

APPENDIX 7 - GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENT TEACHERS WITH DISABILITIES ON SCHOOL PLACEMENT

This policy has been developed by the Department of Education in Maynooth University to support student teachers with disabilities on school placement.

Introduction

These Guidelines seek to support student teachers with disabilities on school placement. They are written for student teachers with a view to addressing any barriers and accessibility issues that may arise on school placement and to outline the kinds of accommodations which might reasonably be provided. Having a disability should not be perceived as a barrier to becoming a teacher. All student teachers bring a unique set of dispositions into the classroom which can enrich both classroom climate and interactions.

The Education Department gives due care and attention to the individual needs of students so that all students are enabled to complete the requirements of school placement. While the evaluation standards for school placement remain the same for all students, some students with disabilities may require reasonable accommodations to meet those standards. With this in mind, these Guidelines provide information on the provision of reasonable accommodations and will help you, as a student teacher, to manage your disability on school placement. You have an important role to play in this process, for example in proactively seeking out the range of supports available to you.

Disclosure and Confidentiality: Communicating your Disability

Disclosure is a personal decision and it is your right not to disclose if you wish. Your decision may have important consequences later on, so in making your decision, it is best to be as informed as possible about what the potential benefits may be. We are obliged not to discriminate against you and, if informed, to make appropriate accommodations to facilitate your equal participation in school placement. If we are not informed, however, we are unable to

provide reasonable accommodations which may be of benefit to you before/while on school placement.

If you have already disclosed your disability to Maynooth University through the CAO, DARE, or to the Disability Office it is important for you to know that your information can only be passed on to other parties (e.g. school Placement Tutors or school personnel) with your written permission. For school placement, you will be invited to discuss and decide on your disclosure options as part of the placement planning process.

Safety and wellbeing is of the utmost priority in schools. In this context, students are encouraged to disclose a disability in advance of undertaking school placement. The decision to disclose is one that is best made voluntarily and often after a fuller discussion has taken place. It is important to realise, however, that disclosure may be necessary where there is a legal obligation to make known any factor which may have the potential to cause risk or harm in the context of a school placement setting.

Placement Planning Support



To avail of reasonable accommodations while on placement, students must register with the Disability Office and complete a Needs Assessment in advance of school placement. Details of the Disability Office along with requirements for registering and examples of the supports and accommodations available can be found on the college website at www.nuim.ie/access-office or by telephoning (01) 708 6025.

The Needs Assessment is a meeting between you and your Disability Advisor to discuss the impact of your disability, your individual characteristics, and the requirements of your course.

Following the Needs Assessment, a placement planning meeting with your course leader /tutor will be arranged if you and your Disability Officer decide that reasonable accommodations may be required on school placement. During this placement planning meeting, you will have an opportunity to discuss the reasonable accommodations that may need to be arranged in advance of school placement, any health and safety issues, and any disclosure/ confidentiality concerns that you may exist. The course leader or an assigned member of the school placement team will be central to assisting in the recommendation of appropriate accommodations for you on school placement.

As a result of this placement planning meeting, the Disability Advisor in conjunction with the course leader/tutor will generate a Placement Planning Report. The Report outlines your disability, how it affects your learning and appropriate placement supports and reasonable accommodations. With your consent and agreement, the Placement Planning Report will be discussed by a member of the School Placement team with the principal and the co-operating teacher to facilitate reasonable accommodations whilst you are on placement or seeking a placement.

During school placement, you should contact your tutor and/or course leader if the reasonable accommodations provided for you are not functioning properly. If there are concerns that the reasonable accommodations made are not appropriate or working well, the Disability Office in conjunction with you and the School Placement Team will review the provision of reasonable accommodations to see how they might be improved.

Sometimes, a student may find that a particular need arises for them during a placement period. In such cases, a student's first discussion may be with their supervisory tutor during a school placement visit or with the tutor or course leader.

A student may acquire a disability or experience changes in the level of a disability during the course of their studies. In such cases, a student should communicate such information to the Disability Office to facilitate obtaining reasonable supports where necessary.

Reasonable Accommodations on School Placement

A reasonable accommodation is a legal right and is any arrangement, change or modification that seeks to reduce the impact of a disability or specific learning difficulty. These reasonable accommodations are provided without creating an advantage over other students in the assessment process or creating undue risk for anyone during practical work. Reasonable accommodations on school placement are specific to an individual student teacher's need whilst on school placement.

Reasonable accommodation on school placement may include, but is not limited to:

- Assistive technology for use in the classroom e.g. using white board technology for writing notes on the white board;
- School placement planning supports e.g. assisting with sourcing a placement, visiting your placement school in advance;
- Support from a school-based mentor teacher and a college Placement Tutor;
- Timetabling arrangements to enable you to fulfil your teaching requirements.

The provision of reasonable accommodation on school placement is undertaken in a spirit of partnership with your placement school with a view to supporting you as far as practicable.

Reasonable Accommodation Placement Review

After you have completed your school placement, you will be invited by your Disability Advisor to take part in a review of your experience of school placement in the context of the reasonable accommodations which were provided for you during school placement.

This review will involve a meeting/communication with your Disability Advisor and, if appropriate, your course leader or tutor. The post-school placement review is designed to ensure that the most appropriate supports have been provided for you. The review meeting will also offer you an opportunity to reflect on the learning you have gained throughout the placement and to plan for improvements in future placements. Your feedback and your engagement with the review process are therefore very important.

Student Responsibilities

1. You are strongly encouraged to register with the Disability Office as early as possible following acceptance onto the course to discuss your needs and how you might be reasonably accommodated on school placement. While you can register with the Disability Office at any time throughout the year, you are strongly advised to register early to ensure that reasonable accommodations can be put in place for you before you commence school placement.
2. You can only avail of reasonable accommodations if you disclose your disability and register with the Disability Office. If you do not inform us of your disability and are unsuccessful on school placement, you will not be in a position to claim that you were not reasonably accommodated because you have a disability.
3. If you require assistance sourcing a school placement, you should contact the School Placement Officer Fiona Casey, as soon as possible to ensure that this assistance can be provided. Fiona can be contacted on school.placement@mu.ie or on 01 4747203.
4. It is your responsibility to communicate and to provide feedback if there is a problem whilst you are on school placement.
5. If a particular need emerges during placement or a change of need emerges or where a student acquires a disability or experiences a change in the level of their disability during the course of their studies, a student should communicate such information to the Disability Service in the university.
6. You may need to attend a review meeting on completion of your school placement to review how the accommodations worked and if any changes are required for future placements.

University Responsibilities

1. The University has responsibility for liaising with schools to facilitate inclusive school placement experiences for students with disabilities.

2. The University will make students aware that a Disability Office is available to them and that reasonable accommodations for school placement will be made where needed when students disclose a disability and register with the Disability Office.
3. The University will invite you to review how accommodations put in place for you worked. The University will review how accommodations for individual students worked and whether the reasonable accommodations supported the student during placement.
4. The University will, where appropriate, seek the co-operation of a school with regard to providing a placement and/ or providing reasonable accommodations recommended to facilitate a student's school placement in so far as is possible bearing in mind the voluntary nature of school engagement in school placement.