



# fluent

EDUCATION

## **KEY INFORMATION**

**Semester Teaching Positions**

**Vietnam - [January 2023](#)**

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## **Q: Who is Fluent Education?**

A: Since 2010 we have been enabling newly qualified English teachers to come to Vietnam and take up one semester positions at schools across the country. Fluent Education liaises with English schools and educational organisations around Vietnam who require English teachers for their own centres or who have contracts to provide English teachers to state and private primary and secondary schools.

Fluent Education has local Vietnamese staff who speak fluent English and understand the local context as well as expatriate staff with strong academic backgrounds in English language teaching.

Fluent Education manages the application process for the teachers, ensures that documentation is appropriately prepared, provides pre-departure support and assists with the visa process. In Vietnam, we run an orientation week which includes airport pickup, orientations, training, trips as well as arranging all of the documentation required for your work permit. At the end of orientation week teachers go to their schools together.

Teachers are directly engaged by their schools for one semester. During the semester, you are welcome to contact our team if you need assistance and we stay in touch with you throughout the semester. However, it is important to understand that your school will be your employer in Vietnam.

## **Application**

### **Q: How do I apply?**

#### **Step 1**

Please follow this link to lodge your application:

<https://elcvietnam.wufoo.com/forms/fluent-vietnam-application-jan-2023/>

**Photo:** You will be asked to upload a photo of yourself as part of this online application. Please make sure you have this ready when you start. This photo is sent to schools as part of the application process so smile and look smart. Most schools will not accept teachers with brightly-coloured hair (e.g. pink), visible tattoos (that cannot be covered while teaching) or facial piercings. Get someone else to take the photo – no selfies.

#### **Step 2**

You will receive automatic notification of receipt of application and one of our team will then email you. The next step will be for you to provide us with scans or clear photos of the following documents. These are required by your school as part of the application process and they may need to provide them to the Department of Labour when applying for your work permit.

- Passport biodata page containing photo and passport number. Please do NOT send a scan of a passport that you plan to renew before your trip. Wait and send a scan of the new one in this situation.
- Degree certificate. If you have not yet graduated you will need to provide a letter from your university confirming you are set to graduate prior and your most recent academic transcript.
- Your TESOL/TEFL certificate if you have already been awarded this.
- Police certificate from a relevant authority in your country confirming that you have a clean police record. Do not apply for this until after **15th September 2022**. You can provide us with the other documents while you wait for this and email it later to: [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com)

- Video: You need to make a short video of yourself. You can do this on your phone and upload using the link provided to you (see link below). This video should be short (60-90 minutes) and you should briefly introduce yourself and talk about your motivation to teach in Vietnam. The video will be provided to your prospective school.

You should upload your documents following this link:

<https://elcvietnam.wufoo.com/forms/fluent-vietnam-documents-jan-2023/>

You also need to get the **Teacher Fluent Contract** printed, sign and email a scan of the signed contract to [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com). The contract will be sent to you together with other supporting documents via email.

### **Step 3**

In some cases depending upon school preferences, applicants may be asked for an online interview with a Fluent Education advisor.

### **Step 4**

All applicants will be contacted by email by Fluent Education to confirm receipt of their full application and then to confirm an offer by a school of a one semester position.

In some cases no school makes an offer and in this case we will advise you that your application has not been successful. Applicants should not book flights until they have received confirmation of offer. Applicants should not apply for a visa until they have received a visa invitation letter which we send to you. (This is not the same as your confirmation of offer letter). If you have any questions about the application process please contact us: [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com)

### **Q: Once I have lodged my application (including my supporting documents), what will happen next?**

1. We will provide your application to a number of schools who we regularly collaborate with.
2. We will send you a confirmation of offer by email. We can only issue this letter once a school has accepted your application. This usually takes up to 2 weeks after you have submitted your supporting documents (but sometimes longer).
3. Apply for a police check (if you haven't already done this). Upon receipt scan and email it to [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com)
4. Book your flight and send the arrival details to [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com) Do not book your flight until you have received your confirmation of offer letter but you must do so no later than 3 weeks before departure.
5. Take out insurance (see advice on this later in the document).
6. Get your documents legalised (if required – see below) and send us scans.
7. Get your vaccinations done (see advice at the end of this document).
8. Fluent Education will send you visa advice by email. Follow the instructions provided to get your visa for Vietnam
9. Keep checking your emails and join our Facebook group for regular updates (we will send you an invitation to join the group by email when we open it)
10. Come to Vietnam!

### **Q: How do I get a police certificate?**

A: The process for obtaining a police check/police certificate/criminal record check varies from country to country

(as does the name). There must be **no convictions** (no matter how trivial or long ago). If anything shows up on your criminal record check we will have to decline your application. No refunds will be made if you fail to disclose a criminal record at the time of application and you are accepted on this basis. If you are concerned that an old conviction may appear you need to check this before completing the application process. It can take a while to receive your police certificate so please lodge the rest of your supporting documents whilst waiting for it to arrive. In this case scan and email your certificate to [vietnam@fluenteducation.com](mailto:vietnam@fluenteducation.com) as soon as you get it.

You will need to apply for a police check after [Sep 15th 2022](#).

**Australia:** You require a National Police Check.

<http://www.afp.gov.au/what-we-do/police-checks/national-police-checks.aspx#national-police-certificates>

Note that a fingerprint check is not necessary.

**New Zealand:** You require a Criminal Record Check. **Please note that police checks must include an ink signature or stamp from the issuing authority and New Zealand ones don't have this. So please bring with you the envelope that your police check comes in as it has a stamp on it which can be used to confirm the authenticity of the document.**

<http://www.justice.govt.nz/services/criminal-records/how-to-get-a-copy-of-your-criminal-conviction-history>

**England and Wales:** You require a Basic Check. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-checks>

**Scotland:** You require a Basic Disclosure: <https://www.mygov.scot/basic-disclosure/>

**Northern Ireland:** You require a Basic Check: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/accessni-criminal-record-checks/apply-accessni-check>

**Ireland:** You require a Police Certificate. <http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=2742&Lang=1>

**USA:** You require a Criminal Record Check through the FBI or a police check through your local police department. The FBI check can take a long time so please explore the option of going through your local police first. Ensure your police check will be valid when you arrive in Vietnam. Some US police checks expire after 60 days in which case you will need to leave it as late as possible to apply for it.

