

Framework for Considering Provision of Guidance in

Post Primary Schools - Revised - August 2017

Issued by Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS),
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CONTENTS

Introduction	<u>Section 1.0</u>
Autonomy of school management	<u>Section 2.0</u>
Guidance counsellors and the role of guidance	<u>Section 3.0</u>
Guidance - a whole school activity	<u>Section 4.0</u>
Use of ICT in guidance	<u>Section 5.0</u>
Guidance counsellor and the curriculum	<u>Section 6.0</u>
Personal counselling	<u>Section 7.0</u>
Time for personal counselling	<u>Section 8.0</u>
Parents	<u>Section 9.0</u>
Testing and assessment	<u>Section 10.0</u>
A structured school guidance programme	<u>Section 11.0</u>
Guidance counsellor professional development	<u>Section 12.0</u>
Concluding remarks	<u>Section 13.0</u>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

When it comes to planning and implementing the Guidance Plan in a school, one size does not fit all. Each school will have different needs, circumstances and resources and the Guidance Plan will have to take full account of these. Even in the same school, circumstances will change over time and it is important to regularly review the Guidance Plan to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the students. Any review of the Guidance Plan and its implementation should involve consultation with the student body. After all, it is the students that are the beneficiaries of the Guidance Plan.

This framework document provides guidance for school management in the allocation of teaching hours to guidance counselling in post-primary schools in the context of the decision in Budget 2012 to withdraw the provision of ex-quota guidance hours to schools and the subsequent decisions in Budgets 2016 and 2017 to partially restore guidance hours to schools.

The framework takes as its starting point Paragraph 4 of DES [Circular 0009/2012](#) – *Staffing Arrangements in Post-Primary Schools for the 2012/13 School Year*, which sets the context for the provision of guidance in schools and, in doing so, highlights the following statutory requirement regarding guidance.

*Section (9) of the Education Act (1998), Subsection (c), states that schools must “ensure that students have **access to appropriate guidance** to assist them in their educational and career choices”.*

Furthermore, the framework references best practice and DES guidelines as articulated in the publications referenced at 1 to 4 immediately below. The Inspectorate’s identification of best practice effectively broadens out the DES guidelines in a very tangible way for both guidance counsellors and school management. Though the Inspectorate’s report was written prior to schools losing their entitlement to an ‘ex quota’ staffing allocation for guidance counselling as a result of the 2012 budget, it is, nevertheless, essential reading for anyone interested in improving guidance counselling in schools.

1. [Circular 0009/2012](#) – *Staffing Arrangements in Post-Primary Schools for the 2012/13 School Year* (DES 2012)
2. Circular Letters [10/2017](#), [11/2017](#) & [12/2017](#)
3. Circular Letters [01/2016](#), [02/2016](#) & [03/2016](#)
4. [Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9\(c\) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students Access to Appropriate Guidance](#) (DES 2005).
5. [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)
6. [Guidance for all? Guidance Provision in Second-Level Schools](#) by Selina McCoy, Emer Smyth, Merike Darmody and Allison Dunne (ESRI 2006)

The NCGE currently has a concise overview of guidance in post primary schools and this may be accessed [here](#). By 26 October 2017 and, it seems, annually thereafter schools will be required by the DES to complete an on-line Guidance Compliance Return to establish that they are using their allocation for guidance in accordance with the terms of the Department Circulars. The NCGE has developed a very practical guide to completing the compliance return and this may be accessed [here](#). This document will also inform the planning of guidance provision in a school.

Also, in September, the NCGE will publish a career learning development framework which is intended to support schools in planning and delivering a comprehensive whole school guidance programme that meets the needs of all students.

The following publications can also inform school management in planning for the provision of appropriate guidance counselling in their schools.

- [The Practice of Counselling by Guidance Counsellors in Post primary Schools](#): Claire Hayes & Mark Morgan, NCGE (2011). This is relevant, in particular, to the whole matter

of counselling. Indeed, it recommends that ‘the DES needs to clarify ‘what exactly the practice of counselling by guidance counsellors involves, its limits and how it can be supported, evaluated and developed’. (Chapter 8, page 07) The DES response to this research report may be accessed from the NCGE website via the following link http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/DES_Response_to_Research.pdf

- The NCCA draft curriculum framework for guidance (2007) provides support for schools in developing student access to appropriate guidance. It stresses the importance of a balanced approach to guidance provision, both in terms of the coverage of a broad range of topics and skills, and in terms of student access to guidance across all the years of post-primary education. The draft framework and associated documents may be accessed from the NCCA website.

