

DigiSET – The Academy of Digitally Sustainable European Teachers
Project Number: 101249272
ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PEX-TEACH-ACA

DigiSET Project

Work Package 2 – COUNTRY REPORT

Ireland

Teacher Competences for Sustainable Digital Literacy:
National Context, Policies, and Professional Development

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Date: 8-May-2026

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Recommended Citation

Kenny A., Lahart s., Byrnes R., Toomey A-M., Murphy C., Redmond M., Fortune S., (2026) *Country Report Ireland - Teacher Competences for Sustainable Digital Literacy: National Context, Policies, and Professional Development*, DigiSet Project, Europe.

Funding

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them



Erasmus+

Project contribution to Agenda 2030 SDGs 4,5,9,10,17.



Acknowledgment

This report is a deliverable of the project 'DigiSET - The Academy of Digitally Sustainable European Teacher', funded within the Erasmus+ Programme with applicant Universität für Weiterbildung Krems and Grant Agreement No. 101249272

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Forward

I am pleased to present this Country Report Ireland as a contribution to the *DigiSET – The Academy of Digitally Sustainable European Teacher* project, which is funded by Erasmus+ scheme. The report provides a detailed examination of the Irish education and training context in relation to digitalisation, sustainability, inclusion, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. Its purpose is not only to describe policy and provision, but to explore whether current structures genuinely support teachers in doing their work well, ethically, and sustainably.

There is no doubt that Irish teachers are already engaging positively with digital technologies, inclusive pedagogies, and sustainability education, often well ahead of formal requirements. This reflects the professionalism and commitment of the teaching workforce and the strength of Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development provision across the system.

However, significant structural shortcomings are presented. Digital transformation, sustainability education, and artificial intelligence continue to operate largely in parallel policy streams rather than as a coherent whole. Teachers are encouraged to innovate yet are rarely provided with a unified competence framework that integrates digital capability, sustainability, ethics, inclusion, and wellbeing. The result is a fragmented landscape in which good practice exists but is uneven and often dependent on local initiative rather than system design.

The report notes the rapid expansion of AI use in education without sufficiently robust safeguards. While national guidance rightly promotes ethical and responsible AI use, this report identifies gaps in enforceable standards relating to data protection, algorithmic bias, environmental impact, and commercial influence on educational technologies. Teachers are increasingly expected to exercise professional judgement in complex AI-mediated environments, yet are not always supported with the time, training, or clarity required to do so safely. Responsibility is too often devolved to individuals rather than underpinned by strong system-level governance.

Attention is also focused on an issue that is consistently under-acknowledged in reform agendas: teacher workload and lack of allocated time. Teachers in Ireland demonstrate a strong willingness to engage in professional learning, collaboration, and innovation. However, expectations continue to expand—digital competence, sustainability, inclusion, AI literacy, open education—without sufficient consideration of workload, substitution, or protected time for high-quality professional learning. Without addressing this imbalance, even the strongest policy intentions risk becoming unsustainable in practice.

Crucially, this report is grounded in teacher practice. It has been developed by a multidisciplinary team comprising practicing teachers, educators, academic researchers, and a social partner, drawing on extensive experience across secondary education, further and higher education, and teacher professional learning. The analysis combines research evidence with lived experience, using a collegial and reflective process throughout. This approach ensures that the findings reflect classroom reality as well as policy intent, and that teachers' voices remain central to the conclusions reached.

From a leadership perspective, the message is clear. Ireland does not suffer from a lack of innovation or professional commitment; rather, it requires greater coherence, stronger safeguards, and more realistic conditions for teachers' work. Digital transformation must be shaped by educational values, not driven by technological momentum. Sustainability must extend beyond curriculum content to include the environmental and human costs of digital systems. Artificial intelligence must support, not displace, teacher judgement and professional agency.

The digital divide in our schools is not simply about whether broadband reaches the front door. Many schools may have a connection available, but lack the internal infrastructure, devices, hardware, maintenance, and technical support needed to turn that connection into real learning opportunities for students. This creates stark differences between students who can access reliable digital tools and those who cannot. Without adequate devices, classroom infrastructure, and trained personnel to support teachers and students, broadband alone will not close the gap. Schools and workplaces need sustained investment in equipment, connectivity throughout buildings, technical expertise, and practical support so that every student can benefit equally from digital learning.

In this context, DigiSET has a critical role to play. The project offers an opportunity to articulate an integrated, European-aligned framework that brings together digital pedagogy, sustainability, ethical AI, inclusion, and open practices—while recognising the realities of teacher workload and the primacy of professional practice. If DigiSET is to succeed, it must continue to be informed by teachers' experience, grounded in research, and uncompromising in its commitment to safe, ethical, and sustainable education.

Michael Gillespie

General Secretary Teachers' Union of Ireland

May 2026

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Abbreviations

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
ATU	Atlantic Technological University
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCU	Dublin City University
DES	Department of Education and Youth
DFHERIS	Department Further, Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Skills
DLF	Digital Learning Framework
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland

ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institute
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
INTO	Irish National Teachers Association
ISSN	Irish Schools for Sustainability Network
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	Open Educational Resources
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QQI	Quality Qualifications Ireland
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETU	Southeast Technological University
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TU Dublin	Technological University Dublin
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
TUS	Technological University of Shannon
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UCG	University College Galway
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UL	University of Limerick
WWETB	Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board

Introduction

This country report has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ funded project, *DigiSET – The Academy of the Digitally Sustainable European Teacher*. The project consortium consists of sixteen partners organisations and two associate partners from eight countries¹. The general objective of the DigiSET project is to enhance teacher digital skills, integrate digital tools and innovative pedagogies. Creating resources and training opportunities to teachers to drive the digital transformation of education in Europe. Including the ethical use of artificial intelligence to enhance sustainability and social inclusion within the teaching and learning environment.

As part of the projects' methodology each country involved must produce a Country Report to provide an evidence-based analysis of the education context in relation to digitalisation, sustainability, inclusion, and artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. The purpose is to examine how current policy frameworks, teacher competence standards, and professional development structures support—or constrain—the development of digitally sustainable teaching practices, and to inform the design of the DigiSET competence framework and training programme. The reports adopt a mixed, practice-based approach, combining desk research on national and European policy documents with analysis of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and innovative practice. Central to the methodology is the inclusion of teacher voice.

This Country Report was developed by a multidisciplinary team of practicing teachers, educators, academic researchers, and a social partner. This ensured the policy analysis was grounded in classroom reality and professional experience rather than abstract reform agendas. This practice-based approach is qualitative in nature, seeking to develop understanding and meaning from the teacher and trainee teacher perspectives. The project team has sought to put the perspective of teachers at the centre of the research process. The validity and trustworthiness of this approach is supported by the expertise evident in the multidisciplinary applied research team. The desk research was carried out from March to May 2026.

The research process adopted a contemporary review of Irish education policy using a process-oriented and interpretive approach, recognising that policy is dynamic, contested, and continuously shaped through interaction between texts, actors, and contexts. Rather than treating the policy review as a discrete stage, it should function as an ongoing, iterative process of engagement, where reading, analysis, and writing develop simultaneously. This approach draws on multiple forms of evidence, combining external sources such as policy documents, legislation, and academic literature with internal insights derived from professional experience and reflective interpretation. This enables a deeper understanding of policy not only as formal text but as lived practice within schools and institutions. Analytically, policy is understood as text, discourse, and action, shaped by political and institutional contexts and mediated through processes of interpretation as it moves across different levels. The review further adopts a multi-level perspective, examining policy across national, and school contexts looking at intent. Overall, this approach enables a critical, systematic,

¹ For full list of partners see DigiSET website <https://digisetproject.eu/partners/>

and context-sensitive analysis of specific Irish education policy relating to project themes and its implications for practice.

Throughout the report, emphasis is placed on professional judgement, ethical decision-making, and sustainable workload-aware approaches to innovation. Case studies and communities of practice are used to illustrate how competence development is enacted in real settings. By foregrounding practice-based evidence and teachers lived experience, the report aims to support the development of a coherent, realistic, and values-driven DigiSET framework aligned with Irish and European education priorities.

1. National Policy Digital and Sustainable Education

This chapter outlines the applied research methodology underpinning this Country Report and examines the national policy framework governing digital and sustainable education in Ireland. It focuses on the implications of these policies for teacher competences and professional practice across initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD). The chapter reviews the principal national strategies shaping digital education, sustainability, artificial intelligence (AI), and open educational practices, and analyses how these policies articulate expectations for teachers.

The DigiSET project adopts an applied mixed-methods research design situated within a social science paradigm, with the aim of generating evidence to inform project development and outputs. Data collection is organised into three sequential phases aligned to specific work package objectives. Phase 1 comprises a Country Report methodology based on systematic desk research, designed to establish a comprehensive overview of relevant policies and practices in each partner country. These reports are developed by multidisciplinary national teams of teachers, academics, and researchers, coordinated by a designated national lead researcher. Phase 2 employs an anonymous online survey to collect quantitative data on practitioners' perspectives, while Phase 3 uses focus groups to explore participants' meanings, experiences, and understandings of core themes in greater depth. Research topics and instruments were agreed through partnership consensus, and all country reports were subject to cross-partner peer review prior to finalisation.

The study forms part of *DigiSET – The Academy of the Digitally Sustainable European Teacher*, an Erasmus+ Teacher Academies project involving partners from eight European countries. The project seeks to capture both policy initiatives and the experiences of teachers and pre-service teachers in relation to digitalisation, sustainability, inclusion, and the ethical use of AI in teaching and learning. Ethical approval was granted by Bahçeşehir University. Participation was voluntary, all data were anonymised, and processing complied with GDPR requirements based on informed consent. Data may be shared in anonymised form in accordance with the EU Open Science Strategy.

This chapter addresses key policy areas, including the *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027*, *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030*, national teacher digital competence frameworks, guidance on AI in education, and national approaches to Open Educational Resources (OER). It also considers the main drivers of digital transformation in teaching and learning, such as infrastructure investment, curriculum reform, and school self-evaluation frameworks. The document review is confined to relevant, openly available policy documents accessed between March and May 2026. The analytical scope is deliberately strategic rather than operational, prioritising policy intent, coherence, and alignment over programme-level implementation. The chapter concludes with a gap analysis identifying the absence of an integrated national framework for sustainable digital literacy. This analysis provides a foundation for subsequent chapters examining competence frameworks, teacher education pathways, and the implications for the DigiSET competence model.

The Irish education and training system is mainly publicly funded by both the Department of Education and Youth (Primary and Post-primary) and the Department of Further Higher Education Research Innovation and Science (Further Education and Training and Higher Education). Both Departments set out the national policy and guidelines for the respective sectors. Primary and Post-primary education sectors operate to a national curriculum whilst tertiary education and training², in general, has autonomy to develop its own programme. The national authority Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) has statutory responsibility to maintain the National Framework of Qualification³ (NFQ) and can make awards for programmes registered with QQI by providers. The table below provides a snapshot of the main publicly funded education sectors including age ranges and level of qualification.

Age range (approximate)	Education sectors in Ireland (in general)	National Framework of Qualifications
0 to 2 years	Home care or private childcare	NA
2 to 5 years	Pre-school	NA
4 to 12 years	Primary school	Levels 1-2
12 to 15 years	Post-primary Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate exams	Level 3
15 to 16 years	Post-primary Transition Year (optional year)	NA
16 to 18 years	Post-primary Senior Cycle Leaving Certificate exams	Levels 4-5
16 years+	Further education and training, apprenticeships	Levels 5-6
17 years+	Higher education (third level)	Levels 6-10

Table 1 Education sectors, age range and NFQ level

1.1 Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2027 (2022⁴) is a national strategy which guides Ireland's integration of digital technologies across teaching, learning, and assessment. The strategy report claims to,

'... builds on the achievements and ambition of the previous strategy and aims to further support the school system to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to successfully navigate an ever-evolving digital world. The strategy has been developed following a wide ranging and extensive consultation process and sets out high level objectives under three key pillars' (Department of Education and Youth, 2022).

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 sets out a national framework to strengthen the use of digital technologies across primary and post-primary education. Building on the 2015–2020 strategy and informed by extensive consultation, it aims to ensure that all learners develop the digital skills, confidence, and critical understanding required for lifelong learning, work, and participation in society. The strategy is structured around three interconnected pillars:

² The universities and technological universities have autonomy to develop and award their own programmes, further education and training colleges can offer national curriculum programmes or programmes accredited by Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

³ The Irish National Framework of Qualifications published in 2003 has 10 levels compared to the European Qualifications Framework 2005 which has 8 levels see diagram https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-07/qqiglobalfansphere_2024.pdf.

⁴ The 2022 strategy was updated in 2024 and addition guidelines were include on artificial intelligence in 2025 see full range of policy texts at <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/digital-strategy-for-schools-to-2027/#overview>

1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment using Digital Technologies
2. Leadership, Research and Policy
3. ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity

Rather than prescribing specific tools, the strategy focuses on system capacity, supporting schools through professional learning, leadership development, robust infrastructure, and coherent policy alignment to 2027.

A core pillar in the strategy focuses on developing teachers' digital competence through Initial Teacher Education⁵ (ITE), continuous professional development (CPD), and the Digital Learning Framework, which supports schools in evaluating and improving digital teaching practices. The policy funds digital infrastructure and broadband while providing teacher training, digital resources, and leadership support. It aligns with broader European digital education initiatives and emphasises inclusive and sustainable practices, such as reducing inequalities through digital access and supporting flexible, technology-enhanced teaching environments (Department of Education and Youth, 2022).

