St Mary's University College

A College of Queen's University Belfast



PGCE

(Irish-Medium) Programme

www.smucb.ac.uk

Faith in educational opportunity
defines both our history and our future

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The entrance requirements in this brochure should be viewed as a guide only.

Meeting these requirements does not guarantee an offer. Questions regarding entry qualifications not listed in this brochure should be directed to the Academic Registry prior to submitting an application: **www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions**



Introduction

The PGCE Primary programme at St Mary's is bilingual by design, combining the specialist knowledge and competences required for teaching in Irish-medium immersion classrooms with the essential skills, understanding and professional values that underpin effective teaching in all educational settings.

At St Mary's, students benefit from a welcoming, supportive and collaborative learning environment. Our aim is to develop confident, reflective and inspiring teachers who can deliver high-quality learning experiences in Irish-medium classrooms. Academic staff seek to model these approaches through engaging lectures and practical workshops, where active learning is supported by independent reading, critical enquiry and reflection.

Throughout the programme, PGCE students have opportunities to learn alongside and engage with Irish-medium students on the BEd programme, fostering a strong sense of professional community. Students are introduced to contemporary educational research and benefit from direct engagement with researchers specialising in immersion education. An integral element of the programme is the phased experience of three blocks of clinical practice, providing valuable opportunities to develop professional competence across a range of school settings, including both Irish-medium and English-medium schools.

Students also have the opportunity to engage with the Áisaonad, a specialist organisation based at St Mary's that develops high-quality teaching and learning resources for the Irish-medium sector. Through its commitment to promoting best practice in the use of these resources, the Áisaonad makes an important contribution to Irish-medium education. Further information about its work is available elsewhere in this brochure. sector. The Áisaonad is committed to sharing best practice on the use of its resources. More information about the Áisaonad can be found in this brochure.

The PGCE programme provides a strong professional foundation for a variety of career pathways. Graduates have progressed into roles within educational organisations, Irish-language media, educational support services, academia and educational psychology. The majority, however, pursue careers in Irish-medium schools, where their enthusiasm for teaching and commitment to pupils' learning continue to inspire their own professional development as lifelong learners. The programme has a consistently strong record of graduate employability.

St Mary's also works in partnership with Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University to provide an Irish-medium dimension to the PGCE Post-Primary experience. This provision places particular emphasis on developing students' Irish-language proficiency and the specialist competences required to teach effectively in Irish-medium post-primary settings.

Whatever your aspirations, we hope this brochure encourages you to take the next step in your educational and professional journey. We look forward to the opportunity to welcome you to St Mary's, where a strong sense of community, a commitment to excellence and a shared passion for education are at the heart of the student experience.

Thomas Rogan
Programme Leader for Irishmedium Education



Meet the PGCE Team

The PGCE team brings the experience of practical teaching in Irish-medium and English-medium schools. Members have also led curriculum development in Irish-medium education and are research active in this area.



Back row lecturers: **Dr Tomas Rogan, Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, Dr Seán Mac**

Front row Awards students: **Aislinn Coll, Eve Ní Chathasaigh, Aoife Nig Loingsigh, Conan Glass**

Teaching staff on the PGCE Programme team bring expertise and teaching experience that spans all areas of the primary curriculum. The team includes Senior Lecturers, with subject specialisms and Associate Lecturers who also bring current or recent expertise of teaching in Irish-Medium primary schools.

The PGCE programme benefits from a strong tradition of educational leadership and a commitment to advancing Irish-medium education. The team strives to ensure that the programme reflects developments in educational practice while supporting the continued growth and development of the sector.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Primary)

Programme Outline

The Irish-medium PGCE is a one-year full-time course of professional training for university graduates leading to the award of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education of the Queen's University, Belfast. In addition to this professional qualification, successful students will be awarded the Teastas san Oideachas Dátheangach (Certificate in Bi-lingual Education).

This programme is primary designated (5-11 age range), accredited by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and is recognised by the Department of Education (NI) as an initial qualification to teach in all types of schools. Students who successfully complete the programme may apply for registration to the GTCNI.

Graduates may also apply for registration to the Teaching Council in the Republic of Ireland. Please note that conditions may apply. Registration is a mark of professional recognition as a teacher. Further information about the registration processes will be made available during the PGCE year or may be accessed directly from the websites:

www.gtcni.org.uk www.teachingcouncil.ie

Programme Structure and Content

The programme runs from September until June and is thirty-six weeks in duration. Eighteen weeks will be spent in a variety of classroom settings where competences in professional practice are developed. The College will arrange all school placements. They will be in both English-medium and Irish-medium schools. A Gaeltacht experience is a highly valued dimension of the PGCE programme. Students are encouraged to participate in Gaeltacht courses in order to enhance their language competence.

