

FAQ's: the ECIS International Teacher Certificate

What is the ITC?

More and more schools around the world are becoming internationally-minded. International school students are culturally diverse and geographically mobile, and for many English is an additional (second or other) language. International school curricula are designed to help students develop skills, knowledge and qualities which will help them to lead active, fulfilling and productive lives as citizens of a rapidly-changing world. The role of the international teacher, working within this context, is thus of crucial importance. Those aspiring to this demanding role must have quality preparation and support. Equally, they need to demonstrate that they have achieved the professional standards required and gain appropriate recognition when they do.

As a program and as a qualification, the ECIS International Teacher Certificate (ITC), jointly certificated by the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), has been designed to meet these professional development needs.

The ITC is based upon the five ECIS Standards for Certification, which embody the principle that international teaching should be learning and learner centered. The ITC program consists of a balance of online and face-to-face professional development, individual research and group discussion, and support from a mentor approved by ECIS. The ITC is awarded to teachers who successfully complete the program and produce a substantial portfolio of practice-based evidence, assessed by CIE, which meets the standards. The ITC certificate is thus evidence of teachers' commitment to learning-centered teaching, to first-class professional practice in an international context and to continuing professional development. It is an exemplary qualification for exemplary teachers.

Who can apply?

Applicants must be certified/qualified to teach at the appropriate grade/subject level and have a minimum of two years full-time teaching in a school that promotes international education.

I am not a trained teacher but am teaching in an international school, can I apply?

The ITC is for experienced, qualified teachers. ECIS suggests that prospective applicants may wish to consider taking the CIE Certificate and/or Diploma for Teachers and Trainers as a first step to acquiring the ITC.

My school is not a member of ECIS, does this matter?

The ITC is open to any teacher who meets the admissions criteria, whether or not they work in an ECIS member school. All participants in the ITC must become Individual Members of ECIS.

Who will recognize the ITC?

The ITC is designed to be a rigorous, standards based program assessed by CIE. Both ECIS and CIE believe the skills and expertise of teachers holding the ITC will be recognized by schools and higher education institutions, and valued within the international schools community. The pilot program will help institutions to see the value of the ITC in practice.

What is involved?

Teachers in the ITC program have a dedicated website through which they can engage in professional discussion with colleagues, sharing ideas and resources. The program starts with the teachers taking three courses from ECIS Online Learning with Optimus:

- Developing International-mindedness
- Understanding English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Bilingualism
- Supporting EAL Students in the Classroom

There is a face-to-face two-day ITC institute at which the teachers are able to work with and learn from experts on key issues in international teaching. The ITC program also involves individual research, reading and practice guided and supported by a mentor approved by ECIS.

The ITC is assessed on the basis of a portfolio of evidence. The ultimate purpose of the portfolio is to provide the best examples of evidence for each of the ITC Standards in a format which is concise and easily accessible to the CIE Examiners. Along the way, the portfolio provides a supportive framework for the professional development experiences and activities in the ITC program, eg as a means of candidate and mentor reviewing progress.

The portfolio will contain a collection of carefully selected materials and reflections that provide a record of professional growth in international teaching. Through their portfolios candidates will demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding, and show that they have continually monitored their growth and reflected on their development as international teachers.

The ITC has been designed to reflect best practice in teaching and much of the portfolio evidence presented by candidates will be generated through naturally occurring teaching activities *ie* from real experience. Some evidence may also be generated through activities and experiences in the course of the ITC program itself.

It is anticipated that as much preparation time as possible is integrated within professional activity. Including such activity, the ITC is designed to take one year to 18-months to complete.

Why EAL? I am a physics teacher and the focus of this program seems to be largely on language issues and internationalism where subject teaching is secondary.

The purpose of the ITC is to develop internationally minded teachers, who are aware of such issues as cultural diversity and language. Schools recruit excellent teachers but often speak of the need for these teachers to have an international outlook hence the development of the ITC. Too often teachers remain "British", "American", "Australian" etc in their mindset and do NOT develop as *international* teachers.

All international school teachers, no matter what grade/subject level, are EAL teachers. For instance, the contribution of physics and other subject teachers to the ITC will be a benefit to the program as they will be able to provide a perspective on teaching their particular subject to multilingual and multicultural students.

How long is the ITC valid for?

The ITC will be valid for a period of five years after which time it may be renewed by demonstrating evidence of continuing professional development through attendance at courses and conferences and the maintenance of a reflective journal.

How much will it cost?

For the 2007 intake, the fee will be £1,500, which includes the assessment fee to University of Cambridge International Examinations, a two-day special ITC Institute prior to the ECIS November Conference 2007¹ plus three online learning courses. In addition there will be an application administrative fee of £25. On successful completion of the ITC teachers will be required to take out a five-year individual membership of ECIS.

¹Accommodation, travel and all registration fees for the main ECIS November conference will need to be paid by the candidate

The ECIS Standards for the International Teacher Certificate

The ITC is based on the five ECIS Standards for the International Teacher Certificate. These correspond to the five key aspects of the role of the international school teacher. These standards are generic and are applicable to international teachers in any type of school, at any age level, any location and any curriculum. They are intended to provide a framework for continuing professional development.

1 Education in an international context

The international teacher is familiar with the characteristics of education in an international context.

The international teacher recognizes, understands, communicates, and works effectively across cultures.

2 Teaching competencies for the international educator

The international teacher is familiar with a wide variety of strategies and methods for teaching international school students.

Teachers differentiate instruction and assessment to accommodate the needs of students of varying ability levels and with different learning styles.

Teachers aim to help students become academically successful, proactive, responsible and caring global citizens.

3 Teaching students for whom English is an additional language

The international teacher understands how to facilitate a learning environment that meets the needs of students learning English as an additional (second or other) language.

Teachers facilitate a learning environment that meets the needs of each EAL student immersed in the mainstream classes without diminishing the student's respect for his or her own culture and language.

4 Student transition and mobility in international schools

The international teacher recognizes the challenges and opportunities of teaching a mobile student population.

Teachers empathize with, and guide students and families on social and academic issues that affect a transient international school community.

5 Reflective practice – continuing professional development

The international teacher is a reflective practitioner.

The international teacher regularly reviews own practice, sets high personal targets and takes responsibility for continuing professional development to enhance international teaching competencies.