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/abroad/legal-matters/criminal-record-check.html>

**Canada:** You require a Certified Criminal Record Check. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cr-cj/fing-empr2-eng.htm>

**Note:** Your CRB must have been issued no earlier than 6 months prior to the time that your work permit application is assessed. **This means that it should have an issue date after 15th September 2022.**

**Q: The names on my documents are not identical. What should I do?**

**A: The name on all of your documents (degree, police certificate and TESOL/TEFL certificate) must be exactly the same as your passport.**

Check that the full name on your passport is identical to your degree, police check and TESOL certificate. If not, read on....

Sometimes teachers have certificates that do or don't include a middle name, use an initial instead or were issued in a maiden name. If your documents use different variations of your name then you will need to swear an oath at

your embassy in Vietnam to say that all the documents relate to the same person. We arrange this for you but you are liable for any additional costs. For **citizens of Australia** you will need to have your degree re- issued by your university.

If any of your documents are in a maiden name and you now use your married name then you may need to get your marriage certificate notarised and bring it with you. Please email us if this applies to you.

Any costs associated with affidavits are the responsibility of the teacher. Costs will vary depending upon your home country since different consulates charge different fees. Currently (although subject to change without notice) an affidavit costs: UK consulate 55GBP; US consulate USD\$56; Ireland 48 Euros.

**Q: One or more of my documents is not written in English. Is this OK?**

A: All documents must be in English. If one or more is not (e.g. if your degree is written in Latin) you will need to have this translated into English by a professional translation service. In most cases you will need to do this in your home country although we can sometimes arrange for it to be translated in Vietnam. This will be at your own cost. Please contact us for advice if this applies to you.

**Q: Do I need to get my documents legalized and why?**

A: Vietnam is not currently a member of The Hague Convention. This means that documents required for business or personal use in Vietnam must be legalised through the Department of Foreign Affairs of the issuing country and then legalised by the Vietnamese embassy in that country.

For citizens of some countries it is possible to do this whole process in Vietnam and we will assist you with this during orientation week. However, for British citizens, South African citizens or other citizens who hold documents from the UK or South Africa (including TEFL certificates) this service is not offered by the British or South African consulates in Vietnam. Therefore, you will need to follow the process of legalisation of documents outlined below before leaving home and bring these with you. If you hold a different passport but you have a degree or police check from the UK or South Africa, you will also need to follow this procedure.

**Q: How do I get my documents legalized?**

You require the following documents for your work permit:

- Undergraduate degree
- Police check
- TEFL certificate
- An affidavit if your names on documents don't match (see above)

**British citizens or anyone with a document issued by a British organization (includes TEFL certificates):**

You need to follow this procedure for any document issued by an organisation in the UK:

**Step 1.** Each original document must be notarized by a Public Notary in the UK. He/She confirms the authenticity of the signature or the seal of the granting authority. Find a public notary: <https://www.thenotariessociety.org.uk/>

**Step 2.** The notary's seal must be legalised (also referred to as 'authenticated') by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). See their website for clear information about how to do this. <https://www.gov.uk/get-document-legalised/>

**Step 3.** The Vietnamese Embassy in the UK authenticates the signature or the seal of the FCO. See their website for information about how to do this.

<https://vietnamembassy.org.uk/?action=p&ct=Consular%20Services%20for%20UK%20residents#LEG%20ALISATION>

Costs: These prices were correct in Sept 2022.

1. Notary: We cannot confirm the price of the particular notary you choose.
2. FCO: The cost of the FCO is given on their website as £30 per document plus £5 courier costs (to an address in the UK).
3. Vietnamese Embassy: The Vietnamese Embassy does not publish prices for legalisation but asks that you contact them directly.

Please note that you need to allow time to take/send the documents and receive them back from both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Vietnamese Embassy in London in order to scan and email them to us no later than 2 weeks before departure.

**Using a legalization company:** You could use a company to do all of this for you. **We strongly advise all applicants to consider this option** because it is much easier and less stressful for you. We have negotiated a discounted package price for you at £130 for a set of three documents for the whole process with <https://www.vitalconsular.com/i-to-i-tefl-legalisation.html>. Please apply through this website link to get the discount package. If you only need your tefl certificate legalized the price is still £130 for one document.

### **South African citizens or anyone with a document issued by a South African organization (includes TEFL)**

You need to follow this procedure for any document issued by an organisation in South Africa:

**Step 1.** You need to have your documents verified. The original certificate together with copies should be submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training, as the relevant section will stamp and sign a true copy of the certificate and issue an original covering letter confirming that the educational institution is a recognised institution in South Africa. The original covering letter must also be signed and stamped by the authorised official. <https://www.careerhelp.org.za/frequently-asked-questions>

**Step 2.** Submit the original covering letter together with the stamped/signed copy of the certificate to DIRCO for legalization: <http://www.dirco.gov.za/consular/legalisation.htm>

**Step 3.** The Vietnamese Embassy in South Africa authenticates the signature or the seal of the DIRCO. See their website for information about how to do this. <https://www.vietnam.co.za/index.php/consular-services>

Costs: These prices were correct in Sept 2022.

1. Department of Higher Education and Training: No price listed on their website. You need to confirm with them directly.
2. DIRCO: We believe that the service is free of charge.
3. Vietnamese Embassy: The Vietnamese Embassy does not publish prices for legalisation but asks that you contact them directly.

**Using a legalization company:** You could use a company to do all of this for you. This is a more expensive option but the time and hassle you save may be well worth it, especially if you don't have much time before departure.



Please note that you need to allow time to take/send the documents and receive them back. Once you have completed the legalization process you will need to scan and email us a copy of your legalization stamps. We need to receive this no later than 2 weeks prior to departure and sooner if you've completed this process.

