



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional
Learning of School Leaders
and Teachers

Droichead Classroom Observation Toolkit



**A Resource for
Newly Qualified Teachers
and Professional Support
Team Members**

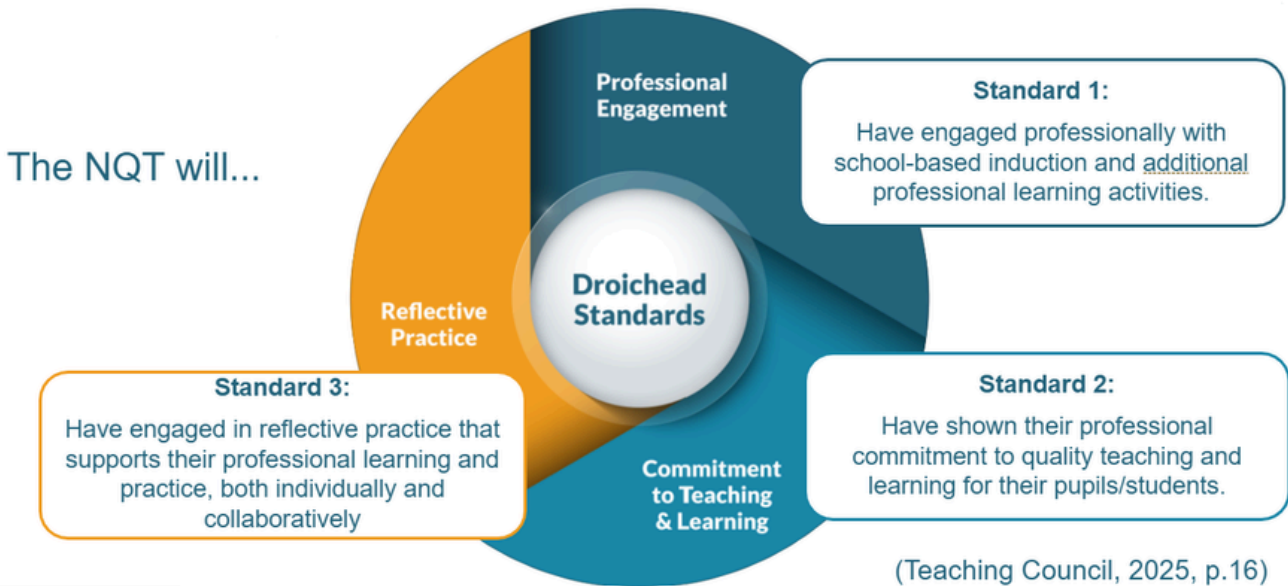


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The Droichead Standards

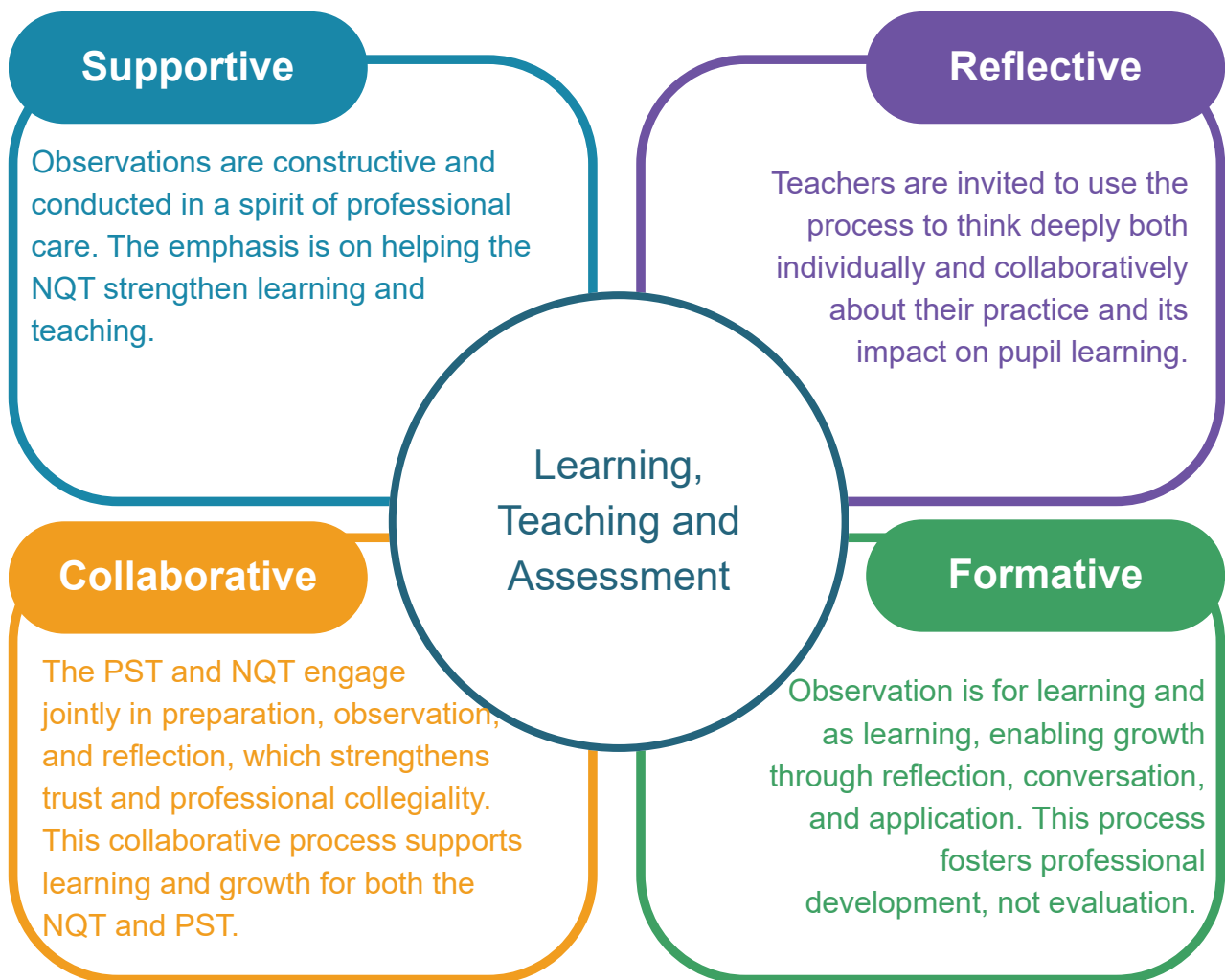


The Observation Process

Observation is an essential induction activity that supports the Newly Qualified Teacher’s (NQTs) professional learning in ways that align with the Droichead Standards. It is a collaborative professional learning process designed to support, guide and challenge NQTs. Its goal is to enhance learning and teaching through structured peer observation, reflection, and professional conversations. Through this process the Professional Support Team (PST) and NQT work together in ways that reflect the three Droichead Standards (above) which inform and guide all the support PSTs provide to NQTs.

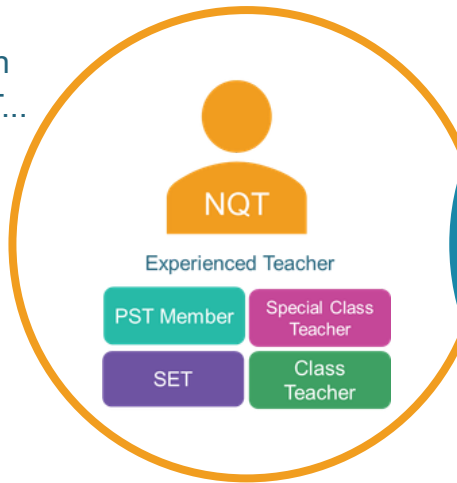
Consistent with this standards-aligned approach, each observation is shaped by the NQT’s identified learning needs. As *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework* (2025, p.11) highlights: “Observations by the PST of the NQT’s practice should focus on areas where the NQT feels that they need particular advice, help and support.” This ensures that observation remains meaningful, supportive, and firmly grounded in the professional learning intentions of Droichead.

Guiding Principles of Observation



The Droichead Observation Model

Observation
by the NQT...



Observation
of the NQT...



Who	Focus	What	Minimum
NQT observes experienced teacher	Based on the NQT's identified professional learning needs.	The agreed focus is central, and the NQT also experiences a myriad of teaching strategies, methodologies, and classroom organisation techniques.	2
PST observes NQT	Based on agreed focus area(s) aligned with the Droichead Standards.	The agreed focus is central but other elements of the NQT's learning, teaching and assessment practice are supported.	2

Key Points

- The number of observations can be adjusted according to the emerging needs of the NQT.
- Observation is just one induction activity.
- NQTs are to be observed teaching in an area where they feel their learning need is greatest.
- Observations to be scheduled early in the Droichead process.
- NQTs observe another teacher at least once before being observed themselves.
- Observations to last between 20 and 40 minutes.
- Only PST members named on the NQT's Teaching Council application may observe as part of the Droichead process.
- Observations are supportive and developmental, not evaluative.
- All observations are equally important and valuable.



