

K12 ACADEMICS — TEACHING ABROAD SERIES

International-School Teaching

A guide for qualified & aspiring teachers — how international-school teaching works, how it differs from ESL, requirements, packages, recruiting, and how to break in.



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2026 EDITION

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

THE LICENSED-TEACHER CAREER TRACK ABROAD

International schools are the **career track for licensed teachers** abroad — distinct from ESL. They follow the **IB, British, or American** curricula, pay the **best salaries and benefits**, and recruit qualified, experienced teachers. This program-neutral guide covers **how they differ from ESL, the requirements, packages, recruiting, and how to break in**, and points you to the K12 Academics directory to find schools.

General guidance, not legal, immigration, or career advice. International-school requirements, packages, and recruiting norms change and vary by school and country. The details here are general examples and **must be confirmed with each school and the relevant authorities**. K12 Academics does not run or endorse any specific school or recruiter — use the K12 Academics directory to find and compare your options.

Understand How It Differs From ESL

WHAT TO KNOW

International-school teaching is **subject or classroom teaching in English** (following the IB, British, American, or a national curriculum), not English-language instruction. It requires a **qualified teacher**, pays **more**, and offers **fuller benefits** — a career track, where ESL/TEFL is often an entry point or a different path entirely.

BY THE NUMBERS

Not ESL

subject/classroom teaching

Curricula

IB, British, American

A career track

not entry-level

HOW TO HELP

Know the distinction — international schools want **qualified classroom teachers** (following a foreign curriculum), not English-language instructors; it's a career track, not entry-level ESL.

WATCH OUT

International schools teach a **full curriculum in English** — they hire licensed teachers of maths, science, humanities, and more, not just English.

Know the Curricula

WHAT TO KNOW

Most international schools follow one of a few systems: the **International Baccalaureate (IB)**, the **British curriculum (IGCSE/A-Levels)**, the **American curriculum**, or a **national curriculum taught in English**. Your **training and experience** are matched to a school's curriculum, so target schools whose system fits your background.

BY THE NUMBERS

IB

widely used worldwide

British / American

IGCSE/A-Levels; US system

Match

your training to the curriculum

HOW TO HELP

Learn the systems — the **IB, British, and American** curricula dominate; schools match hires to their curriculum, so target ones that fit your training.

GOOD TO KNOW

IB training is widely valued — it broadens the international schools you can apply to.

Check the Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

The core requirements: a **recognised teaching license/qualification (e.g., QTS, a PGCE, a state license, or equivalent)**, a **relevant degree**, and usually **two or more years of classroom experience**. **IB or curriculum-specific training** helps, and subject specialists (maths, sciences) are in demand. A TEFL certificate alone is **not** enough for these roles.

BY THE NUMBERS

License

QTS/PGCE/state license

Plus

degree + 2+ years' experience

TEFL alone

not enough

HOW TO HELP

Line up the essentials — a **recognised teaching license, a relevant degree, and classroom experience** (IB training and subject specialisms help); a TEFL alone won't qualify you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Subject specialists — especially **maths and the sciences** — are in high demand at international schools.

Understand the Packages

WHAT TO KNOW

International-school packages are the **most generous in teaching abroad**, often including a **competitive salary plus housing or an allowance, annual flights, health insurance, pension contributions, relocation support, and free or reduced tuition** for your children. Packages vary widely by school and region — the strongest are typically at established, accredited schools.

BY THE NUMBERS

Salary

competitive

Plus

housing, flights, insurance

Often

tuition + pension

HOW TO HELP

Value the whole package — international schools often add **housing, flights, insurance, pension, and dependants' tuition** — which can far outweigh the headline salary.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **full package** (housing, flights, tuition, pension) is where international schools stand out — weigh it, not just salary.

Get Recognised & Accredited

WHAT TO KNOW

Have your **teaching qualification recognised** where needed, prepare **apostilled/translated documents and a background check**, and keep evidence of your **curriculum training and experience**. Membership of professional bodies and **up-to-date safeguarding training** also strengthen applications. Accredited, reputable schools expect thorough documentation.

BY THE NUMBERS

Recognise

your qualification

Prepare

apostilled docs + background check

Keep

training & safeguarding evidence

HOW TO HELP

Get your paperwork in order — have your **qualification recognised**, prepare apostilled documents and a background check, and keep evidence of curriculum training and safeguarding.

GOOD TO KNOW

Reputable schools expect **thorough documentation and safeguarding checks** — prepare these early.