**Q: Why do I need to bring my original documents with me?**

A: We appreciate that you may be reluctant to carry your original documents with you. However, there is no way around this and **if you arrive without your original documents you will not be able to take up your position**. If you are planning to continue teaching overseas, many countries in the region require you to submit your original documents so it may not be such a bad thing in the long run. If you have been required to legalise your documents then you will need to bring both the original and any legalized copies.

If you arrive in Vietnam without your original documents you will not be able to take up your position at your school.

**Q: What happens if my application is not successful?**

A: Fluent Education will make every effort to secure a one semester position for you. However, ultimately the decision lies with the schools about who they decide to offer a position to. The school is the sponsor of the work permit and visa and is your employer so we cannot force them to accept someone. If your application is not successful you will receive a refund of your application fee. We are unable to provide information about why an applicant was not successful since we do not ask our partner schools.

**Q: My plans have changed and I would like to withdraw or defer my application.**

A: Once Fluent Education has issued an offer letter, your position is confirmed and your school will be expecting you. This means that your school will go ahead and apply for a visa invitation letter for you. They will also book your accommodation and close to departure organise your teaching schedule. Therefore, if you decide not to come it has a huge impact on them on a practical and financial level. So please make sure that you let us know immediately if you have changed your plans. Should you wish to defer after an acceptance letter has been issued we can consider a deferral request only on compelling and compassionate grounds for which you will be asked for to provide evidence to support your request. These are generally circumstances beyond the applicant's control which will prevent them from travelling, such as an extreme health situation (evidenced by a medical certificate); bereavement of an immediate family member (parent, sibling, spouse, child) (evidenced by a death certificate) or traumatic experience (evidence must be provided). If a deferral is approved there is a deferral fee of \$200 since your application has to be processed again by Fluent, your school and the department of education in Vietnam. A deferral can only be granted once. Please note that if you have not completed the application process by the application deadline, this is considered a withdrawal.

**Before departure & general program information**

**Q: When should I arrive in Vietnam?**

A: You should book your flight to arrive into Hanoi, Vietnam on **Saturday 7th January**. Airport pickup on this day and accommodation from this date are included. **However, check in at the hotel is from 10am. Early check-in before 6am is an extra \$35 and before 10am is an extra \$20.**

If you arrive before the start date then we can assist you with accommodation and airport pickup upon request and for an additional charge. Alternatively, we will be happy to provide you with a list of suggested hotels and hostels and you can book accommodation for yourself and arrive at the hotel on the orientation start date. You should not plan to arrive more than 4 days before this date since it may affect your visa. If you do wish to arrive more than 4 days before the start date then you must advise us as soon as possible and before your visa letter has been issued.

You need to send us your flight arrival date, time, flight number, airline and departure city by following this link: <https://elcvietnam.wufoo.com/forms/fluent-vietnam-jan-2023-flight-details/>

**Please book and send the flight details no later than 4 weeks before departure.**

### **Q: When will I start teaching?**

A: The official start date is **Monday 16th January 2022**. However, this can differ slightly according to region and school type so some teachers may begin teaching as soon as they arrive at their school while others may not begin teaching for up to a week.

### **Q: When will I finish teaching?**

A: The official end of the semester is **31st May 2022**. In some cases if schools close a week or so earlier than this you may be required to carry out other administrative duties. Your visa will be valid for 10 days after your semester finishes (according to current immigration law).

### **Q: I want to travel in Vietnam and elsewhere South East Asia after my semester. Do I need to book a return flight?**

A: **Officially all travellers arriving in Vietnam are meant to hold a departure ticket.** In reality not all do and immigration rarely ask. However, it is possible. Fluent Education recommends the purchase of a return ticket home or at least a departure ticket to elsewhere in Asia (e.g. you can buy a cheap ticket to Bangkok). If you choose not to do so, you should be prepared to explain why you do not have a departure ticket. We advise that you do not say that it is because you are unsure of your plans. Rather explain that you intend to leave overland through Cambodia or Laos.

### **Q: When should I book my departure for?**

A: You should expect to be teaching right up until the last day of your semester. **Your visa will be valid for 10 days after the final day of your semester.** It is not permitted to change from a business visa to a tourist visa in Vietnam nor to extend your business visa. So, if you wish to travel in the country for longer than this (which you probably will) you should expect to go to Cambodia or Laos and obtain a new tourist visa there to re-enter Vietnam. Most teachers get together with friends they have made during the semester to travel. If you are flying out of Vietnam almost straight away please keep in mind when booking your return flight to allow time to travel from your school to the city where you will board your flight home (at least 48 hours).

### **Q: What kind of visa is needed for Vietnam and how can I apply for it?**

A: The regulations for work permit applications vary slightly from province to province and dictate which process you must follow to obtain your initial entry visa. Depending on your school Fluent Education Vietnam will advise you individually which one applies. **You should not apply for a tourist visa on your own without an invitation letter from your school.** This is not the right type of visa and you will not be able to use it to obtain your work permit in Vietnam. Even if your travel agent suggests you apply for a tourist visa through them, do not do this.

1) You will enter Vietnam on a 3-month business visa obtained prior to arrival. To obtain this you will require an invitation letter, which will be issued by your school and sent to you by Fluent Education Vietnam by email.

You will need to apply for a visa from the Vietnamese consulate in your country before departure. Your visa invitation letter will have been pre-approved by Vietnamese immigration so you should only apply for your visa **after** you have received this letter. Specific details will be sent to you with your invitation letter.

You need a visa invitation letter that will be sent to you by Fluent Education in order to apply for a business visa. Do not apply for a visa without this letter.

If you are likely to be leaving your home country before we have issued you with your visa invitation letter then you must inform us of this so that, if necessary, we can make arrangements for you to collect your visa from a Vietnamese consulate in one of the countries you are visiting.

OR 2) You will enter Vietnam on a 3-month visa obtained on arrival. To obtain this you will require an invitation letter, which will be sent to you by Fluent Education by email. You should print your invitation letter and bring it with you in your hand luggage on the flight. You will not be admitted entry to Vietnam without this letter.

