Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Tertiary Pathway to Primary Teaching

1. What is this programme?

This is a **five-year, full-time tertiary degree pathway programme** designed to support students from diverse backgrounds who want to become a primary school teacher.

The pathway is delivered by the Education and Training Board (ETB) in partnership with a Higher Education Institution. If you successfully complete year 1 with the ETB and meet progression requirements, you may progress seamlessly to a **Bachelor of Education - Primary Teaching** degree.

2. Who is this programme for?

This programme is for people who:

- want to become a **primary school teacher**, and
- meet the **minimum academic entry requirements**, but
- may have faced barriers to accessing higher education in the past.

While anyone may apply for a place, the programme is particularly targeting applicants from the priority groups identified in the National Access Plan 2022-2028 (see below).

3. What are "priority groups" and why are they used?

Priority groups are used to ensure fair access for students who are under-represented in higher education nationally. Research shows that people from certain backgrounds face structural barriers to progression, even when they have academic potential.

Priority groups include (among others):

- students from low-income households;
- mature students returning to education;
- lone parents or carers;
- care-experienced students;
- Travellers and Roma;
- migrants, refugees and minority ethnic students;

- students with disabilities;
- students who have experienced social exclusion.

Being in a priority group does **not guarantee** an interview or a place, instead it affects how applications are **ranked** where demand exceeds available places. Please note that applicants who identify as coming from one or more priority groups will be required to provide evidence to support their application.

Meeting the academic requirements is essential, but your life circumstances and educational context are also taken into account during the admissions process.

Please Note - You do **not** need to have followed a "traditional" school-to-college pathway.

4. What are the minimum academic entry requirements?

You must meet **one** of the following routes:

- A Leaving Certificate[1] including **Gaeilge at H6/O3**, plus **English at H7/O5** and **Mathematics at H7/O5**;

  OR

- A **QQI Level 5 Major Award** with a minimum **Merit** grade, plus the following two qualifications in Gaeilge and Mathematics:

  - Leaving Certificate Gaeilge at H6/O3 **or** Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) with minimum of a pass (50%) at Level A2 in the full examination.

  AND

  - QQI Level 4 Mathematics with a Merit grade or Leaving Certificate Mathematics with a grade H7 / O5

5. How do I apply for the programme?

1. Applications to the programme may be made via the NTO.ie or fetchcourses.ie websites
2. All applicants will be contacted to allow them:
   a. indicate which priority group they identify as coming from, and to provide evidence to support their application

[1] A Leaving Certificate is taken to mean a minimum of six Leaving Certificate subjects with a minimum grade for Gaeilge, English and Mathematics as described above and no lower than H7/O6 in the remaining three subjects.

b. submit evidence that they meet the minimum academic requirements for the programme (see question number 4). Please note; for current Leaving Certificate and QQI students, this will happen in late August.

3. Applications will be scored using a matrix that is designed to prioritise the groups described in question 3.
4. Those scoring highest will be shortlisted for the next stage of the process.
5. Those on the shortlist will be called for interview in late August or early September.

6. I'm not sure if I'm "eligible" — should I still apply?

Yes. If you meet, or expect to meet, the minimum academic entry requirements, you may apply. All applications will be scored using a matrix and those applicants scoring highest and who meet the minimum academic entry requirements will be shortlisted to progress to the next stage of the admissions process.

The scoring matrix is designed to give higher scores to applicants who indicate and provide evidence that they identify with a priority group. These applicants will be given priority, but all applicants who meet, or expect to meet, the minimum academic entry requirements can apply.

If applicants are tied after the scoring process and cannot be fairly separated, a **randomised and auditable selection process** is used.

This ensures that all applicants are treated fairly and that no pathway is advantaged or disadvantaged.

7. Can I apply before I receive my Leaving Certificate or QQI results?

Yes. You may apply while you are waiting for your Leaving Certificate or QQI results. Shortlisting will apply, and only those on the shortlist, who have achieved the minimum academic requirements, will be called for interview. Interviews will not be scheduled until late August or early September, after Leaving Certificate results are issued.

8. What evidence do I need to provide — and when?

Once you apply, you will be requested to submit evidence within the period specified by the ETB. This evidence is required to confirm:

a. that you meet the minimum academic requirements for the programme. Please note; for current Leaving Certificate and QQI students, this will happen in late August.

AND

b. your indication that you identify with one or more of the priority groups described in question number 3

The types of evidence for each priority group can be viewed in this table.

If you have any questions about the required evidence, please contact us (see last question below for contact details).

You will **never** be asked to provide personal stories, medical records, Garda reports, or court documents.

