

Droichead – an enhanced framework for the induction of Newly Qualified Teachers

Significant changes announced by Council Director for the induction of new teachers

At the Shared Learning Day for Droichead today (2 March 2016), Teaching Council Director Tomás Ó Ruairc announced a number of significant changes to Droichead, the integrated framework for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). These changes have been shaped by the teachers who have participated in the Droichead pilot over the past three years, including more than 750 NQTs who have engaged in the process to date. They are also a result of the Council's reflection on the findings of the ESRI research which is being published today.

The changes build on the progress made by the profession in mentoring and induction since 2002. They will help ensure that this professionally collaborative culture of welcome and induction will receive the acknowledgement and systems support that it has deserved for so long. In his opening remarks, the Council Director noted the findings of the [ESRI research](#) which indicated greater levels of improvement and lower levels of stress for NQTs in Droichead schools.

The changes to Droichead include the following:

- 1. Integration of the Droichead process and induction workshop programme.** From September 2016, all NQTs who commence Droichead will attend one cluster meeting per term and one additional professional learning activity. This will replace the current registration condition to attend workshops.
- 2. NQTs who wish to avail of the Droichead process will be able to do so in a wide variety of settings.** While the expectation is that NQTs will normally complete Droichead in a mainstream setting, **from September 2016**, they will now be able to engage in the Droichead process in special schools, learning support and resource settings. The Council understands that, other than in exceptional circumstances, NQTs should be deployed in mainstream settings. In certain circumstances, where they are the most appropriate teacher to support the needs of pupils, they may complete Droichead in SEN settings. The Council believes that this can build on the enhanced culture of collaboration which Droichead facilitates and thus help principals ensure that all pupils will be supported by the most appropriate teachers in each school. In all settings, upon completion of the process, the Droichead condition will be fully removed from a teacher's registration.
- 3. Explicit recognition of the enhanced, reconceptualised programmes of initial teacher education.** Under Council policy, the extended school placement in the latter half of the programmes will now be recognised towards the professional practice requirement of Droichead. In addition to the extended school placement, primary teachers undergoing Droichead will now be expected to complete a single block of 60 days, and post-primary teachers will be expected to complete a single block of 200 hours. The Council is also committed to ensuring that the learning of NQTs will be seamlessly supported in the transition from initial teacher education to Droichead.

There are a number of consequent changes arising from these decisions of Council. The probation and Post-qualification Employment (PQE) processes will continue to be an option for mainstream schools in the 2016/2017 school year, but will not be open to special schools or special educational needs (SEN) settings. Subject to the required resources and supporting actions, the Council's plan is to ensure that Droichead will be the sole route of induction for all NQTs by September 2018. As part of the phased growth towards Droichead, Droichead will be the recognised route to induction for NQTs in large schools from September 2017 and for all NQTs by September 2018. In relation to the requirements for professional practice, the Director repeated the Council's call to all stakeholders, including management and unions, to work towards a position whereby a system of guaranteed placement is established for NQTs. In the interim, all stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that NQTs get as much time as possible to apply their professional learning in teaching.

The Council has significantly simplified and revised the documentation relating to Droichead. Professional Support Team (PST) members will recommend that arising from the induction phase of their learning, the NQT is now ready to progress to next phase of the continuum of teacher education. The NQT will also identify areas of further learning in collaboration with the PST to guide their future learning. In this way, the Council is reiterating the fact that Droichead is about progression, not perfection, and is clarifying that Droichead is but one phase of teachers' learning.

The Council will engage with the Department of Education and Skills regarding the implementation of this policy.

The Department has confirmed a new model of release time for circumstances where there is more than one NQT in a school. In these situations, up to a maximum of 7 days for primary schools and 37 hours for post-primary schools will be available based on a sliding scale of the number of NQTs. Release time is being maintained for PST training as is the bank of discretionary time which will continue to be held by the NIPT. Additional release time is also being made available to support the further professional development of PST members in existing Droichead schools.

The approval by Council of Droichead as the enhanced route of induction for NQTs marks a significant milestone in leadership by the teaching profession in Ireland. All the teachers who have participated in the consultation, and the pilot itself, have had a significant impact on the future of their professional learning through this policy. They have demonstrated how the profession can be trusted to not only maintain, but also enhance, the quality of learning for themselves and their students. The Council wishes to thank the National Induction Programme for Teachers and all teachers who have contributed to this achievement.

There will be a further review of policy in 2019. In this way, teachers and schools who participate in Droichead over the next few years will have further opportunities to shape and influence the future of their profession's learning.

The Council believes that there is a great prize within reach of the teaching profession through Droichead - to lead the enhancement of the quality of students' learning in schools by leading the enhancement of their own professional learning. This is the litmus test of systemic reform. Schools in Droichead have shown that by using a collaborative approach to support, guide and welcome their newly qualified colleagues, all teachers, and indeed all students, benefit. The Council is

therefore confident that the profession is well placed to stake its claim as leaders of professional learning, not only for their students, but for themselves as well.

