

**Opening statement**

**3 July 2024**

**Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education,  
Research, Innovation and Science**

Good evening Chair and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for your invitation to speak with you today. My name is Lynn Ramsey, I'm the Director of the Teaching Council and I'm accompanied today by my colleagues Phil Fox who is our Deputy Director, Siobhán Healy who is our Head of Registration, and Bríd Murphy who is our Head of Initial Teacher Education and Induction.

The Committee has asked us to address a number of matters and I will provide a summary overview at this point, and we welcome your questions for our further discussion.

The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland. Our role is to protect the public by promoting and regulating professional standards in teaching. Serving the public interest is central to our work, which includes the statutory registration of teachers, ensuring they meet and uphold high standards. We regulate the competence and conduct of the profession including fitness to teach processes. We also conduct vetting for over 123,500 teachers on an ongoing basis. These are just some of the ways we ensure the protection and care of children, young people and vulnerable learners in the education system.

It is also important to note that we operate under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015.

All of our activity relates to the practice and promotion of teaching as a profession and this spans a range of areas, including:

- Setting standards and reviewing and accrediting, as appropriate, all programmes of initial teacher education in the State that lead to registration with the Council
- Maintaining the Register of over 123,500 teachers, including the vetting and re-vetting of teachers
- Development and supervision of the Droichead Framework for the induction of newly qualified teachers
- Supporting teachers' learning and research contributing to knowledge and best practice within the profession

- Developing and publishing a Code of Professional Conduct for the teaching profession
- The holding of fitness to teach inquiries and/or investigations where necessitated, and
- Advising the Department and Minister for Education on matters relating to teacher workforce planning and any other matters in line with our statutory remit.

### **Registration process for those qualified in the Republic of Ireland**

In relation to registration processes and the recognition of qualifications for aspiring teachers, we ensure that all teachers entering the profession in Ireland meet required standards.

We have a high-quality, and trusted teaching profession in Ireland. Part of this is due to the high-quality initial teacher education that teachers experience and the high standards we as a regulator set for those entering the profession in Ireland.

As the regulator of the teaching profession, we set the standards for programmes of initial teacher education within the State. The standards for primary, and post-primary teaching are outlined in [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education](#). When a person completes an accredited programme of initial teacher education, they may apply for registration as a primary, post-primary or further education teacher.

It's also important to note that, as a regulator, we have no role in deciding where teachers work, or in what setting. It is the responsibility of each school management authority or board of management, in conjunction with guidelines from the Department of Education, to decide what settings teachers work in, and what registration status they must hold.

## **Registration process for those qualified outside of the Republic of Ireland**

Our responsibilities also include acting as a competent authority for recognising qualifications from outside of the Republic of Ireland.

Under EU Directive 2005/36/EC as amended, we assess and recognise professional qualifications to support the mobility of professionals across EU countries. We also apply the EU Directive to non-EU and non-EEA applicants ensuring equality and consistency of process for all applications.

Teachers qualified outside of Ireland must apply for recognition of their qualifications. This involves providing evidence of their educational background, including transcripts, vetting information and an official letter confirming their status as a fully qualified teacher from their home country's relevant authority.

These measures ensure that applicants meet the required high standards to practise in Ireland.

The average processing time for applicants from outside the Republic of Ireland in 2023 was eight weeks. There are no backlogs or delays in the processing of any category of applications, including all applications currently being processed.

Over the past number of years, we have enhanced this registration process. We introduced a new online registration system making it easier for applicants to submit and track applications in real time. We also conducted a quality assurance review of this process over 2023-2024 which brought further enhancements.

### **Return to the register**

In line with Teaching Council legislation, if a teacher's registration lapses, they must make a full application if they would like to rejoin the register.

With this in mind, we developed a tailored registration process to support teachers in applying to return to the register. This includes the provision of detailed guidance on how to apply to return to the register and the documentation required. A dedicated

team has also been put in place to manage the processing of these applications including a specific email address for teachers' queries.