The programme will focus on all three phases of primary education: Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. The course is structured in three modules, two of which are at M-Level. Modules have been designed to allow students to integrate knowledge gained from College-based study and from clinical practice. Successful completion of the PGCE (IME) currently entitles graduates to 30 credit points within the College M-Level programme.

Assessment

The Postgraduate Certificate is awarded on the basis of continuous assessment and students must satisfy the examiners in both College-based courses and in practical teaching.

Religious Education

Applicants will also have the option of studying the one-year Religious Education Programme required for teaching certification in Catholic primary schools.



Programme Structure

The PGCE Primary Programme

Vision

To inspire and develop highly-competent, reflective teaching professionals with a strong sense of moral purpose and a vocational commitment to the holistic development of their pupils and the improvement of society

Framework	The Catholic Intellectual Tradition and Catholic Social Teaching	Partnerships with Schools and Key Stakeholders including Government	The GTCNI Charter, Code of Values and the Competence Framework for the Professional Development of Teachers	The Memorandum of Agreement with Queen's University Belfast	The Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Research Strategy
Learning and Teaching in the Primary School (M-Level Module)	Language and Literacy (Irish)		Irish Language		Partnership Engagement Collaboration Leadership Coherence Best Practice Scholarship
	Irish Medium Issues	Holistic Learning	Special Educational Needs	Early Years in Education	
	Effective Communication and Academic Writing - Writing Centre, Peer Tutors				
School-Based Work (H-Level Module)	Term One Irish-medium School Placement at Foundation or Key Stage One	Term Two English-medium School Placement at Key Stage One	Term Three Irish-medium School Placement at Key Stage Two	Professional Development and School Experience	
	Practical Experiences: Special school or nursery placement, Gaeltacht-based course, Irish-medium conference				
Perspectives on the Primary Curriculum (M-Level Module)	Numeracy		Language and Literacy (English)	UICT	
	Creativity		World Around Us		
	Physical Education	Art & Design	Music	History	Geography	Science
Underpinning Ethos, Values, Attitudes and Dispositions	Catholic Education Catholic Education takes place in communities inspired by faith. Faith-based education promotes a caring ethos which is expressed in positive relationships both within and beyond the College.		Shared Education Promoting respect, understanding and co-operation for a pluralist and diverse society	The International Dimension Enriching the educational, social and cultural lives of students to promote a broad world view, enabling better-informed decisions and responsible actions.	

Admission to the PGCE Primary Programme

Requirements

- On admission applicants must possess an honours degree (with classification 2.2 or above) or equivalent from a recognised university.
- Applicants are also required to hold passes (Grade C or above at GCSE) in English Language, Mathematics and Science (or an equivalent qualification) prior to the commencement of the course. Please note that the Essential Skills qualification is not deemed equivalent to Grade C.
- For applicants from the Republic of Ireland, the equivalent qualification for English and Mathematics is Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level Grade O4 or above. For Science, the minimum requirement is Junior Certificate at Higher Level, Grade C or above.
- Applicants must have a high level of competence in Irish, both written and oral, commensurate with competence to teach the primary school curriculum.

Interview

All applicants who meet the minimum requirements will normally be invited for interview and asked to complete a writing task. These are designed to assess an applicant's oral and written competency and suitability for the PGCE programme. It should be noted that possession of the educational requirements does not guarantee admission to the course.

Fees

Information about the fees for the academic year is available on the College website: www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions/ studentfinance

The fees can be paid for through a student loan from the student finance company. Further contact details, application forms and guidelines are available from the website: www.studentfinanceni.co.uk



How to Apply

The application deadline for PGCE programmes is in February each year. To apply, or if you have any enquiries, go online to www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions or contact:

The Academic Registry
St Mary's University College
191 Falls Road
Belfast BT12 6FE
Tel: +44 (0)28 9026 8320
Email: admissions@smucb.ac.uk

A Student View
Aoife Nig Loingsigh

I am a former student of Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh - a school that is much more than just a place of learning; it is a strong and vibrant community. The same is true at Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, where the lecturers knew us personally and provided continuous support, both inside and outside the classroom.

I applied to this course because I believe in education through the medium of Irish. I want to help nurture the language among the next generation through Irish-medium education. This course has prepared me to pursue this goal with real purpose.