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Guidance

- NCGE School Guidance Handbook - an online resource to support the development and delivery of the school guidance programme is available [here](#)

Each of the above documents is hyperlinked on the electronic version of the framework and, to make the information easy to access, the framework is presented in 13 separate sections – each of which is hyperlinked from the list of contents.

2.0 AUTONOMY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

[Circular 0009/2012](#) – *Staffing Arrangements in Post-Primary Schools for the 2012/13 School Year* states that schools (principals and management authorities) now have “autonomy to ‘allocate and manage staff’ for the ‘provision of guidance to students’. (Section 4.2) The provision of additional resources through Budgets 2016 and 2017 does not diminish this autonomy but rather enhances the capacity of principals and management authorities to ‘allocate and manage staff’ for the ‘provision of guidance to students’.

The DES [Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#) states that ‘While the responsibility for the deployment of resources to support the school’s guidance programme rests with the management, the guidance counsellor should have responsibility for the design and delivery of the programme’. In fact, ‘the inspectors found this to be the case in most schools. Good practice in this regard, such as clear delegation of responsibility to the guidance counsellor as co-ordinator of a planning team, was often combined with good planning processes, which included structured meetings and the involvement of management’. (Section 2.1, page 6). Of course, the Guidance Counsellor cannot deliver the whole programme; s/he is only responsible for delivering his/her specific elements of the programme.

Regarding the autonomy of school management to allocate and manage staff for the provision of guidance to students, **Circular 0009/2012 noted** (Section 4.4) that the DES 2005 Guidelines¹ and the 2009 Inspectorate Report² ‘were published at a time when a separate additional allocation was given to guidance’ and should be read ‘in the context of the further autonomy being provided to schools relating to the allocation of resources and some elements may need to be adjusted ...’ Essentially, this meant that resources had to be deployed differently to achieve the outcomes desired for students. The additional resources for Guidance & Counselling becoming available from Sep 2017 will need to be deployed strategically with a view to maximising learner benefit and their deployment will need to be reviewed annually.

3.0 GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AND THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE

[Circular 0009/2012](#) stated that ‘it remains the case that a person being assigned as (a) guidance counsellor must be a qualified, registered second-level teacher’ and hold the relevant recognised qualification for school guidance work’. In this regard, all schools, no matter how small need

¹ [Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9\(c\) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students Access to Appropriate Guidance \(DES 2005\)](#)

² [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)

access to a qualified guidance counsellor. Where a school does not have a qualified guidance counsellor on the staff, curricular concessions should be sought from the DES.

‘Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance’. (Section 1.4, page 3)

It should be borne in mind that good guidance is essentially holistic. Thus, guidance should not be separated into its component parts - personal guidance versus vocational and educational guidance. However, it is appreciated that, in a large school, one guidance counsellor might focus more on the provision of guidance while another may have a counselling focus.

4.0 GUIDANCE: A WHOLE SCHOOL ACTIVITY

[Circular 0009/2012](#) (Section 4.3) made it clear that it is ‘established policy ... that guidance is a whole school activity’ and that schools should consider the ‘following options for maximising the use of their available resources for the provision of guidance:’

1. ‘Optimise the delivery of personal, educational, career and vocational guidance in class group settings’.
2. ‘Enable some of the curriculum elements of the planned guidance programme to be delivered through other teachers, such as SPHE staff,’
3. ‘Maximise the role of student support or pastoral care team in schools ...’

These considerations should be read in the light of the following DES Inspectorate’s recommendations and commendations in *Looking at Guidance (2009)*³.

