



Teaching in Prisons

Questions and answers from SET webinar on 6th July 2017

Since 2014, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has had a remit to support the workforce development needs of the offender learning sector.

Following an initial review, ongoing conversations with all levels of the offender learning workforce and their managers are taking place from **peer mentors, instructors and teachers** to **Governors** and **HMPPS prisons group leads**. This enables us to gather intelligence to tailor the support offered.

ETF were delighted to take part in the Coates Reviewⁱ into education in prisons in 2016. The review was called Unlocking Potential and it said there needed to be a threefold strategy to build the capacity of the teaching workforce:

- Attract and train new teachers
- Attract experienced teachers
- Provide high quality professional development for the existing workforce.



The Society for Education and Training (SET) is the professional membership organisation for practitioners working in the post-16 education and training system and is part of the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). On 6th July 2017, SET ran a webinar for its members looking at teaching in prisons.

To listen to the webinar, go to http://bit.ly/SET_webinar_Teaching_in_Prisons_2017.

To find out more about SET visit <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/home/>.

PRISON LEARNERS TELL US THAT IT IS THE ONE PERSON WHO TOOK AN INTEREST IN THEM THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES.

Useful resources for those interested in teaching in prisons can be found on ETF's offender learning website in the Working in the Sector section: <https://offender-learning.excellencegateway.org.uk/working-sector>.

The resources include:

Teach Inside

ETF commissioned Milton Keynes College to produce an online module 'Teach Inside' aimed at new and existing teachers interested in finding out more about teaching in prisons.

The module includes:

- Film clip describing how offender learning has developed over the last 20 years
- Film clip from a prison Governor about the importance of prison education
- Information and links about career opportunities and jobs
- Film clips with reflections from teachers and prisoners
- Quizzes relating to health & safety whilst teaching in prisons and myths and facts
- Information about training and support available

Teach Inside is an online resource, created by those already working in prison education to entice others to do so. To access the module, register for free with Foundation Online Learning (www.foundationonline.org.uk), and you will find Teach Inside within the Teaching and Learning section.

Raising the Bar videos form part of Teach Inside but also can be accessed independently at (<http://bit.ly/RaisingtheBarvideos>). The four videos focus on the following themes:

- Functional skills
- ICT
- Personal and social development
- Vocational training

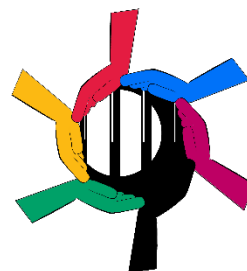
Again, they are created by prison educators for potential prison educators and include perspectives from learners, teachers and instructors, governors and employers. The videos show how teaching in prison while challenging can be very worthwhile.

Offender Learning: A Career of Choice

This guide provides you with the different pathways that are available in prisons for teachers and vocational trainers along with information about working in prisons and appropriate qualifications.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2535

Pages 3 to 8 list the questions asked during the webinar along with answers provided by Caryn Loftus, ETF Associate and Milton Keynes' College teachers Natalie Jameson-Warren and Annette Johnson and followed up after where necessary.



Learning at the heart of the regime

Question

What are the 3-Ls again?

Answer

The 3 Ls were mentioned in the presentation in relation to how to attract, train and retain high quality staff – from our experience it boils down to the 3 Ls:

- Listen to
- Learn from and
- Look after the workforce

Who provides prison education?

Does Milton Keynes College cover prisons all over the country, or would another college cover prisons in different parts of the country?

The majority of prisons in England are publicly owned and have contracted education provision through the offender learning and skills service (OLASS). The OLASS providers are:

- Milton Keynes College (Midlands and South Central)
- Novus – South East, London, North West, Yorkshire, North East
- PeoplePlus – East of England
- Weston College - South West.

Links to their job sites are below.

The current OLASS contract runs until the end of July 2018.

Private prisons (sometimes referred to as contracted prisons) identify their own learning provision and contract directly with a provider.

Qualifications required to teach in prisons

Would I need a special qualification in addition to mainstream education qualification?

All teachers within offender learning are encouraged to hold a minimum of a Level 3 teaching qualifications but would ideally hold a Level 5 Certificate of Education or PGCE. All staff will be expected to hold Level 2 maths and English qualifications and to be vocationally competent in their area of delivery.

Do you need a degree to work in prison or do you have to be qualified in a specialist subject to teach offenders in prison?

You don't need a special qualification in addition to mainstream teaching qualifications to teach in prisons. Providers deliver a comprehensive induction which includes guidelines for working with offenders.

