

Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments for Initial Teacher Education

a toolkit for ITE stakeholders

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Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments for Initial Teacher Education

Project Aims EKARA aims to:

- Map the current understanding of reasonable accommodations/adjustments for ITE students with disabilities amongst lecturing staff/placement coordinators within the Schools of Education, staff within Access Offices/Disability Support, and co-operating teachers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- Identify any gaps in knowledge and understanding amongst the three key groups regarding reasonable accommodations or adjustments for ITE students with disabilities
- Explore the attitudes of these three key groups towards the needs of disabled ITE students and reasonable accommodations/adjustments on teaching placement
- Identify effective approaches and best practices in supporting disabled ITE students on teaching placement
- Develop a toolkit as the basis for an open-access online resource for supporting ITE students on teaching placement in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

Definition of reasonable accommodation

“A reasonable accommodation or adjustment is a necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden to ensure persons with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others.”



EKARA Toolkit Element



Cooperating Teachers



Academic Placement coordinators



University based Staff



ITE Students

Joint Statement

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Joint Statement on Disability Inclusion and Reasonable Accommodation in Teacher Education



University College Cork (UCC) and St. Mary's University College Belfast, as partners in the “Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments for ITE Students with Disabilities in ROI and NI-EKARA” project, affirm our shared commitment to creating inclusive learning environments that foster the success of all student teachers, including those with disabilities. We believe that:

- Disability inclusion is essential to a just and equitable education system. Every student teacher deserves the opportunity to develop their full potential, regardless of disability.
- Equity of opportunity requires proactive efforts to remove barriers to participation. Reasonable accommodation is a key strategy for ensuring that student teachers with disabilities have equal access to learning and teaching experiences.
- Student teacher success depends on a collaborative approach. We recognise the importance of open communication, shared responsibility, and mutual support between universities, placement schools, and student teachers in identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations.

In line with our institutional policies and the aims of the EKARA project, we are dedicated to:

- Promoting a culture of understanding and respect for disability.
- Providing comprehensive support services and resources for student teachers with disabilities.
- Working with placement schools to create accessible and inclusive learning environments.
- Empowering student teachers with disabilities to advocate for their needs and participate fully in their education.

We are committed to working together to ensure that the student teachers have the support and opportunities they need to succeed and contribute to a diverse and inclusive teaching profession.

01

Professional Discussion on Reasonable Accommodation & Fitness to Practice for Student Teachers



- Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff ITE Students

Objective Identify potential barriers on school placement and consider how to address these issues as a cooperating teacher

Group Size: 2-4 participants

- Copy the selected vignettes
- Take one vignette per group.
- Complete the tasks below to structure your discussions



Duration: 1 hour

Group Members:

1. Case Summary

Vignette Number: _____

Key Facts: (write 5 details about this student teacher that may affect their ability to teach without support.)

Detail 1	Detail 2	Detail 3	Detail 4	Detail 5

2. Identifying Barriers in the School Environment

What barriers does the student teacher face in their teaching practice and placement setting? Consider each barrier theme and then, using the vignette to help, write down the potential barriers that they may face in the classroom and in the wider school.

Not every box needs to be filled with a barrier description.

Potential barrier themes	Describe barrier in the classroom	Describe barrier in the wider school
Classroom management challenges		
Communication difficulties with students/colleagues		
Organisational/time management difficulties		
Difficulties with lesson planning or assessment		
Emotional or stress-related challenges		
Physical or sensory impairments affecting teaching		
Other		

3. Reasonable Accommodations in the School Environment

Now choose 3-4 of the barriers highlighted above that have implications in the classroom and the wider school context. Explain how you will reasonably accommodate the student teacher to overcome the barrier. Consider this in the context of the cooperating teacher and the wider school.

Potential barrier description	<i>What can I do as a cooperating teacher to reasonably accommodate the student teacher to overcome the barrier?</i>	<i>What can the school do to reasonably accommodate the student teacher to overcome the barrier?</i>

4. Fitness to Practice Considerations

Teaching Council of Ireland	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)
<p>According to the Teaching Council of Ireland, a teacher's fitness to practice relates to their ability to carry out their professional roles and responsibilities competently and ethically.</p> <p>Fitness to practise means having the capacity to carry out the duties and responsibilities of a teacher. It includes having the requisite knowledge and skills, being able to communicate effectively, and demonstrating sound judgement and diligence. Teachers are expected to adhere to professional standards and the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct, ensuring the well-being and learning of their students.</p>	<p>In Northern Ireland, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) emphasises the importance of teachers demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Values and Practice – Commitment to learners, trust, respect, empathy, reflection, and creativity in teaching. • Learning and Teaching – Creating engaging, high-quality learning experiences that support student development. • Specialist Learning and Teaching – Applying subject-specific expertise and teaching strategies effectively. • Planning for Learning – Designing lessons that cater to diverse learner needs and curriculum goals. • Assessment for Learning – Using assessment to track progress, provide feedback, and inform teaching. • Access and Progression – Ensuring equal learning opportunities and supporting students' educational and career growth.

02 Challenge your Bias



Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff ITE Students

Activity Worksheet: Reflecting on Bias in Supporting Student Teachers with Disabilities.

Objective This worksheet is designed to help you critically examine your conscious and unconscious biases regarding student teachers with disabilities.

- By the end of this activity, you should have a better understanding of how your attitudes and values impact the experiences of student teachers with disabilities.

Group Size: - Discuss each section in small groups or as a whole staff, noting your personal and professional reflections.

Materials Needed:

- Worksheets
- EKARA Vignettes



Duration: 1 hour.

Step 1: Initial Self-Reflection: Understanding Bias (10–15 minutes)

Statement	Rating				
	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that student teachers with disabilities can be just as effective as those without disabilities.					
I am comfortable discussing disability-related accommodations with student teachers.					
I have assumed that a student teacher with a disability might struggle more than others.					
I see disability as a difference rather than a deficit.					
I believe schools should actively recruit and support student teachers with disabilities.					
I have reflected on how my expectations of student teachers with disabilities might be influenced by bias.					



Compare your answers with someone else and discuss your responses. Why do you think you hold these opinions? What has led you to believe these opinions? To what extent do you believe them to be true?

Step 2: . Exploring Unconscious Bias (30 minutes)



Discuss the following questions with colleagues and record 5 details from your discussion below.

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
<p>Can you recall a time when you made an assumption about a student teacher with a disability?</p> <p>What was it, and how did it affect your interactions with them?</p>	<p>Have you ever lowered or raised your expectations for a student teacher because of their disability?</p> <p>Why?</p>	<p>In what ways might subtle biases in language, feedback, or body language impact student teachers with disabilities?</p>

5 Key Takeaways from Discussion:

Step 3: Valuing Disability Difference in Teaching (15 minutes)



Why is it important for people with disabilities to work as teachers? Consider Vignettes supplied Remember that these are descriptions of student teachers and the potential future teachers in the profession.