On arrival you should go to the 'landing visa' desk just before immigration. You will be required to pay them in US dollars in cash. The cost depends on whether you are applying for single or multiple entry and this is dependent upon the visa letter your school has applied for. This will **cost \$25 single entry or \$50 multiple entry.** Prices are subject to change without notice but we will provide the latest updates via the Facebook group. Give them the invitation letter with your passport. You will be issued with your visa and can then proceed through immigration.

If you will be entering Vietnam overland (from Cambodia, Laos or China) you must inform us of this as the visa process is different.

**In most cases all visas are single-entry so you will not be able to leave Vietnam and re-enter without requiring a new visa.**

#### **Q: Which vaccinations am I required to have before travelling to Vietnam?**

A: You should visit your doctor to discuss which vaccinations are recommended. It is assumed that you have had all of the regular vaccinations that you will have received whilst at school. You should have your vaccinations done before you leave home. It can be difficult to arrange these once in Vietnam and they are not that much cheaper. Some vaccinations require more than one jab so don't leave it to the last minute.

#### **Q: Will I need to take malaria tablets?**

A: We do not recruit for schools in malarial areas. However, there is malaria in some more remote parts of Vietnam and you may need to take malaria tablets if you travel to these areas. You will not need to take tablets throughout your semester period though, just before you go travelling. You should bring anti-malarial tablets with you if you think you may be travelling to these areas. The zika virus and dengue fever are also present throughout South East

Asia and anti-mosquito precautions should always be taken.

**Q: Do I need a vaccination against Japanese Encephalitis?**

A: This is an expensive vaccine and a lot of teachers ask us if it's really necessary. It is a very rare disease, usually contracted via a mosquito that has recently bitten a pig. However, it is also potentially life-threatening if you contract it. In the end this is a personal decision, which you should take in consultation with your doctor according to the current status of the disease in the country.

You should always consult a doctor regarding recommended vaccinations.

**Q: What kind of insurance is required?**

A: You require comprehensive insurance. As you will be at a school for a lot of your time, the package must cover you when you are in a workplace overseas. Schools in Vietnam do not have public liability insurance that covers foreign teachers. You must have your own insurance. It should also cover you as a passenger on a motorbike since motorbike travel is very common in Vietnam. You should also check that the insurance you take is valid for the entirety of your stay in Vietnam and any further travels you plan. Take care – some annual policies only permit you to stay in one country for a maximum of 21 or 30 days. If you have any doubts then make sure you discuss with a representative from the insurance company. You should always read the small print. Fluent Education will ask you for your policy details to confirm that you have insurance. However, it is up to you ensure that the policy is suitable – Fluent Education does not read the document on your behalf. This is a helpful guide to choosing a travel insurance policy:

Comprehensive travel and medical insurance is essential for all international travel. This should cover you for any COVID-related costs. Do not leave home without this. When you have taken your policy please send us the details by following this link:

<https://elcvietnam.wufoo.com/forms/fluent-vietnam-jan-2023-insurance/>

[http://smartraveller.gov.au/guide/all-travellers/insurance/pages/choice-travel-insurance-buying-guide.aspx`](http://smartraveller.gov.au/guide/all-travellers/insurance/pages/choice-travel-insurance-buying-guide.aspx)

**Q: What expenses should I expect?**

A: The key things to consider, other than personal expenses, are listed below. You should be aware that preparing for an international trip will incur substantial expense.

- Vaccinations
- Legalisation of documents in preparation for your work permit (as required)
- Health check in Vietnam for work permit purpose
- Name oath at your embassy in Vietnam if your names on your documents are not identical
- International flights
- Travel insurance (essential)
- Visa for Vietnam (obtained prior to departure)
- Meals or drinks (including water) during your semester are not provided.

- **Bills.** Your accommodation is provided by the school but bills are not included. **In most cases you will be charged a total of \$60 per month by your school for transport, water, electricity and WiFi.** In most cases the school will pay the bills for the accommodation and deduct this from your salary. We have asked the schools to cap the bill at \$30 per month for water/electricity and wifi. Bills up to \$42 will not be charged any extra. However, if your bill is in excess of \$42 per month then you may be charged the extra amount by your school (for example if your bill is \$50 then you will be charged an extra \$8 that month).
- Transport may be arranged by your school to take you to and from your schools and a charge of US\$30 per month will be made by them for this. (Please note that local bus transport would take you a long time and taxi transport if you organized this independently would cost you more).

Bills are not included in your free accommodation. In most cases you will pay \$60 per month total for all bills including transport to your schools. Personal transport is not included in this.

#### **Q: Can two applicants travelling together be engaged by the same school?**

A: This is guaranteed providing you inform us at the time of application. You should note this when submitting your applications. Married couples who want to be accommodated together must bring their marriage certificate with them. If you are not married we cannot guarantee that your school will be willing to allow you to share a room. Whenever possible we will ask you if you wish to share. We guarantee to place 2 friends together and will try for groups of 3 or 4 but cannot guarantee this.

#### **Q: When will I know about my school?**

A: Schools we recruit for are currently in or around the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, Halong and Ho Chi Minh City. However, new schools may be added to this over the coming months. You will be provided with details of your schools when you receive your confirmation of offer. Please be aware that very occasionally a school withdraws its offer at a later stage for reasons beyond our control. In this case, if a confirmation of offer has already been issued, then Fluent Education guarantees that we will find an alternative position for you. You will be advised of this right away should it occur. Offers are based on the individual schools' selection process. We **cannot guarantee** any location requests.

#### **Q: What kind of teacher positions are available?**

A: Generally there are the following age groups:

1. Kindergarten (Under 4-6 years)
2. Primary school (6-11 years) (The majority of applicants will be teaching primary school)
3. High school (12-18 years) (Junior high school 12-15 years, secondary 16-18 years)
4. Adults (18+) (University, language school)

You will be asked to nominate your age preference, **but these are not guaranteed** and you should be prepared to teach any age group according to the requirements of your school.

#### **Q: Can I choose my location?**

A: We do not accept location requests and we ask you to be flexible. Demand for teachers from particular schools varies from semester to semester and so we need flexibility in order to be able to secure positions for our applicants and meet the demand of our schools. Besides, some of the nicest locations are ones that teachers have not even

heard of before they come to Vietnam!

