

PGDE (Secondary) Placement Handbook¹

For Students and Staff



**Semesters 1 and 2
2025-2026**



¹ This Handbook is to support FAQs and is designed to be used on a need to know basis. There is no need to print or read the whole document.

² Students should read this in conjunction with the University's Generic Student Handbook

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the PGDE (Secondary) School Experience (Placement) Handbook.

This handbook provides an overview of partnership and placement arrangements for PGDE (Secondary) and the processes and support mechanisms involved in placement provision. The handbook is intended for ITE students, schools hosting placements, School Based Educators and University Based Educators.

School Experience is a compulsory part of the ITE learning process, giving students the opportunity to carry out a journey of personal and professional development within an educational setting. It is a series of placements in which students are mentored and supported for a specified period of time to achieve professional competence as a teacher, as assessed against the General Teaching Council for Scotland's (2021) Standards for Provisional Registration.

School Experience enables the acquisition of new knowledge and skills as well as the application, consolidation and reflection on learning gained in the university environment. School and University Based Educators, working in collaboration, have a crucial part to play in supporting ITE students' progress to meet the required General Teaching Council, Scotland (GTCS) Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) by the end of their programme. The success of School Experience is highly dependent on a clear and supportive interchange between ITE students, university, local authorities and schools. Copies of all resources for schools can be easily downloaded from the following link to our website.

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/initial-teacher-education/postgraduate-school-experience-placements/>.

1.1 Aims

Placements will provide opportunities to support students, over time, to:

1. *Apply* theory to practice and evidence in original and creative ways pedagogies for inclusive learning with the ability to develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.
2. *Manage* complex issues and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.
3. *Design, develop, implement and evaluate* sequences of lessons which support all pupils to optimally participate in the curriculum and school life utilising a range of specialised skills, techniques, practices as advocated by key national policies and priorities.
4. *Demonstrate and facilitate* collaboration, discussion and debate within groups of learners to challenge assumptions and to extend the individual's and groups' perspectives of 'real world issues'. Professional collaboration with other teachers and parents/carers will require demonstration of respectful and professional exchange.
5. *Communicate* effectively and collaboratively in various media to a range of audiences (e.g. peers, tutors, research community, pupils, parents/carers, allied professionals)
6. *Engage in increasingly critical reflection* towards the improvement of practice and to develop skills of self-evaluation in accord with the GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration.
7. *Demonstrate* originality, creativity, independence, autonomy and accountability in relation to personal and professional practice and development.

1.2 Partnership between Local Authorities, Schools and University

QMU has established partnerships with the following local authorities: Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and Fife. Educational representatives from these authorities have been closely involved in the design and development of the Education programmes. From 2020-2021 QMU's partnership with these authorities forms part of the wider Edinburgh Early Phase Partnership along with Napier University and Moray House. Whilst each university will retain its distinctive programme partnership elements, the wider partnership will enable all stakeholders to meet regularly to discuss school experience and partnership related developments including the sharing of good practice with local authority partners.

Here are some of the people involved in supporting students directly and indirectly:

Head(s) of Division	Ensures consistency across ITE programmes and represents placement matters externally on bodies that discuss national level placement policy (or delegates this appropriately).
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Programme Leader	Leads on the overall academic and placement programme for the PGDE (Secondary).
University Based Educator (UBE)	An academic member of staff who acts as a contact person for a group of students and their SBE throughout a placement. The UBE is also responsible for coordinating and carrying out the Joint Observation visits.
Placement & Partnership Officer	The administrator who co-ordinates all the operational aspects of placement across specific schools, carrying out placement matching, communicating to students and schools and overseeing the general day to day issues arising from placement.
School Based Educator (SBE)	The person facilitating students' learning whilst they are on placement. The School Based Educator is a class teacher or Curriculum Leader who is jointly responsible with the University for the assessed placement outcome and who acts as a professional guide and mentor to students, coordinating feedback from class teachers to enable the student to focus on clear and specific targets.
Student	The enrolled student on the ITE programme.
Pupil/s	Young people in schools (learners).

1.3 The GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR)

The GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) (2021) can be found here: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/standard-for-provisionalregistration.pdf>

Student Teacher Code (<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/teacherregulation/studentteacher-code-0412.pdf>) provides direction for programme-related practice experience.

The ITE year is the first year of two in the student's practical learning to teach context. Year two is the probationary year. The GTCS have a dedicated site for students with added support and advice specifically tailored to support students through the provisional registration process and their probationary service, whether it is via the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) or the Flexible Route. See: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/probationerteachers/>

Based on the Standards, students are required to use a series of self-evaluative tools on placement to keep a record of their teaching experience and to record key

moments of learning that have been insightful, detailing what went well and what can be improved. As part of this learning students ought to self-assess against the GTCS Standards either through a Weekly Evaluation conversation with their SBE or within the 'My-SPR' focus of their e-portfolios 'Pebble-pad'. UBEs access students' digital e-portfolios to monitor their placement work.

The GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) and the Student Teacher Code provide direction for programme-related practice experience. Working together with, and being guided by, the School Based-Educator, it is expected that students will take account of these outcomes and will consider ways in which they can meet the requirements of the SPR. By the end of the first School Placement, it is expected that 6 out of 8 of the SPR Criteria on the Final Report Form should be achieved, but all eight criteria must be achieved by the end of the Second School Placement.

1.4 QMU Placement Team Contact Details

Name & Address of Institution

Queen Margaret University, Queen Margaret University Drive, Musselburgh, East Lothian, EH21 6UU. Contact: +44(0)1314740000 or +44(0)1314740000

Placement Officers: Wendy Kolossy and Amy Cutt - ITEPlacements@qmu.ac.uk

<p>PGDE (Secondary) Programme Leader Dr Linda Craig lcraig1@qmu.ac.uk</p>	<p>PGDE (Secondary) University Based Educators (UBE)</p> <p>Eluned Michael EMichael@qmu.ac.uk</p> <p>Katie Thomas Kthomas1@qmu.ac.uk</p> <p>Alice Munro Amunro1@qmu.ac.uk</p> <p>Claire Cooper ccooper@qmu.ac.uk</p> <p>Stephen Scholes SScholes@qmu.ac.uk</p> <p>Suzie Dick sdick@qmu.ac.uk</p>
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2. Reflective Practice and Situated Learning

Learning is a lifelong process experienced through connections that are embodied through diverse learning situations. Through cognitive, practical and emotional experiences, professional transformation occurs in stages, resulting in a continually changing or more experienced person (Jarvis 2009¹; Illeris 2014²).

Central to this strategy is the need for students to engage in learning experiences, a readiness to listen and explore, preparedness to be open to experiences, to challenge their own assumptions and with resilience to keep going. This requires an effective learning environment based on intellectual and communicative space to learn, with shared values of honesty, trust, authenticity, respect and reciprocity. The environment should generate a culture of engagement and criticality where students can creatively explore and question theories, practices and different sources of knowledge in an atmosphere of high challenge and high support.

As part of this process students will find themselves reflecting on their learning and development as a student teacher, and as part of a team, while on placement (also known as a *situated learning experience*). They can also reflect in their e-portfolios about what supports and strengthens their situated learning experience.

Students will be supported to challenge their thinking, values and beliefs; through the posing of complex activities and questions and develop resilient and sustainable approaches to their learning and practice in response to these.

Critical to this process is the use of diverse knowledge, scholarly inquiry processes and evidence-informed resources to engage and enliven the processes of learning. On this programme of study students have a professional obligation and responsibility to perform:

- As a representative of the teaching profession and the University
- Professionally within the school, towards building collaborative professional relationships with both staff and pupils;

The engagement in life-long learning and co-creation of communities of practice is integral to this process.

