FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can casual and temporary teachers apply?

   Yes, casual and temporary teachers can apply as long as they meet the following:

   • They hold a valid permanent approval to teach in NSW public schools;
   • Their teacher accreditation has not lapsed, been suspended, withdrawn or cancelled;
   • They have completed the equivalent of two years successful teaching experience verified by their principal. (Remember, it is a condition of application that a principal endorses the teacher’s application for sponsored training.);
   • They are willing to agree to the terms and conditions of the Deed of Agreement.

2. I have never worked for the Department; can my employment as a teacher in a Catholic, independent or interstate school count towards the required 2 years teaching experience? Can the principals of said schools complete my principal’s supporting statement?

   Yes, principals or headmasters of non-government schools where you have completed the required teaching experience can recommend you for consideration into the STEP. The principal has to confirm your service and also comment on your effectiveness as a teacher. Apart from completing the required supporting documentation, your teaching experience must be verified by an official statement of service or letter of recommendation on official school letterhead. The statement must confirm the following points:

   • the years (duration) of experience i.e. commencement date to finishing date and whether full time or part time including number of days per week;
   • details of leave without pay (LWOP) if any;
   • subject(s)/curriculum and years taught.

   Please note that on completion of your studies you must be willing to work in a NSW public school in a geographical area of workforce need for a minimum of three years (or two years in identified schools).
3. **I do not have two years teaching experience, can I still apply?**

   The two years teaching experience is required so that the principal is in the best position to make an informed assessment of your performance as a teacher and comment on your eligibility for the STEP. However, if your principal is convinced that you are an excellent candidate for the STEP, even if you have not completed the required two years teaching experience, then we encourage you to submit an application for special consideration. The recommendation from your principal(s) as well as your application details will then be further considered in line with other applicants.

4. **I have been away from teaching for some time and have recently just received my new approval to teach. My last teaching engagement was in a Catholic or Independent school, as a casual, four years ago. Am I still eligible to apply for a sponsorship? Who can endorse my application?**

   Yes, you are eligible to apply however the Sponsored Training Education Program (STEP) is highly competitive as there are limited places available.

   The selection process is based on a number of factors including an excellent application, the conditions of employment at the time the application was made, as well as outstanding recommendations from principals and referees endorsing you as a potential candidate for consideration into the STEP.

   So if the teaching experience is not recent, the principal may find it difficult to identify and comment on your demonstrated skills and experience, inherent qualities or other special attributes. Applications will not be considered without a principal’s recommendation.

5. **I am currently on LWOP, am I eligible to apply?**

   Yes. NSW public school teachers on leave without pay are eligible to apply for sponsorship under the Sponsored Training Education Program (STEP). However, if you are on LWOP and have been away from teaching for five years or more, you will have to ensure that you meet accreditation requirements set out by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) for new scheme teachers as well as meet the Department’s eligibility requirements for a permanent approval.

6. **I have accumulated a total of two years teaching experience in various schools by working casually here and there, who should endorse my application? What if I have only served for one term in my most recent engagement?**

   You should ask the principal(s) of the school(s) where you have completed a substantial period of casual teaching to complete your supporting statement. You are able to provide more than one principal’s supporting statement. The principal must be able to comment on
your suitability for the STEP and further comment on your demonstrated skills and experience, inherent qualities and other special attributes.

7. I am currently working permanently in a school. Do I have to work and study at the same time?

Yes. It is assumed that you are capable of handling a teaching load while studying. However, successful applicants will receive study leave in accordance with current provisions contained in the Teachers Handbook (http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/careers-centre/resources/teachers-handbook). Up to eight days relief will be paid to the school per annum ($388 per day including on costs).

The great thing about STEP is that it gives you the flexibility to choose the program you would like to pursue at the university of your choice. You can also choose your own study pattern as long as you complete your studies in the given timeframe. This gives you the flexibility to plan and choose the best option to suit your personal circumstances.

