

Protocol for registered teachers on school placement during the 2020 / 2021 Academic year.

All stakeholders are aware that the goal for the next academic year 2020/2021 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 teachers are unable to attend school including COVID-19 related 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*

Protocol for the filling of substitution requirements by particular categories of registered teachers during the 2020/2021 academic year

The following protocol deals solely with the exceptional circumstances that are faced by the education system in the school year 2020/2021. 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.

Core principles:

- a. 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. The

sequencing for this process is provided for in Department of Education circulars, including 44/2019, 31/2011 and 59/2019.

- b. Subject to the sequencing set out in these circulars, for the purposes of supervision and substitution, schools may engage teachers who are registered under a route of registration other than the school sector. This includes 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. The protocol below sets out the parameters for this process 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. School placement is an essential element of learning to become a teacher. All schools should be open to being involved in school placement and supporting student teachers' learning.
 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 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, 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. Teachers in this category should normally undertake supervision and substitution only in their placement school. This is to underpin the support and guidance which schools give to their teachers in their professional learning. It also helps to support the quality of learning experienced by all students. In turn it will enhance the schools' capacity to meet supervision and substitution needs which arise. Therefore, 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.
 - d. 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 engagement with course requirements. Each HEI has determined its own requirements in compliance with Council standards and will liaise with schools in this regard.

- e. 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.
- f. In certain circumstances, HEIs may, in agreement with school management, advise that the teacher on placement does not undertake additional substitution and supervision e.g. where there are concerns about fulfilment of placement assessment requirements.
- g. The attached MOU template should be used by schools and HEIs to clarify the arrangements of implementation of this protocol for teachers in this category at local level.