Further study will increase breadth and depth, nurturing and connecting both research and enquiry-based approaches to professional practice. As part of this process the situated/practice-based (the placement) element of the programme is key to student learning. A range of learning and teaching approaches are introduced also by the University to support students. These include lectures, collaborative workshops, directed reading, micro-teaching, and e-learning. Key aspects to support the preparation process are described in more detail below.

¹ Jarvis, P. (Ed.). (2009). *The Routledge international handbook of lifelong learning*. Routledge.

² Illeris, K. (2014). Transformative learning and identity. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 12(2), 148-163.

3. Preparing for Placements

3.1 Canvas

Students' preparatory learning is supported within designated areas in the University's virtual learning environment – Canvas and Microsoft Teams.

The Programme Information and Resources area on Canvas as well as the Professional Studies Module space X4092 provides a bank of useful placement learning resources and materials for students. Resources include web links, handbooks, assessment forms, templates for reflection and reading materials relating to key Policies. Announcements can be sent to students from this area. Students must regularly check their e-mails for announcements when they are out on placements.

Students are invited to meeting in UBE groups on a Teams Mentoring Channel when they are out on placements. Such meetings facilitated by the UBE invite discussion of school-based study tasks and professional progress.

3.2. Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG)

As students will be doing regulated work with pupils during placement, they must apply to register with the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG). It is the responsibility of each student to fill in the detailed application form, provide the necessary documentation and to pay for this to be carried out prior to the first placement. The University ensures that all PVG membership applications are appropriately checked and countersigned and that the whole process has been completed satisfactorily prior to the commencement of placement.

Some placement providers require additional checks before accepting students on placements and make this known to the University when making placement offers. Further information on the PVG Scheme is available at:
<https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/pvgscheme.htm>

Please note that it is the school's responsibility to ensure that student teachers are supervised in all of the classes that they teach.

3.3. Insurance Cover for Motor Vehicle Use

Students using their own motor vehicle during placement will be expected to obtain confirmation from their insurers that adequate cost cover is in place for all costs and claims and no liability is placed on the University and/or placement provider. **This is usually business cover.** The vehicle must be in a roadworthy condition with valid road tax and MOT (if applicable). Under no circumstance should students carry pupils, parents, teachers, or others employed by the school in their own vehicle. Travel to and from placements is not funded by the University.

3.4 Dress Code

Dress code on placement ought to be *smart casual*. The main thing to remember when dressing up for smart casual is trying to look smart but not overly formal. If in doubt, ask the University or School Based Educator. As a guide:

Smart Casual Do's	Smart Casual Do Not's
✓ jacket or blazer	– jeans
✓ trousers (dark preferable)	– cardigan or jumper
✓ long sleeved shirt (tie is optional)	– denim jacket
✓ blouse	– shorts
✓ flat shoes pumps	– flip flops or sandals or stilettos
✓ mid-length dress or skirt	– caps
	– sports wear
	– logos and slogans on the top

A student whose personal appearance is deemed to be inappropriate by the School Based Educator or Head Teacher may be asked to leave the educational setting and reported absent until they return dressed appropriately.

3.5. Preparation Lectures and Seminars

The University will prepare students for placement covering topics such as:

- Child protection and UNCRC.
- Lesson planning and Curriculum design
- Inclusive Practice and Anti-Racism Literacy
- Additional Support Needs
- Review of the learning outcomes and specific tasks for each placement, and exploration of how these will facilitate the integration of theory and practice.
- Professional conduct during school experience.
- Reviewing SPR for each placement.
- Preparation for, and review of, self- evaluation on placements.
- Developing, and using, a Professional Development e-Portfolio.

Each school has different child protection procedures and these should be shared and discussed with the student on day one of the Placement.

Attendance and engagement with learning must be at a satisfactory level to proceed to placement.

3.6. Confidentiality Issues

Confidentiality is not just good practice; it is a right owed to all individuals and is central to the maintenance of trust between schools, teaching staff, parents and pupils. Students must act appropriately to respect others' privacy. Students are expected to adhere to and comply with guidance provided by the regulatory body GTCS COPAC: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/fitness-toteach/code-of-professionalism-and-conduct/> .

Any written work completed by students during placement must also be stored as a confidential record. Students are expected to maintain boundaries of confidentiality outwith placement both in discussions, presentations and written course work for the University. At all times, the identity of anyone connected with the placement must be protected, and permission for the use of sensitive material must follow the policies and guidelines of the placement school.

It is important that students do not specifically name staff, or work placement areas on any documents, or in assignments submitted to the University. Students are advised to describe placements in general terms for example, “placement experience”, “additional support service”. Pupils should only be identified by ‘pupil X’ or ‘pupil Y’. School Based Educators will report actual, and possible, student breaches of security or confidentiality to the UBE as a matter of priority.

School Based Educators play an important role in the assessment process and recognising where the PGDE student is at on their individual learning journey is important. It is important to recognise that students are in a learning situation and supportive and friendly formative feedback is an essential part of supporting students to comply with good practice. The GTCS emphasise that learning to become a teacher is a two-year process with the ITE year being a foundational year where students are entitled to explore with ‘trial’ and ‘error’ their developing understanding of teaching and learning practices. No student is fully ready to teach at the end of an ITE year, and there should be no expectation that they are. At the end of this year students become ready to embark with some learning experiences behind them, into year two of a learning to teach process.

3.7. Social Justice and the Individual on Placement (including issues encountered)

QMU has a strong commitment both to social justice and on valuing the individual. We want to encourage you, as a student, in your professional journey, to embrace these values which align with the GTCS Standards. This includes developing your confidence to bring your unique identity to the classroom, regardless of your age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity.

If you, as a student, would value a discussion about the support that QMU can provide for you to be who you are in the classroom, as you get ready for, or during placement, please speak with your university-based educator or your PAT tutor.

If any student encounters any negative reaction from school staff or pupils regarding their identity whilst on placement, please speak with your Teacher Regent, schoolbased mentor and your university-based educator. If, for any reason, it is not possible to speak with your SBE/UBE you should contact another member of university staff that you feel comfortable approaching.

Students should be assured that where disclosures of negative reactions or incidents are raised, appropriate action will be taken to address their concerns, in line with placement school/local authority and/or university policies.

Students are also reminded that QMU's *Report and Support* platform is available for reporting any form of harassment or violence. This also provides access to advice and support. There are two ways that students can report something, either by Reporting Anonymously or Reporting with Contact Details.

Please see more information online: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/servicesforstudents/report-and-support/report-and-support/>

In line with national priorities, school-based mentors and placement schools will recognise the importance of social justice in the context of professional practice and the importance of adopting actively inclusive and anti-discriminatory dispositions. Where school-based mentors or placement schools would like to discuss such areas in relation to supporting students (including discrimination, anti-racism, inclusive practice, social justice) they are also welcome to contact a students' university-based educator. Queen Margaret University is proud to have contributed to the development of the Anti-Racism Framework for ITE for all teacher educators. Please see the document on the following link:

[The National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\)](#)

Further support for promoting and supporting race equality and anti-racist education are also available from Education Scotland:

PDF file: [Promoting and developing race equality and anti-racist education: an overview \(895 KB\)](#) including a number of resources for teachers: [Anti-racist toolkit for teachers](#)

If you would value a chat about the support QMU can provide for you to be who you are in the classroom, as you get ready for placement, or if you encounter any negative reaction from school staff or students with regard to your identity whilst on placement, please speak with the Programme Leader Dr Linda Craig lcraig1@qmu.ac.uk or the Head of Division, Dr Simon Hoult, SHoult@qmu.ac.uk.

