

CELTA in a Swiss Context¹

by John Potts

What is CELTA?

CELTA is an initial qualification for people with little or no previous teaching experience. Over 10,000 people successfully complete a CELTA course each year.

How does CELTA relate to TEFL/TESOL?

'TEFL' or 'TESOL' are terms often used to describe qualifications for English Language teachers. CELTA, the best known and most widely taken initial TESOL/TEFL qualification of its kind in the world, was previously known as CTEFLA and the 'RSA certificate'.

Who is CELTA for?

People starting a career in English Language teaching

You may be considering a career in English Language teaching and view CELTA as an entry into a good teaching position in another country, or you may be a graduate wanting a qualification that provides a sound basis in the fundamentals of language teaching practice and gives you the confidence to take control in the classroom.

People looking for a career change or career break

Increasingly, CELTA candidates are professionals either looking for a new career opportunity or wanting a short break in their existing career. Many seek the exciting opportunities of living and working abroad.

People teaching English without formal qualifications

CELTA can also be a useful qualification for teachers who have little previous formal training. CELTA sharpens your teaching practice, confirms your ability, and may even lead to internal promotion or a better teaching job.

People who want to work in Further, Adult and Community Education in England and Wales

These qualifications meet the UK government's teacher training requirements for people who want to work in this sector.

What does CELTA involve?

You can take CELTA full time (typically four to five weeks), or part time (from a few months to over a year). Your chosen course:

- * teaches you the principles of effective teaching
- * provides a range of practical skills for teaching English to adult learners
- * gives you hands-on teaching practice
- * builds your confidence.

¹ Revised 02.2015. Originally published 2008.

There are five main units of learning:

1. Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context
2. Language analysis and awareness
3. Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
4. Planning and resources for different contexts
5. Developing teaching skills and professionalism.

You will be assessed throughout the course, with no final examination. An external assessor, appointed by Cambridge ESOL, moderates each course. There are two components of assessment:

Teaching practice

You will teach for a total of 6 hours, working with classes at two levels of ability. Assessment is based on your overall performance at the end of the 6 hours.

Written assignments

You will complete four written assignments: one focusing on adult learning; one on the language system of English; one on language skills; and one on classroom teaching.

To be awarded the certificate you must pass both components. There are three grades — Pass, Pass 'B' and Pass 'A'.

Who recognises CELTA?

CELTA is accepted throughout the world by organisations which employ English Language teachers. The Cambridge CELTA has been accredited by the [Qualifications and Curriculum Authority \(QCA\)](#) at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework. Cambridge ESOL also works with international ELT organisations to ensure the acceptance of CELTA globally.

Am I eligible to apply?

Ideally you should:

- have a standard of education equivalent to that required for entry into higher education
- be aged 20 or over
- have a standard of English which will enable you to teach at a range of levels.

Centres may still accept you if you do not have formal qualifications at this level but can demonstrate that you would be likely to complete the course successfully. Some centres may, at their discretion, accept applicants aged between 18 and 20.

The above text is © CambridgeESOL, and is a slightly abridged version of the web text found at: www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/celta.html

CELTA centres in Switzerland

Bell Language School (Geneva): part-time courses

Flying Teachers (Zurich): full-time courses

TLC (Baden): part-time courses

VSV Bern (Bern): full-time and part-time courses, plus off-site courses held in Basel (part time)

Swiss contact details

The Bell Language School, Switzerland
David Mallows (CELTA, CELTYL)