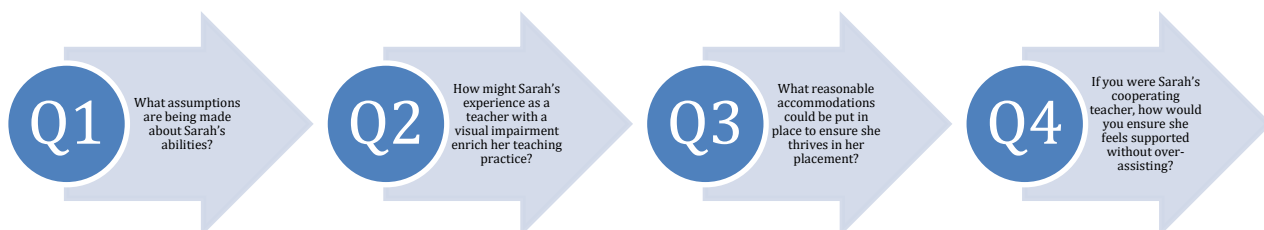
In groups, take one of the vignettes and answer the following questions in the table based on the content of vignette.

<i>Discuss the role of representation in schools: What message does it send to students when teachers with disabilities are part of the staff?</i>	
<i>How do teachers with disabilities contribute unique perspectives to the profession?</i>	
<i>How can having a diverse teaching workforce improve inclusivity for students with disabilities?</i>	

Step 4: How People with Disabilities See the World (10–15 minutes)

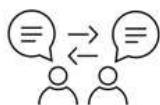
Look at this very short vignette below:

Sarah is a student teacher with a visual impairment. She is highly organised and uses screen readers and braille materials for planning. However, her cooperating teacher worries that students might react differently to her and assumes she will struggle with classroom management.



Step 5: Taking Action: Creating an Inclusive Mentoring Environment

What specific actions can you take as a cooperating teacher to ensure you foster an inclusive and bias-aware environment for student teachers with disabilities? Some actions are outlined in the table below. In each case, describe what your role could be as cooperating teacher in supporting the delivery of the action. In the 'Timeline' column consider when this would take place in a normal academic year running from August/September to May/June.



Action	Your role as cooperating teacher	Timeline
Reflect on and challenge my own biases regularly.		
Engage in professional learning on disability inclusion.		
Ensure reasonable accommodations are discussed with (not for) the student teacher.		
Provide student teachers with disabilities the same professional challenges and expectations as others while supporting them appropriately.		
Encourage open dialogue with student teachers about their experiences.		

03 Rights & Responsibilities on Placement: Student Teachers with a Disability



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Objective Know your rights. Own your responsibilities. Thrive on placement.

Your Legal Rights

As a student teacher with a disability, you are protected under equality legislation:



Disability Act 2005, Equal Status Act 2000 (RoI) and Disability Discrimination Order 2006 (NI): Prohibits discrimination in educational settings, including placement for links to support services in RoI and NI).

- **Reasonable accommodations** must be made to support access to learning and teaching.
- You have the **right to confidentiality** and to choose whether or not to disclose your disability.

Your Rights on Placement To receive **reasonable accommodations** that support your ability to teach.



- To access **placement planning support** from your college.
- To be treated with **dignity and respect** by all school staff.
- To request a **review or adjustment** if your needs are not being met.
- To choose how much you share about your disability and with whom.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations



- Reduced supervision duties
- Use of assistive tech (e.g. voice-to-text)
- Flexible teaching hours or rest breaks
- Access to ergonomic seating or quiet spaces
- Modified assessment or observation practices

Your Responsibilities



- **Engage early** with your college Disability Support Service (DSS)
- **Communicate proactively** with college staff and (where appropriate) your host school
- **Participate in placement planning meetings** if offered
- **Reflect on your needs** and be open to problem-solving
- **Uphold professional standards** and maintain confidentiality

When to Take Action



- If accommodations are not being implemented
- If you experience barriers to teaching
- If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe disclosing needs
- If you require a review of your placement conditions

Tip: Keep records of emails, notes from meetings, and personal reflections.

Support Contacts



- College Disability Support Service
- Placement Tutor or Coordinator
- Student Union or Peer Mentor
- External advocacy services (e.g. AHEAD Ireland)

You Deserve to Thrive



Being a teacher with a disability brings strengths, empathy, and insight. With the right support and preparation, your placement can be a positive, empowering experience. Do not be afraid to ask for what you need — your voice matters.

04

Providing Reasonable Accommodations through UDL in Placement Schools



- Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff ITE Students

The workshop will enable participants to identify barriers to inclusion, apply UDL principles proactively, and ensure equitable access and participation for all learners in school placement settings.

Objective To equip co-operating teachers/mentors with the knowledge and practical strategies to support student teachers in providing reasonable accommodations in inclusive classrooms, using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework.

Group Size: 20 participants.

Materials Needed:



Duration: 1.5 hours.

- Laptop/projector
- Internet access for Padlet or Mentimeter
- Handouts (UDL guidelines, planning templates)
- Vignettes
- Sample lesson plans

Introduction: Multiple Means of Engagement (The Why of Learning)

Why options are important?

Provide participants with options for Engagement:

Option 1: short video student to show the diversity of students and the necessity of UDL

[What is Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)?](#)

Have a follow-up discussion about the necessity of options in higher and teacher education

Option 2- Display a series of printed vignettes or provide a link to the vignettes and ask the participants to explore them. Discuss about the diversity of student teachers in placement settings

Option 3-Poll or Padlet: “What challenges have you encountered when supporting diverse learners?”

Option 4 -Display few lesson plans. Ask the participants to analyse in which situation an option was given to the students. Discuss why having a choice is important?

Conclude that understanding and implementing UDL in their support towards the student teachers will increase their teaching performance, wellbeing and inclusion

Multiple Means of Representation (The What of Learning)-

What is UDL”



Multiple Formats: Present information about UDL principles using slides, infographics, short video clips, and print-friendly handouts.

- **1. UDL Guidelines Summary:** Visually present CAST’s UDL principles. Could use also printed versions
- **2. Video-** [The Inclusive Practice Pyramid](#)
- **3. Scenario Analysis:** Show different scenarios where accommodations were or were not used effectively from the perspective of UDL. These case studies can be used: [Reasonable Accommodations Policy | University College Cork](#)

Action and Expression (The How of Learning)

UDL in providing reasonable accommodation



Participants will be asked to create an Accommodation Planning Tool for one student teacher with disability in placement setting.

They will need to complete the following structure (example below). A printed and a digital template of the format will be provided.

UDL Area	Barrier Identified	Accommodation / Strategy
Engagement	Student teacher experiences anxiety in unfamiliar classroom settings	Allow pre-teaching discussions; provide a clear daily schedule with visual supports
Representation	Difficulty accessing written lesson plans due to dyslexia	Provide lesson materials in audio format or with screen-reader-compatible documents
Action & Expression	Trouble completing written reflections under time pressure	Offer options: audio reflections, bullet-point notes, or dictation software

Participants will be given multiple means to expressions:

Choice of Output: Participants choose how to share their work

- verbally,
- through a digital presentation,
- on flipcharts/printed templates,
- Padlet boards.

