

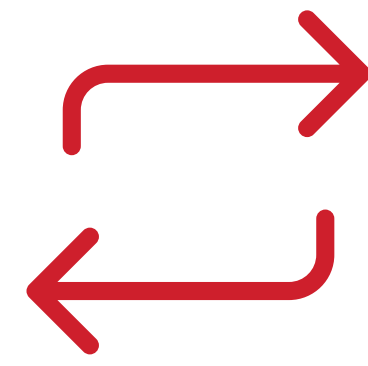
Title: Designing, Negotiating, and Enacting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Professional Practice School Placements: The Positive Experience of the UCC Professional Master of Education (PME) Programme
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Case Study Synopsis

School Placements can rely on the differing versions of good will of local schools, in the absence of any formal regulation or agreement. Ingrained school practices with previous HDE and PDE programme students (e.g., being timetabled without a mentor teacher and no initiation or support processes or practice in place, unsuitable timetabling of classes) were commonplace. Student teachers were not always recognised as student teachers or learners, which resulted in large inequities of experience between students in different schools. Without a formal agreement with schools to specify essential placement requirements and clarify indicators of best practice, the School of Education was unable to ensure satisfactory and equitable placement experiences for all student teachers across all schools.

This unsatisfactory situation led to the initiation of discussions with the local branch of the National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) to negotiate and agree research-informed, best practice principles to inform placement experiences across all schools. A small Working Group of NAPD Principal representatives and UCC School of Education PME staff explored, drafted, and agreed the main elements of a workable MoU, which is in now in place to regulate our PME School Placements



Intended Changes

The MoU is centred around five key principles, which should guide all school placement, and which are very much in keeping with the overall aim of the UCC Connected University to provide a high-quality, outstanding student learning experiences.



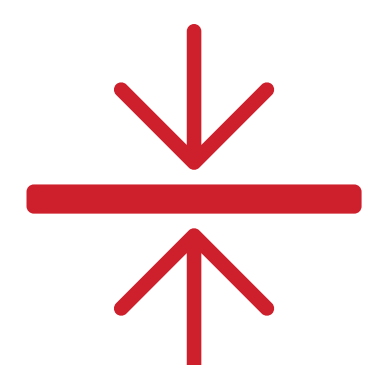
Key Impacts

- The process of designing, negotiating, and implementing the MoU was very significant for maximising clarity of expectations, ensuring fairness/equity of treatment of students and schools, and providing consistency on our PME programme.
- Has reaped numerous benefits for our UCC PME students in terms of the duty of care of the PME programme to try to ensure a general equity of school placement experience and professional learning.
- It has facilitated a more equitable School Placement experience for all student teachers on our UCC PME programme.
- It has been a clear means to validate best practice in initial teacher education at local school level.
- It has been a support mechanism to call on in the event of any issues with the School Placement element of our PME programme.
- Finally, and very importantly, it has been a pivotal element of our PME programme, unique nationally in initial teacher education, and for which we've been consistently commended by our External Examiners, by the Teaching Council as our accreditation body, and by national policy and international experts on education



Additional Information

Students are welcomed and valued by schools as learners and as professionals in training. Schools undertake to offer a broad orientation and support programme for students and are placed with good co-operating teacher role models. All students are expected to work within a well-defined placement framework and become involved with the wider aspects of school life beyond the classroom. The MoU also pinpoints explicitly what school arrangements would constitute 'Best Practice Schools' and names a variety of School Placement practices, which would not be recommended. The MoU also enacts the Teaching Council principles to ensure high quality student teacher placement experiences.



Area of Alignment

Student Success
Learning and Teaching