

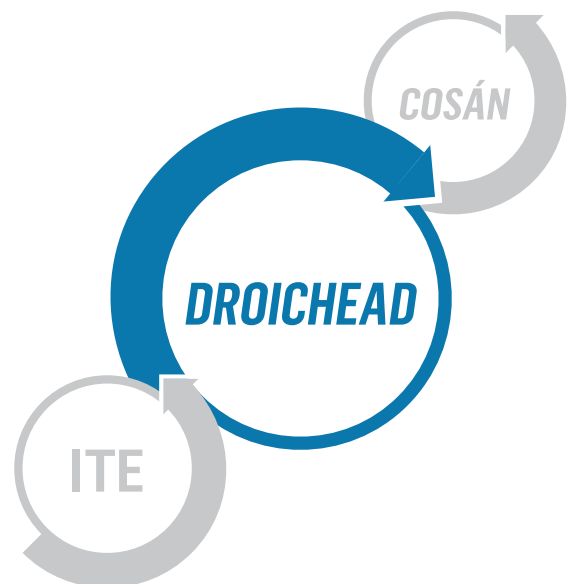
Droichead

The Integrated Professional Induction Framework

Approved in March 2025

Effective from 1 September 2026

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council





Glossary

Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT)

A teacher who meets the Council's requirements in terms of qualification under Route 1 or Route 2 of the Schedule but has not completed the required period of professional practice, including a teacher who obtained entry to the register through Route 5 of the Schedule and who has since successfully completed the accredited programme in teacher education in respect of which they were registered.

Professional Support Team (PST)

The PST consists of experienced colleagues who have completed a programme of professional learning with the Oide, including mentor skill development.

Higher Education Institution (HEI)

HEI or Higher Education Institution denotes those colleges, universities and other third level bodies providing one or more accredited programmes of initial teacher education.

Oide

Oide is a Department of Education support service for schools, established in 2023.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

ITE refers to the initial phase of learning to be a teacher when student teachers are engaged in a recognised teacher education programme.

Cosán

The national framework that guides and supports teachers' professional learning following their induction process. It is a flexible framework that recognises the importance of individual circumstances and school contexts and the many different ways that teachers learn.

Inclusive Education

The term inclusive education refers to any aspect of teachers' learning aimed at improving their capacity to address and respond to the diversity of learners' needs; to enable their participation in learning; and remove barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

Taisce

Taisce refers to the process of portfolio-based learning which is carried through from Initial Teacher Education programmes to enable Newly Qualified Teachers to reflect on their professional learning and practice, as appropriate to their stage of learning and to identify and plan for areas in which they may need support or guidance.

Continuum of teacher education

This refers to the formal and informal learning in which teachers engage as life-long learners during their teaching career. It encompasses Initial Teacher Education, *Droichead* (the integrated professional induction framework), and *Cosán* (teachers' learning).

Recognised School

A recognised school is a school which is recognised in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act, 1998.

Education Support Centre

An Education Support Centre is as provided for in Section 10 (4) of the Education Act, 1998.

1. Procedures and criteria for *Droichead* (primary and post-primary)

Introduction

The following procedures apply where a newly qualified teacher is employed for a sufficient period of time in a school which is participating in the integrated *Droichead* professional induction framework (referred to hereafter as *Droichead*).

1.1 The *Droichead* process

The *Droichead* process is an integrated professional induction framework for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and is central to the continuum of teacher education. It builds on initial teacher education (ITE) and recognises that induction is a distinct phase of the continuum. *Droichead* supports NQTs as they transition from ITE and are welcomed by their peers into the profession. It supports NQTs as they cross the 'bridge' from student teacher to a teacher of students. This integrated framework includes both school-based induction (Strand A) and additional professional learning activities (Strand B) to address the needs of teachers as they begin their careers.

1.2 The purpose of the *Droichead* process is to support the professional learning of the NQTs during the induction phase, in a non-evaluative manner, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and learning. *Droichead* builds upon the standards of knowledge, skill and competence, attained during ITE, particularly in the areas of reflective practice and portfolio-based learning (Taisce) and research. Reflective practice is also a key aspect of Cósán, the national framework that guides and supports teachers' professional learning throughout their careers.

