

Nicola Salmon (2007-2008)

I am a teacher and CELTA trainer working mainly online since I lost my job after the pandemic hit. I have only just begun to work back in the physical classroom again, teaching refugees in Salford, Greater Manchester. I have worked in this country and abroad, in state secondary schools, universities and private colleges.



In 2008 I had the amazing opportunity to set up CELTA at Bilkent in their Teacher Training Unit and to train two additional trainers. I had been a teacher in further education in the UK for about 25 years and a teacher trainer for about 16 years. I had worked abroad with VSO in Tanzania as a teacher but the rest of my career to that time had been in the UK. I really needed a change and having just finished my MA I wanted to take on a completely new challenge in a new place. A colleague told me about Bilkent and luckily the planets collided. They wanted a CELTA trainer at the same time as I applied!

I spent a year at Bilkent setting up the CELTA course, running three courses and training two additional trainers. Professionally this was a wonderful opportunity and one that I have been able to make use of on many occasions since then. Having the evidence of working at a university and in an overseas context has been exceptionally useful.

The university provided safe, comfortable accommodation in an area close to the campus. I was housed in a block with other teachers and my colleagues were all close by. As a newcomer this was really useful. You have a ready-made social group all around you and people on hand to point me in the right direction if I had questions.

Bilkent isn't near the city centre. There were regular buses to and from the centre of Ankara but these were fairly limited. If you missed the last one, it was a long and expensive taxi ride to get home. But Bilkent also has a little 'town centre' with banks, a post office, shops, cafes, restaurants, a massive super market and a cinema. There's also a massive gym – in my day working at the university meant you got a good deal on membership at this gym. All this made the business of living very easy.

I remember also that the university put on some Turkish lessons for the foreign teachers on a Friday afternoon after work. There were also the annual Bilkent conference and many teachers and trainers spoke at or attended conferences in Turkey over the year. I had never been a part of this kind of personal and professional development before so it was another massive chance to get experience.

I made a lot of friends at Bilkent. The winters were freezing and the summers really hot and dry. We celebrated Christmas in a city restaurant and I learnt tango!

I had wanted a change and wanted to work in again in another country. This contract allowed me to realise those dreams in a really supportive environment. After Bilkent I went

on to work in other countries and other cities in Turkey. A really positive, supportive experience.