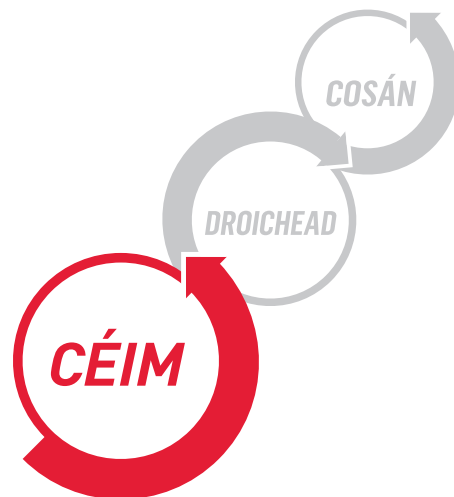


An Chomhairle  
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council



# Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education

2021



# Contents

Foreword	2
<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction	3
Professional Accreditation Process	3
Accreditation Cycle	4
General Principles	4
Programme Standards	4
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>6</b>
Routes to Accreditation	6
Stages in Review Process	7
<b>SECTION 3</b>	<b>10</b>
Review Panel	10
Composition of the Review Panel	10
Role of the Review Panel and Rapporteur	10
<b>SECTION 4</b>	<b>12</b>
Engagement with HEIs	12
<b>SECTION 5</b>	<b>14</b>
The Review Panel Report	14
<b>SECTION 6</b>	<b>15</b>
Addressing Requirements	15
<b>SECTION 7</b>	<b>16</b>
Appeals Process	16
<b>SECTION 8</b>	<b>18</b>
General	18
<b>SECTION 9</b>	<b>19</b>
Accreditation Fees	19
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>20</b>

# Foreword

Further to the launch of *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* in November 2020, the Teaching Council is pleased to publish the procedures for the review and accreditation of programmes of ITE.

On behalf of the Council, we would like to thank all those who have informed the development of this document including:

- survey findings from Review Panel Chairs and HEIs following the first cycle of review and accreditation (2015)
- an Impact Consultation Exercise (2017-2018)
- feedback from the Céim consultation process (2019-2020)
- an internal literature review case study exercise on international and national regulatory accreditation processes (2020)
- an external literature review conducted in relation to the development of the Staff:Student Ratio (2020)
- piloting of the Staff: Student Ratio (2021)
- consultation with HEI ITE Heads of Education and academic staff (2021)
- a discussion group with current Review Panel members (2021)

The Council's role in relation to the professional accreditation of programmes of ITE is set out in the Teaching Council Act (2001 – 2015).

The Council recently reviewed its policy on accreditation standards for programmes of ITE. Its revised standards are now set out in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*.

The Council has also reviewed the procedures by which it carries out the accreditation process. Its revised procedures are as set out in this document, *Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education (2021)*.

The *Procedures* document clearly delineates the routes to accreditation and stages in the review process. The revision of the *Procedures* is an important step in further embedding programme standards and compliance with those standards into ITE provision.

The *Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education (2021)* document should be read in conjunction with *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* and the Teaching Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*.

Taken together, these documents underscore the Council's commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning for all teachers and learners.



**Tomás Ó Ruairc**  
Director



**Seán Mc Mahon**  
Chairperson

# Section 1

## Introduction

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006 as the professional standards body for teaching. It is the statutory body charged with setting the standards for entry to the teaching profession in Ireland and in ensuring that these standards are upheld.

In everything it does, the Teaching Council works within the framework of the Teaching Council Acts, 2001- 2015 (as amended) ('the Act'). The Act confers on the Teaching Council significant functions with regard to teacher education. All of these functions are implemented by the Teaching Council within the context of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*.

These *Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education* (the "Procedures") set out the manner in which the Teaching Council exercises its role in reviewing and accrediting all programmes of initial teacher education, in accordance with Section 38 of the Act. The accreditation standards are set out in the document *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. The Procedures should be read in conjunction with *Céim: Standards for Initial teacher Education* and the Teaching Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Both are available for download from [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

## Professional Accreditation Process

Professional accreditation for any profession is a judgement as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into that profession. It is distinct from academic accreditation, which is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree/diploma. Professional accreditation is distinguished by the existence of standards that are specific to the profession, these having been defined in consultation with members of that profession and other relevant parties.

