**Working Group on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Provision for 2020/21**

**Equity of Student Placement Experience**

**1.0 Background**

1.1 The Working Group asked the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to prepare a short paper to consider how to manage the potential inequity of student placement experience during Initial Teacher Education in 2020/21. The following paragraphs outline the views of each of the HEIs.

# **2.0 Queen’s University Belfast (QUB)**

# **QUB: Varied Placement Experience (VPE)**

2.1 We recognise that not all students may be placed in standard placements this year and that issues of inequity may arise which require appropriate mitigations. In pre-Covid times, however, we have already been used to applying criteria that are adaptable across different schooling contexts which aim to ensure that different experiences do not result in inequity. These criteria are the 27 GTCNI competences. In bringing forward the following proposal we aim to offer an alternative Varied Placement Experience (VPE) to those who are not placed in a standard placement setting, which facilitates student development across a significant range of the 27 competences. The VPE will involve a blend of some or all of the following elements:

1. One or Two weeks Primary Placement;
2. Online Teaching in Post-Primary schools;
3. Resource design and preparing online courses;
4. Online or face-to-face teaching in alternative educational settings.

2.2 It is important to note that:

* The experience would be quality controlled through the completion of a VPE Portfolio supervised by a Queen’s tutor;
* The VPE experiences would aim to develop students’ across the majority of GTCNI competences (see **VPE Competence Map – Appendix 1**);
* Students who have a VPE in Placement 1 would be prioritised for a standard school placement in second semester in order that we can be satisfied that they have achieved a full range of competences.

## **One or Two weeks Primary Placement**

2.3 Traditionally, PGCE students spend two weeks on Primary placement and in advance of this year’s course some students had already received confirmation of a place. Students would be invited to re-connect with this Primary school and attempt to arrange a placement, ideally for 2 weeks. Following the primary school placement, students would not engage in any face-to-face teaching in a different school for 2 weeks.

**Online Teaching in Post-Primary schools**

2.4 While some schools are currently unable to take students, some have said they would be open to students participating in online teaching. Mostly, this would be done through the provision of asynchronous teaching resources on topics identified by the school. The purpose of such teaching could be to provide:

* additional support for vulnerable young people who are self-isolating;
* catch-up support for groups of pupils whose progress was significantly affected as a result of lockdown in the previous academic year;
* revision sessions.

2.5 In situations where a teacher is undertaking online teaching the student-teacher could potentially contribute by, for example:

* co-teaching a synchronous session;
* helping to manage a discussion forum;
* providing feedback on assessed work.

2.6 Given the need to uphold appropriate safeguarding standards it would not be possible for students to tutor pupils on their own in an online live setting.

2.7 It would be expected that a students’ contribution might vary from week to week, as could the length of the placement.

## **Resource design and preparing online courses**

2.8 Under the guidance of a QUB tutor, students could be given a specific topic or unit of work for which they would prepare a range of learning materials. This could be done by developing a variety of resources such as booklets, videos, podcasts or worksheets. Alternatively, it could be developed as an online learning course. As a result of the online learning week students are aware of a wide range of possible ways to design learning experiences for students.

## **Online or face-to-face teaching in alternative educational settings**

2.9 To further enhance their experience, it is proposed that student teachers would be supported to negotiate teaching and learning experiences with alternative education providers. A contract would be agreed setting out the role of the student teacher and the organization. In addition, health and safety as well as safeguarding standards would be risk assessed and any adjustments agreed. Similar to the Post-Primary online teaching above, this experience could include some or all of the following:

* preparation and publication of asynchronous teaching resources;
* additional support for vulnerable young people who are self-isolating;
* catch-up support for groups of pupils whose progress was significantly affected as a result of lockdown in the previous academic year;
* revision sessions.

2.10 In situations where a teacher/tutor is undertaking online teaching, the student-teacher could potentially contribute by, for example:

* co-teaching a synchronous session;
* leading revision sessions;
* helping to manage a discussion forum;
* providing feedback on assessed work.

