



**Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland

# QUALITY IN FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING.

**Education and Training Board (ETB) Follow-Up  
Reports to the Inaugural Review of QA in FET  
Process - Case Studies**

January 2025





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>	Kerry ETB – Intensive English Language Summer Provision to Learners who Require Additional Language Support	<b>34</b>
City of Dublin ETB – Development of a QQI-validated Tertiary Degree in Partnership with NCI	<b>4</b>	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB – Enhanced Data Analysis Processes (Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review)	<b>36</b>
City of Dublin ETB – Development of QA Governance Working Groups	<b>5</b>	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB – Family Learning KCETB Adult Learning Service (Teaching, Learning and Assessment)	<b>38</b>
City of Dublin ETB, Diversity and Inclusion in FET – A Professional Learning Response	<b>7</b>	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB – Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (Governance and Management of Quality)	<b>41</b>
Cavan and Monaghan ETB - Learner Voice at CMETB	<b>8</b>	Limerick and Clare ETB – Induction Session for new ESOL Learning Practitioners – Limerick and Clare ETB College of FET	<b>43</b>
Cavan and Monaghan ETB – Programme Development at CMETB	<b>10</b>	Limerick and Clare ETB – National Course Calendar QA Approval Process	<b>45</b>
Cavan and Monaghan ETB – Quality Assurance Communications at CMETB	<b>12</b>	Limerick and Clare ETB – SHOW AND TEL – Limerick and Clare ETB College of FET	<b>47</b>
Cork ETB – Professional Learning and Development (PLD) SharePoint Training Site	<b>14</b>	Longford and Westmeath ETB – Employer Engagement	<b>49</b>
Cork ETB – Responding to the Needs of External Stakeholders	<b>17</b>	Longford and Westmeath ETB – FET Buildings and Infrastructure	<b>50</b>
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB – Enhancing Quality Assurance: A Secure Solution for Communication Collaboration and Repository Access	<b>18</b>	Longford and Westmeath ETB – The QGG and the Learner Voice	<b>55</b>
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB – The ETB’s Early Learning and Care Qualifications Post-validation: the DDLETB Approach to Minding the Shared Curriculum	<b>20</b>	Louth and Meath ETB – Pilot Virtual Reality Learning Support Development Project for Literacy Learners within LMETB Adult Learning Service	<b>57</b>
Donegal ETB – FET Service Student Hub	<b>22</b>	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB – Literacy and Writing Skills Supports in New Generation Apprenticeships	<b>59</b>
Donegal ETB – UDL Professional Learning Network (PLN)	<b>23</b>	Tipperary ETB – FET Student Council	<b>60</b>
Donegal ETB – Donegal Women in Business Network (DWBN)	<b>24</b>	Tipperary ETB – Universal Design for Learning Implementation Plan for FET	<b>62</b>
Galway and Roscommon ETB – GRETB’s Conversational Learning Project	<b>26</b>	Waterford and Wexford ETB – WWETB’s Learner Voice Forum	<b>64</b>
Galway and Roscommon ETB – GRETB Learner Regional Experience Events	<b>29</b>	Waterford and Wexford ETB – WWETB’s Use of Data	<b>66</b>
Galway and Roscommon ETB – GRETB QA SharePoint Site	<b>31</b>		
Kerry ETB – A Case Study on Psychological Support	<b>32</b>		

## INTRODUCTION

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The inaugural review of quality assurance in the 16 education and training boards (ETBs) was conducted from March 2021 to May 2022. The external review teams comprised both national and international reviewers with expertise in further education and training (FET), vocational education, quality assurance, learner engagement, community involvement, and industry perspectives. The purpose of the inaugural review process was to foster the development of a quality culture within ETBs and enhance public confidence in the quality of FET provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.

Twelve months subsequent to the publication of each ETB's review report, the ETB submitted a follow-up report outlining the actions and plans devised to address the recommendations made by the review team. The final follow-up report was delivered to QQI in March 2024.

A synthesis report<sup>1</sup> has been created, offering an overview of QA developments, enhancements, and activities across the sector based on the 16 follow-up reports. This report identifies key themes and topics as well as significant initiatives implemented by ETBs in response to the review teams' recommendations. It also contains references to various case studies provided by ETBs within their Follow-Up Reports. This compilation of **Case Studies**<sup>2</sup> comprises all the case studies submitted by ETBs as part of the follow-up reporting process.

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1 <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-11/quality-in-further-education-training-2024.pdf>

2 To ensure consistency of language and format, QQI has made some slight editorial changes to the case studies as submitted.



## CITY OF DUBLIN ETB –

# DEVELOPMENT OF A QQI-VALIDATED TERTIARY DEGREE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NCI

### INTRODUCTION

In response to requests from industry, P-TECH learners, government departments and community partners in the North East Inner City (NEIC). City of Dublin ETB developed a Tertiary Degree with a Level 6 exit award 'Higher Certificate in Digital and Business skills' (DABS) in partnership with NCI.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Five DEIS schools in the NEIC participated in a P-TECH programme with 11 industry partners. IBM led the P-TECH initiative which supports second level students to complete valuable technology awards alongside their second level studies. The first 70 students complete their Level 6 Certificate Pathways to Technology (NIC programme leading to a QQI award) but industry did not have enough entry level jobs available to recruit students coming from the course. Learners and their families identified that economic blocks would prohibit them from progressing to further study at this time. The DABS programme sought to address these two issues.

### ACTION

City of Dublin ETB worked in partnership with local, national and international stakeholders to develop a paid educational progression route for learners emerging from the P-TECH schools programme (Higher Certificate in Digital and Business Skills leading to a BA (Hons) in Digital and Business Skills). This programme combines scaffolded classroom and work-based learning to help nonstandard learners progress to further and higher education in a programme specifically designed to connect learners from the NEIC with international industries on their doorsteps.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The development of tertiary degrees is in its infancy. This jointly developed programme is validated by QQI and provides a roadmap and rich learning ground for the coproduction of progression routes for nonstandard learners that respond to the current and future needs of industry. Between 25 and 100 learners per year will attend college between 1-3 days per week and spend the rest of the week as well as a minimum of 18 weeks per year on placement in industry. (e.g., IBM, Uisce Éireann, Irish Rail, Virgin Media, Salesforce).

### KEY LEARNINGS

Collaboration and partnership working takes time. Getting clarity from the beginning is essential and helps ensure a successful partnership.

## CITY OF DUBLIN ETB – DEVELOPMENT OF QA GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUPS

### INTRODUCTION

City of Dublin ETB's QQI-validated FET provision is delivered by over 40 certification centres, in five different spheres (FET Colleges, Training Centres, Adult Education Provision, Educational Services to prisons and Youthreach) offering QQI-accredited courses from minor certs at NQF Level 1 to full awards at Level 6.

This diversity of provision over a small geographic region allows City of Dublin ETB to provide tailored provision to respond to changing needs and to help prepare the city's residents and workforce to shape the future.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Arising from this diversity and scale of provision is the challenge of keeping quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures current and applicable across all FET service spheres.

### ACTION

To address this challenge in 2022/2023 City of Dublin ETB reviewed its QA governance groups (see chart below), updated the Terms of Reference of each, clarified the roles of the groups and established 11 different time-bound, task-specific working groups under its Programme Management Development Group (PMDG), the Strategic Performance Development Group and Quality Assurance Development Group (QADG) in areas like, RPL, Blended Learning, Academic Integrity, Onboarding of Learners and Apprenticeship Development.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

These working groups include representation from all five service spheres who have subject-matter expertise in the topic being developed. Some of the enhancements that have arisen from these groups include the updating of the City of Dublin ETB's EA policies and procedures, blended learning procedures and quality review guidelines. They have also developed UDL equivalence assessment guidelines, made recommendations on the use of E-portfolios across FET and developed a change management plan for the marketing of City of Dublin ETB FET provision, to name but a few.

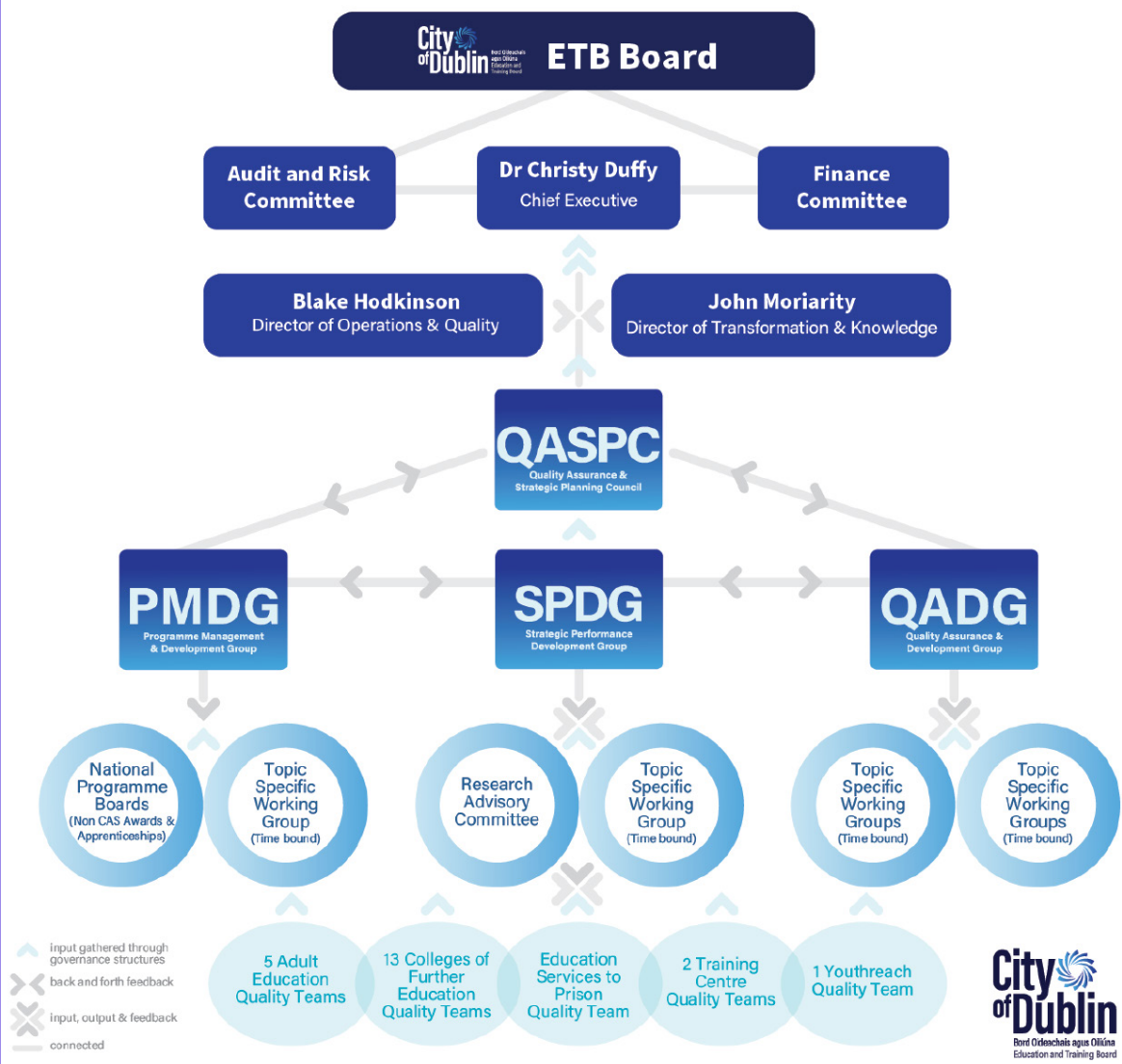
Participants in these working groups have given positive feedback about meeting colleagues from across City of Dublin ETB that they would not normally meet and having a chance to shape provision in the city. This is contributing to the One Service with the Learner Journey being the central approach leading to a more consistent learner experience across City of Dublin ETB centres.

### KEY LEARNINGS

Changing the wording of a policy or procedure is very easy to do. But ensuring the change of wording is the right change, that it is applicable to all centres and service spheres, that it can be communicated to everyone who is impacted by it and that it is implemented appropriately takes time, commitment and resources. But small changes can have big impacts on staff, learners and the communities they live and work in.



## Quality Governance Structures





## CITY OF DUBLIN ETB, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN FET – A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING RESPONSE

### INTRODUCTION

FET provision is diverse with extensive variability in the learner cohort. However, there is additional variability in how support is provided to those with barriers to learning.

Such variation in provision is in direct contrast to the overarching aims of the FET Strategy, which is to deliver a consistent learner experience (SOLAS, 2020).

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Traditionally, inclusive education centred on disability, but the recent expansion of the concept to include all at risk of marginalisation or exclusion (UNESCO, 2001), including target cohorts in FET. Article 24 of the UNCPRD, envisages an education system moving beyond student variability to exploring barriers to participation within context (EADSNE, 2013), where inclusion is at the core of education and not an add-on (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022b). There is an absence of accredited courses dedicated to inclusive education in FET and a dearth of research in this area.

### ACTION

City of Dublin ETB and Trinity College Dublin collaborated to co-design a tailored Level 9 Postgraduate Award in Diversity and Inclusion for FET. In 2021/2022 30 FET staff undertook the certificate course. The feedback from the participants was so positive that a diploma and master's was developed to facilitate City of Dublin ETB FET staff to continue to develop their knowledge, skills and competence in the area.

In 2023 approval was granted for a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma and Top-up Masters for this programme.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

City of Dublin ETB have sponsored 82 FET employees on the Certificate and 18 on the diploma course to date. The first master's students will begin their research in 2024. The awards are practice-focused, with each staff member challenged to apply a universal design perspective to their work. Areas included in the redesign were recruitment of learners, development of programmes, assessment design, establishment of clubs and societies, communities of practice to name but a few.

A review of the impact of the programme on practice in City of Dublin ETB will be carried out when the programme has been running for 5 years.

In 2023/2024 the certificate was offered to 7 DDLETB staff. Places on the certificate course have been offered to 4 other ETBs for 2024/2025. Year 3 is research masters, providing an opportunity to produce research specific to inclusive education in FET.

### KEY LEARNINGS

Based on feedback, City of Dublin ETB staff were approached to lecture and co-lecture on the certificate course to make the content more FET-specific.

The modules and indicative content for the development of the diploma were informed by ongoing feedback from certificate participants. Improved understanding was needed on leadership for inclusion. In October 2023, Dr Joanne Banks and Dr Gavin Murphy hosted a leadership for inclusion event for all City of Dublin ETB management, however more research and input are needed on leadership for inclusion to sustain the outcomes from the course

### RELEVANT LINKS:

[YB2021-FET-09.pdf \(irelandseducationyearbook.ie\)](#)



## CAVAN AND MONAGHAN ETB

### LEARNER VOICE AT CMETB

#### INTRODUCTION

CMETB actively promotes the learner voice on an ongoing basis at centre level as well as on a FET-wide basis via its annual Learner Voice Process. The Learner Voice Process is conducted via the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service (QAES) so that it is independent of centres directly involved in programme and service delivery. The process commences in December each year with the circulation of the annual learner survey and culminates in the annual learner forum in February. Feedback garnered from the process feeds continually into relevant CMETB strategies, quality processes and service delivery.

#### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The annual CMETB Learner Survey has been devised and tested in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Sub-group and charts the learners' journey with CMETB from initial point of contact right through to course completion.

The learner survey is conducted via Microsoft Forms and each learner only gets asked questions that are relevant to their particular learning journey with CMETB. First conducted in this format in 2019/20, the data gathered via the survey was manually analysed and collated in a FET-wide report, as well as centre level reports. This was a very onerous and time-consuming process.

Since 2020/21, however, the data analytics process has been fully automated using Power Automate and Power BI. With over 2,415 responses between 2019 and 2023, the learner survey database is a powerful tool which allows management and individual centres, and services access the data and cross-reference the data.

Overall service level data is presented to FET management and staff via a FET Breakfast Briefing, while all centres and services have access to the database and are

actively encouraged to analyse the data relevant to their own centre or service.

The data from the learner survey database helps inform the annual Learner Forum which takes place in February/March each year. In advance of the Learner Forum, CMETB convenes the Learner Advisory Network (LAN). The LAN is where learner representatives from each FET Service is invited to meet with QAES to discuss the learner survey feedback and to help plan the structure and focus of the Learner Forum.

#### ACTION

The following timeline outlines the key stages and dates of the CMETB Learner Voice Process:

- October/November – Review of survey questions and testing of updated survey
- December/January – Circulation of survey to all current FET learners in December with the link to the survey remaining active until the end of January
- February – Data in the Power BI databased is 'cleaned' and reviewed for anomalies etc.
- February – Overview data is presented to all FET centres/services via a FET Breakfast Briefing
- February/March – Learner Advisory Network (LAN) is convened to help with the planning of the Learner Forum
- February/March – Annual CMETB Learner Forum takes place with learners from all FET centres/services invited to attend and participate. CMETB typically engages with AONTAS on the forum as part of their National Learner Forum work.
- March – December – Outputs from the learner survey and forum are used at FET-wide and centre/service level to enhance the learner experience at CMETB.



## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

In 2019/20, when this format was first adapted for the circulation of the learner survey, the data from the learner responses submitted via Microsoft Forms had to be manually analysed and collated. This was a very labour intensive and time-consuming process as FET-wide and individual centre level reports had to be produced. In 2020/21, however, the process was automated with learner responses automatically feeding into the Power BI database. The Power BI database is live so as each learner response is submitted the database is updated. The impact of this automated, interactive database is that individual FET centres can have access to the most up-to-date information, and they can compare the data across centres and at a FET-wide level, as well as comparing their own data across years with the database now containing four years' worth of data.



## CAVAN AND MONAGHAN ETB – PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AT CMETB

### INTRODUCTION

CMETB has created its own process for the development of both CAS and non-CAS awards. This new process is the result of collaboration with stakeholders who participated in various new projects over the past two years. The process breaks programme development into a stage-gate system, with the proposed programme having to pass through a gate (review process) in order to progress to the next stage of development.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Because programme development is new ground for ETBs, CMETB initially pursued a trial-and-error approach. Based on the learnings from this ad hoc approach to programme development, CMETB worked with stakeholders involved in the process over the past two years to develop a comprehensive programme development process.

Programme development can be a lengthy and complex process, and it is for this reason that CMETB opted to implement a stage-gate system.

### ACTION

Given that programme development can be a lengthy and complex process, particularly for new programme development teams, preparatory and scoping exercises have been included in the stage-gate system and are completed before the programme descriptor is circulated to the development team.

In the first instance, centres wishing to develop a new programme must submit a request to proceed with programme development to the Programme Proposals Committee (PPC). Using Form PD01 for this purpose, centres must provide key details about the proposed programme, including a clear rationale for the programme. At the PPC meeting, the centre will be expected to assure the committee of clear evidence of

need for the programme, as well as support for the programme and capacity to deliver it in the centre. If approved by the PPC, the application will be forwarded to the FET Management and Quality Council for review and final approval. Once approved by the FET Management and Quality Council, the preparatory exercises will be completed to help new programme development teams come to terms with key concepts such as MIPLOs, MIMLOs and mapping exercises.

Inclusive of the preparatory exercises, there are five different stages and gates in the programme development process and each of these takes a defined period of time to complete as outlined below. A number of workshops are also conducted with the programme development team at each stage of the process:

- Stage 1: Scoping and Preparatory Exercises (5-6 weeks, 2 workshops)
- Stage 2: Programme Overview and Delivery Plan (6 weeks, 2 workshops)
- Stage 3: Module Development (4-5 weeks, 2 workshops)
- Stage 4: Curriculum Development and Validation (4 weeks, 2 workshops)
- Stage 5: Descriptor Completion with Summary (3-4 weeks, 1 workshop)

Based on this process, it is expected that the programme development team will complete a first draft of the programme descriptor within approximately 26 weeks of the date of approval of the programme development process. Once completed, the programme descriptor must be returned to the Programme Design and Validation and Review (PDVR) Officer for review. Once the PDVR Officer has reviewed the programme descriptor for consistency of content, the programme development team will meet with the PDVR Officer to discuss any issues that may need to be addressed before final submission can take place.



Once the programme descriptor is finalised it is submitted to QAES to commence the self-evaluation process. QAES will assemble a suitably qualified and independent team to assess the programme descriptor against the stated QQI criteria. Once this process has been completed, the programme descriptor is submitted to the FET Management and Quality Council for final approval before it is submitted to QQI for validation.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Breaking the programme development process down into the stage-gate system has help make the process easier to navigate for new development teams. In addition, given the complexity and duration of the process, providing a clear timeline for programme completion has helped to keep programme development teams on track.

In addition, the emphasis on keeping MIPLOs broad and few in number is a good way of ensuring that programmes retain their currency and do not become prematurely outdated.

It has also allowed for a pipeline of new programme development and transparency around the status of the programmes and serves to highlight resourcing issues quickly. As a result, CMETB has achieved a significant number of new programme and differential validations over the past 18 months.

Since the implementation of this new stage-gate system for programme development, CMETB has developed the Audio and Music Production (AMP) QQI Level 6 Award, which is the first non-CAS Level 6 Award to be developed and validated by an individual ETB. Additionally, CMETB is currently working in collaboration with QQI on piloting the draft Broad Standards at Levels 1 – 4 via the development of new ESOL awards at NFQ Levels 1 and 2. These awards are being developed in tandem with a unique unaccredited bridging programme aimed at supporting ESOL literacy learners to successfully access accredited ESOL programmes.

### KEY LEARNINGS

Based on experience of the stage-gate system to date, a number of key learnings have emerged:

1. Enabling learners and enterprise to have a voice in the curriculum development process is essential to help ensure that the programme meets the learners' needs, while also meeting the needs of industry.
2. In terms of quality assurance, internal review of the programme prior to QHub submission is essential and serves to ensure that applications meet a high standard.
3. Using the QHub platform to upload documentation and relevant information is not without issues. In particular, the information required on QHub is not always aligned with that required to complete the programme descriptor. This significantly increases the time it takes to make a submission. In addition, the site has a tendency to "forget" information that has already been added to the application. CMETB are working with the QQI team to mitigate these impacts.
4. Panel reviews, where there is a face-to-face element, have been positive and engaging. Feedback from both desk and face-to-face reviews has been both positive and helpful.



## CAVAN AND MONAGHAN ETB – QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMUNICATIONS AT CMETB

### INTRODUCTION

The Quality Assurance SharePoint site is an online repository designed to house key quality assurance documentation in a way that is easily accessible to all CMETB FET staff.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

With an ongoing increase in the breadth and scope of documentation being produced in respect of quality assurance, circulating these documents via email is not sustainable nor the most effective method for providing ongoing access to the most up-to-date document versions. Over the past few years, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service (QAES), via the work of the Quality Assurance (QA) Working Group, has commenced work on the development of a suite of QA policies and procedures. At the same time, CMETB has also completed its inaugural quality review which required the development and publication of a range of key documents. A number of important quality linked strategy documents have also been produced in respect of Blended Learning, Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) and Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL).

Consequently, an accessible single library resource was required to house and provide access to all QA resources, documents and templates. As CMETB has rolled out the Microsoft 365 suite to all staff, it was logical to develop a SharePoint site as a centralised repository.

### ACTION

CMETB had the expertise internally to develop the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service (QAES) SharePoint site. The site was designed in a user-friendly and visually engaging manner. Core QA documentation has been laid out in a tabular

Quality Assurance Handbook format with 12 different chapters/tabs making up this handbook, as follows:

1. Documented Approach
2. Governance and Management of Quality
3. Programme Development, Approval, Monitoring and Review
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
5. Teaching and Learning (including the learning environment)
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Supports for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communication
10. Collaboration
11. Self-evaluation and Review
12. Blended Learning
13. There are also links to the staff induction resources, ConexUs! Newsletter and general QA news and publications within the SharePoint site.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

All CMETB FET staff have access to the QAES SharePoint and are advised to regularly check the site for the most up-to-date version of documents, especially policies and procedures.

The site was showcased to the independent review panel as part of the inaugural review and was commended by the panel as an international model of best practice.



## KEY LEARNINGS

Based on the experience of developing and using the QAES SharePoint site to date, the following were the key learnings:

1. Bi-annual reviews of the SharePoint site are required to ensure it remains up to date and includes the most recent versions of documents.
2. Consistent signposting to the site, particularly among new staff is required. ConexUs! the QAES newsletter, acts as a key mechanism for communicating with staff and reminding them regularly of the SharePoint site.



## CORK ETB –

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (PLD) SHAREPOINT TRAINING SITE

### INTRODUCTION

The SOLAS FET PLD Strategy 2020-2024 set out clear goals in relation to staff professional learning and development. Cork ETB's Strategic Statement 2022-2026 clearly details its commitment to support staff in developing their professional practice. In response to the statutory review recommendations, Cork ETB identified staff training and support as a priority development area.

To that end, the Cork ETB Professional Learning and Development Support Service was established in September 2021. The goals of the service are quite simple: to support staff in assessing their professional learning and development requirements and to offer transparent and easily accessible training supports. It aims to provide quality meaningful training pieces in line with staff and Cork ETB priority needs and to update existing policies and procedures to provide clarity and transparency for staff. Its staff are Cork ETB's most vital resource and ensuring their continued ability to access appropriate and relevant training is of the utmost importance.

On its appointment, the PLD team conducted a Training Needs Analysis to ascertain the views of staff in relation to PLD, their priority training requirements and possible challenges impacting staff accessing PLD. It quickly developed an action plan based on the TNA results. One of the key objectives was to create a dedicated PLD Training Platform in order to focus all PLD-related information in one place to increase staff access to, and engagement with, PLD training opportunities and information.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

On establishment, the Professional Learning and Development Support Service recognised that while there was an existing PLD culture amongst Cork ETB staff but it was ad hoc and depended on the ability of individual staff member, or their managers, to identify, source and/or engage with appropriate training pieces. Training, related to several thematic areas, needed to be identified and sourced and, crucially, staff

needed to be made aware of the training available. The PLD team believed that a more structured approach would benefit staff, management, and the organisation overall.

Initially the PLD Support Service used emails as the main communication tool and MS Forms as a means of recording EOIs in training, registration and evaluating for training. It became obvious very quickly that this was neither the most efficient nor effective means of reaching staff or gathering necessary data related to training.

The PLD team needed a dedicated platform where it could, at minimum, advertise training events, record registration, track attendance and evaluations of the training offered. It needed to collect data which could be easily managed and filtered. This, in turn, would be used for better planning of future PLD in line with organisational and staff requirements.

### ACTION

The creation of a dedicated PLD Training Platform, ultimately utilising the Sapiens plugin, was central to increasing staff awareness of and engagement with training pieces. The ultimate aim was to create a training site that both staff and managers could access to view training opportunities and where forward planning could also take place. The site, in the long term, would act as a central repository for all things PLD-related – training calendar, policies and procedures and PLD news.

The PLD team therefore began to search for suitable software/applications that might suit its purposes. It considered the use of Privacy Engine as a possible training management system as the system was already being used for compliance training pieces at Cork ETB. However, after review, it became obvious that while it was suited to compliance training it did not provide the functionality or flexibility the PLD team required.



In September 2021, the team met with representatives of SharePoint Sapiens for a demonstration of their SharePoint add-on application. As Cork ETB already uses MS Office 365 and SharePoint as the primary ICT system for all Cork ETB staff, the use of an application that could be integrated with the MS Office platform already established seemed appropriate. The SharePoint Sapiens Employee Training Management plug-in provided the functionality the PLD team needed. For example, it had a built-in calendar to advertise training events, registration was easy for the user, registration numbers could be viewed and it allowed for direct communication with participants. Exporting data would also be straightforward for the PLD team.

The PLD team began the process of securing approval to purchase the necessary license for the SharePoint Sapiens Employee Training Management System. The approvals process took time as it required the cooperation, and approval, of a number of Cork ETB departments to ensure the system was compatible with existing Cork ETB IT policy and procedures.

The license was purchased in late May 2022. The ICT department then needed to create the necessary SharePoint site which the Sapiens application would plug into. The site was not launched until October as the PLD team needed first to beta test the site.

With the help and support of Adrian Deasy, Cork ETB ICT Department, the site went live on Thursday 13th October 2022.

As with any new system there have been some minor teething problems. The site requires staff to use an @corketb.ie email address. While it has been policy for staff to use only a Cork ETB email account when doing business on behalf of Cork ETB, this has not always been strictly enforced. Part-time staff, in particular, may not always have access to their work email. This issue is being resolved at present.

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

1. To date, the PLD Training site has proven quite successful. In the last 90 days alone, 14/12/22-13/03/2023, there have been 4,790 visits to the site. Since its establishment in October 2022 the site has been visited 13,543 times by over 1,043 unique viewers. Given that Cork ETB FET staff numbers around 1200, this means that approx. 85% of FET staff have visited the site.



2. Over 60 separate training pieces have been offered to Cork ETB FET staff covering key thematic areas such as QA, Teaching and Learning, Literacy, ICT, TEL, Health and Safety and more through the site.



3. From October 2021 to December 2022, 275 staff (approx. 22.9% of FET staff), accessed training provided through the site.
4. Staff can view the calendar in advance and make appropriate training choices for their needs. It allows for better planning and better use of time.



5. Training can be tailored by the staff member to their needs and those of their learners.
6. Staff can view both course registrations and achievements. In other words, they can view and track their own training.
7. Managers can also view training which allows for better planning on a campus/area basis especially where staff may need to be released to attend training.
8. PLD Staff can monitor registration for courses, record attendance and send evaluation forms directly to participants.
9. PLD staff can gather data on training uptake and the quality of training to improve the service provision in the long term.
10. The Sapiens Employee Training Management Application is a standard add-on. There is significant scope to customise the application to better serve the needs of CETB staff and the PLD Support Service.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Having a single PLD Training platform is effective in communicating training opportunities to FET staff. As a result, staff are engaging more with training relevant to their practice.

Staff using the training site often use the direct registration links rather than simply checking into the site. Promotion is necessary to encourage them to use different aspects of the site, not just the training calendar. Policies and Procedures, external training opportunities and FAQ pages will hopefully see more traffic when promotion of the site improves.

The Sapiens Plug-In could be leveraged for more purposes. The PLD team, in order to streamline a number of different procedures, has engaged SharePoint Sapiens to customise the site for Cork ETB needs. The development plans will route all training-related activity to the PLD site.

Once the development work is complete the applications for attending training and/or funding applications will be automated through the PLD site:

- Staff will be able to apply for funding and online approval by line managers.
- Where relevant, payment for attending, or delivering, training will also be automated through the system.

Managers will be able to:

- Approve training and payment applications for their staff attending/delivering training.
- Be able to view training undertaken and completed by their staff.

This will allow managers to assess gaps in staff training and enhance forward planning at a local level.

The tracking capability will be vastly improved by the customisation of the SharePoint Sapiens Plug-in to meet the future needs of Cork ETB.

PLD will continue to build on the variety of training and upskilling opportunities already provided, in line with SOLAS and Cork ETB strategies. The more PLD can meet the training needs of Cork ETB staff the better the service provision will be, which will benefit all learners attending Cork ETB centres.



## CORK ETB –

# RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

### INTRODUCTION

As per the recommendations of the statutory review, Cork ETB need to simplify and streamline the opportunities for external partners to engage with the FET Directorate. The Business Support Team in Cork College of FET- Bishopstown Campus encompasses an Apprenticeship Service and Skills to Advance and provides for external partners to engage with Cork College of FET.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

A Cork-based hotel group had identified an issue with staff retention and recruitment post-Covid. Many staff had left for other jobs and many new staff had been recruited. The group identified a strong need to develop leadership at all levels of the company in order to increase staff retention and develop career pathways within the hotel group.

### ACTION

Skills to Advance Team in Bishopstown Campus were first contacted by the Regional Skills Forum, who had been working with the hotel group.

The Skills to Advance manager met with representatives from the hotel group learning and development department. The hotel had conducted a training analysis of their needs, and the findings were brought to the meeting. The Skills to Advance team then discussed various options. It was decided to offer the group a suite of qualifications accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). ILM is an internationally recognised qualification. The final course design was co-designed by the Skills to Advance team and the hotel group.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The final programme has three levels:

1. Navigate Programme
2. Emerging Leaders
3. Complete Leaders

#### Navigate Programme

The Navigate Programme is aimed at upcoming supervisors and assistant managers, and those who wish to move into a supervisory or managerial role.

Certification: ILM Level 3 Award in Leadership and Management

#### Emerging Leaders Programme

The Emerging Leaders Programme is aimed at existing supervisors and assistant managers.

Certification: ILM Level 3 Certificate in Leadership and Management

#### Complete Leaders Programme

The Complete Leaders Programme is aimed at the Senior Management Team.

Certification: ILM Level 4 Certificate in Leadership and Management

The first group of learners have started the programme, and it has been very successful so far.

### KEY LEARNINGS

A single point of contact through the Business Support Team is key for clarity and ease of access for external stakeholders.

By working collaboratively with industry, Cork College of FET can respond quickly to the needs of external stakeholders.



## DUBLIN AND DÚN LAOGHAIRE ETB – ENHANCING QUALITY ASSURANCE: A SECURE SOLUTION FOR COMMUNICATION COLLABORATION AND REPOSITORY ACCESS

### INTRODUCTION

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality, integrity, and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system. As a recognised provider in this system, Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) offers a diverse array of QQI awards across its further education and training (FET) services. Over the years, DDLETB has been consistently working towards establishing a unified quality assurance (QA) system to uphold the highest standards across its FET services. This case study highlights DDLETB's journey of implementing QA enhancements and the profound impacts these initiatives have had on the organisation.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

In the past, DDLETB housed QA and curriculum documentation on a Google Drive called CloudETB. This site lacked the ability to ensure secure access, and this led to inefficiencies in document management. With a substantial workforce of over 800 FET teaching staff, the need for reliable access to QA policies, procedures and curriculum documentation was imperative to ensure standards, consistency, and quality across DDLETB FET services thus, supporting excellence in teaching, learning and assessment.