1.3 The steps of the process are outlined below (see Sections 2 and 3). Following the *Droichead* process, a declaration is made by the NQT that they are ready to move to the next phase on the continuum of teacher education. A joint declaration is made by the teacher and experienced colleagues, following collective reflection, that through their engagement in *Droichead*, they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process. The Teaching Council then removes the *Droichead* condition from the teacher's registration. The teacher will be fully registered by the Council when all registration conditions (e.g., Irish Language Requirement, qualifications shortfall conditions) have been deemed by the Teaching Council to have been met.

1.4 When a NQT is employed in a participating school in an eligible setting (see Section 2) and for the minimum period of professional practice (see Section 3), they may apply to the Teaching Council for approval to commence the *Droichead* process via their My Registration portal account. If their application is approved, they will receive a confirmation email of approval with their commencement date for the process.



1.5 There are two key strands of the *Droichead* process as an integrated induction framework for NQTs. The first strand is a school-based induction one (Strand A), through which the NQT is supported by experienced colleagues. The second strand is made up of additional professional learning activities (Strand B), which involves attendance at NQT cluster meetings. The Strand also includes one other professional learning activity, related to the needs of the NQT as discussed with their Professional Support Team (PST). Typical learning activities might be, for example, participation in a workshop, a meeting of a Teacher Professional Network/subject association, an online/ blended learning activity, attendance at a conference, etc. (see Section 5).

2. Settings in which the *Droichead* process can take place

2.1 Primary

A primary teacher will normally undertake the *Droichead* process when employed as a mainstream class teacher, in a recognised school. A recognised school is a school which is recognised in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act, 1998. As a general rule, paid employment in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity is eligible, where the teacher is teaching all areas of the Primary School Curriculum, including Irish, to a mainstream class of pupils (single or multi-grade) for the entire school day, and where the teacher's tenure at the school will afford them the opportunity to meet the minimum duration requirements set out in 3.2 below.

Generally, schools should deploy NQTs in a mainstream setting. However, NQTs can complete the *Droichead* process in one of the following roles listed below.

a) special class teacher in a mainstream school

b) teacher in a special school

c) full-time Special Education Teacher/ Teaching in a mainstream school (SET)

In the above cases, the period of employment must involve teaching the same cohort of pupils (save for exceptional absences).

Where NQTs are deployed in one of these settings, Oide should provide supports to the school to ensure that the needs of the NQT are met in line with their role, and within the school context.

As part of the *Droichead* process, the school should also endeavour to ensure that there are opportunities for the NQT to teach in a mainstream setting, which would include the teaching and learning of Gaeilge in a mainstream class, in collaboration with the class teacher.

2.2 Post-primary

A post-primary teacher will normally undertake the *Droichead* process when employed in a recognised post-primary school. A recognised school is a school which is recognised in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act, 1998.

A post-primary teacher may complete *Droichead* in:

- a recognised post-primary school.
- a Special School where a proportion of the pupils attending the school are of post-primary age, and where the teacher is teaching a post-primary curricular subject(s) to such pupils.

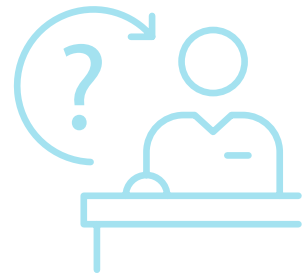


- A Centre of Education where the following criteria are met:
 - post-primary curricular subject(s) is taught and is eligible to submit students for state examinations etc., Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate examinations.
 - The NQT is teaching a post-primary curricular subject i.e., Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate subjects (including LCA and LCVP) and has full responsibility for state examination preparations.
 - The principal coordinator is a registered post-primary teacher.
 - The PST is comprised of registered post-primary teachers.

As a general rule, paid employment in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity is eligible, so long as such employment will afford the teacher the opportunity to meet the minimum duration requirements set out in 3.3 below.

It should be noted that where NQTs are employed in the above settings via voluntary (unpaid) service or internship schemes, this is not deemed acceptable by the Teaching Council as being suitable for *Droichead*.

