

## **Supporting the next generation of Scotland's teachers in academic year 2020/21**

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### ***Background***

This is a difficult time for teachers in schools and universities alike, for young people and for children. In spite of the unforeseen challenges of COVID-19, we continue to seek to ensure that children and young people have the opportunities to learn and to flourish. Student teachers, our next generation of teachers, are eager to gain school experience, an essential element of their journey to become teachers.

### ***Individual school contexts***

It is recognised that there may be concerns about the introduction of any additional adult into the class/department depending on individual school, staff and learner circumstances.

### ***Actions already taken***

- In order to relieve pressure on schools, undergraduate year 1 student placements were cancelled in [29th June 2020 guidance](#);
- Student teacher placements were delayed until October 2020;
- Enhanced university support approaches are being developed and will be discussed through established partnership relationships in support of student teachers and schools;
- Arrangements will be shared shortly about alternative approaches to the assessment of students on placement, which minimise additional adults in school; whilst ensuring increased demands are not placed on school staff.

### ***Why student placements matter***

Schools play a vital and irreplaceable role in supporting the next generation of Scotland's teachers:

- The placement of student teachers in schools plays a critical role in the sustaining and renewal of Scotland's teacher workforce. Without classroom experience, student teachers will not be 'classroom ready' for the coming session, meaning we may have no future workforce for session 2021-22;
- The partnership activity, mentoring, and support offered by schools is the bedrock of student teachers' school experience; it is also a vital aspect of the health of the education system in Scotland;

- As part of the accreditation of the teacher education programmes, GTC Scotland requires student teachers to spend an agreed length of time on school placements, in order to achieve their teaching qualifications and demonstrate the Standard for Provisional Registration;
- Student teachers benefit from practical experience and advice during placements, not only in terms of their teaching practice but also in relation to their university learning, as they are able to bring insights from school experience to university activities;
- Student teachers can also support school recovery plans and are frequently recognised as bringing new ideas, energy, and enthusiasm into schools.

### ***Who are student teachers?***

There has been a lot of discussion about students in the media recently; in general, the news coverage has focused on first year undergraduate students who tend to stay in halls of residence. Student teachers going on placement in 2020/21:

- are, in many cases, not school leavers fresh to university, particularly the PGDEs;
- overwhelmingly do not live in halls of residence (often less than 3%);
- might be mature students or second-career students;
- are the teaching workforce of the future.

### ***What COVID-19 measures are in place for student teachers?***

A host of measures are in place to support student teachers:

#### ***General***

- Students know, perhaps more than most, to follow Covid-19 reporting guidance, as per Scottish Government procedures;
- Students are required to download the Protect Scotland app;
- Testing facilities exist (walk-through test centres are in locations across Scotland).

#### ***On campus***

- Most ITE programmes have no on-campus teaching, or very limited on-campus teaching, this semester;
- Where on-campus teaching is taking place, there is familiarity with physical distancing in a learning context, as all rooms take account of the 2m rule;
- Masks are worn (except with exemption) in many HEIs while student teachers are on-campus;
- Teaching takes place in significantly smaller class sizes than would have taken place in pre-Covid times;
- Capacity of all teaching spaces significantly reduced to be 'Covid-safe' (20% of their usual capacity, for example).

### ***On placement***

- Student teachers have been supported to understand the potential sensitivities with regard to the current situation and the importance of understanding and implementing the agreed health and safety procedures in schools;
- Student teachers have also been informed about their individual responsibilities concerning the management of their own health and wellbeing;
- A direct link with a named ITE tutor as part of the enhanced support provision is in place;
- Clear advice will be given to follow school safety protocols;
- Student teachers will engage extensively in risk assessment processes:
  - Student teachers will follow local authority and school risk assessment processes. While on placement, COSLA view student teachers as under the instruction of the local authority;
  - Student teachers will have all received training and guidance on the need to communicate with their schools prior to starting their school placement. They have been informed that they will need to access the school's risk assessment and to find out the requirements needed for them as members of your school community;
  - Student teachers will also go through their own university risk assessment process to ensure that they are able to complete their placement with you this year. These will be collated and shared with authorised staff;
  - We have discussed that it is important that student teachers are aware of the unique nature of each school and its corresponding risk assessment. We will continue to communicate the need to follow the advice given to them.
  - We recognise that for some students, the risk may be too high for them personally. We take risk seriously and these students will be able to defer, if appropriate. We have agreed to meet with high-risk students to support and discuss their options with them.
- Clear reporting mechanisms exist and student teachers will be expected to follow specific procedures for reporting absence, as per the ITE provider guidance.

### ***What commitments have student teachers made?***

- Student will read and follow the [Scottish Government's Covid-19 guidance](#);
- As with all students, student teachers are subject to university disciplinary procedures and can be subject to suspension or even cessation of their studies for misconduct;
- Student teachers are also subject to the GTCS Student Teacher Code.