4. During Placement

4.1 Placement Timings

PGDE (Secondary) placements will take place in two different placement schools. These dates are:

Placement 1: 27 October – 19 December 2025 (8 weeks)

Placement 2a: 2 February – 27 March 2026 (8 weeks)

Placement 2b: 4 May – 29 May 2026 (4 weeks)

Students are expected to plan in advance for these accordingly and should be available to attend fulltime placement. *Holidays and other events should not be booked into the placement window.*

4.2 Placement Expectations for Students

Prior to the Placement students should:

- Make contact with the School prior to the placement to arrange a pre-visit introduction and to share any relevant documentation.
- Ensure all necessary risk-assessments including PVGs are in place.
- Have adequate arrangements in place to support travel and attendance for school experience.
- Monitor student e-mail accounts and respond promptly to any enquiries from their School/University.
- Attend all pre-placement briefings and/or participate in all mandatory preparatory activities as required by the School/University.
- Read all documentation provided by the University for school experience including assessment requirements, procedures, and regulations.
- Read all pre-placement information provided by schools.
- Revise relevant taught information, and skills in preparation for school experience.

At the Start of Placement and during Placements students should:

- Complete an Emergency Contact Form and leave this with the School Office.
- Complete the **Health & Safety Induction checklist** by the end of first week.
- Read and summarise the School or Local Authority's **Child Protection Policy** by the end of week 1.
- Become familiar with other significant policies in place at the school, such as the Positive Relationships/Behaviour Policy.
- Share your School Based Study tasks information with your SBE.
- Find out who will write your final School Report.
- Co-observe or team-teach some classes during weeks 1 and 2 and be prepared to undertake some solo teaching in week 2 **leading up to 14 hours of teaching in week 3**, or before if you feel ready.
- Identify the use of educational principles and practices in your subject Department including BGE, Curriculum and Benchmarks, Senior Phase SQA courses offered, Support for Learning arrangements, Pastoral care offered by Guidance Departments, GLOW etc.
- Always submit **lesson plans to class teachers 2 working days in advance** of teaching your lessons to allow them to give you feedback.
- Learn how to register your classes through SEEMIS or other system.
- Find out information about pupils with Additional Support Needs from the CL or from the Support for Learning Department.
- Reflect on the role of the teacher towards inclusive practice and observe how different teachers have different teaching styles and techniques.

- Recognise the importance of working in partnership with teachers and parents and be proactive in finding out about Reporting and Parents Information evenings.
- Identify the roles of professionals working in the Secondary school's integrated children's services.
- Establish and maintain a Professional Development e-Portfolio that records all Weekly Reviews and Lesson Plans for each class. Use this to evaluate your professional progress and to demonstrate critical reflection on your professional learning.
- Reflect on the transition processes from primary to secondary school, where appropriate and visit a Primary school if the opportunity permits.
- Gain an understanding of how young people learn and consider inclusive approaches to learning that motivates and sets high expectations for their engagement in learning.
- Be respectful of feedback from experienced colleagues and demonstrate that you can respond and enact their feedback advice positively.
- Seek opportunities to participate in the wider school community through parents' evenings and extra-curricular activities and in-service events etc.

At all times, follow the procedures of the placement setting, and QMU regarding absence and sickness reporting. This involves notifying the school before 8.30am, ITE Placements and the UBE and Programme Leader. You should also complete the absence form available in your student portal.

4.3 Placement Overview of University School Based Study Tasks

In each Placement there will be a University assignment focus for the students which the school staff can support them with. For Placement 1 the focus for students will be on their developing approaches towards implementing inclusive practice in the classroom. On return to the University the student will be writing a 4,000 word essay in which part of their task will be to discuss and critically reflect upon three instances of how they have tried to implement inclusive practice in their planning for teaching.

In Placement 2 the focus for the student's University assignment will be on planning to teach for Sustainability. This is to help address the 'Learning for Sustainability' requirement for all teachers in Scotland published by the Scottish Government in June 2023 and integrated into the GTCS SPR 1.3. It is hoped that students will be given an opportunity to design and teach a sequence of 3 lessons during Placement 2a upon which they can then reflect and report on, for their recorded presentation assignment due in April on their return to campus.

It is hoped that SBEs and supporting classroom teachers can discuss these activities with students and enable them to develop their teaching approaches for these to important National Priority themes.

4.4 Professional Development e-Portfolio (PDP)

To track professional progress and development, students will maintain an ePortfolio called Pebble-pad (PDP). The PDP provides evidence of the student's professional

learning, and should contain examples of lesson plans for each year group taught, as well as the Weekly Review of targets and Mid-Way Review forms which both the student and the SBE agree and sign. The PDP will also allow the student to reflect on their learning in relation to the SPR under the 'My SPR Focus' tab. Students are encouraged to reflect on their practice in relation to particular activities, identifying the professional actions required to make satisfactory progress towards the SPR. This process prepares students for using portfolios to evidence their continuing professional development informing their completion of the Teacher Education Profile in preparation for probation: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/05/ITEprofile-info-for-students.pdf>

The PDP also forms an element of the Placement assessment evidence.

It is mandatory for examples of lesson planning for each year group on the timetable to be written into the PGDE Lesson Plan proforma as well as their weekly selfevaluations of professional progress (this Weekly Review of Teaching form is sometimes referred to as PROP (Professional Reflection of Practice)). These are to be stored in the PDP under the weekly tab. The Weekly Review form should be signed by the SBE (to show that the student and the SBE are in agreement with the target). Where the student is given feedback from two or three Departmental teachers – it is the SBE's role to consolidate this variety of feedback into one coherent and manageable weekly target for the student ie 'setting learning objectives and success criteria' or 'developing Q & A skills' or 'developing the review plenary' at the end of a lesson. The following examples of evidence-based practice can also be placed in the PDP such as the Mid-Way Review, timetables, blogs, planning, Formative Feedback from observations and feedback from teachers. Evidence of professional learning might include reflective journal examples, lesson resources, pupils' work, displays and reports. Records of engagement in wider school experiences or extra-curricular activities should also be recorded. All of the above forms part of the Placement Observation assessment and UBEs will access Pebblepad to ensure that students are on track.

5. Organisation of School Experience, Administration, Processes and Procedures

5.1 Placement Matching Process

From 2024/25 placement matching has moved to a manual system due to the closure of the GTCS SPS. Placements are now organised via requests from universities for offers of placements via Local Authorities who consult with schools.

5.2 Allocation of School Placements

Students will complete a pre-placement form and the information they provide will be shared with the relevant local authority to match them to an available school place. Please see the University's Privacy Statement here:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/qmu-student-privacy-statement/>

Under no circumstances should students attempt to organise their own placement directly with a school.

While we try to bear in mind any preference a student might have, there are other considerations, which may well take precedence when placing students. In particular, the centralised procedures for placing students, the induction programmes for newly qualified teachers and the availability of student teacher places across Scotland – where there is often pressure on school capacity. Students may be required to travel to a placement in an outlying area and should be prepared to travel up to 90 minutes each way. Placements will be allocated based on a student's term time address and mode of transport. Students are required to indicate if their term time address is their home address or an address close to QMU.

Students must also declare if they have personal connections to staff or pupils in any school. Failure to do so presents significant concerns around professionalism. If students are placed in such a school they must alert ITEplacements@qmu.ac.uk immediately in order to be rematched.

The Placement & Partnership Officer will have the final decision on which school students will attend. Placement enquiries should be sent to ITEplacements@qmu.ac.uk using their student e-mail account.

Allocations will be made known to students as soon as possible before commencement of placement. Students must however note that placement allocations **can and do change** due to a range of factors beyond the university's control and this may, in some cases, mean that the notice period for placement allocations is much shorter in individual cases.

Placement allocations are non-negotiable. Students do not have the right to exchange allocated placements with their peers. Normally, the programme teams do not enter into third party communications about allocated placements. The responsibility lies with the student to raise reasonable and relevant concerns directly with the Programme Leader. The following are not considered valid reasons to request a change in placement:

- Personal preference - allocated placements are deemed relevant and will offer appropriate learning experiences.
- Financial hardship - students should consider the cost of school experience as being a necessary and integral part of the programme and plan for this in advance.

