PDE Pre-course Information

Introduction

This document is intended to be read by students that are joining the TCD PDE course in September 2010. It contains information about the Induction Course and general advice about aspects of teaching, and the PDE, that you may find useful.

As soon as it is completed, the Course Handbook for 2010/2011 will be placed on the PDE webpage http://www.tcd.ie/Education/courses/pgedpp.php

Induction Course

The Induction Course will take place on Monday 13th September (from 2pm), Tuesday 14th (from 9am) and Wednesday 15th September (from 9am). Attendance at the course is mandatory. However, if you are unable to attend e.g. because of illness, please let Liz Fleeton know: pde.info@tcd.ie

Please, please.... remember to bring a completed timetable form with a map/directions of how to find your school. If you use a separate sheet please put your name and subject specialism on the top of the sheet. If your school has not confirmed the details of your timetable by the beginning of the Induction Course, still hand in the timetable form with the details of the school and your contact information completed; but add a note on the front of the form that the timetable is incomplete.

Provisional timetable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 13th September</th>
<th>Tuesday 14th September</th>
<th>Wednesday 15th September</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.00 – 16.00</td>
<td>09.00 – 11.00</td>
<td>09.00 – 11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and</td>
<td>Voice Management</td>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the PDE</td>
<td>Dr P. Sloane</td>
<td>Mr H. Freeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rm 3074</td>
<td>(Clinical Speech &amp; Lan-</td>
<td>(Second Level Support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>guage Studies)</td>
<td>Service)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.00 – 17.00</td>
<td>11.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>11.00 – 13.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome reception</td>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td>Communication Skills and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rm 3074</td>
<td>Dr S. Minton</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rm 3074</td>
<td>Dr C. O’Sullivan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Rm 3074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Planning</td>
<td>14.00 – 15.00</td>
<td>Course Administration;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr K. Johnston &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q&amp;A session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr D. Murchan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr P. Matthews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rm 3074</td>
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<td>Rm 3074</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00 – 16.30</td>
<td>Subject specialisms 1</td>
<td>(see below)</td>
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<td>(see below)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.30 – 18.00</td>
<td>Subject specialisms 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(see below)</td>
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</table>

Subject specialisms: rooms and lecturers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>3074</td>
<td>Dr A. Devitt</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3074</td>
<td>Dr P. Matthews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>3105</td>
<td>Ms. B. de Róiste</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>3105</td>
<td>Mr K. Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>4035</td>
<td>Ms. E. Oldham</td>
<td>Business Studies</td>
<td>4035</td>
<td>Mr A. Cashell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3108</td>
<td>Dr C. O’Sullivan</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>3106</td>
<td>Dr D. Limond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3081</td>
<td>Ms. M. Kerin</td>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>3081</td>
<td>Mr S. Kingston</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There may be changes to this timetable, but the Monday sessions are ‘fixed’ and any changes will be announced then.
Some advice for the novice teacher

In nearly all respects your role as a student teacher is like that of a full-time member of staff. Below are some general points to guide you.

1. Be punctual and inform the school if you are going to be absent, e.g. through illness.
2. Fit in with the norms of dress that other staff adopt.
3. Familiarise yourself with the school rules, the lines of communication, and ways of working. Especially, find out: what to do in the event of a student becoming ill or suffering an injury in class; the school policy on punishments such as giving extra work for missing homework etc.
4. Avoid confrontation with students (and staff).
5. When in doubt, seek advice. Especially, don’t try to hide problems, e.g. about discipline, and just hope they will go away.
6. Listen, and learn, from observing how staff deal with students; e.g. to establish what behaviour patterns are tolerated (or otherwise), the tone of voice to adopt.

Guidelines about your teaching

1. Prepare your lessons in detail and be well-organised.
2. Make sure you familiarise yourself with your school’s policies on discipline, record keeping, and safety e.g. what to do in case of an accident or fire.
3. Give encouragement/praise whenever possible and indicate what positive behaviours you expect. This is in distinction to criticising and emphasising what students can’t do, don’t know, or shouldn’t do.
4. Set high standards of work and behaviour; but be sensitive to students’ perceptions and ability levels.
5. Be fair and consistent. Always keep a record of, and follow-up on, any instructions, punishments etc. that you have given.
6. Avoid threats, e.g. “If you do that again I will....”. Do not use sarcasm as a technique to control classes or individuals.
7. Avoid making physical contact with students and, especially, at no time should you use physical punishment however ‘slight’ you might consider it to be.
8. Do not send students out of the class as a form of punishment.
9. Do not leave a class unattended. If you need assistance, e.g. a student becomes ill, send a trustworthy student to seek assistance (probably that would be from the school office).
10. When you have settled in, volunteer to take part in extra-curricular activities. This will repay the effort in several ways. E.g. it is a good way to get to know students, and it will look good on your cv when you seek a new job.

For your information, below is a list of positive characteristics of teachers reported by students. It is taken from Tatar, M. ‘Teachers as significant others...’ British J. of Ed. Psychology 68, 217–227 (1998).

- Takes me seriously.
- Has confidence in me.
- Pushes me to do well.
- Makes it easier for me to understand things.
- Makes me learn willingly.
- I gain a lot of knowledge from her/him.
- I admire the way this teacher behaves towards others of my age.
- Teaches me things beyond the subject-matter studied in the classroom.

It is worth reflecting on how such a list ‘fits’ you as a teacher.
Teaching practice supervision
During the Induction Course you will be given details about how we organise visits of supervisors to view your teaching; but for the moment, you might like to know that you will not be visited until after the end of the Induction Course. However, it as well to be aware of some of the things that supervisors consider during a visit to see you teach — see the list below. (It is not an exhaustive list.) Please realise that supervisors do not expect to see perfection when they visit you. It is expected that you will improve your teaching over the course of the year, so the standard expected can change over time.

General points
Did the lesson begin and finish on time?
Did the student have command of the subject matter?

Planning
Were the objectives clear and directed to students’ learning?
Was there a logical sequence of lesson stages?
Was the content appropriate to the age/ability group?

Teaching and class management
Was a positive atmosphere for learning established and maintained?
Was discipline maintained?
Were incidents (if any) dealt with appropriately?
Were students engaged with the content of lesson?
Were students kept actively involved in lesson?
Were students praised/encouraged for their contributions and work?
Were high expectations set for student work and behaviour?
Was a mix of open and closed questions used?
Were links made to issues beyond school/classroom/laboratory?

Common faults to avoid
Supervisors often find that novice teachers’ lessons may ‘go wrong’ because of:
i. trying to cover too much work in a lesson;
ii. spending too long talking to/at the students;
iii. concentrating on the content of the lesson (the ‘facts’ and key ideas/concepts) without thinking of what the students are going to be doing (with the emphasis on the ‘doing’);
iv. thinking that the text book is a teaching manual — it is not;
v. believing that the text book is the authority on what should be covered in a class — again, it is not. Download a copy of the syllabus from the NCCA web site http://www.ncca.ie In many cases you may find that the text book includes more than is actually required by the syllabus. Also, read the preamble to the syllabus document — it will give you an indication of the approach to teaching and learning that the NCCA is trying to promote.
vi. teaching in a single style that matches that of a teacher who impressed you when you were at school. It is good to have a positive role model, but not good if it means that you are unwilling to try different methods/approaches.

Lesson planning
The purpose of planning your lessons is to ensure (as far as possible) that you have organised your teaching to maximise the learning opportunities for the students. As noted above, one mistake that novice teachers make is to organise the subject matter of a lesson, but not anticipating the ways students may respond to the way the lesson progresses.
Thus, in planning your lessons you should give first thought to the students’ capacity to cope with the work, and not with the textbook presentation of the subject. Indeed, one of the clearest indications that a student teacher has not prepared a lesson adequately is if she/he is using the textbook as a ‘prop’ during the majority of a lesson, e.g. reading it to the students or following the textbook paragraph by paragraph.

Giving first thought to the students includes:
- not overestimating their ability to understand the ideas presented to them;
- not underestimating the amount of time they need to complete a task;
- remembering that they have other interests and worries in life than the subject that you are teaching — so it is a good idea to try to link the work with their interests and involvement in everyday life.

You should realise that you were probably in the higher ability groups of your own school, enjoyed academic work (more often than not) and (for the most part) kept out of trouble. Very many, perhaps the majority, of school students do not match these profiles. Much of an examination subject is too difficult for the average student to understand and their attention span is lower than yours. If you fail to realise the importance of these issues you will (almost) inevitably have problems with student behaviour in your classes.

**Features of lesson plans**

A good lesson plan should have:

A general aim that give the broad purpose(s) of the lesson.

A set of key objectives that relate to the students’ learning *(not directly to the teacher’s activity)*

A statement of how the lesson is to develop

We shall consider each of these in turn.

(i) A general aim that give the broad purpose(s) of the lesson

For example, an aim for work on the Irish Famine might be ‘that the students appreciate the importance of the famine in the depopulation of Ireland’. (Notice that this tells you nothing about what would form the content of a lesson(s) on the famine; but this does not make the aim irrelevant.)

(ii) A set of key objectives that relate to the students’ learning *(not directly to the teacher’s activity)*

These should consist of a list of things that the students should be able to do, and/or understand at the end of the lesson. For example, students should know the seven times table and repeat it from memory; they should know that X, Y and Z were the main causes of the First World War and recall them from memory; they should understand the seven characteristics of living things, and show their understanding by being able to apply the characteristics to novel examples of living and non-living things.

Ideally, a learning objective should be linked to a way in which you, and the students, will know if it has been achieved. This means that you should consider the way(s) students’ work will be assessed.

(iii) A statement of how the lesson is to develop.

This may contain a detailed series of events that are planned so as to allow the objectives to be met, questions that you plan to ask, notes that you intend to give them, handouts/worksheets diagrams that you will want to put on the board or ohp or data projector, the day’s homework; and so on. Indeed, this is the section to give a *detailed* account of how you intend the lesson to
proceed. The amount of detail is largely up to the individual; but there should be enough to give a realistic impression of how the lesson is to develop.

During the Induction Course you will be given advice on lesson planning, and a suggested template for writing your plans. However, different subject areas can have different requirements for plans so do not assume that there is a single ‘perfect’ pattern to be followed. Below is one template that you could use for the present:

Lesson Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Length of lesson (mins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Topic/sub-topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement of students’ previous knowledge and experience of the subject matter

Aim(s) of the Lesson

Objectives

Statement of content and skills

Classroom organisation

Assessment of student learning

Resources

Organisation of lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Teacher activity</th>
<th>Student activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection

Perhaps to state the obvious, only headings have been shown in the template, not the space that would be needed to write under each of the headings.

Reflection

An important aspect of teaching is that one should be prepared to reflect on one’s own performance as a teacher. So, we expect you to complete every lesson plan with a short reflection on the lesson as it actually turned out in practice. For example, you might find that your plan was something of a failure because you assumed the students had far more knowledge about the topic of the lesson than they had in reality. Why, or how, you made this error needs some thought, and the reflection should act as a reminder to avoid similar errors in the future. It would also be worth considering how you dealt with the problem(s) that resulted, and what you would do differently in future if such an event occurred. Likewise, if a lesson goes particularly well, your reflection should give an outline of what factors contributed to the success.

An example of stages and/or events in a lesson

Here is an example of points that you might consider when thinking about a lesson (the topic is not thought to be on any Junior Certificate syllabus!). N.B. it is not a lesson plan — it is only intended to give you a guide to thinking about some characteristics of the three main stages in a lesson. (You shouldn’t find it hard to make improvements to the lesson outlined here.)
Introduction (about 15 minutes)

1. Take register
2. Write the title ‘Different Types of Spaniel’ on board and say that what the lesson is about — we are going to do some more comparisons of different types of dog. Students to copy title in their notebooks. Some teachers advise always starting a lesson with a list of the main ‘learning intentions’ of the class, so as to give the students a sense of direction for their learning.
3. Ask an individual student (Jane?) Have you ever seen a Springer spaniel? If so ask ‘can you describe it?’; if not ask another student (John?). If no result, ask same question of whole class — ‘Has anyone...’
4. Show pictures/videos of spaniels using a data projector or on an overhead projector. (Is a link to the web possible?)
5. Write characteristics on board. Look for long ears, waggy tail, lively, good natured, intelligent. Text book and syllabus uses term ‘steady disposition’—write on board and check their understanding of the word ‘disposition’. Explain meaning of the phrase. Students copy into their books.
6. Ask whole class or an individual, ‘Does anyone/Mary know any other types of spaniel?’ Write up names on board. Aim to get Cocker, King Charles as examples.

Middle phase — development (about 15 minutes)

Give out handout showing picture of the three types and with a set of questions. Give students ten minutes to put answers into their books. Tell them that they can work in pairs. As they do this, go round class and collect homework books, and take names of defaulters. Give them one more day.

Final phase — conclusion (about 10 minutes)

1. Go over answers by asking different individuals to give their responses in turn. (Don’t forget to ask as many girls as boys.)
   Summarise on board/ohp/data projector:
   Reasons why people keep spaniels:
   (1) as pets, e.g. Springers and King Charles
   (2) as working dogs — Springers mainly.
   Types of work done by Springers:
   (1) retrieving at shoots
   (2) sniffer dogs, e.g. for drugs at ports and airports.
   Why they are used
   (1) intelligent, learn quickly
   (2) very good sense of smell—much better than humans.
2. Remind students of short test next Thursday on what has been done today. Tell them that they are expected to know the names of three types of spaniel, their dispositions and uses. Just before the bell, tell them to put their books etc. away. Allow them to leave when bell sounds.

Commentary on the sample of lesson events

Note the following points:
1. The students are given something specific to do early on (writing something in their books) This can help settle a class.
2. Questions are first asked of individuals rather than invite a ‘free for all’.
3. The board is used to summarise key points. An overhead or data projector would probably be better because items to be displayed can be prepared in advance (and can be used without the teacher having to turn her/his back to the students).

4. ‘Difficult’ words/terms are identified and explained.

5. The lesson is split into phases. The initial and final involve the teacher a good deal. The middle phase does not. This is where the students do the work, and (perhaps) the most learning. They are allowed to work in small groups rather than in isolation. (It is a mistake to think that lessons require teachers to be the centre of attention.) By building in such periods the teacher is free to go round the class dealing with difficulties or doing other tasks, such as collecting homework. The latter can best be done ‘on the quiet’ rather than problem cases attracting the attention of everyone. Also, students quickly realise that they will be found out if they do not do the work.

Students are given a summary of the key points—depending on age/ability this task can be left to them, provided the teacher oversees for accuracy.

6. Homework, in this case test revision, is ‘built in’ to the plan, rather than left to be thought about on the spot. Students are told what they are expected to know for the test.

7. It is important to end a lesson on time, and to make sure the students leave when told they can do so (rather than just wander off).

8. Create/collect resources well in advance of the lesson, and check if the room has the facilities you need; e.g. does it have a data projector (and does it work), does it have a blackboard or whiteboard, do you have chalk, ohp pens, whiteboard pens?

The best advice is to be well prepared. Think ahead, consider the students’ viewpoints of a lesson, and plan each lesson in detail.

**Two books and a website**

There are many books about teaching practice, but here are just two:


The first gives more of an overview of a wide-range of issues in Irish education about which a student teacher should be aware. The second gives detailed advice and information about specific issues in classroom teaching, lesson planning, assessment etc. In many ways the books complement each other.

A very useful resource is Teachers.TV: http://www.teachers.tv/

It has a wide-range of videos related to teaching aimed at both novice and experienced teachers. It is a UK-centric site but much of the content is highly relevant to teaching in Ireland as well.

PM August 2010