- ‘While the guidance counsellor has ‘primary responsibility for the design and delivery of the school’s guidance counselling programme’, ‘other members of staff have important and worthwhile contributions to make to the planning and delivery of many aspects of the programme’. (Section 2.1, page 8) The Guidance Counsellor is not the only person delivering guidance.
- Schools should ‘review their guidance plan to ensure a greater balance of provision between the Junior and Senior Cycles’. The report also commends schools providing timetabled guidance to junior cycle classes and the practice of every junior cycle class having a ‘guidance class every two weeks’ and every senior cycle class having a guidance class ‘each week’. (Section 2.3, pages 9-10)
- ‘First-year students should have some formal lessons in Guidance in the course of the year’ ... ‘many elements of the SPHE curriculum overlap with Guidance’ and there is ‘scope for greater collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the teachers of SPHE and RE in planning and delivering the guidance programme for junior cycle in most schools’. (Section 2.4, page 11)
- It is good practice to aim guidance programmes ‘at first year, third year and senior cycle students’. (Section 2.4, page 11)
- ‘Some inputs on career topics (should) be provided for second year and third year classes in conjunction with the SPHE programme’. (Section 3.2, page 22)
- ‘Students in first year should have a module in Guidance to assist them in developing self-management skills and to understand the value of learning’. (Section 3.2, page 22). This would enable schools to respond to the documented desire of students ‘to have access to Guidance at an earlier stage in their post-primary schooling and the value of such access’. (Section 3.2, page 23). The ESRI study found that some students were dissatisfied with the ‘lack of Guidance before 6th year’ (Section 3.2, page 23).
- The good practice of guidance counsellors being ‘involved in a wide variety of guidance related activities’ (Section 3.2, page 24) and with ‘programmes that dealt with decision

³ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)

making, developing social skills, or making educational and career choices’ (Section 3.2, page 22). At page 22 also, the Inspectorate’s report notes approvingly that ‘Most guidance counsellors were also involved in the process leading to subject and programme choices in the junior cycle and senior cycle.’

- The good practice of the guidance counsellor’s programme including ‘interventions at all levels of the school ... including Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), with appropriate inputs in all cases’. (Section 3.3, page 25)

Whole School Guidance Planning is central to the development and delivery of an effective school guidance programme as it enables schools to identify, prioritise and respond to the guidance needs of students using the resources available to the school for guidance. A Whole School approach ensures that a school maximises its resources for guidance through the identification of roles and responsibilities for school management and staff in the provision of appropriate guidance to students.

Whole School Guidance Planning is central to the framework presented in this document and schools should consider establishing a Whole School Guidance Planning team to ensure that the level of guidance provision is appropriate and that it meets the needs of all students. Essentially, guidance is delivered in two formats – timetabled class-based guidance and one-to-one or small group guidance. The DES provision for guidance is now within the approved allocation of teaching posts for a school and, in this context, one-to-one or small group guidance may be termed ex-curricular i.e. outside of the scheduled timetable of classes.

It will be important for schools to review and revise their guidance plans in the context of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing⁴ Programme being implemented in schools from September 2017. Indeed, Circular Letter 0015/2017⁵ (pages 7-11) explicitly states that guidance education must be included in the Junior Cycle programme and is an important pillar in the school’s Wellbeing programme.

5.0 USE OF ICT IN GUIDANCE

- [Circular 0009/2012](#) asked schools to consider enabling ‘students to use directly the extensive range of guidance tools available through the internet from relevant websites (e.g. Qualifax, Careers Portal, Career Directions)’ to maximise ‘the use of their available resources for the provision of guidance.’ (Section 4.3)
- The Inspectorate’s Looking at Guidance⁶ found that ‘most students feel competent or very competent in the use of ICT to access information’. (Section 3.4, page 27). Thus, it would be important (resources permitting) for guidance classes and students generally to have access to reliable and sufficiently fast broadband, so they may use the extensive range of tools available through the internet to access guidance relevant information.
- There may be potential for those teaching ICT, right through the year groups, to provide students with the knowledge and skills to use effectively a variety of relevant websites ([Careers Portal](#), [Qualifax](#), [UCAS](#), [fetchcourses.ie](#) (the Further Education & Training Course Hub). This would, of course, need to be done in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor.

6.0 THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR AND THE CURRICULUM

The Inspectorate’s Looking at Guidance⁷ acknowledges the following best practice.

⁴ [See NCCA Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2017](#)

⁵ http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0015_2017.pdf

⁶ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)

⁷ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)

1. The need for ‘a high level of collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the programme or subject coordinators’ where ‘programmes with a significant guidance component are provided’, for example: LCA, LCVP, TY, JCSP. (Section 3.3, page 26).
2. The desirability of guidance counsellors being ‘consulted’ or making ‘a significant contribution to curriculum planning’. (Section 3.5, page 28)
3. The need for ‘structured follow-up when students attend career events’ (college open days, industry visits, talks by guest speakers, etc.) and that this follow up should be ‘arranged by the guidance counsellor in collaboration with relevant subject teachers’. (Section 3.7, page 31).

7.0 PERSONAL COUNSELLING

[Circular 0009/2012](#) addresses the need for schools to ‘ensure that the guidance counsellor has 1:1 time towards meeting the counselling needs of students experiencing difficulties or crisis. (Section 4.3). Indeed, Circular Letters 10/2017⁸, 11/2017⁹ & 12/2017¹⁰ at 1.2 (ii) ‘requires schools to adjust their Guidance Plans to meet Action 9.1 in **Action Plan for Education 2017** which states that the Guidance Plan should *‘include specified time allocation for guidance counsellors to be available for one-to-one guidance counselling and time allocation for the role in supporting the organisation and work of the Student Support Team’*

The Inspectorate’s Looking at Guidance¹¹ draws attention to two related matters:

- ‘the importance to students of some one-to-one contact with a guidance counsellor is supported by the ESRI research’ findings; (Section 3.2, page 24)
- the extent to which the ‘guidance counsellor’s personal knowledge of students and of their interests’ is ‘a noticeable advantage especially during lessons in which choices of future courses and occupations were themes’. (Section 4.2, page 35)

The DES 2005 Guidelines¹² make two further points regarding counselling:

- ‘Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis. Counselling has as its objective the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. Counselling in schools may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of these’. (page 4)
- ‘Counselling should be available when necessary, on an individual and/or group basis, to assist students in their personal and social, educational and career development. Guidance counsellors are qualified to provide counselling support to students. The demands for counselling will vary among schools and within any particular school from year to year, in response to student needs. Schools, therefore, require flexibility in determining the allocation of time for the guidance counsellor/s to engage in counselling. However, schools need to balance the time available to the guidance counsellor/s for individual counselling against their responsibilities to the full student body in the school. It is recommended, therefore, that **in cases where students require personal counselling over a protracted period of time, guidance counsellors should refer such cases to relevant outside agencies**’ – depending, of course, on the availability of such services. (page 10)

8.0 TIME FOR SMALL GROUP OR ONE-TO-ONE COUNSELLING

⁸ http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0010_2017.pdf

⁹ http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0011_2017.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0012_2017.pdf

¹¹ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 ‘Looking at Guidance](#)

¹² [Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9\(c\) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students Access to Appropriate Guidance \(DES 2005\)](#)

How much time needs to be set aside on the Guidance Counsellors timetable for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling?

In the light of additional provision for guidance and counselling in Budget 2017 the capacity to provide for a significant amount of ex-curricular one-to-one and small group guidance counselling can be more readily accommodated within the overall school timetable. These one-to-one sessions are not just about meeting the needs of students with ‘personal problems’; there will also be a need for one-to-one or small group sessions around subject, course and career choice issues.

In estimating the amount of time that should be allocated for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling in a guidance counsellor’s timetable, it is necessary to have regard for the school’s student profile; in other words, the need that a particular student population is likely to have for one-to-one counselling. In coming to a conclusion about this level of need, the availability of other appropriately qualified staff to provide such counselling will need to be taken into account. The DES 2005 Guidelines¹³ recommendation that students requiring ‘personal counselling over a protracted period of time’ should be referred ‘to relevant outside agencies’ also needs to be considered – see above.

While it is not possible to prescribe in any way the proportion of a guidance counsellor’s timetable that should be set aside for ex-curricular one-to-one or small group counselling/guidance, the following illustration (Table 1) may assist school management in grappling with this issue. The illustration assumes a school of 540 students with six-year groups, each of 90 students.

Table 1

Year Group	Number of Students per Year Group	Time in minutes on Guidance Counsellor’s Timetable for one-to-one and small group guidance counselling per student per school-year	Time in hours on Guidance Counsellor’s Timetable for one-to-one and small group guidance counselling per Year Group per school-year
1 st Year	90	30	45
2 nd Year	90	20	30
3 rd Year	90	40	60
4 th Year	90	30	30
5 th Year	90	30	45
6 th Year	90	60	90
Total hours for one-to-one & small group guidance counselling per school year			300
Total hours for one-to-one & small group guidance counselling per week			9.43¹⁴
Overall total to include unanticipated counselling needs & support for Student Support Team – per week		20%	11.32 Hours

Please note that this illustration is provided purely for the purpose of demonstrating how one might go about analysing the time that might be set aside for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling.

¹³ [Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9\(c\) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students Access to Appropriate Guidance \(DES 2005\)](#)

¹⁴ Based on a 167-day (33.4 week) school year

It is stressed that the illustration is not, in any sense intended to convey how any particular school might allocate time for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling. Consequently, it is emphasised that the amount of time that a school should allocate for one-to-one guidance counselling is something that has to be determined by each school management, following consultation with the Guidance Counsellor – having regard to all relevant factors at play in a particular school, at a particular time.

A further consideration here is the concern raised in the Inspectorate's **Looking at Guidance**¹⁵ around 'a lack of clarity in some schools regarding how the non-timetabled allocated hours for Guidance are being used'. (Section 2.3, page 10)

To assist school management in analysing what time it might need to allocate to its guidance counsellor for one-to-one and small group guidance counselling, an interactive spread sheet is available [HERE](#) on the electronic version of the framework. This will allow users to vary the size of the year groups, to vary the time it might consider allocating for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling on a per student basis or to vary the year groups for which it might make provision for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling, and so on.

The responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor to use his/her time wisely in dealing with crisis interventions also needs to be borne in mind.

It is essential that all class-based guidance activities are supported by access to one-to-one vocational, educational and personal counselling, provided by the Guidance Counsellor. Furthermore, the one-to-one or small group aspect of the guidance counselling service cannot be provided in a curricular setting.

One final point here, the Inspectorate's **Looking at Guidance**¹⁶ acknowledged that 'record keeping among guidance counsellors is almost universally good' and that 'school records and sensitive materials are well managed and stored in a secure manner' (Section 5.4, page 42). That said, however, while good record keeping is essential to good guidance counselling, the time devoted to record keeping needs to be kept in proportion. Record keeping is a means to an end – not an end in itself.

Having regard to the above, therefore, a guidance counsellor's 'timetable' will comprise the following elements:

- An allocation for one-to-one or small group counselling – ex-curricular dimension.
- An allocation for supporting the organisation and work of the Student Support Team (see 7.0 above) - ex-curricular dimension. For example, a guidance counsellor might be allocated one 40-minute period on his/her weekly timetable to support the work of the Student Support Team.
- Class-based guidance and subject teaching – curricular dimension

9.0 PARENTS

The Inspectorate's **Looking at Guidance**¹⁷ draws attention to the good practice of guidance counsellors attending 'parent teacher meetings' and planning and arranging 'information sessions for parents and students'. (Section 3.2, page 24) Here, the commitment of guidance counsellors to providing information to and information sessions for parents is acknowledged.

10.0 TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

The Inspectorate's **Looking at Guidance**¹⁸ stresses the 'vital role' that guidance counsellors play in ensuring that 'good assessment and test information is available to inform decisions about students' learning and about the choices and decisions that they and others make about their lives' – an aspect of guidance counsellor's work that 'ranges from the assessment and testing of

¹⁵ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 'Looking at Guidance](#)

¹⁶ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 'Looking at Guidance](#)

¹⁷ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 'Looking at Guidance](#)

¹⁸ [DES Inspectorate Publication in 2009 'Looking at Guidance](#)

incoming students to the diagnosis¹⁹ of learning difficulties and the aptitude testing that aids students in making educational and career choices'. (See Section 5.1, page 40) Clearly, all testing needs to be undertaken in line with best ethical practice.