Students may only request a change in placement allocation for extenuating circumstances not identified on the school experience information form, e.g. changes to health or well-being requiring reasonable adjustments. Relevant supporting evidence must be provided to the Placement & Partnership Officer (e.g. medical certificate) before any such request can be considered. Requesting a change of school placement allocation does not guarantee that it can be made.

5.3 Religious and/or Cultural Observances

A student's identity, such as their religious / cultural practices, can have a significant impact on teaching, learning and assessment in practice. However, it is a statutory requirement that the university and placement providers address these through establishing relevant policies and guidance which address diversity and inclusion.

These policies include a commitment to:

- Promoting equal opportunity and diversity during employment.
- Ensuring all employees are treated fairly and valued equally.
- Valuing religious and cultural needs and practices and meeting these where possible.

Students may have particular religious or cultural needs in terms of requests which may appear to "conflict" with existing working requirements in the practice setting. Such issues may include:

- Health and safety issues relating to dress code.
- Request for flexible working related to religious/belief-related festivals.
- Adjustments for prayer time, and space.

Whilst it may not always be possible to accommodate every student's religious or cultural observance, every effort will be made to find a mutually agreeable solution.

Our guiding principles:

- In these exceptional circumstances, negotiation between the student, the university, and school is essential. Students should speak with their university-based educator at their earliest opportunity to ensure that a proactive approach can be adopted.
- Established policies that apply to employed staff in schools also apply to students accepted on placement. It is vital that discussion takes place on the religious and cultural needs of the student and how they will be valued and/or met whilst on placement.
- Agreements between the student and placement provider may occur prior to, or at the outset of any placement as part of the induction process. These should be reviewed and discussed with the student at the midway point of the placement.

5.4 Religious Beliefs

Students may be placed in schools that do not align with the religious beliefs. For example, a student with no religious affiliation may be placed in a Roman Catholic school. In such cases, students are *not expected* to take part in or lead any aspect of religious observance activities. This will remain the responsibility of the SBE. Students should, however, become involved with aspects of the wider life of the school which are not explicitly religious in nature.

The Religious and Moral Education (RME) curriculum remains part of any teacher's responsibility to deliver within CfE. Where Religious Education - Roman Catholic (RERC) guidelines are used in schools, the learning should only be delivered by a fully qualified

member of staff. Students are not obligated to deliver denominational religious education.

5.5 Catholic Teachers' Certificate

Students who are eligible and wish to obtain the Catholic Teachers' Certificate must complete the online CREDL (Certificate in Religious Education through Distance Learning) programme. This Certificate is recognised by the Bishops of Scotland as a preliminary qualification in generalist Catholic religious education for those who wish to teach religious education in Catholic primary or secondary schools. For eligible ITE students who wish to complete this programme, further information can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/religiouseducationbydistancelearning/>

Please note that QMU does not offer funding nor allocated time within the university week for students to complete this.

For further information on eligibility and the requirements generally see the Scottish Catholic Education Service: <https://sces.org.uk/>.

5.6 Students with Disabilities

QMU is committed to equality of opportunity and believes in a culture of diversity and inclusion.

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/disability-service/>

Disabled students should experience the same broad range of practice settings to enable them to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes for each placement. At QMU, the term 'disabled' relates to the impact of an illness, impairment, developmental disorder or specific learning difficulty on the specific tasks associated with university level study. The Disability Service works with a broad range of students including those with long term medical conditions (such as MS, epilepsy, diabetes, chronic fatigue etc), mental health difficulties, sensory impairments, physical impairments, those on the autism spectrum and those with specific learning requirements (such as those with dyslexia).

Students with Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and Support on Placement

The QMU Disability Service develops an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) following a disability needs assessment. The ILP details the reasonable adjustments and supports recommended by the disability service. The ILP is developed with the expectation that it will be shared as necessary with staff on campus and for online teaching and assessment purposes.

Students should note that the provisions of the ILP do not apply to placement.

When a student is on placement the placement provider is responsible for any reasonable adjustments. In a Secondary School the Teacher Regent is the person a student should discuss their 'reasonable adjustments' requests with. Reasonable adjustments are determined by the context of the placement and the providers' policies and guidance.

Prior to the placement commencing it is also the student's responsibility to discuss their 'reasonable adjustments' requirements for placement with the Academic Disability Student Co-ordinator (ADSC) . Thereafter, if the student has agreement for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made in school they should inform the ADSC and the UBE. The student may request the ADSC's support in approaching the Teacher Regent to discuss 'reasonable adjustment' requests.

Where the student experiences difficulties with respect to 'reasonable adjustments' they should contact the ADSC, copying in their UBE, in the first instance. The ADSC will keep the Programme Leader updated on any challenges the student faces.

QMU services remain available to students while on placement, including Disability, Student Services, Wellbeing and the PAT (Pastoral Academic Tutor).

5.7 Travel and Accommodation

There is no direct provision by QMU for the cost of accommodation or travel expenses whilst on placement. Students should consider the cost of placement as being a necessary and integral element of the programme and plan for this in advance.

The University Student Finance Service administers two discretionary funds provided by the Scottish Government. These are the Childcare Fund, which is aimed at students who incur childcare costs whilst studying, and the Discretionary Fund, when students find themselves facing exceptional financial problems. An application form is completed and submitted with supporting evidence which is then considered. It is useful to make an appointment to see the Student Funding Adviser before submitting an application. More information here:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/services-for-students/student-funding/studentfunding-service/>

5.8 Attendance

Students are expected to arrive at their placement school in good time to ensure lessons are well prepared and resourced before pupils arrive. They should also expect to stay on after the end of the school day to tidy up, assess pupils' work, put up displays, attend any staff or planning meetings, plan and prepare lessons or activities for the next day or help with after school clubs. As a guide, student teachers are expected to arrive at school between 8.00-8.30am and leave 4.30-5pm.

If difficulties arise with placement hours, School Based Educators, and the student are actively encouraged to draw this to the attention of the school and university so that a mutually acceptable plan of action can be developed.

The University is aware that many students now find it essential to find work whilst studying. **However, employment outside of the programme must not adversely affect student's work during school experience.** Students are expected to mirror their working patterns to those in operation at the school. They must recognise that flexibility on the part of the school is not to be expected.

Similarly, all requests for pre-arranged absence from placement must be discussed with the Programme Leader. Planned absences from placement may be approved by the University in exceptional circumstances only.

IMPORTANT: Students do not have the right to negotiate holidays, or other leaves of absence during a placement, directly with the School Based Educator. Any essential leave requests must be agreed by the Programme Leader and then subsequently by the school.

5.9 Absence from Placement

Students are expected to comply with the attendance and reporting sickness policies of the University and must familiarise themselves with these policies. If absence is before the start of a placement the student must contact the Programme Leader, the Placement & Partnership Officer and the School Based Educator to report any sickness or absence. Every student is required to inform both the school and the University should they be unable to attend their placement on any given day. Students should:

- Contact the placement school as a matter of urgency by 8.30am in order that the school can plan cover staff for the absence.
- Students **must** also contact the Placement & Partnership Officer at ITEPlacements@qmu.ac.uk to report the absence, copying in their UBE and Programme Leader.
- Students must also log all absences via the Student Portal in the usual manner.
- If absent for more than one day, students should contact both the placement school and the ITEPlacements@qmu.ac.uk on each day of absence.
- If absent for more than 5 working days students must submit a medical certificate to the Student Portal and to ITEplacements@qmu.ac.uk
- When students return to school they should advise the Partnership and Placement Officer, again, via ITEplacements@qmu.ac.uk copying in their UBE and PL.
- If students cannot return due to valid reasons covered under the Extenuating Circumstances (EC) policy, such as for serious medical/health reasons, students can opt to withdraw from the placement subject to an approved EC request. An EC should be applied for in the usual manner via the Student Portal. This is then sent to the PL for approval. Robust evidence **must** be provided, e.g. a letter stating that a student is currently unfit to undertake placement from a GP or relevant medical professional.
- If students choose not to return to a placement for any reason not covered under ECs this is treated as an unsuccessful placement. Students would then be referred to Fitness to Study (see section 6).
- Any days missed due to absence may be required to be made up at the end of the placement, if the school is in agreement, or by undertaking an additional placement. This is to be arranged by the Placement & Partnership Officer, the SBE and the PL. Students should **not** arrange this themselves.
- Appointments, i.e. dentist, doctor, driving test etc should all be rescheduled out with placement time.