**All programmes of teacher education shall have received academic accreditation before formally applying for professional accreditation with the Teaching Council.**

Professional accreditation from the Teaching Council offers an opportunity for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to demonstrate they are providing quality programmes of teacher education which are designed and delivered in line with the Teaching Council's professional accreditation standards.

All teacher education programmes in Ireland that lead to registration with the Teaching Council shall have professional accreditation.

New programmes of teacher education should be accredited by the Teaching Council, prior to programme commencement.

## Accreditation Cycle

Accreditation is awarded for a specified time period (normally five years). The Teaching Council aims to review all programmes delivered by a HEI consecutively, with each HEI having its own accreditation cycle. Accreditation may be granted for a period of less than five years, in order to maintain a HEI's accreditation cycle.

If, during the period between reviews, a material change to a programme is proposed, the HEI **shall** notify the Teaching Council of this, **unless the change is a result of a requirement from the most recent review**. A material change is anything that may affect compliance with the professional standards set out in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*.

Where a material change has occurred, a review shall be arranged.

## General Principles

In reviewing and accrediting programmes of initial teacher education, the Teaching Council is committed to the following general principles:

- mutual respect and trust as the basis for positive professional relationships between the Teaching Council and the HEIs
- partnership and collaboration through the participation of HEIs in the review process
- review and accreditation informed by evidence as a means of ensuring high standards of initial teacher education in Ireland
- recognition of the diversity of contexts in which programmes are provided
- cognisance of the diversity of modes (e.g. blended models, synchronous, asynchronous) by which programmes are taught
- consistency and fairness throughout the review and accreditation process
- confidentiality in relation to all information obtained during the course of a review, having due regard to the Teaching Council's statutory obligations
- clear communication of outcomes to HEIs and the wider public
- the HEI's right to provide feedback in relation to the Review Panel's draft report

## Programme Standards

*Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* is divided into two sections:

- 1) The Programme Standards
- 2) The Graduate Teacher Standards

The **Programme Standards** are the benchmark for the process of review and accreditation. Review Panels shall base their recommendation on The **Programme Standards**. The Graduate Teacher Standards will not be measured during the accreditation process.

The **Programme Standards** are listed below:

- 1 Programme Design (to include staff:student ratio, please refer to Appendix 1 for the formula for how to calculate the student ratio)
- 2 Programme Resourcing
- 3 School Placement

Providers should note the following:

- Where **'shall'** is referenced in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*, this is a mandatory requirement that the HEI programme provider must fulfil
- Where **'should'** is referenced in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*, the Council expresses an 'ideal' scenario but recognises that certain challenges may arise in its implementation. Where the ideal scenario may not be achieved, the provider will be required to explain why (comply or explain process) in their submission documentation and during any Review Panel meetings, as required

# Section 2

## Routes to Accreditation

Types of Review	
<b><i>New programme</i></b>	<p>A provider will notify the Teaching Council of the proposed introduction of a new programme. The Teaching Council will advise on the next steps to be taken.</p> <p>The decision as to whether a HEI should be encouraged to proceed with more detailed programme planning and the submission of a pro forma, will take into account a range of considerations, including supply issues.</p> <p>New programmes shall be subject to a “General Review” meaning that all aspects of the programme will be reviewed.</p>
<b><i>Addition to existing programme</i></b>	<p>Addition to existing programme applies to existing post-primary programmes, where a new subject strand/methodology is being added.</p>
<b><i>Accreditation of existing programme</i></b>	<p>The accreditation of a programme typically lasts for five years. When this period is over, accreditation must be awarded again.</p> <p>The Teaching Council will initiate this process by notifying the HEI that they have been selected for review. The Teaching Council will set up a preliminary accreditation briefing meeting between the HEI and Council staff to discuss the review process.</p> <p>A thematic review of an existing programme may be carried out (at the Teaching Council’s discretion). A thematic review may focus on specific areas, taking account of national policy priorities, changes to programme design, or internal reviews of programmes which may impact on an aspect of a programme.</p>