**Q: When do I need to finish my TEFL course?**

A: Generally, you need to complete your TEFL course at least 6 weeks before departure. Your TEFL certificate must be submitted by your school to the local authorities in Vietnam when applying for your visa invitation letter. If it is possible for you to be issued with a 60-hour certificate 6 weeks before departure then this can be submitted and the remainder of your course completed within 3 weeks of departure. If you don't expect to have any TEFL certificate by 6 weeks before please contact your course provider who may be able to provide us with a confirmation letter. You will then need to send us a scan of your legalized certificate no less than 2 weeks before departure so please do not leave course completion too late. In addition, you will be teaching the week after you arrive in Vietnam so you need to be mentally prepared for this. If you completed your course some time ago we suggest you review your course notes in preparation for departure. The schools understand that you are not experienced but they do expect you to be qualified, to plan thoroughly and be committed and professional. During orientation week we run practical workshops on teaching in Vietnam to help you get ready for the following week

**Q: What are my fees used for?**

A: Fluent Education receives an application fee which forms part of the fee you pay to the TEFL/TESOL organization through which you booked. This contributes to the costs of processing applications and providing pre-departure support to teachers. Other costs which Fluent Education incurs such as staff to recruit, visit and train host schools; production of information for TEFL providers and teachers; translation and legal costs as well as maintaining an office and staff in Vietnam are derived from a recruitment fee that the schools pay to us at the start of the semester. Please note that we are unable to answer questions regarding TEFL course fees paid to your course provider.

**Orientation in Vietnam**

**Q: Will someone meet me at the airport when I arrive?**

A: Yes. **If you arrive on the orientation arrival day**, our team will pick you up from the airport. We will send you a pre-departure letter just before you leave home with details of exactly what to do when you land. If you arrive before this, we can arrange accommodation for you and an airport pickup **at additional cost**. We can also make suggestions for places to stay and explain how to get a taxi from the airport if you would prefer to do it on your own. Please email us for details. **Your visa is usually only valid for up to 4 days prior to the program arrival day**. If you plan to come earlier then please advise us as soon as possible.

**Q: What happens during orientation week?**

A: Your orientation includes a city tour, a welcome orientation, introductory Vietnamese class and social activities. You will meet the Fluent Education Vietnam team as well as other teachers who will be going to teach in the same location as you as well as elsewhere. You'll also be expected to take part in an online orientation prior to departure.

**Q: Where do we stay during orientation?**

A: You are accommodated in a hotel in the central area. Accommodation during orientation is twin share.

**Q: Are meals included during orientation?**

A: Yes, all meals are included during orientation week. However, you will need to buy your own drinks.

**Q: How will I go to my school?**

A: Depending on the location of your school, you will travel by bus, train or air. The school pays for your travel to them but you will be responsible for any excess luggage fees incurred. When packing for Vietnam, you should keep in mind that you will be travelling around and therefore you need to be able to transport your luggage easily. The standard luggage allowance for a domestic flight is 20kg and there is only limited storage on trains. Carrying a backpack rather than a suitcase is preferable.

**Teaching semester**

**Q: How many hours of work will I be doing?**

A: **35 hours per week:** You will be scheduled to teach for 20 hours per week. That means you will actually be in the classroom for 20 hours – usually 3-4 hours per day for 5-6 days. You will also need to prepare your lessons and submit lesson plans and do various other tasks such as marking. These will take 15 hours per week. So your working week will be 35 hours usually across 5-6 days. You will rarely have 4 consecutive teaching hours and there is a long break in the middle of the day so you may be out of the house all day like a normal working day at home. Like all jobs, your 35 hours does not include travel time and that traffic can be heavy in some cities. Teaching is tiring and preparing to teach is time-consuming. There will not be free time during your working day to sightsee and you won't be taking long weekends to travel during the semester. You'll get to know your local area really well but travel around the country should be planned for after the semester finishes.

**Read this:**

Sometimes teachers come to Vietnam expecting to be on a holiday during which they do just a little bit of work. However, this is not the reality. 20 hours of face-to-face teaching and planning for this is time-consuming and we really don't want you to be taken by surprise.

The teaching week consists of: 20 hours of face-to-face teaching  
Approx. 15 hours of lesson prep. & admin  
Total: Approx. **35 hours/week**  
(excluding travel time).

**Q: Will I be required to sign a contract?**

A: Yes, you will be required to sign a contract of employment with your school or educational organization. This agreement is a standard employment contract. It will be provided to you in English. The school is the sponsor of your visa and work permit and is responsible for your salary and completion bonus. The Fluent Education team will assist you to liaise with your school about any questions you may have about your contracts. There can be some slight differences between particular school contracts although all of the basic employment conditions stated in advance by Fluent Education will be the same for all teachers.

**Q: Will there be other teachers at the same school?**

A: Fluent Education Vietnam ensures that there is a group of teachers in each location. No-one is contracted to a school alone. In some cases there may only be one teacher at a particular school but that teacher will then be sharing accommodation with others who teach at nearby schools

**Q: What kind of school(s) will I be teaching in?**

A: Schools in Vietnam vary greatly as they do in all education systems. You may be working in a private language school, a private primary or high school or a government school. Some regional primary schools will be small, whilst secondary schools in urban areas may have thousands of students. Some of the schools have foreign teachers but there are many schools in Vietnam that are new to having foreign teachers in the schools.

**Q: Will I only teach in the one school?**

A: Some schools share teachers so you could teach in more than one school. We also work with several educational organisations in Vietnam who arrange for teachers to teach at schools who they assist with the staffing and English language curriculums for. In these cases, a teacher may teach at several schools in close proximity. In this situation several teachers may visit the same school at different times during a week. However, you won't always be there at the same time as another teacher. You will however be sharing accommodation with other teachers.