IMPORTANT: Failure by students to inform the School Based Educator, and the University via ITEPlacements@qmu.ac.uk that they are not attending placement will be regarded as unprofessional behaviour and students may be referred to Fitness to Study.

A School Based Educator should only report unauthorised absences, but these should be notified to the University's Placement & Partnership Officer - ITEplacements@qmu.ac.uk as soon as practicable, and certainly within 48 hours.

Attendance must be monitored throughout the placement and all absences from placement must be recorded by School Based Educators on the Final Report form.

5.10. Acceptable use of Social Media, ICT & Other Mobile Devices

Using Social Media

The University acknowledges that social media (e.g. Facebook, X, Linked-in, Blogging, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Tik Tok) is a significant part of people's lives and is a positive way to keep in touch and share information.

Student teachers could be putting their registration at risk, however, if posting includes inappropriate comments about pupils, parents, teachers, schools, others employed by the school, as well as other students - or posting any material that could be considered explicit. See 'Engaging Online: A Guide for Teachers (GTCS): <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/professional-guide-engagingonline.pdf>

As a student-teacher, be cautious about the information you post on-line. Students should remember that:

- The law around defamation and harassment, and confidentiality applies at all times.
- Anything posted on-line to a social networking site is in the public domain, even with the strictest privacy settings.
- The more personal lives are exposed through social networking sites, the more likely it is that this could have a negative impact.
- What may be considered as "letting off steam" about a situation at placement could potentially be seen by another person as unprofessional behaviour.

The following points are offered to students as guidance:

- Make use of appropriate etiquette when posting materials to social networking sites.
- Act responsibly at all times upholding the reputation of the profession, and QMU.
- Protect their own privacy, think through the kinds of information students want to share and with whom, and adjust their privacy settings.
- Observe placement providers' bullying, harassment and dignity policies when posting on-line (including e-mail, and text messaging) with colleagues, and peers.
- Do not post information to social networking sites that may lead to the identification of service users.

- Do not make disparaging remarks about the placement, service users, or employees on a social networking site (even when anonymised these are likely to be inappropriate).

Using official ICT Facilities, and Mobile Devices

Educational settings offering placements have policies regarding the use of mobile devices (e.g. smart phone, iPad, Android tablet, lap top computer) stating where and in what circumstances such devices are permitted or prohibited.

It is important therefore that when students go out on placement that they make it a priority to familiarise themselves with the local regulations. This will give students a better understanding of what is permitted and what is not.

Any ICT/official mobile devices offered to students during placements such as ipads are provided for use in learning and/or pursuit of their studies. Students should keep usernames and passwords private at all times. Students must not abuse ICT facilities for any other purpose, e.g. use of social networking sites or for recreational internet use. Students should be aware that organisations hosting placements may have auditing systems in place that can identify who is looking at what, and where, and when this activity took place.

Service user confidentiality, privacy, and dignity must be maintained at all times. Students should **never** use their own mobile devices or QMU ICT to create or send official school records (including photographs, videos, audio recording).

Keeping Safe Online

As an ITE student, studies may involve internet searches relating to young people. This may generate unwanted links to objectionable websites. Students are advised to use, wherever possible, specific education related search engines.

Even if students are careful, they may accidentally access internet sites they did not mean to. This might happen because they clicked on a misleading link, clicked on a link by accident, or because a site has been 'hijacked'. Students may also find that they get bombarded by unsolicited and explicit 'pop-up' advertising. If any of these things happen whilst a student is on placement, they should:

- Take a note of the URL (web address) of the site and the time it was accessed.
- Tell someone immediately.
- If possible, show them what happened.
- Record the details of the site accessed, before logging off the computer).
- Tell their School Based Educators as soon as possible.
- Tell local ICT staff (any alerts regarding inappropriate internet use will go to them first).
- Contact their UBE and Personal Academic Tutor at the University to advise them of what has happened.
- Where a pupil has been unable to log-in to a school computer – a student must never log-in on a pupil's behalf with their own personal log-in details.

In the event of a mishap, an investigation into the student's on-line activities might be undertaken, but if the accident was legitimate and these steps are followed, it will be resolved quickly.

The University does not discourage students from using such services. However, students should be aware that the University will take seriously any occasions where these services are used inappropriately.

Personal Use of Social Media and Professional Vulnerability

Students often create 'What's App' class groups. Please be aware that messages even within closed 'What's App' groups can be made public therefore be cautious of any unprofessional conversations which may constitute professional misconduct ie which miscalling of schools, or persons either based in schools or towards any University staff or fellow students. Such actions would be deemed to be a breach of the student Code of Professional Conduct.

Students must also heed the GTCS guidance on the use of 'Social Media', particularly since their 'personal' use can impact their 'professional' roles. This professional guidance will help identify potential dangers, offer some guidance about how to avoid them and provide a context for responsible, professional use of electronic communication and social media. For example, students and teachers can be vulnerable to unintended misuses of electronic communication. E-mail, texting and social media encourage casual dialogue; and very innocent actions can easily be misconstrued or manipulated. Electronic messages are not anonymous and can continue to develop a life of their own long after the original message has disappeared. Social Media sites can archive content even when deleted from online profiles. In effect, once information is placed online you relinquish control of it. Social media can disarm inhibitions; it brings a new dimension and 'feel' to a relationship. It is particularly important to be mindful of this whenever a student and a teacher consider becoming 'friends' in an online environment. A teacher should never share information with students in ANY environment that they would not willingly or appropriately share in a school or school-related setting, or in the community.

The Legal Implications

The GTCS Codes draw attention to the potential impact of criminal convictions on registered teachers and on those wishing to become registered. Careless or unwise behaviour online can result in criminal action or, in some cases, civil action brought by others. Online behaviour should therefore be treated with caution at all times. For further information please see:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/na/public/gw09leerosslyn/uploads/sites/3445/2018/09/GTCS-social-media-guidance-pd.pdf>

5.11. Formal Complaints Handling Procedure

The University has implemented a Complaints Handling Procedure (QMU 2014a) which can be found here [complaints at QMU](#).

Any queries about the complaints procedure or any complaints written on the

Complaints Form may be e-mailed to complaints@gmu.ac.uk

6. Fitness to Practice / Study: Placement

6.1 Fitness to Undertake Placement

Please see information regarding Fitness to Study here: <https://www.gmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulationspoliciesand-procedures/regulations-policies-and-procedures/fitness-to-study/>

At QMU we must ensure that all students maintain proper professional standards whilst on placement. This is about safeguarding that our students are fit to practice so that public trust and confidence in teachers is maintained and the learning of our children and young people is protected. Before commencing a placement a student must demonstrate readiness to undertake placement, in the following ways:

1. Are of sound medical fitness (including mental health): see section 6.2
2. Have demonstrated acceptable levels of attendance and adequate engagement with learning.
3. Completed all requirements for progression to placement.

If there are concerns about students' integrity or ability to practice on placement the Programme Leader reserves the right to refer to Fitness to Study / Practice, with potential for a deferred placement, as appropriate.

