Job description

Adult education teachers coordinate and teach programmes designed specifically for adult learners. Typical activities involve designing and teaching courses, liaising with further education authorities and following curriculum development.

Adult education covers a whole spectrum of subjects, from academic areas like history and literature to practical subjects like IT and languages, as well as social and life skills. Learners are usually between 18 years of age and 85 and above; they may be recent school leavers or retired people looking to extend their skills and knowledge base, to help them in day-to-day life.

Teachers organise and run tutorials, seminars and lectures in particular subjects. Along with the responsibilities of teaching and preparing lesson plans to engage people from a variety of backgrounds, the teachers often have to carry out administration tasks connected with the running of the programmes. Many of these will be accredited courses delivered through the VEC network of schools and colleges while others are delivered by locally based community groups which play a key role in attracting learners. Many of the locally based groups deliver accredited courses while others concentrate on ensuring that learners develop self-confidence about learning, enabling them to progress to accredited options.

Work activities

• Planning, preparing and delivering lessons to classes.
• Involving learners in the planning and implementing of their learning activities.
• Creating a climate that encourages and supports learning.
• Fostering a spirit of collaboration in the learning setting.
• Developing a report with members of the class, to meet the needs of each and deliver a structured and fulfilling learning experience.

• Foster critically reflective thinking
• Assessing and recording pupils progress, through coursework and examinations.
• Participating in staff meetings.

Work conditions

Travel: can be a regular feature of the job if involved in a number of different centres.

Working hours: can often include evenings and weekends (Saturdays) though not normally public holidays or Sundays.

Location: in towns or cities throughout the country, particular with community groups and colleges.

Opportunities for self-employment: part-time work is common with teachers, who often also have full-time jobs elsewhere. Depending on their qualifications and or expertise, teachers can supplement income through private tuition, national examination invigilation and marking, other evening classes and writing textbooks.

Typical employers

• Adult Education Centres
• VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) Centres
• VEC network of schools and colleges
• Universities and institutes of further and higher education.

Career development

Promotion to positions such as adult education organiser or learning co-ordinator is possible.

Salaries

Salaries vary greatly depending on employing organisation, hours work and whether teachers are on an incremental scale or paid on an hourly basis.

(continued overleaf)
Entry requirements and training

No regulation currently exists within the adult education sector. Many teachers involved in adult education in Ireland do not have a formal teaching qualification. They may be appointed for their expertise in a subject or discipline, but there is currently no requirement to hold a teaching qualification for positions in the adult education sector or the further and higher education sectors.

Higher education institutions deliver a range of programmes relevant to practitioners in the adult and community education sector as do community providers. VECs provide Continuous Professional Development for their staff.

Specific degree subjects required

Open to graduates of all disciplines and non-graduates with relevant experience or qualifications in the area taught.

Postgraduate study

Postgraduate diplomas and higher degrees in adult/community education are offered by a number of universities in Ireland.

Specific entry requirements

There may be a minimum age requirement (normally 23 years) for those entering training programmes in adult and community education.

Training

Further training is provided through in-service courses. Professional development and other specialised courses are also offered by some universities.

Tips for applications

Volunteer as a tutor with VEC adult literacy services.

Skills and qualities

• Highly conscientious and committed to the highest standards of professional service.
• Excellent communication and organisational skills.
• Caring and motivated by the best interests of his/her students.
• Enthusiasm for the subject material that will foster a love of learning by students.
• Willing to engage in ongoing professional development.
• Ability to relate well to different groups of students of different ages and ability levels.
• Team-player who can collaborate with colleagues.