

BEHIND THE JOB AD

Bridge across cultural gulf

■ Middle and senior school teachers, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
Salary: Commensurate with Queensland teacher salaries, based on experience (but wages are tax free)
Closing date: Ongoing recruitment
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Cameron Cooper

If you are a teacher acclimatised to Queensland weather, you may find it easier than most to settle into the Australian International School in Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates, where the mercury often rises above 35C early in the morning. You also should be well acquainted with the curriculum. The AIS, set up in 2005, is the first Australian school in the Middle East, created under contract between Al Sharif Investment Trading Group and Education Queensland.



Looking for clever teachers: Students at the Australian International School in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The Queensland curriculum, syllabus and work plans have been adopted at the school, which caters for students from preschool to year 12. Former Brisbane teacher Annette Wilson is the principal and has been in the role for three years. She is recruiting Australian maths and science teachers for the middle school and senior school.

Wilson wants a special kind of employee, and many of them.

"The school is rapidly growing," she says. "In UAE, there are a lot of reforms happening in the education system... Most local schools are still on what we would call an information transmission model where the teacher is the expert and the kids' job is to be the empty vessel and take the information in."

Wilson needs teachers who can interact with students in a cultural and educational sense, and give an international flavour to their learning while respecting local traditions. Her employer from the Al Sharif Group told Wilson that before creating AIS he had two choices for his children: a private international school, possibly losing access to quality teaching of Arabic and the support of Islamic studies, or to choose a national school or a private Arab school.

"They looked worldwide; they considered British systems, they considered American systems," Wilson says. "He actually said he found the Australians had the capacity to respect their culture. He appreciated that."

"My job is to make sure that we have high-quality teaching in Arabic studies and Islamic studies at the same time as we deliver a Queensland curriculum."

When AIS opened its doors four years ago, it accepted kindergarten to year 6 students.

More classes have been added progressively and the student body has grown from 60 children to an expected 1200 next year. Students enjoy enviable facilities, including an indoor pool, gymnasium and two-floor library, and are taught by 72 Australian teachers who initially sign on for two-year contracts.

"Last year, about 85 per cent of teachers signed on for an extra year, so they went on to their third year," Wilson says. "But really we'd be expecting to turn over probably about a third of our staff. We're looking at [hiring] between 20 and 30 teachers each year."

Candidates who fill present vacancies in maths and science roles will be expected to start in August, but AIS will continue recruiting until all positions are filled.

Successful teaching candidates will experience a very different environment and culture,

one that Wilson says does not suit everybody. She says some applicants expect an Australian school "to be just as it is in downtown Brisbane". "But you are in a very different place and you need to understand the students and their learning needs. As a teacher you need to be able to design your programs to meet those learning needs. So we are looking for pretty clever teachers."

Younger teachers or older teachers without families typically dominate the recruitment intake, but all are welcome to apply. AIS teachers receive 13 weeks of holidays annually and the world is at their doorstep; many teachers use Sharjah as a stepping stone to holidays in Rome, Istanbul and Moscow.

"If you're working here, then the chance to travel is delicious," says Wilson. Sharjah is a short drive from Dubai, a pop-

ular shopping and entertainment destination.

Teaching salaries are relatively modest — similar to the Queensland scale and based on qualifications and experience — but no tax is payable, accommodation and health insurance is covered, and annual return air flights are provided.

Wilson says Sharjah is more conservative than Dubai and has little crime. It is also a dry emirate, with no alcohol permitted and modest dress expected. "Being drunk is seen to be unseemly," she says, adding that new teachers are taken through a code of conduct.

The roles are not for everyone: Wilson says most teachers will stay a maximum of three or four years. "But for people who have stepped on to the international circuit, one of the benefits for them is that they can go on to yet another adventure."

Goodbye job boards, hello company web sites

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Joseph de Avila

FOR many people looking for work, the first stop is an online job board. Now job seekers are finding that prospective employers increasingly are looking elsewhere to find new recruits: their own web sites. To draw in applicants to their sites, companies such as software makers Intuit and Adobe Systems are revamping their online career pages, including making them more interactive by adding videos and employee profiles.

