



Communiqué on the implementation of Teaching Practice / Work integrated Learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a dramatic impact on all aspects of life and work. The national lockdown is forcing all us to think differently and to act innovatively in relation to education delivery. Universities are responding in a variety of ways, including through optimizing digital and online teaching, learning and assessment opportunities.

The Teaching Practice (TP) or Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) component of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes is likely to be significantly impacted, as the national lockdown period coincides with the time that many ITE students are engaged with TP/WIL in schools.

TP/WIL is a fundamental component of initial teacher education programmes that cannot be compromised. The *Policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (PMRTEQ, DHET, 2015) requires that:

- *The learning-in-practice, workplace-based component of WIL for teacher education qualifications mostly take place in classroom and school settings, but could also include a small component of service learning in community settings.*
- *It is the responsibility of the institution offering the qualification to formally arrange WIL opportunities for students, in line with the requirements of the qualification as described in this policy. This implies developing mutually beneficial partnerships with schools.*
- *The workplace-based component of WIL must be structured, supervised, integrated into the learning programme, spread across the learning programme and it must be formally assessed.*

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In terms of actual time spent in schools, the PMRTEQ requires that for the Bachelor of Education (B Ed):

School-based WIL, including supervised and assessed teaching practice, constitutes an essential part of the B Ed programme. In a full-time contact programme, students should spend a minimum of 20 weeks and a maximum of 32 weeks in formally supervised and assessed school-based practices over the four-year duration of the degree. In any given year, a maximum of 12 such weeks could be spent in schools, and at least three of these should be consecutive. In part-time or distance mode programmes, students may be physically in schools for longer periods – for example, if they are employed as unqualified or under-qualified teachers. However, the same amount of supervised and assessed school-based practice is required.

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For the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), the requirement is that:

School-based WIL, including supervised and assessed teaching practice, is an important part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education programme. In a full-time contact programme, students should spend a minimum of eight weeks and a maximum of 12 weeks in formally supervised and assessed school-based practice during the one-year duration of the programme. At least four of these weeks should be consecutive. In a part-time or distance mode programme, students may be in schools for longer periods – for example if they are employed as professionally unqualified teachers. However, the same amount of supervised assessed school-based practice is required.

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Universities have requested guidance from the Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department) on meeting the policy requirements in the context of the national lockdown, and the following guidelines are provided:

B Ed 1st, 2nd and 3rd year:

- It will be possible to shorten the school-based TP programme for this year, and to spread the TP time that could not be undertaken this year to the outer years of the programme.

B Ed 4th year and PGCE students:

- Universities that have TP requirements that exceed the minimum 20 weeks for the B Ed programme and 8 weeks for the PGCE programme can reduce the requirement so that the minimum requirement is met.
- As schools will have an extended second term, schools could be engaged with a view to hosting 4th year and PGCE students for a longer period during the second term. Universities should limit the placements in the second term to only accommodate final year B Ed and PGCE students.
- Use could be made of simulated classroom environments (micro teaching, peer teaching, use of avatars/virtual teaching) as part-satisfaction (up to 1 week¹) of TP requirements.
- For students who have teaching subject specialisations that are taught in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, or in Community Education and Training (CET) colleges/ Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), a part of the Teaching Practice requirement could be satisfied in those contexts.
- For 4th year B Ed and PGCE students, who are in a lockdown context with school-going children, it may be possible for the students to support the learning of the scholar(s). This could include online support for learning. A portfolio of evidence of learning support (time spent, nature of activity, evidence of planning work, evidence of learner work, video records, reflective exercise etc) could be compiled by the student and assessed by the institution, and this could possibly count for up to 1 week¹ of the TP requirement.
- There will likely be the need for schools to implement a range of catch-up programmes to make up for the time lost through the lockdown. 4th year B Ed students and PGCE students could

¹ Universities will have to work out how many hours constitute a day/week on TP. No more than 2 weeks of the required school-based TP time should be accommodated through these alternatives.

volunteer/be recruited to participate in such programmes and this could be considered to be part-satisfaction (up to 1 week¹) of the TP requirements.

- The PMRTEQ also indicates that recognition of 1 week of service learning is possible as part-satisfaction of the TP requirements, and universities that have not yet embarked on this possibility may consider doing so.

The contribution of the Basic Education sector, and schools in particular, in assisting to develop the next generation of teachers, through hosting and supporting ITE students during the TP component of their programmes is vitally important and is highly appreciated. Schools are encouraged to work with universities to explore how the range of possibilities described in this document can be implemented practically.

Universities are invited to share the plans and innovative practices that they put in place regarding TP in the context of COVID-19 with the Department as there may be important lessons that can be learnt for the future implementation of TP.



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