6.2 Fitness to Study/Practice: Placement Considerations

Prior to Placement

Any student experiencing ill health (including mental health) and/or personal issues prior to a placement should make an appointment to meet with either the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), UBE, or if they have an ILP the ADSC. It is recommended that students also inform their PL prior to placement commencing.

If a student has an existing ILP in which they consent to information being shared with placement this is the responsibility of the student to do so, with support from the ADSC / UBE. See Section 5.6 for further details on ILPs, the ADSC role and placement.

The Programme Leader may recommend that the student consults a medical practitioner to obtain a medical assessment on whether the student is able to commence the placement. A supporting medical certificate must be obtained by the student and forwarded to the Programme Leader.

If the student is unable to commence a placement they should apply for Extenuating Circumstances via the Student Portal. If accepted this will result in the placement being deferred and the student will undertake another placement once she/he is in sound health, subject to confirmation of fitness to resume.

During Placement:

Students developing a health (including mental health) issue or experiencing a worsening of an existing / chronic condition during placement that significantly impacts on their performance, safety of self or others are advised to discuss their situation with the SBE and UBE as soon as possible. The UBE should inform the PL.

Following discussions with all relevant parties the student may be advised to consult a medical practitioner to obtain a supporting medical certificate providing confirmation of their current health status and forward this to the University via an Extenuating Circumstances (EC) request.

This may result in the placement being terminated and deferred, with the student commencing another placement when she/he is of sound health, subject to confirmation of fitness to resume.

If the University becomes aware of an issue regarding a student's health or behaviour which may have an adverse effect on the student and / or placement, (and in the context of health, including mental health, and the student does not take advice as outlined above to request an EC), a Fitness to Practice (FtP) Panel may be convened by the University.

The Fitness to Practice (FtP) Panel has the delegated authority to impose a range of sanctions including requiring a student to suspend study or withdraw from the programme. If the outcomes of the FtP Panel prevent a student from starting or continuing with a school placement these will be discussed within the team and a recommendation made regarding their progress on the professional programme. See QMU's Fitness to Practice policy: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/regulations-policiesand-procedures/fitness-to-practise-ite/>

7. Assessment of Placement: Roles Processes and Paperwork

Roles

7.1 University Based Educator (UBE)

Before each placement commences, students will be allocated to a PGDE experienced Secondary educator – a University Lecturer - who will take on a mentoring role during the placement. This University Based Educator (UBE) will be the first point of contact if students have any questions or concerns about their placement. Each UBE will host a Teams meeting in week 2 or 3 of the placement for the group of PGDE students they are mentoring. UBE's will also invite SBE's to a separate Teams meeting to discuss the shared assessment process. UBEs also have access to the student's e-portfolio and will ensure that this is being kept up to date and that it is being used to record evidence of the student's progress.

The UBE will also visit the student to carry out a joint observation of the student's teaching practice with the SBE. These observation lessons will take place following the Mid-Way Review report. The UBE will write a report providing their shared and agreed feedback to the student on all eight of the GTCS SPR Criteria. Clear development targets will be shared with the student and the recording of Assessments will follow as set out in Section 7.2 below.

7.2 School Based Educator (SBE)

School Based Educators are the school-based mentors who oversee the assessment of a student's performance on placement. They will provide the student with opportunities to observe a range of experienced teachers' teaching with some opportunity to co-teach in the first week of the placement. From week 2 onwards they will help the student to build towards a teaching timetable **of up to 14 hours of contact time per week**. If the student will be working with two or more teachers in the Department then the SBE should co-ordinate the feedback from the other teachers to ensure that the student does not feel overwhelmed and that feedback is in the main focused around one key agreed target area to record on the Weekly Review form. The SBE will liaise closely with the UBE and following a Mid-Way Review, will undertake a shared observation lesson during weeks 5-7 where together with the UBE they will agree the student's progress against the Standard for Provisional Registration. The SBE will also take the lead in writing the student's Final placement Report having agreed the grades with the UBE.

Feedback and assessment by both the SBE and UBE will be based on their professional expertise in line with their professional knowledge and understanding of GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration. See Section 14.3 below.

7.3 Supervision of Students on Placement

School-based educators (SBEs) have overall responsibility for the learning and welfare of their class/es on the student teacher's timetable. The student teacher accordingly has the privilege of planning, resourcing, and teaching the pupils as a guest in the school.

As placements progress, and the students develop their confidence in teaching practice, SBE mentors may provide the student with opportunities to teach the class without the immediate intervention of the SBE or class teacher. However, as the students are not fully qualified or in employment; they should not be left in their class without the school providing the appropriate level of supervision from their SBE or a replacement teacher (for example, if the SBE cannot be present).

Such supervision is also required to ensure that SBEs/teachers can provide students with ongoing formative feedback on their professional development and progress towards the GTCS Standards for Provisional Registration.

Students should not be asked to cover lessons for absent teachers in any circumstances.

7.4. Students on Receiving Feedback

Students must ensure that they adopt a positive disposition towards receiving all feedback and to recognise that feedback from more experienced colleagues is an important learning opportunity for critical reflection and for planning their next steps in professional actions. Students may discuss feedback and their response to it with the UBE or their PAT tutor at any time.

7.5 Assessment of Placement: Processes and Paperwork

School Experience is assessed both informally and formally at regular intervals throughout the Placement. It should be a cumulative process which is supported by the SBE, other Departmental colleagues including the Teacher Regent and the UBE. This is enabled through the following process:

- **Weekly Reviews of Progress.** A weekly review of at least one development target (SPR) is set and agreed upon between the Student and the SBE. The signed copy of the agreed target is recorded on the Weekly Review form and posted into the student's weekly 'place-holder' in their PDP. Targets are reviewed each week, with feedback from the SBE. This is also recorded on the Weekly Review form providing a written record of progress which is uploaded by the student to the PDP e-portfolio.
- **The Midway Review.** Half-way through the placement the Student and SBE Review the student's progress – if satisfactory progress has been made then both agree targets for the remainder of the placement. This is recorded on the Mid-Way Review Form by the student (signed by the SBE). The student will (a) share their signed copy of the Mid-Way Review Form with their UBE and (b) post this into the Weekly Place Holder of their PDP.
- **Cause for Concern.** Should progress be unsatisfactory at the Mid-Way stage, then the SBE should complete a 'Cause for Concern' form and share this with the student and the UBE. This in turn triggers a three-way meeting between student, SBE and UBE to agree an action plan with a view to enabling the student to have clear step by step guidance on how to overtake any necessary targets before the end of the placement.
- **Joint Observation Lessons**

Joint observation lessons should take account of the stage the student is at on their professional learning journey. In **Placement 1** it is expected that students will achieve **6 out of 8 of the following GTCS SPR criteria to achieve an overall Satisfactory Report**. In **Placement 2** students **must achieve all 8 of these criteria** to enable them to progress to their Probationary year.

These GTCS criteria are:

Being a Teacher in Scotland – SPR Criteria	Either
1.1 Professional Values	S / U
1.2 Professional Commitment	S / U
1.3 Engaging with the Standard for Provisional Registration	S / U
Professional Knowledge and Understanding	
2.1 Curriculum and Pedagogy	S / U
2.2 Professional Responsibilities	S / U
Professional Skills and Abilities	
3.1 Curriculum and Pedagogy	S / U
3.2 The Learning Context	S / U
3.3 Professional Learning	S / U

GTCS SPR criteria are designed as benchmarks for the UBE and SBE to make a 'professional judgement' of the student's progress which will take into account evidence beyond the observed lesson. As specified by the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (2021) – 'professional judgement' should be informed by:

1. The lesson observed and the student's justification of their lesson planning process.
2. The student's professional self-evaluation and critical reflection of lessons against SPR and their recording of next steps through their weekly review of targets, as will be evidenced in the PDP. The student's contribution to the wider school community should also be recorded as evidence in the PDP.
3. The school's (ie SBE and other colleagues') overall knowledge of the student's professional progress. For example, through their teaching of other classes, demonstration of their professional values, commitment and collegiality and their contributions to the wider school community ie parents' evenings, breakfast clubs etc.
4. The student's oral testimony following the observed lesson – where the student is invited to discuss any aspects of their professional practice that might not be immediately apparent – such as the theory informing their lesson activities, their knowledge of assessment practices or approaches towards supporting pupils with additional support needs etc.

