



## Droichead - External Professional Support Team (PST) Member FAQs - Post-primary

### What is the need for an External Member?

In small schools, or in circumstances where a school is not able to establish a PST exclusively from within the staff, an external dimension may be used. Principals may choose to establish a PST using a combination of the school's own staff and an external PST member. There must be at least one member from the Newly Qualified Teacher's (NQT) base school on the PST.

### How would a school source an External Member?

Oide's Droichead Induction Division has created a panel of self-nominated, fully trained PST members who are willing to act as an external member of another school's PST. Typically, these PST members have worked collaboratively as part of a PST in their own school and have directly supported NQTs through the Droichead process.

To request the list of PST members on the Droichead Induction Division's **External Panel**, the school principal should email [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie). The principal will then select an external PST member from this panel and invite them to join their PST. The Droichead Induction Division will not recommend an external member - selecting the external member is a matter for the principal. The school's context (e.g., Community and Comprehensive, DEIS, ETB, Gaelcholáiste, Voluntary Secondary School, Educate Together) and proximity to the external person will usually inform this selection. This list is for discreet use by the principal.

As an alternative to the Droichead Induction Division's External panel, principals may wish to invite **a teacher in a local school** to be the external member on their PST. This teacher must already be a trained PST member. If not already trained, they must commit to completing PST Training. Please inform [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie) if this is the case and, where possible, this teacher will be invited to PST Training. A teacher must have fully completed Day 1 and Day 2 of PST Training before beginning their role as an external PST member.

### If selected as an External Member by a school, do I have to agree?

No. Membership of the external panel is on a voluntary basis and in that regard the external member, if contacted by a school, has the discretion to choose whether to support a school due to time or geographical constraints.

It is important to contact [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie) if you are no longer available to act as an external member.

## What is expected of me in my role as an External PST Member?

In summary, the PST (internal plus external members) **guides and advises the NQT** during school-based induction **and forms a joint declaration with the NQT** that they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process (signing Form D).

When the external PST member's appointment is confirmed and agreed, the Droichead school and the external member will agree protocols regarding engagement with the process at school level. The roles and responsibilities of each PST member and the principal may differ from one school to the next and therefore, should be agreed before the Droichead process commences. **The external member should be involved in the development of the Droichead Outline Plan** with its indicative dates for the NQT they are supporting.

Supporting an NQT during Droichead is always a collaborative process. An external PST member usually interacts with the school a number of times for professional conversations with the other PST members and the NQT, and to engage in induction activities such as classroom observation and discussions. These interactions - actual and/or virtual will include professional conversations with the other PST members and the NQT.

The host school/Droichead school, in collaboration with the NQT and the external panel member, will explore the possibility of conducting a range of induction activities. Face-to-face interaction is not always required, and some activities/professional conversations are well suited to using appropriate software/technology e.g., pre-observation and/or post-observation discussions.

For elements of Strand A, the required period of professional practice, school-based induction activities, including but not limited to observations and professional conversations etc. should ideally take place on-site within the school environment. These should be in line with school policies and appropriate data protection guidance provided under GDPR.

## How is the integrity of the three-stage observation process maintained?

Throughout the Droichead process, a three-stage process is used in every observation whether the NQT is observing an experienced fellow professional or being observed themselves. Each element of the process requires attention and time. This process: Pre-observation Preparation / Classroom Observation / Post-observation Discussion, applies in all instances. There is a minimum of two observations **by** the NQT and a minimum of two observations **of** the NQT during the Droichead process. The exact number will be decided by the PST in consultation with the NQT and should be captured in the Droichead Outline Plan.



It is important that where an external member has arranged to visit the host/Droichead school for an observation, that the pre-observation discussion would usually happen a few days before the observation so that the NQT is set up for success and has an opportunity to amend the plan well in advance of teaching the lesson to ensure it is classroom ready. This may be done remotely.

Following the observation itself, the PST member arranges to meet with the NQT for the post-observation discussion.

Once again, we see the PST member's skills in action e.g., questioning, listening, empathising, summarising, reflecting, providing feedback, goal setting and action-planning.

**I have been asked to conduct the 'inspections' of the NQT and I have been told that this is all the school needs from me. I am uncomfortable about this - do I have to do this?**

No. Inspections are the remit of the Inspectorate and not the role of a PST member.

While observation is an important part of the Droichead process, it is certainly not the only aspect. The 'Classroom Observation' should not be taken in isolation either - it is a three-part process and continuity, and consistency of support are very important. For that reason, the same PST member should be involved from start to finish of each observation. A different PST member may be involved for other observations.

Please bear in mind that the PST (internal plus external members) **guides and advises the NQT** during school-based induction **and forms a joint declaration with the NQT** (by signing Form D) that they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process.

**Is there a maximum number of schools I can support?**

When creating the Droichead Induction Division **External Panel**, we envisaged that a panel-member would support one school, if requested. We suggest that you have a conversation with the principal of your own school in the first instance as release time/substitution affects your own school and is claimed via your school's OLCS/ETB. We are aware that in a few instances for good reason, panel-members are supporting more than one school, and they (and their principals) are comfortable with this. Please feel free to contact the Professional Learning Leader for your area if you would like to discuss your situation. See contact details [here](#).

**Can I apply for Release Time (with substitute cover) to support the school/NQT?**

Yes. The external panel member should apply to [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie) for the **Sanction for External Member Release Time Form** and receive an email from the Droichead Induction team approving the application before confirming final details with the host school. An external panel member may avail of up to five hours release time if needed. This time is not taken from the host school's allocation but from the Droichead Induction Division's **Discretionary Time**. The discretionary hours allocated to an external PST member, if granted, must be used in the given



academic year that the PST is supporting the NQT; they cannot be used in the following academic year.

As you will have been involved in the development of the NQT's **Droichead Outline Plan**, you will be aware of the timeframe and the indicative dates for the induction activities.

**Although I am fully trained, it has been a year since I have supported an NQT. What would be particularly useful for me (as an external member) to read/review before I work with the school and NQT?**

It is important that you are au fait with the many resources on our [website](#) which includes the following important sections:

- Preparing for an NQT
- Engaging in the process with an NQT
- Useful Documents

We would also recommend that you complete a Droichead Refresher event - please contact [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie) for dates and times.

**A school has asked me to be part of the process, but they are yet to complete training themselves. How should I proceed?**

In this instance, please contact [angie.grogan@oide.ie](mailto:angie.grogan@oide.ie) for advice.

**What happens if I need help or advice? What should I do?**

If you need further support or clarification, please contact the Professional Learning Leader assigned to your region. They will advise you on how best to proceed. You will find contact information [here](#).