**Q: What are my teaching duties?**

A: As a general rule you should expect to be **in the classroom for 20 hours per week**. Please note that this is 20 actual clock hours, rather than academic/lesson hours. (In some countries one school hour is 45 or 50 minutes). In Vietnam, lesson lengths vary from 30 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the school and age of learners. There will **also be preparation time, meetings, materials preparation and assessment** as needed of up to an additional **15 hours per week**, with **a total of approx. 35 working hours (depending on how long you spend preparing)**. You can expect to take lessons by yourself most or all of the time. The emphasis is on the teaching of "conversational English". However, you should expect to teach vocabulary, listening and reading skills as well. You may also be expected to assist Vietnamese English teachers in testing students.

**Q: Is it possible to change school during my semester?**

A: Your commitment to the school(s) is for the full semester. Your work permit will be lodged by your school for employment at that school only, so no changes can be made during the semester.

**Q: What happens if I decide that I want to leave early?**

A: The expectation of the schools and Fluent Education is that a teacher will stay for the whole semester. It can cause significant inconvenience to schools if a teacher leaves before the end of the semester. The school has also incurred considerable costs for your work permit and has leased accommodation for you for the whole of the program period.

Should you decide not to complete the semester, and providing that contractual obligations have been met by your school, your school will not be obliged to pay your completion bonus and the school is likely to withhold some of your salary (up to \$500) in order to reimburse them for the cost of your work permit and/or accommodation. Your work permit will be cancelled and you will usually have 5 days to leave the country. Your school is required to ask to see your return flight details in order to ensure that you do not intend to remain in the country illegally. If any teacher leaves their school without providing onward flight details, the school as your sponsor, is obliged to report this to the authorities and this may result in deportation.

Your commitment to your school is for the full semester. They will have scheduled your classes and booked your accommodation until the semester end.



**Q: Can I take up another teaching position in Vietnam?**

A: You are only meant to work for one employer at a time and they are the sponsor of your work permit. If you leave your school your work permit must be cancelled. You cannot transfer your work permit to another school. To work for another school, you would need to leave the country and reapply for a new business visa and work permit through a new employer.

**Q: What are Vietnamese schools like?**

A: The schools in which you will work will vary as in all school systems. Some schools are well-equipped but many are rudimentary by western standards. Note:

- Most state schools are open 6 days/week from Monday to Saturday. Teachers should expect to teach 20 hours across 5-6 days per week.
- Some language schools open on a Sunday or evenings. However, you will always have one full day off per week and will be required to teach for a maximum of 20 hours per week. Please note that you will also be expected to prepare lessons and do other teaching admin. tasks for an additional 15 hours, making a 35-hour week.
- Class sizes will vary and may be up to 60 students
- The quality and amount of equipment and resources will vary from school to school
- Foreign teachers are not common in schools.
- Classes are usually between 45 and 90 minutes in length.
- You may receive a lot or only a little guidance on what to teach depending on your school.

**Q: What kind of clothing do I need to wear when teaching?**

A: Dress policy may vary between schools and you are required to follow the school policy on these matters. Generally, a high dress standard is expected, with the minimum standard being smart casual. This means no shorts, jeans, T-shirts and no running shoes. Female teachers should dress modestly when teaching which means covering shoulders and not wearing very short skirts or tops that reveal back or stomach. Facial piercings are not acceptable and any tattoos should be covered. If you arrive in Vietnam with a tattoo that cannot be covered or a facial piercing that you do not wish to remove, you will not be able to take up your position. Some schools have a uniform, which they will provide. This is usually a company shirt that you wear with your own trousers/skirt.

**Q: Do the teachers have a mentor or point of contact at the schools?**

A: Yes, there will be a liaison person at the school to assist with your integration into the school community. Often a Teacher Assistant will be provided to go to class with you (although you should not automatically expect this). The Fluent Education Vietnam team in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are also ready to assist.

**Q: Will I be teaching by myself, or will there be assistant teachers?**

A: You should be prepared to lead a class on your own, although you may have a teaching assistant in some classrooms.

**Q: What happens if there are problems between the school and I?**

A: Generally, problems can be resolved easily with effective communication and having all involved willing to assist to ensure there is a satisfactory resolution. It should be noted that the concept of 'face' is very important in Vietnam and if you have a concern it should be handled politely and tactfully. Your first step is to talk to your school. If you are not comfortable with this or have tried to no avail then you should contact us and we will assist you promptly and confidentially. Contact details will be provided during orientation.

**Q: What will the accommodation be like?**

A: **The accommodation will vary between schools.** Teachers will generally have their own basically-furnished room in a shared apartment or in a guesthouse. It is possible in some cases when rooms are large that you may be asked to share a room if you are travelling with a friend or partner.

Please be aware that your accommodation will be basic by the standards you are used to.

Cooking facilities will be limited but you should be able to refrigerate food and boil water and you may have a small cooktop. Please note that some accommodation may not have cooking facilities. You will not have a TV with international channels. You should have WiFi but it may be sporadic. By western standards, the accommodation may be considered basic, but by Vietnamese standards the accommodation provided to foreign teachers is comparatively high standard. You will share with other teachers but in some locations where there is a big group of teachers, you may not all be living in the same apartment/house but spread across several.

**Q: Will I be able to get meals at school?**

A: Most schools don't have canteens but there will be many places serving inexpensive food close to the school. You should plan to eat locally. It is much cheaper to eat local food than western and often cheaper to eat at small local restaurants than to buy and cook your own. Not all accommodation has kitchens.

**Q: How will I get to my school(s)?**

A: Schools may arrange taxi transport for you or you will be expected to catch a local bus or walk. **If the school organizes a taxi for you each day to and from your school(s) you will be asked to make a transport contribution from your salary of US\$30 per month.** Please note that the actual cost to the school of transport for each teacher is usually a lot higher than this but you will not pay more than \$30. Some schools provide bicycles for the teachers but you'll need to buy your own helmet. **If you do not want to ride a bicycle then it is important that you inform us before you arrive in Vietnam.** Schools do not permit teachers to ride their own motorbikes to and from school unless properly licensed.