Alternatively, they can create

- Reflection Journals: Invite written or audio reflections on how their understanding of “reasonable accommodations and UDL” has evolved.

Assessment & Feedback (Optional Add-on) –

Goal: Evaluate learning and gather input for ongoing support.

Options:

- Self-Assessment Checklist: Participants assess their confidence in applying UDL strategies.
- Exit Ticket: “One change I’ll make in my next mentoring session is...”
- Feedback Form: Collect digital or physical feedback on session effectiveness and follow-up needs.

Accommodation Planning Tool

UDL Area	Barrier Identified	Accommodation / Strategy
Engagement		
Representation		
Action & Expression		

05 Toolkit for Student Teachers with a Disability



Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff ITE Students

Objective To Identify and Understand Reasonable Accommodations During Placement – Your Placement, Your Rights, Your Voice.

As a student teacher with a disability, you are entitled to reasonable accommodations that support your success. This handout provides “What if” scenarios you might face and positive solutions to help you plan ahead and feel empowered during your school placement.

What If... I’m not sure what supports I’ll need on placement?

Solution:

- Schedule a meeting with your college’s Disability Support Service (DSS) before placement.
- Discuss your classroom-related needs (mobility, sensory, stamina, communication, etc.)
- Ask for a **Placement Planning Meeting** involving your college and, with your permission, the placement school.



What If... My host school does not know what reasonable accommodations are?

Solution:

- Provide a short, clear **Placement Support Letter** from your college.
- Offer general info on what reasonable accommodations are (ask DSS for a handout).
- Emphasise that accommodations promote **equity**, not advantage.



What If I’m nervous about disclosing my disability to my cooperating teacher?

Solution:

- Disclosure is your choice — but it can help explain accommodations like seating needs or assistive tech.
- Focus on the *impact*, not the diagnosis:
“I experience fatigue, so I will be using a tall stool when teaching at the board.” If unsure, ask a DSS advisor to help frame the conversation.



What If... I need more time to prepare or organise my classroom?

 *Solution:*

- Request early access to the classroom or resources.
- Ask for prep time or flexibility as part of your accommodations.
- Use visual schedules, task boards, or checklists for organisation.



What If... I experience a challenge during placement related to my disability?

 *Solution:*

- Keep in regular contact with your college placement tutor.
- Keep a reflective journal — helpful for follow-ups.
- If needed, request a review meeting with DSS and the placement rep.



What If... I'm worried about being a burden or "making a fuss"?

 *Solution:*

- Accommodations are your **right** under equality legislation.
- Think of them as tools to help you succeed — just like lesson planning.
- A well-supported student teacher equals a better placement experience for everyone.



Reasonable Accommodations May Include:

- Reduced yard duty or supervision.
- Use of assistive technology.
- Physical adaptations (e.g. chair, ramp access)
- Flexible scheduling or rest breaks.
- Alternative assessment arrangements.
- Communication supports (e.g. speech-to-text technology)
-



Top Tips



Plan early – do not wait until placement starts to flag needs.

Keep notes – great for documentation and reflection.

Ask questions – no issue is too small if it impacts your teaching.

Who Can Support You?



- Your college disability support service.



- Placement coordinator or tutor.



- School principal or cooperating teacher.



- A trusted peer or mentor with experience.



06

Reasonable Accommodations Student Teachers in Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Legislation Governing Reasonable Accommodations for Student Teachers on the island of Ireland.	
Republic of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015: Protects against workplace discrimination, including disability. Employers (e.g., schools) must provide reasonable accommodations unless it causes a disproportionate burden. • Equal Status Act 2000: Ensures non-discrimination in education, granting equal access for students and staff with disabilities. • EPSEN Act 2004: Promotes inclusive education but mainly applies to school-aged students, not student teachers. • Teaching Council Act 2001 & Code of Professional Conduct: Sets professional standards, emphasising schools' responsibility to support student teachers on placement.
Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) & SENDO 2005: Requires schools and educational institutions to make reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals, including student teachers. • Equality Act 2010 (GB only): Not in force in NI, but its principles are reflected in NI legislation. • Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO) 1998: Prohibits employment discrimination, ensuring equal treatment for employees, trainees, and student teachers. • General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) sets professional standards (see page 8 for more details).
What this means for student teachers	
Republic of Ireland	<p>Student teachers can request reasonable accommodations, but schools must only provide adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate burden. Accommodations must be balanced to ensure they do not affect fitness to practice or pupil learning, and student teachers are responsible for disclosing their needs.</p>
Northern Ireland	<p>Stronger legal protections under Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SEUDO) and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) require schools and universities to collaborate in removing barriers for student teachers. Schools must provide reasonable adjustments unless they cause undue hardship, with a greater legal duty than in the Republic of Ireland to ensure equality in professional training.</p>



Mentoring

Provide a supportive and inclusive mentoring environment for student teachers.



Reasonable Accommodations

Collaborate with the school and student teacher to identify reasonable accommodations that support effective teaching



Strength-focused Training

Focus on strengths and enabling adaptations, rather than assuming incapacity



Fitness to Practice

Communicate concerns about fitness to practice professionally and supportively



Feedback

Ensure feedback is constructive and inclusive, maintaining fair expectations while allowing necessary accommodations



Biases

Advocate for inclusive teaching practices and actively challenge biases



Confidentiality

Maintain confidentiality, handling disclosures sensitively and sharing only on a need-to-know basis

Understanding Legal Responsibilities

- Do we understand our legal responsibilities under equality and disability law?

Fostering an Inclusive Environment

- How do we ensure that student teachers feel comfortable disclosing a disability if they wish to do so?
- What steps can we take to create a more inclusive environment for future student teachers?

Proactively Addressing Reasonable Accommodations

- Have we proactively discussed reasonable accommodations with student teachers?
- Are placement expectations flexible enough to accommodate different needs while maintaining professional standards?

Training and Support for Cooperating Teachers

- Do we provide training or resources to help cooperating teachers support student teachers with disabilities?

Fair and Consistent Implementation

- Are reasonable accommodations implemented consistently and fairly across different student teachers?

Challenging Bias and Promoting Equity

- How can we challenge our own unconscious biases about disability in teaching?