Monitoring Processes between Accreditation Periods	
<b>Material change</b>	<p>The HEI shall notify the Teaching Council of a proposed material change to an accredited programme.</p> <p>A material change is anything that may affect compliance with the professional standards set out in <i>Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education</i>. It can include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a change to the title of a programme</li> <li>○ a change to the structure of a programme</li> <li>○ a change to the number of credits carried by the programme or its components</li> <li>○ a change to the entry requirements</li> <li>○ a change to module design or content</li> </ul> <p>A material change shall require the establishment of a Review Panel and may involve a site visit/meeting with the HEI.</p>
<b>Policy mapping and data collation</b>	<p>The Teaching Council will engage on a regular basis with HEIs to support the mapping of national policy priorities on programme delivery.</p> <p>This process will also include regular data updates on national education policy and strategy.</p> <p>The HEI may be expected to provide data on different areas, such as school placement requirements and entry levels into different courses.</p> <p>This will help with national policy development on teacher supply and other areas.</p>

## Stages in Review Process

	New Programme	Existing Programme Renewal	Addition to Programme
<b>STEP 1</b> <i>Notification</i>	The HEI will notify the Teaching Council of the concept of the new programme. An initial meeting to discuss the new programme will be held between the HEI and Teaching Council staff.	The Teaching Council will notify the HEI six months in advance of their next scheduled accreditation review.	The HEI will notify the Teaching Council of the concept for the addition to programme.  A meeting to discuss the addition will be held between the HEI and Teaching Council staff.
<b>STEP 2</b> <i>Preliminary Meeting between Teaching Council staff and HEI</i>  <i>(This meeting will provide the HEI with an opportunity to ask questions on any aspects of completion of the pro forma.)</i>	If the HEI progresses with development of the new programme, a preliminary meeting will be arranged with the HEI.	A preliminary meeting will be arranged with the HEI.	If the HEI progresses with the addition to programme, a preliminary meeting will be arranged with the HEI.

	New Programme	Existing Programme Renewal	Addition to Programme
<b>STEP 3</b> <i>Submission of pro forma</i>	The HEI completes the pro forma in full and submits it to the Teaching Council.	The HEI completes the relevant sections of the pro forma and submits it to the Teaching Council (General or thematic review may apply.)	The HEI completes the relevant sections of the pro forma and submits it to the Teaching Council.
<b>STEP 4</b> <i>Desk-based review of pro forma</i>	The Teaching Council staff conduct a desk-based review of the pro forma. Contact is made with the HEI regarding any further information or clarifications needed.		
<b>STEP 5</b> <i>Appointment of Review Panel</i>	Once all documents are received, a Review Panel is appointed by the Director and briefed by the Teaching Council staff.		
<b>STEP 6</b> <i>Review Panel Meeting 1</i>	The Review Panel meets and reviews documentation. Following this meeting, contact will be made with the HEI seeking further clarifications as necessary and giving notice regarding a site visit if required and/or meeting with relevant HEI personnel. If a site visit is required, the HEI is informed of the members of the Review Panel.		
<b>STEP 7</b> <i>Engagement with HEI</i>	Site Visit and/or Meeting arranged	Site Visit and/or Meeting arranged	Site Visit and/or Meeting arranged
<b>STEP 8</b> <i>Review Panel Meeting 2</i>	Review Panel meets to agree recommendations	Review Panel meets to agree recommendations	Review Panel meets to agree recommendations
<b>STEP 9</b> <i>Reporting</i>	<p>Reporting Stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The draft report is prepared by the Review Panel Chairperson and Rapporteur and agreed with Panel members.</li> <li>○ The draft report will be issued to the HEI with a request that the HEI respond with any feedback and confirmation of matters of fact and accuracy within 30 days. The feedback received will be forwarded to the Review Panel who will consider it when preparing the final draft report. Council staff will liaise with the HEI and Review Panel regarding the feedback, as necessary.</li> <li>○ The draft report will be finalised by the Review Panel.</li> </ul> <p>Where more than one programme is being reviewed, separate reports will be prepared in relation to each programme.</p>		
Note: In the interest of consistency, the Teaching Council staff may seek clarification or raise queries with the Review Panel during the review process, including in relation to any report(s) prepared by the Review Panel.			
<b>STEP 10</b> <i>Education Committee</i>	<p>The Review Panel Chairperson will present the report to the Education Committee who will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Approve the accreditation of the programme; or</li> <li>2) Refuse accreditation</li> </ol> <p>If the Education Committee approves the accreditation of the programme, it may include requirements to be met within a specified timeframe.</p>		