**Q: Do teachers have to pay any bills?**

A: **Yes, you will need to pay for electricity, water and internet.** Your accommodation is provided by the school but bills are not included. Your school will deduct from your salary or ask you to pay in cash usually **US\$30 each month for this.** We have asked the schools to cap the bill at \$30 per month for water/electricity and wifi. Bills up to \$42 will not be charged any extra. However, if your bill is in excess of \$42 per month then you may be charged the extra amount by your school (for example if your bill is \$50 then you will be charged an extra \$8 that month). Teachers are expected to buy and pay for any gas they use for cooking at home.

**Q: How much is the salary and how will I receive it?**

A: The salary is **US\$800 per month** paid by your school or educational organization **in Vietnamese Dong**. **The amount will be fixed at the exchange rate as it stands 2 weeks prior to your arrival in Vietnam**. Salary is payable in arrears and is often but not always paid around the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Please note that this may be up to **4 weeks** after you commence teaching so you should bring enough money to survive until then. Please note that no payment is made for your orientation week and your salary will begin from your first teaching day. Your first salary will be calculated as \$800 pro-rata from your first teaching day to pay day and then \$800 per month onwards. Your final salary will be \$800 pro-rata from your last pay day to the final day of the contract. You will also receive a **bonus of US\$800** upon completion of the semester providing you have met the conditions of your contract. **However, if you have missed lessons or have been regularly late for class, the school will make a deduction from your bonus**. Salary is either paid by the school in cash or into a local bank account which they will assist you to open. You need to bring enough money with you to survive until the first salary payment is made.

Your package =  
\$800 per month salary (in Dong)  
+ \$800 completion bonus (in Dong)  
+ accommodation + subsidised bills.

The package of salary + accommodation + subsidized bills + completion bonus is competitive for Vietnam and is roughly equivalent to what an experienced teacher would earn after having paid their expenses (bills, transport and accommodation). Of course, you may meet teachers who are earning more. However, you should keep in mind that they will have come to Vietnam alone and will have approached schools for work independently. They will have found and are paying for their own accommodation. They may be working multiple jobs in order to get enough hours together in total to earn a decent income. They have paid a deposit for their accommodation and pay their own bills. In many cases, they do not have a valid work permit and are just running the risk of working illegally. If they have a work permit they will also usually have committed to at least a 1 if not 2-year contract.

**Q: How will I get to my departure city at the end of my semester?**

A: After the semester completion, teachers are free to arrange their own travel itinerary. You should be aware that your visa will only be valid for 10 days after your semester completion date and you will need to leave the country before or on the day of visa expiry. You can then re-enter the country on a tourist visa if you wish.

**Q: Can I stay in Vietnam to work after my semester?**

A: You should expect to come to Vietnam for the duration of the semester only. There is a possibility that your school might offer you work for another semester and be prepared to extend your visa. However, this offer is not guaranteed and would be at the discretion of your school. Teachers who overstay visas or who work illegally are at risk of deportation and a fine.

**Q: On what grounds might I be asked to leave my school?**

A: Teachers should dress and behave professionally at all times. Teaching is a highly respected profession in Vietnam and teachers are expected to act as a model to their students. A school may remove a teacher from their employment under these circumstances:

- Repeated lateness for class
- Repeated failure to submit lesson plans upon request
- Repeated failure to adequately prepare for class
- Repeated provision of incorrect models of written English including spelling

- Repeated provision of unclear models of spoken English
- Poor teaching performance with no evidence of progress even after support is given
- Repeated inappropriate dress for class (including non-removal of facial piercings or not completely covering any tattoos)
- Taking leave without approval
- Unprofessional language or behaviour with colleagues or management
- Shouting, swearing or inappropriate physical contact with a student
- Smoking or drug use on or outside school grounds
- Drunk and disorderly behaviour at school, at a staff meeting, inside school accommodation or in a public place where parents or students might be present
- Drug use (illegal in Vietnam)
- Verbal or physical violence or threats of violence to any school staff, students or fellow teachers

In these situations the following procedure should be followed:

1. The school will inform the teacher in writing of their concerns and outline areas for improvement.
2. The school will inform Fluent Education Vietnam of their concerns and we will contact the teacher to clarify and offer support as necessary.
3. If the conduct re-occurs (and depending on the severity of the issue) the school will give notice to the teacher. In some cases immediate dismissal may occur.
4. The school will inform Fluent Education Vietnam of their decision to terminate the contract.
5. The teacher's work permit will be terminated by the school and the teacher will be required to leave Vietnam within the period specified by the school (usually 5 working days).
6. No completion bonus will be paid. In some cases, deductions will be made by the school from the final salary payment to compensate them for work permit expenses incurred by the school.

Fluent Education will always address the issue with the teacher directly and ask the school to allow the teacher to continue. Often there has simply been a misunderstanding that can be easily resolved. In more severe cases, however, Fluent Education Vietnam will not be able to support the teacher to stay and in this case, no refund of any fees or associated costs will be offered.

### **Work permit process**

#### **Q: When do I apply for my work permit?**

A: On arrival at the orientation centre you will need to provide Fluent Education with your original documents and complete an application form for your work permit application. Your school will then lodge this for you. They will also apply for a visa extension for you after 3 months. **Your health check fee of \$80 is payable in cash to Fluent Education on arrival so that Fluent can help to arrange for you to get a health check done for work permit purpose.** Please note that work permit requirements for Vietnam may be subject to change according to government regulations and we will update you on this if you are required to bring any additional documentation or follow a different process.

You need to bring **US\$80** with you in cash. This is collected by Fluent Education during orientation week for your health check.

#### **Q: What documents do I need to provide in order to get my work permit?**

A: In order for your school to apply for a work permit for you, you will need to provide them with the following documents. If you do not bring these with you then you will not be able to take up your position.

1. Original undergraduate degree certificate
2. Original criminal background check (no convictions)
3. Original TESOL/TEFL certificate
4. Medical check certificate (obtained in Vietnam)
5. Six passport-sized photographs (obtained in Vietnam)

If you forget to bring your original documents to Vietnam with you then you will not be able to take up your position. There is not enough time for you to get them sent from home since the school must lodge these documents for you on arrival. In this case, you would need to leave at the end of orientation week.