Writing of Reports

Once grades of either 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory' are agreed against all 8 criteria between the SBE and UBE, then the student is informed orally of the outcome of the observed lesson before the UBE leaves the school. The UBE then completes the visit Report providing feedback against all 8 of the GTCS SPR categories and both the UBE and SBE sign the Report before it is

shared with the student teacher to sign. The Joint Report which is formative should be uploaded to the Student's PDP.

This Joint Observation Report may form the basic template for the School's Final Report written two weeks later by the SBE, wherein the final grades must also be agreed between the SBE and UBE with both signing their agreement.

Placement 1: Final School Report

The student should upload the signed Final Report for Placement 1 into their PDP and also submit a copy to the University Formative Dropbox **no later than 19 December**. Students are expected to achieve 6 out of 8 SPR criteria **for an overall Satisfactory Pass**.

Placement 2: Final School Report

The Joint Observation process will take place as per Placement 1 following the Mid-Way Review. As before the Joint Observation Report can form the template for the School's Final Report and final grades will be agreed between the school and the University at both stages. Further guidance on how to complete the Final Report is also provided on our School resources Webpage –

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/initialteacher-education>

Please note that SBEs should complete the Final Summative Report by **19 May 2025**. The student will upload this Final Summative Report to the University Dropbox **no later than 20 May** in time for the QMU Exam Board deadline.

SPR Criteria expectations:

- By the end of Placement 1 it is expected that students will be able to achieve 6 out of 8 of the GTCS SPR criteria.
- By the end of Placement 2 – all 8 of the GTCS SPR criteria must be achieved to allow students to graduate and to progress to the Probationary year.

For any further questions on the assessment process please contact the Programme Leader: Dr L Craig lcraig1@qmu.ac.uk. All placement forms can be easily downloaded from the following link:

7.6 Supporting Students at Risk of an Unsatisfactory Placement

Whilst being relatively rare, an unsatisfactory outcome of placement does happen and can be a very stressful situation for all concerned. These guidelines are aimed at

reducing some of the stresses and ensuring that a fair process is in place to help support the student and the School Based Educator.

One of the key aspects in managing this is early detection – the sooner a student's performance can be identified as a **'Cause for Concern' (CfC)** then the more opportunity available to the student to attempt to address the key areas for improvement.

The student needs to be informed whether their progression on placement is a 'cause for concern' as soon as this has been identified.

- Inform the student as soon as possible if their practice is a cause for concern.
- The word unsatisfactory and/or cause for concern at this stage must be clearly used in this discussion.
- All attributes/knowledge gaps where the student is not satisfactory must be clearly indicated to the student and examples must be given by the SBE and related to the SPR.
- Inform the UBE as soon as possible if their performance is causing concern – preferably no later than the midway review – and encourage the student to talk with their UBE at the earliest opportunity.
- SBEs will arrange a three-way meeting (SBE, UBE and student) in order to complete an Action Plan to support the student's progress with clear steps for action highlighted.
- A discussion will then ensue to decide the most appropriate form of action to ensure support for both student and the SBE. For example, this may be a reduction in timetabled classes or a change of class on the student's timetable.
- A copy of the Action Plan will be put in place by the UBE, and a copy shared with the Programme Leader, which sets clear targets to resolve the CfC.

Whilst each situation will vary and requires to be handled appropriately, there are key aspects as how to best work forward. Honesty, trust and integrity is paramount and requires both the SBE, UBE and the student to be open within the learning conversations. Clarity is important, and both UBE and SBE should make sure the student is very clear about areas of concern and how they might best address these. In some cases, this might trigger an additional visit by the UBE.

Guiding principles:

- Ensure that the student receives honest, non-judgmental feedback which focuses on the key areas causing concern and linked to GTCS SPR criteria.
- Document these discussions have taken place on the Weekly Evaluation record. Both SBE and student should sign this.
- UBE and SBE and student set targets on a 'CfC' Action Plan which will support the student for the remainder of the placement – making these realistic and achievable. Both SBE and student should sign this Action Plan.
- Schedule weekly feedback sessions indicating progress on the set goals/targets and document discussions on the Weekly Evaluation record.
- Encourage the student to use reflection as much as possible to allow them to assess their own practices – giving some focus to where things go well as well as those where practice could be improved.

- SBEs should keep in touch with the student's UBE to feedback on progress.

If the student has not been able to overcome their targets by the Final Report stage then ensure that all verbal and written comments are in line with the SPR criteria so that the student is left with a very clear picture of where their practice did not meet expected levels.

All relevant documented evidence will then feed into a grading meeting at the end of the placement at QMU, where a decision will be made regarding the final grade for submission to the Board of Examiners. Ultimately, the Board of Examiners will determine whether the student may progress or whether they may be offered another opportunity through a retrieval placement.

If a student is offered a retrieval placement they will begin with an Action Plan already in place, based on the unsuccessful SPRs from the first attempt.

7.7 Discontinuation of School Experience

In some situations it may be necessary for a placement to be discontinued. It is important that all involved in this decision be as objective as possible, are clear about the relevant evidence that they have, follow the relevant procedures, seek advice and record decisions and outcomes.

A placement may be terminated for the following reasons:

Reasons related to the student:

- Professional misconduct.
- Serious detriment to children's learning and progression.
- Serious risk to children's safety.
- Issues related to competency and/or fitness to practice. The Programme Leader, acting on advice from the UBE can terminate a placement on these grounds and refer the student to Fitness to Practice.
- Health and safety issues and mandatory programme requirements.
- Personal issues.

Reasons related to the School Based Educator:

- SBE's competency, and/or concerns regarding their conduct.
- Personal issues.

Reasons related to the school:

- Staffing shortages.

If a placement is terminated, ITEPlacements@gmu.ac.uk, must be informed immediately as well as the UBE, student and Programme Leader must be notified at the earliest opportunity, so that an appropriate action plan or alternative placement can be developed.

Possible actions

- Issue is resolved. Placement continues with extra support from the school, and the University.
- Another SBE is able to facilitate the placement for the student in a different class.
- The terminated placement is rescheduled.

In the instance of a satisfactory standard being unachievable, resulting in an unsatisfactory placement, a not yet satisfactory mark may ultimately be presented to the Board of Examiners for the placement module; at which point a decision will be taken as to whether a retrieval placement may be offered to the student. All outcomes from Boards of Examiners, regarding progression or potential retrieval are made available to students via the QMU Student Portal: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/studyhere/learning-facilities/it-services/qmu-portal/>

Student Withdrawal / Removal from School Placement

If a student chooses to withdraw from a placement without prior discussion with the SBE, and approval of the Programme Leader, normally the student is deemed to have failed the placement module. However, if extenuating circumstances occur which preclude prior discussion (such as serious illness, or a sudden family bereavement) then a course of action will be agreed.

There may be rare occasions when the school and/or SBE feels it appropriate to remove a student from the placement immediately and they have the authority to do so. On these rare occasions the placement school will report the matter immediately to the University. The student is also required to inform their UBE and Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and Programme Leader immediately if any such event occurs.

8. Joint Observation Visit Procedures

8.1 The University Based Educator school visit procedures:

- The school visit should be arranged between the UBE and SBE at a mutually convenient time during the visit weeks.
- Once the date and time are agreed the UBE should complete an e-card with the visit confirmation and their contact details and email this to: (a) The Teacher Regent (b) the SBE and (c) the student. This should also be posted in the Student Teams Placement Mentoring File.
- The student should send their lesson plan to both the SBE and UBE at least two days before the visit.
- The UBE should confirm that the student's PDP is up to date prior to the school visit as this forms part of the assessment process.