You might find the following guide useful to show you the different routes options:

Offender learning: a career of choice (March 2017)

A short guide to illustrate some of the jobs that are available together with the qualifications you would need and possible career pathways within in offender learning.
www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2535

You might also wish to contact our FE Advice line to talk to an expert about your next steps. FE Advice offers advice to people already working or considering working in the FE sector, including prison teaching. Find out more at www.feadvice.org.uk/ or call 0300 303 1877.

Do you have suggestions how to get back to teaching Functional Skills to people working in other field (fast-track for suitably qualified teachers)?

If you are interested in teaching in a prison, then contact the OLASS provider in your region (see above) to see what they would require as you may be able to undertake CPD such as the Teach L2: the complete introduction for non-specialists offered by ETF whilst you work.

www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/maths-and-english-pipeline/courses/

Can you apply to work in prison in an Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships for teaching in further education are currently in development. Milton Keynes College currently run a graduate trainee programme.

Finding a teaching job in a prison

Where is the best place to search for prison teaching opportunities?

There are many routes into prison education for new and existing teachers as well as people direct from industry.

Can you provide a website where I can apply for a teacher in a prison?

Use the OLASS Jobs website (www.olassjobs.co.uk) to explore career opportunities.

Do you apply to individual institutions or via the Home Office?

Work through the Career Opportunities section of Teach Inside to find out more. This section includes the following links to the individual OLASS providers' recruitment pages:

I have worked in prison teaching but currently not inside. I would like to teach again in prison. How do I get teaching maths, accounts etc in prisons?

- www.mkcollege.ac.uk/jobs/our-vacancies/olass-vacancies
- <http://novus.ac.uk/careers>
- www.peopleplus.co.uk/work-with-us
- www.weston.ac.uk/about/education-south-west-prisons/jobs-could-you-teach-prisons

Also see FE Advice – details above.

Do we need to be UK nationals to work in prison?

No, but you would need to have the right to work in the UK.

Safety in prisons

Do you ever feel unsafe in that learning environment?

Visit the Working Safely section of Teach Inside to find out about categories of prisons and how staff are supported to stay safe.

Do you feel safe?

Listen to the SET webinar to hear the view of two teachers who currently work in prisons on how safe they feel.

I was told there are different categories of prisons, category A, B etc.

http://bit.ly/SET_webinar_Teaching_in_Prisons_2017

My local prison is category A. Would they offer teaching? Would it be safe?

The safety of all staff in prisons is of paramount importance.

Class sizes

How does it work? What will be my role? I mean is this going to be individual teaching or what?

All classes are risk assessed in terms of their numbers but there are generally no more than 12 learners in a class with one teacher.

How many students per session?

If a class is larger, then there is likely to be additional teaching or support staff or a learner mentor allocated to support delivery.

What's a typical class size?

Subjects taught in prisons

What are the different subjects that are taught in a prison?

A wide range of subjects are taught in prisons. Programmes within offender learning can be delivered up to degree level. A range of courses are delivered such as carpentry, painting and decorating, bricklaying, barbering, hospitality, finance, ICD, English and maths and many more.

Is there a need to teach most subjects and is the learning provision decided by the institution or do the learners choose what they want to learn?

Watch the Raising the Bar videos to find out about some of them - <http://bit.ly/RaisingtheBarvideos>.

Are the courses tailored to the students' time in prison, is there a time limit to complete the course?

The videos give a voice to learners, teachers and managers.

When a prisoner enters a prison, they take part in an assessment process including an interview to agree the appropriate pathway towards employment on release. This will include working towards qualifications or gaining work experience whilst in the prison. Depending on the length of their sentence, they will complete the pathway whilst they are in prison or undertake the first steps towards their end goal. The pathway will depend on labour market information, age of the prisoner, length of stay and the results of their risk assessment.

Will they have a final test for Maths Functional Skills?

Learners in prisons can undertake Functional Maths and English and will be assessed in the same way as they would be in any other sector.

Learning support

Do students have additional support needs, i.e. autism, deaf? Is there specialist support needed?

Specialist support is provided where needed as in a college.

Work is currently underway to identify in greater depth prisoners' learning difficulties and disabilities so that they can be supported more effectively.

Maths and English levels of prisoner learners

What percentage of learners are pre-entry and do you have resources for pre-entry learners?

Assessment of English and maths skills levels of prisoners in England

Research by Brian Creese, Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System at UCL Institute of Education, undertaken in 2014-15 shows that:
English Entry L1 and below = 7.4%
Maths Entry L1 and below = 5.8%

www.nrdc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/An-assessment-of-the-English-and-maths-skills-levels-of-prisoners-in-England2.pdf

Resources are available for working with pre-entry learners.

Managing challenging behaviour

Prior to teaching in prison, apart from developing skills on managing behaviour, do you provide staff with a workshop for them to deal with different role-playing methods of tackling difficult people?