07

Links to Support Services (RoI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Student Disability Support Services Republic of Ireland

Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) – Government-funded scheme (managed by the HEA) that allocates funding to colleges for supports and accommodations for eligible higher education students with disabilities (covers costs of assistive technology, learning support, etc.; non-means-tested & non-repayable). <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/>



Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) – An alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers with disabilities whose educational progress has been impacted. DARE offers reduced points college places and additional support to eligible students entering higher education. <https://accesscollege.ie/dare/what-is-dare/>



Higher (including Teacher Education) Institutions – Disability/Student Support Services (RoI)

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) – Incl. *St Angela's College Sligo*. Comprehensive supports via the Disability & Learning Support Service, assisting ATU students (across all campuses) with needs assessments, academic accommodations, assistive technology, and advocacy. <https://www.atu.ie/student-life/student-support/disability-support>



Dublin City University (DCU) – Disability & Learning Support Service – Provides needs assessments, learning support, exam accommodations, assistive technology, and an autism-friendly initiative on campus, to ensure equal access for DCU students with disabilities . <https://www.dcu.ie/disability>



Hibernia College – *Online teacher education provider*. Student Support – Offers a dedicated Student Affairs team and a Reasonable Accommodation Policy to support learners with disabilities or long-term illnesses. Students register with the support officer to arrange accommodations (e.g. extra exam time, assistive software, etc.) <https://hiberniacollege.com/student-support/>



Marino Institute of Education (MIE) – [MIE Disability Service](#) – Delivered in partnership with Trinity's Disability Service, it provides one-on-one disability officer meetings, learning support, occupational therapy, assistive technology, and coordinates reasonable accommodations for



MIE student teachers.



https://www.mie.ie/en/student_life/student_support_services/mie_disability_service/

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Higher (including Teacher Education) Institutions – Disability/Student Support Services (RoI)

Mary Immaculate College (Limerick & Thurles) – Access & Disability Office – Supports MIC students



through needs assessments, learning support, and exam accommodations. Campuses in Limerick and Thurles offer a range of services to ensure students with disabilities can fully participate in teacher education programmes. <https://www.mic.ul.ie/current-students/student-information/access-disability?index=0>

Maynooth University – *Froebel Dept. of Primary and Early Childhood Education included.* The Maynooth



Access Programme's Disability Office coordinates supports for students with disabilities – from comprehensive needs assessments and learning support to assistive technology – fostering an inclusive campus environment. <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/supporting-students-disabilities>

Munster Technological University (MTU) – Disability Support Service – Ensures students on Cork and Kerry



campuses can access reasonable accommodations and support. Disability Advisors conduct needs assessments and arrange supports such as assistive technologies, learning support, exam accommodations, ISL interpretation, etc., across all MTU teacher education courses.

<https://www.mtu.ie/access/disability-support-services/>

National College of Art and Design (NCAD) – Student Support Services – Disability Support – Offers a



Disability & Learning Support Service for art and design teacher education students who need accommodations. Services include assistive technology support and learning support to ensure students with disabilities can succeed in studio & classrooms settings.

<https://www.ncad.ie/students/support-services/help-us-help-you/>

National College of Ireland (NCI) – Disability Support – Provides advice and support to NCI students with any form of disability. The team arranges reasonable accommodations (e.g. in- class supports,



exam arrangements) and links students with services like academic support and the on-campus sensory room. <https://www.ncirl.ie/Students/Student-Services/Support-Services/Disability-Support>

[Support](https://www.ncirl.ie/Students/Student-Services/Support-Services/Disability-Support)

07

Links to Support Services (RoI)



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Student Disability Support Services Republic of Ireland

South East Technological University (SETU) – *Waterford and Carlow campuses.* [Disability Support Services](#) – Encourages students to register with the campus Disability Office for supports. Services include needs assessments and tailored reasonable accommodations to empower SETU students with disabilities throughout their teacher training. <https://www.setu.ie/current-students/student-support-services/disability-support-services>

Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) – Disability Support Office – Supports students across Midwest (Limerick/Thurles) and Midlands (Athlone) campuses. Students receive needs assessments and access a range of supports: assistive tech, tutoring, exam accommodations, and campus accessibility improvements, enabling full participation in TUS teacher education programmes. <https://tus.ie/disability-supports/>

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) – Trinity Disability Service – Offers an inclusive “Trinity disAbility Service” for all students, including those in education courses. Disability Officers provide needs assessments, create LENS reports (Learning Education Needs Summaries), arrange academic accommodations, and advise on transition to placement or employment. <https://www.tcd.ie/disability/>

University College Cork (UCC) – Disability Support Service – A professional service providing needs assessments and ongoing support to UCC student teachers with disabilities. Supports include assistive technology, learning support, exam accommodations (e.g. extra time, alternative venues), library access services, and occupational therapy interventions to facilitate participation. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/access/support-while-in-ucc/disability-support/>

University College Dublin (UCD) – [Access & Lifelong Learning – Disability Support](#) – UCD’s hub where students with disabilities or significant ongoing illnesses can register for supports. The team arranges reasonable accommodations (e.g. lecture materials in accessible formats, extra time in exams, etc.) following a Needs Assessment. Support covers all UCD programmes, including the Professional Master of Education. <https://www.ucd.ie/all/supportwhilestudying/disabilitysupport/>

07

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Student Disability Support Services Republic of Ireland

University of Galway – Disability Support Service – Provides support and accommodations to students with disabilities, ongoing health conditions, or specific learning difficulties. Services include assistive technology, exam accommodations, library support, and a dedicated Disability Support Service team that works with student teachers to ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/disability/>

University of Limerick (UL) – Disability Support Services – UL’s Disability Support Service (DSS) helps undergraduate and postgraduate students with disabilities by arranging classroom and exam accommodations, note-taking supports, sign language interpreters, etc. The UL DSS works closely with the School of Education to support student teachers during their studies and school placements. <https://www.ul.ie/student-affairs/disability-services>

Disability Support Services and Organisations (Republic of Ireland)

AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability) – Promotes inclusive education and provides resources for students and educators with disabilities. <https://www.ahead.ie/>

ADHD Ireland – National charity offering information, self-screening tools, and support groups for people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity <https://adhdireland.ie/>

AsIAm – Ireland’s National Autism Charity, providing advocacy, resources and support for autistic students and promoting autism acceptance. <https://asiam.ie/>

Aware – National charity supporting those affected by depression, bipolar, and mood disorders, offering support groups and educational programs. <https://www.aware.ie/>

Chime – The national charity for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in Ireland, providing assistive technology, outreach services, and advocacy for individuals with hearing loss. <https://www.chime.ie/>

07

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Disability Support Services and Organisations (Republic of Ireland)

Dyslexia Ireland – Registered charity offering information, support services, advocacy and resources for people affected by dyslexia and dyscalculia. <https://dyslexia.ie/>

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (Disability Rights) – Provides information and assistance on disability rights in education, including guidance on reasonable accommodations that colleges must provide to students with disabilities. <https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/education/disability/>

Mental Health Ireland – National voluntary organisation supporting positive mental health. Offers information, peer support initiatives, and community mental health resources for students and the wider public. <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/>

National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) – Ireland’s national sight loss agency, providing services, rehabilitation, assistive technology, and support to people who are blind or visually impaired (including students in higher education). <http://www.ncbi.ie>

Pieta House – Suicide prevention and crisis support charity that provides free counselling to people experiencing suicidal ideation or self-harm, with centers and a 24/7 crisis helpline (relevant for students in crisis). <https://www.pieta.ie/>

Specialisterne Ireland – Social enterprise supporting neurodivergent people (autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, etc.) in securing meaningful employment. Offers programs (e.g. training, mentorship) that can benefit student teachers and graduates in their transition to the workplace. <https://www.specialisterne.ie/>

YourMentalHealth.ie – HSE online mental health information hub. Provides advice on minding mental wellbeing, a directory of mental health services, and guidance on what to do in a crisis (for students seeking mental health support). <https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/>

07

Links to Support Services (RoI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Resources about Reasonable Accommodation and Disclosure

ASET Good Practice Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities on Placement

<https://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Good-Practice-Guide-for-Supporting-Students-with-Disabilities-on-Placement.pdf>

Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland

A comprehensive guide outlining inclusive teaching practices and the provision of reasonable accommodations.

