

Qualifying to teach Panjabi: Flexible PGCE route

Teaching in schools today demands more than just caring about children: teachers need to discover what motivates children and understand properly students' strengths and weaknesses. To discover the answers involves a long and interesting journey. I would like to share my experience with you of my journey from being an unqualified teacher to becoming a full-time qualified teacher.

I am overseas qualified with a BA degree from New Delhi University, India. UK NARIC decided that my degree had an equivalent compatibility in the United Kingdom, but I could not enrol on a teacher training course due to my lack of GCSEs in English and Maths. Being a single parent of three children and teaching EAL/Panjabi at a local school, I had to be very determined and proactive to find a suitable part-time course. I eventually took a course at East Berkshire College for one evening a week across two terms and I passed my Maths and English GCSEs at the required level.

Having completed my GCSEs, my next aim was to enrol on a PGCE course offering Panjabi, but very few options were available. I was then offered a great opportunity to work at the Ministry of Defence, teaching British soldiers Hindi, so I delayed my plans for a couple of years. I then discovered that Goldsmiths College at the University of London offered a Flexible PGCE in Panjabi. I

enrolled on a two-year PGCE course with my extremely supportive tutor, Jim Anderson. This flexible course enabled me both to carry on working and to spend a good amount of time on my studies. Jim recommended that Cranford Community College, a Specialist Language College in Hounslow, employ me because he was aware that the school was seeking a Panjabi teacher to improve standards in the Panjabi section after a disappointing Ofsted report.

Working at Cranford Community College, and with Jim's help, I managed fast-track completion of my PGCE in less than a year, including the QTS skill tests in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT. Using the knowledge gained on my PGCE course, I was using better lesson plans and teaching skills with the students at the school and was able to give my section colleagues my full support. A rigorous internal review subsequently reported that Panjabi teaching at the school had improved from unsatisfactory to good. As well as teaching Panjabi up to A level, I have taught some Hindi and become a Year 10 form tutor. I have also arranged several assemblies to raise awareness about religious festivals, which my Years 8, 9 and 11 students thoroughly enjoyed. I am still learning something new every day!

While I was doing my PGCE, I was juggling single-parenthood and an array of jobs. Despite this, I still managed to complete my PGCE and I believe that if I



can do it, then anyone can! Finally having a recognised degree and qualified occupation gives me a sense of confidence, security, and achievement, along with greater financial benefit, and I would advise anyone in the teaching field to try their hardest to become qualified.

Narinder Kaur | Cranford Community College – Flexible PGCE graduate from Goldsmiths College, University of London
E-mail: nka@cranford.hounslow.sch.uk

To find out more about the Flexible PGCE at Goldsmiths College, which is also offered in Arabic, Mandarin Chinese and Urdu, please contact Jim Anderson at j.anderson@gold.ac.uk. Cranford Community College can be contacted on 020 8897 2001.

CILT Register of Specialists

CILT, the National Centre for Languages has established the Register of Specialists as a useful resource for any school or college seeking specialists in teaching community languages, such as Bengali or Turkish. Specialists are listed under the language(s) expertise they can offer.

It can be very difficult to source such specialists, particularly in areas outside of the big cities and where community language provision is still to be developed. If you can offer your expertise locally, regionally or nationally, please get in touch.

The Register serves as a contact list, so in completing the application form, applicants are agreeing to its publication on the CILT website. Details of expertise and experience are supplied by applicants and are not verified by CILT. CILT is therefore unable to enter into any negotiations between specialists on the Register and any organisation that should choose to contact them.

If you would like to be added to the Register, please download the application form at www.cilt.org.uk/commlangs/regform.doc.

If you have further queries or would like to return an application form,

contact Kathryn Abram, CILT, the National Centre for Languages, 20 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4LB. Tel: 020 7379 5101 ext. 284. Fax: 020 7379 5082. E-mail kathryn.abram@cilt.org.uk.

To access the Register visit www.cilt.org.uk/commlangs/register.htm.