2.11 Where face-to-face teaching is possible, this experience may also include typical placement competence development in relation to:

* preparation of lesson plans;
* employing varied teaching strategies;
* classroom and behaviour management;
* assessment and feedback.

**Appendix 1 - VPE Competence Map**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Competences** | | **Descriptors** | | |  |
| **Primary Placement** | **Online Teaching in Post-Primary schools** | **Resource design and preparing online courses;** | **Online or face-to-face teaching in alternative educational settings** |
| ***Professional Values and Practice*** | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| ***Professional Knowledge and Understanding*** | | 3(i), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12 | 3(i), 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 | 3 (i), 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 | 3(i), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 |
| ***Professional Skills and Application*** | ***Planning and Leading*** |  | 14, 15, 18, | 15, 18, 20 | 14, 15, 18 |
| ***Teaching and Learning*** |  | 19, 20, 21, 22 | 20 | 19, 20, 21, 22 |
| ***Assessment*** |  | 24, 25, 26 | 25 | 24, 25, 26 |

* Missing: 2, 10, 13 (to be covered and assessed through Campus activities)
* At risk: 16, 17, 23, 27 (to be completed in second placement)

# **3.0 St. Mary’s University College**

3.1 The College is keen to support the professional development of our students,

whilst at the same time, working collaboratively with our partner schools in whatever ways possible.

The ideal scenario is that all student teachers should have a placement experience as close as possible to existing arrangements. Priority will be given to those students in third and fourth year of the BEd as well as PGCE. The following options are being considered if it is not feasible to place students in schools for required placements.

1. Steps will be taken to ensure that students have appropriate experience of planning and reflecting on their developing teaching skills and that these experiences are mapped against the professional competences. To facilitate this:
   1. The College has affiliated each student with a partner school and a host teacher and class of children (primary)/ host teacher and subject class(es) (post-primary) during Semester 1.
   2. If it is not viable for the student to attend the partner school in person (if they have to self-isolate), they will be required to plan supplementary learning activities and be available to assist the teacher. This may be mutually beneficial in the provision and support for on-line and blended learning. Students, as part of their professional learning and development, could engage in activities such as:
      1. working with groups or individual pupils providing synchronous online support for teachers in activities such as supporting learning in literacy or numeracy (primary) or subject specific learning (post-primary);
      2. in consultation with the teacher, and supported by SMUCB College tutors, planning online asynchronous activities for the pupils with whom they are affiliated.
      3. providing additional support to small groups who may themselves be out of school, or would benefit from revision/catch-up work.
   3. Additionally, students may be required to produce teaching and learning resources that demonstrate pedagogical knowledge and understanding. Reflecting on and analysing these learning experiences and resources will be an important aspect of student teacher professional learning.
2. The experiences and activities above would be recognised as contributing to the students’ academic and professional profile. Students will be required to develop a portfolio of evidence (e.g. content and organisation of student professional file; consultations with class teacher; tasks focusing on student planning and critical reflections; professional development journal) and maintain a record of activities undertaken that will relate directly to the competences that they should be developing.
3. As it is becoming increasingly unlikely that it may not be possible for supervising tutors to carry out classroom observations and to submit supervision reports as part of the school placement assessment, the College will work closely with the respective host teachers to ascertain student progress and development.
   1. Tutors will liaise closely with students through bi-weekly online forums – both group and individual - to review planning and discuss the development of targeted competences (the specific competences will be dependent on the stage the student is within the programme).
   2. Ideally, lesson observations will be live streamed and online meetings will be held with host teachers, and host teachers with students (3-way discussion) on at least two occasions across the duration of the normal practice period. If this is not possible, students will be asked to record short sections of lessons with no learners in view and these recordings will form the basis of discussion on progression of competence with both student and teacher.
   3. A portfolio of additional evidence will be required for assessment of competences (as outlined above).
   4. Should specific areas of difficulty be identified, focussed support will be provided to students on a tailored basis.
4. Securing post-primary placements this year is much more challenging than normal and the College continues to consider alternative placement experiences where students may have the opportunity to develop the competences required by GTCNI. These placements might include settings that normally are used for Alternative Education Placements where students can develop their knowledge and understanding of the options and opportunities which are open to qualified teachers in a range of different settings. These may include school support networks, homework clubs and other appropriate contexts.