In relation to testing, the Inspectorate's report emphasises the need for schools to use 'up-to-date and appropriately standardised' tests and cautions against using test results to stream or band students in first year. (Section 5.4, page 43)

The DES has published a list of formal assessment instruments (including tests) that are approved for use from May 2017 for guidance and/or learning support in post-primary schools. This may be accessed on the DES website.

http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0035_2017.pdf

11.0 GUIDANCE PROVISION IN A SCHOOL

Each school has different needs when it comes to the allocation of teaching resources to guidance counselling and these needs are the critical issue in allocating staff resources to guidance counselling in any particular school. That said, however, it might be helpful if school management was to consider the following matters in allocating teaching resources to guidance counselling:

- The need to ensure that guidance counselling is adequately provided for notwithstanding the need to meet the curricular (subject) needs of students. While improved guidance provision in the DES Approved Teacher Allocations for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 have relieved the pressure to some extent, possibilities for timetabling the Guidance Counsellor to deliver (to timetabled class groups) elements of the curriculum with a guidance component remain an important consideration. Such an approach to deploying the Guidance Counsellor can deliver timetabling and other synergies for a school. For example, other teachers will be 'freed up' to teach curricular subjects, the Guidance Counsellor will be able to deliver elements of the guidance programme to class groups, students may be exposed to a structured guidance programme at an earlier point in their second level education, the role of the Guidance Counsellor will be understood by students from early in their second level education, and the Guidance Counsellor will get to know the students – in advance of the big issues of subject, career and third level choices emerging.
- The need for guidance to be seen as a whole school activity involving many members of the school staff. Indeed, when one considers the three dimensions of guidance (personal, educational and vocational), all members of the teaching staff are in some way involved in providing guidance to students, though they may not recognise it. Of course, it is the responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor to coordinate the guidance programme under the direction of senior management.
- The importance of guidance counsellors knowing the students they guide and counsel. One way of ensuring that guidance counsellors get to know students as soon as possible after they transfer to second level, might be to involve them in the delivery of SPHE to first year. This would not necessarily mean that they would have to deliver the full SPHE programme to first years but they might deliver those elements of the programme that have a particular guidance orientation to first years.
- Similarly, the Guidance Counsellor might be timetabled to deliver the guidance elements in the third year SPHE programme and maybe even in the 2nd year SPHE programme. This could maximise the use of teaching resources that might be applied to delivering the subject curriculum, while enabling the Guidance Counsellor to provide significant guidance on subject choice and related matters to class groups.

¹⁹ It would be more appropriate to use the term 'identification' but, since the report uses 'diagnosis', and this is a quotation, 'diagnosis' is used here.

- To ensure the efficient and effective involvement of the Guidance Counsellor in the provision of Guidance as part of the SPHE programme, it might be possible, in some instances, to block timetable the Guidance Counsellor and other staff delivering the SPHE programme. For example, in a school with six (6) class groups in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, the Guidance Counsellor and other teachers be timetabled to teach a number of SPHE classes (for example, 1A, 1B & 1C) at the same time each week - with the Guidance Counsellor taking each class for 33% of the time.

This example is provided merely to illustrate how judicious timetabling can deliver synergies that optimise the guidance service while preserving student subject choice. However, adopting such an approach would require collaboration between the Guidance Counsellor and the other staff delivering the SPHE programme.

Conversely, there may be possibilities for SPHE teachers delivering the study skills and other related elements of the guidance programme – thus releasing the Guidance Counsellor for other work.

- Given the extent to which the internet provides a wealth of resources for the school guidance programme, might guidance counsellors be timetabled to take some computer classes to explore these resources with students? This would release those who might otherwise be taking the computer classes to deliver other areas of the curriculum while also providing the Guidance Counsellor with opportunities for delivering some elements of the guidance programme to class groups. To maximise the use of teaching resources, it might be advisable to block timetable the Guidance Counsellor with other members of staff in this context.
- What potential is there for the Guidance Counsellor taking transition year classes for a module on career investigation or reflection on work placement? Again, using similar timetabling approaches to those suggested above for delivering SPHE, it should be possible to improve the efficiency with which the guidance programme is delivered. For example, where there are four (4) transition year class groups in a year, the block timetabling of the Guidance Counsellor with another teacher for one period a week (for pairs of TY classes) could, potentially, enrich the guidance component in transition year.