### ACTION

DDLETB has strategically committed to and invested in Microsoft 365 as a comprehensive solution for the entire organisation. This decision was taken to enhance productivity and efficiency while prioritising security for data and devices. As a result, all staff and learners have accounts providing access to the full suite of

Microsoft applications. To maximise the potential of this resource, the DDLETB QA Unit collaborated with Cloud Design Box, 'a Microsoft Partner', to develop a tailored SharePoint site that would provide secure access to QA resources and documentation for all four of DDLETB FET services (CDB 2024). This would support DDLETB's goal to develop one common, overarching quality assurance (QA) system for all four FET services i.e., Adult Education Services, Post-Leaving Certificate Colleges and Further Education Colleges, Training Centres, and Youthreach Centres.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

**Improved Accessibility and Security:** The implementation of the QA Hub addressed longstanding concerns about accessibility and security. The QA Hub now offers secure access controls to a centralised repository where staff members across all DDLETB FET services can efficiently retrieve QA and curriculum documentation, ensuring compliance and consistency in educational practices.

**Enhanced Communication:** The QA Hub emerges as a pivotal communication tool, facilitating the dissemination of important updates, news items, and calendar reminders to FET centres. This streamlined communication process fosters greater alignment and collaboration among stakeholders, enhancing overall operational efficiency.

**Positive User Experience:** Feedback from FET centres confirmed a resounding appreciation for the QA Hub's user-friendly interface and its tangible impact on workflow efficiency. Testimonials praised the platform for its usability, inclusivity, and accessibility, highlighting its pivotal role in supporting teaching, learning and assessment.

**Streamlined Appeals Process:** The success of the QA Hub compelled the QA Unit to



embark on a transformative journey to streamline the appeals process through the development of the Results Appeals Process Hub. By digitising appeal forms and establishing secure folders for learner evidence, DDLETB significantly reduced the time and effort required for appeals processing, thereby improving efficiency and accessibility and ensuring timely resolution along with stakeholder approval and satisfaction.

**Effective Governance:** The integration of Microsoft Teams within the QA Hub enabled DDLETB's robust governance structures to communicate and collaborate, consequently ensuring strategic oversight and alignment with organisational objectives. Committee members can now seamlessly access relevant documentation, participate in meetings, and collaborate on initiatives, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.

**Universal Design Integration:** The incorporation of Universal Design (UD) principles into the Assessors Hub exemplifies DDLETB's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. By offering features such as the Immersive Reader option, descriptive imagery, and diverse content formats, DDLETB empowers assessors with diverse needs, fostering a culture of equity and inclusion.

**Further Developments:** The success of the QA Hub has inspired the development of the Professional Development (PD) Hub, another collaboration between DDLETB and Cloud Design Box. The PD Hub will support the ongoing advancement of DDLETB's professional learning and development by providing a central location for FET continuous professional development (CPD) and PD requirements, as well as support resources such as TEL, ESOL, and UDL. FET staff will be able to use the PD Hub to register and/or express interest in DDLETB CPD events, DDLETB-sponsored PD, and free external courses. This initiative further demonstrates DDLETB's commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in teaching, learning, and assessment.

## KEY LEARNINGS

**Collaboration and Partnership:** DDLETB's successful QA enhancement initiatives underscore the significance of collaboration with technology partners like Cloud Design Box. By leveraging external expertise and resources, DDLETB was able to develop tailored solutions that met the unique needs of its FET services.

**User-centric Approach:** Prioritising user experience and accessibility emerged as fundamental principles guiding DDLETB's QA-enhancement endeavours. By actively seeking feedback and incorporating user-centric design principles, DDLETB ensured widespread adoption and acceptance of its QA initiatives among stakeholders.

**Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:** DDLETB recognises that the journey towards excellence in QA is an ongoing process. Continuous evaluation, feedback loops, and iterative improvement are essential components of DDLETB's QA framework, ensuring adaptability and responsiveness to evolving educational needs and regulatory requirements.

**Leadership and Vision:** DDLETB's commitment to QA reflects strong leadership and a clear organisational vision. By championing a culture of excellence, innovation, and continuous improvement, the DDLETB QA Unit sets the standard for QA, inspiring emulation and collaboration among peers and stakeholders.

In conclusion, DDLETB's journey in enhancing QA within its FET services serves as a testament to the transformative power of strategic investments, collaborative partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. By prioritising accessibility, inclusivity, and continuous improvement, DDLETB has not only elevated the quality of its educational provision but also set a benchmark for best practice in the wider educational community. DDLETB continues its quest for excellence and stands poised to embrace the future of further education and training in Ireland and beyond.

## DUBLIN AND DÚN LAOGHAIRE ETB –

# THE ETB'S EARLY LEARNING AND CARE QUALIFICATIONS POST-VALIDATION: THE DDLETB APPROACH TO MINDING THE SHARED CURRICULUM

### INTRODUCTION

The Early Learning and Care qualifications (Level 5 Certificate 5M21473 and the Advanced Certificate 6M21471) were developed by DDLETB for and on behalf of the 16 ETBs in 2020-2021. DDLETB achieved validation and the 15 partner-ETBs achieved differential validation of the shared curriculum in a simultaneous exercise in May-June 2021. The qualifications are now rolling out across all ETBs and the delivery phase is mid-way through the five-year validation period. In the first two years of roll-out, 868 graduates at Level 5 have qualified as Early Years Educators, enabling them to enter employment in Early Years services.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

DDLETB's role in supporting the ELC qualifications continues post-validation. The organisation has taken a three-pillar approach to 'minding the shared curriculum'. These pillars can be described as: 1) maintaining standards, 2) communications, and 3) governance, management & review.

### ACTION

The three pillars outlined here have been actioned. They are governance, management and review:

- providing the secretariat for the ELC Programme Board, which acts as the 'custodian of the shared curriculum', to ensure that it remains up to date and fit for purpose
- facilitating two-way communication between the board and the ELC programme managers at ETB level
- coordinating and reporting on the annual programme review

- coordinating, documenting and communicating curriculum updates
- coordinating the sharing of the curriculum with other approved providers

#### Communications:

- facilitating a community of practice for ELC programme managers across all ETBs, meeting frequently through the year to communicate relevant updates, share experience, raise issues and contribute to solutions; the 'national' community of practice allows for communication to be cascaded to local ELC staff communities of practice.
- reporting to the ETBI-hosted Quality Network of ETB QA Managers on relevant updates
- acting as a point of contact with government departments, QQI and other bodies on ELC-sector related issues

#### Maintaining standards:

- developing and maintaining resources to accompany the programme, including a sample assessment booklet, a Professional Practice Placement Handbook, and the RPL Toolkit for ELC
- collaborating with ETBI FET Digital Library to create ELC subject pages and ensure additions to the library stock
- collaborating with ETBI and FESS to support EA briefings
- arranging PD opportunities in a range of relevant topics both with FESS and via DDLETB for teachers across all providers who use the curriculum

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

This approach to ‘minding the curriculum’ post-validation means there is oversight of the programme located in a suitably provisioned programme board.

The national big picture can be made available to all the participating providers about the extent of roll-out, certification and learner progression pathways. In addition, insights into impacts of the programme and on the programme can be shared.

The collaboration, the communities of practice and shared resources provide for a consistency in standards while also allowing for peer learning about different approaches to delivery taking place across ETBs.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Chief among the key learnings is that developing a qualification in a sector regulated for employment entails a long-term commitment to maintain the programme post-validation. It is akin to acting as a coordinating provider. As such, the commitment requires personnel and significant time.

A second learning is the way this approach to minding the curriculum takes care of much of the preparatory work needed for review and revalidation of the programme at the end of the five-year certification period.

Finally, solutions to specific programme-level problems can, with good design and creative application, grow into tools with benefits for learners and staff way beyond the limits of the programme in which they originated.



## DONEGAL ETB – FET SERVICE STUDENT HUB

### INTRODUCTION

Donegal ETB's Further Education and Training (FET) Service launched its FET Student Hub in September 2022, a one-stop shop containing all the information a prospective or current FET student might need before or during their course.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

During the student voice activities, students requested an online resource where they could access all relevant information in one place. Following this feedback the FET Student Hub was developed.

### ACTION

Following initial feedback from students, the first draft of the Hub was created. Consultation with students took place with each iteration of the Hub shared with students at different student voice activities to ensure that it was being designed in a way that suited their needs. The Hub contains all relevant information for students and ensures that students across the FET service are receiving consistent information and access to academic and wider support. The Hub is live and continuously updated with new items and information. Students are also able to express interest or register for student voice events.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The Hub allows us to engage with the wider student community ensuring that they all receive the same information in a way that suits their needs.

Initial feedback from students suggests that students find the Hub an excellent tool for academic support and for more general information.

Teaching staff have found it an invaluable resource in the classroom for supporting learning. The Hub is designed to simplify and enhance the way students access guidance and support services, making them more accessible and consistent for all.

### KEY LEARNINGS

It is vital that features are continuously added or enhanced based on student feedback to ensure the Hub remains fit for purpose.

Based on student feedback, future features in development include an online student forum so students can communicate with other students from across the FET provision.



## DONEGAL ETB – UDL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK (PLN)

### INTRODUCTION

A Donegal ETB Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Professional Learning Network (PLN) was set up in February 2022 with the vision of supporting members implementing UDL in their work, to help practitioners gain a deeper understanding of UDL and support colleagues by showing best practice so other staff members may wish to embrace UDL and implement innovative practices in their classrooms.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

To create innovative ways of communicating examples of best practice UDL across the FET Service to enhance the student experience.

### ACTION

All staff are invited to join the PLN to Establish '+1' 'Lunch Bytes'. The 'Lunch Bytes' are short 15-minute monthly lunchtime sessions consisting of members' pre-recorded video on a UDL topic, a live introduction, and a Q&A session afterward. The focus is on short '+1' ideas to show how beneficial implementing UDL is to teaching and learning. Meetings are scheduled for the second Monday of each month and culminate with a webinar at the end of the academic year for our organisation and educators nationally that highlights a variety of the UDL+1 ideas generated by the PLN. To support members implementing UDL in their work, a Google Chat Group and Workspace was set up.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

This group engages in collaborative learning with others, ultimately improving outcomes for students.

Staff feel supported through the Chat Group where members can post UDL queries or ask for suggestions on UDL activities, and other members post responses and answer queries.

In October 2022, the Donegal ETB UDL Professional Learning Network was shortlisted for the "John Kelly Awards for Universal Design in Further and Higher Education". The PLN was successful in winning the "One to Watch" award for the collaborative category.

### KEY LEARNINGS

Future plans to engage more collaboratively not just across the ETB sector but also within the wider education clusters in the northwest of Ireland will be an opportunity to showcase and share good practices with other organisations and stakeholders as a further opportunity to grow UDL initiatives.



## DONEGAL ETB – DONEGAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS NETWORK (DWBN)

### INTRODUCTION

Donegal Women in Business Network met with the Enterprise Engagement Officer to see how Donegal ETB could provide training support to their members. Many members are sole traders, do not have the resources to outsource and therefore were unable to maximise their reach to positively influence their businesses. Female sole traders often feel isolated and some lack the confidence to highlight their businesses online. They requested practical training for their members that would enable them to grow their businesses. The aim was to build a sense of self-efficacy in ecommerce.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Many members were spread throughout the County and needed upskilling in social media, as they wanted to trade online and create a social media presence. Firstly, Donegal ETB created a beginner level Social Media course with Skills for Work, which was attended by 21 sole traders. This was then followed by the Principles of Social Media (City and Guilds) for 20 members, in the format of Lunch and Learn Sessions as advised by DWBN. Following on from the success of previous programmes, Donegal ETB is offering a Video Production Course as a progression in 2023.

### ACTION

Several meetings have been held with the President and Facilitator of DWBN since November 2021. These included face-to-face and online meetings. Meetings were held with all sole traders for the City and Guilds Principles in Social Media training face-to-face in various locations throughout the County. Even though this took considerable time, it was well received by the members and generated a rapport and an understanding of the members/participants.

The tutor tailored the training to suit the needs of the group in line with the learning outcomes and QA processes. One-to-one sessions were offered with the tutor so that

participants could access advice on live issues. The course was delivered as Lunch and Learn Sessions in order to allow for the greatest participation. We followed the lead and advice of DWBN in the shape of our delivery. The tutor remained supportive and flexible and went beyond the call of duty.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

- Those participating in the training found it very practical and were able to bring their businesses to the next level. Sole traders felt more confident in their abilities and the one-to-one support addressed many of their concerns and queries.
- In addition, DWBN looked at other offerings such as Barista Skills Training and Wine Spirit and Education Trust Level 1 and 2 for DWBN members in hospitality/ cafe owners. This increased scope with harder-to-reach businesses.
- Following reviews of training needs with DWBN, Donegal ETB developed an Understanding Your Numbers Programme in Partnership with Larissa Feeney of Accountant Online for members who needed assistance with financial/business acumen. Larissa is on the DWBN Committee and has a great profile both nationally and locally as a winner of the Business Person of the Year Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce Award.
- This collaboration arose from an excellent working relationship with DWBN, and over 41 new businesses have signed up for training. Acting on the feedback from previous courses, the first meeting will be a business breakfast face-to-face followed by two mornings online. Currently this course is uncertified and run under Skills for Work. Future planning includes offering a certified unit in Business Planning 5N1418 as a follow-on.
- This is an integrated response to training needs by both Skills to Advance and Skills for Work in order to meet the needs of local businesses.



## KEY LEARNINGS

- It is important to offer targeted training and courses that are relevant and attractive to employers and their employees. In addition, the first session of any course should be face-to-face in order to help with any technical issues and to create a positive relationship. Thereafter, it can be online. We experienced technical glitches with those who found MS Teams hard to navigate. Therefore, an initial face-to-face classroom can address any issues with MS Teams or devices.
- We know the importance of good relationships with business groups such as DWBN and the importance of good working relationships internally. Listening is a key element along with an agile response without compromising the need for quality processes. Collaborations are key to creative responses to industry.



## GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB – GRETb'S CONVERSATIONAL LEARNING PROJECT

### INTRODUCTION

The GRETB Conversational Learning project is a ground-breaking initiative designed to offer flexible learning solutions to support a diverse range of learners within Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb). The project utilises Conversational Learning, an educational approach that involves learners engaging with short, 3 to 5-minute units of learning. These units are grouped into brief courses that are aligned with specific learning objectives and curricula across various GRETB programmes. Learners access these courses through a dedicated app that presents the learning material as engaging and interactive conversations, complete with quizzes and knowledge checks related to the course content.

### TARGETED COHORTS

Initially, this project focused on two specific groups for pilot testing: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Trades Apprenticeships. Over time, the project expanded its scope to include GRETB Youth Advocacy services, tailoring flexible courses to meet the needs of learners in this category.

### COLLABORATIVE DESIGN AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS

One of the significant achievements of this project is the establishment of a collaborative model for creating course content. This collaboration involves the Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL) team, subject matter experts (GRETb practitioners), and app developers working together to create effective learning experiences.

### CONTENT CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SHARABLE RESOURCES

GRETb practitioners played an active role in developing user-friendly content that aligns with specific learning objectives and curricula. These resources are easily

accessible, support classroom activities, and are seamlessly integrated into the syllabus. All content is stored in a content library, making it easy to update and reuse as standalone resources or incorporated into other platforms.

### INTEGRATION OF AI

The project enthusiastically adopted advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) by incorporating AI-driven personal learning assistants and an AI-powered question bank into the learning experience. The content includes AI avatars that engage learners through short conversations and repeated phrases, similar to popular platforms like WhatsApp, Duolingo, and TikTok Reels.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The project addressed specific challenges that had been identified within the target cohorts:

#### ESOL:

- Lack of ESOL tutors available to address the demand for ESOL classes
- Lack of standardised ESOL resources aligned to GRETB A1 curricula
- Lack of relevant conversational material for an Irish context
- Geographical dispersion of ESOL learners in Galway and Roscommon and access to GRETB centres (flexible learning opportunities)
- Efficient ways to share resources with learners

#### Apprenticeships:

- Learner supports for apprenticeship students
- Extra support in maths for trades
- High rates of failure in phase 2 exams (maths identified as a problem area)



- Lack of easily accessible resources aligned to the Irish apprenticeship syllabus
- Flexible access to support resources on the job

Youth Advocacy: Leveraging educational reels, the project will aim to promote interaction and engagement for harder-to-reach learner groups, promoting engagement with the service.

## ACTION

The project commenced by identifying two initial cohorts for pilot testing: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Trades Apprenticeships. The project development followed the ADDIE model of instructional design:

### Phase 1

- During lockdown, TEL worked with GRETB practitioners to develop e-Tivities and engage in storyboarding for instructional design.
- Two TEL champions who completed this training were identified and invited to participate in a collaborative design process for ESOL and apprenticeships.
- Content experts were identified for each of the pilot cohorts.
- Initial training on the specific design platform and ongoing weekly project meetings with TEL.
- Decisions were made regarding the overall course areas to be developed: ESOL focused on social interactions and community interactions aligned with A1 curricula, while apprenticeships focused on key mathematical formulas in various trades.

### Phase 2

- ESOL scripts were developed by ESOL practitioners, with 4-minute interactions carefully scaffolded for ESOL learners and reviewed for suitability and language level.
- The software Mural was used to develop an initial storyboard presented to app developers, and AI avatars were created to represent different characters in each interaction.
- Interactions were staged in various locations using photos of centres/locations as

scene backdrops.