	New Programme	Existing Programme Renewal	Addition to Programme
<b>STEP 11</b> <i>Outcome notification to the HEI</i>	The HEI is notified of the outcome and, if necessary, the appeals period of 30 days.		
<b>STEP 12</b> <i>Publication and dissemination of report</i>	The report is published on the Teaching Council's website and the Minister for Education is advised.		

## Material change

Step	Action
1	The HEI notifies the Teaching Council of the proposed material change. A material change is anything that may affect compliance with the professional standards set out in <i>Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education</i> .
2	A preliminary meeting is arranged between the HEI and Teaching Council staff to discuss the proposed change, if deemed necessary.  The HEI may be requested to submit a revised pro forma taking account of the change.
3	The Teaching Council staff conduct a desk-based review of the documentation and decide if the change is material.
4	If the change is not deemed to be a material change, it will be noted by the Head of Initial Teaching Education and Induction ("ITEI") and Director of the Teaching Council.  If the change is deemed to be a material change, a Review Panel shall be convened to consider the revised programme.

# Section 3

## Review Panel

Where a review of a programme is to take place, the Director of the Teaching Council will establish a Review Panel, to be assisted by a Rapporteur, to carry out the review and to make a recommendation in relation to accreditation of the programme.

## Composition of the Review Panel

A Review Panel will normally consist of no more than three people and will be supported in its work by a Rapporteur. The composition of the Review Panel will normally be as follows:

- an independent Review Panel Chairperson
- a registered teacher with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level in the sector in question
- an external expert in the area of teacher education or accreditation processes in another system/jurisdiction.

The Review Panel may engage further external expertise if necessary.

In the case of concurrent post-primary programmes, relevant external expertise may be engaged to support the Review Panel for the purposes of evaluating specialist subject context.

## Role of the Review Panel and Rapporteur

The Review Panel Chairperson will:

- chair the Review Panel meetings
- liaise with the Review Panel members, the Rapporteur and the HEI in scheduling a site visit/meeting, as required
- prepare an initial draft of the Review Panel report with the Rapporteur
- forward the draft report to Review Panel members for comment and agreement
- liaise with the Teaching Council staff in the event that clarifications are sought or queries are raised, including in relation to any report(s) prepared by the Review Panel
- submit and present the final report to the Teaching Council's Education Committee

The responsibilities of Review Panel members will include:

- analysing all documentation provided by the HEI
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information obtained during the course of a review
- participating in the Review Panel meetings and programme visit
- contributing to the Review Panel recommendation and report
- providing the Review Panel Chairperson with comments on any feedback submitted by the HEI in relation to the draft report
- agreeing the final Review Panel report

The Rapporteur will:

- provide administrative support to the Review Panel
- attend all Review Panel meetings and any site visits/meetings
- record the Review Panel's observations and findings
- work with the Review Panel Chairperson to draft a report

# Section 4

## Engagement with HEIs

This process can vary, depending on the route to accreditation:

- New programme accreditation
- Accreditation of existing programme
- Addition to programme

As part of the review process and at the discretion of the Review Panel Chairperson, HEIs may meet with or be visited by the Review Panel. This may involve:

### 1 Meeting(s) /Interview(s)

- The Review Panel may request a meeting(s) or interview(s) with any number of personnel associated with the programme, including Dean of Faculty and HEI programme staff, current students, alumni, Treoraithe from participating schools, and any other person it deems appropriate.
- The Review Panel may also visit HEI partner schools where student teachers are facilitated on school placement or request interviews with school personnel.
- The Review Panel may request video footage of facilities in lieu of a physical visit.

