

# Teaching in China

Information sheet produced by the Australia-China Friendship Society (WA Branch) to assist people interested in living and working in China. (Update....January 2007) All information herein is accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at this time.

## The Task

You are employed to improve the English of Chinese school and university students. English is the second language taught in Chinese schools.

Many have a knowledge of the rules of written English grammar which was taught in WA schools (Primary & Secondary) 1950's- 70's and is often superior to that of most Australians, but not necessarily the wider applications. The big need is instruction in Conversational English, (applied to a wide variety of situations) pronunciation and listening skills. However, many schools set their own texts, tapes and courses. Some of these may not have much relevance for usage in Australia. Occasionally one is required to set the course, but this occurs only occasionally.

Teaching conditions vary, but generally require 12 to 16 periods per week plus an involvement in English Corner (an informal conversation group), clubs and different faculty and staff projects.

It should be noted that class sizes in China are often 35/40 plus. At higher level institutions though, specialist type teaching maybe required and these groups are often smaller. Again, there are many variations.

## Conditions

Your salary may vary between 2,500 Yuan to 11,000 Yuan per month (about AUS\$450 to AUS\$2,800). These salaries are in the high-income bracket by Chinese standards. One needs to remember that the cost of living in China is considerably lower than in Australia.

Accommodation and Service Charges -Electricity, cooking gas etc; are often supplied free of charge and usually consists of a self-contained apartment. Telephone costs are the responsibility of the incumbent, as is computer usage-should this also be available. (Some persons have their own laptops/notebook.)

The host institution usually provides transportation from your point of entry in China to your teaching site. Arrangements are usually made for an English-speaking interpreter to meet you and assist you through a settling-in process.

You will be reimbursed for the return portion of your international airfare on completion of a 10 month academic year. Many placements will now pay the airfare both ways following this length of teaching and usually require a qualified teacher.

Placements are for 5 or 10 months as English teachers in a Chinese university, college or school. Ten month contracts (2 semesters) are more common. The holiday breaks are related to Chinese festivals and occasions of National significance, NOT to an even split of the semester duration. Most educational institutions have a "holiday payment" to assist travel, other expenses, should one decide to complete the 2 semesters. This is often NOT equivalent to your salary and varies from place to place.

(Some of these conditions are negotiated & clarified when drawing up the contract, prior to perusal, acceptance & signing of same; with the assistance of the Education CO-ordinator.)

## Eligibility

It is helpful, though not always essential, to have teaching qualifications. It's also useful if you:

- 1 hold a degree in any discipline
- 2 have an excellent level of written and spoken English
- 3 are in good physical and mental health. A full medical examination is required prior to granting a visa to teach in China.
- 4 are flexible, adaptable, and able to enjoy living conditions that will be significantly

different to those in Australia.

This opportunity is also open to mature candidates, including currently and recently retired people.

### **Appointment Dates**

The best times for departure to China are February and August. It needs to be noted however, that negotiations and the receipt of invitation documents from China can be somewhat protracted. Allow AT LEAST three months before departure, for the finalization of all arrangements. Some Chinese institutions will appoint at any time of the year (except during the July-August holiday period)

### **Additional Requirements**

The ACFS is a non-profit organization with the principal aim of developing friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China. We see the sending of Australians to teach in China as an excellent way of helping to achieve our purpose. We do not seek monetary profits from this enterprise, and charges are only to cover our costs. We ask for:

- Membership of the ACFS WA Branch with an ongoing commitment to the society, at ones discretion, upon return to Western Australia...
- Initial \$50 fee to cover ACFS membership, fax and telephone costs in negotiating the teaching contract with China. If no placement is found for you, \$30 is refunded and your ACFS membership remains current for a year.

### **ACFS WA Role.**

To learn more about the Australia-China Friendship Society WA Branch, please visit our website at [www.acfswa.com.au](http://www.acfswa.com.au)

- The ACFS will organise the placement in China, but accepts no responsibility or obligation concerning the ultimate success of the contract.
- Through its contacts, the ACFS will do everything possible to facilitate teaching appointments in China to the mutual satisfaction of the institution and appointees.
- ACFS will also ensure that prior consultation takes place by the appointees with members of the education committee and teachers who have recently served in China.
- The ACFS will act on behalf of appointees in the framing of contracts, and will also endeavour to assist and resolve any disputes or problems that may arise between the respective parties for the duration of a contract.
  - 1 The ACFS will provide letters of introduction in English and Chinese to each appointee. These are invaluable in encouraging co-operation during travel and everyday experiences.
  - 2 The education co-coordinator keeps in regular contact with teaches, passing on local information, acting as a link between them, their activities (often accompanied by photos) Perth, Australia in general and the membership. Often the newsletter is available on line to these members, providing another important link to "their other life".

