



Circular 0070/2025

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Post-Primary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and
The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards**

NQF Level 9 Graduate Diploma in Social Personal and Health Education/Relationships and Sexuality Education (SPHE/RSE) Programme 2026

Introduction

The Department of Education and Youth is offering a postgraduate training programme for teachers who want to improve their skills in teaching SPHE/RSE in post-primary schools. The programme aims to strengthen teachers' abilities and leadership in teaching SPHE/RSE. This professional development opportunity will be available to teachers in January 2026.

2026 postgraduate training programme

The programme will be offered by Dublin City University (DCU) in January 2026.

If there is more demand for the programme, there may be more programmes offered in the future.

Qualification

Teachers who successfully complete the programme will receive a National Qualification of Ireland (NQF) Level 9 award of a Graduate Diploma in SPHE/RSE.

Funding

The programme is funded by the Teacher Professional Learning Section of the Department of Education and Youth.



Aim and content

The programme is specifically designed to upskill and enable registered post-primary teachers to acquire, develop and advance their core competencies in the teaching of SPHE/RSE at Junior and Senior Cycle levels. The programme purposely incorporates three areas of professional learning, namely, personal development, skills and knowledge.

Post-primary teachers who are currently teaching SPHE/RSE and have a permanent teaching position or a contract of indefinite duration (CID) are the target group for participation in the programme. Ideally, teachers should have taught SPHE in junior cycle and SPHE and/or RSE in senior cycle for one academic year at a minimum. It is desirable that participants have a role in the coordination of SPHE/RSE in their school or want to have the opportunity to have this role in the future.

Requirements to participate

To participate in the postgraduate professional development programme, teachers must:

- Provide evidence of having completed introductory training in SPHE and/or RSE, such as that provided by Oide (formerly the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and/or Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)).
- Be Garda vetted.
- Have a commitment from their school principal to be timetabled to teach SPHE/RSE for the duration of, and following, the programme and in the future.
- Be registered in accordance with Section 31 of the Teaching Council Acts, 2001-2015. Please refer to the Teaching Council website www.teachingcouncil.ie for further information. Teachers will be required to forward a copy of their Registration Certificate¹ (see footnote 1 below) from the Teaching Council, when submitting their application form. If the “Route” field is blank, teachers will be required to provide evidence that they have qualifications suitable to teach in the mainstream post-primary sector.
- Be employed in a position funded by the Department of Education and Youth and who teach, and will continue to teach, Social, Personal and Health Education/Relationships and Sexuality Education in recognised post-primary schools.
- Be a teacher eligible to hold a permanent post in recognised post-primary schools.

Provider

DCU Institute of Education, DCU St Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, DO9DYOO (www.dcu.ie).

¹ Certificates of Registration are available to download by logging into the My Registration portal on the Teaching Council website www.teachingcouncil.ie



This programme is provided by the DCU's Institute of Education and leads to the award of the NQF Level 9 Graduate Diploma in Social, Personal and Health Education/ Relationships and Sexuality Education (*GradDip SPHE/RSE*).

Duration and location

The programme lasts for one calendar year and uses a blended learning approach, with both in-person sessions and online sessions. With support from the Department of Education and Youth, teachers can take a total of four weeks (20 days) off from school to attend in-person sessions. Most in-person sessions will be held at DCU, with a few sessions at an additional location in the Midlands (venue to be confirmed). This flexible approach is designed to make it easier for working teachers to participate.

Programme approach

The programme will involve a blended model of delivery incorporating;

- attendance, in-person, at lectures and workshops facilitated through a series of block release days from school with a maximum of four weeks duration (20 days) across the one-year programme,
- attendance at summer school as required,
- on-line learning, attendance at approximately one two-hour online lecture/ workshop/ seminar per week across DCU's academic year,
- creation and development of evidence of professional practice with which the student has engaged throughout the programme,
- engagement in professional learning communities (PLCs),
- engagement in professional consultations with programme mentors/tutors.

In order to participate in the programme, teachers will need access to a computer and reliable broadband internet access.

Assessment

Participants will be assessed on the basis of:

- the required attendance of the programme,
- successful completion of selected tasks and written assignments,
- submission of evidence of practices engaged with via the University's Virtual Learning Environment platform,
- engagement in professional learning communities (PLCs), and
- engagement in professional consultations with programme mentors/tutors.



Further details of assessment will be made available to participants by DCU.

How to apply and closing date for applications

Applicants should apply using the online application form at <https://www.dcu.ie/gdip-sphere>. Please follow the instructions, ensuring that all required information is available before commencing this process.

Applications will open 22 October 2025 and must be submitted via the online application form by 5pm, 21 November 2025.

Postal applications sent to DCU will not be accepted.

Selection

The selection of participants from the eligible applicants will be a matter for the DCU authorities.

Programme Fees

No fee or registration charges will apply for applicants eligible under the terms of this Circular.

Extra Personal Vacation

No extra personal vacation will be allowed in respect of attendance at the programme.

Substitution

Substitution, which must be approved by the managerial authority of the school, will be allowed for four weeks (20 days) duration of release in total. The dates of the respective days will be provided by DCU. The substitution must be deemed necessary to cover the approved periods of absence of the teacher from teaching duty for attendance at the course. Documentation from DCU specifying the absence details must be retained by the school. It should be noted that paid substitution cover will not be provided by the Department of Education and Youth where a teacher takes personal leave during the block release element of the programme.



Salary Arrangements

All teachers on block release under the terms of this programme will continue to receive their salary in the usual way.

Please note that successful completion of this programme will not result in any entitlement to additional remuneration from the Department of Education and Youth.

Travel and Subsistence

Please note that there will be no reimbursement of any travel or subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the programme which is the subject of this Circular.

Covid-19

Applicants should be aware DCU may need to operate under Covid-19 restrictions for the 2025/2026 academic year which may necessitate amendments to the delivery of certain elements of the programme in order to meet Government health advice at the time.

Maresa Duignan
Principal Officer
Teacher Professional Learning and Early Years Section
21 October 2025



APPENDIX 1

The following Circulars are available for download on the website of the Department of Education and Youth. www.gov.ie/education :

<u>0031/2011</u>	Teacher Recruitment Registration and Qualifications – Post Primary
<u>0025/2013</u>	Requirement for Teachers in Recognised Schools to Register with the Teaching Council
<u>0052/2013</u>	Procedures on the Commencement of Section 30 in Recognised School