

## **Covid-19 protocol for exceptional substitute teaching and supervision requirements in the 2021/ 2022 Academic year.**

All stakeholders are aware that the goal for the next academic year 2021/2022 is to ensure that schools re-open as fully as possible.

This will be a significant undertaking in light of the requirements for social distancing as guided by available public health advice.

An adequate supply of teachers to provide substitution cover will be an acute requirement in this context in order to ensure that schools remain open in the event that where teachers are unable to attend the school site for health reasons.

The Council's work on this matter is underpinned by the following section of the Teaching Council Act:

### **Section 6 (b) (i) (ii)**

*The objects of the Council shall be –*

- *To establish and promote the maintenance and standards of –*
  - o Programmes of teacher education and training*
  - o Teaching, knowledge, skill and competence of teachers in recognised primary and post-primary schools*

### **Draft protocol for the filling of substitution requirements during the 2021/2022 academic year**

The following protocol deals solely with the exceptional circumstances that are faced by the education system in the school year 2021/2022. It does not set a precedent and cannot be viewed as a long-term strategy for ITE programmes or to address structural issues in teacher supply.

The Teaching Council's School Placement Guidelines continue to apply. In particular, the role of the co-operating teacher is unaffected by these provisions.

These provisions must be read in conjunction with circular 44/2019.

## Core principles:

1. In compliance with Department of Education circulars, other than in certain limited circumstances, schools must fill short-term vacant supervision and substitution positions by engaging a teacher who is registered with the Teaching Council. It is imperative that the following categories are exhausted in descending order in seeking to do so:
  - a. Registered teachers for the appropriate sector on part-time hours in the school who may have capacity to teach the classes.
  - b. Registered teachers for the appropriate sector who are not in full or part-time employment
    - i. Schools' attention is drawn to the national on-line portal for short-term vacancies *Sub Seeker* hosted on education posts.ie.
    - ii. The Teaching Council will launch a communications campaign targeted at registered teachers in this category encouraging them to list themselves on the website and support the education system in this critical hour.
  - c. Registered teachers who are job sharing.
  - d. Teachers who are registered under a route of registration other than the school sector including:
    - i. Teachers who are registered under one Route of Registration as set out in the Teaching Council's regulations and who are in the process of fulfilling the qualification route for another. Conditions which apply to these teachers are outlined in No. 7 below.
2. The Teaching Council acknowledges that accredited programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provide a vital channel for ensuring that our education system provides a world-class teaching profession. Safeguarding the integrity of these programmes is of critical importance both in the context of the current public health pandemic and into the future. The Council also acknowledges the diversity of ITE models across HEI providers.
3. HEIs acknowledge that some additional flexibility is required in programme delivery so as to ensure that registered teachers are available to the safest extent possible to facilitate quality teaching and learning for all learners in schools.
4. The Department of Education acknowledges that all education partners and stakeholders, including school management and teacher unions, must support quality school placement for all student teachers as a key component of accredited programmes of ITE.
5. School management acknowledge that a clear commitment from schools to hosting student teachers on placement is essential to support quality teacher education and to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers to meet the identified needs of the system, including Irish medium education.

6. Teacher unions acknowledge that a high quality, university-based, research-informed teacher education system is essential to supporting the initial formation period of the teaching profession.
7. In the case of teachers in 1 (c) (i) above, the following conditions will apply:
  - a. The needs of learners (children, young people and adult learners) are of paramount importance. It is essential that we continue to provide the best quality teaching and learning experience for all.
  - b. In the context of the Covid-19 public health emergency, the health and safety of all members of the school community supersedes all other concerns and all requirements will be followed in this regard.
  - c. Any school seeking to offer substitution and supervision opportunities to teachers in this category must have confirmed their willingness to be a host school for placement with at least one HEI provider of accredited programmes of ITE. In particular, they must have confirmed the offer of placement to teachers in this category in writing with the relevant HEI(s) before substitution can be offered.
  - d. Teachers in this category should normally undertake substitution and supervision only in their placement school.
  - e. It is imperative that teachers in this category are facilitated in completing course requirements. The integrity of the assessment process of school placement must be safeguarded, in the interests of all parties to school placement. Therefore, the total time spent teaching by teachers in this category, including placement and substitution, cannot compromise their engagements with course requirements. Each HEI has determined its own requirements in compliance with Council standards and will liaise with schools in this regard.
  - f. Where teachers in this category are offered substitution or supervision opportunities above and beyond their placement hours, it must be clear that it is at the discretion of the student teacher whether to avail of the opportunity. In the interests of their wellbeing, they cannot be compelled, explicitly or implicitly, to undertake the substitute teaching work. Any substitution or supervision work undertaken must be in a paid capacity.
  - g. In certain circumstances, HEIs may, in agreement with school management, advise that the teacher on placement not undertake additional substitution and supervision e.g. where there are concerns about fulfilment of placement assessment requirements.