Or

### 2 Site Visit

#### Advance Notification

As part of the preliminary accreditation meeting, the HEI will be advised that a site visit may take place once they submit their application for accreditation. If a site visit is deemed necessary, a preliminary meeting will be scheduled where the Review Panel Chairperson and Rapporteur/member of the Teaching Council staff will outline:

- the purpose of the Review Panel visit and the various activities generally included as part of the visit
- the documentation to be made available during the visit
- the facilities the HEI is expected to make available during the visit
- the categories of persons the HEI is expected to make available for interview during the visit

The HEI can raise any contextual issues which should be borne in mind by the Review Panel.

The dates of the visit are formally agreed, including the dates on which the school placement element of the visit will be conducted.

Review Panel members will indicate their preferences with regard to the type of activities they wish to observe/experience, and the visit schedule will be discussed and drafted.

Subsequent to that meeting, the Rapporteur, in consultation with the Review Panel Chairperson, will liaise with the HEI with a view to finalising the schedule not less than three weeks before the visit. The Review Panel and Rapporteur may also be accompanied by Teaching Council staff.

## Visit activities

Typically, a visit to a HEI will last for the duration of between half a day to one full day. A list of visit activities is set out below:

- 1** meeting with:
  - President of the HEI
  - the Dean of Faculty/Head of School/Head of Department/Programme Director
  - Head of school placement
  - programme staff
  - school placement tutors to discuss their role as mentors and evaluators
  - a sample of student teachers in all years to discuss their experience of the programme
  - external examiners and/or review of their reports
- 2** interviews with recent programme graduates
- 3** interviews with Treoraithe and Principals in schools where newly qualified teachers from the programme have been employed or where student teachers have completed the school placement

The visit may also include the inspection of programme facilities and observation of a sample of lectures, seminars or tutorials (inspections and observations may be virtual/utilise video footage).

## Facilities required by Review Panel during a physical visit

To facilitate a physical visit by the Review Panel, HEIs are asked to make the following facilities available for the duration of the visit:

- a private meeting room for use by the Review Panel with telephone and email access and facilities for viewing student work presented in electronic format
- refreshments for the Review Panel members in the meeting room
- a member of staff nominated as facilitator/guide for the Review Panel for the duration of the visit

# Section 5

## The Review Panel report

A Review Panel report will cover:

- the background to the review including reference to the Procedures
- a statement with regard to the publication of the report on the Teaching Council's website, [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie)
- an overview of the review process including the dates of any visits that took place, and details of Review Panel membership
- an outline of the documentation considered as part of the review process
- details of the activities undertaken as part of the review visit
- a clear recommendation as to whether Teaching Council accreditation of the programme should be granted and, if so, the number of years for which this accreditation will apply. The maximum period of accreditation is five years.
- details of requirements, if any, and the specified timeframe for implementing them, i.e. addressing identified shortfalls within 6 months of receiving the final Review Panel report
- details of any wider issues to which the Review Panel wishes to draw attention.



# Section 6

## Addressing requirements:

- Within six months of receiving the final review report, the HEI will address the requirement(s).
- The HEI will notify the Teaching Council that the requirement(s) has been addressed by submitting the “Accreditation Requirements Addressed” template for review.
- The Teaching Council staff will review the template and contact the HEI if any further information is required.
- Where a requirement has clearly been fulfilled, this will be noted by the Director of the Teaching Council and Head of ITEI.
- If there is ambiguity around the fulfilment of a requirement, a review may take place.

# Section 7

## Appeals Process

A HEI may appeal a decision of the Teaching Council in relation to accreditation.

Such an appeal must be made in accordance with the procedures set out below.