1.2 Education for Sustainable Development to 2030

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030 is Ireland's national framework for embedding sustainability across the entire education system (Department of Education and Youth, 2022b). One of its five priority areas is the capacity building of educators, ensuring that teachers develop the competencies needed to integrate sustainability principles—environmental, social, and economic—into pedagogical and institutional practice. The strategy contains three main pillars 1, Social, 2, Economic and 3, Environment, it claims to be grounded in the principles of;

'...social justice, equity and a respect for human rights and seeks to foster engaged and active citizens, of all ages, motivated to take action towards a sustainable future. By learning from one another and working individually and collectively, key global challenges of the 21st Century such as climate change, poverty, inequality, sustainable consumption, health and wellbeing, can be addressed' (Department of Education and Youth, 2022).

The Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) provides Ireland's cross-sectoral framework for embedding sustainability principles across early learning, schools, further education, higher education, and lifelong learning. First published in 2018 and now progressed through the ESD to 2030 phase, the strategy aligns education policy with Ireland's climate commitments, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and whole-of-government climate action. Its central aim is to ensure that learners develop the knowledge, skills, values, and agency needed to contribute positively to a socially just, environmentally sustainable, and economically viable future. Implementation is coordinated nationally and supported through funding calls, professional development, toolkits, and structured oversight mechanisms.

⁵ Initial Teacher Education is regulated under legislation see additional information Department of Education and Youth <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/services/initial-teacher-education-ite-post-primary/> and the Teaching Council <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/professional-learning/initial-teacher-education/>

The strategy promotes professional learning, curriculum integration, and whole-institution approaches to sustainability, while linking education policy with national climate and sustainable development agendas. Through CPD, collaborative projects, and sustainability toolkits, the policy positions educators as key agents in fostering sustainability competencies in schools and communities (Department of Education and Youth, 2018). Together they shape teacher capacity to use digital technologies to deliver sustainability-oriented education, aligning Ireland's education system with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.7, and with digital transformation agendas (United Nations, 2015⁶).

1.3 Digital Education Strategy and Teacher Competences

Within an Irish context the teaching profession (Primary Level, Second Level and Further Education and Training) is regulated, this includes ITE and CPD. As such national strategies and policies can have a direct impact on teacher practice, competencies and curriculum. Two key national strategies shape digital education in Ireland, which effect teachers' roles, competences, and are drivers of digital transformation are the Digital Strategy for School and the Digital Learning Framework for Schools.

1.3.1 Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

Ireland's Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 guides the integration of digital technologies into teaching, learning, and assessment (Department of Education and Youth, 2022). It emphasises developing teachers' digital competence across initial teacher education, induction, and continuing professional development. Teachers are expected to design technology-enhanced learning, to support inclusive and personalised learning, and to use digital tools for assessment and collaboration. Key drivers include investment in broadband and infrastructure, curriculum reforms which integrate digital skills, and professional learning supports, such as the Digital Learning Framework. The strategy positions teachers as central agents in embedding digital innovation in schools (Department of Education and Youth, 2022; European Commission 2021⁷).

1.3.2 Digital Learning Framework (DLF) for Schools

The Digital Learning Framework supports schools in evaluating and improving digital teaching and learning practices (Oide, 2018). It defines expectations for teachers' digital pedagogical competence, including using digital tools to design learning activities, support differentiated instruction, collaborate with students, and enhance assessment practices. The framework guides school self-evaluation and professional learning planning. Teachers are expected to integrate digital technologies ethically and effectively to promote student engagement and problem-solving. Key drivers include pedagogical innovation, personalised learning, and the need for teachers to confidently apply digital tools in curriculum delivery.

⁶ The United National Sustainable Development Goals were agreed in 2015 see website <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/professional-learning/initial-teacher-education/>

⁷ European Union Digital Framework Strategy for School 2021-2027, policy and guidelines updates can be found at <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/actions/plan/digital-education-content-guidelines-and-framework>

The main drivers of digital transformation in Irish teaching are:

- National investment in ICT infrastructure and broadband
- Teacher professional development in digital competence
- Curriculum reforms embedding digital literacy and digital skills
- Frameworks for school self-evaluation and digital planning (Department of Education and Youth, 2022)

1.4 Sustainability in Education Policy

Ireland integrates sustainability mainly through the Education for Sustainable Development to 2030 policy document which embeds environmental, social and economic sustainability across curricula, in school culture, and in community engagement (Department of Education and Youth, 2018). The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 complements this by developing teachers' digital competences and technology-enhanced pedagogy (Department of Education and Youth, 2022). Connections appear through teacher professional development and digitally supported sustainability learning initiatives.

1.5 Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education Policy

Ireland has begun introducing national guidance on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. The Guidance on AI in Schools supports teachers in using AI safely and ethically in teaching and planning. It emphasises AI literacy, human oversight, data protection, and critical evaluation of AI outputs as teacher competences (Department of Education and Youth, 2024). It also acknowledges risks such as bias, misinformation, privacy issues, and environmental impacts of AI systems, encouraging responsible and reflective use in school (Department of Education and Youth, 2024). The Government supported the development of 'Oide⁸' Supporting the Professional Learning of School Leaders and Teachers. Oide provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and training resources for teachers to explore and consider before engaging with AI tools.

A key recent development within the strategy is the publication of Guidance on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Schools, which responds to the rapid emergence of generative AI tools and their implications for learning, assessment, ethics, and student wellbeing. Rather than promoting AI as a set of tools to adopt, the strategy positions AI as a pedagogical, ethical, and governance challenge, emphasising critical digital literacy, professional judgement, and safe, responsible use aligned with child-centred and inclusive educational values.

The OECD report, 'The impact of digital technologies on students' learning in Ireland Key considerations from peers' experience' (2025), emphasises that teachers play a central role in ensuring that digital technologies enhance, rather than hinder, learning. Evidence from PISA and international peer systems shows that technology contributes most effectively when used with clear pedagogical intent and in moderation. Teachers are therefore encouraged to select digital tools purposefully, aligning them with explicit learning objectives rather than substituting traditional methods without added value (OECD, 2025). The report highlights the need for educators to cultivate students' self-

⁸ Oide was established to support teachers and education leaders on the use of AI in schools see <https://oide.ie/post-primary-news/important-announcements-guidance-on-artificial-intelligence-in-schools/>

regulation and critical digital literacy, as distractions and inequitable access continue to pose challenges. Teachers are also advised to promote responsible device use through classroom norms and digital citizenship education, supported by programmes such as Ireland’s Webwise initiative (Webwise, n.d.). To strengthen practice, the report recommends sustained professional learning opportunities that integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. Teachers benefit most from ongoing, practice-embedded professional development—such as coaching, peer collaboration, and micro-credentialling—rather than one-off workshops (OECD, 2025). International examples from Estonia, France, and Sweden suggest that high-quality digital education is supported by teachers who can interpret learning analytics, adapt instruction, and evaluate the impact of digital tools on learning outcomes. Accordingly, the report advises that Irish teachers make active use of the Digital Learning Framework to plan, monitor, and refine their digital practice, while drawing on national platforms such as Oide Technology in Education and Scoilnet to access resources, develop competence, and maintain reflective, evidence-informed approaches to digital integration (OECD, 2025).

1.6. Open Educational Resources (OER) in Education Policy

Ireland does not yet have a single national OER strategy fully aligned with the UNESCO (2019) OER Recommendation, but open education is promoted through sector initiatives led by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The National Resource Hub provides a national repository of Creative Commons-licensed teaching resources (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education⁹). Other platforms such as Scoilnet support schools. Funding for teaching-innovation projects often requires outputs to be openly licensed, indirectly supporting OER development and open education practices.

1.7 Sustainable Digital Literacy

Ireland’s Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 focuses on teachers’ digital competence, infrastructure, and technology-enhanced pedagogy, while Education for Sustainable Development to 2030 develops educators’ sustainability competences (Department of Education and Youth, 2022; Department of Education and Youth, 2018). However, the frameworks largely operate in parallel. Explicit guidance on “sustainable digital literacy”—combining digital skills with environmental, ethical, and socio-economic impacts of technologies—remains limited, leaving integration mostly dependent on local initiatives and teacher professional learning. In 2024 the Department of Education and Youth sought an integrated approach to digital literacy with the development of Ireland’s Literacy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033¹⁰, which noted

‘Central to the strategy, is the recognition of the importance of early intervention and support in establishing a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy during a child’s formative years. Accordingly, the strategy prioritises

⁹ See the National Teaching and Learning Forum website for information on open source materials <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/?s=creative+commons>

¹⁰ The strategy builds on from other education policies and develops a broader approach to include more stakeholders see <https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Irelands-Literacy-Numeracy-and-Digital-Literacy-Strategy-2024-2033-Every-Learner-from-Birth-to-Young-Adulthood.pdf>

development in ELC to ensure that all children have access to high quality learning experiences that promote skills development from an early age' (Government of Ireland 2024).

The plan included measures to engage with key influence areas in the education sector, parents, profession, leadership, learners and diversity. The strategy outlines priority areas for development over the next ten years.

Are these policy initiatives with there detailed strategies and guidance impacting at teacher practice level in the classroom? Below are some comments obtained from a small sample of teachers regarding the key Irish policy frameworks mentioned previously (see table 2). Teacher responses indicate that awareness of key national policies is generally low, particularly in relation to the Digital Strategy for Schools 2027, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030, and the Digital Learning Framework. Most teachers report limited or no awareness of these frameworks, yet their descriptions of practice—such as using ICT to enhance learning, supporting differentiation, and promoting critical thinking—closely align with the intended aims of the policies. This suggests that teachers are effectively implementing policy principles, but in an intuitive and experience-led way rather than through explicit policy knowledge.

In contrast, Guidance on AI in Schools shows higher visibility and engagement, largely due to recent training and organisational focus. Teachers demonstrate a mixture of confidence and hesitation: some apply AI with an awareness of ethical considerations and classroom value, while others avoid it due to its perceived complexity or pace of change. Across responses, there is a strong emphasis on professional judgement, ethics, and the central role of the teacher, with AI and digital tools viewed as supports rather than replacements.

Where policies are clearly understood—particularly in areas such as inclusion, SEN, wellbeing, and school-level frameworks—teachers recognise their value in providing structure, consistency, and direction for practice. Overall, the findings highlight that while policy has the potential to shape teaching meaningfully, its impact is currently limited by lack of clarity, accessibility, and practical translation into classroom application.

In your own words, how do national and school-level policies influence your everyday teaching practice?

AI policy impacts the AI tools I use with classes/ to demonstrate/ create resources

I think national and school-level policies influence my everyday teaching quite a lot. They provide a framework and a shared direction on how learning, inclusion, and assessment should be approached in classrooms. Policies related to inclusion or teaching and learning, such as UDL or the SEN guidelines, child protection guidelines and well-being frameworks - They certainly shape how things happen in the classroom. I suppose at school level, just to ensure consistency across classrooms and support, to provide a shared understanding of expectations among staff, policies are an integral part. Our DEIS plan encourages reflection and continuous improvement, which influences our practice in our classroom so policies really should be lived out in the classroom.

As a teacher I am aware of and actual use policy and or related guidance in my everyday teaching practice

Policy	Small sample of teachers general comments relating to the themes
Digital Strategy for Schools 2027	<i>I more use ICT intuitively and in a way that improves outcomes or enriches student learning. I wouldn't say I necessarily follow or understand the objectives as laid out by the Digital Strategy for Schools.</i>

	<i>To support schools in embedding digital technologies in a meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable way across teaching, learning, and assessment, the strategy recognises that digital technology is now a central part of education. Students need not only technical skills but also the ability to think critically, be able to communicate to participate safely in a digital world.</i>
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030	<i>I don't know.</i> <i>I think it aims to empower students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to live responsibly. It reinforces the importance of student voice participation and respect for diversity and empowering students to continue to contribute ideas to take action on projects.</i>
Digital Learning Framework for Schools	<i>I have no understanding of it.</i> <i>Encourages me to consider how digital tools can support learning intentions, differentiation, and student participation.</i>
Guidance on AI in Schools	<i>I am aware of it, but I use a more common-sense approach to my AI usage. Our organisation is now developing their own AI policy which requires participation and completion of training so this will probably ground my practice in policy more strongly.</i> <i>Yes, recent communication and training from IT provides good overview of best practice and AI tools</i> <i>A little but I find it tedious to use generally so avoid it</i> <i>Yes, I am aware of the AI guidance for schools, I think it just reminds you as a teacher of your ethical duty to ensure that the information that you are using through AI to support your learning is correct. It doesn't replace professional judgement or the human relationship or the importance of being able to think critically for yourself.</i>

Table 2 Teacher responses to short survey on policies and practice

While the national policy context appears to align closely with the European Commission's strategic direction, there is also clear evidence of significant influence from international organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD. Key strategic priorities within Irish policy strongly reflect the goals and targets proposed by both European and broader international bodies. However, although policy has the potential to shape systems and institutional structures, there appears to be a disconnect between policy intentions and their implementation in classroom practice.

Despite this gap, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that educational practice is responding to emerging challenges associated with AI, digitisation, sustainability, and equality. Educators are developing practical, context-specific initiatives—often within constrained resources—to address immediate issues arising both in the classroom and within the wider community. At the same time, teachers, as reflective professional practitioners, have identified a clear need for access to relevant and ongoing professional development to effectively inform and support their practice.

