



Circular 0034/2025

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

**Graduate Certificate in Autism Education for
Teachers Working with Autistic Pupils in Special Schools,
Special Classes or as Special Education Teachers in
Mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2025/2026**

Introduction

This programme will aim to provide substantial theoretical and practical professional development for teachers working with autistic pupils and, thereby, contribute to the school's overall capacity in this area.

The Programme 2025/2026

In the school year 2025 - 2026 a Graduate Certificate in Autism Education will be offered in DCU Institute of Education, DCU St Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. The Programme will run from 15th September 2025 to early May 2026.

Please apply online via www.dcu.ie/ise/gceas

Deadline for applications 6th June **2025**.

Eighteen places are available in the Programme year 2025/2026.



Funding

Funding for the programme is provided by Initial Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education.

Aim and Content

The aim of the programme will be to provide substantial theoretical and practical training for teachers working with autistic pupils and, thereby, to contribute to the school's overall capacity in this area. A qualification of Graduate Certificate will be awarded by Dublin City University. Participants will be assessed on the basis of **full attendance** and **full participation** in all elements of the course. Candidates are advised that recordings may be required for assignments. Further details on the course and data protection may be found on the following web page:

<https://www.dcu.ie/courses/postgraduate/institute-education/graduate-certificate-autism-education>

Duration and Organisation

This is a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 9, one-year, part-time programme delivered from 15th September 2025 to early May 2026, and consists of 5 modules. These modules are assessed through practical and writing assignments to a Level 9 standard. The programme requires that participants are released from their schools for three weeks of the academic year (15th-19th September 17th-21st November and 23rd-27th February). There are evening lectures and tutorials (1-2 per month) normally held on Tuesdays and two observations of practice in your school, carried out by members of faculty.

The course is delivered in a blended model through on campus learning at DCU Institute of Education, St Patrick's Campus, and online synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Eligibility

Please note that all teachers must be registered in accordance with Section 31 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001-2015. Please refer to the Teaching Council's website www.teachingcouncil.ie for further information.

This programme is for registered teachers who **hold a post currently funded by the Department of Education and who are currently working with autistic**



pupils or who will be working with autistic pupils for the duration of the Programme in recognised Primary Schools including Special Schools and recognised Post-Primary Schools. The programme is designed specifically to assist teachers in teaching and meeting the learning and teaching needs of autistic pupils. Potential applicants must therefore have a significant teaching role with autistic pupils.

Primary:

Teachers will be required to upload a copy of their Registration Certificate¹ 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 either the mainstream primary sector or to teach pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Applicants from Primary Schools should have successfully completed a recognised induction process in accordance with the requirements as set out by the Teaching Council in their publication Post-qualification Professional Practice and hold a position in a sanctioned post in an area of special education or be taking up such posts in September 2025.

Post-primary:

Teachers will be required to upload a copy of their Registration Certificate (see footnote below) from the Teaching Council, when submitting their online application form. If the “Route” field is blank, teachers will be required to provide evidence that they have qualifications suitable to teach in either the mainstream post-primary sector or to teach pupils with special educational needs in the post-primary sector.

Applicants from Post-Primary Schools should have successfully completed a recognised induction process in accordance with the requirements as set out by the Teaching Council in their publication Post-qualification Professional Practice Procedures and Criteria.

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



Special Schools:

Teachers will be required to upload a copy of their Registration Certificate ² 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 either in the mainstream primary or post-primary sectors or to teach pupils with special educational needs in the primary or post-primary sector or to teach in special school settings.

Applicants from Special Schools should have successfully completed a recognised induction process in accordance with the requirements as set out by the Teaching Council in their publication Post-qualification Professional Practice Procedures and Criteria: [The-Teaching-Council-Practice-Procedures-and-Criteria.pdf](#)

Deployment of Teachers Undertaking the Graduate Certificate Programme:

While teachers are completing this programme and for a reasonable period of time following completion of the programme, it is advised that school management in all types of recognised schools make every effort to ensure that autistic pupils continue to benefit from the teacher’s knowledge and expertise in this area, through assigning the learning and teaching of autistic pupils to the teacher concerned. Collaborative practices, such as team-teaching, can also form a part of these arrangements.

In nominating a teacher to participate, the school principal must give a commitment that the teacher will be allocated a significant role in teaching autistic pupils for the duration of the programme, and for a reasonable period into the future, in accordance with the needs of the pupils in the school. This significant special education teaching role should be reflected in the way the teacher is deployed/timetabled.

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

Candidates should note that evidence of having completed Garda vetting is required for participation in the course.

² Certificates of Registration are available to download by logging into the My Registration Section on the Teaching Council website www.teachingcouncil.ie



Applications and Selection

Applications from eligible candidates nominated by their school authorities are via online submission at www.dcu.ie/ise/gceas.

Closing date for applications is 5pm 6th June 2025.

Normally, applications will be accepted from not more than one teacher per school who meets the requirements outlined in this Circular.

Applicants for this programme are not required to attend for interview.

Fees

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

Extra Personal Vacation

No extra personal vacation (EPV) days will be allowed in respect of participation in this course

Substitution

Substitution, which must be approved by the managerial authority of the school/ETB, will be allowed. 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 the college 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 where a teacher takes personal leave during the block release element of the Programme.**

Salary Arrangements

All teachers on release from their school 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.



Noreen Finnegan
Principal Officer

12th May 2025