## Procedure

- 1** The HEI should submit in writing the reasons or basis for the appeal, providing documentary evidence where relevant. Appeals should be addressed to the Director of the Teaching Council and marked “Accreditation Appeals”.
- 2** A HEI wishing to appeal must submit its appeal to the Director of the Teaching Council within 30 days of the date of issue of the final report. For the purposes of the appeals procedure, the relevant date is that on which the report is dispatched from the Teaching Council.
- 3** The Director of the Teaching Council may decide to gather information or documentation to assist the Council in deciding on the appeal. The Director may take steps such as:
  - raising queries with the original Review Panel
  - raising queries with the Education Committee which reviewed the application in the first instance
  - appointing an Accreditation Appeals Panel, where necessary (see 7 – 10 below)
  - seeking any other information as may be necessary on a case by case basis
- 4** The Director will present to the Council in relation to matters including the nature of the appeal, and any steps taken by the Director to gather information and documentation.
- 5** The Council will decide whether to grant the appeal in part or in whole. The Council may request that the Director gather further information or documentation (including taking some or all of the steps referred to at 3 above) before making a decision.
- 6** When the Council is considering an appeal, no member of the Education Committee will take part in the appeal, or be present at the meeting(s) of Council when the appeal is being considered.

## Appeals Panel

- 7** As set out at (3) above, a decision may be made to appoint an Accreditation Appeals Panel. If so, the Appeals Panel will consist of
  - an independent Chairperson.
  - a registered teacher with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level in the sector in question.
  - an external expert in the area of teacher education or accreditation processes in another system/ jurisdiction.
- 8** An Accreditation Appeals Panel may seek clarification, as appropriate, from the members of the Review Panel which considered the application in the first instance.
- 9** The Accreditation Appeals Panel can recommend that the programme be accredited or refused accreditation. The Accreditation Appeals Panel may recommend accreditation with requirement(s) to be met within a specified timeframe.
- 10** The Council will decide to accredit the programme or refuse accreditation. The Council may recommend accreditation with requirements to be met within a specified timeframe.
- 11** The HEI will be notified of the outcome of the appeal.

# Section 8

## General

- 1** Non-compliance with the Procedures shall not render any proceedings or steps void. Such proceedings or steps may be set aside either wholly or in part as irregular, or amended or otherwise dealt with in such manner or upon such terms as the Education Committee or Council, as the case may be, thinks fit.
- 2** When considering applications for accreditation and/or appeals, the Education Committee and Council will endeavour to act at all times in accordance with the principles of fair procedures.
- 3** The Procedures have been approved by the Teaching Council on the advice of the Education Committee.
- 4** The Procedures will be reviewed by the Education Committee on a periodic basis. The Procedures may be amended from time to time by the Education Committee, at its discretion.

# Section 9

## Accreditation Fees

A schedule of fees payable by HEIs participating in the accreditation process is available on the Teaching Council's website, [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

# APPENDIX 1

## Staff:Student Ratio

Programme Resourcing will include calculation of the Staff: Student ratio for the ITE programme which is 15:1. This is a vital support in ensuring that schools and departments of education receive the resources intended for them. Where programmes are not adhering to this ratio, a clear timeline, within the period of accreditation, shall be submitted by the HEI for its achievement.

## Assumptions underpinning the formula

- 1 Engagement with and in research, underpins all aspects of programmes of ITE; teacher educators should be research informed and research active.
- 2 The ratio is calculated per ITE programme (not per year/cohort within a programme).
- 3 The ratio is in respect of the number of students enrolled in an ITE programme, not the number of students in a classroom/lecture hall/tutorial at any given time.
- 4 The ratio is concerned with the staff engaged in work on the ITE programme, it does not reflect the total number of people employed in the department/school of education.
- 5 The ratio is based on the total number of timetabled contact hours that salaried and non-salaried occasional staff spend in the following activities, pertinent to the programme of ITE:
  - Lectures/ seminars
  - School placement visits (travel time is not included)
  - Tutorials/small group work
  - Supervision of student teacher research
  - Lecture/seminar/tutorial/small group work preparation time
  - Assessment of student teachers
- 6 The staff ratio refers to full-time, part-time and occasional staff.
- 7 The term “salaried staff” refers to full-time and part-time (FTE) staff.
- 8 The term “occasional staff” refers to hourly non-salaried occasional staff including: School Placement Tutor, Tutor/Demonstrator, hourly occasional Assistant Lecturer, hourly occasional Evening Lecturer, Visiting/Guest Lecturer, Teaching Fellow, Practising Teacher (Methodologies).
- 9 School Placement tutors are included in the categories of full-time, part-time and occasional staff.



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