3. Duration of professional practice required



3.1 The *Droichead* process builds on periods of school placement as outlined in Céim: Standards for ITE.

3.2 A primary teacher must complete a minimum block of 60 consecutive school days in an eligible setting from the date on which they were first appointed to a post recognised for *Droichead* purposes in a primary school. It is possible to complete *Droichead* if employed on a job-share contract for the duration of the full academic year, including teachers employed as replacement teachers OR on a part-time contract of not less than twelve and a half hours (12.5 hours) for the duration of the academic year.

It is possible to complete *Droichead* if a NQT has secured a post on a supply panel, or a principal release time post. Primary teachers who secure these posts to complete the *Droichead* process are subject to certain provisions including:

- 1) The NQT is engaged in the *Droichead* process over the full period of their contract of employment, which must exceed the minimum requirement of 60 days.
- 2) A minimum of one, of the two PSTs required to support the NQT throughout the process, have to be from the base school.
- 3) The Principal of the base school has to act in an oversight role.

4) The PST and NQT must ensure that they have prior consent and agreement that all schools in the cluster are willing to facilitate the completion of the *Droichead* process.

5) The form D must be signed by the PST in the base-school

The teacher must apply to the Teaching Council to commence the *Droichead* process via their My Registration portal account.

3.3 A post-primary teacher must complete a minimum of 200 hours' teaching employment in an eligible setting to include the teaching of a post-primary curricular subject(s) to a designated class on the school's timetable, or employment in a learning support, special needs or language support position. The teacher must apply to the Teaching Council to commence the *Droichead* process via their My Registration portal account.

3.4 It should be noted that these are absolute minimum periods of practice. Given that *Droichead* as an induction framework is designed to provide the maximum degree of support, guidance and advice, it is recommended, where a NQT has additional time in their school over and above the minimum requirements set out at 3.2 and 3.3 above, that extra time be used to support the *Droichead* process.

4. School-based strand

4.1 *Droichead* is fundamentally about the NQT's professional journey and the process of their induction. A key part of this process is a NQT's engagement with more experienced colleagues, and reflection on the professional conversations that take place on their own professional learning and practice.

There are a number of ways in which a PST can be established. In larger schools, with multiple NQTs, a number of teams might operate in parallel.

As the leader of the school, the principal plays a vitally important role in annually highlighting the value of induction to the whole school staff, as well as the PST and NQT.

It is important that schools have in-school management support for the induction process. The Principal or their management team nominee should have oversight of the *Droichead* process in their school, whether a direct member of PST or not.

Where a principal is not a direct member of the PST, they should endeavour to engage with the process by providing additional supports where needed for both the PST and NQT.

There are a number of ways in which a PST can be established. In larger schools, with multiple NQTs, a number of teams might operate in parallel. Principals/management of the school should consult with Oide regarding guidance on appropriate selection and composition of PST members.

In smaller schools, a team of two or three teachers may suffice. In very small schools, or in circumstances where a school is not in a position to establish a PST exclusively from within the staff, an external model is available, as outlined below. An external dimension may also be used where specific expertise is required e.g. to support a NQT who is teaching in a Special Class. Principals may choose to establish a PST using a combination of the school's own staff and an external PST member. There must be at least one member from the NQT's school on the PST.

- a) Oide has created a panel of self-selected, fully trained PST members who are willing to act as external members of another school's PST.
- b) As an alternative to the Oide panel, principals may wish to invite a teacher in a local school to be the external member on their PST. This teacher should already be a trained PST member. If not already trained, they must commit to attending PST Training.

4.2 Supporting a NQT during *Droichead* is always a collaborative process, although the roles and responsibilities of PST members may vary in different school contexts and are therefore agreed before the *Droichead* process commences. The *Droichead* process should be taken into consideration when planning for the academic year, and to also reflect the roles and time allocations, and any potential additional support or accommodation needs of incoming NQTs.

In-school and tailored supports should be considered and planned for accordingly to ensure that NQTs with additional or accommodation needs, and members of the PST, are best supported during the *Droichead* process.

Oide should provide supports to the school to ensure that the needs of the NQT and PST are met, and within the school context.

4.3 The PST completes *Droichead* professional learning provided by Oide, and is assisted in its work through the provision of a range of supports and resources including:

- Oide initial training for all members of the PST.
- Release time with substitute cover to allow each member of the PST to attend training.
- Release time to support the school-based elements of *Droichead*.
- Onsite and virtual support from Oide, through its network of associates and its permanent staff.
- A comprehensive mentor guide, that addresses key areas such as:
 - The roles and responsibilities of the PST and NQT
 - Observations
 - Creating a *Droichead* Outline Plan
 - Professional Conversations
 - Maintaining records of the *Droichead* process.

