

OFFICIAL EDUCATOR EXCHANGES

INFORMATION NOTES

International Services Branch
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Department of Employment, Education and Training

INFORMATION NOTES

Exchange programs covering exchanges with:

United Kingdom

*England, Scotland, Wales, Northern
Ireland*

Canada

*British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario
including the Northern Territories*

USA

Colorado

New Zealand

North & South Island

Australia

All states and territories except Vic and ACT

Department of Employment, Education & Training

This information booklet is in two parts:

Section A is of particular interest to intending applicants.

Section B relates to responsibilities and expectations for principals and senior staff.

Interested educators should read all the expectations and information. The educator who is applying should make the relevant information available to the principal and senior staff of his/her School.

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SECTION A

General information for Potential Exchange Teachers

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There have been official educator exchanges between the Northern Territory Department of Education and United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand since the early seventies. The scheme with Minnesota and Colorado, USA, has been in place since 1997.

2. Government Involvement and Support

- 2.1 The International Services Branch is responsible for recruiting, assessing and matching of applicants and for providing ongoing support for the exchange program.
- 2.2 The Department supports this program as it aims
- to provide opportunities for the professional development of teachers through an overseas exchange experience
 - to provide opportunities for an educational establishment to host a member of staff from another country
- 2.3 The Department organises and monitors the program to ensure that Northern Territory teachers going on exchange, and their overseas counterparts entering host Territory schools, add value to the educational programs in operation in the sending and receiving country.

3. Who can apply for an official Educator Exchange?

Teachers:

- Primary and secondary
- Pre – early childhood
- Librarians (not available in UK)
- Special Educators

- 3.1 All applicants must hold a permanent full time position within an institution and have a minimum of 5 years experience as an educator by the date of application.

4. Personal Attributes

4.1 In order to make best use of the exchange experience, applicants are expected to be professional and have the following attributes;

- maturity
- creativity
- tact
- stability
- flexibility
- good judgement
- adaptability

5. Timing of Exchanges

5.1 All general exchanges run from January to December, unless variation is specifically negotiated for particular purposes or special circumstances.

6. What will I be paid whilst I am on Exchange?

6.1 The exchangeee receives their normal salary whilst overseas, unless they are in a promotional position. In this case, the exchangeee's salary would drop to the top of the Band One level teacher salary scale.

6.2 There is no extra funding available to the educator from the Northern Territory Department of Education to help with the cost of going on exchange. (However, there are taxation benefits.)

7. Under whose working conditions will I be working whilst on Exchange?

7.1 An exchangeee is treated as part of the host school's staff in terms of conditions of employment.

8. What will my exchange assignment be?

8.1 Selected applicants will be offered exchanges in host institutions which are able to offer an exchange which best suits the exchangeee's training and experience.

8.2 The exchangeee is expected to work at the classroom teacher level. This requirement allows the exchangeee to fit more rapidly into the overseas educational culture.

9. What else may I be asked to do whilst on exchange?

9.1 The exchangeee should be open to invitations to share aspects of culture, ideas and experiences of their own educational system and different teaching methods in use in their system of Education. An exchange teacher carries out an ambassadorial role for Australia and the Northern Territory education system. Because of this role, exchangeees should be prepared to speak at functions if invited to do so.

10. Will I be able to go and see other schools and talk to professional specialists?

10.1 This will depend upon the exchange destination and the host school, but it is accepted that exchangees should be given some time during the academic year to visit establishments or professional experts in order to widen their perspective of the host country's education system. The Northern Territory Department of Education funds up to 5 days of teacher relief for incoming exchangees to enable them to undertake professional experiences.

11. What support will I have whilst preparing for or during an exchange?

11.1 International Services Branch and our overseas counterparts have an ongoing responsibility to support the negotiated exchanges.

11.2 International Services Branch will provide ongoing support to the exchange teachers. The Teacher Exchange Co-ordinator can provide assistance in regards to any aspect of the exchange.

12. The cost of going on exchange?

12.1 Medical

A pre-exchange medical may be required for some exchange destinations. This may involve the expense of travelling to a designated specialist located in Darwin or Alice Springs.

12.2 Travel

Exchangees make their own travel arrangements and pay their own travel expenses. Due to small numbers of exchanges each year it is impossible to negotiate bulk deals.

12.3 Insurance

Applicants are expected to take out appropriate health and travel insurance.

12.4 The difference in cost of living and exchange rate fluctuations

The costs depend upon the exchange destination, salary, the standard of living expected, family size and in particular, the amount and style of weekend and holiday travel you undertake during your year away.

Based on previous experience and depending on all the above factors, exchange teachers will need to set aside between \$5,000 and \$20,000 to cover expenses during their time offshore.

Exchange rates are obviously a very significant factor. Over the last few years the UK has been very expensive due to the increase in the value of their pound. Consumables seem to be cheaper in the USA and Canada compared to the UK and New Zealand.