- For Apprenticeships, bespoke animations were created using MS PowerPoint and Adobe Photoshop, focusing on specific mathematical formulas.
- A series of 60-second videos were developed demonstrating formulas for 5 different trades, along with other videos exploring key theories.

### Phase 3

- Courses were rolled out to apprenticeship classes in GRETB TC Galway city and ESOL classes in Co. Galway.
- Learners could access and download the app via a QR code, and a 5-digit code sent to GRETB emails.
- Feedback from learners, especially apprentices, indicated a desire for short maths revision courses on key maths formulas, leading to the design of these courses for phase 2 apprentices.

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The Conversational Learning project has yielded several key outcomes and benefits:

- Increased Student Engagement: Learner analytics indicate engagement beyond traditional class hours, even on weekends.
- Improved Learning Outcomes: Learners who engage with Conversational Learning consistently exhibit enhanced understanding of specific topics.
- Personalised Learning Paths: Students appreciate the tailored learning experience focused on short, digestible learning elements.
- Flexible Learning Opportunities: Learners can access material via an app on smartphones, making it possible to study during commutes.
- Learner Analytics: Guided lessons help learners identify areas of difficulty, building autonomy. Practitioners can identify common areas of difficulty.
- Accessibility: Conversational Learning is available 24/7, ensuring learners have support when needed. The AI question bank provides immediate answers to learners' questions based on the material uploaded by practitioners. We have



had 262 users complete courses (up to October 2023) and usage has risen very steadily as instructors and learners are becoming more familiar with the app and how to use it effectively. Analytics indicate that 94% of learners feel more confident in the topic after completing the short courses.

- Collaborative Design/Instructional Design: The project has successfully involved various stakeholders in content creation and has established a resource library.

## KEY LEARNINGS

- The project's journey yielded valuable insights:
- Co-Creation/Co-Design: Collaborative content creation involving practitioners, instructional designers, and developers is crucial, with regular catch-ups to maintain a shared vision.
- Instructional Design: Designing a course prototype for testing allows for quick adjustments before the course is fully developed.
- Blended Learning: Embracing blended learning and flipped classroom models enhances engagement and understanding.
- Community of Practice: Developing a community of practice is essential for collaboration and maintaining content quality.
- Consistent Sets of Resources: Establishing a library of high-quality, consistent learning resources is a crucial ongoing project, particularly for ESOL and Apprenticeship programmes.

Conversational Learning demonstrates an innovative approach to flexible learning, addressing specific challenges and fostering improved outcomes and engagement. Through collaborative design, advanced technology integration, and personalised learning experiences, the project has highlighted the potential to reshape traditional learning paradigms leveraging the best of innovative technology developments to enhance learning.



## GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB – GRETB LEARNER REGIONAL EXPERIENCE EVENTS

### INTRODUCTION

The Learner Regional Events were established to encourage learners to provide feedback to GRETB on their learning experiences. The premise was to establish five regional events that would encourage learners throughout GRETB to meet informally with a view to sharing their experiences of GRETB services. Each event intended to provide individuals with the opportunity to hear from other learners, and to communicate their views on being a GRETB learner, critique the services offered, and make suggestions on improvements that GRETB could respond to. The events also provided an opportunity to share the impact of being an adult learner, their learning journey within GRETB, and how this experience will inevitably shape their future. Following the events, 112 learners expressed an interest in participating in a Learner Forum. It is hoped that in the long term, learners, representative of each provision, will participate in Regional Learner Forums so that their voices can be captured on an ongoing basis.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

While GRETB has always recognised the importance of the inclusion of the learner voice and actively welcomes learner participation, no formal process to capture this has been in place to date.

### ACTION

Following consultation with Centre Managers and stakeholders, GRETB decided to establish Regional Learner Events across five geographical locations within Galway and Roscommon to engage with the diverse learner groups engaging with all education and training services offered within FET. The events were planned and designed to provide learners with the opportunity to interact with each other in an inclusive and fun-orientated environment. Hotels with appropriate facilities and refreshments were booked. Transport to and from the events was provided. Learners with additional

needs, including special dietary requirements, were catered for. Activities were carefully selected to engage learners and included participation from Galway Community Circus and a facilitator from Galway Youth Theatre. The Learner Experience events took place the week of 16th to 20th October 2023. The five events took place in Tuam (North Galway), Clifden (West Galway), Galway City, Roscommon Town and Loughrea (East Galway).

Following consultation with stakeholders, five questions for learners were identified at the events. These were presented to learners to ensure inclusion for all, in a variety of formats, including: facilitation (GCC & Facilitator Galway Youth Theatre), Mentimeter and paper-based. Data was collected electronically and via paper. In total 937 responses to the 5 questions were recorded. This is reflective of a total of 198 attendees overall.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Preliminary findings from the feedback generated to date indicates:

- GRETB learners are predominantly positive about their experiences to date.
- Learners believe in sharing their opinions and making their learning experience as positive as possible.
- Broadband and internet connection is a concern for most.
- Learners would like more course offerings, including online and blended delivery.
- The need for learner supports including Learner Assistance Fund, career guidance & counselling were mentioned frequently.
- IT support and digital skills training would be welcome.
- 112 of the 198 learners are interested in joining the five Learner Forums.



#### **Planned outcomes:**

- All data generated from the learner events is currently being collated and a report has been generated to QA Steering. A more detailed comprehensive report will be published and circulated.
- Feedback on the findings will be distributed to learners through a variety of means.
- GRETB will liaise with the learners and establish forums that best suit their schedules and create an environment that they feel comfortable contributing in.
- The forums will have members that represent each level of courses/provision within GRETB.
- We aim to have the Regional Forums established by February 2024.

#### **KEY LEARNINGS**

GRETb takes pride in our partnership with our learners and appreciates the level of participation and feedback provided by this diverse group through these events.

#### **The Key Learnings from the five events are:**

- Each of the five regions bring their own unique issues, supporting the need for five independent Regional Forums.
- To facilitate meaningful participation and to support inclusion, a maximum of 50 learners is recommended at each event with the provision of facilities for those who are neuro-diverse and have additional needs.
- Broadband quality is a key issue irrespective of region.
- GRETB could improve its social media presence, particularly in relation to advertising courses, and making learners aware of the supports available to them.
- Learners want more courses, extra class time, and to continue their positive learning journey with GRETB.

It is intended to conduct a 'Lessons Learned' review post the event to inform future event planning.

## GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB – GRETB QA SHAREPOINT SITE

### INTRODUCTION

QA have recently engaged in an upgrade of a dedicated QA SharePoint site. Following research and collaboration with the external design team, a template suitable for staff and QA needs was selected and developed.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Prior to the establishment of this resource, GRETB FET relied on Moodle for the provision of educator resources and updates for staff. These media were challenging as not all staff found them readily accessible or easy to navigate. In addition, other relevant documentation required by staff, was stored on a SharePoint site, further complicating access. Staff had highlighted this at briefings and in other communications.

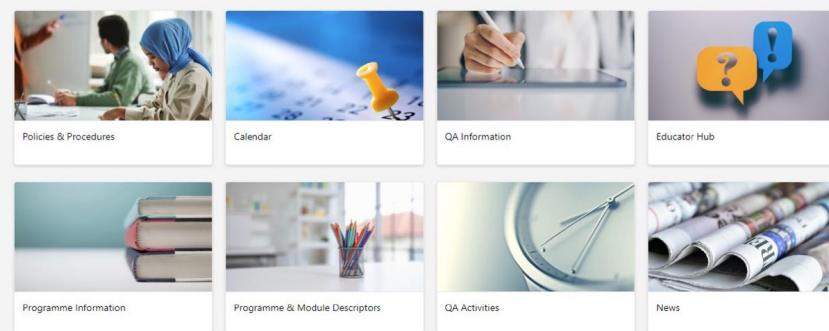
### ACTION

The QA Team created one easily accessible Resource Hub for all staff members.

- QA connected with Centres to ascertain feedback on Moodle resources.
- Centre Managers indicated one location on SharePoint would make resources more accessible.
- QA engaged Data Analytics to identify usage by practitioners.
- QA conducted research and consulted with other ETB's QA departments.
- QA created a template following a brainstorming exercise with FETSU team.
- QA consulted with an external design team.
- QA has now developed the site for publication and will continue to update as required. Additional software has been added so that materials can be displayed and accessed in a user-friendly manner.

The front facing design of the site is illustrated below.

### GRETB Quality Assurance Portal



### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The updated SharePoint site is now published, and the primary outcome is expected to be an easily accessible resource for all staff.

To that end, early feedback from some staff, given a short demonstration of the new site, has been very positive.

### KEY LEARNINGS

The importance of:

- presenting resources in an accessible format.
- a single location with ease of access and navigation.
- maximising internal resources to facilitate staff support and development.
- facilitating the provision of resources via a variety of digital formats.
- promoting inclusivity.
- being UDL-friendly.

## KERRY ETB – A CASE STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Kerry ETB has a formal contract with South West Counselling Centre to provide one-to-one psychological support to students in Killarney Youthreach, LCA Tralee, Tralee Youthreach and Listowel Youthreach. The service was delivered for 3.0 hours per week in the centres. The assigned counsellor provided one-to-one support to students. Support was also provided to centre manager/co-ordinator regarding the psychological welfare of the students.

This formal arrangement commenced because there was an increased incidence of young people feeling anxious, having low self-esteem and presenting with complex mental and psychological health issues. Reflecting the increased prevalence of mental health difficulties, personal counselling is one of the key supports provided to Youthreach learners.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Vulnerable learners are presenting with issues for which they need psychological support and in 2022/ 23 these included:

- Neglect and physical abuse in home
- Anxiety
- Drug addiction
- Sexuality & sexual health
- Suicide ideation
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Trauma
- Anger

- Depression
- Restrictive eating disorder
- Displacement due to war
- Self-harm
- Self-esteem issues
- Self-identity issues
- Grief/loss

Having support with these issues allows the learners time to learn in their Youthreach settings and provides safe and professional services to meet psychological needs.

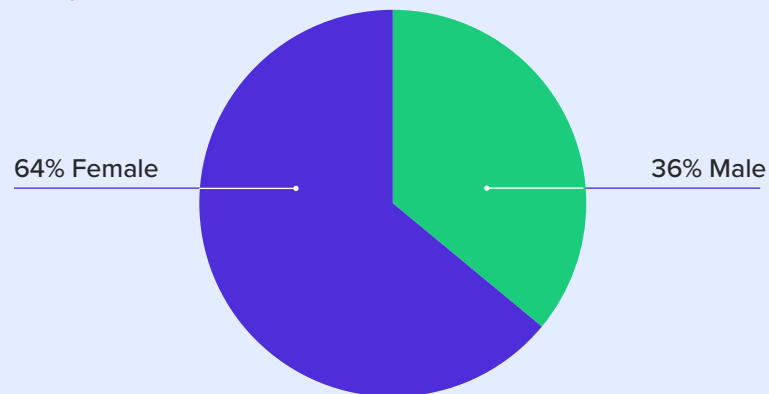
### ACTION

In 2022/23 44 learners engaged with the support services as follows:

Centre	Clients	Female	Male
Killarney Y/R	9	7	2
Tralee Y/R	11	7	4
Listowel Y/R	7	3	4
Tralee LCA	17	11	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>

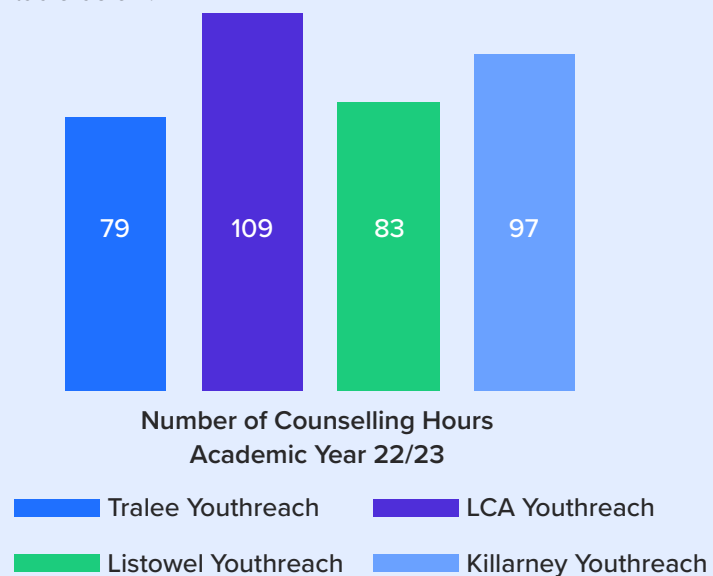


The gender breakdown is:



### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

A key impact was the number of learners who engaged with the services. Please see table below:



### KEY LEARNINGS

This formal arrangement is to be continued as it supports learners to learn formally and achieve certification while also supporting them in developing skills to navigate psychological distress.



## KERRY ETB – INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUMMER PROVISION TO LEARNERS WHO REQUIRE ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE SUPPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Kerry ETB plays a key role in responding to the Ukrainian crisis and to others who are affected by global conflict. Kerry ETB participates regionally in the Ukrainian Response Steering Group, working collaboratively with other statutory, local development and community-based organisations to meet the education and training needs of Ukrainians seeking refuge, 6200 of whom are provided with refuge in Kerry. In the summer of 2023, Kerry ETB organised a Summer English language programme to assist in the development of language needs. This is in addition to other provisions delivered as part of the training schedule and academic year.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Several applicants to Kerry ETB FET and Kerry College courses required intensive English language tuition to help them prepare and achieve the level of English language required for full participation in learning and assessment. Kerry ETB responded to this need in June and July 2023. The chart below illustrates the numbers and the locations of provision, which all took place in Kerry ETB FET Centres.

Participants were offered courses that helped prepare them for IELTS. All participants were tested using British Council tests to ascertain their level at commencement and completion.

### ACTION

A total of 1219 learners engaged in 109 courses offered with a total of 340 tuition hours provided to this initiative. The courses were delivered in June and July across eight different locations.

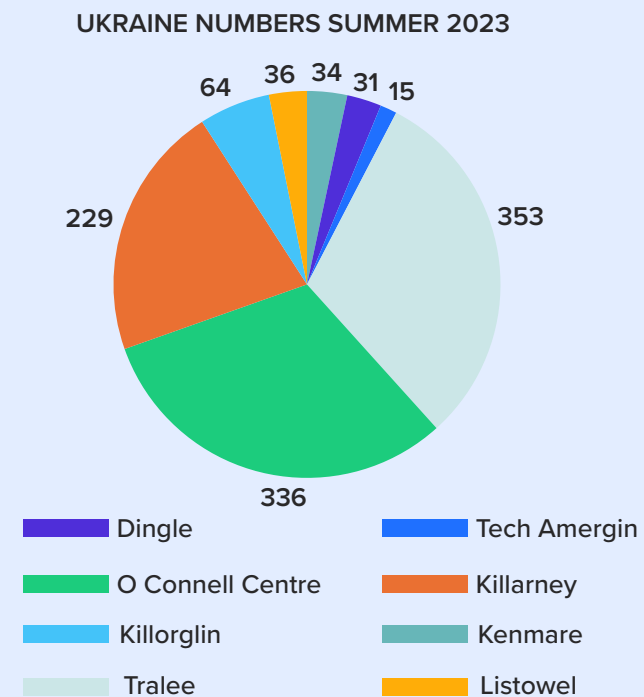


Figure 1



## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Although the programmes were intensive the attendance and completion rate reached 90%. We estimate 15% will now progress to Kerry College from the Killarney and Tralee classes, while all participants in other FET Centres will now engage locally with that FET Centre. The integration of Ukrainian nationals into other ESOL programmes with other nationalities will also take place, given the high demand for our services from international protection applicants.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Several key learnings have emerged from this initiative:

- Kerry ETB now recognises that it is time to move from emergency measure provision to the integration of these learners into mainstream course offerings. The FET Centres and Kerry College Admissions Office have addressed this for the 2023/ 24 provision.
- To support learners' progress through language level, intensive tuition modules of a minimum of 6 hours per week are required.
- Initial assessment of learners' language skills and matching them to the correct course level is critical, and this knowledge can help inform the delivery modes and methodologies such as using technology, online.



## KILKENNY AND CARLOW ETB –

# ENHANCED DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES (SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW)

### INTRODUCTION

Following on from the recommendations received as part of the Inaugural Review, KCETB set about enhancing the analysis of the data available to strengthen programme provision. Several key steps were involved in this process most notably the development of the Data Management Policy, which provided a framework for the analysis of data. In addition, the development of learner feedback processes provided a structure for formal learner feedback across all provision. This case study will detail the challenges experienced and detail the actions undertaken to enhance our data analysis capacity.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

During the self-evaluation process and the subsequent panel visit, it was found that while there was an extensive array of data available, from QQI provider data, PLSS data and data provided through programme reviews, there was no consistent mechanism to analyse this data to inform provision. This was identified as a key action by the panel. The QAOC set the QA team the task of addressing this area in September 2022.

### ACTION

In considering what key actions should be undertaken to enhance the analysis of the data available, KCETB first considered what data was available. The data available was found to be diverse including QQI provider data, PLSS data and data provided through programme reviews along with data provided from SOLAS through the SPA Tableau Dashboards. Following this comprehensive review, the DFET was consulted to establish what information would be required to support FET provision into the future. To support this scoping exercise a meeting was held with a neighbouring ETB to obtain information on what data analysis processes were in existence and to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of same.