Learn the Recruiting Cycle

WHAT TO KNOW

International schools recruit on a **defined annual cycle**, mostly **January–May** for an **August/September start** (the Southern Hemisphere differs). Hiring runs through **recruitment fairs, specialist agencies, school websites, and direct applications**. Apply **early in the cycle**, as the best roles fill months ahead.

BY THE NUMBERS

Cycle

Jan–May (Sept start)

Via

fairs, agencies, direct

Apply

early in the cycle

HOW TO HELP

Time it right — international schools recruit **January–May** for a September start, via fairs, agencies, and direct applications — apply early, as top roles fill fast.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **best roles fill months ahead** — enter the recruiting cycle early (fairs and agencies open in the new year).



STEP 07 OF 10

Build a Standout Application

WHAT TO KNOW

Tailor a **professional CV and cover letter** to each school and curriculum, lead with your **license, degree, experience, and results**, and prepare for **interviews and a demo lesson** (often via video). References and a clean safeguarding record matter greatly. Show you understand the school's **curriculum and community**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Tailor

to school & curriculum

Lead with

license, experience, results

Prepare

interview + demo lesson

HOW TO HELP

Make each application specific — tailor your CV to the school and curriculum, lead with your qualifications and results, and prepare for a demo lesson.

GOOD TO KNOW

Show you understand the school's **curriculum and community** — it sets strong applicants apart.

Verify the School & Contract

WHAT TO KNOW

Before accepting, verify the school's **accreditation and reputation** (talk to current teachers), and get the **full package in writing**: salary, housing, flights, insurance, tuition, hours, and visa sponsorship. Established, accredited international schools are transparent — be cautious of vague terms or missing accreditation.

BY THE NUMBERS

Verify

accreditation & reputation

In writing

full package + visa

Be cautious

vague terms

HOW TO HELP

Do your diligence — verify the school's accreditation and reputation, and get the **full package and visa sponsorship in writing** before accepting.

GOOD TO KNOW

Talk to **current or former teachers** — the best insight into a school's reputation and how it treats staff.

Build a Long-Term Career

WHAT TO KNOW

International-school teaching is a **portable, progressing career**: strong performance and curriculum experience (especially IB) open doors to **better schools, leadership roles, and higher-paying regions** worldwide. Many teachers move between countries every few years, building an international profile that compounds over time.

BY THE NUMBERS

Portable

move between countries

Progress

to better schools & leadership

IB experience

compounds

HOW TO HELP

Think long term — international-school teaching is a **portable, progressing career** — experience (especially IB) opens better schools, leadership, and higher-paying regions.

GOOD TO KNOW

Many teachers **move every few years**, building an international profile that opens progressively better roles.

Find Your School & Thrive

WHAT TO KNOW

When you're ready, use **the K12 Academics directory** to find and compare specific international schools and recruiters worldwide, target schools whose curriculum fits your training, and pair your search with our Teaching in [Country] guides for country-specific detail. Confirm requirements with each school and the relevant authorities.

BY THE NUMBERS

Find & compare

schools & recruiters

Target

curriculum-matched schools

Pair with

country guides

HOW TO HELP

Use **the K12 Academics directory** to find and compare international schools and recruiters, target curriculum-matched schools, and pair your search with the country guides.

WATCH OUT

Browse **the K12 Academics directory** to find the specific international schools and recruiters that fit your credentials and goals.

International-School Teaching: The Essentials

A snapshot — program-neutral. Confirm details with each school and the relevant authorities.

What it is

Subject or classroom teaching in English following a foreign curriculum (IB, British, American, or national) — a career track for qualified teachers, distinct from ESL/TEFL, with the best pay abroad.

Requirements

A recognised teaching license/qualification (QTS, PGCE, a state license, or equivalent), a relevant degree, and usually two or more years of experience; IB or curriculum-specific training and subject specialisms (maths, sciences) help; a TEFL alone is not enough.

Packages

Often a competitive salary plus housing or an allowance, annual flights, health insurance, pension, relocation support, and reduced tuition for your children; the strongest are at established, accredited schools.

Recruiting

A defined annual cycle — mostly January–May for a September start — via recruitment fairs, specialist agencies, school websites, and direct applications; apply early, as the best roles fill months ahead.

Verify & grow

Verify accreditation and reputation (talk to current teachers) and get the full package and visa sponsorship in writing; it's a portable, progressing career that experience (especially IB) advances worldwide.

YOUR TEACHING-ABROAD JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find Your Community.

Explore our Teaching in [Country] guides, and find and compare international schools and recruiters in the K12 Academics directory — among **1,297 free resources**.

tools.k12academics.com →

