

**Key Themes:**

The day concluded with a roundtable sharing session, exploring three key questions. Initial collation of responses to these questions indicated a number of salient themes, which were outlined by Tomás Ó Ruairc (Director of the Teaching Council) in his closing address. The questions and a summary of the responses are outlined below:

1. How can we translate the energy and learning from today, into one small action in our school/HEI?

Highlighted actions here included the use of varied but efficient models for communication and collaboration, and a level of consistency around same. Open communication between HEIs is vital here, where they might collaboratively explore their respective approaches before coming together with schools. Consistency here specifically refers to the multiple relationships evident in the school placement experience, where there is clarity of expectations, roles, etc., among student teachers, tutors, co-operating teachers, and principals. A recognition of the varying roles therein is imperative, and in tandem a heightened awareness of the importance of principals and deputy principals in cultivating positive school placement experiences. In essence there is now a timely need for open conversations between all stakeholders.

2. What do you see as a challenge facing School- HEI Partnerships and what are the possible solutions to same?

Perhaps expectedly, time featured as the primary challenge identified by groups. Comments in this vein centred on pre-existing roles and responsibilities for teachers, and the time required to effectively support student teachers. Offered solutions here included a structured approach where school-wide timetables take account of student teachers' needs, and indeed those of the teachers, post holders, principals, and deputy principals (involved in the school placement experience). Similarly, groups emphasised the need for a consideration of the workload required in facilitating school placement, which has previously relied on goodwill on the part of school staff. Possible solutions here included incentives, which would be accounted for in an overarching (and agreed) vision around school placement, between all stakeholders. Grading also featured as a challenge, with

groups suggesting non-grading as a possibility for ITE students in certain stages of their programme, as well as a collaborative agreement across HEIs regarding grading systems. The latter would be especially welcome given that many schools synchronously facilitate ITE students from multiple HEIs.

3. Are there any other opportunities for developing School-HEI Partnership that may not have arisen today?

Groups highlighted a number of opportunities here, including the greater use of technology in cultivating virtual relationships, and the creation of a digital platform to develop appropriate structures between HEIs and schools, e.g., the roll out of the Teacher, University and School - School Placement System (TUS<sup>1</sup>). Groups also suggested formally establishing a number of roles in schools and HEIs, e.g., dedicated partnership officers in HEIs and within schools. Several groups highlighted the opportunities and indeed requirement for professional learning in the area of school placement. This would be offered not only to those involved, but more importantly to whole faculties/ school staff groups as all are essentially impacted by, and have the capacity to impact, ITE students' school placement experiences. Finally, some groups sought more flexibility with respect to ITE students' activities and responsibilities during placement, where broadening these would enrich the overall experience and enhance the capacity for rich reflection.

The next phase of the Council's work on school placement will include the production of a **school placement eBook** in spring 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently in its first phase, after a pilot, the *TUS (Teacher/University/School) online platform*, developed by Mary Immaculate College and the University of Limerick, seeks to facilitate more streamlined communication (e.g. sharing of documentation) between the HEI placement tutors and students. Currently used primarily as a platform for securing and confirming placements for students, it has both administrative and pedagogic potential.