12 chemin de la Voie Creuse
1202 Geneva

Tel: 022 740 20 22 Fax: 022 740 2044

E-Mail: dmallows@bell-school.ch

Internet: www.bell-school.ch

Zurich Flying Teachers GmbH Cristina
Vieira (CELTA) Universitätstrasse 86

8006 Zürich

Tel: 044 350 33 44 Fax: 044 350 33 45

E-Mail: teachertraining@flyingteachers.ch

Internet: www.flyingteachers.ch

TLC The Language Centre Baden
Ms. Nancie Gantenbein
Bahnhofstrasse 44

5400 Baden

Tel: 056 205 51 78

E-Mail: nancie.gantenbein@tlcsprachschule.ch

Internet: www.tlcsprachschule.ch

VSV Bern
Ms. Iris Diem

Verband Der Schweizerischen Volkshochschulen Bern
Hallerstrasse 58

3012 Bern

Tel: 031 302 82 09 Fax: 031 302 56 46

E-Mail: office@up-vhs.ch

Internet: www.up-vhs.ch

Some CELTA FAQs

I don't have a degree. Can I still apply for a place on a CELTA course?

Yes. A degree is not a pre-requisite qualification.

I don't have A-levels or their equivalent. Can I still apply for a place on a CELTA course?

Yes: see above (page 2).

I'm not a native-speaker of English. Can I still apply for a place on a CELTA course?

Yes. Both native and non-native speakers of English are eligible - and both must show that their command of English and their language awareness are sufficient for the demands of the course and for language teaching.

What happens when I apply?

All centres require you to complete a detailed application form. They also require you to complete a selection task or tasks, either ahead of the interview or at the interview itself. All applicants must be interviewed: in exceptional cases, a telephone interview may be arranged (at the applicant's expense).

Can I still work part-time while doing a part-time CELTA course?

Yes, but centres will discuss this with you at your interview to ensure that you understand the CELTA workload and have realistic expectations about the course.

How many study hours per week are necessary outside the actual attendance?

It is impossible to give a precise figure, as people vary in their study habits and in their ability to work, concentrate, study and prepare. Remember that you need time to prepare your next lesson in teaching practice, study time to research and write the four assignments, plus general study and review time throughout the course. On part-time courses, you also need time to do the 6 hours of external observation - typically this translates into 4 visits of c 90 minutes, but with travelling time each visit may occupy up to 3 hours.

If I fail the course, can I retake only the failed components of the course?

No, you would have to retake the entire course.

What is the pass rate?

For Switzerland, the pass rate is around 90%: the other 10% comprises both fail and withdrawals.

How does Cambridge maintain standards if there is no written exam?

Every centre must be approved by CambridgeESOL: new centres on an annual basis, and established centres every 3 years. Every course is moderated by an external assessor, appointed by CambridgeESOL, who comes for a day towards the end of the course. S/he moderates the selection procedures, the course records, the candidates' portfolios of TP and assignments, and also observes TP and TP feedback to ensure

that the tutors are applying the assessment criteria, are grading TP to the right standards, and are giving appropriate feedback to trainees. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the candidates' provisional final grades. The final recommended grades must also be approved by the assessor.

The assessor's report is submitted to CambridgeESOL and also the centre's JCA (Joint Chief Assessor), who reads the reports on every course at every centre under her/his jurisdiction. Any recommendations in the assessor's report must be addressed by the centre, and the JCA checks that recommendations are indeed being acted upon. If a centre fails to meet or observe requirements, standards and assessment criteria, its approval to run courses is withdrawn by CambridgeESOL.

Why are courses limited to only 12 candidates?

This is for two main reasons. Firstly, so that the tutors can devote sufficient attention to the individual trainees. Secondly, because TP is very time intensive: 12 candidates require a total of 72 hours of TP class time with the learners, plus further time for feedback and preparation with the tutors.

What are my job prospects?

Many language schools and adult education institutions now require their teachers to possess a suitable qualification – some specify CELTA. Others may specify SVEB level 1: see below for details. As CELTA is an accepted equivalent to SVEB1, it will satisfy this requirement. Without CELTA, you would almost certainly be asked to obtain SVEB1. Many companies also prefer their in-house or out-sourced language teachers to be appropriately qualified.