9. Is my information kept confidential?

Yes. All evidence is handled under strict data-protection rules.

- Only admissions staff review priority-group evidence;
- Interview panels do **not** see this information;
- Documents are stored securely and will be deleted in line with ETB data-retention policies;
- Information is used **only** for admissions ranking and interview allocation.

10. What happens if I do not meet the entry requirements when results are issued?

If your results do not meet the published entry requirements by the date they need to be submitted to the ETB, you will not be eligible for the programme.

11. If I appeal my Leaving Certificate or QQI results, can my place be held?

No, unfortunately the ETB cannot hold places open while Leaving Certificate or QQI appeals are being processed. Appeals are often completed after programmes have started and all places must be finalised before then.

12. If my appeal is successful, can I still be offered a place?

If your appeal is successful **and** a place becomes available later (for example, if another student withdraws), you may be considered for entry at that stage. This depends on programme capacity and timing; however, the offer of a place **cannot be guaranteed**.

13. How are interview places decided and what happens if there are more applicants than interview places?

All applications are scored using a fair and transparent matrix that assigns marks based on the priority groups identified and the evidence submitted for this. Those applicants scoring highest on their application and who meet the minimum academic requirements for the programme will be called for interview in late August or early September.

Following the scoring of applications, if applicants have the same score and cannot be separated fairly, a random selection process is used. Please note, no educational route (Leaving Certificate or QQI) is given preference.

14. I'm a mature applicant — Can I apply?

Yes. The admissions process has been designed to avoid disadvantaging mature students.

- Age is not used as a factor;
- Recency of qualifications is **not** used to score applicants;
- Random selection is used where applicants are genuinely indistinguishable.

15. What if I need accommodations for the interview or personal statement?

Reasonable accommodations are available.

Examples include:

- typing instead of handwriting,
- additional time,
- assistive technology.

You should request accommodations **in advance**, and admissions staff will work with you where possible.

(For information on reasonable accommodations during the programme, please see question 20 below)

16. What is the interview like?

The interview is designed to be **supportive and structured**, not intimidating.

It includes:

- a short written personal statement (completed on the day), and
- a short interview with a small panel (likely one representative each from the ETB and the Higher Education Institution).

The interview looks at:

- your motivation for the programme,
- your communication and reflection skills,
- your readiness for full-time study.

17. Will my background be judged in the interview?

No. Interview panels **do not receive information** about your priority group status, socio-economic background, or personal circumstances.

The interview focuses on:

- your motivation for the programme,
- your understanding of the pathway,
- your communication and reflection skills,
- your readiness to engage in full-time study.

18. What happens after the interview?

After interviews:

- The interview panel will score each applicant;
- Applicants are ranked and the top scoring 15 applicants will be issued with an offer of a place on the programme.

Offers are made to the highest-scoring applicants. Other applicants may be placed on a waiting list.

19. Can I appeal a decision of the interview panel?

Yes. If you are unsuccessful, you may appeal the decision through the ETB's appeals process. You may submit an appeal on the following two grounds:

1. If the applicant believes that they possess unique qualifications, skills, or experiences that align with the programme's objectives and would contribute significantly to the primary teaching profession.
2. If there is evidence of procedural error or irregularity in the admissions process that may have affected the outcome of the application.

20. I have a disability; can I apply for reasonable accommodations?

Yes, you can apply for reasonable accommodations during the year with the ETB and during the Bachelor of Education (Primary Teaching). Each application for reasonable accommodations will be assessed in line with the ETB's policy during the year with the ETB or the higher education institution's policy during the Bachelor of Education (Primary Teaching).

Some examples of what you **can** apply for:

- Access to reading assistance
- Access to a Scribe
- Access to assistive technology

Please note: Spelling, grammar and punctuation waivers will **not** be granted by the ETB or the higher education institution.

21. If I complete the year with the ETB, what happens next?

To progress to the Bachelor of Education (Primary Teaching), you must:

- successfully complete the year with the ETB;
- achieve the required results, including a minimum of four Distinctions including Distinctions in both Gaeilge modules and one English module and one Merit grade in Mathematics.

Progression is guaranteed if you complete the year with the ETB and achieve the required results.

Please note, it will not be possible to defer your place in the Higher Education Institution.

22. Who can I contact if I am unsure about applying?

If you have further questions that are not answered above, you can contact the Guidance Service or Admissions Office or the Tertiary Manager at the ETB Campus where the programme will run who can guide you through the process.

Contact details are available on the course webpage which you will find by clicking on Courses | National Tertiary Office.