Additional information on release time is available from Oide.

4.4 A key part of this process is an NQT's engagement with more experienced colleagues, and reflection on the professional conversations that take place on their own professional learning and practice. These conversations provide opportunities to exchange informal feedback on a one-to-one basis and discuss issues arising in the course of the NQT's professional learning and practice and offer guidance. Alternatively, a professional conversation may take the form of an arranged meeting between the NQT and one or more members of the PST.

Where a NQT requires additional support, Oide is available to provide guidance to schools and PST members around available layers of support, where necessary.

4.5 *Droichead* builds on the portfolio-based learning process (Taisce) that all student teachers engage in during their ITE programmes. NQTs continue to use Taisce during the *Droichead* process to reflect on their professional learning and practice. Taisce's use in both ITE and *Droichead* supports the development and engagement in reflective practice.

The format of Taisce is determined by the NQT and is a private item that supports their own professional learning. The NQT must share one element of their Taisce with their PST that specifically concerns a professional learning need that they want

to address, and the NQT and PST should use this element to form the basis of one of their professional conversations. Using the research skills developed during ITE, the NQT should also find a piece of existing research, such as a published journal article, relevant to the identified need to support the professional conversation. This professional conversation should be used by the NQT to identify a Strand B Professional Learning Activity in consultation with the PST.

Practical guidance on this process is available to NQTs and the PST from Oide. All elements of Taisce should be correctly managed in compliance with GDPR and the school's data protection and management policies.

4.6 Observations are also a key feature of *Droichead*. This includes observations by the NQT of more experienced teachers' practice, as well as observation of the NQT's practice by the PST. Both types of observations are arranged in advance and provide NQTs with opportunities to learn from their fellow professionals. Observations by the PST of the NQT's practice should focus on areas where the NQT feels that they need particular advice, help and support. The NQT should therefore be encouraged to teach in an area where they feel their learning need is greatest. This can then provide the basis for a subsequent professional conversation. It is recommended that there would be at least two of each type of classroom observation (observations by the NQT,

and observations of the NQT's practice), and that the exact number, and the classes observed, should be based on discussions between the NQT and the PST.

4.7 The NQT and the PST are encouraged to take every opportunity to discuss issues and challenges as they arise. PSTs offer a range of supports that enable the NQT to address those challenges and learn from them. Additional support, advice and guidance is available from the Oide via its school support service, and some additional time to facilitate this may be of value. The more comprehensive the support offered, and the greater the degree of open engagement by those involved, the better for the NQT.



5. Cluster Meetings & additional Professional Learning Activities

5.1 To complement the school-based induction strand outlined above, NQTs also engage in additional professional learning activities as part of the *Droichead* process, as follows.

NQT Cluster Meetings and other Professional Learning Activities

A cluster meeting is a forum where NQTs can ask questions, seek guidance, share ideas and reflect upon particular challenges, successes and experiences in their professional practice, or on the *Droichead* process itself. All NQTs must attend at least one cluster meeting through an education support centre. The additional cluster meeting may be provided online. Cluster meetings trí mheán na Gaeilge will be made available.

Prior to engaging with the Cluster Meetings, NQTs must complete an online webinar provided by Oide, outlining the steps in the *Droichead* process.

Cluster meetings are facilitated by Oide and provide avenues for both professional and personal support to NQTs. This shared-learning approach builds professional relationships, confidence and competence.



All NQTs must participate in two cluster meetings during the *Droichead* process. These meetings are categorised as follows:

- A general cluster meeting focusing on broad issues of professional practice
- A focused cluster meeting addressing specific content contextualised to the needs of the NQT.

NQTs must attend one general and one focused cluster meeting as part of their *Droichead* process. A list of focused cluster meetings will be made available, allowing NQTs to choose the meeting that best suits their specific needs.

It is important to note that an NQT must have received a confirmation email from the Council confirming approval to commence the *Droichead* process prior to registering for Cluster Meetings.