The Three-Stage Observation Cycle

Each observation follows a three-stage cycle promoting professional discussion, reflective practice, and shared learning.



“

The value of an observation depends on how well it is planned, executed and discussed afterwards - and that depends on how knowledgeable and astute the observer is and how open the new teacher is to using this as an opportunity to develop.

”

(Bubb, 2007, p.83-84)

Active Listening

Because effective pre- and post-observation conversations are essential to the observation process, active listening becomes a vital skill that strengthens trust, enhances clarity, and supports open professional dialogue. Active listening in pre and post-observation meetings fosters open communication, ensures mutual understanding, and enables reflective discussion that helps teachers identify strengths, address challenges, and implement targeted strategies for professional growth.

Core Practices for Meaningful Active Listening



(Hook et al., 2006, p.63)

Stage 1: Pre-Observation Discussion

Purpose:

The purpose of the pre-observation discussion is to establish the specific focus of the observation, confirm organisational and procedural arrangements, and ensure that the process supports meaningful professional learning. The agreed focus should align with *Looking at Our School 2022* standards and the statements of effective practice. Appendix 2 outlines possible areas of focus to support this discussion.

“
The NQT should...be encouraged to teach in an area where they feel their learning need is greatest.

”
(Teaching Council, 2025)

Effective Practice

Discuss:

- Focus of the observation (see Appendix 2)
- What is the focus of the learning?
- What knowledge, skills and attitudes will the pupils learn?
- What methods or activities will be used to facilitate learning?
- How learning will be assessed?
- Consider the inclusion of all learners and context (mainstream, SEN, special class).
- *Looking at Our School 2022* as a resource (see Appendix 4)
- Review the weekly preparation for the lesson being observed, as supported by Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools (2026).

For NQT observing other teachers:

- Identify the focus for the observation - drawn from areas the NQT has identified for development.
- Identify specific aspects of the focus to consider, adapt or apply.

For PST observing NQT:

- Use coaching questions to refine lesson preparation (see sample, Appendix 3)

Other Considerations:

- Time of lesson
- Duration of lesson
- Location
- Role and location of PST member during observation
- Note-taking and confidentiality protocols
- Has the weekly recorded preparation/focus of the learning and learner experiences been reviewed and agreed upon?
- Is the co-constructed lesson now classroom-ready for the setting?
- Post-observation meeting time and location



Stage 2: Classroom Observation

Purpose:

To observe learning in action.

Effective Practice

- Conduct the observation with the agreed focus and protocols within the agreed timeframe
- Maintain respect, care, integrity and trust upholding the Teaching Council's Four Ethical Values (Teaching Council, 2016, p.6)
- No unplanned "pop-ins."
- Avoid intervening unless previously agreed
- Maintain confidentiality and a calm, professional presence

Observer's Focus:

- Focus on evidence related to the agreed learning area as discussed in the pre-observation professional conversation
 - What is supporting pupils' learning?
 - What may be preventing pupils from learning?
 - Which teaching strategies enhance pupil engagement and learning?
 - Which assessment strategies improve engagement and learning?

Considering these questions will allow for targeted discussion and reflection in the Post- Observation Meeting.

Actions:

- Take factual, objective notes; share relevant observations afterwards.
- Share the post-observation template with the NQT



Stage 3: Post-Observation Discussion

Purpose:

To reflect on practice, affirm strengths, and identify clear next steps.



Best Practice

The post-observation discussion should ideally take the form of a facilitative, coaching session. The NQT is guided by the PST member to explore areas of strength and to identify areas to strengthen further in their practice.

- Meet privately after the lesson in a comfortable setting
- Begin with self-reflection by the NQT “What went well? ‘What helped the pupils learn?’ ‘What surprised you?’”
- (see Appendix 1 for a Glance Sheet)
- Adopt a facilitative stance using open-ended questioning.
- Use open-ended questions to deepen reflection and problem-solve (see prompt questions, Appendix 3)
- Focus the discussion on facts and evidence, not opinions
- Emphasis on professional learning, not evaluation
- Be specific and descriptive (not judgmental)
- Ask questions rather than make statements
- Prioritise aspects that have the most impact on pupil learning

Focus of the Observation:

- Initially the discussion should address the agreed area of focus - emphasise strengths and successes with the NQT
- NQT should be guided to discuss the area of focus and identify what support they need in this area of focus
- Use facilitative communication to identify:
 - Strengths and successes
 - Areas for growth, or that need support other than the focus area
 - Actions and support (Action Planning)

Summarise the discussion and next steps collaboratively and on the Post-Observation Record Appendix 5 (optional inclusion in Taisce).

Action Planning

- Work collaboratively to agree on 1–2 priority areas or goals to focus on.
- The area(s) should be
 - realistic and relevant to the NQT's current practice
 - connected to professional learning needs
- For each priority, identify specific, practical actions that will support progression.

Examples include:

- incorporating a new strategy
- observing another colleague
- preparing a lesson with PST support
- Discuss what supports the NQT will need to carry out the actions, such as:
 - Resources or sample materials
 - Team-teaching opportunities
 - Professional learning sources
 - Additional PST guidance
- Agree actions and record using the Droichead Standards and Induction Plan or action plan, it can be included in Taisce. also

Set a Review Date

- Agree on a reasonable date to revisit the action plan. This helps track progress and ensures the plan remains relevant, purposeful and achievable.

Tools to Support Action Planning:

SMARTER Goals

An Example of an Action Planning Tool

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SPECIFIC
Clear and focused on one key area, can be linked to LAOS Standards of Effective practice.

MEASURABLE
Evidence can be gathered or observed.

ACHIEVABLE
Realistic within the NQT's context.

RELEVANT
Directly linked to improved teaching and learning.

TIMEBOUND
Includes a clear timeline for review.

EFFICACY
Builds confidence and professional agency.

REVIEWED
Progress discussed at the next meeting.

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Droichead – Droichead Standards and Induction Plan – Primary

The Teaching Council established three standards to support the Droichead process, in guiding the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and their Professional Support Team (PST), in relation to the NQT's professional learning and practice.

Through their engagement in the Droichead process, the NQT will:

1. have engaged professionally with school-based induction and additional professional learning activities
2. have shown their professional commitment to quality teaching and learning for their pupils/students
3. have engaged in reflective practice that supports their professional learning and practice, both individually and collaboratively.

Droichead Standard	Looking at our School (2022) Statement of Practice	Area to Strengthen	Induction Activity
	The statements of practice within Looking at Our School (LAOS) (2022) support NQTs, in collaboration with their PST, to consider effective practice in areas of strength and in areas to strengthen further.	NQTs' areas to strengthen are emergent and identified throughout the Droichead process.	Related induction activities are identified in response to emergent areas to strengthen.
Example: Standard 2: The NQT will have shown their professional commitment to quality teaching and learning for their pupils/students	Teachers are aware of pupils' individual learning needs, interests and abilities and adapt learning and teaching practices accordingly (p.31)	Extending learning opportunities in reading for exceptionally able pupils within the class.	Review the NCCA's 'Exceptionally Able Students – Draft Guidelines for Teachers' Review NCSE Resource 'Exceptionally Able Students and PLC Resources' Check-in meeting between NQT and PST member if required following review of above resources.

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The Droichead Standards and Induction Plan



References:

Bubb, S. (2007) *Successful Induction for New Teachers: A Guide for NQTs & Induction Tutors, Coordinators and Mentors*. London: SAGE.

Department of Education and Youth (2026) *Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools*. available: https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/EN_Preparation_for_Learning_Teaching_and_Assessment_2026.pdf

Department of Education (2022) *Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools*, available: <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/looking-at-our-school-2022-a-quality-framework-for-primary-schools-and-special-schools.pdf>

Hook, P., McPhail, I., & Vass, A. (2006). *Coaching and Reflecting Pocketbook*. Alresford: Teachers' Pocketbooks.R London

Teaching Council (2016) *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2nd Edition)*, available: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/assets/uploads/2023/09/code-of-professional-conduct-for-teachers1.pdf>

Teaching Council (2025) *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework* (online), available: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/professional-learning/droichead-the-integrated-professional-induction-framework/>