Providers deliver a comprehensive induction which includes guidelines for working with offenders. CPD is also offered to teachers in prisons as required.

The following are examples of training packages that have been used:

Classroom or workshop management strategies

Materials for a 3-hour CPD session looking at managing behaviour in a classroom or workshop.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2136

Managing behaviour for learning

Materials for a one-hour CPD session, shared by The Manchester College, as part of series of sharing effective practice sessions run by ETF in Feb/March 2015.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2086

How to avoid or better manage conflict situations

Materials for a one-hour CPD session, shared by The Manchester College, as part of series of sharing effective practice sessions run by ETF in Feb/March 2015.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2085

Pro-social modelling

Materials for a one-hour CPD session, shared by The Manchester College, as part of series of sharing effective practice sessions run by ETF in Feb/March 2015.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2087

How do they manage bad behaviours amongst their learners in prison?

Prisons are complex environments; security and health and safety will be at the forefront of everyone's mind at all times, However, the risks are known and managed.

Most learners request to attend education classes, so it is an active choice, and as a result they are usually content to attend. As with all teaching, high quality, challenging and purposeful delivery will be the most effective way to keep learners engaged and working.

What's the most challenging behaviour you have encountered in the classroom?

Natalie said that by treating prisoners as human beings, treating them like adults, treating them with integrity by working professionally and maintaining professional boundaries then you can feel safe at work.

Annette mentioned that there is a process in place for times when there is challenging behaviour.

Terms and conditions for teaching in prisons

Is it a 9 to 5 job? They don't have terms, right? So, is the employment like for a firm, where we need to book holidays etc?	Prisons can be open 52 weeks of the year, but you will still get your contracted holiday arrangements.
How many days annual leave are you entitled to?	Hours vary with full-time and part-time contracts available.
Can you work on a pro-rotta basis?	
If you live a long distance from the prison do you get travel allowances?	Not as far as we are aware.
Do you only teach your subject specialism area?	Most people will teach their subject specialism but may branch out into other areas depending on demand. Depending on your role you may cover other classes.
Do you have regular team meetings?	Yes, Annette and Natalie mention the support from colleagues and the sharing of good practice. Regular CPD events are held and support is provided from an advanced practitioner to help develop a supportive culture, so you are not alone in the prison. Weekly meetings are held looking at data, what's going well, what support is needed etc.

Roles within Education departments in prison

Can we volunteer to teach maths say once a week rather than being employed?	Yes, some prisons use volunteers. Contact the Education/OLASS Manager at your local prison(s). The prisons map shows you where prisons are located www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/contacts/hmps/prison-finder/prison-map-2017.pdf You can then find the contact details for a prison from the Ministry of Justice prison finder www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder
Can you work as an Associate lecturer/tutor role?	You would need to check with the different OLASS providers as to what roles they have available.

Questions/comments from teachers working in prisons

I think, it's also important to talk about inmate LSA's, they are a good resource but teachers need to make sure that you are the teacher and LSAs are support for learners not to take over the lesson.

Yes, peer mentors are a very important resource but need careful managing.

How can we improve the process of diagnostic assessment or what modern techniques we could introduce?

ETF commissioned research into effective practice guidelines (EPGs) in assessment and tracking to help providers look at how they can improve the assessment and tracking process. The EPGs can be seen at (www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/effective-practice-guidelines/).

A research project is currently underway to look at how these EPGs can help develop assessment and tracking processes in prisons.

I as a functional skills teacher. The problem I am facing is new sequences policy, when learners are forced to do a course which they are not interested in and this creates frustration for teachers as well as for learners. Don't you think it should be on learners' choice what they want to learn or what they want to improve.

As mentioned above in most prisons: when a prisoner enters a prison, they take part in an assessment process including an interview to agree the appropriate pathway towards employment on release. This will include working towards qualifications or gaining work experience whilst in the prison. Depending on the length of their sentence, they will complete the pathway whilst they are in prison or undertake the first steps towards their end goal. The pathway will depend on labour market information, age of the prisoner, length of stay and the results of their risk assessment.

I am interested in how people who work in a prison are finding it at the moment - where I work we are having trouble getting students in to education.

ETF has produced a DVD looking at how HMP Dartmoor has developed their regime planning process which might be helpful if the process is not working in your prisons. You can order this DVD by completing ETF's Offender Learning Resources order form www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2778

How do you think making functional skills compulsory has impacted on the mood of your class?

Natalie said they try and make their classes innovative and creative to engage the learners so that they can see the benefits of developing their skills.

ⁱ Coates, S. (2016) *Unlocking Potential: A Review of Prison Education*. Ministry of Justice www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison