

Droichead
A Guide for Schools
2015/2016

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council



Glossary of terms

Associate

An associate is a practising and fully registered teacher who is also an experienced mentor and/or induction workshop facilitator, nominated by the National Induction Programme for Teachers to support the *Droichead* process in *Droichead* schools.

Centre for Education

A Centre for Education means a place, other than a school or a place providing university or other third level education, where adult or continuing education or vocational education or training, is provided and which is designated for that purposes. The Minister may from time to time designate a place to be a Centre for Education (Education Act, 1998).

Continuum of Teacher Education

This describes the formal and informal educational and developmental activities in which teachers engage, as lifelong learners, during their teaching career. It encompasses initial teacher education, induction, early and continuing professional development and later career support.

Droichead

Droichead, a period of supported professional practice, is a central feature of a new model of induction and probation being piloted in a number of schools. Following satisfactory completion of the *Droichead* process, newly qualified teachers are confirmed by fellow professionals as having met certain criteria and the Teaching Council will remove the *Droichead* condition from their registration.

Eligible settings

A newly qualified primary teacher may undertake the *Droichead* process if employed in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity in any of the following positions:

- mainstream class teacher
- special class teacher in a mainstream school
- teacher in a special school or hospital school
- full-time resource teacher of pupils with low-incidence disabilities (as defined by the Department of Education and Skills).

A newly qualified post-primary teacher may undertake the *Droichead* process if employed in a full-time permanent, temporary or substitute capacity in any of the following positions:

- a recognised post-primary school
- a special school where a portion of the students attending the school are of post-primary age and the teacher is teaching a post-primary curricular subject(s) to such students
- a Centre for Education, where post-primary curricular subjects leading to a State examination are taught.

Induction Programme

The Induction Programme is a flexible learning programme, funded by the Department of Education and Skills, and designed to meet the particular professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers. The programme, which is coordinated by the National Induction Programme for Teachers, builds on the learning that took place during initial teacher education. It can be tailored by a newly qualified teacher (NQT) depending on his or her particular circumstances. Subject to an overall minimum of 20 hours of professional learning, NQTs may combine school-based professional learning activities with off-site workshops. Engagement in the Induction Programme is a requirement for all NQTs wishing to be fully registered with the Teaching Council.

Mentor

A mentor is an experienced teacher who has completed Initial Mentor Training with National Induction Programme for Teachers. He or she supports the professional learning of a newly qualified teacher and facilitates his or her induction into the school and the profession, in collaboration with colleagues.

National Induction Programme for Teachers

The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) is a State-funded support service that co-ordinates the provision of a multi-faceted induction programme for teachers. Full-time team members (Regional Development Officers) are supported in their work by a team of associates (see above).

Newly qualified teacher

In this document, a newly qualified teacher refers to all newly registered teachers who are beginning their teaching career, regardless of the date of qualification.

Probation

Probation is completed when a newly qualified teacher has demonstrated to the Council that he or she has met certain post-qualification criteria.

Professional learning portfolio

A professional learning portfolio is developed over time by the newly qualified teacher (NQT), to support the process of reflection on his or her practice. The portfolio may provide a focus for the professional conversations which are central to *Droichead* and allow the NQT to identify areas in which he or she may need support or guidance. It may be created in hard copy or electronic format.

Professional Support Team

The Professional Support Team (PST) is a team of experienced and fully registered teachers, including a principal and a mentor, who work collaboratively to support the newly qualified teacher during the *Droichead* process and his or her entry into both the school and the teaching profession. All members of the PST are required to complete *Droichead* professional development provided by the National Induction Programme for Teachers.

List of acronyms

DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (Department of Education and Skills policy instrument to address educational disadvantage)
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PST	Professional Support Team



Introduction

As the backbone of our education system, teaching is an ever-evolving profession. There was a time when it was assumed that an initial teacher education qualification equipped graduates with everything they needed to be a teacher. But the world we live in is changing constantly and nowhere more so than in the field of education.

Our children and young people deserve to experience the highest quality of teaching and, in turn, our teachers deserve the best possible support to be equipped to deliver this high standard of teaching.

The work of the Teaching Council, on behalf of the profession of teaching and in the interests of pupils/students and the public, is grounded in the values of professionally-led regulation and shared professional responsibility.

Informed by these values, the Council has introduced a new model of induction and probation for primary and post-primary teachers on a pilot basis. Central to this new model is a period of post-qualification professional practice called *Droichead* (the Irish word for bridge), which is designed to reflect the importance of the induction phase on the teacher's lifelong learning journey. It marks the point where the new teacher is formally welcomed into the profession of teaching having completed the initial teacher education (ITE) phase.

Droichead is grounded in the belief that the people best placed to conduct that formal welcome are experienced fellow professionals who know what is involved in teaching and learning in their school.

These fellow professionals are themselves supported through the provision of a range of structures and resources. Consistent with the concept of ongoing improvement in any profession, *Droichead* seeks to develop the current system in a way that continues to reflect the values described above. While it is acknowledged that *Droichead* involves a new step on this journey of professionally-led regulation, it is important to capture what has been learned already by the profession, and to build on that.

The Council's plan in relation to *Droichead* has been set out in its *Policy on a New Model of Induction and Probation* for newly qualified teachers, following consultation with stakeholders, which is available for download from www.teachingcouncil.ie. It includes provision for a pilot of the proposed *Droichead* process. This guide is intended to act as a resource for schools participating in *Droichead*, and should be read in conjunction with the policy document. It is set out in question and answer format, based on the queries that have been raised with the Council during its consultation process on *Droichead* and the experience of participating schools.

2.2 Indicators of Good Practice

Criterion	Indicators of Good Practice
The NQT will have ...	The NQT will have ...
<p>engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ taken a proactive approach to his or her own learning and to reflection on his or her practice ○ participated constructively in a broad range of professional experiences ○ worked well as part of a team and contributed to the professional conversations with the PST ○ engaged fully in the life of the school commensurate with his or her stage on the continuum of teacher education ○ sought and availed of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers, and sought and availed of support and engaged with constructive feedback from the PST
<p>demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ engaged in long-term and short-term planning, and practised in line with school policies (in particular homework, assessment and other relevant teaching and learning policies) and the relevant national curriculum/syllabus or specification ○ used a range of appropriate teaching methodologies, resources and assessment techniques commensurate with his or her stage of development ○ structured and paced lessons appropriately ○ provided for differences in pupil/student abilities, backgrounds and learning styles ○ covered an appropriate range of material
<p>demonstrated an ability to practise independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ demonstrated good communication skills ○ demonstrated good classroom management skills ○ engaged with all of the school community, including parents, in a respectful and courteous manner, having due regard for the values and standards set out in the <i>Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers</i> and for the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies ○ supported, guided and motivated pupils/students towards the achievement of quality learning outcomes, including written work ○ demonstrated an ability to exercise professional judgement in dealing with a range of issues and situations, and ○ actively engaged with colleagues in the context of the school as a professional learning community, and sought their guidance and support when necessary

3 The Professional Support Team

3.1 What is the Professional Support Team (PST)?

The PST is a team of experienced and fully registered teachers, including a principal and a mentor, who work collaboratively to support the NQT during the *Droichead* process, and who support his or her entry into both the school and the profession. In turn, the PST is assisted in its work through the provision of a range of supports and resources. These include *Droichead* professional development, provided by the NIPT, and engagement in that programme is a requirement for all members of the PST (see Section 13 of this guide for further information on the supports available to the PST).

3.2 Is it essential to form a PST in order to facilitate the *Droichead* process in a school?

Yes, although there may be considerable variety in the size and composition of the team that might suit different schools. For example, in some schools the PST may consist of the principal and mentor only. In other schools, the PST may consist of the principal, mentor and other experienced teachers. There may also be circumstances where the PST may be drawn from the staff of more than one school working in collaboration.

3.3 Who are the members of the PST?

The PST is made up of experienced and fully registered teachers, either in the same school as the NQT, or in neighbouring or other schools. All members of the PST must have five years' teaching experience and have completed *Droichead* professional development, provided by the NIPT. When the members of the PST first meet they should clarify their roles and responsibilities, for example:

- The principal has an oversight role and ensures that the process is carried out appropriately, but may choose not to be directly involved in observing the NQT. He or she may delegate those aspects to the deputy principal, mentor and/or other experienced teachers, as appropriate.
- The mentor has a uniquely supportive role and works closely with the NQT on a regular basis to support planning, preparation and reflection. The mentor also facilitates a range of school-based induction experiences including observation of other teachers teaching and opportunities for the NQT to be observed.
- Other members of the PST are experienced teachers who engage with the NQT as part of the *Droichead* process and who may observe the NQT periodically and provide feedback based on those observations.

The role of the PST is to support and guide the NQT in the first stages of his or her professional journey and, with the exception of the mentor, to form an opinion in relation to the NQT's practice and make a recommendation to the Teaching Council¹. Where a PST involves more than one teacher making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, they should reach a consensus on the progress of the NQT before signing the form.

In the case of post-primary teachers, one or more members of the PST may be teachers in the same subject area, but need not necessarily be so. Where there is no PST member with the same subject, the PST may wish to consider drawing on expertise from other staff members, or perhaps from a neighbouring school.

At a minimum, it is expected that a PST will be comprised of at least two members, including a mentor. It is suggested that, at post-primary level, there might be a minimum of three teachers on a PST. It is vital that, from the outset, all members of the team and any other teachers who may support the process, are clear as to their respective roles, and that these are communicated to the NQT at the earliest opportunity.

3.4 How is the PST formed?

Where a school is considering participation in the pilot, the principal should invite teachers who are suited to the various roles, interested in being a member of the PST and who are willing to undertake professional development to be a member of the PST.

Any experienced and fully registered teacher is eligible to be involved and, ideally, such teachers will have five years' experience or more. Where only one or two teachers in a school are interested in participating in *Droichead*, teachers in neighbouring schools (or other schools in a network or cluster) may be invited to join the PST. Alternatively, a PST may be made up of the principal and mentor. In such circumstances, the principal alone makes the recommendation to the Teaching Council.

At post-primary level, where a school has several NQTs in different subject areas, more than one PST may be formed, each with different subject specialisms, depending on the NQT(s).

The important thing is that, from the outset, all members of the team are clear as to their respective roles on the PST, and that this is communicated to the NQT at the earliest opportunity.

¹ In some cases, the principal may also opt not to be involved in making the recommendation to the Teaching Council, e.g., in the case of inter-school PSTs. However, in all cases, the principal retains an important oversight role and ensures that the process is carried out appropriately.

3.5 How will inter-school PSTs work?

Where a PST is made up of teachers from more than one school, there is a need to ensure that all members of the PST attend *Droichead* professional development provided by the NIPT and have sufficient opportunity to engage with and support the NQT during the *Droichead* process including having opportunities to observe the NQT's practice.

There is also a need to ensure that all PST members are familiar with the culture, policies and practices of the school where the NQT is employed, so that the support they might offer is appropriate, relevant and consistent.

The Council believes that the pilot provides a valuable opportunity for schools to try different approaches. In doing so, much may be learned from the experience of the NIPT in establishing the associate service for schools, whereby visiting mentors play a valuable role in supporting NQTs and mentors. Whatever the approach chosen, it is crucial that the PST agrees the timeline for the *Droichead* process with the NQT at the outset.

In all cases, it is expected that local arrangements will be agreed for the reimbursement of expenses and for the sharing of release time between schools. The research bursary² will be held by the school where the NQT is working.

3.6 Can a PST be made up of teachers from primary and post-primary schools?

The purpose of the pilot is to capture the learning in schools and, for that reason, the Council is keen to see schools test different variations of the model. Through the NIPT, it welcomes expressions of interest from teachers in schools in different sectors who are interested in working together on a single PST.

3.7 Can a PST be made up of teachers in schools that are not in close proximity?

It is envisaged that schools establishing a joint PST will be in close proximity to each other, but there may be instances where, for whatever reason, a school may not wish to partner with the school or schools that are closest to it. In such circumstances, the school may wish to work with another school, which, while not in close proximity to it, has a well-established relationship with the school, for example, a Gaelscoil may wish to partner with another Gaelscoil. The Council is open to such collaborations, so long as the location of the two schools is such as to render participation viable and allow both schools to receive the level of support that they need.

3.8 What knowledge, skills and competences do PST members need to have?

Many theorists have written about the knowledge, skills, competences and professional dispositions that are needed for effective mentoring. The Council believes that the same skills, competences, etc. are

needed for all PST members who are participating in the *Droichead* process, including observing the NQT and providing feedback. We have highlighted some of the requirements here. Members of the PST should:

- be **fully registered** and, ideally, have five years' experience or more as fully registered teachers
- be **good communicators** who are sensitive to the viewpoints of others
- be **committed** to providing both professional and personal support and challenges
- be **good role models** with a good repertoire of teaching styles
- be **committed to high standards** of professional practice and conduct
- be willing to commit **time and effort** in the interest of developing both the NQT's and their own practice
- be open to, and comfortable with, their practice **being observed** by other teachers, and
- have **good relationship-building skills**, a clear understanding of the stages of teacher development (particularly the induction phase) and an ability to support and challenge the NQT to map his or her learning from ITE to the reality of the classroom.

3.9 How can a PST be established in the context of a small school?

The Council suggests that a PST can be established in any school where there are two or more experienced and fully registered teachers on the staff who are suited to the role of PST member, willing to undertake professional development and committed to supporting the *Droichead* process. It is recognised, however, that this may not be the case in all small schools. In such circumstances, an inter-school PST may be formed, whereby experienced teachers from more than one school work together in supporting the new teacher (see Section 3).

3.10 What is the role of the mentor on the PST and what is his or her input into the recommendation to the Teaching Council?

While a whole school approach to the induction of NQTs is promoted, the role of the mentor within the whole school context is crucial to the support of the NQT. NQTs value and acknowledge the importance of having 'someone there for them' as they take their first steps on their professional journey as a teacher. The mentor is someone the NQT can turn to for personal, professional and pedagogical support throughout that crucial time. The mentor supports, guides and challenges the NQT, and acts as a role model for him or her. He or she has no evaluative role, and does not make a recommendation to the Teaching Council in relation to the NQT's practice.

2 See Section 13 for information regarding the research bursary that is available to schools.

He or she does, however, contribute, as appropriate, to the PST's conversations in relation to the NQT's *Droichead* experience.

The NIPT has defined the mentor's role to include the following:

- to provide professional and pedagogical support for the NQT
- to co-ordinate the induction plan and induction activities in collaboration with the principal and the NQT
- to liaise with the principal in providing short updates on the induction of NQTs
- to liaise with other staff members in relation to opportunities for the NQT to visit their classrooms and work alongside other class teachers
- to liaise with other schools in the local area for the purpose of observing and sharing practice
- to consult with the principal on release time (for mentor and NQT) regarding substitution arrangements
- to support the NQT with his or her planning and reflection
- to enable and empower the NQT to seek and source answers to questions
- to establish clear boundaries for the mentor-NQT relationship
- to familiarise the NQT with school policies and procedures
- to work collaboratively with the NQT in the classroom, e.g., observing and giving feedback
- to accept and give feedback in a constructive, open and professional manner, and
- to engage in action planning with the NQT.

As part of the *Droichead* model, it is expected that PSTs will, at the outset of the process, agree the roles of each PST member.

3.11 Can an individual teacher make a recommendation to the Teaching Council in relation to an NQT, without the input of colleagues?

In most cases, a recommendation will be made by a number of experienced teachers working collaboratively. There may, however, be circumstances where a principal is not in a position to establish a PST, perhaps due to school size. In such circumstances he or she may wish to consider linking with another school or schools, and establishing an inter-school PST, or he or she may make the recommendation to the Council him or herself. In other cases, where a PST consists only of the principal, the mentor and an external PST member from another school, the principal may choose not to be involved in making

the recommendation to the Council in relation to the NQT, and his or her role is solely to support the NQT's induction and confirm that the process has taken place. In such circumstances, the external PST member is the only person who would make the recommendation to the Council that the condition of *Droichead* be removed from the NQT's registration. In all cases, the principal retains an important oversight role and ensures that the process is carried out appropriately.

3.12 If a school wishes to have an external member on its PST, what should it do?

A panel of teachers who are interested in acting as external members on PSTs has been established by the NIPT. Typically, such teachers are trained PST members from other *Droichead* schools. The panel is available to schools upon request from the NIPT.

3.13 How are teaching principals supported so that they can participate on a PST?

The Council recognises that the workload of all principals is significant, particularly given the context of a reducing number of teachers at middle management level. This workload issue is especially challenging for teaching principals. It is acknowledged that principals and deputy principals who are observing the practice of NQTs and otherwise supporting the *Droichead* process need additional release time over and above that which is available to them at present. It is also acknowledged that many will welcome external support, guidance and reassurance and, to that end, a network of NIPT associates is available to support the *Droichead* process. Further information on the supports available for pilot schools can be found in Section 13.

3.14 Are there any incentives for teachers to participate on a PST? How will their work be recognised?

Feedback from mentors indicates that the process of supporting new teachers' induction into the profession is a very rewarding one. While there are differences between the role of mentor and that of PST members, there are also many similarities particularly in terms of the collaborative culture that is at the heart of both, and the Council believes that it is important to build on the learning to date.

The Council believes that involvement by teachers in PSTs is equally rewarding and professionally enriching for the individual members of the team and for the school. Feedback from many teachers and PST members in participating schools has borne this out.

“ The *Droichead* process made the classroom a learning environment. ”

“ We have always supported NQTs in our school. *Droichead* brings that to a whole new level and I feel I really got to know my NQTs this year. It was a great energy boost for me and a privilege to be invited into NQTs’ classes to observe teaching and learning and to engage in reflection afterwards. ”

It is acknowledged that the success of *Droichead* will depend on experienced teachers giving of their time and experience. The Council has begun discussing ways in which that professional goodwill might be recognised. The following are among the ideas that are emerging, and feedback on these is welcomed:

- a) the inclusion of a new field on the Register of Teachers, which would clearly identify those teachers who are members of a PST
- b) in time, teachers’ work as part of a PST could be recognised in terms of their CPD requirements for renewing registration
- c) the accreditation of PST/mentor training by a college or university
- d) the Festival of Education In Learning and Teaching Excellence (FÉILTE)³ event which is organised annually to mark World Teachers’ Day, could provide a forum for the showcasing of PSTs’ work in facilitating the *Droichead* process in their schools, and
- e) the hosting of periodic Shared Learning events, with a significant number of places reserved for PST members and NQTs.

3 FÉILTE is a celebration and recognition of all that is good about teaching, where teachers from around the country showcase what they are doing in their schools to enhance the learning experiences of their pupils. FÉILTE was organised for the first time in 2013 to mark World Teachers’ Day and is now an annual festival in October.

4 Settings in which *Droichead* may take place

4.1 In what settings may a newly qualified primary teacher undertake the *Droichead* process?

A newly qualified primary teacher⁴ may undertake the *Droichead* process if employed in a full-time permanent, temporary or substitute capacity in any of the following positions:

- mainstream class teacher
- special class teacher in a mainstream school
- teacher in a special school or hospital school
- full-time resource teacher of pupils with low-incidence disabilities (as defined by the Department of Education and Skills).

To meet the professional practice requirements of *Droichead*, a primary teacher must complete a minimum of 100 school days from the date on which he or she was first appointed to a post which is recognised for *Droichead* purposes in a primary school. Such practice may be in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity and must comprise:

- at least 100 consecutive days in a single setting, or
- at least 100 days, which may take place in separate schools in two periods of not less than 50 consecutive days each, or
- at least 120 school days, which must involve a single block of not less than 50 consecutive days.

The minimum period following which a recommendation may be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding the professional practice of the NQT is a block of 50 consecutive school days within one of the class settings outlined above. It should be noted that these are absolute minimum periods of practice and the Council believes that, where the period of practice in a school exceeds those thresholds, it is advisable to defer the making of a recommendation until nearer the end of the NQT's time in the school.

4.2 In what settings may a newly qualified post-primary teacher undertake the *Droichead* process?

A newly qualified post-primary teacher may undertake the *Droichead* process if employed in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity in any of the following positions:

- a recognised post-primary school
- a special school where a portion of the students attending the school are of post-primary age and the teacher is teaching a post-primary curricular subject(s) to such students
- a Centre for Education, where post-primary curricular subjects leading to a State examination are taught.

To meet the professional practice requirements of *Droichead*, a post-primary teacher must complete 300 hours' teaching employment in an eligible setting as outlined above. A minimum of two-thirds (200 hours) of the employment must involve teaching a post-primary curricular subject or the provision of guidance counselling to a designated class on the school's timetable. Up to one-third (100 hours) of the professional practice may take place in a learning support, special needs, language support or other timetabled teaching activity.

The minimum period following which a recommendation may be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding the NQT's professional practice is 100 hours. The 100 hours⁵ must be spent teaching a curricular subject to a designated class on the school's timetable within a single post-primary school or Centre for Education.

⁴ This refers to NQTs whose remaining Teaching Council registration conditions are: a) probation/*Droichead* only, or b) probation/*Droichead* and the Induction Programme requirement.

⁵ See *Procedures for Induction and Procedures and Criteria for Probation 2015/2016*.

4.3 If an NQT successfully completes the *Droichead* process in a restricted setting, will the condition be removed for mainstream settings?

No. A teacher employed in a restricted setting is generally not afforded opportunities to teach the full curriculum and gain experience in areas such as whole-class management. For this reason, on the conclusion of the *Droichead* process in a restricted setting, the Teaching Council cannot remove the condition of *Droichead*. It will, however, update the register to reflect that the *Droichead* process has been completed in a restricted setting. The time-bound requirements regarding the condition of *Droichead* will no longer apply for so long as the teacher remains employed in such a setting.

Teachers who complete the *Droichead* process in a restricted setting, and who subsequently move to a mainstream setting in a pilot or non-pilot school, must complete the relevant (probation/*Droichead*) process within two years of taking up the position in a mainstream setting. This will require them to teach for a period of not less than 50 consecutive days in such a setting (see Section 4 for further information).

4.4 Does the professional practice requirement have to be met by the NQT by teaching only those subjects in which he or she is registered?

Newly qualified post-primary teachers can fulfil the practice requirements of *Droichead* where they are teaching a post-primary curricular subject to a designated class on the school's timetable. Ideally, such subjects would include that subject in respect of which the NQT is seeking to be fully registered and schools are reminded of the provisions of Circular 31/2011, which seeks to ensure, as far as practicable, that people appointed to teach are registered teachers with qualifications appropriate to the sector and suitable to the post for which they are employed.

4.5 Can a teacher engage in *Droichead* if he or she works on a voluntary basis?

Voluntary placement may not be considered for the purposes of the *Droichead* pilot. The Council has called on all stakeholders with a responsibility in relation to terms and conditions of employment to make every effort to ensure that a system of properly resourced, guaranteed placement in schools is put in place as a matter of urgency, for all teachers seeking full registration.



5 Supporting the newly qualified teacher

5.1 How can the PST and the school effectively support the NQT during his or her *Droichead* process?

Research has found that support and assistance for beginning teachers has a positive impact on professional practice, and on teacher commitment and retention⁶.

In establishing a supportive environment, the key is to do so in a way that equips the NQT with the skills to reflect on his or her own practice, and enables him or her to grow at an appropriate pace and with his or her own unique style. Supports are likely to include mentoring, observation and feedback, professional conversations, and observation of other teachers teaching.

5.2 In supporting the NQT, do PST members need to examine the NQT's preparation and planning?

Preparation and planning are key to good teaching and are referenced in the Indicators of Good Practice that the Council has developed (see Section 2). For that reason, they will likely receive considerable attention during the *Droichead* process. PSTs should have regard at all times to the particular professional development needs of the NQT, noting that some NQTs may need less support in this area than others.

5.3 What is meant by the term 'professional conversations'?

During the course of the *Droichead* process, an NQT will have a number of interactions with one or more members of the PST. These conversations are referred to as 'professional conversations' throughout this guide.

A professional conversation might be an opportunity for the NQT and mentor (or the NQT and another member of the PST) to exchange informal feedback on a one-to-one basis, and discuss issues arising in the course of the NQT's day-to-day practice. Alternatively, it may take the form of an arranged meeting between the NQT and some or all of the members of the PST.

The first professional conversation will likely be for the purposes of welcoming the NQT and agreeing an outline plan for the *Droichead* process, including indicative timelines for making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, having regard to the tenure of the NQT's position in the school.

Other professional conversations will follow observations of the NQT's practice and allow the NQT and the members of the PST, either individually or collectively, to share feedback in relation to the teaching and learning that was observed. It also provides an opportunity for the PST to provide guidance regarding areas for further development.

An NQT may wish to take a note to record the key aspects of the discussion and the agreed outcomes. He or she may do this as part of his or her professional learning portfolio (see Section 6 for further information in relation to the professional learning portfolio).

Once the note has been agreed between the NQT and the experienced teacher who has observed the NQT's practice, the NQT should share it with the PST.

The need to respect the confidentiality of information discussed during professional conversations is emphasised. All communication protocols should be agreed at the outset of the *Droichead* process.

In recognition of the collegial nature of teaching, the practice of discussing emerging classroom challenges with colleagues (including members of the PST) is a very positive one. Therefore, the fact that an NQT seeks guidance or support with regard to a professional practice issue, as part of a professional conversation, should be viewed in a positive light and encouraged by members of the PST. This is reflected in the NIPT's motto that "it is a sign of strength to ask for support".

5.4 What other supports are available for NQTs undertaking the *Droichead* process?

As well as the supports outlined above, the following additional supports are available for NQTs through the *Droichead* process:

- Support from the NIPT team members and associates
- *Droichead* cluster meetings (see Section 14)
- Induction programme (workshops and school-based support).

Full details of the above are available at www.teacherinduction.ie. Information is also available in the Registration Handbook which is issued to all NQTs when they register with the Teaching Council.

6 Ingersoll, R. and Strong, M. (2011). "The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research." *Review of Education Research*. Vol. 81(2), 201-233.

6 Observation, feedback and reflection

6.1 How many observations of the NQT's practice should be made during his or her *Droichead* process?

Observation is part of a multi-faceted supportive process which helps to ascertain if an NQT has demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning, and has the ability to practise independently as a fully registered teacher. Observations should be professionally developmental, formative and constructive.

A number of observations of practice by one or more members of the PST are required. The number will vary depending on a range of factors. For example, where an NQT is experiencing professional difficulties, a greater number of observations may be needed in order to identify areas for improvement and support.

The PST is best placed to determine, on a case-by-case basis, how many observations might be necessary, and to co-ordinate these within the overall school-based *Droichead* process. It is anticipated that an NQT will be observed at least twice by one or more members of the PST within a 50-day period (at primary level) or 100-hour period (at post-primary level). This is over and above any observations that may be made by the mentor.

6.2 Is there a particular format a PST member should follow when observing the NQT teaching?

As the Council is keen that the profession will shape the model that ultimately emerges from the pilot, it is reluctant to prescribe one particular format for observations of practice, as not every format will suit every NQT, PST or school.

Experience from the NIPT, and from the first phase of the pilot, tells us that it may be helpful to consider observation as a three-stage process as follows:

- a) planning the observation
- b) observation, and
- c) post-observation.

This is also reflected in the protocols for professional collaborative review of teaching and learning, which have been published in the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Guidelines for primary and post-primary schools (www.education.gov.ie).

a) Planning the observation

This stage helps to ensure that the observation is a worthwhile process, for both the NQT and observing teacher. During this stage the observer and NQT may discuss:

- the purpose or focus of the observation
- organisational details, e.g., time of observation, introductions to the pupils/students, duration of visit to the classroom, participation or non-participation whilst in the classroom
- protocols for recording and sharing observation and reflection notes, and
- time and place for post-observation conversation and feedback.

b) Observation

The model that has evolved from the NIPT can involve a range of options which may include the following:

- the experienced teacher visits the NQT's classroom for an agreed period whereby the experienced teacher engages with a group of pupils/students and focuses on both pupil/student learning and teaching
- the experienced teacher and NQT plan and co-teach a lesson⁷, and
- the experienced teacher observes in the NQT's classroom and focuses on both the pupil learning and the teaching.

c) Post-observation

If the process is to be successful, then there will be aspects of the lesson that will require attention and further work. These aspects should be based on the evidence of the observation, as reflected upon by the experienced teacher and the NQT in conversation after the lesson. It is suggested that the experienced teacher may wish to make notes to guide the post-observation conversation, while the NQT should record the agreed outcomes⁸.

⁷ Co-teaching is an effective part of preparing to support the observation process. Experience from the NIPT tells us that a co-teaching approach can render observation less intimidating for both mentor and NQT. However, it does not replace focused observation and feedback.

⁸ Templates have been developed by the NIPT which may prove useful to guide such discussions. Please refer to the NIPT *Guide to Induction and Mentoring*.

He or she may do this as part of his or her professional learning portfolio. A copy of the agreed outcomes should then be shared with the experienced teacher and other PST members, in line with the protocols agreed in planning for the observation. Please refer to Section 7, Maintaining a record of the *Droichead* process.

It is important that PST members conducting observations also keep some record of their reflections on their experience. Ideally, they should be maintained electronically, for ease of retrieval. They will be of interest to the researchers (ESRI) appointed by the Council to capture the learning from the pilot, and may be shared with them in an anonymised format, or subject to the informed consent of the NQT and appropriate ethical and data protection considerations being observed.

6.3 What should be the focus of the observations?

Whatever the format, the key to successful observation is that the focus should be on observation of both pupil learning and teaching. After that, the focus should be determined by the Council's criteria and Indicators of Good Practice (see Section 2) and, in particular, the areas where most support is needed. These may be identified in professional conversations with the NQT and in the process of building the professional learning portfolio.

6.4 What form of feedback should the PST provide to the NQT?

It is recommended that feedback to an NQT should be provided in a timely fashion. It should be based on evidence gleaned in the course of observation and appropriate to the stage that the teacher is at on the continuum of teacher education. Feedback should be clear, fair and honest, communicated in language that is appropriate to a dialogue on teaching and learning, and provided in an encouraging and sensitive manner. Ideally, observers will engage the NQT in critical reflection on his or her practice, so as to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and possible strategies for improving practice. These reflections may then feed into the NQT's professional learning portfolio.

Please visit www.teacherinduction.ie to read relevant extracts from the NIPT's *Guide to Induction and Mentoring* in relation to the provision of feedback.

6.5 Are PST members supported in developing the skills needed for observation and feedback?

Yes. Every PST member undergoes *Droichead* professional development in relation to all aspects of the *Droichead* process. This is provided by the NIPT (see Section 13 for further details). It is essential that all members of the PST attend professional development.

6.6 How many observations of other teachers' practice should the NQT make as part of his or her *Droichead* process?

Observation of other teachers' teaching is a key element of the *Droichead* experience. As with many aspects of *Droichead*, the Council is reluctant at this point to prescribe the number of observations that must be undertaken, as it is the quality rather than the quantity of observations that is important. It is recommended that there would be at least two classroom observations carried out by the NQT and that the exact number, and the classes observed, should be determined based on discussions between the NQT and the mentor.

While it is acknowledged that this may affect the teaching day of other members of staff, the experience of mentoring to date would indicate that this type of work is mutually enriching for both the NQT and their more experienced colleagues. The Council would ask experienced teachers to bear this in mind when considering requests for observation time by NQTs.

At post-primary level, it is suggested that NQTs observe other teachers teaching at both junior and senior cycle, to include a range of higher and ordinary level classes. Where possible, such observations should be in the subject areas that the NQT has been appointed to teach, though of course all observation is valuable. For example, it may be particularly helpful for the NQT to observe other teachers teaching the same class or year groups that he or she teaches.

6.7 What is the professional learning portfolio?

A professional learning portfolio is developed over time by the newly qualified teacher, to support the process of reflection on his or her practice.

It provides a focus for the professional conversations which are central to *Droichead*, and allows the NQT to identify areas in which he or she may need support or guidance.

It is distinct from a school placement folder and should not duplicate the weekly planning which the NQTs do for their work programme with pupils. Neither is it the same as the monthly progress reports (*Cuntaisí míosúla*) prepared by newly qualified primary teachers.

7 Maintaining a record of the *Droichead* process

7.1 What record is the NQT expected to keep in relation to his or her experience?

It is expected that NQTs will maintain a record of the *Droichead* process. This should include the record of the agreed outcomes following post-observation professional conversations. A template for recording the outcomes of observations is available from the NIPT. Once the record has been agreed between the NQT and the experienced teacher who has observed the NQT's practice, the NQT should share it with the PST. These protocols need to be agreed from the outset of the process.

The NQT should also maintain a record of other professional conversations and, as outlined above, it should be agreed with the PST members who participated.

Ideally, such records should be maintained electronically, for ease of retrieval and also for sharing with PST members and researchers during the pilot phase.

In maintaining records of the *Droichead* process, the NQT should respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information garnered during the process. He or she should also be mindful of ethical and data protection considerations, anonymising data where appropriate, and taking any measures necessary to restrict access to sensitive information.

7.2 What record is the PST expected to keep in relation to *Droichead*?

PST members will make notes of their observations of the NQT's practice and these will inform the agreed outcomes which will be recorded by the NQT following the post-observation professional conversation. A template for observations and recording the outcomes of these is available from the NIPT, and guidance on the use of such templates will be provided to all PST members as part of their professional development.

It is important that PST members keep some record of their reflections on their experience, so as to fully inform the research project. Ideally, such records should be maintained electronically, for ease of retrieval and for sharing with researchers during the pilot phase.

In maintaining records of the *Droichead* process, PST members should respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information garnered during the process. They should also be mindful of ethical and data protection considerations, anonymising data where appropriate, and taking any measures necessary to restrict access to sensitive information.