Appendix 1: Observation Glance Sheet

Droichead Observation Essentials

Pre-Observation Discussion

Goal:

Clarify the focus and prepare for a productive observation

- Identify key focus area, linked to NQT's professional learning needs.
- Consider all learners and context (mainstream, SEN, special class).
- Review recorded preparation of the lesson: learning outcomes, activities, and key elements the NQT wants observed.
- Discuss what pupils will learn - knowledge, skills, expected progress.
- Agree how learning will be facilitated - teaching methods, activities, learning tasks, assessment.
- Confirm logistics: time, duration, seating, confidentiality.
- Use coaching prompts such as:
 - What do you want pupils to learn?
 - How will you know they've learned it?
 - What challenges might arise and how could you respond?

Observation

Goal:

Observe learning in action, focused on the area the NQT wants to strengthen

- Follow agreed focus and protocols.
- Observe what and how pupils are learning.
- Record objective, factual notes only.
- Avoid interrupting unless previously agreed (e.g. Child Protection or Health and Safety Issues).
- Maintain confidentiality and a calm, supportive presence.

Post-Observation Discussion

Goal:

Reflect together, affirm strengths, plan next steps

- Meet promptly and privately after the lesson.
- Begin with NQT's reflections: What went well? What surprised you? Was there anything you did not expect?
- Discuss agreed focus.
- Use open questions to explore learning and problem-solving.
- Offer observations that are factual, balanced, and evidence-based.
- Collaboratively identify strengths, areas for growth, and agreed next steps/supports or SMARTER goals.
- Agree actions and record using Droichead Standards Induction Plan or Action Plan.
- Action plan can be included in Taisce.
- A clear timeframe and follow up meetings can be recorded on the NQT's Droichead Outline Plan.



Appendix 2:

Focus of an Observation

This table provides suggested observation focus areas linked to the NQT's identified needs. It is aligned with *Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools* and *Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools (2026)*.




LAOS Domains	Area	Possible Topic for Focus
Teacher's Individual Practice	Preparation for Learning Teaching and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of learning objectives & success criteria • Understanding of pedagogy and knowledge of curriculum • Knowledge of the pupils and their needs • Alignment with curriculum • Quality of visible and invisible preparation • Lesson sequencing & pacing • Anticipation of challenges
Teacher's Individual Practice, Learner Outcomes Learner Experience	Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness and variety of tasks • Active, collaborative and independent learning • Pupil engagement
Teacher's Individual Practice, Learner Outcomes, Learner Experience	Teaching Methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies aligned with learning intentions • Differentiation for all learners • Use of questioning
Teacher's Individual Practice Learner Outcomes	Assessment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of formative assessment • Monitoring progress • Use of success criteria to support learning



LAOS Domains	Area	Possible Topic for Focus
Teacher's Individual Practice Learner Outcomes Learner Experience	Classroom Culture and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines & expectations • Inclusive, safe learning environment • Enabling pupils to engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities • Quality of interactions
Teacher's Individual Practice, Learner Experience Learner Outcomes	Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of explanations • Listening & responding to pupils • Encouraging pupil voice • Effective use of voice & non-verbal cues
Teacher's Individual Practice, Learner Experience Learner Outcomes	Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection and suitability of resources • Distribution and organization of resources • Digital and visual tools • Accessibility for all learners
Teacher's Individual Practice Learner Experience	Transitions and Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth activity transitions • Maintaining flow • Maximising learning time
Teacher's Individual Practice Learner Experience Learner Outcomes Teachers Collective Practice	Additional Professional Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration / co-teaching • SEN or inclusive practices (UDL) • Cross-curricular links • Record keeping



Appendix 3: Professional Conversation Prompts

Pre-observation	Post-observation	Action Planning
 <p>What is the focus for the lesson?</p> <p>How will you know if the learning outcomes are achieved for all pupils?</p> <p>What resources will be used to support the different learning needs?</p> <p>Time/Duration/Venue of lesson?</p> <p>Role and location of PST member?</p> <p>Note-taking by the PST member?</p> <p>Agreed time and location for post-observation discussion?</p> <p>Is the co-constructed lesson now classroom-ready for your setting?</p>	 <p>Ask the NQT: In terms of the agreed focus for the lesson, what were you most pleased with? Why?</p> <p>Why do you think it went the way it did?</p> <p>Were there any surprises?</p> <p>Do you think the needs of the learners were met? How do you know?</p> <p>How might you build on these strengths in future lessons?</p> <p>If you could teach this lesson again, would you do anything differently?</p> <p>Where will you take the pupils from here?</p>	 <p>What is one key area that you would like to focus on improving before the next observation?</p> <p>What does <i>LAOS 2022</i> say about effective/highly effective practice in this area?</p> <p>What support would help you achieve this goal? (additional learning activities, observation, resources)</p> <p>What timeline feels realistic to review the progress of this goal?</p> <p>What evidence will we look at to evaluate progress? (pupil work, observation feedback or data)?</p>



