Guidelines for School Placement for the Professional Master of Education (PME) 2015-16

School placement

The experience of working in a school is a vital part of learning to be a teacher. It is the responsibility of each student offered a provisional place on the course to make satisfactory arrangements for his or her school placement. The school in which the placement is secured must be within 65km of Maynooth. If you have special requirements in relation to school placement please contact Thomas Walsh (Thomas.walsh@nuim.ie) at the Education Department.

Learning to be a teacher in the second-level system involves experience both inside and outside the classroom. As part of the school placement it is expected that student teachers will teach some classes and also participate as fully as possible in the life of the school. Student teachers are expected to co-operate in every reasonable way with the running of the school and to assist with school activities, provided that it does not interfere with their own classes or with their ability to be at Maynooth for the full day on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Student teachers who have been accepted by a school for placement purposes should not be included in the school’s timetable as if they were qualified teachers. Rather it is expected that the student teacher should work with a co-operating teacher (or teachers), and teach some of the classes normally assigned to the co-operating teacher.

Co-operating teachers

The support of co-operating teachers is greatly valued and appreciated by Maynooth University. Student teachers are urged to work closely with co-operating teachers:

- to agree their own overall schemes of work for a particular class with the co-operating teacher well in advance;
- to keep the co-operating teacher informed of progress and difficulties;
- to invite the co-operating teacher to observe the student-teacher’s classes, particularly in the early stages of the school year;
- to seek and listen to advice from the co-operating teacher.

The co-operating teachers who work with student teachers play no formal role in the assessment of school placement. However the school placement tutors will consult with the co-operating teachers and also with the school principal, or other staff members as appropriate.
Supervision and video recording
Student teachers are supervised on a number of occasions during the year by at least two tutors – A placement tutor and a university tutor. The main aim of tutors is to help student teachers to set, to monitor and to achieve high standards of teaching. Tutors assist student teachers in making realistic appraisals of their own work, focusing on lesson planning, classroom performance, teaching and learning strategies, strategies for improving teacher-pupil relations, relations with teaching colleagues, and post-lesson evaluations.

All files of student teachers’ lesson plans and evaluations must be kept up to date and must be available for consultation by supervisors.

As part of the PME, students will participate in both video and audio recording in their teaching practice school. Acceptance of a PME student from MU assumes permission for such recordings.

Dates and times
Schools reopen in late August. Normally student teachers should be present in the school from the beginning of the school year and attend staff meetings and relevant subject meetings.

Observation: Students will be present in their placement school on Mondays and Fridays in early September to observe classes, and to become familiar with the school prior to beginning to teach.

School Placement dates: Students will engage in teaching practice on Mondays and Fridays from September 2015 to May 2016. During this time, student teachers are expected to be present in their teaching practice school from 9 am to 4 pm on Mondays and Fridays during school terms.

Block teaching: In addition to teaching on Mondays and Fridays, students will be in the school full time for a 3-week block placement in January 2016.

Teaching hours
Student teachers are expected to teach classes on Monday and Friday throughout the academic year, and for five days a week during a period of block teaching in January.

Each student teacher is expected to teach 4 classes per week, ideally 2 on Monday and 2 on Friday, in semester 1. Schools are requested, wherever possible, to accommodate student teachers with the same classes on Monday and Friday, so that the student has an opportunity to get to know the class. Block teaching in January carries an expectation of 10 class periods per week. In semester 2, the student teacher is expected to teach 6 class periods per week and to observe / team teach 2 class periods with 3rd year students.

In order to facilitate the development of teaching skills, classes should have a minimum of 12 pupils. Student teachers should not be allocated classes of special needs pupils, classes that have a large number of non-English speaking pupils or classes that may be presenting undue difficulty to established staff.
Subjects
The student teacher should teach at least two subjects as part of his/her school placement.

- **Mondays & Fridays:**
  - 4 class periods per week in term 1.
  - 8 class periods per week in terms 2 and 3. This includes 2 class periods observing / team teaching third year classes preparing for the state examinations

- **Block Placement:**
  - 10 class periods per week

Students with **two recognised teaching subjects (double honours degree)** must teach classes in their teaching subjects as defined by their final degree subjects. Ideally they will teach half of the required classes in each of their teaching subjects.

Students who have **a single honours degree or one recognised teaching subject** must teach the majority of classes in that subject but may teach all classes in the subject. Up to 25% of the classes (i.e. 1 of 4 or 2 of 8) **may** be used to expand their teaching repertoire. This may involve teaching a subject that they have studied at third level (provided that this subject is taught to first year pupils only), SPHE, involvement in team teaching, a specific interest module in transition year, or another interesting initiative that the placement school is promoting.

Subject Methodologies
The following school subjects are supported with specific teaching and learning methodology seminars. During the PME, students are required to take specific courses in the teaching of their subject(s).

- Irish, English, French, Spanish, German, modern languages
- Business Studies (Accountancy, Business, Economics)
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics),
- Mathematics, Computer Studies
- History, Geography, Music, Religion, Classical Studies
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- Social, Personal and Health Education.