<https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/roadmap/Inclusive%20Learning%20and%20RA%20-%20final.pdf>

Road Map for Disability Support in Higher Education in Ireland - AHEAD

A strategic framework defining the role of Disability Officers and promoting inclusive education in higher education.

<https://www.ahead.ie/roadmap>

The Inclusive Practice Pyramid

A model illustrating best practices for inclusion in higher education, from disability support services to mainstream classrooms.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FeCytA5-yw

AHEAD UDL Resources

A resources page for the National Teaching and Learning Forum digital badge on Universal Design for Learning.

<https://www.ahead.ie/digital-badge-resources>

07

Links to Support Services (RoI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Resources about Reasonable Accommodation and Disclosure

Students with Disabilities on Placement

Research highlighting the underrepresentation of students with disabilities in certain fields and the challenges faced during professional placements.

<https://www.ahead.ie/publications-for-educational-staff?id=101&qstring=>

https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/documents/Students%20with%20Disabilities%20on%20Placement%20digital_2-12-22.pdf

How to Tell Employers About Your Disability - A Guide to Disclosure

A guide to assist individuals in considering whether to disclose their disability to employers, including legal information and suggested approaches.

https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/shop/free/AHEAD_DisclosureGuide2023-digital.pdf

Arranging Reasonable Accommodations – Autism & Uni Toolkit – Trinity College Dublin

Guidance for students with autism on arranging reasonable accommodations at university.

<https://dublin.autism-uni.org/arranging-reasonable-adjustments/>

Students with Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2022/23

An annual report providing data on the participation of students with disabilities in higher education support services.

https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/AHEAD_Research_Report_23_digital_supplied.pdf

08 Links to Support Services (NI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Student Disability Support Services Northern Ireland

ADHD UK: As well as providing self-screening tools and a range of resources, ADHD UK holds video-support groups bringing people together who have, for example, a recent adult diagnosis. <https://adhduk.co.uk/>

ADHD in Adults (Royal College of Psychiatrists): Provides peer support groups or low-cost services where people with ADHD can listen and share experiences, advice, strategies and tips. <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/adhd-in-adults>

Autism NI, Northern Ireland's Autism Charity: Provides diagnosis, support and a wide range of resources to support adults and young people with autism. <https://autismni.org/>

AWARE is the depression charity for Northern Ireland with offices in Belfast and Derry. <https://aware-ni.org/>

British Dyslexia Association: Offers information and support for those with dyslexia or dyscalculia for those who teach neurodiverse students. <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Disability Support at College NI <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/disability-support-college>

08

Links to Support Services (NI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Student Disability Support Services Northern Ireland

Disability Support the Open University Northern Ireland <https://university.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland/study-us/disability-support>

Disability Support University of Ulster <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/student/wellbeing/disability/accessability>

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA): Financial support for students with disabilities to cover extra study-related costs. It's not means-tested and doesn't need to be repaid.

<https://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/types-of-finance/postgraduate/tuition-fee-and-extra-help-student/extra-help/disabled-students-allowance/what-is-it/>

Dyslexia Ireland: Is a registered charity (RCN 20025335) which works with and for people affected by dyslexia and/or dyscalculia, by providing information, offering appropriate support services, engaging in advocacy and raising awareness of dyslexia and dyscalculia. <https://dyslexia.ie/>

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: Provides advice and assistance on disability rights in education. <https://www.equalityni.org/Disability>

Lighthouse: Provides support for anyone suffering suicidal thoughts, depression or bereavement. Their services include crisis support, counselling, complementary therapies, and youth intervention programs. <https://lighthousecharity.com/>

08 Links to Support Services (NI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Student Disability Support Services Northern Ireland

MindWise: Is a leading mental health charity in Northern Ireland that supports and empowers people living with mental health issues to live their best lives. <https://www.mindwisenv.org/>

MindYourHead: Provides information, advice and support to help people in Northern Ireland look after and improve their mental health and wellbeing and find out what to do in a crisis. <https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>

Neurodiversity: Northern Health and Social Care Trust

<https://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/child-health-development-and-emotional-wellbeing-services/child-health-development>

Northern Ireland Dyslexia Centre: Offers support and practical, effective help to overcome the challenges of dyslexia. <https://www.nidyslexiacentre.co.uk/>

Royal National Institute of Blind People in Northern Ireland (RNIB): Offers a wide range of services, support and information to help anyone experiencing sight loss, blindness or partial sightedness. <https://www.rnib.org.uk/nations/northern-ireland/>

Royal National Institute of Deafness in Northern Ireland (RNID): Offers a wide range of services, support and information to help anyone who is deaf, is experiencing hearing loss or tinnitus. <https://rnid.org.uk/about-us/rnid-in-northern-ireland/>

08

Links to Support Services (NI)



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Student Disability Support Services Northern Ireland

Specialisterne Northern Ireland (Belfast): This not-for-profit organisation specialises in supporting neurodivergent individuals, including those with dyslexia.

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Service/9362/employmenttraining/specialisterne-northern-ireland-empower>

Student Guidance and Support St Mary's University College <https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/college-life/support-health-and-wellbeing/>

Student Support Stranmillis University College <https://www.stran.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/>

The ND Group (Autistic Student Social Group) University of Ulster

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/student/wellbeing/disability/accessibility/what-support-is-available/neurodiverse-group>

Wellbeing and Accessible Learning Queen's University, Belfast

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/accessible-learning-support/>

09 Challenge to Change



- Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff ITE Students

Activity for Student Teachers– Reflecting on Placement through Personal Vignettes.

Objective To help student teachers reflect critically on the challenges they faced during placement, particularly those related to disability, inclusion, or structural barriers, and to explore possible accommodations or supports that could address these issues.

Group Size: Small groups Maximum 10 participants.

Materials Needed:



Duration: 1 hour.

- Vignette template (can be printed or digital)
- Paper, pens, Post-its
- Visual prompts (e.g. symbols for disability, assistive technology icons)
- Optional: Lego, plasticine, or images to inspire creativity

Step 1: Reflective Pair Share (10–15 minutes)

Prompt: Think of a challenge you personally experienced during placement. This could be related to accessibility, support, understanding from staff, workload, physical or - In pairs, each student shares one challenge they faced during placement.

- Discuss:



- What was the nature of the challenge?
- Did you receive support? If not, what would have helped?
- Was it something you felt comfortable discussing with your placement school or university?

Step 2: Personal Vignette Creation (30 minutes)



In small groups, choose one real challenge from the discussions and develop it into a fictional vignette using the structure below. Emphasise privacy and fictionalisation.