2. Teacher competence frameworks

This chapter reviews the teacher competence frameworks currently guiding teacher education and professional development in Ireland, with particular attention to their alignment with European and international models. It identifies the Teaching Council as the primary regulatory authority, with competence expectations articulated through the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*¹¹ and *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. These frameworks emphasise professional knowledge, pedagogy, ethical practice, inclusive education, and continuous professional learning across the teacher career continuum. The Code of Professional Conduct of Teachers states three main purposes,

‘It serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through their career in teaching and to uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession.

It may be used by the education community and the wider public to inform their understanding and expectations of the teaching profession in Ireland.

It has an important legal standing and is used by the Council as a reference point in exercising its investigative and disciplinary functions under Part 5 of the Teaching Council Acts, 2001 – 2015, dealing with fitness to teach’ (Teaching Council 2026).

Digital competence emerges as a significant, though not formally mandated, priority within the Irish system. National expectations are strongly influenced by European frameworks, particularly DigCompEdu, which is widely used in research and initial teacher education programmes to assess and support teachers’ digital pedagogy. Digital competence is understood holistically, encompassing pedagogical, ethical, legal, and social dimensions rather than technical skills alone.

However, the chapter highlights notable gaps. Ireland has not formally adopted European competence frameworks such as GreenComp, LifeComp, or EntreComp, nor UNESCO’s AI Competence Framework for Teachers. As a result, sustainability, AI literacy, socio-emotional competences, and entrepreneurial skills remain underdeveloped and inconsistently addressed. Overall, the chapter concludes that while Ireland demonstrates strength in digital pedagogy, the absence of an integrated, nationally embedded competence framework limits the development of a digitally sustainable and future-ready teaching profession.

2.1 National Teacher Competence Standards

In Ireland, the official competence standards for teachers are set by The Teaching Council¹², the national statutory body responsible for professional standards in teaching. The core reference document is the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*¹³, which outlines the required professional knowledge, skill, competence,

¹¹ The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers full text can be obtained at <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/fitness-to-teach/updated-code-of-professional-conduct/>

¹² The Teaching Council was established under the 2001 to 2015 Acts see <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/about/relevant-legislation/>

¹³ Code of Professional Conduct full text available here <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/fitness-to-teach/updated-code-of-professional-conduct/>

and conduct expected of all registered teachers. These standards are framed around four core values — respect, care, integrity, and trust - and apply across all stages of a teacher's career (Teaching Council, 2016).

The Teaching Council also issues standards for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through regulatory frameworks such as *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* which specify competences expected of new teachers, including curriculum, assessment, inclusive practice, ethics, and professional responsibilities (Teaching Council, 2020). More broadly, analyses of teacher standards in Ireland highlight requirements for:

- Professional knowledge and pedagogical skill
- Inclusive and effective learning environments
- Ethical practice and professional conduct
- Ongoing professional learning and engagement with colleagues, parents, and communities (Teaching Council, 2016)

The evolving position of digital competences within national frameworks. Digital competence is recognised as a priority area in Irish education policy, and teachers (particularly pre-service teachers) are expected to be competent in designing and facilitating learning that integrates digital technology to support learner development.

Key points:

- National expectations reference European models such as DigCompEdu, which inform teacher education programmes and teacher self-assessment of digital competence. Studies indicate that Ireland aligns its understanding of teacher digital competence with these wider European frameworks.
- Digital competence is seen not merely as technical skill, but as encompassing pedagogical, ethical, psychological, social, and legal dimensions — for example, safe and responsible use of technology, data protection, and inclusive digital learning practices (Egan et al., 2025).
- Research in Ireland shows that digital competence is embedded in expectations for initial teacher education, though levels of competence on entry vary. This reinforces the need for structured development aligned with national and EU frameworks. (McGarr & McDonagh, 2021).

Ireland's teacher competence standards, set by The Teaching Council, define a comprehensive framework of professional knowledge, skill, competence, conduct, and ethical practice. Digital competence is explicitly recognised as a national priority and is integrated into teacher expectations through alignment with European frameworks such as DigCompEdu. Digital competences are positioned not only as technical abilities, but also as essential pedagogical, ethical, and professional capabilities required for contemporary teaching.

2.2 Adoption of European frameworks

Ireland does not mandate any of the European competence frameworks (DigCompEdu, GreenComp, LifeComp, EntreComp) or the UNESCO AI Competence Framework for national teacher standards. However, some frameworks, especially DigCompEdu, are informally integrated, referenced in research, or used within teacher education programmes as guidance tools.

DigCompEdu (Redecker & Punie, 2017)

Ireland demonstrates active alignment with DigCompEdu in teacher education and digital competence initiatives, despite the framework not being mandatory. Pre-service teacher studies in Ireland explicitly use DigCompEdu as a digital competence assessment tool, and the framework has influenced expectations for digital competence within teacher education programmes (Egan et al., 2025; McGarr & McDonagh, 2021).

GreenComp (Bianchi et al., 2022)

There is no evidence of GreenComp being formally adopted in Irish teacher education policy. While Ireland participates in EU-level sustainability initiatives, GreenComp remains recommended rather than formally embedded, with no explicit integration into Teaching Council standards.

LifeComp (Sala et al., 2020)

LifeComp is currently not specifically referenced in Irish teacher standards or teacher education requirements. Although recognised at EU level as a key personal, social, and learning competence framework, it does not currently feature within national guidance for teachers in Ireland.

EntreComp (Bacigalupo et al., 2016)

EntreComp has not been formally adopted in Irish teacher education policy. While established at EU level to support entrepreneurship competences, there is no documented integration into Ireland's national teacher competence standards.

AI Competence Framework for Teachers (UNESCO, 2024)

Ireland has not adopted UNESCO's AI Competence Framework for Teachers in a mandatory way. As the framework was recently launched in 2024, national uptake remains emergent. There is currently no evidence of formal adoption in Irish teacher standards or regulatory frameworks.

2.3 Gaps in Current Competence Frameworks

Ireland's teacher competence system is primarily guided by The Teaching Council's professional standards, which emphasise pedagogy, ethics, inclusive practice, and ongoing professional development (Teaching Council, 2016, 2020). However, none of the major European frameworks (DigCompEdu, LifeComp, GreenComp, EntreComp) nor UNESCO's AI Teacher Competence Framework are formally adopted at national level. As a result, digital competence expectations exist mostly through research and programme level practice rather than being systemically embedded within Teaching Council regulations. This creates a fragmented landscape, where digital elements are highlighted in some areas (particularly initial teacher education), but where broader sustainability related competences are far less developed.

2.4 Digital Competence

Digital competence, while not formally mandated, is the most consistently emphasised area in Ireland's teacher education research and digital competence studies. Pre-service teachers in Ireland are explicitly assessed using DigCompEdu-aligned tools,

including SELFIE for Teachers and DigCompEdu self-assessment instruments, particularly within initial teacher education programmes (McGarr & McDonagh, 2021; Redecker & Punie, 2017).

Digital competence is also recognised as a national education priority, with expectations that teachers integrate digital tools to support learner development, inclusive practice, and effective pedagogy, as articulated through policy frameworks and teacher-education provision (Department of Education and Youth, 2022; Teaching Council, 2020). Ireland has a strong emerging practice in digital pedagogy and digital-literacy development, even without a national mandate. From a teacher practice perspective an analysis of the competencies used in training and/or classroom teaching of some major European policies is presented in table 3.

Area	Status Ireland	in	Gap Implication
Digital Pedagogical Competence (DigCompEdu)	Focused	/	Strong but inconsistent — needs national embedding.
Sustainability Competence (GreenComp)	Least focused		Major gap for “digital & sustainability” integration.
AI Competence (UNESCO AI Framework)	Limited focus		Teachers unprepared for AI-rich classrooms and ethics.
Personal/Social Competence (LifeComp)	Limited focus		Missing structured socio-emotional digital-wellbeing component.
Entrepreneurship Competence (EntreComp)	Limited focus		Digital creativity and innovation skills underdeveloped.

Table 3 List of competency gaps

Ireland’s teacher competence frameworks place strong emphasis on professional ethics, pedagogy, and digital integration, largely driven by research evidence and higher-education practice rather than by statutory policy (Egan et al., 2025; Teaching Council, 2016). However, the absence of systematic national adoption of European competence frameworks limits the development of a fully Digitally Sustainable European Teacher.

While digital pedagogy represents a clear strength, sustainability competences, AI literacy, entrepreneurship, and socio-emotional digital competences remain significantly underdeveloped. This fragmented landscape highlights the need for an integrated competence framework that explicitly connects digital innovation with sustainability, ethics, and wellbeing (Bianchi et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2024).

While there is a clear need for policy frameworks and guidelines to support teaching practice, these must be informed by meaningful engagement and consultation with stakeholders across the education sector. Emerging gaps between policy and practice can be reduced through the implementation of targeted awareness strategies, alongside appropriate resourcing to support professional development, training, and the effective enactment of policy at the local school level.

3. Initial Teacher Education, Continuous Professional Development and its Certification

This chapter examines how Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Ireland address digital competence, sustainability, AI, and Open Educational Resources (OER), with a focus on training provision and certification. It shows that ITE programmes, accredited by the Teaching Council under the *Céim* standards, adopt an embedded and cross-curricular approach rather than discrete modules. Sustainability education is integrated through global citizenship, ethics, inquiry-based learning, and subject-specific pedagogy, aligning with UNESCO's interdisciplinary vision of Education for Sustainable Development. Digital pedagogy is positioned as a core professional competence, emphasising ethical, inclusive, and pedagogically informed use of technology, strongly influenced by DigCompEdu, though not formally mandated. AI is treated as an emerging extension of digital pedagogy, mainly discussed in relation to ethics, assessment, and professional judgement, while OER creation remains uneven and largely implicit.

The chapter also reviews a wide CPD landscape supported by national agencies, higher education institutions, and EU initiatives, offering workshops, micro-credentials, and digital badges. Despite strong provision, gaps remain in advanced AI integration, sustainability-driven digital practice, and consistent certification. Overall, the chapter highlights a growing but fragmented ecosystem that would benefit from greater national coherence.

3.1 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision

A teacher must be registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland to teach and be paid for working in a publicly funded school (Primary or Post-primary level). To teach in Ireland in a public funded school. To become a teacher a student must gain the required qualifications from a designed provider. In general, the below table sets the qualification requirements for Primary and Second Level schools.

Qualifications to Become a Teacher in Ireland
Primary Teacher Qualifications
To become a primary teacher, you must meet the following requirements:
- Undergraduate Degree: Complete a Level 8 undergraduate degree. - Postgraduate Option: Alternatively, complete a two-year Professional Master of Education (PME). - Subject Requirements: You must have studied Irish, English, and mathematics at Leaving Certificate level.
Post-Primary Teacher Qualifications
For post-primary teaching, the qualifications required are:
- Undergraduate ITE Programme: Complete a Level 8 undergraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme. - Postgraduate Option: Alternatively, complete a two-year PME. - Curricular Subject: Your degree must include at least one subject from the post-primary curriculum.
In-Service Training and Support
Both primary and post-primary teachers are required to do in-service training during their initial years of teaching.

Table 4 General qualification requirements to become a teacher

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland are delivered by registered providers who must be approved by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Registered providers may deliver degree programmes and/or postgraduate programmes. Providers can specialise in either Primary¹⁴ or post-primary¹⁵ education. Once qualified a teachers' terms and conditions of employment are set nationally by the Department of Education and Youth and the relevant trade union¹⁶. The general terms and condition for teachers including general pay¹⁷ is set out in table 5 below. Note that allowance for qualifications and extra work tasks is not included as part of the calculation for general pay.

Teachers' general terms & conditions	Weekly teaching norm	Starting salary	Number of increment years	Salary top of the scale
Primary	23.5 hours	44,435.00	27	81,930.00
Post-primary	22 hours	45,829.00	27	83,439.00

Table 5 Teacher terms and condition including pay rates

There are three main trade unions in Ireland who represent teachers, negotiating on their behalf and seeking improvements in pay, terms and conditions and professional practice. These are listed in table 6 below.

Trade Union	Sector
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)	Primary school teachers both North and South.
Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI)	Second level teachers
Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)	Second level teachers also teachers in further education and training and academic in higher education.

Table 6 Teacher trade unions

Based on the Department of Education and Youth annual report 2022/23¹⁸, within an Irish context the teacher workforce accounts for nearly 75,000 teachers at Primary and Post-primary levels. Who deliver education lessons to nearly 1 million students, see table 7.

Teachers and Students by Sector		
Sector	Full time teachers	Full time students
Primary	41,623	558,143
Post-primary	32,450	406,392

Table 7 Full time teachers and students both sector 2022/23

Sustainability education in ITE is primarily shaped by The Teaching Council through its *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. While sustainability is not always a standalone compulsory module in all programmes, Education for Sustainability and Development (ESD) principles are expected to be embedded across programme

¹⁴ Primary providers <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/professional-learning/initial-teacher-education/>

¹⁵ List of Post-primary registered providers can be found here <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/professional-learning/accredited-programmes/>

¹⁶ Trade unions must be registered with the state agency Society of Friendly Societies. Amongst other services, they are engage in collective bargaining on behalf of members terms and conditions of employment.

¹⁷ The agreed teacher pay rates are available from the Department of Education and Youth

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d162a7cb-00152025-.pdf>

¹⁸ See key statistics report at <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/7242c6ed-key-statistics-20212022-and-20222023-.pdf>

design, placement, and pedagogy, particularly through inclusive education, global citizenship, and ethical practice. Most ITE programmes adopt a cross-curricular approach to sustainability education rather than discrete, mandatory ESD modules. ESD is commonly integrated through:

- Geography, Science, and Social Studies education
- Wellbeing, Ethics, and Global Citizenship modules
- Inquiry-based and place-based pedagogies
- School placement activities linked to environmental or community initiatives

This approach aligns with UNESCO guidance that ESD should be transformative and interdisciplinary rather than content heavy.