The amount of study applicants need to complete varies for each individual and is largely dependent on the studies you have already acquired. Officers will assess your prior qualifications to determine the additional studies you need to undertake to meet the requirements for the additional teaching competency as prescribed by the BOSTES’ (Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards) subject content requirements in a second teaching area.

8. Am I granted a leave of absence from my permanent role while retaining my teacher salary, similar to what was previously offered in the Retraining program?

STEP does not include the provision for leave of absence from your permanent role. The Department has changed the way it implements sponsored training. Successful applicants will receive study leave in accordance with current provisions contained in the Teachers Handbook.

9. What are the current study leave provisions in the Teachers Handbook?

10. **Will my application be considered and my sponsorship granted before I commence my studies or finalise my enrolment?**

The timing of the grant is dependent on numerous factors surrounding each individual’s particular circumstances. Even if you are successful, a decision may not be available until after you have already commenced your studies. However, every effort will be made to ensure payment to successful candidates is arranged promptly.

11. **What if I enrol into a program and find out later that I am not successful in gaining a sponsorship?**

STEP was developed to help teachers who are already intending to pursue additional training in a subject area of workforce need in order to improve their career advancement opportunities. As sponsorship grants are competitive, enrolment in courses should not be undertaken in anticipation of a sponsorship being granted.

12. **How will I know if my intended program of study is recognised by the Department as appropriate?**

You are able to get advice and confirmation by sending an e-mail to the STEP team at sponsoredtraining@det.nsw.edu.au. Alternatively, you can also contact our Additional Approvals team at Additional.Approval@det.nsw.edu.au if enquiring about self-funded studies. The fact sheets published on the STEP website may also assist you.

13. **When I finish the required studies, do I have the option to stay in my own school if a vacancy arises? Is that guaranteed?**

Teachers may elect to be appointed to:

- their current school, if currently a permanent teacher (with their principal’s support);
- the closest suitable vacancy for which they would have priority of appointment. This may include a vacancy in their own school; or
- a school in a geographical area of workforce need.

On successful completion of your studies, you will be guaranteed permanent employment as a teacher in a NSW public school in an agreed geographical area of workforce need if you are not a current permanent teacher. Geographical areas of workforce need are as follows:

**Non-coastal rural priority areas**

Albury (301), Armidale (302), Bathurst (305), Bourke (308), Broken Hill (309), Deniliquin (313), Dubbo (314), Griffith (317), Moree (323), Orange (328), Tamworth (338), Wagga Wagga (341)
**Metropolitan priority areas**

Bankstown (303), Blacktown (306), Campbelltown (310), Fairfield (315), Granville (316), Liverpool (321), Mount Druitt (324)

The specific schools in the staffing areas nominated above are listed on the DEC website at: [https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/employment/promotion/schstaffingareas.xls](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/employment/promotion/schstaffingareas.xls)

Teachers who enter into a Deed of Agreement with the Department under a sponsorship program must be prepared to teach in any of the schools that fall under the agreed geographical area of workforce need to deliver the subject they are being sponsored for.

14. **If I am able to study part time and finish my studies mid-year, do I get appointed straight away?**

Yes. Appointments are usually made for the school term immediately following course completion. However, other factors may influence scheduled appointments and could result in negotiations regarding entry-on-duty dates. These factors include but are not limited to:

- Current and upcoming vacancies in your chosen geographical areas;
- The needs of your school if you are currently appointed;
- Recommendations from principals.

15. **Do I still get $5,000 even if I study part-time?**

The $5,000 annual tuition subsidy is granted based on a full-time study load. If you are enrolled in part-time study, your annual tuition subsidy will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

16. **Is the financial assistance taxable?**

Yes. The $5,000 annual tuition subsidy, as well as the one-off grant of $2,500 on successful completion of your study, are considered as income and therefore would be taxable. You will receive the payment as part of your salary which will be reflected on your pay advice on the week of payment.

