

# Thinking Ahead? Teaching Assistant

Produced by  
Manchester Adult Education Service  
Information and Guidance Team  
Updated: 2018

# Learner Services

## What does a Teaching Assistant do?

Teaching assistants typically work one-to-one with students to help them understand and apply principles taught by the classroom teacher. They also circulate around the classroom while students are completing assignments and assist students who are struggling with their work.

## Where do they work?

Teaching assistants work in a variety of environments. They work in public and private schools, as well as childcare centres and even religious organisations that have educational programmes.

## What skills and personal qualities do they need?

The ability to build good relationships with children, teachers and parents; organisational, planning and IT skills; the ability to manage children and cope with challenging behaviour and creativity to design materials and activities

## How do I become a Teaching Assistant?

Becoming a TA is fairly competitive, but if you are keen and show potential, you may not need a qualification to start work. Some candidates work voluntarily to gain experience and assess whether the role is for them, whereas others prefer to gain an understanding of the role by completing courses and gaining qualifications. Either way is perfectly fine as you may want to gain a good understanding via a course or spend a number of weeks/months in an actual TA role, thus getting hands on experience within the environment and setting. The best advice would be to contact the LEA (local education authority) for the school(s) you are interested in working as they may have specific criteria. Some LEAs will only require some enthusiasm and little experience working with children, but others require a qualification such as the Level 2 or Level 3 QCF (formally NVQ) Supporting Teaching & Learning in Schools. Most QCF courses (Certificate and Diplomas) will require a work placement so it would be advisable to prepare early for such a course. It is fast becoming the norm for LEAs to request a suitable TA qualification.

## Where can I study?

**Manchester Adult Education Service - [www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted)**

- **Working with Children in Schools Level 1 Award (NCFE)**  
Develop the knowledge and skills needed to support children and young people in their schools.
- **Support Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 2 Certificate**  
This course covers a wide range of areas, including children and young people's development, and supporting those with disabilities or special educational needs. Entry requirements are Level 2 in Maths and English or GCSE C or above. You will need to be currently working or volunteering in a school setting.
- **Support Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 2 Certificate Fast Track**  
This course helps you develop the skills and knowledge needed to work as a Level 2 Teaching Assistant. Entry requirements are Level 2 in Maths and English or GCSE C or above. You will need to be currently working or volunteering in a school setting and attend classes 2 days per week.

**The Manchester College – 03333 222 444** [www.themanchestercollege.ac.uk](http://www.themanchestercollege.ac.uk)  
**Northernden and Harpurhey Campuses**

- **Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools L2 Certificate.**  
You'll cover a wide range of areas in children and young people's development, looking at how to communicate and form professional relationships with them, how to prepare and maintain learning environments, and how to support children with disabilities and special educational needs. You'll also focus on safeguarding practices and how schools operate as organisations.
- **Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools L3 Diploma**  
Using a variety of teaching and learning methods, you'll develop experience and expertise in classroom practice over the duration of the course with a voluntary or employed position at a school. You'll learn how to supervise the whole class effectively, with a focus on behaviour management strategies and the planning and delivery of learning activities.
- **Higher Level Teaching Assistant L4 (Short Course)**  
Looking at factors that affect learning and planning to meet these different needs, you'll develop the professional attributes of an HLTA, focusing on communication skills with parents and adults, monitoring and assessment, record keeping, behaviour management and the direction of other adults to support learning.

**Trafford College – 0161 886 7070** <http://www.trafford.ac.uk>

- **Introduction to Teaching Assistant as a career**  
A ten week introduction course into the role of a Teaching Assistant. No formal entry requirements.
- **Edexcel Level 2 Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Certificate**  
All prospective learners will undertake an informal interview and complete a skills scan and initial assessment. The aim of this qualification is to contribute to the skills, knowledge and overall performance of School support staff. It provides an insight into the principles of care and legislation of the educational sector and will aid career development
- **Edexcel Level 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Diploma**  
The aim of this qualification is to contribute to the skills, knowledge and overall performance of school support staff. It provides an insight into the principles of care and legislation of the educational sector and will aid career development.

**Tameside College – 0161 908 6600** [www.tameside.ac.uk](http://www.tameside.ac.uk)

- **NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools**  
Candidates must be at least 19 years old or over with good communication skills. A placement of 5 hours a week in a school is also required. Level 2 in English and Maths is desirable.
- **NCFE Level 3 Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools**  
Minimum entry age 19. Achievement of NCFE level 2 or NVQ 2 in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. Extensive experience of role in schools and good communication skills are essential. Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths GCSE grade C or above or equivalent. A minimum of 5 hours per week placement in a school of your choice. An Enhanced DBS form must be completed for Tameside College cost £44.

- **Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools (NCFE)**  
Minimum entry age 19. Achievement of NCFE level 2 or NVQ 2 in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools; Extensive experience of role in schools; Good communication skills are essential; Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths GCSE grade C or above or equivalent; A minimum of 5 hours per week placement in a school of your choice (year 1 and above)
- **Higher Level Teaching Assistants**  
Once you have more experience of working as a Teaching Assistant, you may wish to progress onto a higher level of responsibility in the role and be trained and assessed as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant or HTLA for short.

HTLA's generally have more responsibility in the classroom such as planning more of the curriculum with the teachers, and even taking classes of their own. To be considered for HTLA, you will need to have the support of the schools Head Teacher or management, as you will need to take the time to train and the school will also need to fund it.

For more information see [www.tafocus.co.uk/higher-level-teaching-assistant-hlta](http://www.tafocus.co.uk/higher-level-teaching-assistant-hlta)

### **Higher Education – Foundation Degrees**

As an experienced Teaching Assistant you may also wish to continue onto Higher Education by studying for a Foundation Degree.

A foundation degree is the equivalent of two thirds of a full honours degree and is a fully flexible qualification allowing students to study part-time or full-time to fit their lifestyle. Completing an honours degree following on from a foundation degree will normally take an extra year and could lead to Qualified Teacher Status, QTS, if the top up Honours degree includes this.

Trafford, Tameside and Bury College and the University of Bolton offer relevant Foundation Degrees – see information above for Trafford and Tameside.

Bury College - 0161 280 8280 [www.burycollege.ac.uk](http://www.burycollege.ac.uk)

University of Bolton – 01204 900600 [www.bolton.ac.uk](http://www.bolton.ac.uk)

### **What are the job prospects for Teaching Assistants?**

Education is a large employment sector both in primary and secondary schools but it is expected to decline between 2013-2023. However, there will be a large number of opportunities because of its size. ([www.economicmodelling.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Greater-Manchester-LPE](http://www.economicmodelling.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Greater-Manchester-LPE))

### **OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

MAES Learner Advisors can give advice on careers, education, training and support with job search. Make an appointment at your local centre: [www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted)

Teaching Assistant Focus - [www.tafocus.co.uk](http://www.tafocus.co.uk)

The National Careers Service (see Job Profiles) [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

**You are advised to check material facts as although every effort has been made to ensure that information given is up to date we are aware that information is subject to change. The website links are used to provide further information and are not intended to signify that MAES endorses such websites and their content.**