



Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

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# BULLETIN 4

## PRACTICAL CLASS SIZES

SEPTEMBER 2017

INTO has, in response to DE Circular 2016/11, raised concerns over practical class sizes with representatives of Education Authority (EA).

EA accepts that class sizes are governed by the Secondary School (Grant Conditions) Regulations (NI) 1973 which limits practical classes to 20 pupils, with some exceptions – see chart below:

Technology & Design	20 pupils		
Music	20 pupils		
Home Economics	20 pupils		
Science	26 pupils 24 pupils 20 pupils	(Years 8 – 10) (Years 11 – 12) (Years 13 – 14)	Rooms of at least 83 sq metres
Art & Design	26 pupils 20 pupils	(Years 8 – 10) (Years 11 – 14)	
PE (Gym & Assembly Hall) (Pitches & Sports Hall)	25 pupils 30 pupils	(Years 8 – 10) (All Years)	
Drama	20 pupils	(All Years)	See HSENI guidance <i>Health and safety checklist for classrooms</i>

The latest Circular 2016/11 provides flexibility in determining class sizes where a risk assessment has been carried out. However, under the Health & Safety at Work Order (NI) 1978, schools have a statutory responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all employees, visitors and children on their premises.

If INTO members are required to teach practical classes of over 20 pupils they should, in the first instance, be provided with a signed health and safety risk assessment, carried out by a competent and trained person, clearly stating that the Board of Governors are content that any practical activities by a larger group are unlikely to present a risk.

INTO recommend that an assessor should hold one of the following qualifications.  
(Further information can be obtained from <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/topics/education> )

**NEBOSH – National Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety**  
**City & Guilds Level 5 NVQ (Occupational Health & Safety Practice)**  
**BSC (British Safety Council) Level 6 Diploma (Occupational Health & Safety)**

If a member is not fully satisfied with the documentation provided in regard to the risk assessment or the assessor's qualifications they should refuse to carry out any practical teaching activity and contact INTO immediately.

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