One of the highlights of the year for me was the school placement experience. I had the chance to build strong relationships with amazing pupils and to use the strategies I learned at university as powerful tools in the classroom.

Looking back, it's incredible how much I learned in just one year - from active learning to differentiation - concepts I had little awareness of before but was able to proudly put into practice by the end of the course.

My advice to TICO students? Trust yourself and embrace the challenges. This course will not only shape you into a skilled teacher, but it will also help you grow into a more confident and resilient person.



Is iardhalta de Ghaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh mé, scoil ina bhfuil i bhfad níos mó i gceist léi ná áit fhoghlama - is pobal láidir bríomhar í. Is amhlaidh an cás i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire: bhí aithne phearsanta ag na léachtóirí orainn agus tugadh tacaíocht leanúnach dúinn, bíodh sin laistigh nó lasmuigh den seomra ranga.

Chuir mé isteach ar an chúrsa TICO mar go gcreidim san oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge. Ba mhaith liom an teanga a chothú i measc an chéad ghlúin eile. D'ullmhaigh Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire go cuimsitheach mé chun an sprioc seo a bhaint amach.

Ag amharc siar ar an bhliain seo dom, is dochreidte an méid a d'fhoghlaim mé laistigh de bhliain amháin - ón fhoghlaim ghníomhach go difreáil - coincheapa nach raibh cur amach agam orthu roimhe seo, ach a bhí mé in ann a chur i bhfeidhm roimh dheireadh an chúrsa.

Caithfidh mé a rá gur buaicphointí na bliana dom na tréimhsí a chaith mé ar thaithí scoile i mbliana. Bhí an t-ádh liom an taithí phraiticiúil seo a fháil. Chaith mé tréimhsí ag tógáil caidrimh le páistí iontacha agus na straitéisí a d'fhoghlaim mé san ollscoil mar uirlisí cumhachtacha agam.

An chomhairle atá agam do mhic léinn TICO: De réir a chéile a thógtar an mhuinín. Creid ionat féin agus glac leis na dúshláin go fonnmhar. Faoi dheireadh an chúrsa seo, beidh tú réidh don mhúinteoireacht agus níos láidre mar dhuine.

Irish Medium/and Irish Language Enhancement Course for Post-Primary PGCE students at Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University

Programme Outline

In response to the demand for subject-specific teachers in the growing Irish-Medium Post-Primary sector, St Mary's University College, Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University (Ulster) have formed a partnership to offer a one year Irish-Medium Enhancement course to students interested in becoming teachers in Irish-Medium Post-Primary education.

Additional places have been added to the PGCE intake quotas for Queen's University, Belfast and Ulster University specifically for those applicants who wish to teach in the IrishMedium Post-Primary sector. On completion of the course, these students will be awarded a Certificate in Bilingual Education (St Mary's University College) in addition to their PGCE qualification (Ulster/ Queen's).

Programme Structure

Students will follow the PGCE course designed by either Queen's or Ulster depending on their subject specialism.

Queen's prepares students to teach in the following subject areas: English, Mathematics, ICT/Computing, Science, Modern Languages, Religious Education and Social Science/Citizenship.

Ulster prepares students to teach in the following areas: Art & Design, English with Drama and Media Studies, Geography, History, Home Economics, Music, Physical Education, and Technology & Design.

Further information on specific subjects offered and on PGCE course structures is available on Queen's (www.qub.ac.uk) and Ulster (www.ulster.ac.uk) websites.

Bilingual Immersion Education

Irish-Medium students will also complete additional elements in the area of bilingual/immersion education. These will include completing spring and summer Gaeltacht programmes (15 days in total), an induction week in August and an additional week in the following June. This bilingual focus is provided by St Mary's University College, which has a long tradition in preparing teachers to teach in the Irish-Medium sector.

Applying for the Irish-Medium/Irish Language Enhancement Course for Post-Primary PGCE students at QUB and UU.

Applicants will apply to undertake their PGCE studies with either Queen's or Ulster (depending on their subje ct specialism) and should express an interest in Irish-Medium Education if they wish to be considered for this option. Competence in Irish is required. Usually, this means a GCE A Level or the equivalent qualification in Irish.