Companies also are trying to reach job seekers through social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Sodexo, which provides food services to institutions, offers online "widgets" at its website, which send alerts to job hunters' computer screens when the company has new openings.

Companies say they are scaling back advertising on online job boards, which saves them money. By focusing more on their own career pages, companies also reduce the number of applications they need to sift. And, they say, people applying through a prospective employer's own website are, on average, better-qualified than applicants coming through job boards.

The developments mean jobseekers may have to change tactics. Craig Halfman, a chef, began looking for a job seven months ago after being laid off. He set up profiles on about seven online job boards and created a personal website to publicise his accomplishments and resume. "A lot of the [job boards] gave me stuff that had nothing to do with me," says Halfman, 37.

About three months ago Halfman joined a group on LinkedIn hosted by Sodexo for former, present and prospective employees. After seeing his LinkedIn profile, a Sodexo human-resources representative contacted Halfman and suggested he apply for an opening as executive chef at a university in Virginia. He applied through Sodexo's website and was hired last month.

Human resource experts say job hunters shouldn't give up on job boards, but should use every tool available to them. That includes making a list of companies that meet their requirements for a desirable employer, and researching the companies to understand their business. "You should really tailor and target your cover letter and resume to the needs of the company," says Mark Stelzner, a principal at management consultant Inflexion Advisors LLC.

He adds that many successful job seekers are finding luck by first networking with employees at the company via social media such as LinkedIn, and applying directly instead of through job boards.

Despite the recession, many companies continue to hire, at least to replace departing

staff. Sodexo, for instance, which has 350,000 employees worldwide, says it expects to fill about 5000 management and professional jobs in North America this year.

As unemployment soars, applicants are flooding traditional online job boards such as Monster.com, Careerbuilder and Yahoo's HotJobs. In May, 22.9 million unique visitors searched for work on job boards, according to comScore Media Metrix. That's up 37 per cent from a year earlier. Company career sites also are seeing greater traffic. Adobe says applications are up 30 per cent since it revamped its career page about four months ago. Intuit says online job applications also have increased.

That makes it harder for companies to screen the best applicants. Companies are asking, "Now that we are overwhelmed with talent, how do we attract the right talent?" says Stelzner, the consultant.

Sodexo this year added a page to its career site called Network With Us that links to the company's Twitter and YouTube pages and to its LinkedIn groups to interact with potential job applicants. The page has helped build a database of 137,000 people who have shown interest in working at Sodexo.

"Our strategy has been to build this targeted talent pool and to reduce our reliance on job boards and advertising," says Arie Ball, vice-president of talent acquisition at Sodexo. She says cutting advertising at job boards, and seeking out applicants directly, saves the company hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and has improved the efficiency of the job-hiring process. The company says its career site had about 161,000 page views in May, more than twice as many as when it revamped the site last year.

For many companies, beefing up their online career pages is part of a larger strategy to boost brand awareness to compete for the best employees.


Intuit last month launched a new interactive portion of its career site where visitors can see a short virtual representation of what the Intuit offices are like, along with pop-up videos and photos.

"Part of it is letting people know who we are as a company," says Melissa Rutledge, an employment-branding manager at Intuit. "We are getting away from the job boards a little bit," she adds. "We will probably never get away from it completely, but we are moving more towards viral advertising."

Adobe also launched a new career site, which features a professionally produced video chronicling a day in the life of several Adobe employees.

Among the most successful new recruits are those referred by existing employees, some companies say. "One of our main philosophies is to get smart and talented people. They tend to be connected," says Molly Graham, manager of human resources and recruitment at Facebook Inc. About 50 per cent of Facebook's new recruits come through referrals, she says.

University & Higher Education



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Faculty of Education

Ref No. 09/2078
 Ref No. 09/2052

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For further information about 09/2078 contact Professor Atique Islam on 02 6201 5405.

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The person Applicants should possess an exemplary research track record, together with experience in leadership and management.

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Contact Obtain the position description and selection criteria online. Contact either Professor Nick Fisk, email n.fisk@uq.edu.au; or Professor Susan Tett, email s.tett@uq.edu.au, to discuss the role.

Applications close 20 August 2009
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