## **Fees**

The Teaching Council is required to charge registration fees to cover the cost associated with assessing and processing applications. These fees ensure that we can maintain high standards and operate efficiently. Applications from outside the Republic of Ireland can be complex, with additional resources required to verify and evaluate international qualifications, ensuring they meet Ireland's high educational standards. The qualification assessment fee for applicants from abroad is between €200 - €300. If applicants decide to proceed with registration, they will then pay an initial registration fee of €90 which is the same fee paid by those who have qualified within the Republic of Ireland.

## **Ireland's Initial Teacher Education Policy**

In 2012, the report of an International Review Panel, chaired by Professor Pasi Sahlberg, proposed a vision for the restructuring of initial teacher education provision in Ireland. This report which was conducted on behalf of the Department of Education, has become known as the Sahlberg Report. This report recommended significant restructuring of the provision of initial teacher education in Ireland and since its publication has made a significant impact on teacher education in Ireland. Sahlberg's research emphasised the need for systemic change, advocating for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educational institutions. The Panel's recommendations underscored the importance of critical mass—ensuring that teacher education programmes reach a sufficient scale to have a meaningful impact. As a result, Ireland's educational landscape witnessed significant shifts, with some institutions and faculties amalgamating, relocating to university sites and re-evaluating their approaches to initial teacher education.

Building upon the Sahlberg Report, Centres of Excellence have been established to provide initial teacher education. This has created opportunities for research hubs, professional development, and collaboration while also creating an environment that enables innovation and best practice. This collaborative spirit has led to a more cohesive and informed approach to teacher education.

In 2023, the Department of Education published the [Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement](#). This document outlines a comprehensive framework for the future of teacher education. It reaffirms the principles and vision for Centres of Excellence led initial teacher education, whereby mergers or alliances of higher education institutions take place to allow high quality teacher education to be facilitated within that Centre of Excellence, as set forth by the Sahlberg Report.

The national policy statement on initial teacher education emphasises the following key areas:

- **Quality Assurance:** Rigorous standards are now in place to ensure that teacher education programmes meet high-quality benchmarks. Institutions must demonstrate their commitment to excellence in curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment.
- **Induction Programmes:** The policy recognises the critical role of induction programmes for newly qualified teachers. These programmes provide ongoing support, mentorship, and professional development during the crucial early years of a teacher's career.
- **Research and Innovation:** The policy encourages institutions to engage in research that informs teaching practices. By fostering a culture of inquiry, teacher educators contribute to the continuous improvement of the profession.

It reaffirms the commitment to attracting high-quality candidates, promoting inclusive education, and maintaining rigorous standards. This policy statement unites stakeholders, also emphasising collaboration, research, and continuous improvement.

The Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement outlines that technological universities will be in a position to provide subject expertise to initial teacher

education and any plans for entirely new initial teacher education provision must be led by a Centre of Excellence.

The establishment of technological universities through the mergers of institutes of technology is an important development in Irish higher education. The technological universities, through their engagement with the existing Centres of Excellence, can offer an opportunity for fostering collaboration, research, and innovation in initial teacher education. There are currently 11 such collaborative programmes accredited by the Teaching Council for the post-primary sector.

In summary, our accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education at higher education institutions, including technological universities, ensures that these programmes meet professional standards for preparing future teachers. This is a rigorous process which includes evaluating the content, structure and delivery of initial teacher education programmes to confirm their alignment with national standards, as detailed in the "Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education."

As a regulator, we will continue to play an essential role in this regard. By aligning with the national policy position and teacher workforce planning priorities, we will continue to ensure that initial teacher education graduates enter the profession well-prepared and ready to make a positive impact for learners throughout Ireland.

Thank you Chair and members of the committee and we welcome our further discussion.

**Dr Lynn Ramsey**

**Director**