These comments should only be taken as a general guide, but they do reinforce the need for extra savings, and lifestyle adjustments. Of course these costs will continue to fluctuate during the exchange period.

12.4 Other Costs

Visa processing fees, possible forward shipping of materials and salary transfer fees imposed by banks and financial institutions.

12.5 Accommodation

There should be no extra cost for accommodation. This is normally exchanged, or occasionally some other reciprocal arrangement is organised so the cost of accommodation is no greater for both partners than at home. Exchange applications are not normally accepted where the (only) accommodation offered is to be shared.

After initial acceptance of the exchange, the Northern Territory exchangee negotiates all accommodation arrangements directly with the exchange partner who then jointly assumes full responsibility for the arrangements and agreements.

During the exchange year each exchange partner maintains payment of normal house running costs in their home country, eg mortgage and rates, with the exchangee paying exchange year consumable expenses such as electricity and telephone. Care for pets and gardens may require special agreements.

Both exchangees are required to come to an agreement which ensures the insurance for house and contents (and car, if the car is exchanged) covers the other exchangee's use of the house and the exchange partner's personal possessions in addition to the normal house contents.

13. Will my partner be able to work in the exchange country?

13.1 A spouse accompanying a teacher on exchange in Canada is eligible for employment once he/she has found a job. Authorisation for spouses to work has been negotiated with the Canadian government. If the partner were a teacher he/she would need a four-year degree as well as a teaching degree. The USA has similar requirements.

13.2 A spouse accompanying a teacher on exchange to the United Kingdom is able to work in Britain. The likelihood of a spouse being able to gain employment will be dependent upon the exchange location. Teachers from EEC countries are now given preference over Australians, so it should not be presumed teaching positions will be easy to find. New regulations in the UK have also made obtaining teaching positions more complicated.

13.3 The United Kingdom no longer recognises de-facto relationships with respect to accompanying partners. Unless a partner has their own right of entry they must be a legally married spouse or else they will only be admitted on a visitors permit, which can be restricted to six months. USA and Canada now have the same restrictions.

13.4 Applicants should not assume their partner would gain employment in the exchange country when calculating if they can afford an exchange.

14. Tax liability whilst on exchange

14.1 There are a number of Double Taxation Agreements in force between Australia and overseas countries, which may result in payment of overseas tax. The main purpose of such agreements is to ensure that tax is not paid in two countries but is paid in at least one.

- 14.2 Where necessary, the Department Of Employment, Education & Training will provide the Australian Taxation Office with advice in writing of the Exchange and the dates of the absence.
- 14.3 You should keep all receipts (including airfare tickets) associated with educational programs and an accurate record of all financial matters. These might be helpful later in submitting an income tax return. **We advise you to find a Taxation Agent familiar with tax requirements for this activity.** Former Exchange Teachers are a good source of information and may be able to advise/help you find one.
- 14.4 Exchangees going to the United Kingdom and New Zealand are exempt from paying income tax there for up to two years. Australian income tax continues to be deducted from your salary as well as other allowances paid by the Department Of Employment, Education & Training each fortnight.
- 14.5 Canada
- Teachers going to Canada on exchange for more than 183 days in any Canadian financial year will be subject to Canadian tax. The Canadian financial (tax) year is from 1 January to 31 December and the filing date is on or before 30 April.
- 14.6 United States of America.
- For those teachers going on an exchange to the USA, Article 15 of the US Convention applies and they will be required to pay tax in the USA if the period of the exchange exceeds 183 days during the US tax year. Teachers may wish to follow a similar procedure to that outlined for exchange teachers going to Canada.

15. What sort of things can I expect to gain by going on exchange?

Here are some quotes from past exchangees –

“Without doubt, the exchange has been the greatest professional development experience of my career”

“I had a brilliant year and would like to repeat the experience again sometime”

“The opportunity to share my knowledge in specialised curriculum areas”

“If you expect things to be the same as at home why bother to go on exchange”

“Testing in terms of flexibility and personal communication skills”

“I grew incredibly and became acutely aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses”

“A wonderful opportunity to reflect and confirm what you really believe, as well as to rethink areas and issues”

16. Am I the right sort of person to go on Exchange?

Only you are able to answer that. Below are some quotes from past exchangees who were asked, "What professional and personal qualities do you consider necessary to make a person a successful exchangee?"

"Positive, enthusiastic, open minded, flexible. An ability to adapt. Perception to share ideas and experience in a non-threatening way"

"Flexibility, lots of patience, tact and discretion, energy and a keenness to get out and get involved"

"A sense of humour"

"A sense of adventure"

17. What are my chances of getting an Exchange?

If you are accepted as an applicant, the chances of getting an exchange are related to several factors:

- Whether an applicant of similar professional expertise applies through our overseas counterparts.
- The flexibility your school has for placement of your exchange partner.
- The exchange destination you choose.
- The size of families and accommodation compatibility.