Following this scoping exercise, a Data Management Policy was drafted and approved by the QAOC in January 2023. The purpose of this policy was to outline the processes for the collation of programme and learner data associated with KCETB FET provision to enhance the use of data for planning and self-evaluation.

The Centre Data reports are created twice a year in September (covering mid-year data) and February (end-of-year data). In line with the Data Management Policy the reports consider completion rates, early leaver/finisher reasons, certification rates and grade distributions by centres across programme categories. The centres are benchmarked against their 3-year and 1-year statistics with the report highlighting if a centre's statistics are outside an agreed percentage change, either positively or negatively, as a topic for discussion.

As a parallel process, the Public Information and Communication Group (PIC) were developing mechanisms for obtaining learner feedback and sharing it with centres in a timely manner. A similar review process took place which identified core areas requiring feedback from learners. Three distinct learner feedback forms are now in place – a form for courses 14 weeks or longer, a form for courses under 14 weeks, and a mid-course for courses over 33 weeks. The next priority for the group is the development of a learner withdrawal form.

The first end-of-year learner feedback form was circulated to centres in April 2022 and 477 responses were received. This number increased to 884 responses for the end-of-year feedback form for the 2022/23 academic year. Each centre then receives the feedback relevant to their centre with reports generated twice a year - in September (end-of-year course forms), and again in January (mid-course forms). A report is also generated at ETB level that is circulated to the QAOC.



## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

A key outcome from implementing the Data Management Policy is that there is now an agreed format with specific times in the year for the analysis of data. This information is shared with centres in a timely manner and supports centre managers in their decisions around programme provision.

Ensuring the learner voice is harnessed was a key priority post the Inaugural review and the work undertaken by the PIC has meant that learners are now consulted three times per year through the learner feedback process.

The addition of Tableau data analysis software and the creation of templates to support the analysis and visualisation of data has enhanced the overall analytical ability of the team.

## KEY LEARNINGS

The utilisation of Tableau to analyse data has increased the capacity within the QA team to utilise data and data analytics software to answer pertinent questions raised at the QAOC and support the future development of KCETB. The provision of data to the centres to inform provision is a form of support to centres for programme provision planning into the future.



## KILKENNY AND CARLOW ETB –

## FAMILY LEARNING KCETB ADULT LEARNING SERVICE (TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT)

### INTRODUCTION

The Adult Learning Services (ALS) in Kilkenny and Carlow, wished to expand certification options for learners participating in their family learning provision to meet needs identified locally and in national policies. In February 2022 ten education and training boards (ETBs) came together to develop a programme to meet this need and to support parents of primary school children, in their role as primary educators of their children.

The programme's focus would enhance parents' understanding of the core skills of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy. It would also support parents to develop the skills and knowledge required to enable them to see the home environment as a valuable learning space. This case study will detail the rationale for the development of the award, the process undertaken and detail the key impacts of the programme and family learning provision across KCETB ALS.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Family Learning is a core part of provision across the ALS in Kilkenny and Carlow. The programmes have far-reaching impacts on both parents/ guardians, children and the wider community thus helping to improve life chances and tackle disadvantage. They provide parents with an opportunity to get back on the educational ladder and build their confidence to progress.

Key policy areas which recognise the importance of family learning include:

- FET Strategy 2020-24 document, 'Future FET: Transforming Learning' identified Family Learning as an effective means of diversifying literacy and numeracy provision.

- The Adult Literacy for Life Strategy sets out the necessity to 'grow family literacy and family learning approaches as part of a targeted programme of support for health, social care, and family support interventions' (2021: p.12)
- The Enabling Intergenerational Learning: Guidelines and Background report on Family Literacy Practices in Irish ETB's (2020) notes 'the potential for devising short QQI modules or elements of modules that match family literacy purposes' (p122)

A key target of the SOLAS Strategic Performance Agreements (SPA) targets is that 50% of adult literacy provision must receive certification. To support the ALS in meeting this target it was decided that an award that provided certification opportunities for learners participating in Family Learning programmes would be developed. Following a review conducted by the Adult Literacy Organisers (ALO) they felt a programme that was specifically focused on supporting parents in their role as primary educators would enable them to meet their certification targets, and support progression opportunities for learners engaging in family learning programmes.

### ACTION

KCETB QA commenced developing the award in February 2022 with nine other ETBs. In total a team of 11 people developed the award with representation from subject matter experts, Adult Literacy Organisers and Quality Assurance Officers and Managers. The breadth of membership ensured that a broad range of perspectives were considered. Three subgroups were established to work on the four core areas of literacy, digital literacy, maths and learning to support children which were identified following an initial consultation process. Given the breadth of ETBs involved, a Shared Curriculum approach was deployed and QQI were consulted on an ongoing basis to ensure all key areas were included, including the consideration of the new Broad Standards guidelines.

In line with Section 17.3 of the policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training, an extensive consultation process was undertaken to ensure the group had “sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders” (QQI:2017: p.17). The consultation was comprehensive, involving ALOs, literacy service tutors, learners, and agencies that would benefit from their clients’ participation in the award. Additionally, national agencies operating in this field were also consulted.

By July 2022 the Learning to Support Children in Primary School Non-CAS Special Purpose Award (SPA), which had four embedded programmes at QQI Level 3, had been developed.

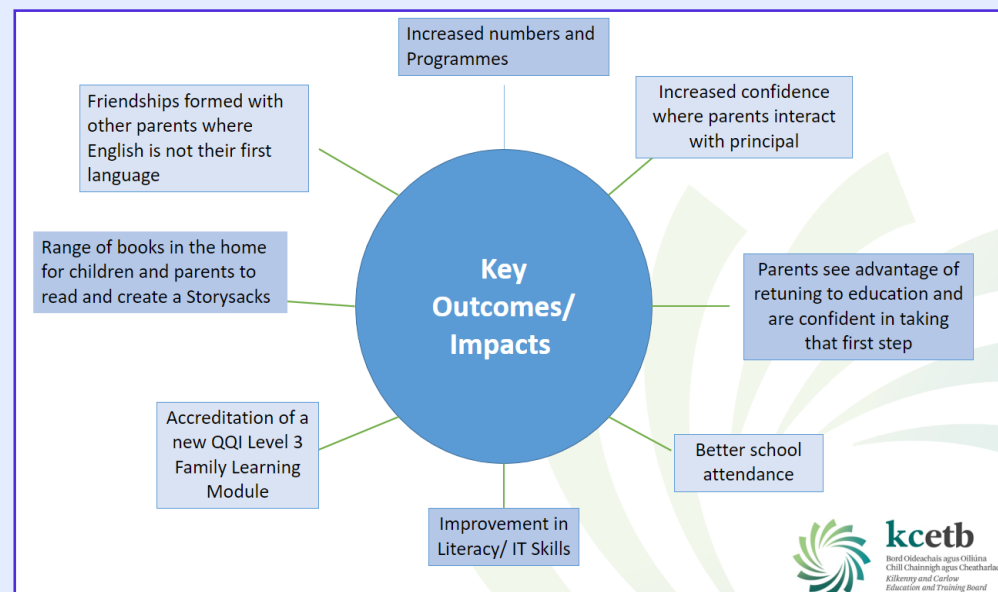
- Supporting Children with Learning in Primary School
- Supporting Children with Literacy in Primary School
- Supporting Children with Digital Literacy in Primary School
- Supporting Children with Maths in Primary School

KCETB who were the lead ETB, submitted the programme descriptor (which comprehended the newly devised QQI broad standards at Levels 1-4,) to QQI for validation. This programme was validated by QQI in February 2023 and was officially launched as part of ETB week on 1 March 2023. The award is now open to differential validation from other ETBs and will be delivered to learners across Kilkenny and Carlow from September 2023, thus supporting the service to meet its certification targets.

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The programme development process undertaken ensured a programme with a clearly justified need, input from a broad range of experts, and an extensive consultation process, was developed. The consideration of the broad standards in the development process also meant that the award is more applicable across a broad range of areas. Moreover, the opportunities afforded by this award to the ALS will ensure parents continue to be supported in their role.

Family learning programmes have far-reaching outcomes for parents, as detailed in the graphic below which was prepared by the ALS:



Family Learning is seen by the ALS as a mechanism to target those most distanced from education and support them in their role as the primary educators of their children. Participation on these programmes has been found to have a positive longitudinal impact on families by increasing school attendance, improving literacy skills, and opening the door to further educational opportunities for parents.

## KEY LEARNINGS

There were several key learnings for all parties in terms of the development of the Special Purpose Award and Family Learning provision. For the Quality Assurance team, the experience of developing a Special Purpose Award with nine other ETBs expanded our understanding of the programme development process and provided an opportunity to collaborate on a broad scale with other ETBs.



For the ALS, the expansion of Family Learning programmes provides them with several valuable insights namely:

- The importance of having a practical and fun programme where the learning outcomes are achievable.
- Allowing the parents to play an active role in the programme.
- The importance of collaborating with schools, FRC, libraries and other agencies.
- Having the right tutors and resources.

Finally, for the learner, having access to an award which formally recognises and supports parents in their role as the primary educators of their children in areas such as literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy, will provide them with certification and further progression options into the future.



## KILKENNY AND CARLOW ETB –

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) (GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY)

### INTRODUCTION

Recognising the benefits of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) observed during the COVID-19 response, in late 2020 KCETB decided to further enhance its RPL offering. During the COVID-19 response, RPL formed part of the Further Education and Training (FET) offering for learners participating in programmes that required access to work placement. RPL was used for FET learners who had vocationally relevant life and work experience compatible with the mandatory work placement element of the award. To support our capacity to grow this offering further, KCETB reviewed its Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) in November 2022. The learning gained during the COVID-19 response, and over previous years, was taken on board to inform the updated policy.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 meant that KCETB centres and colleges had to move to remote delivery of teaching, learning, and assessment. FET learners participating in programmes which required access to work placement were particularly disadvantaged when trying to meet the requirements of their award when placements were no longer available to them. It was found that many FET learners had vocationally relevant life and work experience, which was compatible with the mandatory work placement element of the award. Recognising this experience would enable them to meet the requirements of the overall programme and allow them to progress to employment or higher education.

In total ten learners participated in this process, with the majority coming from part-time programmes which formed part of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) at NFQ Level 5 in Healthcare Support (5M4339), Early Childhood Care and Education (5M2009) and one learner from a full-time Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Level 6 Horsemanship programme (6M3505). The KCETB QA Department took the lead in the process and were supported by mentors and assessors in the relevant subject areas. The staff

supporting this process comprised one Adult Education Officer, one QA Co-ordinator, one mentor and three subject specific assessors. The time commitment from both the assessors and mentors was significant given the complex nature of the work placement requirements across the range of programmes. However, the diverse range of programme offerings enhanced our level of understanding of the processes involved.

Following a review of the benefits for learners of having access to this process it was decided to work towards further enhancing our RPL offering.

### ACTION

To further enhance our capacity to roll out RPL to a broader range of learners, the learnings from the COVID-19 response and the previous TOBAR programme (2018) were taken on board in our review of our RPL process. The KCETB RPL policy was reviewed and updated prior to formal approval by the QAOC in November 2022. Parallel to the development of the revised procedures, the RPL team at KCETB worked with two groups in 2022 to formally recognise experience gained and work completed in the workplace.

For the defence forces, their work in the areas of Health and Safety, Communications, Work Experience, IT skills and Sports was recognised in the case of 7 learners across 29 awards at QQI Levels 4 and 5. The group received their certificates in February 2023 at a ceremony organised in the James Stephens Army Barracks in Kilkenny.



RPL awards Defence Forces, Kilkenny - February 2023

Another employer which benefitted from the RPL process was Nutribio. This group brought together nine members of their sales team to obtain certified recognition of their sales experience. The group was mentored and supported to match their work activities to the QQI Level 6 award Consultative Selling. In February 2023, the participants were presented with their individual awards at a ceremony in Mount Wolseley in Tullow, Co Carlow.



Figure 1 RPL awards - Nutribio, Carlow - February 2023

Both projects were supported enthusiastically by the teaching and support staff at KCETB. The work involved was acknowledged by the employers who commended the individual RPL participants and KCETB for working collaboratively to achieve formal certification for knowledge, skills and competencies achieved in the workplace. The RPL participants gave very positive feedback on how beneficial the RPL process was for them.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The initiatives outlined and the review of the RPL Policy has had many benefits for KCETB. The initiatives undertaken have been publicised widely internally within the organisation through our QA newsletters and the subsequent briefings on the revised RPL policy, both of which have served to raise awareness of the availability of RPL for centre managers and teaching staff. It has also enhanced the organisation's capacity to offer RPL to a broader range of learners across our services and employers in the region by broadening our assessor base.

In the 2022-2023 academic year there were 32 RPL applicants; up from 15 in 2021, which represented a 213% increase growth in RPL numbers.

For 2023-2024, we are continuing to grow the capacity to offer RPL opportunities to our learners by offering professional development opportunities to teaching staff to further enhance our assessor base. A targeted promotional campaign to make learners and employers aware of RPL options is also being developed.

### KEY LEARNINGS

KCETB's experience in RPL has been growing since the initial TOBAR Defence Forces project in 2018. The advent of COVID-19 afforded us an opportunity to serve the needs of our learners and to grow our capacity in the area. In recent years, the learnings have increased, supported by our RPL policies, and have allowed us to establish a strong foundation for further developing our RPL provision for learners and employers in the region.



## LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB –

# INDUCTION SESSION FOR NEW ESOL LEARNING PRACTITIONERS – LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB COLLEGE OF FET

### INTRODUCTION

In 2022, in light of the growing demand for ESOL classes for migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced Ukrainians, the College of FET recruited almost 40 new ESOL learning practitioners. In order to welcome these new staff members, the College of FET designed and hosted for the first time an online Induction Session specifically targeted at ESOL learning practitioners.

**KEY STAKEHOLDERS:** ESOL learning practitioners, key staff members from the ESOL provision, FET co-ordinators, FET Active Inclusion, Information Recruitment and Guidance, and Professional Learning and Development Support Services, as well as LCETB senior management.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

One of the recommendations from the Institutional Review of QA was ‘to develop a cohesive approach to staff induction at corporate, FET and campus-level.’

### ACTION

The induction session was designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the FET ESOL provision in the Limerick and Clare ETB and give new ESOL learning practitioners an understanding of the supports available to both ESOL staff and learners. The session covered the new ESOL Migrant Framework and introduced the new staff members to the scale of ESOL provision in the College of FET. Attendees had the opportunity to meet with key staff members and learn about the specific supports available, such as Learning Hubs, the ESOL Share-Space, Information Recruitment and Guidance Support Services, etc.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** The induction session was held on MS Teams and required 2 hours of paid time for all part-time staff attendees, as well as planning and collaboration between presenters.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

With 41 attendees, the feedback from the session was overwhelmingly positive. Most attendees found the session to be very informative and helpful in understanding LCETB’s ESOL provision and the support available to both tutors and learners. They appreciated the opportunity to meet with key staff members and learn about their roles and responsibilities.

**CHALLENGES:** Some attendees found the session to be information-heavy, with a lot to absorb in a single session. Some also struggled to make sense of the various systems and terminology used by different LCETB campuses and would have appreciated a simpler guide to bring them into the ETB working environment. Suggestions were made for future sessions to be broken down into smaller sections and for a simple guide for new tutors to be created to help them navigate the various systems and terminology used by ETB campuses.

### KEY LEARNINGS

The induction session provided a valuable opportunity for new ESOL learning practitioners to get an overview of LCETB’s ESOL provision and understand the supports available to both tutors and learners. It also created a platform for attendees to meet with key staff members and start building relationships within the organisation. Based on the positive feedback, several other induction sessions were then held in person. Additionally, suggestions from attendees were taken into account, resulting in the creation of the ‘Meet Your Support Service’ resource and space for Support Service



staff to showcase their work and meet new and experienced ESOL practitioners for the first time post-pandemic at a follow-on ESOL event. At the ESOL Networking Day LCETB Services displayed summaries of what they do and their key documentation. This was provided in paper format, and it could also be accessed by using QR Codes. These information sheets can be incorporated into future induction sessions. The information overload could be addressed by increasing the session time or splitting it over 2 longer induction sessions. Also, by providing an induction checklist and mapping the titles of the session inputs, where these could be ticked off as they are covered.

## LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB – NATIONAL COURSE CALENDAR QA APPROVAL PROCESS

### INTRODUCTION

A Course Approval Process for the National Course Calendar (NCC), overseen by the QA Support Service (QASS) and the FET Operational Planning Support Manager, was piloted in Ennis Campus during the summer of 2022. This involved a review of certified and non-certified courses which were scheduled on the NCC in advance of publishing and delivery. This local business process was aiming to ensure a more standard and consistent approach to the scheduling of courses on NCC. This functionality was then extended to all campuses across the organisation in October 2022.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Lack of consistency in the scheduling of certified and non-certified courses on NCC leading to incorrect descriptions on outward facing portals such as FETCH.

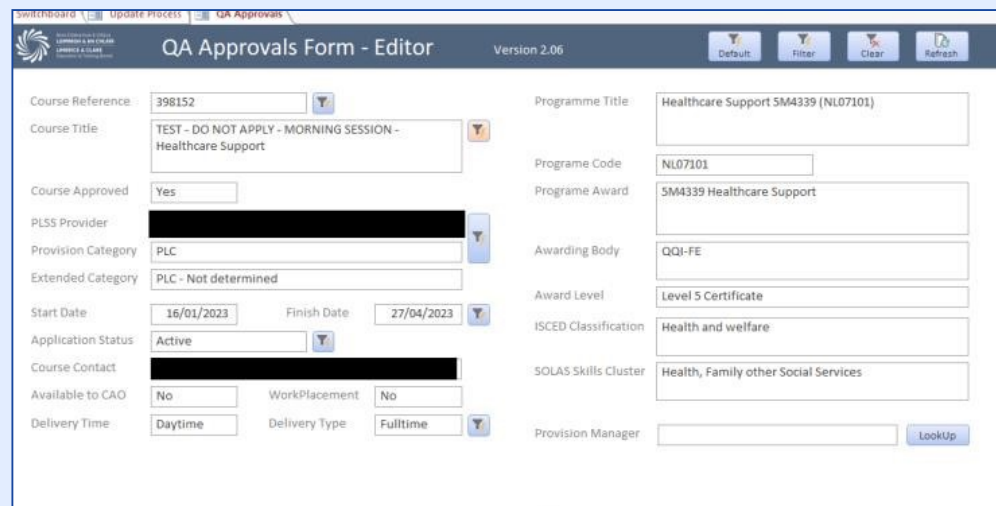
Scheduling of courses that did not come through the required approval processes of the local Quality Council sub-group (Programme Governance) or SRPN processes.

### ACTION

In phase 1 of this process, QA approval was required for all certified courses. The “Approved” box on NCC could not be ticked locally by Provision until the QASS reviewed the course and ticked the “QA-approved” box.

As part of the initial rollout process, QASS developed Checklists for Certified Courses using the feedback gained from the pilot. These Checklists contained guidelines on all the fields on the NCC.

Following the initial rollout, a Client App was developed to streamline the process and to reduce the correspondence required between the QASS and local Provision. Prior to this a MS Form had been developed but this proved to be too time consuming for local Provision.



A report generated from PLSS of all the current, active, closed and cancelled courses is generated daily and uploaded to the Client App, through the Update Import Process Form. This updates the courses visible on the app. A module modified report is generated at the end of the week and this updates the modules which have been uploaded/reviewed on the NCC.

The app has been further enhanced with fields for QASS to input details of the revisions required and a Provision Update Notification field where local Provision can tick when revisions have been applied.

Retrospective approval was applied by SOLAS to courses that were active or complete prior to this process.

In Phase 2, a similar checklist was developed for non-certified courses. Provision can currently schedule and publish such courses without QA approval as the QA-approved



box has not yet been enabled by SOLAS. However, adherence to the principles of the process and the new checklist was encouraged until such time as this box is active. To further support non-certified Provision, the QASS met with co-ordinators and established a resource bank of non-certified course descriptions and outcomes. This is being used and shared across the organisation and updated as required.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

This new and critical process now acts as a quality assurance check that programme and module details are appropriately selected, learning outcomes clearly stated, the course description is concisely presented, and that the necessary campus programme and module validations are in place before the existing 'Course Approval' step is enabled.

The list of non-certified courses now means that:

1. QASS has a helicopter view of the non-certified courses on offer and the courses come through a checking process before they are scheduled, allowing for clear descriptions and outcomes for learners,
2. Provision are not scheduling non-certified courses without QA approval and are actively engaging in the development of the bank of descriptions and outcomes for such courses.
3. Provision across the organisation can now see all the non-certified courses on offer and adapt or adopt for their region.
4. Progression links can be made between certified and non-certified Provision allowing for a more streamlined offering in vocational areas.



## LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB – SHOW AND TEL – LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB COLLEGE OF FET

### INTRODUCTION

Show & TEL is a professional development initiative consisting of lunchtime bite-sized inputs, each lasting less than 30 minutes, showcasing best practice in the use of learning technologies across FET. The inputs are delivered by Learning Practitioners for Learning Practitioners and are recorded and available in the Show & TEL Stream Channel.

#### [Show & TEL Stream Channel.](#)

Description of issue Show & TEL focuses on:

- building staff digital capacity and skills
- showcasing and sharing staff experiences of training, conferences, and professional development opportunities available to staff both in-house and outside of the organisation

### ACTION

A record number of 47 Show & TEL sessions were run in 2022 across two academic terms, with presentations given by both Limerick and Clare ETB staff and external guest speakers. 50 of our own staff were involved in presenting and sharing best practice, reaching a live audience of 1,062 and a “watch on demand” audience of 957. The most popular live session was the first ‘Blended Learning Design Programme Showcase’ and was shown in December 2022. The Blended Learning Design Programme is the first of its kind in Ireland and attracted a wide audience who were excited to see what the secondees had been working on since September.

In 2022, Show and TEL deliberately grouped topics into themed weeks, which helped the audience to identify the sessions they are most interested in. It also allows us as showrunners to include key themes from the new FET Strategy and TEL Action Plan. For instance:

- Show & TEL focused on building staff digital capacity and skills through the provision of a dedicated digital induction month in September 2022, which introduced and provided updates for our supported technologies for staff returning to work and for new staff on-boarding with us. Throughout 2022, hands-on training in new and existing software for TEL (e.g., Mindmeister, Ellii, MS PowerPoint, MS Outlook, MS Video Editor, MS Forms, etc.) followed on from our strategy of encouraging learning practitioners to present technical ‘how-to’ videos in the interest of promoting peer learning and support. In-centre, hands-on training for new classroom hardware, including the interactive classroom screens and visualisers, was preceded by demo Show and TEL sessions that were recorded to allow for on-demand access to assist learning practitioners learn these new technologies. This was one of the resources most used by teaching staff in 2022.

TEL showrunners also collaborated with colleagues in Active Inclusion Support Service to dedicate one Show & TEL session per month to showcase all the learner hubs across LCETB including their staff, supports, learners, and projects. This has proven to be hugely successful, drawing strong audience figures and raising awareness of the learner supports available locally. The sharing of projects by hub staff related to specific disabilities has raised much needed awareness of the technological supports available for different challenges our learners present with. The launch of the Disability Awareness Information Booklet for Learning Practitioners through Show & TEL in September by Ann McLoughlin was also a milestone in Show & TEL’s partnership with AISS.

In 2022, Show and TEL showrunners in partnership with our colleagues in PL&D dedicated 5 Show & TEL sessions to the showcasing and sharing of staff experiences of training, conferences, and professional development opportunities available to staff both in-house and outside the organisation. The sharing of participant redesigns from the Universal Design for Learning training highlighted the immense value of the course, encouraging more teaching staff to enrol for upcoming training to improve their

own practice. Shared staff experiences at conferences in Europe and their travelling, networking and learning opportunities further promoted the value of attending educational conferences in Europe and applying for Erasmus+ opportunities. Recorded inputs received high viewing figures in addition to live attendees at the session.

In 2023, showrunners will take to the road to record footage of our teaching staff in action across the Limerick and Clare region. This will dramatically broaden the scope of the topics and subjects covered during the Autumn 2023 season of Show & TEL. It will also grow audiences and participants at the sessions.

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

A record number of 47 Show & TEL sessions were run in 2022 across two academic terms, with presentations given by both Limerick and Clare ETB staff and external guest speakers, reaching a live audience of 1,062 and a “watch on demand” audience of 957. The most popular live session was the first ‘Blended Learning Design Programme Showcase’ shown in December 2022. The Blended Learning Design Programme is the first of its kind in Ireland and attracted a wide audience who were excited to see what the secondees had been working on since September.

The sessions were rated as excellent by 80% of total respondents. Respondents rate the length of the live sessions, their availability to watch back on demand, and the variety of topics covered as the most common reasons for a high rating.

The proposed reasons for the popularity of the three sessions that garnered the most feedback are:

- Teachers were inspired by the innovation and passion on display at the UDL Showcase.
- Audio editing and podcasting are of great interest to many teachers and these Show & TELs provided valuable information to both advanced editors and absolute beginners who were perhaps unsure of where to begin.
- The breathwork Show & TEL provided teachers with an opportunity to give themselves permission to recharge and slowdown in what can often be a demanding schedule.

## KEY LEARNINGS

The most watched video on playback was ‘Using the Classroom Screens’, highlighting the importance of having recordings available on demand for staff to access whenever they have the time and for practical day-to-day teaching skills that use new but commonly available technologies such as classroom equipment.

Adding timestamps to each video in 2022 now allows the viewers of the recorded sessions to search and find the relevant section of the video they are interested in and access the information as often as needed and with greater ease. Anecdotal feedback on this addition has been overwhelmingly positive.

In 2022, a new focus was put on communication and promotion of upcoming sessions. This included making monthly promotional posts of the upcoming events, posting more details on individual sessions the day before, and scheduling meetings in the Show & TEL channel. These all worked well as staff feedback in 2021 showed that staff often forgot about or missed Show & TEL sessions.

Plans for a new podcast series will be explored to complement and broaden the pedagogy and emerging technology discussions begun in Show & TEL sessions - a first for FET in Ireland. To complement this outward facing theme more external guests will be invited to Show & TELs to promote the development of cooperation and sharing of ideas across FET nationwide. In 2023, Show & TEL recordings will be moved to a new home platform for ease of viewing and sharing with external parties.



## LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH ETB – EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The LWETB STA programme provides support to enterprise through the upskilling and reskilling of employees, thereby increasing market competitiveness and economic growth.

LWETB's projected business opportunities for 2023 included:

- Flexible training aligned to business needs.
- Training needs identification to suit individual enterprise requirements.
- Courses that are responsive to emerging and evolving markets.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

LWETB's projected benefits of employer engagement to enterprise/employers through 2023 include:

- Supporting business growth.
- Developing enterprise workforce.
- Help retain and recruit employees.
- Increase productivity and competitiveness.

In 2023 a local employer (3MKCI) contacted LWETB's employer engagement department seeking training and upskilling for their employees.

### ACTION

The employer engagement department contacted 3MKCI and arranged a meet-up to discuss their specific training needs and requirements. The employer engagement department discussed the options available to the employer.

The steps taken were after engagement with the employer and line managers. The LWETB employer engagement department then delivered a specific training solution with the outcome being a tailored training needs analysis specific to the 3MKCI. This

training solution suited both the employer (3MKCI) and the employees that were to be trained. LWETB agreed the training schedule with 3MKCI and the employees commenced training.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The identification of needs involved the employer engagement department liaising with the employee's line manager to identify the specific areas where the employees needed upskilling and training. LWETB met up with the employer several times over a 2-week period to finalise and agree the training solutions that could be offered to suit all parties involved.

Through regular communication with the learners (3MKCI employees) they gave incredibly positive feedback verbally throughout the training courses they undertook. They are all still employed by 3MKCI and both parties are very satisfied with the training received to date.

Both employer and employee have given verbal feedback which was positive in relation to the training received.

In relation to repeat business, the company will have employees to train again in 2024.

### KEY LEARNINGS

The employer engagement department contacted 3MKCI and arranged a meet-up to discuss their specific training needs and requirements. The employer engagement department discussed the options available to the employer. The main takeaways from this case study are that there is an appetite for specific employer/company training solutions from LWETB in the Midlands region. As a result of this training to 3MKCI, LWETB will have more staff from them to train in 2024 and from other similar companies in the region. The idea is to ramp up employer engagement in relation to site specific training/upskilling solutions for staff.

## LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH ETB – FET BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### INTRODUCTION

LWETB buildings estate and infrastructure support the delivery of services to students and learners at locations throughout the two counties. These buildings vary in capacity, function, quality, and ownership. Some buildings provide excellent environments such as Athlone Community College. However, many fall well short of the standards necessary to create the desired environments and achieve the optimum working and learning outcomes for the services being provided in them. The LWETB strategy statement 2022-2026 recognises this and identifies it as strategic priority No.2 “Enhance Infrastructure across LWETB”. This Strategic Priority focuses efforts to **“Enhance working and learning environments, Develop and improve infrastructure, facilities and resources for staff and learners.”**

This need to enhance infrastructure is intended to address the deficits in the current LWETB built environment. These deficits are a consequence of many factors which have combined over time to produce the LWETB infrastructure we see today. Many of these challenging factors remain, such as demographic demands, lack of strategic planning, internal and external delivery capacity issues, resource provision and evolving societal requirements. There is, however, an opportunity for LWETB to work with key stakeholders to address these complex challenges and to move towards providing an enhanced working and learning environment across all LWETB infrastructure to improve learner participation and outcomes and assist in staff recruitment and retention. The need to deliver enhanced working and learning environments has been recognised by central government and through various capital programmes, and they are supporting LWETB in the delivery of an extensive capital investment programme, which will deliver substantial capacity increases, improvements to quality of environment and energy efficiency and new facilities of national importance such as the new National EV Training centre announced in November 2023 by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The LWETB strategy statement 2022-2026 identifies as strategic priority No.2 “Enhance Infrastructure across LWETB”. This Strategic Priority focuses efforts to “Enhance working and learning environments, Develop and improve infrastructure, facilities and resources for staff and learners.” This priority can be broken into five key points which detail the key objectives and outcomes of this priority:

- Maintain, enhance, and expand buildings and facilities to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation for staff and learners.
- Explore expansion of LWETB services to include community national schools and FET Colleges of the Future.
- Implement and expand ICT infrastructure to support governance systems, data protection systems, business continuity and risk management.
- Develop appropriate management information and reporting systems across LWETB.
- Review and enhance effective Health and Safety systems and structures across the organisation.

The broader mission and vision structure is set out in the LWETB strategy statement 2022-2026. This key document outlines the path for education, training, youth work and other statutory functions for LWETB. This high-level document sets out the mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities.

The five strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1** Provide High-Quality Teaching, Learning, Assessment, Development and Learner Experience ·
- **Priority 2** Enhance Infrastructure across LWETB



- **Priority 3** Enhance Organisational Support & Development
- **Priority 4** Enrich Partnerships
- **Priority 5** Develop Environmental & Social Sustainability

The foreword from the Chief Executive in the LWETB strategy statement 2022-2026 sets out the creation, importance, delivery, and review of these priorities. “Key strategic priorities were developed following extensive and comprehensive consultation with multiple stakeholders. Underpinned by LWETB’s mission, vision and values, each priority will support the organisation to remain contemporary and responsive in meeting the future education and training needs of learners. The five Strategic Priorities in this document are of equal importance. In partnership with our stakeholders, the priorities aim to support learners to reach their full potential by having quality learning experiences in an environmentally and socially sustainable world. Over the lifetime of the strategy, our focus will be on the implementation of the priorities as defined in LWETB annual Service Plans, with comprehensive Annual Reports providing the status of outcomes achieved each year.”

## ACTION

Several building and infrastructure improvements have been made in pursuit of priority 2, ‘Enhance Infrastructure across LWETB’.

### Example:1

#### Connolly Campus, Battery Road Building, 3 new classrooms and tearoom spaces.

This improvement was designed to meet a need for additional high-quality teaching and recreational space for learners and staff, and is aligned closely with the sub-priority 2.1 to “Maintain, enhance, and expand buildings and facilities to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation for staff and learners.”

### Example: 2

#### Athlone Campus, Additional Common Spaces and Master Plan.

This improvement which is at planning and design stage will see the need for fit-for-purpose common spaces provided on Athlone Campus. One of the deliverables will be the development of a master plan to consider how the site can evolve to meet

the ambitions set out in the Future FET Transforming Learning the National Education and Training (FET) Strategy document and specifically a road map on how the site can supply the features of the FET colleges of the future, as set out in the document. This improvement is aligned closely with sub-priority 2.2 to “Explore expansion of LWETB services to include Community National Schools and ‘FET Colleges of the Future.’

### Example: 3

#### Health and Safety Systems improvement

This action will assist LWETB to fulfil their duties and the requirements of relevant Health and Safety regulations. As part of this process the organisation has created a committee system which will serve to highlight health and safety issues in various parts of the organisation. This improvement is aligned with sub-priority 2.5 “Review and enhance effective Health and Safety systems and structures across the organisation.”

Much of the infrastructure improvements undertaken are intended to enhance the learner experience, and to provide an improved working environment for staff. These improvements will also enhance engagement with external stakeholders such as the public and industries – their perception of LWETB can be improved and reinforced by the presentation by LWETB of a professional corporate identity coupled with efficient management of an estate of high-quality buildings. The Buildings Department sought responses from stakeholders to the provision of additional classroom space in the Battery Road building on Connolly Campus, Longford. The views of internal stakeholders such as teaching staff, support staff and learners as expressed were positive, external stakeholders such as contractors were also canvassed for their views, and these were broadly positive. The capital section deployed no structured feedback mechanisms to formally capture stakeholder feedback, but I understand that feedback is captured by other sections of the organisation.