Contact

Anyone requiring additional information should contact Dr Seán Mac Corraidh (Irish-Medium/Irish Language Enhancement Course Co-ordinator) by telephone on 028 90268281 or by e-mail s.maccorraidh@smucb.ac.uk



A Student View
Conan Glass

I am Conan Glass and I come from Fallagloon in south County Derry. I completed the Irish Language and Irish Medium Enhancement Course in June 2025, which I took on as part of the post-primary PGCE (Science) course I followed at Queen's University Belfast. St Mary's University College, Belfast provided the enhancement course.

It was a challenging beneficial year as I worked to gain the PGCE qualification. I realised how important it is to prepare lessons well and, to consider the various needs of classes and of individual pupils. I also found out how important reflection on practice is while considering my strengths and areas for improvement in my teaching. I have no doubt that the Irish language and Irish Medium dimension of the course was the most enjoyable of the year as, without having done it, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to teach in an Irish language setting, to learn new scientific terminology in Irish and to inspire another generation to use and improve their knowledge of the Irish language. As a school child I did not attend an Irish Medium school or college which was the case for many on the enhancement course at St Mary's University College and therefore there was an additional challenge ahead of us in respect. Two days of workshops on immersion teaching methods were organised as well as two Gaeltacht courses concentrating on grammar and oracy. Having done that, I felt that I could take on teaching in an Irish Medium college and we all did well on our school placements. I learned a lot during the year and the experience has inspired me to go ahead and teach in an Irish Medium setting.



Is mise Conan Glas as Folach Ghlún, Deisceart Chontae Dhoire mé. Chríochnaigh mé i ndiaidh an cúrsa feabhsúcháin sa Ghaeilge agus sa ghaelscolaíocht atá mar chuid de chúrsa an PGCE san Iar- bhunoideachas ag díriú ar an Eolaíocht in Ollscoil na Ríona, i Meitheamh 2025. Ba é Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste a sholáthraigh an chuid sin den chúrsa. Bliain dhúshlánach thairbheach a bhí inti agus mé ag iarraidh cáilíocht an PGCE a bhaint amach. Chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm orm an tábhacht a bhaineann le pleanáil ceachtanna, agus le bheith ag amharc ar riachtanais dhifriúla dhaltaí lena linn seo. Níl aon dabht ná gurbh iad diminsin na Gaeilge agus na gaelscolaíochta an chuid ba shultmhaire agus achab é sin, cha bheadh deis agam múineadh i suíomh Gaeilge, téarmaíocht úr Eolaíochta a fháil agus glúin eile a spreagadh lena gcuid Gaeilge a úsáid agus a fheabhsú. Chuidigh an cúrsa go mór le muinín a bheith agam asam féin i dtaca leis seo de. Eagraíodh dhá chúrsa lae i mBéal Feirste ag díriú ar mhodhanna teagaisc agus agus cúrsaí Gaeltachta bunaithe ar chruinneas gramadaí agus cainte. Ina dhiaidh sin ar fad mhothaigh mé go dtiocfadh liom tabhairt faoi mhúineadh i nGaelcholáiste, agus d'éirigh go geal linn ar fad sa rang agus muid i mbun cleachtadh teagaisc. D'fhoghlaim mé cuid mhór i mbliana agus spreag sé mé le dul agus teagasc i suíomh .lán-Ghaeilge

An tÁisaonad

Resource Unit for Irish-Medium Schools

While studying at St Mary's, students will have the opportunity to become familiar with the resources of the Áisaonad which is based in the College.

This is a specialist organisation which produces learning and teaching resources for the Irish-Medium sector. An tÁisaonad was established in 1998 as a response to demand from Irish-Medium schools. There was an urgent need for high quality books, and, until then, all that was available were photocopies and handmade materials. Now, An tÁisaonad has a wide selection of resources to meet the needs of schools.

An tÁisaonad puts great emphasis on its relationship with teachers. Teachers from each Key Stage are represented on the Consultative Committee and in the focus groups which also represent each Key Stage. Drafts of resources are trialed in schools, and teachers give their feedback before resources are published.

An tÁisaonad also organises questionnaires, conferences and workshops to collect teachers' opinions. Over the years, An tÁisaonad has developed a number of innovative projects, including The Early Reading Programme (Cleite), Collins Primary Maths, a series of big books (some with music) and a number of reading series for each level. At present, An tÁisaonad also provides an online news service for schools through the C2K platform – An Seomra Nuachta – with lively interactive articles for schoolchildren.

The provision of training for teachers on how to make best use of its resources is central to the work of An tÁisaonad. Find out more about An tÁisaonad, as well as support materials at www.aisaonad.org

Call on +44 (0)28 9024 3864 or visit the office in St Mary's University College.





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