18. What am I committing myself to if I apply?

Applicants are committing themselves to seriously consider any exchange proposal offered. To assist us in our efforts to expedite arrangements and maintain good relationships with education authorities overseas, **we ask that applicants keep us informed as soon as possible of any changes, which might affect or alter information given in their application forms.**

19. What am I committing myself to if I accept an exchange proposal

19.2 Both exchangees make a commitment, on acceptance of the exchange proposal, to remain in the exchange position until the end of the agreed exchange period and to return to the educator position with their home employer.

19.2 An exchange report is to be completed within two months of your return to the Northern Territory. Some of these reports will be printed in future booklets and examples may appear on our web page for the benefit of other teachers interested in applying for an exchange.

20. Withdrawing from an Exchange Position

- 20.1 Occasionally circumstances develop which require that an applicant may consider withdrawing from an exchange agreement, either before or during the exchange period. If circumstances develop which prompt you to consider withdrawal from an exchange, the Exchange Co-ordinator should be notified at once. The exchange is a full-term commitment from all parties and it should be recognised that an early withdrawal during the exchange period is a serious matter.
- 20.2 It is an operational target of the exchange scheme that if one partner of an exchange withdraws early from their exchange assignment their exchange partner does not have to return. (NB if both exchangees agree to terminate the exchange then the Department would usually accept their decision.) This safeguards exchangees from having to return through some problems occurring in relation to their exchange partner. Once the exchange has begun both the exchangees have first right to a teaching position in the overseas host school and to their exchange partner's accommodation. The Exchange Co-ordinator must be contacted immediately before considering such a move.

21. Exchange Teachers Committee

If you would like to talk to someone with experience as an exchange teacher please contact the Exchange Teachers Committee. This Committee is made up of past exchange teachers. They voluntarily take on a supportive role to current exchangees and will be most willing to help with any queries. Contact the exchange co-ordinator who will put you in touch with a member of the Committee.

Further enquires/information, contact the Exchange Co-ordinator

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DARWIN NT 0801

Phone: 8901 4902
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SECTION B

The Responsibilities (asked) of Principals/School Directors

1. Principals' responsibilities in the application process

1.1 Approving the exchange in principle

When considering whether to agree to an application by a staff member for an official educator exchange the following should be taken into account:

- The Applicant must have 5 years teaching experience (at least 3 in the Northern Territory) by the time of application.
- The Applicant must have performed their professional duties in a fully satisfactory or in a superior way in the educational establishment.
- The applicant must be of good character, and a thoroughly worthy representative of their profession.
- The applicant should be experiencing satisfaction and stability in their professional and personal life.
- The applicant must possess maturity, tact and good judgement.
- The 'education establishment' and the wider community should be likely to benefit from having an exchange teacher located there for the year.

1.2 Acting as a referee

When giving his/her comments on the Referee Form the Principal should indicate the applicant's particular teaching strengths, weaknesses and interests as well as commenting generally on the quality of their performance and suitability for an exchange.

1.3 Analysing school flexibility

The applicant, before completing his/her application, will need to discuss with the Principal:

- The teaching assignment of the overseas exchangee and the flexibility of the school in accepting an exchangee who does not quite fit into their current teacher's timetable.
- Any particular requirements of the overseas educator. These should be indicated on the application form or in a covering note, eg 'must be willing to teach Music'.

2. After the application has been accepted

If there are any circumstances within the school or exchangee which may affect the exchange please contact the exchange co-ordinator as soon as possible.

3. Confirmation of the exchange by Exchange Co-ordinator

At this time Exchangees/Principals may:

- start communication with the overseas educator/principal or
- start preparation for hosting the overseas educator in conjunction with their exchangee
- principals should advise other members of staff and the School Council of the impending exchange
- exchange information with the overseas educator about curriculum requirements and school procedures
- discuss with the exchangee the personal and professional support to be put in place for the incoming teacher. Principals may wish to allocate a “buddy teacher”.

4. During the Exchange

- 4.1 The overseas teacher, although paid by their own (overseas) employing authority, will be working under the same conditions as other NT teachers. The Principal should treat the overseas teacher as if they were a local member of staff.
- 4.2 The overseas exchangee will be invited to the Department's orientation meeting usually held at the start of each year. If the orientation is held during working time then International Services Branch will provide funding for relief teacher cover. Relief funding is given to schools up to 5 days per year, per exchange teacher. This leave can be used for observation leave or in-service training as required. Contact the Exchange Co-ordinator, International Services Branch for further assistance.
- 4.3 Exchangee's sick leave conditions during the exchange period are considered to be the same as if the exchangee is a member of staff. Overseas teachers sick leave forms, may be forwarded to the exchange co-ordinator so that they can be sent back to their relevant authorities.
- 4.4 The Principal should contact the exchange co-ordinator if the exchangee is absent for more than three days or anytime during the exchange period if they need further clarification re leave entitlements.
- 4.5 At the end of the exchange period the principal will be asked for a report on the following:
 - the overseas exchangee's performance
 - the school's experience of being part of an official teacher exchange.