

Subject:

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION: APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

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Target Audience:

- Initial Teacher Education Providers;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education;
- Governing Bodies Association; and
- Teachers' Unions.

Summary of Contents:

Description of arrangements for approval of initial teacher education programmes in Northern Ireland.

Enquiries:

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Governor Awareness:
Advisory

Status of Contents:
Information/advice for initial teacher education providers and employers

Related Documents:
DE Circular 2007/22

Superseded Documents:
DE Circular 1989/40

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION: APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Circular replaces DE Circular 1989/40 and is a description of arrangements for approval of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Northern Ireland. It sets out and explains the requirements that underpin inspection and accreditation, both of which are necessary for approval of ITE programmes. The Annex to this Circular provides the *Requirements* for ITE programmes that providers must meet.

2.0 Approval

2.1 Approval of programmes is made by the Department of Education (DE) and is dependent upon evidence of need, accreditation by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and evidence from inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Approval permits ITE providers to offer programmes, the successful completion of which entitle individuals to seek registration with the GTCNI and thus be able to teach in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland.

3.0 Accreditation

3.1 Accreditation is concerned with the suitability of ITE programmes as a professional preparation which enables students successfully completing such programmes to register with the GTCNI. GTCNI accredits ITE programmes underpinned by the Requirements set out in this Circular. Accreditation is separate from academic validation, which is not dealt with in this Circular.

4.0 Self-evaluation

4.1 Self-evaluation is an internal process, making use of monitoring and evaluation processes which include the use of the framework of quality indicators agreed jointly by the ETI and the ITE providers. The purpose of self-evaluation is to identify the necessary improvements that are the focus of improvement plans, with measureable outcomes.

5.0 Inspection

5.1 Inspection of ITE programmes is carried out by the ETI who make an evaluation of ITE provision. Inspection also audits and quality-assures the self-evaluation carried out by ITE providers, using the agreed quality indicators.

6.0 The Requirements

6.1 The ITE Requirements set out in this Circular have been agreed by DE, the ETI and the GTCNI. They set out the requirements with which ITE programmes must comply in order to be inspected, accredited and subsequently approved.

6.2 The Requirements will be kept under review by DE, the ETI and the GTCNI in liaison with the ITE providers.

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THE REQUIREMENTS THAT UNDERPIN THE APPROVAL, ACCREDITATION AND INSPECTION OF ITE PROGRAMMES

R1 Entry Requirements

It should be noted that these are minimum entry requirements for admission to Bachelor of Education Honours (BEd (Hons)) and Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programmes and that the ITE provider may seek qualifications over and above these.

GCSE Requirements

R1.1 All entrants must have achieved a standard equivalent to a Grade C or higher in the GCSE examination in English or English language and mathematics, and all entrants who enter primary teacher education additionally must have achieved a standard equivalent to a Grade C or higher in the GCSE examination in a science subject or subjects (DE Circular 2007/22 refers).

Entrants with qualifications accepted as equivalent to GCSE Grade C or higher must be able to:

- communicate clearly, appropriately and accurately in spoken and written English and, where relevant, Irish; and
- demonstrate not only competence but breadth and flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

Degree Requirements

R1.2 In the case of postgraduate programmes of ITE, all entrants must hold a *first* degree of a United Kingdom (or Republic of Ireland) higher education institution or equivalent qualification. (Applicants with a Foundation Degree will need to supplement this qualification with at least 120 Credit Accumulation & Transfer (CAT) points at Higher Education Level 6).

R1.3 In the case of entry to a BEd (Hons) programme, **and subject to R1.1 above and R1.4 below**, all entrants must fulfil the normal academic requirements for admission to first degree studies, including passes in two subjects at GCE Advanced level (or equivalent) together with passes at Grade C or higher in three other subjects at GCSE level (or equivalent) *OR* passes in three subjects at GCE Advanced level (or equivalent) together with passes at Grade C or higher in two other subjects at GCSE level (or equivalent) *(or three other subjects if the application is for admission to the BEd (Hons) primary programme)*.