Appendix 4:

Using *Looking at Our School 2022* to Empower NQTs



PSTs use *LAOS 2022* in collaboration with the NQT to:

- familiarise the NQT with the two dimensions (Learning and Teaching, and Leadership and Management)
- validate areas of strength with the NQT
- identify and narrow a focus for observation
- support professional conversations and action planning with the NQT.

Go to p.25 of *LAOS 2022* to:

- discuss the NQTs strengths in relation to the domains
- identify where the current challenges are for the NQT
- guide the NQT to the standards that relate to their current challenges
- select **one** area to focus on strengthening.



Example:

If the NQT wishes to strengthen an area such as assessment, go to 'Teacher's Individual Practice' on p.30 of *LAOS 2022* and invite the NQT to read the relevant standard.

Domains	Standards
Learning and Teaching	Pupils: enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum attain the stated learning outcomes for the term and year
	Pupils: engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning
	The teacher: has the requisite curriculum knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills selects and uses preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the intended learning outcomes and to pupils' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching activities as necessary
	Teachers: value and engage in professional learning and professional collaboration work together to develop learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise

Use p. 31 of *LAOS 2022* to:

- explore the statements of practice within the standards of assessment with the NQT
- encourage the NQT to identify **one** possible area of assessment that they might like to strengthen e.g. peer assessment
- co-create an action plan (peer assessment is the focus for the next observation by/of the NQT).

<p>Lesson design and delivery</p> <p>Teachers design and prepare in advance a sequence of suitably challenging learning experiences in accordance with the focus of learning in the lesson or series of lessons and use real life, authentic situations, where appropriate.</p> <p>Teachers identify and prepare in advance resources, including digital resources, where relevant, suitable for the focus of learning in the lesson, or series of lessons, and the learning needs of the class.</p> <p>Teachers' preparation is informed by their knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of pedagogy. It includes preparation for the differentiation of learning outcomes and learning activities, and is informed by meaningful analysis of and use of data as well as teachers' professional judgement and decision-making.</p>	<p>Lesson design and delivery</p> <p>Teachers design and prepare in advance a sequence of suitably challenging learning experiences in accordance with the focus of learning in the lesson or series of lessons and use real life, authentic situations, where appropriate.</p> <p>Lesson design and delivery is flexible to allow for emerging learning opportunities and to provide elements of choice for pupils.</p> <p>Teachers identify and thoughtfully prepare in advance resources, including digital resources, where relevant, tailored to match the learning focus in the lesson, or series of lessons, and individual pupils' learning needs, interests and abilities.</p> <p>Teachers' preparation is informed by their knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of pedagogy. It includes preparation for the differentiation of learning outcomes and learning activities, including personalised learning opportunities, and is informed by meaningful analysis of and use of data as well as teachers' professional judgement and decision-making.</p>
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Appendix 5:

Observation Templates

NQT Observation Record	
<p>I am observing:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a PST member</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> another experienced teacher</p> <p>Agreed focus:</p>	<p>Class:</p> <p>Setting:</p> <p>Date: Time:</p>
Two aspects which I found interesting and might use or adapt to my own class	
(i)	(ii)
One aspect I would like to find out more about/include in my Taisce	
Questions I have for the PST/experienced teacher	



Post-Observation Action Plan

(to be completed by the NQT in collaboration with PST)

NQT: PST: Agreed Focus:	Class: Setting: Date: Time:
Strengths	Areas to Strengthen
<i>(Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Management)</i>	
Key Priorities at this Time	Support Required
	<input type="checkbox"/> Oide Professional Learning Event <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Conversation with experienced teacher in identified area <input type="checkbox"/> Research of policy/document <input type="checkbox"/> Research of a new teaching strategy Other:
Actions to be Taken, by Whom	Review
	Today's Date: Review Date:

