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## HEA Teaching and Learning Conference

### December 2025

Leading Change Together: Building the Future of  
Teaching and Learning in Higher Education



# Collaborative professionalism; An exploration of the professional learning of Cooperating Teachers



**HIBERNIA  
COLLEGE**

#### Institution(s) and Partner Organisations Involved

Hibernia College School of Education, Professional Master of Education Post Primary team with funding from the Teaching Council John Coolahan Round 6 fund

#### Contributor(s)

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#### What level(s) of your institution does this work affect?

- Module level
- Across multiple modules
- Programme level
- Across multiple programmes
- Outreach / Community / Industry engagement

#### Date and Timeframe

Academic Year 2024-2025 and 2025-2026

#### Alignment and Focus

##### Focus

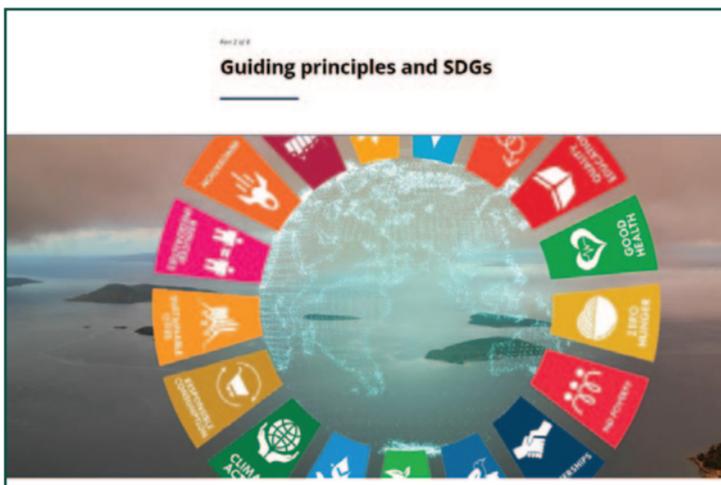
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

#### Frameworks, Policies, or Strategies Aligned

- Hibernia College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, ESD 2030

#### Discipline

- Education



#### Impact, Lessons Learned and Future Directions

##### Impact and Evidence of Success

We offer this CPD for cooperating teachers to cooperating teachers working with our students. In this first term of 2025, we have 350 students on placement. The invitation is being sent this week (commencing 13th October) inviting the cooperating teachers to an introductory webinar where we will outline the materials available. A digital badge is available to teachers who fully complete the course as well as course feedback. We use this feedback to develop and enhance the materials for future cohorts. In addition, we hold an end of course webinar where we meet the cooperating teachers to discuss their engagement with the course as well as engage in reflective practice.

##### Future Plans and Sustainability

In terms of next steps, we intend to build on this course once we have analysed and responded to feedback from participants. Since the GCE session is a new addition, we will need to monitor engagement with this during the academic year 2025-2026 with a view to identifying further session content and potential module additions. Engagement with the cooperating teachers is crucial to sustain and nurture our school-university partnerships and provide relevant, targeted support to both cooperating and student teachers.

##### Top Tips

- Importance of the initial introductory webinar
- Challenges of reaching cooperating teachers as often communication is only with school management
- Importance of responsive professional development

#### Initiative Description

##### Aims and Objectives

- The aim of this initiative was to build on CPD designed to support Cooperating Teachers during school placement. An online, self directed course was designed.

##### Outline or Description

**Collaborative professionalism; An exploration of the role and professional learning needs of the Treoráí (Cooperating Teacher) in supporting a student teacher during the practicum experience of an Initial Teacher Education programme in Ireland.**

In the Hall et al. (2018) report commissioned by the Teaching Council, the importance of the role of the Cooperating Teacher in supporting student teachers during the practicum element of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is emphasised. In that report, it is recommended that support be extended to CTs in order to prepare them for the role, specifically in the areas of observation of teaching and learning and discussion of the student teacher's practice with a view to providing formative feedback for improvement.

This research study aims to give a voice to the Treoráí (Co-operating Teacher) (CT) in determining structured supports for the professional role supporting student teachers during the practicum element of the Professional Master of Education (PME). Furthermore, the study aims to seek feedback on a professional learning model created in response to initial data collected. (see Figure 1)

##### Figure 1 Data collection methods

200 Treoraithe currently supporting post-primary student teachers from Hibernia College were invited to participate in the research. This yielded a sample size of 16 participants (n=16). As data was gathered from a survey and focus groups, this sample size was deemed appropriate.

To begin, a survey was designed to capture views on the role of the Treoráí as well as their perspectives on their professional learning needs regarding the Treoráí role. Thirteen participants (n=13) completed the survey.

##### Findings and Development of Resources

The findings of the survey regarding the professional learning needs of the Treoráí subsequently informed the development of two key professional learning resources for Treoráí by the researchers.

1. A Treoráí Handbook
2. Professional Learning Resources
3. Observation
4. Feedback and Reflection
5. Team Teaching

##### Snapshot of the Key Findings

The survey and initial focus group highlighted:

- More information is needed by the Treoráí from HEIs offering an ITE programme on the structure and processes of school placement.
- Greater clarity vis-a-vis the expectations of the Treoráí role is needed.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) that focuses on the professional learning needs of the Treoráí would be welcomed.

##### Next steps

This research highlights the absence of professional learning resources for the Treoráí, and in undertaking an evaluation of an interactive professional learning module of learning, it underscores the importance of structured support from HEI colleges offering ITE programmes.

We have already added to this course as a next step with the support of Ubuntu funding by developing an additional session on Global Citizenship Education (GCE). This session is intended to support cooperating teachers in their role in supporting student teachers in lesson planning, teaching and reflection in the area of GCE. We are interested to explore the impact on the cooperating teacher's own practice in relation to embedding GCE in their own classroom practice as well as supporting the student teacher's practice in this regard. This session will be available to our next cohort of cooperating teachers, beginning the course in October 2025.

#### Funding & Acknowledgements Details

Teaching Council John Coolahan Funding Round 6, Ubuntu Funding 2024/2025

## Collaborating with the Student Teacher

Patricia Nunan