Whilst the placement of students in schools in the prevailing circumstances does present a range of challenges, we believe that there can be new opportunities for learning. The presence of students in schools provides opportunities for more focussed attention and support for pupils whose learning experience has been challenged since the middle of March 2020. Similarly, there are likely to be opportunities for students to support teachers in the development of online and blended approaches to learning. Fundamentally, teachers and students working collaboratively brings mutually beneficial professional learning opportunities.

# **tranmillis University College**

# Stranmillis UC: Plan B

*Worst case scenario planning if placements cannot be carried out to fulfil time requirements of Circular 2010/03*

4.1 We are all aware of the challenges facing the entire education sector in at least Semester 1 of the academic year 2020/2021 and potentially for longer. For those of us in teacher education who depend on our school and college partners to provide placement opportunities for our students the challenge is particularly acute. We will be doing all possible to ensure that with prevailing government guidance and regulations being adhered to and in full consultation with our partner schools and placement providers, students undergo the required placements this year. However should the situation arise where it is not possible to complete placements in schools we are considering the following plans:

1. **Blended Learning**

Over recent years, students have increasingly been prepared for using technology in innovative ways to support learning in the classroom, but the pandemic has accelerated the use of it to support learning remotely. We will be enhancing the technology-readiness of our students to respond to remote learning and will be seeking further opportunities for students to gain experience in working with pupils who are off-site. This could involve supporting individuals or small groups of pupils as well as whole classes and contributing to the Engage programme. Should placements become unavailable, students’ evidence of having achieved GTCNI competences could be drawn from their provision of online learning and a model considered whereby the number of hours spent directly supporting pupils in this manner become evidence for engagement with pupils for the requirements of Circular 2010/03.

1. **Assessment**

We are hopeful that, following prevailing government advice and with risk assessments undertaken in consultation with schools, tutors will be able to undertake some visits in person to assess students’ progress. However if this was to prove not possible we would explore other options, such as

* making use of technology to live steam teaching sessions from schools
* reduce number of placement visits
* students producing a larger portfolio of work to demonstrate competence, matched to GTCNI competences
* online meetings with tutor
* engaging effectively with school staff
* Students using recorded “microteach” sessions (teaching without pupils) to demonstrate competence.

1. **Circular 2010/03 requirements**

All of this could have significant impact on our ability to deliver on the requirements of Circular 2010/03 and the necessity to have 18 (Primary PGCE) and 32(BEd) weeks on placement. This year we were able to put contingency plans in place for our PGCE students and it may well be the case that with limited or no placement in the coming year, similar mitigations would need to be considered more widely. BEd has more scope for making up time in subsequent years but if we have a second year of disruption in 20/21 this becomes harder to remedy.

4.2 We are currently planning under the three headings as below.

# **Scenario A**

*Placements available and open for all students however a number of students are unable to complete full allocation of time due to self-isolating or short term closures of schools.*

4.3 Our planning here is very much in line with other ITE providers. These students will be assessed on an individual basis and will be expected to engage in:

* Preparation of online resources for host school
* Delivery of these resources remotely where possible. This may be with small groups of students requiring support or other groups as identified in partnership with host school.
* Placement in alternative provision (in case where school is closed rather than self-isolation). This may be another school or may be an appropriate alternative educational setting

4.4 The GTCNI competences will be mapped to each alternative provision such as online support or alternative setting, and assessment will be amended to ensure these can still be achieved.

# **Scenario B**

*Placements only available for a smaller number of students than usual so we cannot place all students in schools.*

4.5 In this scenario, for PGCE students, we will look at all the options in Scenario A to ensure that students can demonstrate competences as above.

4.6 For our BEd programmes we will prioritise our Year 4 students to ensure they avail of any placements available and make provision similar to that described in Scenario A for other students to ensure they can demonstrate competences. We may consider shorter placements for year 1 and 2 students to maximize opportunities for year 3 and 4 as we hopefully have the option of having longer placements in subsequent years for these students.

