

Teaching English in Saudi Arabia.

It is hoped this document provides helpful information for people who are interested in teaching English in Saudi Arabia.

Qualifications and Experience

The most commonly recognised English teaching qualification in Saudi Arabia is the CELTA (Certificate for English Teaching to Adults). However, many people are teaching in Saudi Arabia without a CELTA. If someone is interested in teaching in Saudi Arabia and has not taught before, a CELTA is one place to start. To do a CELTA you do not need to be a native speaker.

Where you can do a CELTA (Select the country, then "CELTA")
<http://cambridgeesol-centres.org/centres/teaching/index.do>

More Information about the CELTA
<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/celta.html>

Most contracts require some type of experience. This experience could be gained in your home country teaching in programs for immigrants or local English teaching initiatives.

Jobs Available

The points here are generalisations from past experience in Saudi Arabia. They can vary (greatly) with different employers.

There are three different types of English teaching jobs in Saudi Arabia. There are contracts available for Men and Women. For most contracts, teachers do not need to be native speakers. All of the contracts can be expected to provide return flights and an accommodation provision (either an allowance or a provided apartment).

i) Universities/Colleges

Universities across the country are now operating 'preparatory year' programs. Both male and female students study maths, science, computers and English. To teach on the programs a teacher normally requires i) A Bachelor degree in any subject ii) An English Teaching certificate (normally a 'CELTA' or equivalent) iii) About 3 years experience. These requirements vary. Some will require more, some will require less. Universities generally offer 2 months or more of vacation each year, require up to 20 hours teaching per week and up to 10 hours preparation/administration. Work days are Saturday-Wednesday.

ii) Private local Institutes / Employers

There are many small English Institutes (and some local Saudi companies needing English Teachers) throughout Saudi Arabia. Generally, smaller institutes can require teachers to work 8am-12:30pm and 4-10pm Saturday-Wednesday. Normally Thursday is a half day for administration. This is the usual 6 day week for institutes. Up to 30 days vacation is also standard for these positions. Due to the smaller teaching staff at these employers, teachers will often have more responsibility. Private institutes tend to be more flexible with regards to qualifications and experience.

iii) Private (International) Companies.

There are several large international companies in Saudi Arabia. Normally teachers are preparing their students for an examination such as Cambridge IELTS (www.ielts.org), or preparing students for a specific job that requires English. Often working hours are 8:30-5pm Saturday-Wednesday. Generally these employers will be more strict with regards to qualifications and experience. Sometimes a Master's degree is required.

Where to find jobs

Two web sites that regularly have jobs for Saudi Arabia:

<http://www.eslcafe.com/joblist/>

<http://www.tefl.com/jobs/>

Both sites allow searching to restrict your results to a particular country.

There are many other web sites with jobs available. Searching at google.com for “ESL” or “EFL” and a city name in Saudi Arabia will sometimes show jobs not on the two main websites above.

Contract Issues

Some issues to consider:

Iqama: This is the residence permit. It is needed to rent accommodation, buy a car and open a bank account. An employee enters the country with a work visa which is converted to an 'Iqama' in the first few weeks (or months) of being in the country.

No Objection Letter: This is a letter which may be received from an employer at the end of a contract. Without this letter some employers or embassies will not allow a new contract or visa to be issued. This is an issue if you seek to change employers after completing a contract.

Additional points:

- Does the contract specify which location(s) you can be placed?
- Is there provided accommodation or a housing allowance?
- What are the maximum (i) teaching/contract hours (ii) working hours. Can this be exceeded?
- What are class sizes like? Is there a maximum?
- Does the contract guarantee to provide a 'no objection letter'?
- Does the employer guarantee an Iqama?
- What is guaranteed for air flights (where are they from/to?)
- How is the salary paid (What currency, how often)?
- Is it a family contract? (for flights/visas and accommodation)
- Will the employer allow you to email/speak with a current teacher?
- Is there a probationary period when either party can end the contract without notice?
- How many days notice is required to leave the job?

The Hiring Process

Initial contacts are nearly always made via email. These are usually in response to specific job advertisements. However, it is possible to contact companies or universities who are not advertising. Often their websites will have contact details for the Dean or Manager of the program or company. It is common for telephone interviews to be needed prior to a job offer. Face to face interviews are rare, but some companies will require them. Because companies receive visas for specific countries, they may require employees to be a particular nationality. Reputable companies will pay for your plane ticket and email or post you the ticket. It is common to pay for your own visa costs in your country and receive a refund on arrival. Requirements for the visa process vary between countries, but work visas always require a medical exam in your home country and then another exam on arrival. Like visas, this is usually paid by yourself in your country and refunded when you arrive.