Digital Pedagogy focuses on the use of digital tools and technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences (Department of Education and Youth, 2022). Digital pedagogy in ITE is again primarily framed through The Teaching Council's *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. These standards require that student teachers:

- Use digital technologies ethically, critically, and creatively
- Support inclusive and differentiated learning through digital tools
- Develop learners' digital competence and digital citizenship

Rather than prescribing specific technologies, Céim emphasises pedagogical judgement, reflective practice, and alignment with curriculum and learner needs. Digital pedagogy is therefore positioned as a core professional competence, not an optional add-on.

AI in Education incorporates artificial intelligence as a tool to support teaching and learning (Department of Education and Youth, 2024). At present, AI is not a discrete, mandatory component of ITE programmes in Ireland. Instead, it is addressed indirectly and emergently, primarily through:

- Digital pedagogy modules
- Professional ethics and reflective practice
- Assessment literacy and academic integrity discussions

As such, it could be argued, that AI is therefore framed as an extension of digital pedagogy, rather than a standalone field of study.

Across ITE providers, AI is typically introduced through:

- Critical discussions on the use of generative AI tools (e.g. for lesson planning, differentiation, feedback)
- Exploration of ethical issues, including:
 - Academic integrity
 - Bias and fairness
 - Data protection and GDPR
- Reflection on AI's implications for:
 - Assessment design
 - Student creativity and authorship
 - Teacher professional judgement

Many programmes now explicitly address responsible and transparent use of AI, encouraging student teachers to understand both the potential and the limitations of AI tools.

Open Educational Resources (OER) Creation: While not explicitly mentioned, OER creation is likely to be addressed as part of the broader goal of sharing educational resources (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education). In ITE programmes, OER creation is not usually addressed as a standalone or mandatory component. Instead, it is treated as an emerging practice situated within:

- Digital pedagogy
- Professional collaboration
- Ethical and inclusive teaching practice

The emphasis is generally on using and adapting digital resources, with OER creation receiving more limited, uneven attention across providers. Where OER appears in ITE, it is typically embedded through:

- Digital pedagogy modules, where student teachers design and share learning resources
- Discussion of copyright, Creative Commons licensing, and academic integrity
- Collaborative tasks involving lesson planning, digital artefact creation, or resource banks

In Ireland, initial teacher education programmes for primary and post-primary teachers are provided by a range of concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) programmes. Minimum entry requirements for programmes of initial teacher education are set by the Minister for Education, in consultation with the Teaching Council. All initial teacher education programmes (primary, post-primary, and further education) in Ireland that led to registration must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council.

Initial Teacher Education programmes are increasingly integrating modern pedagogical and technological requirements, with a strong focus on aligning with sustainability, digital competence, and ethical AI usage. In Ireland, these topics are often embedded in accredited ITE programmes through mandatory standards like Céim.

The main providers of ITE are Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in collaboration with school placement partners:

- Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick: Offers M Ed in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship.
- Dublin City University (DCU): Involved in digital pedagogy research and training.
- TUS (Technological University of the Shannon): Focuses on OER and pedagogical innovation.
- University of Galway: Focuses on OER and open education.
- **Support & Professional Bodies:** The Teaching Council of Ireland (accreditation standards), and bodies such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, which provides digital badges and OER frameworks

(National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, n.d.).

Key Frameworks and supports informing Initial Teacher Education Provision include:

- Digital Competence Frameworks: Teachers use the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) to evaluate skills and develop pedagogical, ethical, and social competence in technology (Redecker & Punie, 2017).
- National Strategies: The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 is the primary framework guiding investment and training (Department of Education and Youth, 2022).
- Support Services (Oide): Oide Technology in Education provides resources, online courses, and school support, including managing Scoilnet for digital teaching resources (Oide, n.d).
- Higher Education and CPD: Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs, including the Bachelor of Education and Professional Master of Education, incorporate digital pedagogy, while CPD is offered through Irish Universities Association.
- Sustainability Focus: The 2022-2026 STEM Education Policy actively encourages integrating digital skills to support sustainability education (Department of Education and Youth, 2022b).
- Webwise: Promotes digital citizenship and online safety training (Webwise, n.d.).
- OECD Peer Learning: Ireland works with international experts to improve digital tools for learning (OECD, 2025).

An overview of the adoption level of key themes such as Education Sustainable Development, Digital Pedagogy, AI in Education and OER including observations is presented in table 8 below.

Aspect	Adoption Level	Notes
Education for Sustainable Development	not available	Integration Approach: ESD is addressed as a core element of global citizenship, focusing on climate justice, biodiversity, and sustainable lifestyles. It is integrated cross-curricularly and through specialized modules, aiming to equip student teachers to facilitate critical thinking and systems thinking. Methodology: Training focuses on pedagogical approaches such as outdoor learning, project-based learning, and active citizenship. Initiatives: Teachers are introduced to tools to map the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) onto the curriculum and often complete specialized modules or workshops (e.g., in partnership with the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, INTO).
Digital Pedagogy	not available	Integration Approach: ICT in teaching and learning is a mandatory element in ITE accreditation, emphasizing not just skills, but "digital teaching competence". Methodology: Pre-service teachers learn to move beyond using technology for mere content delivery toward using it for active and deep learning. This includes blended learning, fostering digital communities of practice, and data-informed decision-making.

		Focus Areas: Developing positive attitudes toward technology, understanding digital divides, and enacting digital teaching competence through school placements.
AI in education	not available	Integration Approach: The rapid evolution of AI has led to its inclusion in ITE, focusing on the responsible, ethical use of Generative AI (GenAI). It is framed as an "agent" within digital pedagogy, transforming the teacher's role into a facilitator rather than just a provider of information. Methodology: Training covers hands-on experience with tools (like ChatGPT) for lesson planning, differentiation, and creating personalized learning materials, while addressing ethical considerations such as bias and academic integrity. Focus Areas: "Human-in-the-loop" approaches, where teachers retain authority over AI-generated content.
OER creation	not available	Integration Approach: ITE programmes, often supported by organizations like the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, teach student teachers how to find, adapt, and create openly licensed resources. Methodology: This includes training on Creative Commons licensing, digital accessibility, and using OER repositories to promote equity and reduce costs. Initiatives: Creating OER assignments, where student teachers produce resources for wider use, is becoming a common practice in digital education pedagogy.

Table 8 Overview of Adoption of Digitally Sustainable Teaching Topics in ITE

3.2 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities

A list of CPD opportunities and providers is detailed in the below section. Programmes were identified on a best-fit basis relating to key DigiSET themes.

3.2.1. Sustainability Education

Providers & Programmes:

- Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN), in collaboration with Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) and SSE Airtricity (Scottish and Southern Energy)
 - Offers workshops such as "Five Key Questions to ask when choosing resources for ESD/GCE" specific to climate and sustainability integration (Irish Schools Sustainability Network, n.d.)
- Education for Sustainability (NGO)
 - Provides online sessions, half-day climate literacy training, and Leadership Environmental Action Forum membership (Education for Sustainability, n.d.)
- SYNAPSES Erasmus+ Academy via Dublin West Education Centre
 - Focuses on teaching for sustainability citizenship with a European dimension
- The Rediscovery Centre
 - Facilitates environmental STEM and sustainability workshops (90–120 min), linked to curriculum and SDGs (Rediscovery Centre, n.d.)

3.2.2. Digital Pedagogy

Providers & Programmes:

- Oide (formerly PDST, JCT, NIPT, CSL)
 - Ongoing CPD in digital teaching tools, ICT, blended learning via online and school-based models

- Hosts webinars and events on digital technology use in schools; supports induction and whole-school practice (Oide, n.d.)
- University College Cork (UCC)
 - Part-time Level 9 CPD Certificate in Digital Education (10 ECTS credits), theoretical and practical modules
- Trinity College Dublin
 - “Embedding Digital Pedagogies into Your Teaching Practice” professional development module, with optional GenAI badge

3.2.3. AI in Education

Providers & Programmes:

- Department of Education and Youth and Oide Technology in Education (TiE)
 - Published a national Guidance on AI in Schools, with supporting materials and an AI Hub (Department of Education and Youth, 2024).
- Education Centres
 - Host webinars on AI tools like ChatGPT for personalized learning
- University College Cork (UCC) – AI Academy
 - Offers workshops (0.5–2 days), e-learning modules, and bespoke training on AI literacy and ethics.

3.2.4. OER Creation

Providers & Programmes:

- National Forum for Teaching & Learning / HEA
 - National Resource Hub to browse, share, and submit CC-licensed OER across the Irish higher education sector (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, n.d.).
 - Funded Open Courses (2026) in areas including “Open Education: OER and OEP” by UCD, UL, DCU, TCD (Higher Education Authority, 2025).
- National Forum “Using OER and OEP for Teaching and Learning”
 - Provides a freely accessible online resource guiding educators through all stages of creating, licensing, and sharing OER (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, n.d.).
- University of Limerick, TU Dublin, TUS
 - Institutional leadership and CPD tied to OER/OEP through Higher Education reform projects and CPD aligned with the Resource Hub.

Key providers of CPDs include national agencies (Oide, ESCI, SEAI), universities (TU Dublin, SETU), and European training platforms. In-service teachers in Ireland have access to a variety of CPD opportunities focused on sustainability education, digital pedagogy, AI in education, and Open Educational Resources (OER) creation. Here are some of the available options:

- Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN): Offers a dynamic CPD schedule with workshops on climate and sustainability, designed to integrate these topics into the classroom. Participants receive a CPD certificate upon completion.
- TU Dublin: Provides professional development opportunities that build sustainability competencies among staff and educators, supporting curriculum innovation and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI): Lists various CPD courses for Irish primary and post-primary teachers, including webinars and hands-on events like the Sustainable Energy in Action! at Mount Lucas Wind Farm & NZEB Centre.
- Education for Sustainability: Offers teacher training workshops and resources to help educators embed sustainability in their school communities.
- Oide: A national teacher support service offering high-quality and relevant CPD to teachers and school leaders in various pedagogical, curricular, and educational areas.

The below table provides details of digitally teaching topics with notes explains certain relevant aspects.

Aspect	Adoption Level	Notes
Education for Sustainable Development	not available	CPD in this area focuses on embedding sustainability across subjects (ESD) rather than just as a science topic. TU Dublin & Partners (SETU, ATU, National Forum): Provides a fully online "Education for Sustainability" course (6 weeks) culminating in a digital badge, which was rollout in February 2026. SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland): Offers teacher workshops for primary and post-primary teachers to teach about energy efficiency and renewable, including workshops at Mount Lucas wind farm. Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN): Runs CPD sessions on climate and ecological literacy. ESCI (Education Support Centres Ireland): Hosts workshops like "Environmental Influencer" and "Ecology and Nature-Based Learning"
Digital Pedagogy	not available	Opportunities focus on the responsible, ethical use of AI for planning and personalized learning. Oide Technology in Education: Offers a 1-hour online course "AI for Schools" for primary/post-primary leadership and teachers. ADAPT Centre & Research Ireland: Runs an "AI Literacy in the Classroom" programme (expanding nationwide) focusing on AI ethics and critical thinking, blending in-person workshops with self-led online learning.
AI in education	not available	Wexford Education Centre & ESCI Centres: Run practical workshops such as "Using AI in your Classroom" (ChatGPT, Magic School AI, Diffit) and AI Tools for Smarter Teaching. Erasmus+ / TeacherAcademy.eu: Provides specialized week-long AI training, including "AI-Powered Content Creation for Educators" and "AI-Enhanced Learning Experiences". Atlas Language School (Dublin): Offers "AI & Digital Tools in Education" covering the TPACK framework and AI tools.
OER creation	not available	National Resource Hub (HEA): Serves as the repository for SATLE-funded OER initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development. Oide Technology in Education: Provides "Digital Learning Webinars" and a "Good Practice Videos" library that showcases how teachers can develop their own digital resources

Table 9 Overview of Digitally Sustainable Teaching Topics in CPDs in Ireland

3.3 Certification and Recognition

Teacher competences in digital education and sustainability are certified through a combination of micro-credentials, digital badges, university-accredited minor awards, and national/European proficiency frameworks (European Commission, 2022; Department of Education and Youth, 2024). These certifications are increasingly modular, allowing teachers to build up skills over time and to align them with national qualification frameworks (NFQs). National and European frameworks are increasingly used to accredit these new certifications. In Ireland, micro-credentials are being mapped to Levels 4-5 on the NFQ (Further Education) and Levels 6-10 (Higher Education) for specific sustainability skills. The European Online Credential Builder (eIDAS regulated) facilitates non-forgable, digital certificates that can be verified across EU member states. Teacher Competency Frameworks (European Commission, 2023). Most countries are adopting these to outline the required skills, which are then used by training providers to create certified training.

3.4 Gaps in Current ITE/CPD

Based on an analysis of the Irish context—specifically within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) accredited by the Teaching Council (Céim standards) Continuing Professional Development provided by Oide Technology in Education (formerly PDST) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)—the focus on creating a "Digitally Sustainable European Teacher" is growing but uneven (Teaching Council, 2020; Oide, n.d.)

The Irish framework for teacher digital competence is heavily influenced by the European DigCompEdu framework, focusing on Pedagogical Competence (using technology to teach) and Facilitating Learner Competence (Redecker & Punie, 2017). Key Supported Competence Developments (Ireland context):

- **Pedagogical Integration and Resource Creation:** Moving beyond using technology for administration, teachers are supported in creating, adapting, and curating digital resources that enhance learning design.
- **Assessment of/for Learning:** Developing capacity in using digital tools for formative assessment and gathering data to enhance learning outcomes.
- **Digital Citizenship and Safety:** Promoting responsible use of technology, as supported by programs like Webwise, ensuring a safe, sustainable digital culture in schools.
- **Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development:** Encouraging professional learning networks and collaborative, professional practice, supported by the Céim standards for ITE accreditation and the Cosán framework for teacher learning, which encourage reflective practice (Teaching Council, 2020, 2016).
- **Digital Sustainability:** Developing competence in using technologies that are ethically sound, sustainable, and that promote equity in access, which is highlighted by Ireland's digital strategy and DEIS (Delivering Equality of Education in Schools) initiatives (Department of Education and Youth, 2022).

These developments are primarily delivered through Oide (formerly PDST) and supported by the "Céim" standards for ITE, ensuring that newly qualified teachers possess essential digital skills (Oide, n.d.; Teaching Council, 2020). The least-focused competence developments for a Digitally Sustainable European Teacher centre on advanced pedagogical AI integration, complex digital content creation, and nuanced ethical/cyber-security issues. While basic digital literacy is improving, training often

fails to address how to use technology to drive sustainability or to navigate legal/privacy issues in AI-driven education. Key Challenges: While training is extensive, Irish schools still aim to fully bridge the digital divide, ensuring consistent access to devices and training across all school types. Time constraints are also a key challenge for teachers who are predominantly willing to embrace the training, but who struggle to find the time for this training.

Interestingly, a review of the websites of the main teachers trade unions (INTO, ASTI and TUI) provides insights into the key areas they have concerns about relating to Digital Education, Sustainability, AI and Inclusion. A comparative analysis of these concerns is presented in Table 9. While there are similarities there are some differences in emphases. All have a cautious approach to AI: none promote AI adoption; all priorities ethics, assessment integrity, and teacher judgement. Digitalisation framed as workload and governance issue, not innovation. Inclusion and equality linked to resourcing, not mainly identity-based programmes. Strong emphasis on negotiated, policy-led change. There are some divergences, INTO has a strong focus on special education and child-centered inclusion. The ASTI most explicitly identify digital risks and seek digital rights. Whereas TUI has arguably the most developed formal structures for equality and sustainability.

Theme	INTO (Primary)	ASTI (Post-Primary)	TUI (Post-Primary, FE, HE)
Digital Education – Main Issues	Digital change linked to curriculum reform, teacher workload, and safeguarding	Digitalisation linked to workload, surveillance, assessment integrity	Digital reform as a system change requiring resources, CPD, and negotiated implementation
Digital Education – Actions / Positioning	Emphasis on school-led curriculum enactment supports, circulars, and time allowances; limited focus on tools	Creation of a Digital Rights Hub to protect teachers online and in digital systems	Addressed through policy submissions, Teaching & Learning policy, and CPD advocacy
Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Main Issues	Risks for young learners, assessment, and child protection	Risks to assessment validity, professional judgement, and autonomy	AI implications for pedagogy, assessment, and staff workload
AI – Actions / Positioning	Implicit treatment within digital professionalism and safeguarding; no standalone AI policy	Implicit but critical stance: AI framed as part of digital rights and assessment reform	Considered within policy discourse, not as a standalone strategy; emphasis on professional judgement
Sustainability – Main Issues	Sustainability not prominent as a separate theme	Limited explicit reference to environmental sustainability	Climate change recognised as a system-level issue
Sustainability – Actions / Positioning	Indirectly linked to curriculum and policy submissions	Not a major visible strand on the homepage	Formal Climate Emergency Statement; alignment with public-sector climate leadership
Inclusion – Main Issues	Central focus on special education, staffing equity, and learner support	Inclusion framed through class size, teacher supply, and workload	Inclusion across multiple education sectors and identities
Inclusion – Actions / Positioning	Strong advocacy on special education posts, appointments, and supports	Campaigning on resources and reform impacts to	Structural inclusion via sectoral representation and networks

		avoid widening inequality	
Equality – Main Issues	Fair treatment in appointments, leave, and career progression	Dignity at work and equitable reform processes	Equality as a core governance issue
Equality – Actions / Positioning	Extensive guidance on appointments, leave, pensions, and rights	Equality embedded in campaigns and collective bargaining	Dedicated Equality Council and LGBT+ Network with policy influence

Table 10 Comparative analysis of teacher's trade unions key issues

Within the Irish context, the policy framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is well defined. The Teaching Council provides detailed procedures and guidelines to support prospective teachers in selecting appropriate pathways into the profession across different education sectors, with qualification requirements clearly signposted. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) oversee the National Framework of Qualifications and engages in quality assurance and review processes with education providers.

Once qualified, teachers are guided by policy frameworks that outline Continuing Professional Development (CPD) expectations necessary to sustain and enhance professional practice across the career lifecycle. While teacher unions recognise the importance of CPD, they have raised concerns regarding resourcing, including funding and time allocation to participate in training. They have also advocated for greater teacher autonomy in selecting relevant professional learning and have questioned the suitability of some CPD provision.

In contrast, education management bodies often seek to align CPD with whole-school priorities and student needs, while operating within existing budgetary constraints. As a result, tensions can arise between CPD requirements, relevance, and available resources. From a teacher perspective, there is a strong emphasis on engaging in professional development that enhances practical competencies and can be meaningfully applied within the classroom to support student learning.

4. Analysis of the Four DigiSET Thematic Areas

This chapter analyses Ireland's alignment with the four DigiSET thematic areas: gender-unbiased AI, systems thinking for sustainability, AI for adaptive learning, and inclusive teaching practices. It finds strong policy commitment to ethical, inclusive, and responsible AI, supported by national initiatives such as the ADAPT Centre and HEA-led resources. Systems thinking is firmly embedded in Ireland's ESD strategy, though teacher training implementation remains uneven. AI for adaptive learning is rapidly mainstreaming under clear national guidance emphasising teacher judgment, privacy, and equity. Inclusive education is the most established area, underpinned by mandatory ITE standards, extensive CPD provision, and strong digital inclusion policy.

4.1 Gender-unbiased AI in Teaching

The ADAPT Centre, which is supported by UNESCO and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), is Ireland's largest AI research centre, has developed a national "AI Literacy in the Classroom" program. It includes AI ethics content, responsible AI use, media literacy, classroom-ready resources and co-designed materials with teachers, National Resource Hub (Teaching & Learning in Higher Education) - Hosted by the National Forum on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, it includes:

- UNESCO guidance on ethical AI
- Resources emphasising risks around gender equality, inclusion, and fairness

It is noted that the HEA AI Teaching & Learning Portal provides AI resources focused on: AI ethics, inclusion in AI usage and AI policy development across Irish higher education (O'Sullivan et al, 2025). Teacher training opportunities are provided by ADAPT such as AI Literacy Teacher Workshops

- Regional in person workshops (Dublin, Limerick, Waterford)
- Self-paced online courses
- Focus on AI ethics, responsible use, and pedagogical integration
- Designed specifically for post-primary teachers

ADAPT is also extending its programme to: Student teachers and ITE institutions offering AI ethics content and resources. In addition, CPD is also provided through the National Forum / HEA, including webinars and professional development on AI in teaching and discussions on ethical, equitable AI use (O'Sullivan et al., 2025)

4.2 Systems thinking for sustainability in education

Ireland's Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD to 2030) explicitly commits to embedding sustainability competencies — including systems thinking — across the entire education system, from early learning to higher education (Department of Education and Youth, 2018). The national framework emphasises transforming learning environments and equipping learners with the ability to understand complex global challenges (climate, biodiversity, inequality), which inherently requires systems thinking.

Training is encouraged, but not yet universal. The national ESD strategy notes the need to build educators' capacities as a core priority. This includes equipping teachers to embed sustainability competencies such as systems thinking in their practice. Overall, the policy intention is strong, but implementation is still uneven. Connection to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Systems thinking is a core component of ESD, and Ireland's ESD framework explicitly adopts this. UNESCO's

ESD competency framework, referenced and used in Irish institutions, lists Systems Thinking Competency first among the 8 key sustainability competencies (UNESCO, 2017). Irish policy documents which confirm the link:

- ESD to 2030 seeks to embed sustainability principles across education and stresses the need for educators to understand the interconnected nature of global issues, which is essentially a systems thinking approach.
- Universities in Ireland are already aligning their teaching with systems thinking as part of ESD. For example, University of Galway directly describes “systems thinking competency” as the ability to recognise relationships, analyse complex systems, and deal with uncertainty — central to its ESD approach.

4.3 AI for Adaptive Learning

Ireland has published a National Policy Framework on Generative AI in Higher Education, which emphasises responsible, values-based adoption of AI - including adaptive and personalised learning tools - across institutions. It focuses on academic integrity, equity and inclusion, transparency, AI literacy, privacy, and sustainable pedagogy (Department of Further Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2024). In schools, the Guidance on AI in Schools explicitly supports teachers planning for safe, ethical AI use, including tools that support personalised and adaptive learning. It brings in best practices from UNESCO and the EU and notes the growing potential of AI to enhance tailored instruction (Department of Education and Youth, 2024). AI in Irish education is mainstreaming rapidly, with large scale organisational adoption as of 2025, including the use of adaptive tools for personalised learning, real-time feedback, and student-specific content sequencing.

The ADAPT Centre’s AI Literacy in the Classroom programme is one of the largest initiatives, delivering blended workshops and online courses to hundreds of post primary teachers (ADAPT Research Centre, 2024). Training covers AI ethics, responsible classroom use, and practical strategies for integrating adaptive/personalised learning tools. A complementary AI Literacy online course provides 90-minute, flexible training for teachers on AI basics and ethics, helping them guide students in safe and responsible use of AI - including adaptive systems. The national higher-education AI framework emphasises privacy and data governance as one of its five principles for responsible AI adoption, particularly relevant to data-hungry adaptive learning systems. The school guidance underlines that AI use must be “safe, ethical, and appropriate,” supporting informed decision-making about tools to protect students and uphold data protection standards. The AI Advisory Council’s education paper stresses that AI should enable, not replace, teacher judgment. Generative AI must operate under teacher decision-making authority. National frameworks repeatedly reference equity and inclusion, ensuring adaptive systems do not disadvantage any learner or amplify existing educational inequalities. Ireland’s national AI strategy explicitly places ethics at its core, with emphasis on avoiding bias, building public trust, and complying with the EU AI Act.

4.4 Inclusive Teaching Practices and Learning Difficulties

Inclusive education is a mandatory core element of all Initial Teacher Education programmes under the *Céim Standards for ITE* adopted by the Teaching Council in 2020. These standards require all new teachers to be trained to address diverse learning needs and to remove barriers to participation. The Policy Statement on Initial Teacher Education (2023) further strengthened inclusive education requirements.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) offers extensive Teacher Professional Learning focused on inclusion —covering curriculum access, behaviour support, transitions, communication needs, sensory needs, and wellbeing (National Council for Special Education, 2023). Oide (national teacher support service) delivers professional learning for inclusive practice as part of schoolwide support and the Droichead induction framework defines inclusive education as a key competency for newly qualified teachers (Teaching Council, 2017). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is explicitly embedded in inclusive-education training through national programmes such as the Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training Framework (TCD), which trains educators to apply UDL principles to create accessible, flexible learning environments that support all learners. Ireland’s national digital strategy places strong emphasis on inclusion, equity, learner participation, and personalisation through digital technologies (Department of Education and Youth, 2022). Schools are supported to use digital tools to meet diverse learner needs. Key features include:

- Embedding digital tools at all stages of teacher education.
- Providing flexible, differentiated teacher professional learning on inclusive digital pedagogies.
- Enhancing inclusion through accessible digital content, adaptive platforms, and personalised learning supports.

Updated Special Education Teacher (SET) Guidelines provide schools with a unified framework for allocating teaching resources, supporting SEN students, and using indicators of effective practice (Department of Education and Youth, 2024b). A national Inclusive Education Framework guides schools in planning, evaluating, and improving provision for students with SEN across whole-school practice, teaching, participation, and culture. Hard copies and digital interactive versions are provided to all schools.

4.5 Comparing policy and themes

The below table displays the results of a comparative analysis of agency websites (HEA, DE&Y, TC) looking for items relating to the four DigiSET themes Gender-unbiased AI Teaching, Systems Thinking for Sustainability in Education, AI for Adaptive Learning and Inclusive Teaching Practices and Learning Difficulties. The table provides summative indicators only of information available on the websites.

Agency	Gender-Unbiased AI in Teaching	Systems Thinking for Sustainability in Education	AI for Adaptive Learning	Inclusive Teaching Practices
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	The Generative AI in Higher Education Teaching & Learning: Policy Framework (Dec 2025) explicitly embeds <i>equity, inclusion, human oversight and bias awareness</i> as	HEA supports systems thinking through national leadership on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), notably via <i>ESD to 2030</i> and funded initiatives (e.g. Sustainable Futures,	HEA guidance recognises AI’s role in personalised and adaptive learning, but positions usage within ethical, pedagogical and assessment constraints. The national AI framework	Extensive national action via the National Access Plan 2022–2028 and PATH Strand 4 (Universal Design Fund), mandating inclusive,

	core principles guiding AI use in teaching, requiring institutions to address algorithmic bias and gender inequities when deploying AI tools in pedagogy and assessment	SDG-aligned curricula), embedding sustainability across policy, pedagogy, governance and partnerships rather than isolated modules	encourages adaptive feedback and learning analytics only with transparency, human oversight and accessibility safeguards, rather than endorsing fully automated adaptation	universally designed learning environments and targeted supports for students with disabilities, including intellectual and learning difficulties
Department of Education and Youth	No AI-specific gender policy for teaching found, but broader Digital Strategy for Schools and equality legislation require that emerging educational technologies comply with equality, anti-discrimination and gender-equity obligations across the education system	National leadership on whole-system sustainability thinking through <i>ESD to 2030</i> , positioning sustainability as a cross-curricular, lifelong systems challenge spanning early years to tertiary education and community learning	The Department acknowledges AI and digital technologies as enablers of differentiated learning but currently frames adaptive learning primarily through teacher-led differentiation, not automated AI systems, pending stronger evidence and governance structures	Strong statutory and policy commitment to inclusive education, SEN support, and learner-centred approaches, with higher education implementation largely delegated to HEA mechanisms (e.g. Universal Design, Access Plans)
Teaching Council of Ireland	No standalone AI policy yet; however, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers obliges teachers to avoid bias, uphold equality, and critically evaluate new technologies, which implicitly applies to gender bias risks in AI-supported teaching	Sustainability appears indirectly through expectations that teachers engage with national priorities and societal challenges; systems thinking is encouraged via reflective practice rather than explicit sustainability frameworks	No explicit endorsement of AI-driven adaptive learning tools; guidance stresses that professional judgement, learner knowledge, and ethical responsibility remain central regardless of digital or AI tools used	Strong alignment with inclusive practice through professional standards requiring differentiation, responsiveness to learning difficulties, and inclusive pedagogy across initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning

Table 11 Comparative analysis of agency websites and four DigiSET themes

There seems to be strong alignment across agencies in promoting ethical, inclusive, and system-level approaches to AI, sustainability, and education, although the depth and explicitness of policy varies. Implementation reflects a cautious stance on AI—prioritising human oversight, professional judgement, and governance over fully automated or adaptive systems. Tensions may be present between ambitious policy goals and practical delivery, particularly around resourcing, autonomy, and the consistent embedding of inclusive and sustainability practices.

5. Innovative Practices and Case Studies

This chapter presents two Irish case studies that illustrate innovative, scalable approaches to developing digitally sustainable teacher competences. The WWETB M365 Digital Cluster demonstrates how a structured Community of Practice can strengthen digital pedagogy through collaboration, peer learning, and strategic alignment with whole-school goals. By cascading expertise across schools, the cluster builds teacher confidence, supports inclusive learning design, and promotes purposeful digital adoption rather than tool-driven change.

The second case study, *AI Literacy in the Classroom*, led by the ADAPT Research Centre, highlights a nationally coordinated model for ethical and responsible AI education. Through blended, co-designed training and certified learning pathways, the programme builds teacher agency, ethical awareness, and curriculum integration skills. Together, these cases exemplify transferable practices aligned with DigiSET principles of collaboration, sustainability, inclusion, and teacher empowerment.

5.1 Case Study 1: WWETB M365 Digital Cluster.

Organisation/Project	Waterford & Wexford Education and Training Board M365 Cluster
Main Dimensions Addressed	Community of Practice and Teacher Training and Collaboration. The Community of Practice reinforces that digital tools must be used purposefully, not just adopted for their own sake. It helps to develop digital competence for teachers.
Teacher Competences Developed	+ Teachers align digital practices with whole-school goals. + Cross-subject collaboration improves coherence of digital learning experiences. + The use of digital tools enhances engagement, allows for personal learning and allows students to present their work in a variety of different formats suited to their learning needs. + Decision-making becomes more strategic (e.g., platform choices, assessment tools). + Creating digital champions across our organisation. + Developing skills to update school Digital Plans and Acceptable Usage Policy. + Creating more active learning opportunities for students and more confident teachers. + Creating digital surveys that help to review and update Digital Learning Plan and what staff require.
Learning Approach	+ The community of practice is made up of 2 teachers from each of our 12 second level schools. The team meets in person and online. + Microsoft Teams for communication and the cross curricular sharing of resources. + The members are involved in digital skills training and developing training sessions that can be used with staff and students. + The cluster members then go back to their schools and cascade the information to their colleagues. + Collaborative learning. + Allows teachers to showcase what is working well within the school.
Transferability to DigiSET	+ A digital learning Community of Practice (CoP) brings teachers together to share, reflect, co-create, and improve digital pedagogy. + CoPs help teachers distinguish effective digital strategies from shiny-but-ineffective tools. + Teachers swap ideas for using digital tools to increase participation, scaffold learning for diverse learners, and support inclusion. + Teachers learn from peers, reducing isolation.

	+ Teachers share approaches to digital citizenship, online safety, and emerging technologies. + Teachers can share information on what works well or things that didn't go so well in their school. This helps other schools that are on a similar journey to learn from the experience of other schools and to adapt for their own situations. One size does not fit all. + Showcasing good practice. + A shared sense of direction within and across schools. + Sharing and developing resources. + The Cluster promote a student digital leaders' program + Keeping teachers up to date on the new tools. + Showcase examples of good work.
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Table 12 WWETB, M365 Digital Cluster

5.2 Case Study 2: AI Literacy in the Classroom – National Expansion (Ireland)

Organisation/Project	ADAPT Research Centre (Ireland), supported by Google
Main Dimensions Addressed	+ Digital Competence for Teachers: Understanding AI systems, data, digital ethics, and their implications in teaching + Ethical & Responsible AI Literacy: Fairness, bias, privacy, and societal impact + Sustainability of Digital Practices: Supporting long term, systemwide capacity building through scalable, inclusive resources (including Irish language materials) + Teacher Agency & Professional Empowerment through codesign and evidence-informed training
Teacher Competences Developed	+ AI & Digital Pedagogical Literacy - Ability to explain foundational AI concepts in age-appropriate ways - Understanding how AI tools work, their classroom uses, and their limitations - Competence in identifying risks such as algorithmic bias and data privacy issues + Ethical Digital Decision-Making - Skills for guiding students in safe, responsible, and critical AI use - Ability to facilitate discussions on fairness, transparency, and digital well-being + Curriculum Integration Skills - Strategies to embed AI literacy activities into existing subjects - Use of real-world case studies to demonstrate AI impact on society + Reflective Digital Practice - Development of confidence in discussing emerging technologies with students - Competence in evaluating AI tools for pedagogical and ethical value
Learning Approach	- Half-day in-person workshops - Delivered across regional education centres - Highly interactive, co-designed with teachers - Focus on ethical AI, critical literacy, and classroom implementation strategies - Self-paced 90-minute online course (available in English and Irish) - Interactive modules - Expert insights - Certificate on completion - Designed for accessibility and alignment with curriculum needs - Teacher Co-Design & Advisory Panels - Ensures training reflects real classroom needs - Enables refinement of student resources and activities - ITE (Student Teacher) Workshops - Embedding AI literacy at the start of teacher careers

	Tailored sessions with universities such as UCD In-school Pilots (especially DEIS schools) Testing and supporting classroom delivery of student-focused AI activities
Transferability to DigiSET	+ Use a Blended Learning Structure. Combine short, practical in-person sessions with flexible online modules. This supports teacher autonomy, accessibility, and scalability. + Prioritise Ethics & Critical Digital Literacy AI Literacy in the Classroom shows that ethical considerations must be central—not just digital skills. DigiSET can integrate sustainability, fairness, bias, and data awareness in a similar manner. + Co-Design Training with Teachers Engage teachers as collaborators to ensure relevance and adaptability across subjects. This increases buy-in and real-world classroom impact. + Build Resources for Students and Teachers Providing teacher training plus classroom-ready materials ensures sustained implementation and stronger impact. + Include Pre-Service Teachers Embedding digital and sustainability competences early helps develop a digitally confident next generation of educators. + Embrace Multilingual & Inclusive Approaches Making resources available in Irish demonstrates a commitment to equity. DigiSET could adopt similar inclusive design strategies. + Emphasise Measurable Impact Collecting feedback (e.g., confidence gains and competence growth) strengthens evidence-informed practice and supports policy alignment.

Table 13 AI Literacy in the Classroom – National Expansion (Ireland)

AI Literacy in the Classroom, led by the ADAPT Research Centre (2024) with support from Google, represents a flagship national initiative for building teacher capacity in artificial intelligence that goes far beyond technical skills. The programme positions AI literacy as a pedagogical, ethical, and societal competence, firmly aligned with Irish policy priorities on responsible technology use, inclusion, and sustainability.

At its core, the initiative develops teachers' ability to understand how AI systems work, evaluate their classroom uses and limitations, and address risks such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and misinformation. Crucially, ethical decision-making is foregrounded: teachers are supported to guide students in critical, safe, and responsible AI use, fostering informed discussion around fairness, transparency, digital wellbeing, and societal impact.

The learning design is deliberately blended and accessible, combining half-day, in-person workshops delivered through regional education centres with a self-paced 90-minute online course, available in both English and Irish. This structure supports teacher autonomy, scalability, and equity of access, while ensuring alignment with curricular and classroom realities. Certification on completion further reinforces professional recognition and motivation.

A defining strength of the programme is its co-design ethos. Teachers are not passive recipients of training but active collaborators through advisory panels, iterative pilots, and classroom trials—particularly in DEIS schools. This ensures relevance, adaptability across subjects, and sustained impact. The inclusion of Initial Teacher

Education (ITE) workshops, delivered in partnership with universities such as UCD, embeds AI literacy at the very start of teachers' professional journeys.

From a DigiSET perspective, the programme offers a highly transferable model. It demonstrates how digital competence can be embedded alongside ethical reasoning, sustainability awareness, inclusion, and teacher agency. Its emphasis on blended learning, co-creation, multilingual access, and evidence-informed evaluation provides a robust template for scaling digitally sustainable teacher competences across the Irish education system.

Whilst the policy framework agenda is developing at pace, we asked a small sample of teachers some teachers to give their consideration from a teacher's perspective in the classroom on their needs relating to key themes (see tables 14 and 15). Teachers' experiences with digital tools show a generally positive attitude toward their value in enhancing teaching and learning, particularly in supporting differentiation, engagement, and efficiency. However, there are persistent practical barriers, most notably unequal access to devices, which limits consistent implementation and inclusion across student groups. Teachers also highlight the time pressure associated with developing confidence and fluency, despite recognising that digital tools can significantly improve preparation and feedback. Importantly, there is a clear belief that technology should support—not replace—the teacher, reinforcing the central role of professional judgement.

In relation to artificial intelligence, engagement is mixed and still developing. While some teachers have benefited from training and are open to using AI tools, others feel overwhelmed by the rapid pace of change and are reluctant to engage. A consistent message is the need for ongoing, practical, and accessible professional development, particularly short, focused sessions and hands-on training that demonstrate meaningful classroom applications. This reflects a broader trend where teachers are willing to engage with innovation but require structured, continuous support to build confidence and sustain use.

For sustainability education and inclusion, responses indicate that these areas are not yet fully embedded in practice, but there is a strong willingness to develop them further. Teachers identify a need for practical resources, collaboration, and cross-curricular approaches to make sustainability meaningful in everyday teaching. Similarly, inclusion is seen as requiring better planning, clearer structures, and more proactive supports, including attention to diversity and equity issues such as SEN and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Overall, teachers emphasise that future policy should prioritise manageable, sustainable implementation, balancing innovation with the practical realities of classrooms and ensuring that changes genuinely enhance student outcomes rather than adding to workload.

Items	From a practicing teachers perspective what are your thoughts or experience of these themes.
Digital tools for teaching	<i>Although my school has invested heavily in ICT resources there still exist difficulties in uniformity of access to devices etc. This can make integration of ICT difficult as inclusion in classes does not always work consistently across student cohorts.</i> <i>I teach basic digital skills to adult learners for everyday life. I generate resources etc. using online learning tools, Copilot and</i>

	<i>Faster, more efficient prep, easier to differentiate and support but have no time to practice!</i> <i>Digital tools have their place in every classroom, but it doesn't replace the teacher. It can support your teaching and learning by giving more opportunities for engagement, to be able to differentiate, for increased collaboration, and to give feedback to students. It saves a lot of time.</i>
Artificial intelligence	<i>Would like ongoing short webinars on different aspects of using AI in teaching.</i> <i>The training programme circulated by IT is helpful, but I would like short refresher inputs on topics especially as AI is evolving so fast.</i> <i>Unsure, it seems to change so quickly that I would rather avoid than keep up And there was a huge benefit from practical hands-on training that explains not only how AI tools work but also how they can be used meaningfully in classroom.</i>
Sustainability Education	<i>More collaboration between staff delivering the same modules or classes. not sure</i> <i>Training for teachers on how sustainability themes can be integrated naturally into different subject areas and classroom practices will be really helpful. I think having practical examples, cross-curricular ideas, and ready-to-use resources that teachers could just start with.</i>
Inclusion and equality	<i>Clear inclusive policies, ongoing staff training in SEN and culturally responsive practice, flexible supports, and strong collaboration with students, parents and support services would make the biggest difference.</i> <i>Greater planning and implementation based of learner needs rather than a learner starting a course and then looking for the resources to support them.</i> <i>Better advanced planning, to identify learner needs and have the supports in place prior to commencement of classes.</i> <i>More concrete conversation about diversity and tolerance</i>

Table 14 Teachers perspectives of key themes

From a teacher's perspective, what should be prioritised next as policy and guidance continue to evolve? <i>At the moment, we're not really promoting digitally sustainable education because the pace of change is so fast that educators struggle to keep up. Technology is being used but not meaningfully embedded, and it can feel more about labelling a school as "digital" than actually enriching learning or improving student outcomes. I think that policy and guidance should be focused on creating digitally sustainable practices in schools.</i> <i>More training on practical use of AI e.g. creating your own class Agenda within Copilot</i> <i>LGBT still not fully supported, I feel we need more conversation around a true celebration of diversity</i> <i>To focus on balancing the innovation reform with practical support for both students and staff</i>
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Table 15 Teachers proposed priorities

Teachers recognise the strong value of digital tools and AI for efficiency and engagement, but highlight inconsistent access, limited time to embed practice, and the need for ongoing, practical training. There is engagement with AI and sustainability, with calls for clearer guidance, hands-on supports, and more collaborative, cross-curricular approaches. Inclusion remains a priority, with teachers emphasising proactive planning, stronger supports, and deeper cultural engagement, alongside a need to better balance innovation with practical classroom realities.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This chapter synthesises evidence from across the report to define the competence profile of the Digitally Sustainable Teacher in Ireland and its implications for DigiSET. It identifies strong national foundations in digital pedagogy, inclusion, sustainability education, and emerging AI guidance, supported by robust ITE and CPD structures. Key competence needs include ethical and critical AI use, inclusive digital learning design, sustainability-focused systems thinking, and engagement with open educational practices. However, gaps persist in interdisciplinary sustainability teaching, advanced AI ethics, environmental impacts of technology, OER creation, and digital well-being. The chapter concludes that DigiSET can address these gaps through an integrated, coherent framework aligned with national policy while strengthening teacher agency, collaboration, and sustainable digital practice.

6.1 Competence Implications for the Digitally Sustainable Teacher

Drawing on the evidence from Sections 1–5, several competence implications emerge for the development of a Digitally Sustainable Teacher in the Irish context. These reflect national policy priorities, existing teacher competence frameworks, ITE/CPD provision, and documented practice.

6.1.1 Emerging Competence Areas

This section identifies some emerging competence areas that could affect professional competencies for teachers in Ireland. It focuses on the critical and ethical use of AI, inclusive digital pedagogy, sustainability and systems thinking, and open educational practice as articulated across ITE, CPD, and strategic frameworks. Together, these areas reflect a shift towards values-informed, future-ready teaching that supports equity, responsibility, and long-term societal goals.

6.1.2 Critical and Ethical Use of AI in Teaching

The integration of AI into Irish education policy—particularly through the *Guidance on Artificial Intelligence in Schools* and the expansion of AI literacy programmes—positions AI literacy as a core capability for contemporary teachers. Teachers require critical judgement to use AI safely, ethically, and effectively, ensuring human oversight, fairness, and data protection. Some examples of supporting evidence are:

- National guidance highlights *responsible AI use*, risks of bias, misinformation, and privacy, and emphasises teacher oversight.
- ADAPT's *AI Literacy in the Classroom* programme develops teachers' competence in understanding AI systems, identifying risks, and embedding AI learning ethically.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) providers (Oide, Education Centres) offer training on responsible and pedagogically aligned use of AI tools.

6.1.3. Designing Inclusive Digital Learning Environments

Inclusion is a mandatory element of all ITE programmes (Céim Standards), and digital technologies are increasingly positioned as tools for differentiated and accessible

learning. Teachers must be able to design environments that accommodate diverse needs, including SEN (special Educational Needs), linguistic diversity, and varied digital access levels. Some examples of supporting evidence include:

- Inclusive education is central to ITE (Initial Teacher Training) and CPD (Continuous Professional Development); the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) provides extensive professional learning on inclusive practice.
- Universal Design for Learning is embedded across Irish training frameworks and digital strategies.
- Digital Strategy for Schools emphasises equity and access, supporting the use of adaptive and personalised digital tools.

6.1.4. Integrating Sustainability and Systems Thinking into Pedagogy

Sustainability is a national education priority under *ESD to 2030*. Teachers require the ability to embed sustainability across curricular areas and develop students' systems thinking—recognising complexity, interdependence, and long-term environmental and social impacts. Some examples of supporting evidence are:

- ESD to 2030 specifically identifies educator capacity-building as a priority.
- Systems thinking is emphasised as a core sustainability competency within national and UNESCO-aligned frameworks.
- ITE programmes include sustainability modules and pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning and global citizenship education.

6.1.5. Creating and Sharing Open Educational Resources (OER)

While Ireland lacks a full national OER strategy, sectoral initiatives (National Forum, Scoilnet, National Resource Hub) encourage teachers to create, adapt, and disseminate openly licensed teaching materials. OER skills support digital sustainability, collaboration, and equity. Some examples of supporting evidence include:

- Initial Teacher Education programmes increasingly incorporate training in OER creation, licensing, open pedagogy, and resource sharing.
- Continuous Professional Development includes digital resource creation through Oide's digital webinars and good-practice repositories.
- Case studies (e.g., WWETB M365 Digital Cluster) demonstrate collaborative OER development in communities of practice.

6.2 Underdeveloped Competences

This section highlights key capability gaps that persist despite strong policy direction and system-level support. It focuses on areas where teacher competence development remains uneven, particularly in relation to ethical technology use, interdisciplinary sustainability, advanced digital production, and digital wellbeing.

6.2.1. AI Ethics and Environmental Implications of Technology

While ethical AI is addressed in guidance, deeper competences—such as understanding energy costs, data governance, and lifecycle sustainability of digital tools - remain narrow in scope.

6.2.2. Interdisciplinary Sustainability Teaching

ESD principles are present, but integration across subjects is inconsistent, and many teachers lack structured professional development in interdisciplinary sustainability pedagogy.

6.2.3. Advanced Digital Resource Production and Teacher Autonomy

Teachers often rely on pre-existing resources; advanced skills in multimedia OER creation, open licensing, and cross-school digital co-design are less consistently developed.

6.2.4. Socio-emotional and Digital Well-being Competences (LifeComp-related)

While inclusion is strong, socio-emotional aspects of digital competence—wellbeing, managing digital overload, fostering healthy digital habits—are not systematically embedded.

6.2.5. Gap-Analysis

A gap analysis of policies and key thematic areas is presented in table 16 below.

Area	Current Strengths (Based on Report)	Identified Gaps / Risks	Implications for DigiSET
Policy Frameworks	Strong digital and sustainability strategies; emerging AI guidance	No integrated sustainable digital literacy policy; no national adoption of EU competence frameworks; no national OER strategy	DigiSET should explicitly merge sustainability, AI ethics, digital pedagogy, and open education
Teacher Digital Competence	Alignment with DigCompEdu in practice; strong digital inclusion focus	Inconsistent integration across ITE; varied digital confidence; unequal access to CPD	Provide a structured, scalable digital competence progression model
AI Competence	National guidance; ADAPT programme; CPD opportunities	Weak environmental and ethical AI content; no national teacher AI standards; risk of bias and data misuse	Develop robust AI literacy, ethics, and governance competences
Sustainability Competence	Strong national ESD strategy; systems thinking recognised	Interdisciplinary sustainability teaching inconsistent; uneven ITE implementation	Integrate sustainability as a transversal competence across digital pedagogy
OER and Open Pedagogy	National Resource Hub; Scoilnet; HEI-led OER initiatives	No national OER policy; limited open licensing training; inconsistent teacher practice	

Table 16 Competency gap analysis

6.3 Recommendations for DigiSET Framework Development

Implications for the Competence Framework based on the Irish national policy and practice context, the DigiSET competence framework should emphasise:

6.3.1. Ethical, Critical and Sustainable AI Competence Knowledge: AI fundamentals, ethical principles, environmental impacts Skills: evaluating AI tools, applying AI responsibly in learning design Attitudes: critical engagement, commitment to transparency and fairness

6.3.2. Inclusive Digital Pedagogy Knowledge: UDL, SEN supports, accessibility requirements Skills: designing adaptable digital tasks, using digital tools for differentiation Attitudes: commitment to equity and learner agency

6.3.3 Integrated Sustainability Pedagogies Knowledge: systems thinking, ESD principles Skills: embedding sustainability across curriculum areas Attitudes: fostering environmental responsibility and global citizenship

6.3.4. OER and Open Pedagogical Practices Knowledge: Creative Commons licensing, open science principles Skills: creating, adapting and sharing OER; participating in digital CoPs Attitudes: openness, collaboration, digital stewardship

6.3.5 Implications for Learning Outcomes, teachers completing DigiSET training should be able to:

- Design and implement learning activities that incorporate AI responsibly, ensuring human oversight and mitigating ethical risks.
- Integrate sustainability concepts across subjects, using systems thinking approaches.
- Use digital tools to differentiate instruction, personalise learning, and support diverse learners.
- Create, adapt, and openly share OER, demonstrating digital authorship, accessibility, and licensing competence.
- Reflect critically on digital practices, considering well-being, equity, and environmental impact.

6.3.6 Implications for Training Design, effective DigiSET training should include:

Practice-based Learning

- Hands-on experimentation with AI tools, OER creation, and digital pedagogies.
- Application to real-world classroom scenarios.

Collaborative and Co-design Approaches

- Learning communities modelled on WWETB's M365 Digital Cluster.
- Joint development of digital and sustainability-focused resources.

Interdisciplinary Workshops

- Integration of sustainability, AI, digital inclusion, and pedagogy.
- Cross-subject teams designing shared learning activities.

Reflective Practice

- Structured opportunities for teachers to analyse ethical, social and environmental implications of digital practices.
- Linking personal reflections to national guidance and school digital strategies.

6.3.7 Potential for National Integration

The DigiSET programme could integrate smoothly into Ireland's existing ITE and CPD system due to several enablers:

Enablers:

- Alignment with national strategies (*Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027, ESD to 2030, AI Guidance*).
- Strong CPD ecosystem through Oide, Education Centres, NCSE and HEIs.
- Existing use of DigCompEdu and sustainability frameworks in teacher development.
- Established national digital platforms (Scoilnet, National Resource Hub).
- Communities of Practice already operating in ETBs.

Barriers:

- Fragmentation between sustainability and digital strategies, requiring integrated training.
- Teachers' limited time for CPD due to workload.
- Variable access to digital infrastructure across schools.
- Lack of national OER policy means open practices may not yet be institutionally prioritised.

The project team consider DigiSET could be integrated via micro-credentials, elective ITE modules, and CPD pathways through Oide and education providers. The design and delivery of such training should take account of teachers work practices and be offered in a flexible way using online or blended approaches.

6.3.8 Key Findings Summary

The Irish context is characterised by a strong policy focus on digital transformation, inclusion, and sustainability, supported by extensive CPD and emerging AI guidance. Key drivers shaping teacher competences include national digital and sustainability strategies, AI literacy initiatives, and professional standards set by the Teaching Council. Teachers increasingly require competences in ethical AI use, inclusive digital pedagogy, sustainability integration, and OER creation.

However, gaps remain in interdisciplinary sustainability teaching, advanced digital content creation, systematic embedding of European competence frameworks, and deeper engagement with digital wellbeing and environmental impacts of technology. These findings underscore the need for a DigiSET framework that foregrounds ethical and sustainable digital practice, fosters teacher agency, and promotes collaboration through open education and communities of practice. The framework should align with national policies while addressing identified gaps to support the development of Digitally Sustainable European Teachers.

The below table provides a comparative analysis of the key project themes and a general synopsis of positions adapted by national agencies and social partners.