In some cases, teachers may be required to have their documents legalized before they leave their home country. This is outlined in the application section of this document. If are required to legalise your documents then you need to bring with you the original documents and any legalized copies.

**Q: Do I have to have a health check?**

A: Yes. A health check in Vietnam is necessary. The check is fairly straightforward, although it does (usually) include a chest x-ray, an HIV test and various other blood tests. Fluent Education or your school will arrange for you to have the test usually during your first week. You cannot have the health check done at home. It must be done in Vietnam. **There is a health check fee of US\$80 which is payable during your orientation week.**

**Q: What medical conditions might affect the success of my health check for the work permit?**

A: Generally, the health check will determine whether you are physically capable of carrying out your teaching duties and whether you have any communicable diseases or conditions that could adversely affect the wellbeing of colleagues and students. If your health condition has not affected your ability to work to date, then it is unlikely that it would affect the success of your work permit in Vietnam. However, this is at the discretion of the medical practitioner and the Ministry of Labour in Vietnam. We suggest that if you have any doubts about your health including any medications you take on a regular basis then discuss this with us during the application process so that we can check with the health centre in advance for you. If you would like more details about what is included then please email us. **If you fail to disclose a chronic health condition on the application form and are subsequently declined a work permit as a result of this, you will not be able to take up your position and no compensation will be due to you.**

**Q: What happens if my work permit application is declined by the Vietnamese authorities?**

A: Your school will apply for a work permit for you once you have arrived in Vietnam. You are responsible for providing all the documentation necessary for the processing of the work permit as per the instructions above. However, each work permit application is subject to approval by the Ministry of Labour in Vietnam. In rare cases, applications may be rejected for reasons that may not be disclosed to the applicant. It is necessary to recognise that the granting of work permits is beyond the control of your school and Fluent Education Vietnam. If your work permit application is declined you will not be able to take up your position. If it is declined on the basis of a pre-existing medical condition that was not disclosed during the application process, or because you have not brought the appropriate documentation, then no compensation will be due to you. If it is declined for apparently unknown reasons, you will receive a partial refund (of orientation week fees) although no compensation will be offered for associated costs such as flights or those incurred in preparation for coming to Vietnam.

**Q: What happens with my work permit if I decide that I want to leave my school early?**

A: Work permits are issued for employment by the school that nominates the teacher for the permit. They are not transferable for employment by other employers. If a teacher leaves their school early, the school is required to report to the Ministry of Labour that you are no longer at the school. Your work permit and visa would be cancelled and usually you would be given 5 days to leave Vietnam.

**General**

**Q: What's Vietnamese food like?**

A: It is usually fresh with abundant fruit and vegetables. Bread and coffee are easy to get – local Vietnamese coffee is strong, dark and sweet! Cold iced black tea will be served to you in most cafes and restaurants for free. Rice is a staple, but every meal comes with a variety of dishes. Unlike the west, Vietnamese meals are similar throughout the day with Vietnamese soup – Pho – being popular for breakfast. Western food can be purchased in the cities, but the quality may vary and it is relatively expensive. Your salary will not provide for the purchase of regular Western meals and you should expect to eat as the locals do. It is recommended that applicants with specific dietary requirements discuss these with the Fluent Education team during the application process as we may be able to provide you with relevant guides whilst in Vietnam.

**Q: How much money will I need?**

A: The salary is a substantial amount of money per month for Vietnam. However, it should be noted that western food can be quite expensive. If you eat locally you will find that your salary goes a long way. Your completion bonus can also assist towards travelling around Vietnam or South-East Asia at the conclusion of the semester. You should bring enough money to last until your first salary is paid, which could be up to 5 weeks after arrival in the country as it is paid in arrears. You should also bring enough cash to pay for your health check (USD\$80) and to cover emergencies. In addition, we suggest you bring or have access to US\$700. You should also ensure that you have access to funds in the case of an emergency.

**Q: What's the best way to bring money?**

A: Most teachers bring a cash passport /pre-paid travel money card which they can load money on to at home (and recharge online) and can withdraw cash from anywhere that displays a Mastercard or Visa sign. It is possible to get cash advances on major credit cards from ATMs in most cities and to use some debit cards (check with your bank). For the best deals for you Google Cash Passport for your country.

Please make sure that you bring or have access to enough money to survive for your first 5-6 weeks in the country. We suggest **at least** US\$700 if not more + emergency funds. You'll need:

- \$80 health check (Dong)
- \$700 (minimum) spending money
- Emergency funds

**Q: Can I send money home?**

A: You will earn enough money to live on during the semester and to save a little for travelling. However, you should not expect to be able to send money home to pay off student loans or other ongoing expenses. If possible, try to find an alternative arrangement for paying these. It is difficult to send money out of Vietnam. Although it can be done by opening a bank account with an international bank in Vietnam such as HSBC, there may not be one in your school location. You can also transfer money by Western Union at a fee.

**Q: Is it easy to buy western toiletries there?**

A: Yes, most western products are available. However, if you have a favourite brand you should bring it. If you wear contact lenses please note that only all-in-one solutions are available here. You will not be able to buy hydrogen peroxide cleaning system solutions nor saline solution. Many facial creams contain a skin whitening ingredient so you may wish to bring the brand you prefer of this.

**Q: Is it easy to get WiFi? Should I bring my laptop?**

A: WiFi is widely available except in very rural areas **so it is worth bringing your own laptop. In addition, it will be much easier for you to plan and submit lesson plans electronically if you have your own laptop.** Some schools encourage teachers to take their own laptops to use in classes equipped with digital projectors. However, you should be cautious when carrying a laptop around as bag theft is common.

**Q: Should I bring my own mobile phone or buy one there?**

A: Most teachers bring their handset from home and buy a local SIM card. Remember to get it unlocked before you leave home. Theft of mobiles is very common though, so you will need to be careful. You can buy a phone locally for around \$30.

**Q: Do I need to bring an adaptor?**

A: It's cheap and easy to buy adaptors in Vietnam for most countries our teachers come from with the exception of South Africa.