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

FET Performance Indicator	FET Target
Works are prioritised and commenced and /or completed in 2023.	Budget of €700,000 to be expended.
Funding applications to be made to SOLAS using new application process: a) Strategic Infrastructure Upgrade Fund (SIUF) Application Form and Business Case b) Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) Template c) Emergency Health and Safety Works Application Form.	A minimum of two applications are made.
Lease applications approved by SOLAS, DES (Department of Education and Skills) and DFHERIS.	A minimum of 1 new location for FET is approved.
Meet funding guidelines and deadlines, achieve planning permission approval, and commence construction.	Additional funding is secured, and construction work commenced.
Support procurement process to contract professional services to undertake Building Condition Survey (BCS) Reports.	Complete a minimum of 2 Building Condition Survey (BCS) Reports.
Respond to requests from DFHERIS/SOLAS to advance both Strategic Assessment Reports (SARS) which were submitted to DFHERIS/SOLAS in 2022.	Process towards establishing FET Colleges of the Future in LWETB is advanced.
LWETB's Director of FET represents FET on the National FET Capital Working Group.	FET sector is represented and involved in decision making at a national level.
Applications developed for DFHERIS/SOLAS along with supporting business cases for the sanction of roles.	Application requests submitted and approved for the sanction of roles.
FET risk management is included in the overall LWETB risk management system.	FET risk management system is updated quarterly.
Annual ICT plan created, and items prioritised subject to budget availability.	Priority items are delivered and / or installed.
Monthly reports created for review by FET Management and coordinators to inform financial planning.	Monthly reports prepared and distributed to all budget holders using SharePoint.
Monthly reports created for review by FET management and coordinators to inform provision delivery.	Monthly reports prepared and distributed using SharePoint.
Work towards the delivery of SPA targets by end of 2023.	Meet SPA 2023 targets by the end of the year.
Funding Allocation Request and Reporting (FARR) is completed.	PLSS and Fetch courses display all LWETB's FET programmes.
FET has nominated 3 staff to the LWETB organisational H&S working group.	Staff attend meetings, represent FET, and contribute their expertise to LWETB's H&S systems and procedures.
H&S training is incorporated into the Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) plan.	A record of H&S training is maintained.



LWETB Priority 2	LWETB Goal	FET Action	FET Performance Indicator
2. Enhance Infrastructure across LWETB	2.1 Maintain, enhance, and expand buildings and facilities to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation for staff and learners.	A plan of works is devised for buildings which are used by FET.	Works are prioritised and commenced and /or completed in 2023.
		Funding to be sought for infrastructure/ building projects from SOLAS.	Funding applications to be made to SOLAS using new application process: a) Strategic Infrastructure Upgrade Fund (SIUF) Application Form and Business Case b) Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) Template c) Emergency Health and Safety Works Application Form.
		Alternative locations to be explored for relocating some FET provision.	Lease applications approved by SOLAS, DES (Department of Education and Skills) and DFHERIS.
		Progress Just Transition Fund project.	Meet funding guidelines and deadlines, achieve planning permission approval, and commence construction.
		Identify buildings to carry out a building condition survey.	Support procurement process to contract professional services to undertake Building Condition Survey (BCS) Reports.
	2.2 Explore expansion of LWETB services to include Community National Schools and FET Colleges of the Future	Secure funding from SOLAS to establish 'FET Colleges of the Future.'	Respond to requests from DFHERIS/SOLAS to advance both Strategic Assessment Reports (SARS) which were submitted to DFHERIS/SOLAS in 2022.
		FET representation on National FET Capital Working Group with SOLAS, DFHERIS and ETBI.	LWETB's Director of FET represents FET on the National FET Capital Working Group.
		Enhancement of FET facilities across Longford and Westmeath.	Applications developed for DFHERIS/SOLAS along with supporting business cases for the sanction of roles.
	2.3 Implement and expand ICT infrastructure to support governance systems, Data Protection systems, business continuity and risk management	FET feeds into the risk management system. Develop an ICT plan in conjunction with FET management and coordinators.	FET risk management is included in the overall LWETB risk management system. Annual ICT plan created, and items prioritised subject to budget availability.
	2.4 Develop appropriate management information and reporting systems across LWETB	Management information systems (Financial).	Monthly reports created for review by FET Management and coordinators to inform financial planning.
		Management information systems (non-Financial).	Monthly reports created for review by FET management and coordinators to inform provision delivery.
		Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) signed with SOLAS for period 2022-2024.	Work towards the delivery of SPA targets by end of 2023.
		Ensure all available FET programmes are open and visible to potential learners.	Funding Allocation Request and Reporting (FARR) is completed.
	2.5 Review and enhance effective Health and Safety systems and structures across the organisation.	Review and enhance Health and Safety (H&S) procedures across FET.	FET has nominated 3 staff to the LWETB organisational H&S working group.
		FET Staff are trained in H&S.	H&S training is incorporated into the Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) plan.



## KEY LEARNINGS

- The case study process reinforces the importance of creating clear priorities and supporting the delivery of priorities through the selection of realistic goals and related KPI's which when taken together create a structure to align the actions of the organisation.
- Alignment of infrastructure improvements with strategic priorities is key to the efficient pursuit of the staged goals. If alignment is logical in theory and achieved in practice the organisation is enabled to work towards the achievement of goals and the fulfilment of vision and mission statements set out in the LWETB Strategy Plan 2022-2026
- Ensuring that all KPI's are simple, relevant, aligned, actionable and measurable will ensure that they will provide quality information on progress towards the end goal.

The organisation may benefit from a structured process to capture stakeholder feedback and assess progress towards achieving the goals and delivering the priority. It may be beneficial for the organisation to engage with external Project Management services to assist in the delivery of the existing project portfolio and contribute to the application process for funding. This approach would accelerate the delivery of projects and reduce the time required to achieve the goal of enhancing infrastructure across LWETB.



## LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH ETB – THE QGG AND THE LEARNER VOICE

### INTRODUCTION

Learner feedback is essential for quality assuring teaching, learning, and assessment. By understanding the learner's perspective, LWETB can identify areas for improvement and develop/enhance a stronger and fit-for-purpose quality-assured teaching, learning and assessment environment for all learners. This case study examines how FE learner feedback received to date can be studied and used to develop a continuous quality culture as well as supports, resources etc. including identifying the need for specific QA policies, procedures, guidelines, and templates to support our services and delivery. Our Quality Governance Group (QGG) is responsible for oversight and support in reviewing, developing and embedding all QA FETQS policies, procedures, documentation and supports and the learner voice is integral to this process.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

LWETB Learner feedback can come from a variety of sources, including learner surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations. It is important to collect feedback from a variety of sources to get a well-rounded understanding of the learner's perspective. Once feedback has been collected, it can be analysed to identify key themes and insights. This analysis can be used to develop recommendations on how to improve teaching, learning, and assessment. This case study will focus on learner feedback received via an MS Form link presented to learners within FE at the end of a programme. This case study presents a specific example of how learner feedback can be used to improve teaching, learning, and assessment services within LWETB.

### ACTION

The case study focused on Further Education (FE) within LWETB where FETQS implemented 3 Learner Feedback Surveys:

- NFQ Level 1, 2 and 3 – Learner Feedback Form

- Young Learners – Feedback Form
- NFQ Level 4, 5 and 6 – Learner Feedback Form

Learner feedback was collated from end-of-programme learners by way of an MS Form anonymous link. The learner feedback was collated to assess the learner journey and experiences of LWETB programmes of learning that have been completed. The findings of the case study will be used to develop a process whereby LWETB can use learner feedback to create/improve quality assurance within LWETB through our Quality Governance Group with approval and oversight from our Quality Oversight Group (QOG).

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

In reflecting on the work carried out and conducting the pilot above it became evident that capturing, reviewing, and implementing actions where feasible from the learner voice was paramount in order to embed a learner-focused QA culture, where we would listen and act consistently and effectively. While the majority of learner feedback brought to the LWETB Results Approval Panel (RAP) by Provisions has been positive it did permit us to focus on priority areas that we knew required work such as the learner handbook, induction, developing and devising educator supports, In-person training/ support sessions etc. The learner feedback confirmed the need for the supports we had considered.

The learner feedback led to the planning and development of supports as identified above to improve the learner experience throughout programmes within our Provisions.

The pilot ran from February 2022 certification period to August 2022. A meeting via the QGG was held on September 22nd, 2022, to discuss the pilot and the Results Approval Panel (RAP) process overall – senior management and FETQS attended this meeting, where it was decided that although learner feedback, clearly, needs



to be placed and homed, RAP meetings were not the best place for this discussion and review. Coordinators/Centre Managers discussed their concerns in relation to the implementation of learner feedback as part of the RAP process with AEOs, who brought this feedback to this meeting, where it was discussed at length. Centre Managers/Coordinators believed that preparation for the RAP process had become too time-consuming. Some Provisions could not retrieve feedback from learners in a timely manner to supply to RAP and the collation of this information became excessive for RAP meetings.

Provisions were instructed to continue to use the MS Forms to gather learner feedback and for this feedback to be reviewed at the end of each programme for learning and implementation of improvements where feasible. This learner feedback is utilised and retained at local level. In future it is intended to bring the area of Learner Feedback to the Quality Oversight Group (QOG) for decision & further discussion on where it should be kept. This will depend on the type of feedback being sought from learners, for example, if 'end-of-programme feedback' it may be appropriate to retain this data and information within LWETB and our governance structures. Is this an area of programme responsibility or teaching and learning? These are questions that we will continue to interrogate to ensure the correct response, action and outcomes are taken.

## KEY LEARNINGS

- Learner voice is paramount for LWETB to actively engage in improving learning opportunities and to ensure that learner feedback leads to continuous improvements.
- Decision is required from QOG on where learner voice data should be kept.
- The pilot consolidated the importance of capturing, reviewing, and actioning learner feedback.

## LOUTH AND MEATH ETB –

# PILOT VIRTUAL REALITY LEARNING SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR LITERACY LEARNERS WITHIN LMETB ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

### INTRODUCTION

LMETB submitted and received approval from the SOLAS Pilot ALL Strategy Collaboration & Innovation Fund.

The funding received was used to purchase virtual reality (VR) headsets and software licenses for the development of real-life based scenario content in Adult Learning Services (ALS). The use of VR technology was chosen because it supports learners with intellectual disability and those learning English as a second language. It also caters to learners' preferences for multi-sensory modalities when learning, and VR provides a safe and reassuring environment for digital literacy development. The scenarios developed for the VR technology include situations such as visiting the doctor, filling out forms, and shopping, with a special emphasis on preparing for work and personal effectiveness. The ALS and Quality Assurance Office collaborated on this project. The Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) staff are supporting the programme to maximise software capability and ensure functionality for all tutors and staff members.

[For more information click here](#)

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The reasons for piloting a project using VR were chiefly that the technologies are inherently suitable for a variety of literacy learners such as:

- Learners with intellectual disability
- ESOL
- Mainstream literacy provision
- Skills for Work provision

The use of virtual reality headsets in adult literacy classes creates a realistic, immersive learning environment that can significantly enhance learning outcomes, while improving learners' digital literacy. Literacy learners favour multi-sensory modalities when learning and retain 90% of information learned through experience rather than the read/write/listen methodologies currently employed in classrooms. The skills, knowledge and competency in this innovative technology within AMTCE staff enables the Literacy Service to both maximise the use of such technologies and to enable and support curricula and resource development.

From a digital perspective the VR experience will encourage digital literacy for all our learners, helping them interact with digital devices in a confident manner, within a safe and reassuring environment. The impact of this pilot on the development of teaching staff will be far-reaching as a pool of VR expertise can be shared throughout LMETB FET.

In respect of learning outcomes (LOs) on certain QQI accredited modules, the ALS and the LMETB Quality Assurance department mapped learning outcomes which lend themselves to a VR learning environment to give a rounded educational experience rather than one solely relying on paper-based submissions or basic role play.

### ACTIONS

The project was delivered in three phases:

- **Phase one:** The purchase of equipment & related license software according to LMETB procurement policies within the 2022 allocation. The AMTCE assisted with maximising software capability and making the devices fully functional for all tutors and staff members. Timeframe: 6 weeks.
- **Phase Two:** Identifying and training staff and learners on the use of the VR equipment.



- Parallel to this was the design aspect of the project which focused on refining the initial project goals into a more limited number of achievable objectives. This included mapping learning outcomes in selected Level 1 - 4 components, for example, ordering in a restaurant, shopping, going to the library, doctor, or dentist. While the potential for immersive learning opportunities in ESOL is extensive, the modules selected for this pilot programme were chosen with a view to preparing for work and personal effectiveness.
- **Phase Three:** The delivery, feedback, and evaluation of the pilot.

This is a fully inclusive and collaborative design process between ALS staff, QA staff and learners, with technical support from AMTCE staff.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

**ESOL:** ESOL learners already occupy virtual worlds – parent-teacher meetings, doctors' appointments, daily banking – the scenarios are endless. All learning encourages confidence and self-awareness in different situations. The use of VR enhances the learning time, speed, and retention of spoken English for groups. Groups can use the headsets outside class (under supervision) to increase the time devoted to learning English.

**Disability:** Adult Literacy Learners benefit from the scenarios also depending on their individual need, e.g., looking after their finances or helping children with homework or filling in application forms to apply for jobs. The use of VR enhances general knowledge and skills retention for the group.

It also allows for individual specific interest projects to be managed in classes, an option that was not available to the learners in typical group learning.

### KEY LEARNINGS

The project was collaborative and innovative and involved working with the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE), FET staff, the local community centre, Ukrainians, and local volunteers as well as the local community, doctor, library, and school.

In future, we will be able to support VTOS and BTEI learners in the LMETB FET plan and the ALL strategy as they are among the most marginalised learners and stand to benefit most from the use of this technology.

Qualitative surveys, teacher and student evaluations were conducted via in-person and online interviews, as well as learner group workshops to reflect on the use of and benefits accruing from this innovative technology use with both staff and learners.

Twenty headsets were purchased; therefore, in the pilot project, twenty people benefited from this new method of teaching and learning. This is the equivalent of three literacy classes. We will subsequently cascade and increase numbers as we further embed the resources within the Provision.

We will benefit from the cost savings over the next 5 years as headsets can be reused and the software needed to run the devices is a onetime purchase with unlimited tours.

Volunteers can be trained in this technique at no cost to be able to deliver highly effective and specific material to learners. It could also speed up the tutor training in ESOL where there is currently an extremely high demand, which we expect to continue.



## MAYO, SLIGO AND LEITRIM ETB – LITERACY AND WRITING SKILLS SUPPORTS IN NEW GENERATION APPRENTICESHIPS

### INTRODUCTION

With the development of the New Generation Apprenticeships there was and still is a need to support learners who have had an educational gap, a bad experience in their education or simply need additional support. It is for this reason that MSLETB decided it was important to introduce Literacy Support as an integral part of the apprenticeship programme. The specific rationale from the programme descriptor (edited) is:

- Many of the apprentices could be commencing the sales apprenticeship after a long period away from education. Study skills will need to be updated – even a year or two away from the discipline of study could mean that some apprentices will need help to reconnect with studying and learning.
- Apprentices coming straight from school are used to a particular style of learning and teaching, where there is more of an emphasis on absorption and regurgitation of information. This sales apprenticeship programme demands more independent learning from apprentices, and many may need help and guidance to adapt to this new style of learning.
- The world of work and business is very different to second level education. Apprentices may have written extensively while studying for the Leaving Cert. but are likely to be unfamiliar with the specific type of writing involved in working in a sales environment – formal and semi-formal emails, report writing, etc.
- Literacy will be delivered as a formal learning session and will commence in induction, followed by asynchronous activities, which apprentices can do in their own time.

### DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

During the development of the Advanced Certificate in Sales a need for directed learner supports was envisaged in the areas of literacy and writing skills. It was foreseen that some learners would be returning to education after a period of time or that entry would be gained due to experience in the field but not educational achievement. The development team created a parallel (non-accredited) support for the learners in this area.

### ACTION

Each learner once enrolled on the sales apprenticeship receives a questionnaire regarding their education experiences and undertake a literacy assessment of reading comprehension, accuracy of writing, punctuation, etc.

In addition to this each apprentice has a one-to-one meeting with the literacy tutor where tutor and learner can discuss any needs or concerns.

Literacy and Writing class occur once a month for one hour; the group is split in half so that apprentices can attend at a time that suits them. There is also an optional one-hour class once per month. If additional needs arise, learners can receive one-to-one tuition.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

With these supports in place, learner completion rates have been high, and learners have commented and responded in post-review surveys that without the supports they would have struggled to complete individual modules or the programme as a whole.

The key outcome of this is that MSLETB have been approved to develop two new apprenticeships and concept will be part of them too. However, it is foreseen that the effort from the learner will now be accredited at an appropriate level (5 or 6) in the area of Writing/Learning to Learn/Digital Literacy while also maintaining the optional class time and one-to-one tuition when needed. So, while the effort is accredited it is also foreseen that the gains in learner success will be maintained.

### KEY LEARNINGS

MSLETB will build on the knowledge and experience of the sales apprenticeship development and revalidation by incorporating this model into any New Generation Apprenticeship developed and will examine the feasibility of this model for any other award being validated.



## TIPPERARY ETB – FET STUDENT COUNCIL

### INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

In 2021, during the self-evaluation process, Tipperary ETB recognised the need for the establishment of formal internal mechanisms to prioritise the learner voice in future planning, policy and decision making. Following the February 2022 Inaugural Statutory Review of Quality Assurance, it emerged as a top priority. The Tipperary ETB FET Student Council was established in 2022 with its first meeting January 2023, giving a platform for the 'Learner Voice'. This approach, central to the development of the FET College of the Future, places the learner at the heart of planning at FET level.