Vignette Template Structure:



- Description of Student (Name, background – fictionalised)
- Positive Aspects of Placement (What the student enjoyed or did well)
- Challenge or Barrier Experienced
- Action Taken by the Student
- Possible Disabilities or Conditions Related
- Suggestions for Reasonable Accommodations

Step 3: Gallery Walk & Peer Feedback (15 minutes)



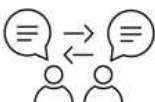
- Groups post or present their vignette.

- Everyone walks around, reads, and leaves sticky notes with suggestions, questions, or affirmations:

- Could the proposed accommodation work?
- What other support might help?
- What system-level changes would help prevent this issue?

Step 4: Group Debrief (10–15 minutes)

Facilitator-led discussion:



- What patterns or common challenges emerged?
- Did anyone's vignette reflect something you had not considered before?
- What does this tell us about the kinds of support needed on placement?
- How can universities and placement schools improve their approach?

10

Inclusive Teaching Strategies Workshop



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Objective To equip student teachers with practical strategies for accommodating diverse learning needs in the classroom.

Designing an activity to support reasonable accommodation for student teachers on placement can help ensure they have a positive and productive experience.

Group size: 2-4 participants

Materials:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Projector and screen
- Handouts with case studies
- Group discussion prompts
- Feedback forms



Duration: 1.5 hours

1. Introduction (10 minutes)



- Begin with a brief overview of the importance of reasonable accommodations in education.
- Discuss the legal and ethical responsibilities of teachers to provide accommodations.

2. Case Study Analysis (10 minutes)



- Divide the student teachers into small groups.
- Provide each group with a vignette of a student with specific needs (e.g., a student with dyslexia, ADHD, or physical disabilities).
- Ask each group to identify potential challenges the student might face and brainstorm accommodations that could be implemented.

3. Group Presentations (30 minutes):



- Have each group present their case study and proposed accommodations.
- Encourage other groups to ask questions and provide additional suggestions.

4. Interactive Lecture (10 minutes)



- Present a lecture on various inclusive teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, use of assistive technology, and flexible assessment methods.
- Use real-life examples and demonstrate how these strategies can be applied in the classroom.

5. Hands-On Practice (20 minutes)



- Set up stations with different activities that require the use of inclusive strategies (e.g., creating a lesson plan with differentiated tasks, using assistive technology tools).
- Allow student teachers to rotate through the stations and practice the strategies.

6. Reflection and Feedback (10 minutes)



- Conclude the workshop with a reflection session where student teachers can share their thoughts and experiences.
- suggestions for improvement.

Follow-Up

- Provide student teachers with additional resources and reading materials on inclusive education.
- Schedule follow-up sessions to discuss their experiences and any challenges they face while implementing these strategies during their placements.

This activity aims to create a supportive environment where student teachers can learn and practice how to accommodate diverse learners effectively.

11

Guide for University Students: Disclosing a Disability



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students

Disclosing a disability to your university can help you access support, accommodations, and ensure equal participation in your studies. Here is how to navigate the process.

1. Understand What Counts as a Disability

A disability includes long-term physical, mental health, sensory, intellectual, or learning differences that impact daily activities. This can include:

- ADHD, autism, dyslexia
- Mental health conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- Chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, epilepsy)
- Mobility or sensory impairments

You do not need to have a visible disability to seek support.

2. Why Disclose?

- To get reasonable accommodations (e.g., extra time in exams, assistive technology, note-taking support)
- To receive support services like counselling or academic coaching
- To ensure inclusive access to labs, libraries, field trips, etc.

Disclosing can empower you to succeed, not limit you.

3. When Should You Disclose?

- During application: Helpful if you need accommodations from the start.
- At enrolment or induction: Common time to inform student services.
- Any time during your studies: Disclosure is always your choice and can happen at any point.

4. Who Should You Tell?

Start with:

- Disability/Accessibility Services Office
- Student Support Services
- Your academic advisor or course leader (if needed)

Information is kept confidential and only shared on a need-to-know basis with your consent.

5. How to Disclose

You may be asked to:

1. Complete a disclosure form or register with disability services.
2. Provide documentation (e.g., medical letter, educational psychologist report).
3. Attend a meeting to discuss your needs and possible accommodations.

6. What Support Might Be Offered?

- Exam accommodations (extra time, scribe, separate room)
- Accessible course materials (large print, audio, braille)
- Learning support tutors or mentors
- Assistive technology

7. Your Rights

Protected under equality and disability legislation (Disability Discrimination Act NI (1995) (DDA); Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDO); The Equality Act NI (2010); Equal Status Acts Ireland (2000–2018); Disability Act Ireland (2005).

- You cannot be discriminated against because of your disability.
- The university has a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

8. Tips for a Smooth Disclosure

- Be clear and honest about your needs, focus on how the university can support you.
- Keep records of all correspondence and agreements.
- Follow up if you do not receive support or accommodations in time.
- Remember, you are not alone; many students benefit from support services.

12

Living Library Workshop



- Cooperating Teachers Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff ITE Students

Objective To build empathy and deepen understanding of the experiences of student teachers.

Building Empathy Toward Student Teachers with Disabilities, promoting more inclusive and responsive practices in teacher education.

Group Size: 20 participants

Roles & Materials



Duration: 1.5 hours

Living Books (3–5): • Student teachers or recent graduates with lived experience as a disabled student

Facilitators (1–2): • Guide sessions, safeguard emotional safety

Materials:

- Nametags (“Reader” / “Book”)
- Title cards for Books
- Prompt-question cards
- Post-its, pens, flipchart or Padlet

1. Welcome & Grounding (5 minutes):



Introduce Living Library concept, set ground rules (listening, confidentiality, respect).

2. Meet the Living Books (10 minutes):



Each Book shares their title (e.g. “Invisible Does not Mean Easy”) & 1-minute introduction.

3. Living Library Conversations (45 minutes):

2–3 rounds of 15–20 min small-group chats; Readers ask open, empathetic questions or they can use prompting questions cards

4. Reflection & Collective Harvest (15 minutes):

Silent reflection: “What surprised you? What resonated?” Post insights; group shares key themes.

5. Inclusive Practice Commitments (10 minutes):

Write one actionable change: “What will I do differently for accommodating student teachers with disabilities?” Optionally share aloud.

6. Optional Final Circle (5 minutes):

Living Books & Readers share takeaways, gratitude, and closing reflections.

