

*UNION OF STUDENTS IN IRELAND*

# **STUDENT TEACHERS PLACEMENT REPORT**



## PARTNERS:



This report was written, designed and researched by  
*Amy Kelly, Vice President for Campaigns, Union of Students in Ireland*  
2017/18

# PRESIDENT OF THE UNION OF STUDENTS IN IRELAND MICHAEL KERRIGAN



Today, our top class teachers get second class supports.

Work placement is invaluable preparation for student teachers who are pursuing their vocation as educators. Students are following their dreams to teach the next generation while battling the high cost of living with no financial support being given. Along with working part-time jobs, students are on placements lasting 30 – 35 hours a week with no support for travel, food or materials.

The reality is, students can't cope with the cost of living without another job on top of this. The average cost of college is €12,500 while students are paying the second highest fees in the EU, after the UK. It's time our Government valued student teachers, otherwise we're faced with a drought of talent with a shortage of teachers reaching crisis point.

This recommendations in this study keeps this in mind while pursuing the chance for real, positive change in our education landscape. This collaborative study has seen student teachers of past, present and future take part to have their voices heard on the difficulty they endure so we as a society can benefit.

It's time we return the favour. It's time we show student teachers we value their work. It's time we properly invest in financially supporting student teachers while on work placements and get paid for fair work or to shift the burden of the Gaeltacht fee.

The Union of Students in Ireland is committed to working for student teachers, and working towards a fairer and better quality of learning for all.

*Michael Kerrigan*  
**USI President 2017\2018**

# INTRODUCTION

*The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the national representative body for the 374,000 students in third level education on the island of Ireland. We are a membership organisation – our members are our affiliated Students' Unions around Ireland, North and South.*

USI launched a campaign in September 2017 with trade unions TUI, ASTI, INTO and ICTU for better working conditions for student teachers while on placement. These unions are demanding student teachers should receive financial support while on placement, to cover the cost of travel, accommodation, materials, and food as a result of the drastic increase in the cost of living devastating students' lives. In 2017, it was agreed that a survey would be created to collect the data needed for this campaign.

This research reviews current students on placement and graduates of teaching programmes.

## ***The purpose of this report is to;***

- Provide evidence highlighting the financial challenges student teachers face when undertaking college placements;
- Explore the key concerns and barriers experienced by student teachers during placement;
- Identify ways in which placement procedures can be amended to ensure all students have the opportunity to undertake such studies, regardless of financial status;

## ***The aim of this report is to;***

- Develop collaborative solutions and recommendations regarding school placement to ensure greater access and equality to teaching qualifications for all students;
- Identify solutions which the Department of Education and individual Colleges can introduce to standardise their placement procedures to reduce any additional financial burden to students and their families caused by teaching placements;
- Engage with all educational institutions to alleviate any further financial burdens on student teachers.

*"This is yet another example of the financial difficulties that face our students and young people and act as barriers to their accessing and fully participating in the workplace. The collaborative survey, fully supported by Congress and our affiliates, will highlight the daily realities for students and how the rising cost of living impacts on their education and the opportunities that will bring. We must do all we can to ensure that our student teachers, indeed all students, are given the best opportunities to access the workplace and decent work, without the added pressure and stress of these additional financial costs."*

*Patricia King, Congress General Secretary, ICTU, speaking at the launch of the survey.*

***For context, it is important to note the below, which is from "Guidelines for school placement document, Teaching Council, 1st Edition, 2013":***

*"The Teaching Council has determined that 25% of student time over the four years of undergraduate programmes and 40% of student time over the two years of postgraduate programmes should be allocated to school placement.*

*Over the full programme, the school-based element must incorporate, at a minimum, 100 hours of direct teaching which may include some team teaching experience. In the context of the extended programmes, it is expected that HEIs and schools will work towards a position where student teachers will gain direct teaching experience in the region of 200 to 250 hours. Student teachers in post-primary should not be timetabled for classes separate from the classes of their cooperating teachers to which they have been assigned for the purposes of the placement. The second half of the programme should include at least one block placement for a minimum of ten weeks."*