Other professional learning activity

NQTs must also engage in one other professional learning activity, identified by themselves in accordance with their professional learning needs, in consultation with the PST. Typical learning activities might be, for example, participation in a workshop, a meeting of a Teacher Professional Networks (subject association), an online/blended learning activity, attendance at a conference, etc.

6. Standards to guide and support the *Droichead* process

6.1 The Council has established standards to support the *Droichead* process, in guiding the NQT, with the PST, in relation to their professional learning and practice. These are set out in Appendix 1. *Droichead* standards and school context examples are further explored as part of professional development for the PST, facilitated by Oide.



7. Maintaining records of the *Droichead* process

7.1 A *Droichead* outline plan is created by the PST, in consultation with the NQT. Ideally the NQT will undertake the *Droichead* process for a period longer than the minimum stipulated period, when their period of employment so allows. Templates for both the *Droichead* outline plan and the observation process, as well as guidance on the use of such templates will be provided by the Oide. To facilitate the Council's quality assurance process, schools are asked to retain records which they have created to support the *Droichead* process in line with their data protection policy.

7.2 In maintaining records, the PST should respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information garnered during the course of the process. They should also be mindful of ethical and data protection considerations, anonymising data where appropriate and taking any measure necessary to restrict access to sensitive information.

7.3 Where a NQT who has completed some or all of the *Droichead* process leaves a school, they should be given a copy of the relevant records which the school holds in relation to that process.

8. Concluding the *Droichead* process

- 8.1** When an NQT is nearing the conclusion of the *Droichead* process, as per the indicative timeframe agreed at the start of the process, a professional conversation takes place between the NQT and the PST. This conversation will also involve the NQT identifying areas of further professional learning (to be included on Form D).
- 8.2** When the NQT and PST have concluded the *Droichead* process (school-based induction and additional professional learning activities) they must complete Form D. It is the responsibility of the NQT to submit the completed Form D to the Teaching Council via their MyRegistration account.

Only fully trained members of the PST are eligible to sign a Form D. Please note, a minimum of two fully trained PST members must sign the form confirming completion of all strands of the process.

A review process is in place where NQTs or the PST wish to raise concerns about aspects of the *Droichead* process. This process includes an informal stage, at school level, and a more formal stage at Oide level. It also allows for unresolved issues to be escalated to the Teaching Council, via its *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel.

- 8.3** When Form D has been fully completed and submitted to the Teaching Council, the Council will remove the *Droichead* condition from the teacher's registration and issue a revised confirmation or registration letter. All conditions must be met, for the teacher to be fully registered.



9. Consistency and quality assurance

- 9.1** A number of mechanisms are in place to assure the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process nationally.
- a) Oide provides support to schools offering *Droichead* who employ a NQT.
 - b) *Droichead* Quality Assurance (DQA) panels, comprising an independent chairperson, a practising teacher from the relevant sector and a person with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level, are established by the Teaching Council. The DQA panel visits a random sample of schools where the *Droichead* process has taken place and discusses the process with the PST and the NQT. Such visits are pre-arranged and take place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. Following its review, the DQA panel submits an anonymised report to the Teaching Council setting out its findings and recommendations in relation to the process. The report is considered by the Council and following ratification, is published on the Council's website and circulated to the Oide and the Inspectorate.
 - c) As a leader of learning in the school, the principal fosters a learning culture in which *Droichead* can flourish and supports the PST in facilitating a quality induction process.
 - d) Professional development, including cluster meetings, for PST members, include discussions regarding the standards and indicators of good practice which guide and support the *Droichead* process.



10. Further guidance



- 10.1** The Council will engage with the Department of Education and Youth and its agencies regarding the implementation of *Droichead*, and to ensure its consistency with the overall policies as may be determined by the Minister from time to time.



Appendix 1

***Droichead* standards**

The Council has set out the following standards to support the *Droichead* process, in guiding the NQT, with the PST, in relation to their professional learning and practice. Indicators of good practice in different contexts are further explored as part of professional development for the PST, facilitated by Oide. Through their engagement in the *Droichead* process, the NQT will:

1. have engaged professionally with school-based induction and additional professional learning activities.
2. have shown their professional commitment to quality teaching and learning for their pupils/students.
3. have engaged in reflective practice that supports their professional learning and practice, both individually and collaboratively.



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