The visit would normally last approximately 90 mins.

- The UBE should arrive 10-15 minutes before the start of the arranged school visit schedule.
- The UBE will jointly observe the student teaching in conjunction with the SBE. Both observers will use the joint observation form to record their thoughts of the student's teaching during the lesson observation.
- All assessments will also be based on 'professional judgement' of factors beyond the observed lesson as set out at 7.5 above.
- Following the lesson the student should be invited to leave the room for a comfort break as both the UBE and SBE will at this point discuss the student's teaching and to agree on what feedback to share with the student. This is also the time to discuss progress generally and the expected outcome of the Final Report at this point.
- Feedback on the lesson observation should then be provided to the student. It would be excellent practice for both the UBE and SBE to jointly provide feedback to the student. This may not always be possible and may depend on whether the SBE has availability/cover has been arranged. It may therefore be the UBE who will primarily provide the agreed joint feedback to the student alone.

8.2 Guidance on Providing Student Feedback

Receiving feedback can be highly stressful after the teaching of an observed lesson and research indicates that it can be difficult for students to 'hear' what is being said to them. Supportive language and a calm tone should enable the student to feel comfortable following their short comfort break.

When feeding back, observers should:

- consider the student's stage of development.
- Invite the student to bring a pen and paper to the debrief.
- encourage the student to reflect on what they felt went well in the lesson and to identify strengths before considering areas for development
- invite the students to discuss their thinking behind their lesson plan activities
- Invite the student to share what they might change with the benefit of hindsight
- invite the student to consider what their next steps for pupils' learning might be
- invite the student to set realistic and achievable targets • conclude by summarising main points and revisiting strengths.

Following the lesson feedback, the UBE should provide discussion time which should be personalised and linked to the needs of the student. This could include any additional advice post-lesson or discussing future targets where necessary and providing advice and guidance regarding paperwork for the PDP. This is recorded on the joint observation form.

The University Based Educator and School Based Educator post-school visit procedures

The UBE will write up the joint observation Report as soon as is possible and email a signed copy of the completed lesson observation form to the SBE. The SBE should be invited to include any further feedback if required and add their signature. The SBE should be asked to email the updated version of the completed observation Report to the student who should then upload to their PDP and to the University Dropbox.

8.3 Completing the Final Report Form (Summative)

The Final Report Form should be completed by the SBE with the grades agreed by the UBE. The Joint Observation Report may be used as a template. This should be done by the notified deadline. The final Report should be discussed with the student. This provides the student with the opportunity to review the report with the SBE and to be made fully aware of their professional progress.

SBEs can find Guidance on Completion on the University Resources webpage:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/initial-teachereducation>.

In making a judgement, it is important to bear in mind the extent to which the placement has given the opportunity to demonstrate the criterion being considered, and what can be realistically expected from students in relation to their stage of the PGDE Programme.

Students who fail to pass Placement 2, may be able to continue to a retrieval placement following agreement by the Board of Examiners. There are no further attempts beyond this in ordinary circumstances. To be eligible to graduate and progress into probation it will first be necessary to successfully complete any retrieval placement(s).

8.4 Student Evaluation of School Experience

At the conclusion of each placement, students will have an opportunity to reflect on their placement. Constructive feedback on placement experience can be communicated via the Class Reps and raised at the relevant SSCC (Staff Student Consultative Committee) meeting.

8.5. Contacts and Support Mechanisms for Students and SBEs during Placement

Support from the Programme team is provided in different ways throughout placement, including online Teams meetings, telephone calls or via teams chat messaging and emails.

University Based Educators act as the first point of contact for an identified group of students and School Based Educators throughout each placement, responding to initial requests for advice and support from SBEs and their students normally within 3 working days. UBEs will usually invite the SBE to a face to face Teams meeting in Week 2 of the placement to check how the student is settling in.

A student will normally receive one visit per placement from the UBE and a further visit if required, or if a cause for concern is raised. All communications and follow-up actions agreed with SBEs and students are documented and copies of completed reports and action plans are retained in their file. The Programme Leader is kept informed of any issues.

8.6 Problems on Placement

If a student is experiencing difficulties on school experience or needs to discuss any aspect of the placement with a member of academic staff, they should contact their University Based Educator. Students may choose to discuss problems of a personal nature with their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT).

Where relevant, the UBE or PAT will liaise with the Programme Leader in attempts to resolve the issue. The Programme Leader in turn may contact the Teacher Regent on the student's behalf should this be necessary.

However, if an incident occurs outside of normal working hours, where there is an urgent need to contact the University, please telephone: (0131)-474-0000. When prompted, ask for School Office, the Programme Leader or the Placements team.

8.7 Student Wellbeing Service

Students experiencing any personal difficulties during their placement are encouraged to make use of the Wellbeing Service. This service is confidential, and sessions can be arranged to suit their timetable. All students are welcome to use the service, which can also provide information on other sources of help that may be more appropriate. The website also provides signposting to various other information and support services.

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/studyhere/student-services/wellbeing-service/>

9. Deferring a School Placement

Students who are unable for legitimate reasons to undertake the placement at the allotted time or who withdraw from a placement due to ill health and/or personal issues will have a placement arranged at a deferred time. This will count as a first attempt. Deferred or retrieval placements are dependent on the University sourcing another placement. Students should be aware that it may not be possible for a retrieval placement to take place until the next academic year (which may impact the student's ability to progress to the next year of study). Students must not schedule holidays, work or periods of unavailability in advance during retrieval points of the year, in case they require one. Retrieval points are normally (but not always, depending on circumstances).

10. Submission of Assessment Paperwork and PDP

Students are responsible for ensuring they receive a copy of their Final Report from their SBE and that they submit this to the University Dropbox by the due date. A submission date for the Final Report will be communicated to students and SBEs, which ordinarily will be on or just before the final day of placement.

At the conclusion of each placement students should reflect on their practice against the SPR and, as a result of their Final Report, set targets for the next placement or for the completion of their GTCS induction profile at the end of Placement 2.

10.1 Completion of the PDP:

Students are responsible for ensuring that their PDP is up to date and completed to a satisfactory standard, as outlined by the University. The PDP is part of the summative assessment of the Placement. The Pebblepad PDP can transfer to the student with an Alumni account to inform their professional development needs on entry to the Probationary year.

- PDPs should be maintained appropriately throughout placement, as these can be viewed at any time by the UBE and they form part of Placement Assessment procedures.
- Failure to do so may be considered unprofessional conduct and considered to be a 'Cause for Concern'.

PDPs must be completed by the submission dates for final Placement Reports.

11. Appeals Procedure

A student wishing to appeal against a decision made by the Board of Examiners about the outcome of a placement may do so by following the procedures, and practices set out in the Academic Appeals Regulations (QMU, 2014a). Information available at: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committeesregulations-policies-and-procedures/regulationspolicies-and-procedures/academicappeals-regulations/>

12. Resources for Schools: Placement Report Forms

All placement report forms are easily downloadable from the following link:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/initialteachereducation/postgraduate-school-experience-placements/>

These include:

1. Weekly Evaluation Review - for Use by Student and SBE
2. Informal Lesson Observation Form – for optional use by Class Teachers
3. Formal Formative Joint Observation Form - for optional use by lead SBE/Mentor Teacher prior to the Mid-way Review
4. Mid-way Review Form - for use by Student and SBE/ Mentor
5. Joint Observation Formative Report Form - for use by University Based Educator
6. Final Placement Report Form (School completes with University agreement of grades)
7. Cause for Concern Form
8. Cause for Concern Action Plan