	Primary Consecutive 2 years (60 weeks) + Extended Gaeltacht Placement	Primary Concurrent 4 years (120 weeks) + Extended Gaeltacht Placement	Post-primary Consecutive 2 years (60 weeks)	Post-primary Concurrent 4 years (120 weeks) + Extended Gaeltacht Placement where relevant
Subject Discipline(s)				50% <sup>2</sup>
Foundation Studies & Professional Studies	50%	55%	50%	25%
School Placement	40% (24 weeks)	25% (30 weeks)	40% (24 weeks or equivalent)	25% (30 weeks or equivalent)
Discretionary Time	10%	20%	10%	
Gaeltacht Placement	To be discussed	To be discussed	To be discussed	[3 months residency required in undergraduate programmes as part of The Teaching Council's subject specific criteria for registration purposes]

**Table from:** Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for programme provider, Revised Edition March 2017 page 11

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

*A total 3,082 students contributed to this report research.*

## Current financial support and part-time work

- The main source of financial support for students is from their parents at 66%, well ahead even of the SUSI grant which comes in second at 34%.
- 71% of current placement students and 70% of graduates have part-time jobs during their placement.
- 55% of current placement students and 53% of graduates work between 10 - 20 hours a week, part-time.
- The biggest motivation for working part-time while on placement is the Gaeltacht fee of €1,500.

## Resources and materials

- 45% of student teachers currently on placement and 43% of graduates contribute between €31- €60 on resources and materials per week.

## Travel

- 54% of current placement students and 43% of graduates have a cost of between €21- €40 weekly on travel costs to and from placement

## Accommodation

- 20% of current students and 31% of graduates pay €100 or more on an average week in relation to rent and bills.

## Gaeltacht Fee

- 89% of current students and 79% of graduates say that the compulsory Gaeltacht fee is too high.

## Placement Hours

- 59% of current placement students and 56% of graduates work between 20 to 35 hours weekly.

## Drop-outs and Mental Health

- 42% of current students and 31% of graduates said they have considered dropping out due to financial pressures.
- 96% of current students and 95% of graduates find their time on placement highly stressful.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Student teachers receive 80% of the entry level rates whilst on placement.

USI also proposes the reinstatement of the state grant to cover all eight weeks of mandatory Gaeltacht placement.

Hours spent on placement in the final year of initial teacher education should count towards Teaching Council requirements on how many hours teaching must be carried out to achieve professional recognition.

# CURRENT STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

2,535 of those surveyed are currently studying teaching which features placement.

## Field of Study

B.ED (Early Childhood Education), **10%**  
 Primary, **45%**  
 Post-Primary, **14%**  
 PME (Primary), **13%**  
 PME (Post-Primary), **14%**

## Year of Study

First, **10%**  
 Second, **33%**  
 Third, **32%**  
 Fourth, **24%**

## Gender

Female, **85%**  
 Male, **14%**  
 I'd rather not say, **0.75%**

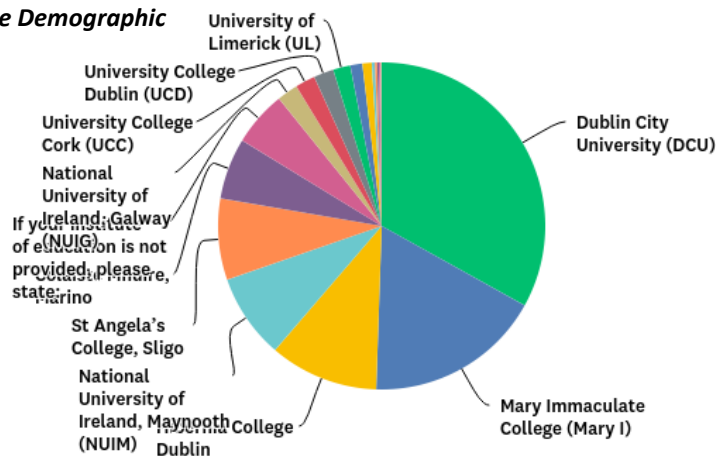
## College demographic

Dublin City University (DCU), **33%**,  
 Mary Immaculate College **17%**,  
 Hibernia College Dublin **11%**,  
 National University of Ireland, Maynooth, **8%**,  
 St Angela's College, Sligo **8%**,  
 Coláiste Mhuire, Marino **6%**,  
 National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), **3%**  
 St Mary's Belfast, **2%**,  
 University College Cork (UCC) **2%**,  
 University College Dublin (UCD) **2%**,  
 University of Limerick (UL) **2%**,  
 St Patrick's College, Thurles **1%**,  
 Trinity College Dublin (TCD) **0.92%**,  
 CIT Crawford College of Art & Design **0.31%**,  
 Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology **0.22%**,  
 Limerick Institute of Technology **0.18%**,  
 National College of Art & Design (NCAD) **0.18%**,  
 St Nicholas Montessori College **0.09%**