R1.4 Subject to R1.1 above, ITE providers may admit to the BEd (Hons) programme applicants who lack conventional entry qualifications, provided they are satisfied as to the intellectual capacity of the applicant to complete the programme successfully and the provider can demonstrate that they have admitted the applicant without compromising academic standards and the development of professional competence. Providers should document procedures for admitting applicants who lack conventional entry qualifications.

Interviews

R1.5 As part of the selection procedures, all entrants must have taken part in an interview designed to assess their suitability to teach and their potential to meet the required professional competences.

Suitability

R1.6 All entrants:

- do not have a criminal background which might prevent them working with children or young people;
- have obtained an AccessNI enhanced disclosure (or, in due course, are registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority);
- have been subject to any other background check deemed appropriate;
- are not currently disqualified from teaching or working with children;
- have the physical capacity and mental fitness to teach (having due regard to Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006);
- have the potential to acquire and develop the required GTCNI Competences; and
- have the appropriate qualities and aptitude to develop professionally as teachers and to exemplify the core values of the profession.

In assessing suitability, and in compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, all ITE providers shall have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- *between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
- *between men and women generally;*
- *between persons with disability and persons without; and*
- *between persons with dependants and persons without.*

R2 Teacher Education Requirements

Guidance on and exemplification of the implementation of the requirements should be developed by the providers with their partners (i.e. schools, DE, ETI, GTCNI).

All ITE providers must ensure that:

Programme Design

R2.1 The content, structure, methodology, assessment and the range of suitable resources are designed to enable students to develop the teacher competences appropriate to the ITE phase as set out in the GTCNI publication, Teaching: the Reflective Profession.¹

Strategic Education Priorities

R2.2 The programmes prepare students to address the strategic priorities for education and key education strategies, as defined and communicated by DE, and, in particular, those relating to literacy, numeracy and special educational needs and inclusion.

Recent and Relevant Experience

R2.3 Teacher Educators in the ITE providers have experience of teaching in schools relevant to their particular phase, subject or other specialisms, and that they maintain and develop that experience.

Teacher Education Quality

R2.4 Provision is of a quality which is judged by the ETI to be at least satisfactory.

Individual Needs

R2.5 The provision and the teaching ensure equality of access and enable the individual needs of the students to be met.

Preparation for Continuing Professional Learning

R2.6 All students are adequately prepared for their transition into continuing professional learning, underpinned by a commitment to a process of continuing improvement and development from the initial phase, through the induction to early and continuing professional development phases of professional formation.

Age Range

R2.7 All students are prepared to teach across at least two consecutive Key Stages which, for the purpose of this requirement, includes the foundation stage as part of KS1, and the 16-19 age range.

As stated in the teacher competences, students should know about the expectations, curriculum, strategies and teaching approaches in the phases immediately before and after the ones in which they are being prepared to teach.

¹ <http://www.gtcni.org.uk>

Time in School (and experience of other educational settings)

R2.8 Students are expected to teach in at least two schools² and normally spend the following amounts of time in schools³:

- 32 weeks for all four year undergraduate programmes
- 24 weeks for all post-primary postgraduate programmes
- 18 weeks for all primary postgraduate programmes

R3 Management and Quality Assurance

All ITE providers must ensure that:

Partnership

R3.1 They establish partnership arrangements, as set out in the Teacher Education Partnership Handbook⁴, in relation to the respective roles of the ITE providers and schools during ITE.

R3.2 In the context of R3.1 above, ITE partners and schools work together to support and keep under review the arrangements for the selection, professional development and assessment of students within the context of the GTCNI Competences.

Compliance

R3.3 Their provision complies with the DE's requirements as set out in this Circular for ITE and all relevant legislation (such as that relating to equality, human rights, employment and discrimination).

Moderation

R3.4 Rigorous internal and external moderation procedures are in place to assure the reliability, accuracy and consistency of assessment against the GTCNI Competences.

Monitoring, Self-evaluation and Inspection

R3.5 They monitor and evaluate all aspects of provision over time and demonstrate how self-evaluation itself and self-evaluation coordinated with inspection contributes to improvements in quality of provision.

² Except students on the Open University "Assessment-only" route who have already demonstrated equivalent experience.

³ A minor amount of time may be spent in other educational settings for enhancement purposes.

⁴ http://www.deni.gov.uk/teacher_education_partnership_handbook_september_2009_edition_-3.pdf