CELTA, SVEB1 and eduQua

Adult education and training institutions in Switzerland who wish to have the eduQua certificate of quality must meet certain conditions. Among these is the requirement that staff teaching more than 150 hours per year should possess the SVEB1 certificate. Here is the relevant text from the eduQua regulations:

Personen, die mehr als 150 Std. pro Jahr ausbilden:

- › Mindestens 10% resp. mindestens 1 Person muss im Besitze eines SVEB 1 – Zertifikates (oder analog) sein. Wird dieser Mindeststandard nicht erfüllt, muss die Institution von einer geeigneten pädagogisch qualifizierten Person (z. B. mit Eidg. Fachausweis Ausbilder oder analog) begleitet werden.
- › Die Institution muss sich formell verpflichten, dass spätestens bis zur nächsten Rezertifizierung (d.h. im Normalfall innerhalb von drei Jahren) alle betroffenen Personen im Besitze eines SVEB 1 – Zertifikates (oder analog) sein werden. Bei Nichterfüllung kann die Erneuerung des Zertifikates verweigert werden.

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English version (unofficial):

People teaching for more than 150 hours per year:

- At least 10% (of staff) or at least one person must possess a SVEB1 certificate (or equivalent). Should this minimum requirement not be met, the institution must be led by a suitably qualified person (eg one with an appropriate Federal specialist diploma or equivalent).
- The institution must bind itself to ensuring that all affected staff possess a SVEB1 certificate (or equivalent) by the time of the next recertification audit (ie normally within the next 3 years). Failure to meet this requirement may result in the renewal of the eduQua certificate being withheld.

However, other qualifications can be accepted as an alternative to the SVEB1 certificate, provided that they are 'analog' - to use the German word employed by eduQua and SVEB.

CELTA is 'analog'

CELTA is accepted as 'analog', and therefore a teacher holding CELTA meets eduQua requirements when an institution is undergoing the eduQua certification process. This process is carried out by one of the seven Swiss certifying organizations authorized to approve eduQua accreditation (namely: IQB-FHS, ProCert, ProFormations, SCEF, SGS, SQS and Swiss TS).

So why is there a CELTA/SVEB1 add-on or "bridge" module?

As already stated, CELTA is accepted as "analog", that is to say, CELTA is *horizontally* equivalent to SVEB1 and meets the needs of an eduQua audit. However, CELTA is not *vertically* integrated into the SVEB suite of certificates: in other words, if a CELTA holder wanted to take a SVEB Level 2 course, s/he would have to possess SVEB1. CELTA itself would not be sufficient. Moreover, a teacher may also welcome having an official Swiss qualification to supplement the internationally-recognised CELTA certificate.

Hence the development of the add-on/bridge module, which combines with CELTA and gives the teacher the SVEB1 certificate.

Requirements:

- CELTA certificate
- successful completion of an approved add-on/bridge module course
- two years' teaching experience
- CHF 40 SVEB administration fee

The CELTA/SVEB1 add-on/bridge module is available only from institutions and tutors approved by SVEB to run the module. These are Bell School (Geneva), Flying Teachers (Zurich), VHS Zurich, and VSV Bern.

Explanatory note: VHS Zurich was a CELTA centre from 1983 until 2007, and the approval to run the add-on modules was given during that period. Although it is no longer a CELTA centre, it remains approved by SVEB to run the add-on modules. At present, TLC Baden is not so approved, even though it is a CELTA centre.

What does the add-on module cover?

The add-on module covers two principal areas: individual and group dynamics, and the adult learner in a Swiss context. The module developed for Bell School, VSV Bern and VHS Zurich lasts for 12 contact hours and includes a pre-course and a post-course written assignment.

Links to eduQua & SVEB

The following sites are available in German, French and Italian: a limited number of pages on the sites are also available in English.

eduQua home page: www.eduqua.ch/002alc_00_de.htm SVEB

home page: www.sveb.ch/001alc_03_de.htm

John Potts

www.johnpotts.info; johnpotts@hispeed.ch