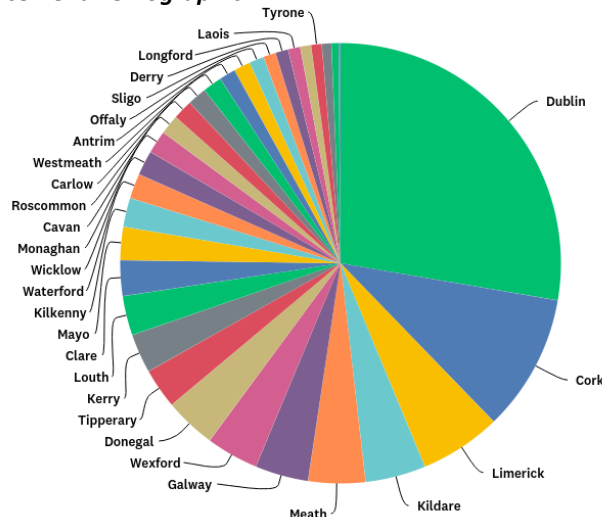
## County of Placement

Dublin, <b>28%</b>	Monaghan, <b>2%</b>
Cork, <b>10%</b>	Roscommon, <b>1%</b>
Limerick <b>6%</b>	Cavan, <b>1%</b>
Kildare, <b>4%</b>	Carlow, <b>1%</b>
Meath, <b>4%</b>	Westmeath, <b>1%</b>
Galway, <b>3%</b>	Antrim, <b>1%</b>
Wexford, <b>3%</b>	Offaly, <b>1%</b>
Donegal, <b>3%</b>	Sligo, <b>1%</b>
Tipperary, <b>3%</b>	Longford, <b>0%</b>
Kerry, <b>3%</b>	Derry, <b>0.93%</b>
Louth, <b>3%</b>	Laois, <b>0.89%</b>
Clare, <b>3%</b>	Tyrone, <b>0.79%</b>
Mayo, <b>2%</b>	Leitrim, <b>0.79%</b>
Kilkenny, <b>2%</b>	Armagh, <b>0.70%</b>
Wicklow, <b>2%</b>	Down, <b>0.51%</b>
Waterford, <b>2%</b>	Fermanagh, <b>0.14%</b>

## College Demographic



## Placement Demographic



# GRADUATES DEMOGRAPHICS

547 of those surveyed are graduate student teachers that featured placement.