# **Scenario C**

*No placements available (full shut down) for significant part of placement period.*

4.7 This would cause significant disruption and would lead to us having to implement alternative provision as outlined in Scenario A for all students.

4.8 In the case where we have to vary placement for students we will do a similar mapping exercise to QUB for competences (see below).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Competences** | | **Descriptors** | | |  |
| **Resource design and preparing online courses** | **Online Teaching in schools** | **Micro teaching** | **Online or face-to-face teaching in alternative educational settings** |
| ***Professional Values and Practice*** | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| ***Professional Knowledge and Understanding*** | | 3 (i), 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 | 3(i), 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 | 3 (i), 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 | 3(i), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 |
| ***Professional Skills and Application*** | ***Planning and Leading*** | 14, 15, 18, 20 | 14, 15, 18, | 14, 15, 18, 20 | 14, 15, 18, |
| ***Teaching and Learning*** | 20 | 19, 20, 21, 22 | 19, 20 | 19, 20, 21, 22 |
| ***Assessment*** | 25 | 24, 25, 26 | 24, 25 | 24, 25, 26 |

**Ulster**

**PGCE School Experience Contingency Plans**

5.1 Ulster has experienced difficulties in obtaining school placements, although all students have been placed in semester 1. In the event of disruption to these secured placements, or where semester 2 placements are restricted or limited, the School of Education has established the following prospective contingency plans to address a variety of possible scenarios that may arise.

**Scenario A**

5.2 If a school placement has resulted in closure due to positive COVID-19 tests.

* In order to ensure continuation of teaching practice, a move to facilitate online teaching will be expected. This includes, the preparation of asynchronous teaching sessions, resources, assessments and the expectation for synchronous teaching as the school’s direction will also be required. Students should demonstrate competency in using the various platforms facilitated by their placement school. Student teachers should work in partnership with their teacher mentors on all pedagogical issues especially those pertaining to the pastoral care or SEN concerns of pupils.

5.3 During this period of closure, any scheduled tutor assessments will be conducted virtually using the temporarily amended GTCNI competency framework (Normal, Threshold, and Familiarity).

**Scenario B**

5.4 If a school placement raises concerns about PGCE tutor conducting lesson observations and does not permit tutor entry.

* In order to ensure to receive continued tutor support, ‘live’ virtual assessments will be conducted.

**Scenario C**

5.5 If a course tutor must self-isolate.

* In order to ensure to receive continued tutor support, live’ virtual assessments will be conducted.

**Scenario D**

5.6 If a student or a family member tests positive for Covid-19, self-isolation is required in line with PHA guidance:

* This will be treated as an absence from the course, following the receipt of an EC1 form, and will be considered by the course committee/exam board in line with University policy for extenuating circumstances.

**Scenario E**

5.7 In the event that a school placement cannot be obtained in your locality due to COVID restrictions, the following options will be considered:

1. The University will seek to find an alternative placement within a reasonable proximity to the students’ chosen location.
2. Failing this, the University will seek to find an alternative school placement close to the Ulster University Campus at Coleraine.
3. Failing this, the University in collaboration with the student, will seek to find an alternative educational setting of an appropriate level to be determined by the PGCE Course Committee.

5.8 The scenario of an alternative placement is contingent upon students having already demonstrated competency in a previous school placement and only to be used in an exceptional circumstances, where options a and b could not be achieved.

5.9 In cases where Scenario E is enacted, the GTCNI competencies and placement learning outcomes will be assessed with the same rigour.

**Placement Supervision**

Students on PGCE Primary and Post Primary courses normally receive at least one placement visit from Ulster tutors during each placement. Physical placement visits in schools will be affected by restrictions to footfall in schools, individual circumstances that may restrict tutor capacity to visit schools physical and the potential for the need to self-isolate. As a result, Ulster has purchased robotic Swivl cameras to use on placement visits where a member of staff in unable to complete a physical visit to schools. It is anticipated that at least half of the visits will be completed using the live streaming from Swivl cameras, but this may increase depending on changing restrictions that may limit physical visits further.

**UCETNI: October 2020**