Similar approaches might be considered in relation to LCVP and LCA class groups.

- Is it necessary to timetable the Guidance Counsellor for classes with 6th year for the whole of their Leaving Certificate Year – given that many 6th years will have come to fairly firm conclusions about third level courses and career directions by the end of January? Might it be possible to release the Guidance Counsellor from having to take careers' classes with 6th year from the beginning of February? While this approach might suit in schools where the vast majority of 6th years are proceeding directly to 3rd year, it might not be suited to schools with a large number of students looking to enter PLC or other courses. Also, students will need assistance around 'change of mind' and the completion of HEAR, DARE and grant applications, and 6th years will need access to personal, social, educational and career guidance at a particularly challenging time in their lives. All these issues need to be taken into account in answering this question.
- Is it necessary to timetable the Guidance Counsellor to take all 5th year class groups for all of 5th year? Might it be feasible to timetable the Guidance Counsellor to take all 5th years in class Groups for careers, from the beginning of February? Again, the particular circumstances of the school will determine what is desirable and feasible.
- Is there any potential for the Guidance Counsellor making contributions to year group assemblies in order to provide information to students around subject choice, third level course choice, career choice, CAO applications or other matters? Here, however, the Guidance Counsellor should not be left to take a full year group on his/her own. It would be important that other members of staff be involved in such assemblies. For example, full year group assemblies might be scheduled for year groups at intervals throughout the year (maybe even weekly) and some or all of the following might contribute, as appropriate, to

these assemblies - the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Year Head, the Chaplain, the Exam Secretary, Class Tutors and so on.

These assemblies have the potential to facilitate the efficient dissemination of information to students. Remember, information provided to either class or year groups can ensure that all students receive the same messages. While such assemblies can only be suited to the dissemination of information, they might be used to 'set the scene' for one-to-one or small group guidance counselling.

To distribute the loss of class contact time across the different subjects, a series of assemblies for a particular year group could be scheduled at different times of the day or week.

- Schools in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme receive an enhanced guidance provision as part their teaching allocation. Their allocation consists of two elements, the core guidance element and the enhanced DEIS element. The core guidance element will be deployed as in all schools. However, the DEIS enhanced element will be deployed to support projects/initiatives identified in the DEIS Plan to ensure equality of opportunity for all students in the school.

12.0 GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important to block-out the Guidance Counsellor's time table for Tuesday²⁰ afternoons to allow him/her (while still delivering a full timetable of student contact) to attend professional supervision and continuous professional development activities organised through the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) - without the classes the Guidance Counsellor is timetabled to teach on those afternoons missing classes unnecessarily? Of course, on the Tuesday's when there are no IGC sessions, the Tuesday afternoon is available for the scheduling of one-to-one or small group sessions.

13.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The overall aim of this framework is to provide school management with access to guidance and information relevant to ensuring compliance with the statutory requirement for schools to provide their students with access to appropriate guidance, having regard to the elimination of the ex-quota entitlement in 2012 and the emergence of a new model of guidance provision within the DES approved allocations of teaching posts for 2017/2018. In doing so, the framework, through a single portal, provides school management with access to a range of publications relevant to addressing the guidance counselling issue.

The non-prescriptive nature of the framework is stressed at a number of points throughout the document, nevertheless it needs to be reiterated here that this framework is not intended, in any sense, to prescribe how schools might manage their guidance counselling programmes; it simply provides school management with information and perspectives that may inform the decisions they will have to take around ensuring compliance with what amounts to a statutory duty to provide appropriate guidance to their students. Ultimately, however, each school will have different needs, circumstances and resources and their decisions will have to take full account of these. In the matter of guidance counselling provision, one size certainly does not fit all.

²⁰ In some regions, these sessions may not be scheduled on Tuesdays, so this statement is intended to refer to which ever day of the week is relevant.