Theme	DE&Y	HEA	DFHERIS	TUI	INTO	ASTI
ITE	National standards (Céim) embed digital competence, inclusion, and cross-curricular ESD; AI and sustainability integration remain indirect and variable across providers.	Supports innovation-led ITE through HE systems; promotes research-led integration of digital, AI, and sustainability themes with variable consistency.	Enables institutional autonomy in ITE design across HE and FET sectors; limited system-wide coherence in competence integration.	Recognises strong ITE foundations but emphasises alignment with professional realities, workload, and system-level conditions.	Focus on inclusive, child-centred teaching; strong emphasis on SEN and classroom readiness within ITE preparation.	Emphasises subject expertise and professional standards; highlights need for stronger preparation around digital systems and assessment.
CPD	National CPD ecosystem (Oide, ESCI) aligned to digital, AI, and ESD policy priorities; delivery varies in accessibility, time allocation, and practical application.	Promotes structured CPD through micro-credentials, national platforms, and open resources; uptake and coherence vary across institutions.	Supports modular, flexible CPD in HE aligned to innovation and research agendas; coordination across sectors remains limited.	Positions CPD as essential but requires sufficient time, resourcing, and relevance to classroom/sector needs.	Views CPD in terms of classroom impact and practical applicability; highlights time pressures and workload implications.	Emphasises teacher autonomy in CPD engagement; highlights tensions between imposed training and professional needs.
AI	National guidance frames AI as requiring ethical use, teacher oversight, and critical literacy; evolving governance and standards across the system.	Embeds principles of inclusion, fairness, transparency, and bias awareness in AI for teaching and learning within HE.	Develops national frameworks for AI in higher education, supporting adaptive learning within ethical and governance structures.	Treats AI as a pedagogical and labour issue linked to assessment, workload, and professional autonomy.	Frames AI in terms of safeguarding, child protection, and age-appropriate use in primary settings.	Positions AI within concerns around assessment integrity, surveillance, and teacher professional judgement.
ESD	ESD to 2030 provides a whole-system strategy embedding sustainability across education; implementation occurs mainly through cross-curricular approaches.	Supports sustainability through national funding initiatives, SDG alignment, and integration into HE teaching and research.	Aligns education policy with national sustainability and climate agendas; implementation varies across institutions.	Frames climate and sustainability as system-level issues linked to education policy, labour conditions, and public sector responsibility.	Links sustainability to citizenship, wellbeing, and curriculum development; less prominent as a standalone focus.	Sustainability appears less central, with limited explicit prioritisation at organisational level.
OER	Promoted through national platforms (e.g. Scoilnet) and policy initiatives; no unified national strategy for OER development.	Leads national OER development via the Resource Hub and funded initiatives in higher education.	Encourages open innovation and resource sharing within HE; strategic coordination at national level is limited.	Supports collaborative and open practices in principle, with limited explicit focus on OER policy.	Recognises potential for shared classroom resources; awareness and structured engagement remain limited.	OER not a core area of focus; limited visibility within policy positions.
Digital Pedagogy	Digital Strategy 2027 promotes system-wide digital competence, inclusion, and technology-enhanced teaching; policy	Supports research-led and framework-informed digital pedagogy (e.g. DigCompEdu	Encourages innovation in digital teaching and learning across HE and FET sectors with variable uptake.	Frames digitalisation as a system-level reform requiring resourcing, CPD, and negotiated implementation.	Focus on classroom application, differentiation, and learner engagement through digital tools.	Highlights links between digital systems, workload, assessment, and teacher professional autonomy.

	awareness and implementation vary across schools.	alignment) across HE.				
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Table 17 Comparative analysis of key theme and stakeholders

Overall, the analysis highlights a system characterised by strong policy agenda and professional commitment, but with uneven translation into practice. National bodies (DE&Y, HEA, DFHERIS) articulate coherent strategic directions across digital pedagogy, AI, and sustainability, yet these areas continue to develop in parallel rather than as an integrated competence framework. Across stakeholders, digital pedagogy is the most established theme, while AI, ESD, and OER remain emergent and inconsistently realised. Teacher unions broadly support reform but emphasise the conditions required for sustainable implementation, particularly workload, time, resourcing, and the protection of professional judgement.

Importantly, the voice of teachers reinforces this position and grounds it in classroom reality. Teachers recognise the value of digital tools for engagement, differentiation, and efficiency, but highlight persistent challenges around unequal access to devices, limited time to develop education material, and the difficulty of applying practice in a meaningful way. Engagement with AI is mixed: some teachers are open and developing practice, while others feel overwhelmed by the pace of change and prefer to avoid it without clear guidance and practical supports. Sustainability is viewed positively but as insufficiently implemented, with teachers calling for more practical, cross-curricular resources and collaboration. Across all themes, there is a clear and consistent message that innovation must remain manageable, supported, and aligned with real classroom conditions, rather than driven solely by policy ambition.

Taken together, the findings point to a system where policy intent, institutional structures, and teacher professionalism are strong, but where greater coherence, integration, and practical support—particularly time and resourcing—are essential to ensure that digital, AI, and sustainability reforms become sustainable, meaningful elements of everyday teaching and learning practice.

Conclusion

This report demonstrates that Ireland possesses a strong foundation of teacher professionalism, policy intent, and innovative practice in relation to digital transformation, sustainability, inclusion, and emerging uses of artificial intelligence in education. Teachers are not resistant to change; rather, the evidence throughout this report shows a workforce that is highly engaged, reflective, and willing to innovate in the best interests of learners. However, from a teacher-informed perspective, the central challenge is not a lack of initiatives, but a lack of coherence. Digital, sustainability, and AI policies continue to operate in parallel, placing increasing expectations on teachers without providing an integrated competence framework, sufficient time, or consistent structural support. As a result, responsibility is frequently individualised, relying on professional goodwill rather than systemic design.

Critically, the report highlights that sustainable digital transformation cannot be achieved through technical upskilling alone. Teachers consistently emphasise the need for ethical clarity, professional agency, protected time for collaboration, and recognition of workload realities. Practice-based evidence from communities of

practice and national programmes shows that when teachers are trusted as co-designers, meaningful and sustainable change occurs. The implications for DigiSET are therefore clear: the framework must foreground teacher voice, align innovation with educational values, and prioritise ethical, inclusive, and realistically implementable approaches. Without this, even well-intentioned reforms risk becoming unsustainable in practice.

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Appendix 1, Digital Strategy for School, key actions and timelines.

Department of Education and Youth website accessed 4.04.2026

Strategic Area / Pillar	Key Actions	Indicative Timeline
Teaching, Learning & Assessment	Embed digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects and levels	2022–2027
	Support teachers' digital competence through sustained, practice-focused CPD aligned with DigCompEdu	Ongoing to 2027
	Promote learner digital competencies, including problem-solving, creativity, coding, and online safety	Ongoing to 2027
	Strengthen the use of digital tools for inclusive education and special educational needs	2023–2027
Leadership & School Capacity	Develop school leaders' capacity to lead digital innovation and digital planning	2022–2027
	Support schools to use the Digital Learning Framework and self-evaluation tools (e.g. SELFIE)	Ongoing to 2027
	Build professional learning networks and communities of practice	2023–2027
Policy, Research & System Alignment	Align digital strategy with curriculum reform (including primary and senior cycle developments)	2022–2027
	Use research and evaluation to inform policy decisions and future iterations of the strategy	Ongoing
	Ensure coherence with national policies on wellbeing, inclusion, assessment, and child protection online	Ongoing
ICT Infrastructure & Connectivity	Continue investment in high-quality broadband for all schools	2022–2027
	Maintain and enhance the ICT grants programme for schools	Annual (2022–2027)
	Support schools in strategic planning for devices, platforms and cybersecurity	2023–2027
Digital Equity & Access	Address digital disadvantage through targeted supports and inclusive access initiatives	Ongoing to 2027
	Promote safe, ethical and responsible use of digital technologies and AI	2024–2027
Implementation & Oversight	Publish and monitor a national Implementation Plan with defined actions and responsibilities	From 2022, reviewed regularly
	Track progress using indicators and stakeholder feedback	Annual review cycle

Appendix 2 Sustainable Education key policy actions and timelines.

Department of Education and Youth website accessed 4.04.2026

Strategic Focus Area	Key Actions	Indicative Timeline
Whole-System ESD Integration	Embed ESD principles across curricula, assessment, and learning experiences at all education levels	Ongoing to 2030
Learner Knowledge, Skills & Values	Develop learner competencies in sustainability, climate literacy, global citizenship, and systems thinking	Ongoing to 2030
Teacher & Educator Professional Learning	Expand and promote ESD-focused CPD for teachers and educators across sectors	Ongoing; updated annually
Leadership & Governance	Support education leaders to embed ESD through planning, policy development, and organisational culture	2022–2030
School Sustainability & Climate Action	Support schools to adopt Sustainability Policy Statements using the national Sustainability Toolkit	From 2023; widespread uptake by 2030
Funding & Innovation	Provide targeted funding calls for schools and organisations to pilot and scale ESD initiatives	Annual funding calls (2022–2030)
Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement	Strengthen collaboration between government departments, agencies, NGOs, and education providers	Ongoing to 2030
Monitoring & Oversight	Oversee implementation through a National Steering Group and publish periodic progress reports	Reports published 2022–2026; continuing to 2030
Policy Alignment	Ensure coherence with Climate Action Plans, public-sector mandates, and international commitments	Ongoing to 2030

Appendix 3 Guidelines on AI for Schools, key actions and timelines.

Department of Education and Youth website accessed 4.04.2026

Strategic Area	Key Actions	Indicative Timeline
Teaching, Learning & Assessment	Enhance teaching and learning through purposeful use of digital technologies, including emerging AI tools where appropriate	Ongoing to 2027
	Support learners to develop digital and AI literacy, including critical thinking, ethical awareness, and understanding of AI limitations	2024–2027 (progressive rollout)
Artificial Intelligence in Schools	Provide national guidance on the safe, ethical, and responsible use of AI in teaching, learning, and assessment	Published 2024; living guidance to 2027
	Emphasise that human judgement remains central to assessment; AI should not undermine academic integrity or learner agency	Immediate and ongoing
	Support schools to review assessment practices considering AI-enabled tools	2024–2027
Teacher Professional Learning	Expand CPD focused on digital pedagogy, including understanding AI capabilities, risks, and classroom implications	Ongoing to 2027
	Support teachers in developing confidence to discuss AI critically with students	2024–2027
Leadership & Policy at School Level	Support school leaders to update digital learning plans and policies (acceptable use, assessment, data protection) in response to AI	2024–2027
Ethics, Inclusion & Wellbeing	Promote responsible, inclusive, and age-appropriate use of AI, with attention to bias, data protection, and student wellbeing	Ongoing to 2027
ICT Infrastructure & Systems	Maintain secure digital platforms and infrastructure capable of supporting evolving digital and AI-enabled tools	2022–2027
Implementation & Review	Monitor implementation through the national Digital Strategy Implementation Plan and update guidance as technologies evolve	Annual review to 2027

Appendix 4 TUI analysis of key areas Digital Education, ESD, AI, Inclusion

TUI website accessed 8.04.2026

Theme	Main Issues Highlighted	Actions / Positions Evident on the Site
Digital Education	Impact of digital reform on workload, assessment, and professional autonomy	Engagement with curriculum, assessment and senior cycle redevelopment policy debates; advocacy through Education Policy and submissions
	Need for adequate resources, CPD, and infrastructure	Positioning digital change as requiring negotiated supports and investment, not unilateral implementation
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Implications of AI for assessment integrity, teaching practice, and staff workload	Addressed indirectly through curriculum, assessment, and teaching & learning policy areas rather than separate AI guidance
	Risk of unmanaged technological change	Union emphasis on professional judgement and policy-led reform, not technology-driven mandates
Sustainability / Climate Action	Recognition of climate change as a system-level emergency	Publication of a formal Climate Emergency Statement
	Role of education in climate action	Alignment with public-sector leadership and educational responsibility for sustainability awareness
Inclusion	Representation of diverse member identities and educational settings	Dedicated Equality Council and sectoral representation across post-primary, FE, and HE
	Inclusive working conditions and supports	Advocacy framed through pay, conditions, and equality structures rather than project-based initiatives
Equality	Structural equality for members and learners	Operation of an elected Equality Council influencing union policy
	Specific advocacy for LGBTQ+ members	Active TUI LGBT+ Network highlighted as part of union governance

Appendix 5 ASTI analysis of key areas Digital Education, ESD, AI, Inclusion

ASTI website accessed 8.04.2026

Theme	Main Issues Highlighted	Actions / Positions Evident on the Site
Digital Education	Digital systems increasing workload, surveillance, and administrative burden	Establishment of a Digital Rights Hub focused on protecting teachers online and in digital work environments
	Digital change linked to senior cycle and assessment reform	Active engagement with Senior Cycle Redevelopment, including negotiated support measures put to ballot
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Emerging risks to assessment integrity and teacher autonomy	AI not addressed as a standalone theme; treated implicitly within digital rights, assessment, and professional judgement discourse
	Concern about unmanaged technological change	Emphasis on policy-led reform and negotiated implementation rather than unilateral adoption of new technologies
Sustainability	Limited explicit reference to environmental sustainability	Sustainability is not a prominent thematic strand on the homepage; focus remains on employment and system capacity issues
Inclusion	Equity of access to education and teaching conditions	Advocacy on teacher supply, class size, and workload, framed as inclusion and quality-of-education issues for students
	Fair access to posts and career progression	Clear guidance and campaigning on Posts of Responsibility and transparent employment practices
Equality	Protection of members' rights and workplace dignity	Union campaigning emphasising fairness, dignity at work, and collective professional voice
	Equality within reform processes	Insistence that reforms (e.g. Senior Cycle) include resources, time, and supports to avoid disproportionate impacts on teachers or schools

Appendix 6 INTO analysis of key Digital Education, ESD, AI, Inclusion

INTO website accessed 8.04.2026

Theme	Main Issues Highlighted	Actions / Positions Evident on the Site
Digital Education	Digital systems increasing workload, surveillance, and administrative burden	Establishment of a Digital Rights Hub focused on protecting teachers online and in digital work environments
	Digital change linked to senior cycle and assessment reform	Active engagement with Senior Cycle Redevelopment, including negotiated support measures put to ballot
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Emerging risks to assessment integrity and teacher autonomy	AI not addressed as a standalone theme; treated implicitly within digital rights, assessment, and professional judgement discourse
	Concern about unmanaged technological change	Emphasis on policy-led reform and negotiated implementation rather than unilateral adoption of new technologies
Sustainability	Limited explicit reference to environmental sustainability	Sustainability is not a prominent thematic strand on the homepage; focus remains on employment and system capacity issues
Inclusion	Equity of access to education and teaching conditions	Advocacy on teacher supply, class size, and workload, framed as inclusion and quality-of-education issues for students
	Fair access to posts and career progression	Clear guidance and campaigning on Posts of Responsibility and transparent employment practices
Equality	Protection of members' rights and workplace dignity	Union campaigning emphasising fairness, dignity at work, and collective professional voice
	Equality within reform processes	Insistence that reforms (e.g. Senior Cycle) include resources, time, and supports to avoid disproportionate impacts on teachers or schools

Appendix 7 NFQ – EQF comparator diagram

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global
Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility
of qualifications, nationally and internationally.

