to be in positions of power and have seen you teach)
- Qualifications (Bachelor of Education at a minimum)
- Police Record Check for vulnerable persons
- List 99 check (which is a UK database check of child molesters)

They also expect the agency to deliver professional development workshops to their teachers, carry out social events (particularly for the foreign teachers to find friends), and generally support the teachers.

Schools pay more for this service because they don't have the time to deal with staffing on their own. In Canada, we have a job shortage whereas in the UK they have a teacher shortage. It is incredibly time-consuming for the Management of each school to do their own hiring. So they pay a higher rate for agencies to find them the best teachers, support them and clear them for teaching.

This usually means you end up getting paid more through an agency than going the independent route. I've worked with teachers who were making 26 325 pounds/year with an agency, then went on their own to schools where they were only making 21 000 pounds. That's a big drop in pay and not unusual.

## Finding Work Through an Agency

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There are literally hundreds of agencies in the UK that have been established in the past 10 years. When the UK government realized they needed to monitor these agencies and make sure that they were sending qualified teachers into schools, they came up with the Quality Mark. The Quality Mark is given by the DFES (Department for Education and Skills, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk>) to agencies that meet their criteria for approval.

The Quality Mark is the government's way of assessing agencies and their practices and then giving their "stamp of approval" to schools to use these particular agencies. If you're trying to find the right agency for you, then the Quality Mark is the bare minimum that you would look for in an agency.

This means that the agency checks their teachers' documentation and verifies that they complete all the requirements to be a teacher in the UK. They check their B.Ed, references, police check and visa. They see the original documents and stamp each document.

I've heard some recruiters brag to teachers that their agency has the Quality Mark so they should go with them. It's not exactly something to brag about! Just expect it, look for the Quality Mark logo on the agency web site and if they don't have it, move on.

The vast majority of agencies you will encounter will already have the Quality Mark, so it's not really something you should worry about. But I do know of one agency that does not have the Quality Mark that was featured on the front page of all the major UK newspapers in 2007. They had sent a "teacher" into a school to do a day of supply teaching.

When he arrived at the school and was advised to collect the class, he then revealed he was a journalist doing a story about how easy it is to pretend to be a teacher and get access into schools! It was a major story.

So, look for an agency with the Quality Mark and register with them.



WORD OF THE DAY

Cuppa

= Cup of Tea

As in, "Fancy a cuppa, luv?"  
Just like on Coronation Street!

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# Interview With a Recruiter:

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## DEON MAXWELL

Deon Maxwell is a teacher-turned-recruiter originally from Capetown, South Africa.



### **Q. WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK AS A RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT?**

**A.** Having worked as a teacher for my particular agency, I saw the opportunity to bring a teacher's perspective to recruitment. I now know what I wish I had known before I started working as a teacher and try and give our new teachers some of this insight.

### **Q. HAVE YOU WORKED WITH ANY OTHER AGENCIES?**

**A.** Yes. I worked as a teacher with a large, well known agency when I first arrived in London.

I did not feel supported by the consultants who kept trying to persuade me to teach other subjects which I had no interest in. I decided to move over to a smaller agency for a more personalized service. I have had a very long association with my current agency, both as teacher and consultant.

### **Q. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION?**

**A.** 4 years. I took a year out in 2007 to teach again – but I'm back in the office now and LOVING it!!

### **Q. WHY DO YOU ENJOY YOUR WORK?**

**A.** My agency is small and I enjoy the feeling of working in a close knit team who I see as my family away from home. Our size means that we can get to know all our teachers pretty well and try and work with them; finding placements which suit their needs.

### **Q. WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?**

**A.** I like the buzz of a busy day when I'm running around the office like a

headless chicken! Keeps me fit and insane!!

**Q. WHAT COULD YOU DO WITHOUT?**

**A.** Early morning shifts, the phone can start ringing before 7am!

I am not an early bird, which is why teachers and schools talk to my lovely co-worker most mornings. I make the occasional guest appearance so be nice in the mornings when you come over and work as a Supply Teacher!

**Q. NOW THAT YOU KNOW CANADIAN TEACHERS AS WELL AS YOU DO, TELL US A COMMON THEME IN THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO TEACHING IN LONDON.**

The multicultural aspect of teaching in the UK can sometimes surprise teachers.

It can be a challenge getting to grips with so many cultures and traditions. I think it is also one of the best parts of the job.

**Q. WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER A TEACHER CONSIDERING THE MOVE ACROSS THE POND?**

**A.** Personally, it gave me the chance to challenge myself, to move away from the comfort zone and make some lifelong friends from a wide variety of countries and backgrounds, something I might not have got had I stayed at home.

Also I think that London is one of the most exciting cities on Earth. My advice? Be brave and take the plunge!

**Q. WHAT PERSONALITY TRAITS DO YOU THINK MAKE FOR THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TEACHER?**

**A.** Resilience, passion and a sense of humour are all essential.

But also important is the realization that supply teachers need to run themselves as a small business, answering calls, following up leads, trying new things and do some research so you can be prepared.

**Q. TELL US A STORY ABOUT SOMETHING FUNNY OR HEART-WARMING THAT HAS OCCURRED IN YOUR TIME HERE.**

**A.** When I first arrived from South Africa, I was keen to try lots of different settings and schools, so despite being Secondary Music trained I was game to try most things.

So when I got a call asking me to cover 'Reception' for two weeks, I thought why not? I went to school ready for a day of answering phones, sending faxes and making cups of tea thinking, 'what a breeze, I can even

manage without any sleep!’

So you can imagine my confusion when on arriving: I was taken PAST the Reception desk to the Reception CLASSROOM which was filled with twenty-six five-year olds, all up to their eye balls in paint, glitter and snot!

Thankfully there were also two very nice assistants who helped me through the day.

After my initial shock I discovered that I really enjoyed working with younger children and we had a great afternoon of sitting on the carpet singing. In the end it was a wonderful experience and I continued to work as a Primary Teacher for a few months before pursuing my passion as a Secondary Music Teacher.

“delightful task! to  
rear the tender thought,  
to teach the young  
idea how to shoot.”

— *James Thomson*