Safeguarding & Ethics

Preparation: Pre-brief Living Books; consent & opt-out option

Boundaries: No recordings; stories stay in the room

Support: Provide breaks & emotional support contact

Sample Living Book Titles

- **“I See in Other Ways”** (*Visual Impairment*)
- **“Noise Is not Just Sound”** (*Autism / Sensory Sensitivity*)
- **“Quiet Does not Mean Lost”** (*Speech / Language Challenges*)
- **“Strong, But Tired”** (*Chronic Illness / Fatigue*)
- **“Smiling Is not Coping”** (*Mental Health: Anxiety / Depression*)
- **“Numbers Blur”** (*Dyscalculia / Learning Differences*)
- **“Did not Catch That”** (*Hearing Loss / Processing Delays*)
- **“Ideas Everywhere”** (*ADHD*)
- **“Some Days Disappear”** (*Neurological Conditions*)
- **“Stairs Before Students”** (*Mobility Impairment / Physical Access*)

13

Baseline Scoping

Reasonable Accommodations



Cooperating Teachers
 Academic Placement coordinators
 University-based Staff
 ITE Students

Context	Potential Support
Physical learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating plans – flexible • Brain breaks/movement breaks • Ask the student what works for them • Be aware of and responsive to trauma and anxiety • Partner/ peer support/ collaboration • Breaking content up with activity • Face class when teaching • Pace of delivery • Lecture notes/activity mindful of student need – depth of activity • Opportunities for culturally responsive pedagogy
In class presentations/ materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of lecture at outset • Break down learning tasks into smaller parts • Multiple means for presentations and class materials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Videos ○ Podcasts ○ Info Graphic/Poster ○ Songs ○ Dramatic Scenarios ○ Recordings • Notes in advance of class • Presentation font and size • Check font colours used in PowerPoints and materials • Use of visuals and props • Coloured paper for handouts
Teaching support beyond the classroom/lecture theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant materials available on VLE • Check computer/IT access available to students • PDF, Editable Word Docs • Recordings • Access to literature and grey literature • T-P-S/cognitive rehearsal

Context	Potential Support
Assessment arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple assessment formats and modes • Choice in assignments • Assignment breakdown/analysis/deconstruction • Extensions to assignment deadlines
Wider HEI support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Support tutors/mentors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with student on time management ○ Supporting students in developing presentations ○ Supporting students in structuring assignments ○ Proofreading/ assistive technology ○ Exam preparation support • Risk assessments • Wellbeing support tutors / mentors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ help students deal with anxiety and stress ○ teaching calming techniques ○ confidence building sessions ○ mental health coping strategies • Note takers for lectures/ classes • Laptops/ assistive technology for learning support • Developing peer support networks • Reviewing assignment calendar and spacing out assignments for students • Counselling sessions available to students
In school support (during placement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication before placement ensuring that support from co-operating teacher is available • Requesting flexible/reduced teaching • Ensuring access to workplace (mobility/ vision) • Access to academic tutor/ mentor to support planning • Access to academic tutor/ mentor to support resources • Proofreader – assistive technologies for dyslexia • Time out from classrooms for planning • Access to break room for rest • Academic tutor/mentor going into school to help organise teaching materials. • Give option to withdraw from placement for a few days to plan and organise mid placement • Reduced working day (to be negotiated with school) • Reduced teaching requirements (to be negotiated between school and HEI)

EKARA

Vignettes



- Cooperating Teachers
- Academic Placement coordinators
- University-based Staff
- ITE Students



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Vignette One: Rebecca

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/7c84416fab9c4ea882b0f331ad08ee01>



Rebecca a white Irish female enrolled in the PME program, specialises in Junior Cycle Spanish. She has Crohn's Disease (IBD), which influences her daily routine and work environment. Rebecca aligns with democratic, educational, and non-religious principles, and her teaching style reflects creativity and cultural awareness. Her prior experience in substitution work before beginning the PME program has earned her positive feedback, particularly for her ability to engage students with innovative cultural lessons. She values working with young people and maintains a positive relationship with colleagues while expressing a strong affinity for her school.

Rebecca faces challenges related to her medical condition. Accessibility issues, such as limited bathroom facilities with no warm water or sinks in cubicles and long class periods without breaks, complicate her routine. These obstacles are compounded by mandatory lecture attendance in the PME program, which can be difficult when she has medical appointments.

Vignette Two: Louise

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/9c30e0129fd140868e8946a3690bc8ad>



Louise, a female student from the countryside, is enrolled in the Professional Master of Education (PME) and teaches Home Economics to second- and fourth-year students in a co-educational city school. The school environment includes large classes of 30 students and small classroom spaces, which add complexity to her teaching experience.

Louise experiences challenges that impact her approach to teaching and classroom management, including heightened sensitivity to crowded spaces, persistent worry about ensuring safety during practical activities, difficulty maintaining sustained focus, occasional struggles with organising complex tasks, and feelings of being overwhelmed in busy or unpredictable environments.

Louise is recognised for her empathetic and understanding nature, making her approachable to students. Her teaching subject's variety is an enjoyable aspect for her, and she demonstrates loyalty and gentleness in handling school pressures. These qualities make her a valued presence in the educational setting.

Louise is recognised for her empathetic and understanding nature, making her approachable to students. Her teaching subject's variety is an enjoyable aspect for her, and she demonstrates loyalty and gentleness in handling school pressures. These qualities make her a valued presence in the educational setting.

In an effort to support her needs, Louise made two formal requests. She asked the PME programme to coordinate her schedule in a way that would allow her to regularly attend external mental health support sessions. She also requested that her placement school provide scheduled support from a cooperating teacher during practical lessons to assist with classroom management and safety oversight. Unfortunately, both requests were not granted.

Vignette Three: Aoife

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/0261a981b3a841af965800e1e5c439e0>



Aoife is a female Irish Professional Master of Education (PME) student pursuing her first year of the programme. She teaches Spanish and English at a fee-paying, co-educational school in a large town. Aoife lives with diabetic retinopathy, resulting in 50% vision loss, and is further impacted by diabetes. The single-storey layout of the school offers some advantages, but its lack of clear signage and challenging environment creates barriers.

Aoife demonstrates strong subject knowledge and a student-centered teaching approach. She thrives in oral language activities, leveraging her strong hearing skills and engaging students with creative use of visuals, PowerPoint presentations, and interactive class participation. Her colleagues provide a supportive environment, which she finds reassuring and motivating.

Despite her strengths, Aoife encounters several challenges. Navigating the school is difficult due to the lack of signage and her visual impairment. Classroom layout changes and overall time management add additional complexity. Commuting via public transport also poses challenges due to her condition. Furthermore, managing a classroom can be overwhelming without visual cues and consistent environmental familiarity.

Vignette Four Gráinne

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/a69e4846d6aa4d9da2b76b99ee4a9925>



Gráinne is a female student teacher currently enrolled on teaching placement in a community comprehensive school. She is really enjoying getting to know the students and is engaging well with college. However, she is struggling to manage her classes due to APD (auditory processing disorder) and Child-Onset Fluency disorder. In short, Gráinne struggles to discern sounds and has a stammer, mildly hindering communication with students and colleagues.

She is carrying out her teaching placement in a community comprehensive school setting, and the ethos of the school requires constant communication and collaboration. Gráinne is a language teacher and teaches two foreign languages.

The community school setting has a diverse student body with differing socio-economic, religious, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. It is a large school with high numbers and therefore a larger classroom size. Gráinne likes this aspect of the school.

The large classroom size due to the school setting leads to constant low-level noise disruption or a constant 'hum'. Gráinne's APD renders it difficult for her to measure and regulate appropriate noise levels in the classroom, which may disrupt other classes around or result in an ineffective lesson.

Child onset fluency disorder (stammer) manifests itself as a blockage when it comes to certain consonant-vowel combinations. Such issues with her stammer include not being able to say some students'/colleagues' names and some classroom commands, which affects classroom management.

Gráinne is requesting smaller class group sizes to help with the noise level and minimise the low-level 'hum' that hinders her auditory processing. This would help to reduce the stress she experiences in managing her classes and hence help to alleviate her stammer.

Vignette Five: Sadhbh

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/cc9ff2eebd8f45368c8759d7b8178cac>



Sadhbh is a female student teacher from Tipperary currently on teaching placement in a post-primary school in Cork city. She is in a team-teaching situation with her cooperating teacher. She is dyslexic and has diagnosed anxiety. While grateful for the opportunity she is currently struggling with the transition from an English medium school to an Irish medium school setting. This is a result of her dyslexia. She has excellent spoken language, though she struggles with her spelling in Irish which can lead to inaccuracies when students take down notes.

Due to this, Sadhbh feels self-conscious and second guesses herself in her practice and relies heavily on the cooperating teacher to produce written instruction for the students. She has asked for extra accommodation with a language assistant, or for more support from the department to help her with resources.

The cooperating teacher already feels that she is providing enough support within and outside the classroom and argues that she cannot spend more time creating resources for this class, when team-teaching. This request to the department was therefore denied.

Vignette Six: Emma

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/715ad887545645c49bfcf3a28cf2c5d3>



Emma is doing her Professional Master of Education (PME) at UCC. She teaches in a post-primary school for girls in Cork City. She enjoys her teaching placement, especially her students. However, she struggles with her mental health. Sometimes, her anxiety drains her and prevents her from giving her best during class. She feels exhausted at the end of every lesson. It is a situation she does not know how to handle.

In order to focus better on her students, Emma asked the school's principal for classes with fewer students. She is also asking for at least two free classes in a row each day so that she can rest and recharge.

According to the school's principal, it is not possible to reduce the number of students in a particular class. However, they will do their best to give her two free classes each day. She will also have access to a mental health assistant at least once a week.

Vignette: Seven Cathal

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/dc9638e9c10e4644a1fe0a1e351bee13>



Cathal is a 20 year-old BEd 3 primary PE student, studying in Belfast. He is a keen Gaelic player and normally trains three nights a week with his club. However, he recently tore his ACL and needs surgery to repair it. He is currently visiting the school for a few days to gather information about his eight-week teaching placement. He will be working with a composite P6-7 class in a small rural school with an enrolment of 70 pupils and the full placement will be starting in 2 months' time. Cathal will be expected to teach 15 lessons each week to this class. He is very committed to teaching and has always wanted to be a teacher, and he ensures that he is always a positive role model to the pupils and especially the boys in the class.

Cathal may need to take some time off to get the surgery and for his recovery. When he is back in school, he will be on crutches and will struggle going upstairs and generally moving about.

Vignette Eight: Kylie

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/b59d0cd000204781b3efb7173b0b2893>



Kylie is a 21 year old girl who is studying primary school teaching with main subject Music at St. Mary's University, Belfast. Kylie is in third year at St Mary's University College. She lives in a rural area in County Tyrone and will be completing her school placement in an Urban area, Omagh, County Tyrone. She will be teaching a primary 6/7. There are 28 children in her class, 12 boys and 16 girls.

One of Kylie's main strengths is enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills. She has developed innovative ways to approach challenges which helps her plan engaging lessons for her children on placement. She fosters an inclusive environment for each student.

Kylie faces several barriers during her placement with dyslexia, particularly in tasks requiring reading, writing, and time management. She struggles with processing written information quickly, making it challenging to prepare lesson plans or follow detailed instructions under time constraints. Spelling and grammar errors in her written work affects her confidence and how others perceive her competence.

Vignette Nine: Aria



<https://media.heanet.ie/page/486bb70b6f4d40ef929f619e43a81c27>

Aria is a 21 year old girl who is enrolled in an undergraduate primary degree programme, specialising in maths. She is currently on teaching placement in a primary school in county Fermanagh. Aria is partially deaf - her speech is of an average level she struggles to hear those who speak fast but has a hearing aid and relies a lot on lip reading. She is a competent lip reader and also uses body language and reads people's expressions.

Aria has a commanding presence in the classroom and enjoys teaching outdoor learning as she feels pupils learn more comprehensively when there are real life links. Aria struggles in group situations but is confident in a one-to-one setting. She can be clumsy as her balance is affected due to her hearing impairment and when addressing the class, she requires the person replying to be at a maximum distance of two metres.

Vignette Ten : Saoirse

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/ece87556365b4f0f8a588b798dff8476>



Saoirse is a mixed race, second-year undergraduate student studying for a BEd degree. She has Tourette's syndrome. She is on placement in a small rural primary school, and she is teaching a composite P6/P7 class of 26 children.

Saoirse is well organised in the classroom, she works quickly with the youth club and enjoys playing the piano and participating in choir. She is very creative girl and can establish excellent relationships with both pupils and the class teacher.

One of the tics of her Tourette's syndrome is that she at times blurts out inappropriate language. This is impacted on her classroom management as children make fun of her, the teacher also thinks this is very unprofessional and is concerned that parents may complain and make an issue out of this it is also beginning to impact on her mental health, and she believes on her competence in the classroom. She asked the school for support.

Vignette Eleven: Rosie

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/c7f7da0c517e460289dfc1b548e3b4ff>



Rosie is enrolled at university as a fourth year BEd primary student. In the past year she has gone through two bereavements of close family members and much grief, which has resulted in her being clinically diagnosed with depression and anxiety. This is something that she is really struggling with and has had an impact on her studies. Some days are much worse than others. She is studying primary Science, and she has performed well in her studies in previous years but in the last year, given the circumstances, her performance has been negatively impacted.

Rosie is normally outgoing, confident and bubbly, but on days when she is struggling, she appears withdrawn in the classroom. She enjoys working with children in her P5 class however, the class she has been placed with are really challenging, with a lot of educational needs as well as serious behavioural issues. Some days Rosie is very withdrawn and has no energy due to her condition - this poses a great difficulty for Rosie.

Vignette Twelve: Elsa



[EKARA Vignette 12 Elsa | media.heanet.ie](https://media.heanet.ie)

Elsa is a 21-year-old final year student studying teaching with PE. She lives in a rural area and is on teaching placement in a local school. Elsa has Type 1 Diabetes and brings her two insulin pens and needles into school every day and has to inject herself before she eats. She also brings sweets in with her every day to help with low blood sugar.

This placement school is a 5-minute drive away from home and she is teaching a primary three class with thirty-two children in the room. There is only Elsa and her teacher in the room and two of the pupils have statements with one other presenting with signs of autism. She has not told anyone in the school about her condition as she manages it well and has her diagnosis for over 10 years. It does not hold her back. She has had great relationships with past teachers who allow her to leave the classroom to inject if she needs. She tends to have a low blood sugar, and if this deteriorated, she could collapse.