## Field of Study

B.ED (Early Childhood Education), **8%**

Primary, **38%**

Post-Primary, **19%**

PME (Primary), **15%**

PME (Post-Primary), **10%**

## Gender

Male, **14%**

Female, **83%**

I'd rather not say, **2%**

## College demographic

Dublin City University (DCU) **22%**,

Mary Immaculate College (Mary I) **16%**,

Hibernia College Dublin **12%**,

Coláiste Mhuire, Marino **9%**,

St Angela's College, Sligo **7%**

National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) **6%**

University College Cork (UCC) **4%**,

University of Limerick (UL) **4%**

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) **3%**,

University College Dublin (UCD) **3%**,

National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) **2%**,

St Patrick's College, Thurles **1%**,

Mater Dei Institute, **0.84%**,

Church of Ireland College, Rathmines, **0.84%**,

National College of Art & Design (NCAD), **0.63%**,

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) **0.21%**,

CIT Crawford College of Art & Design, **0.21%**

## County of Placement

Dublin, **34.21%**

Cork, **13%**

Galway, **5%**

Kildare, **4%**

Wexford, **4%**

Limerick, **4%**

Meath, **3%**

Donegal, **3%**

Louth, **3%**

Mayo, **3%**

Antrim, **3%**

Offaly, **2%**

Tipperary, **2%**

Wicklow, **2%**

Kilkenny, **2%**

Waterford, **2%**

Kerry, **2%**

Clare, **1%**

Laois, **1%**

Westmeath, **1%**

Derry, **0.96%**

Monaghan, **0.96%**

Armagh, **0.96%**

Longford, **0.72%**

Roscommon, **0.72%**

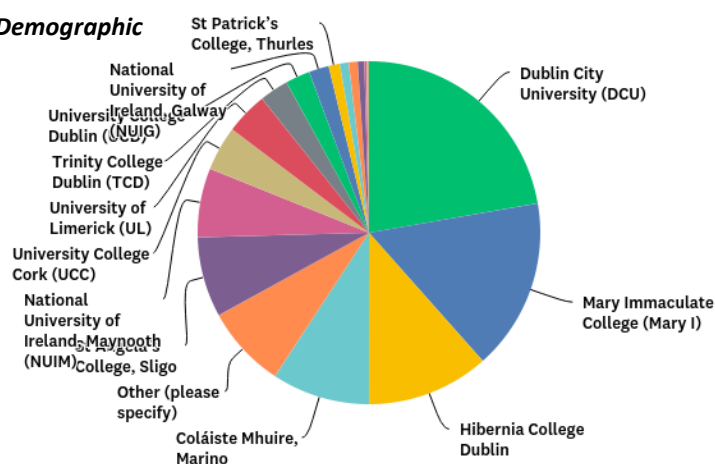
Carlow, **0.48%**

Sligo, **0.48%**

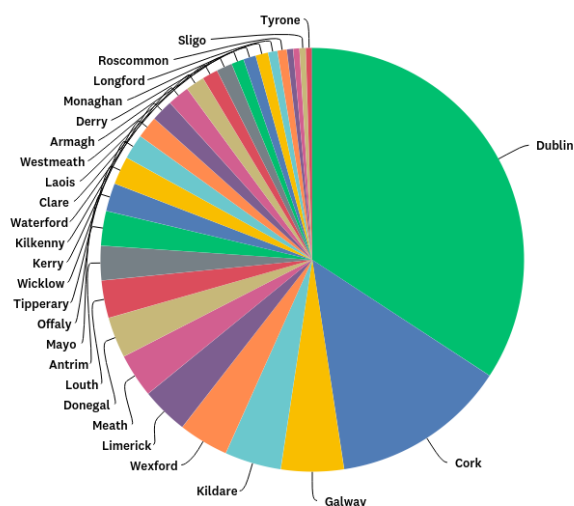
Tyrone, **0.48%**

Down, **0.48%**

## College Demographic



## Placement Demographic





# SURVEY RESULTS



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*



# FINANCIAL COSTS OF STUDENT TEACHERS AND PLACEMENT

In this section of the report, we examine the costs associated with student teachers time on placement.

## *Financial support while on placement*

71% of current students and 76% of graduates at the time of their placement are depending on financial support while in college.

66% of current student teachers receive financial support from their parents, with 34% receiving support from the SUSI grant and 6% from SAF and 14% receive a loan from a financial institution.

71% of current placement students have a part-time job during their placement.

Comparing with students who have completed placement before September 2017, their support came from the categories as mentioned above, with again parents being the number one support (71%), 28% receive support for SUSI, where 19% received a loan from a financial institution.

70% of past placement students had a part-time job at the time of their placement.

Other supports mentioned in answers are scholarships, friends, HEAR scheme, and the back to education allowance.

## *Costs associated with placement*

### *Resources and materials*

During placement, student teachers are expected to contribute resources and materials. There are currently no financial support from the institute in which they are studying.

There is a huge pressure put on placement students by the hours they work, the preparation for each class and the resources and materials they are expected to provide ensuring they are of a high standard. Student teachers want to ensure their mark at the end of the placement is reflective of the work put in each week.

45% of current student teachers pay between €31-€60 weekly for resources and materials, with a further 30% paying between €11-€30 and 22% contribute between €61- €100 weekly.

43% of graduates said at the time of their placement they paid between €31-€60 weekly, with 25% spending between €11-€30 on resources.

Resources and materials are bought by the student with no financial support during their placement to cover these costs. This can create a barrier for some students who may not be able to afford to buy materials needed each week to complete their lesson plans and learning outcomes.

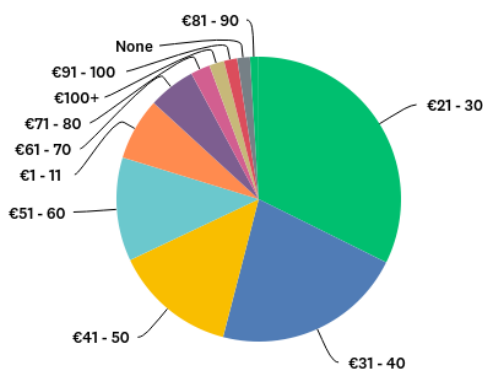
### *Travel*

From the placement demographics (pages 6 & 7) many schools that student teachers go on placement in are in rural areas, with limited accommodation, students can be expected to travel significant distance to their placement.

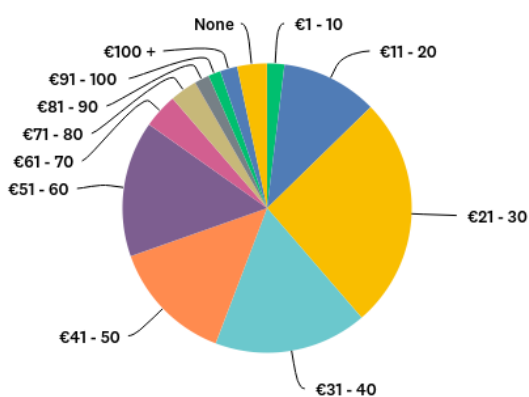
54% of current students have a cost of between €21-€40 weekly on travel costs to and from placement.

43% of graduates at the time of placement, had a cost between €21-€40 weekly on their travel costs to and from placement.

### Current Student Teachers Travel



### Graduates Travel



## Accommodation

Current students were asked where their placement took place in 2017, the top three responses where they studied were: 33% DCU, 17% Mary I, 11% Hibernia. The location placement of students who was currently studying was 27% in Dublin, 10% in Cork and 6% in Limerick.

22% of graduates studied in DCU, 16% in Mary I and 11.53% in Hibernia. However, their placement figures were 34% in Dublin, 13% in Cork, and 5% in Galway.

Interestingly, Cork was very little represented in where student teachers studied but was very high represented as a location for placement.

This shows that a huge proportion of student teachers are traveling to another county to complete their placement.

With travel, as some study too far to travel back and forward to their placement school, some students must pay an extra cost of accommodation during their teaching placement.

With 53% of current students and 39% of graduates studying in Dublin, it is no surprise that most students do not have additional accommodation costs of going on placement. However, 20% of current students and 31% of graduates have an additional weekly cost of €100+ in rent and bills due to their placement. This shows that there is a financial difference between students who study in Dublin and outside Dublin, there are more accessible schools in Dublin, meaning students would not have to up route to complete their placement.

It is very important to note that as some students have to find accommodation, these students are still subject to travel costs, i.e bus fares to and from the placement of work as they would not live in close proximity.

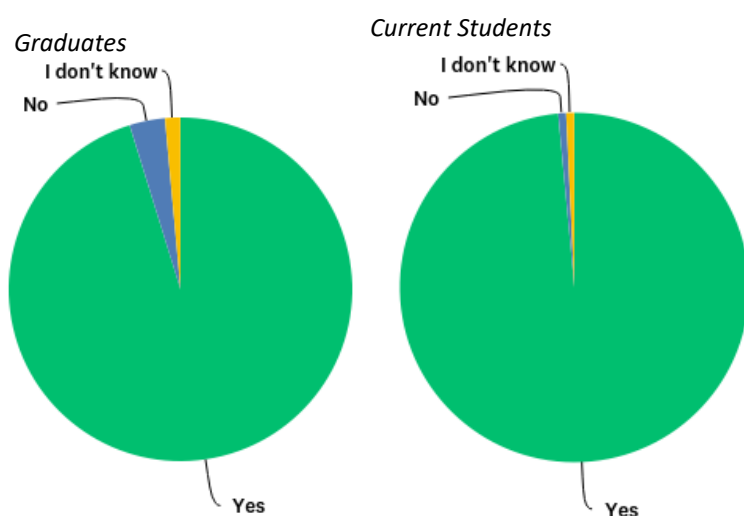
## Should there be financial support while on placement?

It is clear that there is a need for financial support for student teachers while out on placement.

57% of current students and 53% of graduates say that they would need between €50- €150 of financial support during their work placement.

Student teachers receive no financial support for the time on placement, they are working long hours, having to travel, pay for accommodation and materials, and a Gaeltacht fee twice (First year & Third Year, costing €1,500).

It is important to note when asked if survey respondents believed there should be financial support for students while on placement, 99% those on placement at the moment said yes, and 95% of those who completed placement before September 2017 said yes also.



## GAELTACHT FEE

When asked if the current Gaeltacht fee of €750 per year was too much, 89% of those on placement in 2017 said yes, and 79% graduates said yes.

*In 2012, the Department of Education abolished the subsidy granted to students to undertake the placement, which is mandatory, and after commissioning a working group to review the placement, extended it from three weeks to four.*

*The first two weeks are undertaken in first year and the second must be done in third year with each module costing €750, as opposed to the €250 subsidised cost before 2012. Students stay in a local house and attend Irish language classes with traditional céilís in the evenings. The cost includes the tuition fees and accommodation in the area. [Journal.ie Article, 2014]*

In May 2012, a Gaeltacht Placement Working Group report to the Teaching Council warned that the withdrawal of government funding for student teacher placement was “a matter of serious concern and may deter persons from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds from enrolling on programmes of initial teacher education” (Report of the Gaeltacht Placement Working Group to the Teaching Council, p. 3). In September 2014 the Minister for Education acknowledged “that the funding of the Gaeltacht Placement is a significant cost to students and their families” (Written Answers, 25 September 2014) and estimated the cost of restoring the grant for the extended four-week placement at €1 million.

Students engaged in programmes of initial teacher education have between 18 and 30 contact hours per week, with additional responsibilities in mandatory placement periods and lesson plan preparation. The very nature of the programmes restricts access to employment.

# STUDENT TEACHER WORK PLACEMENT

As mentioned in the accommodation section of this report, our student teachers are completing placement in many counties around Ireland, with many having to move and pay extra costs on travel and accommodation (see accommodation section).

## Hours on placement

59% of current placement students and 56% of graduates work between 20 to 35 weekly on placement.

The highest answer of hours being worked is 30-35 hours by student teachers on placement.

This does not take into account the lesson planning that must be prepared before entering a classroom.

When asked to work longer hours while on placement, exactly 37% of current placement students and graduates said yes.

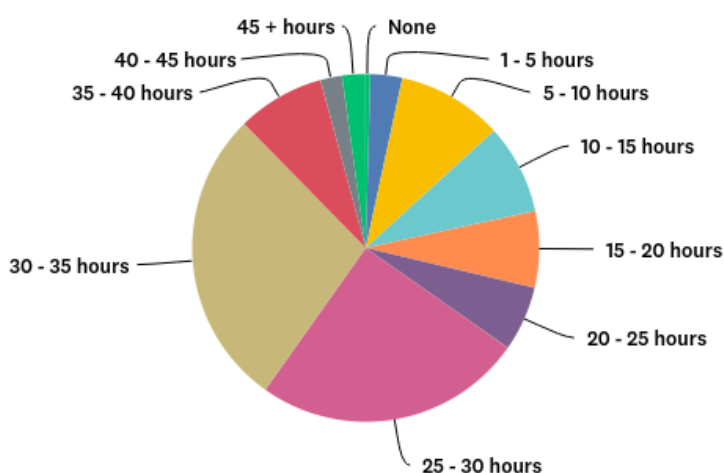
## Impact of placement on other study

We asked our student teachers if they are finding placement in its current form impacting on performance in other aspects of study (lecture, attendance, assignments, study etc), 50% of current students on placement and 54 % of graduates said yes.

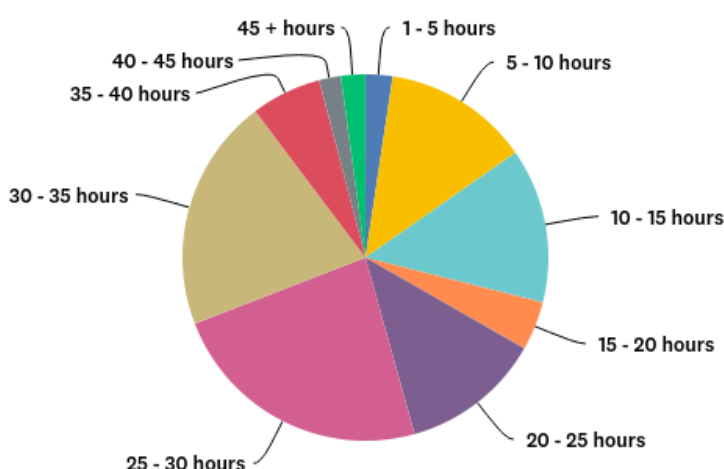
This shows that the pressure being put on our students spills over into other aspects of their studies, as they are not receiving adequate supports.

When we examined work placement further, 59% of current placement students and 56% of graduates work between 20 and 35 hours weekly.

*Current students placement Hours*



*Graduates placement Hours*



# STUDENT TEACHER DROP-OUTS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

42% of student teachers who completed their placement in 2017 and 31% of graduates said they have considered dropping out due to financial pressures.

On student mental health, 96% of current students and 95% of graduates found their time on placement highly stressful.

This is a clear combination of financial and the expectations while on placement for student teachers here in Ireland.

## STUDENT TEACHERS AND PART-TIME WORK

From looking at the financial costs associated with student teachers going on placement, it comes as no surprise that 71% of current placement students and 70% of graduates have part-time jobs during their placement.

### *Sectors*

The sectors in which current placement student teachers are working are 43% in Retail and Consumer, 31% in Hospitality and Leisure. 40% of Graduates at the time of their placement worked in Retail and Consumer, with 27% working in Hospitality and Leisure. 19% of graduate student teachers also outlined that Education was another sector in which they worked part-time.

### *Hours worked part-time*

It is very important to note as mentioned that student teachers are working on average 30 hours a week on placement with part-time work at the weekend or evenings during the week.

55% of current placement students and 53% of graduates work between 10- 20 hours a week, part-time.

A further 23% of current students and graduates work hours of 5-10 per week also.

It is clear from the survey results that on average students are working on 30 hours on placement and an average of 15 hours part-time making a total amount working in a week, 45 hours.

This brings students close to the maximum allowable working hours per week under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 which has clear negative implications for their study and their health, as evidenced by survey responses.

But more importantly many students are being forced to work part-time, in many circumstances, to pay for the additional costs which are incurred as part of their mandatory training on school placement.

### *Motivation for working part time*

When asked what is their motivation for working part-time while on placement, the highest figure in both current placement students and graduates was the Gaeltacht fee (33% of current students and 38% of graduates).

Other factors for working part-time are directly incurred expenses associated with class placements and include materials for class, travel, cost of living, rent and bills and college fees.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends the following;

## FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

*From the research in the survey conducted, it is clear that financial support is needed for student teachers while on placement. 99% of current students and 95% of graduates believe that there should be financial support while on placement.*

USI recommends:

- Whilst on placement teachers in initial teacher education should be supported by government in similar ways to how other professionals in training are supported. Hence, it would be important for an appropriate salary to be paid whilst students are on placement such as nursing students who receive 80% of the entry level rates.
- This financial support should cover resource and material costs in class, travel to their placement, accommodation.

## PLACEMENT HOURS

*This report also recommends the following:*

- School placements should not exceed 20-25 hours per week.
- Student teachers on placement from college are there as a compulsory element of their college qualification to apply their learning and develop practical skills. In no way should any student on placement replace or displace members of the teaching staff, those recently qualified or to provide substitution cover;
- Hours spent on placement in the final year of initial teacher education should count towards Teaching Council requirements on how many hours teaching must be carried out to achieve professional recognition.

