

**Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) Response to the DES Public Consultation Paper and Questionnaire: The Recognition of Initial Education Programmes in Guidance Counselling**

**(April 2015)**

# TUI represents teachers (14,000+) employed by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and in Community and Comprehensive (C&C) Schools and staff working in further and adult education.

# In this document, the term guidance counsellor is used in the context of both a school-based service and also the Adult Education Guidance Service. All guidance services support students with career needs but it is important to also note that the role of guidance often also involves supporting students or potential students to cope with personal barriers which may inhibit the person from accessing education and training.

**Background**

The recent change in allocation of guidance services to schools has created significant difficulties for schools. Ireland has a very young population (Eurostat, 2015). In 2008, we had the second highest proportion of 10-14 year olds in the European Union (CSO, 2009). The high birth rate in Ireland (CSO, 2014) indicates that the population of young people is likely to remain high for the foreseeable future. DES (2014) suggests that the number of students in the primary school system will rise by 30,000 by 2019 and by 67,000 in second level by 2026. In this context, it is not sufficient to suggest that a world-class child/youth centred society can be achieved with inadequate resources of time, money or personnel. Recent research by TUI, ASTI, IGC and NCGE all highlight the negative impact of the recent cut in guidance services. In particular, one-to-one and small group support has been negatively impacted and this is precisely the type of work that cannot be done by well-intentioned but untrained people or by a guidance counsellor who is unable to deal with emergency situations for one student as the counsellor is simultaneously teaching a class. It is in that context that TUI makes this submission.

**Guidance Education**

In relation to training of guidance counsellors, a question must be asked as to whether the course providers actually provide the learning opportunities to acquire these skills etc. in reality.  Yes course providers state that they provide the learning opportunities for trainee guidance counsellors to develop these skills but in reality some may not and if they do may not provide it to a high standard.

TUI would like to see more emphasis put on strategies for academic monitoring.  There is a gap in the system where more emphasis could be placed on the process of academic monitoring. The guidance counsellor would be best placed to lead academic mentoring in conjunction with pastoral/year head teams. Unfortunately middle management posts have been significantly reduced during the moratorium on promotions. It is important that already overburdened guidance counsellors not have significant additional workload foisted on them. Formal academic monitoring/mentoring should be carried out by a designated person in the school. Staff should be provided with adequate training to do so and hence training in this area should be incorporated into the guidance course.

TUI notes reference by the DES document and recent work by Coyle and Dunne (2008) that draw attention to ‘the multifaceted role of all guidance counsellors’. In order to satisfactorily carry out this multi-faceted role, it is important that education of guidance counsellors be facilitated and supported by the DES within a lifelong learning model, as deemed required by the individual guidance counsellor.

**Questionnaire**

On page 20 there is a question on selection of course participants.  Course participants should be permitted to apply for the course regardless of how much prior experience they have. However, the guidance role also benefits from have applicants who have significant previous experience in a teaching role.

Also on page 20 there is a question on qualifications of programme staff.  Most lecturers on the training courses are very well versed in how the Irish education system works and the constraints of the timetable/time/ class composition/management structures etc. This is welcome and should continue.

Ends

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**Glossary**

ASTI Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland

IGC Institute of Guidance Counsellors

DES Department of Education and Skills

TUI Teachers’ Union of Ireland

**References**

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