17. **I have already completed some subjects when I submitted my application for sponsorship. If successful in gaining a place in the STEP, will I get a back payment for the previous studies done?**

No. The financial assistance provided is calculated from the current semester when the sponsorship is granted.
18. I have already retrained with you before and until now am above establishment at my school. Am I able to apply and retrain again? Is there a possibility that I will still end up above establishment for a further 3 years?

You are eligible to apply for sponsorship as undertaking further studies will enhance your employment opportunities. There are many factors surrounding why a teacher is above establishment in a school including the needs of the school, the needs of the individual and/or the geographical staffing areas the individual has selected. The Department will endeavour to appoint all teachers into a substantive permanent position.

19. I am already an approved teacher in a subject area of workforce need, how come I’m not allowed to retrain to secure a permanent position? (What if I am on LWOP, does that change my eligibility?)

Sponsored training programs are implemented by the Department to enhance the supply of qualified primary and secondary teachers in curriculum and specialist areas of workforce need. The Department will not consider sponsoring a teacher already permanently approved in a subject area of workforce need.

Refer to question 5 for eligibility if you are on LWOP.

20. Why are you training additional teachers in subject areas of workforce need when there are already approved teachers who have not secured a permanent position?

There are numerous reasons why a teacher of a specialist area has not secured a permanent position. It is possible that their personal circumstances do not make it feasible for them to be appointed to a geographical area of workforce need or it is necessary for them to limit their location preferences, etc. Other factors could also include the following:

- position vacancies exactly matching the teacher’s specific details;
- priority appointments and transfers;
- specific position requirements such as the required combinations of approved teaching areas, additional staffing codes, etc.;
- the teacher’s endorsed skills and experiences.

Factors that influence when a teacher receives an appointment to a vacancy include the school’s curriculum needs, the teacher’s approved teaching subjects and skills and/or experiences and the geographic locations in which he or she is prepared to work.

21. Why haven’t I secured a permanent position when I am an approved teacher in a specialist area?

Successfully securing a permanent position for a teacher in a specialist area is still dependent on a number of factors such as:
• the teacher’s location preferences;
• position vacancies;
• priority appointments and transfers;
• specific position requirements such as the required combinations of approved teaching competencies, etc.;
• the teacher’s endorsed skills and experiences.


22. I would like to apply for a sponsored training in ESL, teacher librarianship and careers advising. Am I eligible to apply even if I am not appointed to a school?

Only teachers who have been considered through a merit selection process for a vacant careers advisor, teacher librarian or ESL positions are eligible to apply for the program. If you are currently enrolled in a postgraduate program and have recently been successful in securing an appointment through a merit selection process, then you are eligible to be absorbed by the Sponsored Training Education Program.

One of the criteria for being considered into a vacancy in these positions through merit is either to hold an approval in these areas or to currently be undergoing training for approval in these areas or in some cases, willingness to train for approval in these areas.

23. As I am already an experienced teacher, do I still need to complete a practicum under the STEP?

Requirements for undertaking a practicum are the domain of the relevant university. It is possible that a university may not require you to complete a practicum, especially if you have taught or are currently teaching in the relevant area of specialisation.

24. I would like to apply for a sponsorship in mathematics but am unsure if I would be eligible as I have no prior experience in teaching secondary mathematics.

All applicants who meet the minimum required teaching experience in any subject area will be considered. However, in the event where there is a large number of mathematics sponsorship applications received, priority will be given to teachers with verified successful teaching experience in secondary mathematics.

25. I have not completed 2 unit mathematics studies at HSC level. Will I meet entry requirements for enrolment into university level mathematics studies?
The pre-requisite for previous completion of HSC level mathematics will need to be discussed with your university of choice as it might form part of the entry requirements into their mathematics program. For those enrolling into non-award study, it is up to the university to make sure that you meet their standard requirement before allowing you to pursue degree level studies in mathematics.

26. Will my studies be considered towards meeting accreditation at Professional Competence?

No. However, you may apply for recognition of your post-graduate studies to count towards the 100 hours of professional development required to maintain your accreditation. You will have to contact the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards for more information.