7.3 For how long should a school hold records in relation to the *Droichead* process?

The Council has put in place a quality assurance process and an appeals mechanism for *Droichead*, and these are summarised in Sections 8 and 10 respectively. To facilitate those processes, schools are asked to retain the records which they have created, subject to their data protection policies. The Council is aware that an advisory notice issued to all schools in relation to their role in data protection, and schools who are unsure of their obligations in this area are advised to refer to *A Guide for Data Controllers* which accompanied that advisory notice. Further information in relation to data protection is available from the website of the Data Protection Commissioner, www.dataprotection.ie.

Where an NQT who has completed some or all of the *Droichead* process leaves a school, he or she should be given a copy of relevant records which the school holds in relation to that process.

8 Ensuring consistency

8.1 What quality assurance processes are in place?

Given that the *Droichead* process is a pilot and that the outcome of the process has a significant bearing on the NQT's professional journey, it is vitally important that robust systems are in place for assuring the quality and consistency of the process and of the recommendations made at the end of that process. The following mechanisms are in place:

- a) The principal will have an important governance role in ensuring that the *Droichead* process has been properly conducted by the PST that he or she has appointed.
- b) The cluster meetings allow for PSTs to meet and discuss the criteria and the ways in which NQTs might demonstrate that they have met those criteria. In this way, the recommendations that PSTs make to the Council will be moderated.
- c) The Inspectorate has an important quality assurance role through:
 - o providing advice to PSTs, and
 - o evaluating the work of an NQT, when requested by the principal to do so.
- d) Review panels are established by the Teaching Council to quality assure the *Droichead* process. Each panel includes an independent chairperson, a practising teacher from the relevant sector and a person with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level. The review panel visits a sample of schools where the *Droichead* process has taken place, discusses the process with the Principal, the PST and the NQT and reviews the PST's and NQT's records in relation to the process. Such visits are pre-arranged and take place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. Following its review, the panel submits a report to the Teaching Council setting out its findings and recommendations in relation to the process. The report is considered by the Council and, following ratification, is published on the Council's website and circulated to the NIPT and the Inspectorate.
- e) An appeals mechanism is in place where NQTs consider that due process has not applied.

The Inspectorate may also be invited to nominate inspectors to act as external reviewers on review panels to be established by the Council to assure the quality of the *Droichead* process or on appeals panels to be established by Council (see Section 10).

9 Concluding the *Droichead* process

9.1 When does the *Droichead* process conclude?

Ideally the NQT will undertake the *Droichead* process for the duration of the time that he or she is in the position recognised for the *Droichead* process. The PST in consultation with the NQT will agree a timeline for the process. The minimum period following which a recommendation may be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding a newly qualified primary teacher's practice is a block of 50 consecutive school days within one class setting.

The minimum period following which a recommendation can be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding a newly qualified post-primary teacher's practice is a block of 100 hours teaching one or more post-primary curricular subjects to a designated class on the school's timetable⁹.

It should be noted that these are absolute **minimum** periods of practice and the Council believes that, where the period of employment in a school exceeds those thresholds, it is advisable to defer the making of a recommendation until nearer the end of his or her time at the school.

It is also open to the PST to recommend an additional period of professional practice, so that the NQT may avail of further supports to aid his or her development.

9.2 What happens at the end of the *Droichead* process?

When an NQT is nearing the conclusion of the *Droichead* process, as per the indicative timeframe agreed at the start of the process (see Section 5), a professional conversation takes place between the NQT and the PST members. By this point in time, it is expected that the NQT will have:

- completed a required minimum period of professional practice (at least one block of 50 days in the case of primary teachers, and 100 hours in the case of post-primary teachers)
- engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council
- demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning, and
- demonstrated an ability to practise independently as a qualified, registered teacher.

9.3 What form should be used in making a recommendation to the Teaching Council?

The Teaching Council's **Form A** should be used in making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, and this is available on www.teachingcouncil.ie and in Appendix A of this Guide. The Council will review the form and if all is in order, it will remove the condition of *Droichead* as appropriate on the NQT's registration record and confirm this to the teacher in writing.

9.4 When should Form A be submitted to the Teaching Council?

This form should be submitted to the Teaching Council by NQTs **only** when they have completed the *Droichead* process, including minimum periods of professional practice. NQTs should attach a copy of the email from Limerick Education Centre confirming that they have completed and submitted a DR1 form, i.e., registered for the *Droichead* process.

9.5 Can an individual teacher make a recommendation to the Teaching Council in relation to an NQT, without the input of colleagues?

In most cases, a recommendation will be made by a number of experienced teachers working collaboratively. There may, however, be circumstances where a principal is not in a position to establish a PST, perhaps due to school size. In such circumstances he or she may wish to consider linking with another school or schools, and establishing an inter-school PST, or he or she may make the recommendation to the Council him or herself. In other cases, where a PST consists only of the principal, the mentor and an external PST member from another school, the principal may choose not to be involved in making the recommendation to the Council in relation to the NQT, and his or her role is solely to support the NQT's induction and confirm that the process has taken place. In such circumstances, the external PST member is the only person who would make the recommendation to the Council that the condition of *Droichead* be removed from the NQT's registration.

⁹ A number of exceptions apply. Further details are available from *Procedures for Induction and Procedures and Criteria for Probation 2015/2016*.

9.6 What might the outcomes of the *Droichead* process be?

At the end of the *Droichead* process, the PST may form an opinion that:

- the NQT meets the requirement of *Droichead* (this may be subject to undergoing additional periods of professional practice)
- a further period of professional practice and additional supports are required before a recommendation can be made
- the assistance of the Inspectorate is required.