- 3 Many of our members have taught in China, some very recently. Their pooled experiences and knowledge are available to newer candidates. Often our teachers in China are in regular contact through email and many of their stories have been published in our quarterly newsletter.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Do I need qualifications in teaching English as a second language?**

No, but the Society recommends completion of a universally recognized qualification - the RSA Certificate. This can be done intensively over one month or part time over three months through several Perth institutions, and in facilities in all states of Australia. It is a University of Cambridge qualification recognised in almost every country in the world. Fees are about the same as for a university unit – check with the TAFE or International Colleges in your state

### **What if I don't speak Chinese?**

The majority of our teachers haven't been able to speak Chinese. You will be assigned a 'minder/interpreter' by your school, usually an English speaking staff member from the institution's Foreign Affairs office. He/she will assist you with everyday tasks.

Many of the population have a working knowledge of English, as it is the second language in schools there, and frequently come to your assistance should it be noticed that one is having some difficulties..

### **Where might I be placed?**

Following the SAARS and Bird Flu problems, which greatly concerned the Chinese teaching institutions in regards to their overseas teaching staffs, regular contact re: placements has become somewhat fragmented. However, immediately following an expression of interest to teach in China, contact is made with the institutions where we have previously had placements, to ascertain their needs for the following semester/s. Most of these are in the southern provinces. Assistance has also been occasionally given to persons who have located positions suitable to their individual needs, following their joining the Association.

### **How do I apply for a visa?**

After you have accepted a teaching contract, you will be sent an official invitation from the institution in China through their Foreign Affairs office. One of our Education Committee will take you to the Chinese Consulate here in Perth to assist in processing your application. Your visa cost is \$30. If you live in another state you will have to approach your nearest Consulate.

### **What happens if I fall ill or have an accident?**

Some teaching institutions in China have a medical clinic on site, staffed by a nurse/and possibly a doctor. Foreign teachers are given access to this clinic. We strongly recommend that appointees take out comprehensive travel and health insurance which also includes a flight back to Australia, if a serious accident should eventuate.

### **What are the Chinese requirements before appointment?**

Before a letter of invitation can be sent or a contract offered, the Chinese institutions need your CV, a blood test to clear for AIDS and a medical statement from your doctor asserting that you are fit and well enough to teach in China. The Society forwards these documents on your behalf and, in the initial stages, conducts all the negotiations.

### **Are there any age limits?**

The Chinese have a great deal of respect for older people. Some of our members have taught there aged in their 60's and 70's. Others have been in their 20's. It depends firstly on the health and vigour of the individual and also on location. The less developed areas in China are more inclined to accept older candidates.

One's age is often only a guide. The willingness of a person to "give the teaching in China" a go and to step outside their "comfort zone", thus embracing this experience of a lifetime, is the real measure of limitations.

### **Can I travel during my time in China?**

Many of our members have found that they can comfortably accumulate sufficient money from their salaries to travel during the holiday breaks. Institutions usually pay an additional holiday bonus of 1000 Yuan or more, which helps the travel budget.

It helps considerably to think & plan well ahead of this time, due to a variety of factors e.g. contact with a "good" travel agent, local (maybe school) information & assistance, train/bus/plane routes and schedules. China is a HUGE country and travel destinations are many & varied. Try to avoid traveling to famous places during festival times.

### **He did it!**

Sam Murphy, one of our members, taught at Pingyang New Era School in southern Zhejiang for nearly a full academic year. He was the only foreigner in his region. In an email Sam said -

"I feel that teaching in China is a wonderful opportunity that ..... should not miss out on. One will learn so much and develop skills and a deeper understanding. I would recommend it to anyone and say do it, definitely do it. I have learnt so many skills that I know will be of value to me in later life, and I have learnt so much about myself and my system of beliefs. My conventional way of thinking has been challenged, and I have found going to live in such a different culture has been very refreshing, and taught me that there is more than just one way of doing things. The students are delightful and most of them are really keen to learn. I have also managed to make some cherished friendships with Chinese people."

Many of our teacher members would echo Sam's sentiments.

Sam returned to China and taught in other locations, as still do some others.

### **Teaching Enquiries to-**

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