## GAELTACHT FEES

*USI also proposes the reinstatement of the state grant to cover all eight weeks of mandatory Gaeltacht placement for PME students.*

Before Gaeltacht placement costs, students face annual costs of attending college of up to €11,000. (DIT Campus Life, 2016).

A previous Minister for Education and Skills (Written Answers, 1 July 2014) had indicated that support is available to these students through Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) but is only available to students who already receive maintenance payments through SUSI.

In September 2014 the Minister for Education acknowledged “that the funding of the Gaeltacht Placement is a significant cost to students and their families” (Written Answers, 25 September 2014) and estimated the cost of restoring the grant for the extended four-week placement at €1 million.



# COMMENTS FROM SURVEY



**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# STUDENT VOICES

*Below are some comments from students who filled out the survey.*

*"For a compulsory part of the course, the Gaeltacht fees and placement costs are outrageous, particularly as you have no choice but to complete Gaeltacht and school placements. Over the course of four years, B.Ed students pay 1500 for the Gaeltacht and I would imagine an other 1000 on placement costs alone. One placement I had to pay 100 euro for a private bus as there was a number of students place in a school which had no direct or vaguely direct bus from Maynooth."*

*"I feel that placement is a hugely stressful and difficult time for student teachers. I was very fortunate in the sense that my parents helped me financially but I found working such long and gruelling hours at home and in school and not being paid anything quite difficult, especially as I spent a lot on travel and resources. Financial support would be brilliant, but I think emotional support would be even more necessary."*

*"The Gaeltacht fee is ridiculous. €750 isn't even the minimum spend during the Gaeltacht. You need spending money, travel costs and are also missing out on working. If I had to spend money I would much prefer spend it on a one week course in Irish that is certified to deliver great results. I don't understand why we have to go to the Gaeltacht and pay €750 when it's a requirement it should be covered by the college or the government."*

*"Many incoming students are unaware of Gaeltacht fees and their extortionate cost. An extra €1500 over 4 years of college on top of normal fees and the cost of accommodation is a big strain on the limited budgets of students and their families."*

*"I saved for 4 years before undertaking my PME and also worked full time for the first 8 months but I'm still finding myself under constant financial pressure."*



*"It's only fair that students on placement who are trying to do their best and make a good impression are subsidised in some way. Making a good impression involves buying materials and going that extra mile for the children. So the financially supported students (be it a grant or from parents) can flourish on placement and receive high grades, while students struggling financially are worried about basic photocopying and laminating costs. Any kind of financial aid would go a long way for students on TP. Even if they had to prove costs with receipts. Money is not being looked for for the craic. It is genuinely needed to allow them to do the very best they can for the children in their*



*"We should have been getting a payment each week. The majority of students in my course had to work Friday night, Saturday and Sunday... we burned out it was an incredibly stressful time, we all have our own personal things going on in our lives and when something takes over like that giving us no time to even just get out for a walk or just rest up it's dangerous. "*

*"Gaeltacht fees were an measure brought in during times of recession were are over at this stage however the cost remains. In addition to this with fees rising for post graduate level from €5600 last year to €5700 this year and the SUSI grant covering €2000 of this with no maintenance support is is next to impossible for socio-economic and low income families to cover the remaining cost of fees, accommodation, food, travel, etc. Furthermore, it is also highlighted from the offset by teacher training colleges that students should not undertake part time work while doing this course and especially on placement and yet still expected to purchase course books supply the best resources for their class on placement and have full attendance in college while we are not expected or allowed to part take in substitution work during the course to gain both experience and some money. It is evident to me that there is double standards expected."*

*"Struggling to get by every single day for over a year and will continue to struggle until I finish. Weighed down with student loans and borrowing from people! "*

*"Unnecessary paper work is huge issue during placement. It causes stress and financial strain. There are huge cost involved in printing worksheets to place in individual student portfolios (class size of 30 students on average). This is expensive and also environmentally unfriendly. A huge amount of resources for placement need to be 'original' as the college discourages the use of schools books. This is some what understandable but sometimes contradictory to the class teachers requests. "*

*"Placement is an extremely stressful time for teaching students. Not only are you in school all of the school day but once home, another 6 hours on average preparation and planning is needed in order to do well. This stress as well as financial stress throughout placement can take its toll on a student very quickly Financial support would definitely eliminate some of this stress"*