9.7 Does the support and observation stop when Form A has been completed and the NQT has been recommended for full registration?

No. Ideally, the support processes should continue for the duration of the NQT's tenure in that school and beyond. A teacher is just at the start of his or her lifelong journey of learning and growth when the process of *Droichead* has concluded.

9.8 What does the PST do when it is uncertain if it is in a position to make a recommendation to the Council?

Droichead is fundamentally about NQTs' professional journey from qualification to full registration, and the process of their learning as they engage with more experienced colleagues, and as they reflect on the professional conversations that take place, and on their own teaching. The PST is encouraged to take every opportunity to discuss issues and challenges as they arise, and to offer a range of supports that will enable the NQT to address those challenges and learn from them. It is also encouraged to seek additional support, advice and guidance when required. The more comprehensive the support offered, and the greater the degree of open engagement by all those involved, the better for the NQT.

Where, having regard to the practice of an NQT, the PST is uncertain as to the appropriateness of making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, the PST may wish to seek guidance through the cluster meetings or the telephone and email channels, which have been established to support PSTs.

The NIPT is available to offer additional supports via its school support service. That service aims to support and guide the PST and the NQT, and incorporates phone and email support, school visits, action planning, etc. Where, following such supports, the PST still has concerns about confirming satisfactory completion of *Droichead*, it may decide that the NQT would benefit from an additional period of professional practice and further supports, before a recommendation can be made. Following the provision of additional time and support, the PST, in consultation with the NIPT, may decide to request assistance from the Inspectorate.

This is done via Form DR2OCI, which can be requested from Limerick Education Centre by emailing probation@lec.ie. The completed form should be submitted by the principal to the Office of the Chief Inspector.

Having reviewed the submission, the Inspectorate will then:

- observe and evaluate the NQT's practice
- provide oral feedback to him or her, to the principal (or other registered teacher nominated by the principal)
- make a recommendation to the Teaching Council.

It is emphasised that the assistance of the Inspectorate should only be sought where other supports, guidance and advice have not addressed the difficulties the NQT is experiencing. If an NQT has not demonstrated that he or she has met the *Droichead* criteria within the timeframe envisaged at the beginning of the process, it may be a matter of requiring more time and further guidance, rather than an immediate request for assistance from the Inspectorate.

9.9 What happens when the PST considers that the NQT needs more time?

Where the PST is of the view that further time is required in order to make a recommendation to the Teaching Council, the *Droichead* process may be extended. Observations of practice will also continue, and feedback may be further discussed in professional conversations as part of the ongoing process of support for the NQT. Additional supports may be sought from the NIPT, as appropriate. At the end of this period, a further professional conversation with the PST will take place. If necessary, the PST may decide, in consultation with the NIPT, to request assistance from the Inspectorate.

When the PST decides that assistance from the Inspectorate is required, such requests should be made by the principal. Requests should be made to the Office of the Chief Inspector using Form DR20CI which can be requested from Limerick Education Centre by emailing probation@lec.ie.

The NIPT is available to offer additional supports via its school support service.



14 Clustering

14.1 What is the purpose of the cluster meetings?

Cluster meetings provide an opportunity for PSTs and NQTs to receive professional learning from the NIPT, share their experiences of *Droichead* with teachers from other schools, and receive support from the NIPT and an inspector assigned to that cluster. They are of particular value to PSTs that are comprised of teachers from more than one school, and in circumstances where a recommendation is being made by an external PST member (see Section 9). They also provide a useful means of ensuring a consistent approach by PSTs making a recommendation to Council.

14.2 Where do cluster meetings take place?

Cluster meetings are normally arranged in designated Education Centres.

14.3 When do cluster meetings take place?

Cluster meetings will take place in the evenings, three times during the school year.

14.4 Who may attend cluster meetings?

All teachers who are members of PSTs, and NQTs may attend the cluster meetings. Attendance at all cluster meetings by NQTs is recognised for the purposes of meeting the Induction Programme requirement.

14.5 Who chairs cluster meetings?

The cluster meetings are chaired by the Director of the Education Centre or by the NIPT.

NIPT associates provide a considerable degree of support and external reassurance for principals and PST members.



Appendix D

Key points of information about *Droichead*

1

Droichead provides a **supportive** framework for a whole school approach, to formally **welcome** newly qualified teachers into the most important profession in society.

2

Droichead offers teachers as professionals an unprecedented **opportunity** to shape education policy that directly affects them and their colleagues. The Council has made significant changes to the process in response to feedback from the participating schools, and will continue to listen to the voices of all professionals who are involved.

3

In recognition that a teacher is newly qualified, the *Droichead* process focuses on **progression** of a teacher's learning, rather than perfection.

4

Schools participating in *Droichead* are provided with a **programme of professional learning** including release time, off-site, online and school-based professional development and access to ongoing support from a *Droichead* Associate (NIPT). A research bursary of €1,000 is also available until summer 2016.

5

A **Professional Support Team** (PST) includes the principal, mentor and other members of staff.

6

Mentoring and Professional Conversations are at the heart of the *Droichead* process, which involves support, challenge and a shared vision of teaching for both the profession, and within the reality of each school context.

7

The PST use the ***Droichead* Criteria** and *Indicators of Good Practice* to guide the process. School context examples are identified to enable the translation of these criteria into the practical reality of school life.

8

For the school year 2014/2015, there were 149 schools participating in *Droichead*, with 279 newly qualified teachers. The process is being shaped from the **feedback** provided by these schools, both from the **research** being conducted by the ESRI, and on an ongoing basis as communicated by NIPT.

9

It is critical that *all* types of schools are involved in shaping this process so that policy reform is **developed, informed** and most importantly, **owned** by the teaching profession itself.

10

Should a school wish to have an **external PST member** (i.e. a teacher from another school), NIPT have a panel available of trained PST members.