### ACTION

In March 2022, over 100 Tipperary ETB FET learners participated in the AONTAS Learner Forum. Following the forum, a learner voice forum and Call to Council event was organised and held over three days in October 2022, featuring face-to-face workshops in different Tipperary locations. The primary aim was to engage learners in Nenagh, Thurles, Clonmel, and surrounding areas to obtain their perspectives on forming a student council for Tipperary ETB and to seek expressions of interest in contributing to its development. A survey complemented the face-to-face workshops, ensuring all Tipperary ETB learners had an equal opportunity to voice their opinions. Regional events were chosen to facilitate learner participation, with transportation support provided. Online meetings were used to widen access for learners facing transportation, employment or scheduling challenges.

Over 70 learners participated in focus groups and surveys, representing various programmes and community groups. Each forum commenced with an introduction to Tipperary ETB's mission and the necessity for a learner voice. The potential role of a student council was outlined. Participants were divided into smaller working groups for discussions on topics related to the establishment of a learner voice via a student council, learner well-being, and engagement with management. Questions, primarily open-ended for face-to-face sessions, were encouraged thorough discussions. Small

group discussions and feedback were recorded, and the results were compiled. For online sessions on October 20th, the survey questions were based on collective responses from the face-to-face forum meetings. The Likert scale responses to the online survey provided further insights.

### KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

On November 30, 2022, Tipperary ETB extended an open invitation to the Anner Hotel in Thurles, through various channels, including social media, PLSS SMS service, Centre Coordinators/Staff, to learners interested in establishing the Tipperary ETB Student Council. Approximately 50 learners attended. During this gathering, feedback from recent online surveys and focus groups was shared with participants. The student council officers were nominated, and learner preferences for specific council positions were identified. The inaugural student council meeting was held in January 2023. The student council convenes twice a month, alternating between online and face-to-face sessions.





## KEY ACTIONS FOR THE STUDENT COUNCIL FOR 2023

1. Student Council Training with AONTAS (refer to [Learners as Leaders Handbook](#)).
2. Representation at the AONTAS 'Learners as Leaders Development Education Programme' Forum.
3. LGBTQI+ inclusion training for all Student Council Members.
4. Formation of two sub-groups to address key areas: Transport and Work Experience for Tipperary ETB learners (In September 2023: AONTAS gave an advocacy and planning workshop to the FET Student Council on the theme "Making Changes". 22 FET students identified two key issues to progress in 2023 and 2024: Lack of transport for attending courses, and lack of access to relevant work experience)
5. Invitation to register and participate with the PPN and have Student Council members engage in the Transport for Tipperary PPN group.
6. Participation in ETBI feedback on FET Strategy.
7. Hosting a Student Council Focus Group on UDL for the ETBI Inclusion Office.
8. Involvement in the Learner Mental Health Framework level 1 accreditation to develop a project promoting mental health and well-being for learners.
9. Representation at the USI + AHEAD Disabled Student Learner Advisory Group.
10. Invitation for a Student Council member to serve on the FET Committee.
11. Participation in the NTSTEP National Student Engagement forum at DCU.
12. The Chair of the Student Council will speak at the launch of the new Tipperary ETB Statement of Strategy 2023-2027.

## KEY LEARNINGS

The creation and success of the Tipperary ETB FET Student Council (Tipperary ETB Learner Voice Forum and Call to Council) can be attributed to the role of past and current learners from various programmes in Tipperary who contributed to this initiative, and through the invaluable support of FET programme coordinators, teachers and tutors who played a crucial role in engaging and recruiting students. This support needs to be an ongoing process due to the brevity of courses for a large cohort of FET students and the wide geographic spread. The FET Student Council has given a structure and platform to the student voice, and will need coordination, support and management to continue and flourish. In October 2023, following an inspirational speech from the Chair of the FET Student Council to the Tipperary ETB Board, Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team across FET, Schools and OSD, Senior Managements Team, Staff and Students, an invitation to join the FET Committee was extended, bringing the student voice directly into the governance structures.



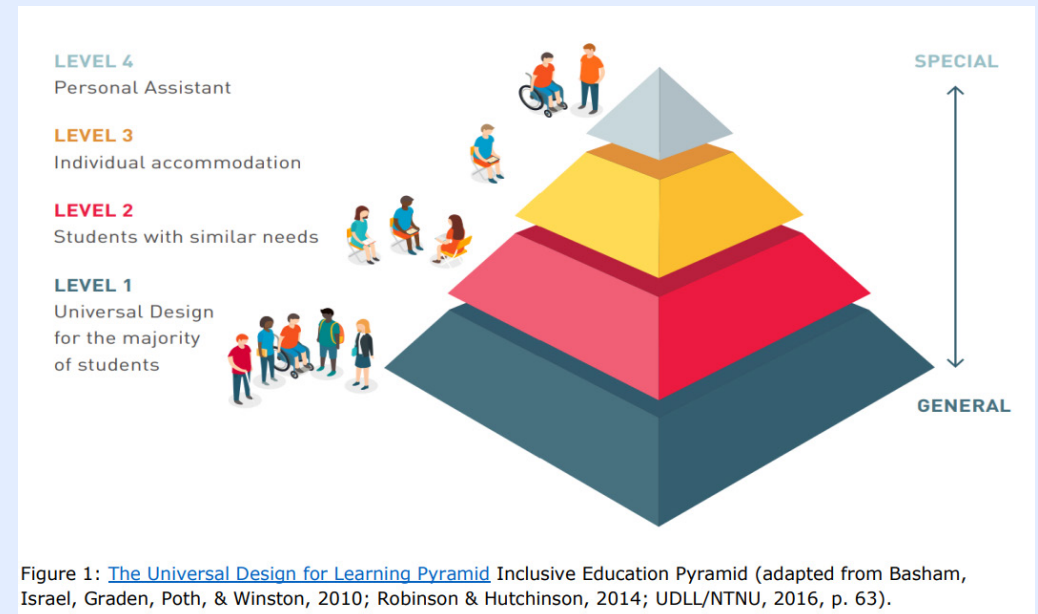
## TIPPERARY ETB –

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR FET

### INTRODUCTION/ DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Active inclusion is a key goal of the FET Strategy 2014-2019 which states that ‘the FET sector will seek to increase levels of active inclusion through the provision of high quality, more accessible and flexible education and training programmes and supports suited to the identified needs of the individual’. It is also given expression in our Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024 (SOLAS FET Strategy) which means to integrate the principle of equity of access more fully into the everyday life of our service so that it permeates all programme and services. The core values of FET are lifelong learning, social justice, active citizenship and economic prosperity. Tipperary ETB FET is committed to inclusion and sees it as a dynamic principle which requires a systematic approach across the organisation. The development of the UDL Implementation Plan for FET is one of the measures that strengthens and supports this inclusion goal within the teaching and learning space. The integration of UDL within existing learner supports and services:

- Support for All – whole programme/service approaches/classroom subject support
- Support for Some – Individual and / or group approaches
- Support for a Few – Individual



### ACTION

The Tipperary ETB Universal Design for Learning Implementation Plan for FET was launched in Q4 2023. The aim of the UDL Implementation Plan is to support and enhance inclusion and accessibility systematically within the teaching and learning space. The Implementation Plan is a road map for tasks and actions that will support implementation over a 3–5-year duration. Tipperary ETB FET has adopted the CAST (Grace Meo, Rachel Currie-Rubin, 2015) universal design for learning implementation process. The implementation of UDL at an organisational level is a process, not an event, and requires more than the adoption of a new teaching and learning pedagogy (LaTurner & Lewis, 2013). There is recognition within this implementation process that



FET providers are multifaceted, operating in central and dispersed locations, with many different resource levels, and each variable can impact on delivery. In summary, the implementation process requires Tipperary ETB service and programme providers to focus on leadership across five phases: explore, prepare, integrate, scale and optimise.

- **Phase 1:** A UDL Task Group was established to oversee the implementation through encouragement, support and monitoring
- **Phase 2:** The next phase after the establishment of the Task Group is the role of the FET Programme Manager, who will set up a UDL programme provider team 2 and build capacity around the team process, complete PD on UDL, identify aspects of UDL in practice and decide on an area of focus for 6 months. The Programme Manager ensures that they have the enquiry data required to monitor learners' progress as they implement UDL and decides if a learner group in the programme could pilot a UDL learner peer learning project
- **Phase 3:** Scale to other courses/programmes across FET by developing an organisational action plan and mentoring support
- **Phase 4:** Scaling implementation

## KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Q4 2022 -> Q3 2023

- UDL Implementation Plan published
- UDL Task Group established to provide oversight on delivery of actions
- FET Staff Engagement and Consultation – UDL Implementation Plan presented to all programme managers
- Development of UDL Self-assessment Tool is underway – this will be used to map journey and progress over 3–5-year journey (due for completion and distribution Q4 2023)
- Development underway of UDL staff support / site within professional development area of Tipperary ETB Staff Hub
- Promotion of UDL professional development opportunities: September 2023: AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning teamed up to jointly deliver the Digital Badge for UDL. This course, hosted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, provides participants with a strong

introduction to the UDL Framework and gives them the opportunity to implement UDL approaches within the teaching activities they are currently undertaking. Staff from across Tipperary ETB FET programme areas are engaging in this PD. Tipperary ETB part-time tutor facilitating UDL Digital Badge Peer Group for FET Tipperary ETB

- The UDL Task group explore Erasmus opportunities to support UDL implementation
- Tipperary ETB Active Inclusion Officer (CEF) – part of national FE and HE sector working group developing Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education (Tipperary ETB FET learners engaged in a national learner survey as part of a consultation process)

## KEY LEARNINGS

The UDL Implementation Plan is a work in progress, which will take 3 to 5 years. Good collaboration and mapping of the journey from stage to stage will be an important part of the process. Tipperary ETB is invested and committed to this UDL implementation plan and there is evidential interest from within FET demonstrated by our UDL FET Practitioners survey, which highlighted a willingness and interest to learn, collaborate, and implement UDL within FET. It is expected that this plan will support change – it is not, however, considered an exercise with an endpoint or UDL destination in mind.

This plan will also be supported with sufficient resources and expertise with the intention of generating meaningful discussion and showcasing what works and what will iteratively improve practice consistent with UDL principles. Tipperary ETB recognises that there are different entry points to UDL implementation. Some FET programme teams may begin by engaging in general professional development to understand the UDL principles, others may examine what they are already doing in UDL and use the implementation phases to determine the next steps, others again may jump in and utilise UDL technology tools and apply these to UDL principles and so on. This plan allows for all these different starting points.

Tipperary ETB is confident that the phased implementation, supported by direct work of the UDL Task group and programme providers, will ultimately lead to the embedding of inclusive education principles across FET.



## WATERFORD AND WEXFORD ETB – WWETB'S LEARNER VOICE FORUM

### BACKGROUND

As part of the self-evaluation process associated with the external review, WWETB engaged extensively with the learner body including former learners. Over 1,000 learners were consulted by way of survey and focus groups. Feedback from learners regarding the services offered to them by WWETB was overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, many learners took the opportunity to describe in detail the elements that contributed to their positive experiences learning within the organisation. The external Review Team recommended that WWETB increase 'learner voice participation' in the QA governance and oversight processes and develop a system that would be suitable and consistently implemented to capture and act on learner feedback, to include the learner experience, capturing and acting on learners' feedback during the programme and not only at the end of the programme.

### ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN

To this end, WWETB made provision for the establishment of a Learner Forum Group. An invitation was issued to the learner body through Programme Coordinators to garner interest in participation with a forum of FET learners. Learners who came forward were confirmed on the Forum until there was representation from each provision type across the organisation. The resulting learner representatives presented as a diverse group of learners, reflective of the learner diversity within WWETB FET provision.

Terms of Reference were drafted by the WWETB Quality Team and agreed upon in consultation with the new Learner Forum and the WWETB FET Management Team. The Learner Forum would not consist only of learners, additional members of the Forum included; WWETB's Access and Inclusion Officer, the Quality Manager and Quality Assurance Officer, and the Chair of the Forum would be from an external organisation. It was agreed by all that externality would be important for such a group. This externality was provided by Aontas, the National Adult Learner Advocacy Group. The

QA Manager reports on the work and progress of the group to the Quality Assurance Steering Group. Throughout the year, the group were consulted with regard to their use of social media and results of this fed back to the FET Management Team to inform discussion and assist with strategising activity in this area.

The WWETB Learner Forum is in its infancy, and much of the early work of the group has been devoted to establishing the mechanism itself, empowering learners (Learners as Leaders facilitated by Aontas) and sharing experiences of learning. Some members of the group have expressed interest in the areas of diversity and inclusion, and this has prompted follow-up work by the Access and Inclusion Officer.

### CHALLENGES

While progress is being made with the initiative, there are challenges that require continued reflection and planning. The inevitable transience of FET learners and the turnover of participants in the forum can disrupt continuity of thought and process and mitigate against an appetite for larger pieces of work or success of same. The diversity, too, while critically reflective of the diversity within our principal stakeholder group, can of itself pose challenges in terms of shared vernacular, vastly differing priorities and needs, and even the logistics of finding times that suit all participants, some of whom are on part-time courses. WWETB have supported travel arrangements where possible (the Forum have favoured face-to-face meetings over online). A Phase 2 apprentice, for instance, is on-course with us for 20 weeks. A participating apprentice may get the opportunity to engage in two learner forum meetings and then must relinquish their place on the forum. Apprentices consist of 10% of our learner cohort.

### CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges, the establishment of the Forum has been a positive development within the organisation and WWETB is committed to continuously improving and refining the mechanism. In addition to this, the QA unit are currently



reviewing our 'End-of-Course Evaluation' process, which is for the most part a programme/centre-oriented process, with the intention of creating a more standardised 'Learner Satisfaction Survey' process with the ability to electronically compile, view and interrogate the data arising. Coupled with the Learner Forum, these learner engagement actions will lead to vast improvement in our systematic approach to capturing the learner voice and ensuring the mechanisms are in place to listen to it.



## WATERFORD AND WEXFORD ETB – WWETB'S USE OF DATA

### BACKGROUND

WWETB has sought to improve its ability to collect and consult data as a constituent element of ascertaining the quality of provision and has invested in putting personnel and systems in place to that end. Data-related recommendations accounted for seven of the recommendations made in the external review team report and WWETB is committed to establishing a robust systematic approach to meet these recommendations and to ensure that:

- The information going into our data systems is accurate and we achieve a high degree of data fidelity.
- We have established procedures for data inquiry and efficient processes for same.
- We systematically report to the FET Management and Programme Management teams on key data points in association with provision that can help inform overall provision.
- Understanding data contexts and being comfortable with using data is standard across FET management and coordination personnel.

WWETB wanted to take the opportunity by way of the Case Study option to outline the progress that has been made to date in the meeting of both the recommendations and the general objectives outlined above.

### ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN

Robust management of data is a key element of quality assurance. WWETB was one of the first ETB organisations to put in place a designated Data Analyst (by way of a CEF contract). The WWETB-appointed Data Analyst works closely with our PLSS Coordinators, and all are part of the WWETB Quality Team. At the time of the review, the Quality Team were in the process of drafting a FET policy for the management of data. In addition to this, a draft procedure was developed for the compiling and

analysis of key indicators relating to FET programmes. These key indicators are compiled by the QA team and communicated to FET Managers and Programme Coordinators/Principals twice yearly by way of:

- A mid-year review.**
- An end-of-year report.**

To establish a system of benchmarking, WWETB uses both the average data for the provision type over the preceding 3-year period, and the average 3-year data for the programme/centre itself. For the mid-year review process, the QA Team flag with the Programme Coordinator and FET Manager a  $\pm 20\%$  or more deviation from the benchmarked averages. The e-mail recipients are asked to run a check on the data to ensure that it tallies with their own records. If the data is confirmed as accurate, then the Programme/FET Manager is asked to give relevant information to explain the variance. It is important to note that there are often very legitimate and logical reasons why certain data indicators might rise or fall to a  $\leq 20\%$  variation and the mid-year review allows us to record this for data purposes. The end-of-year report, the 'FET Programme Data Management Report', is a formal report issued to all members of the FET Management Team in February of the succeeding year after all yearly data has been consolidated. In terms of benchmarking, this report highlights a lesser variance from average figures than the mid-year review process,  $\pm 8\%$  for most indicators. The indicators currently being reviewed and reported on in both processes show 3-year data for:

- Participation Rates
- Completion Rates
- Early-Leaver Rates and Reasons
- Certification Rates
- Grade Distribution Analysis (Using National data supplied by QQI).



In addition to the current policy and procedures, WWETB continue to refer to Tableau for data relating the Strategic Performance targets. The QA Team have rolled out a series of presentations to FET Managers and Programme Coordinators for both the internal data processes and use of Tableau. These have been developed with the objective of improving data fluency and data-attentiveness across FET provision.

## CHALLENGES

It would be fair to say that systematic use of data in the FET sector has not been widespread up until quite recently and all ETBs are striving to respond to the challenge of using data in an efficient and constructive manner. This requires data expertise, data fluency, and a good understanding of the limitations of data in terms of converting data into information. A key concern of many of our practitioners, coordinators and managers is the potential over-reliance on data as a lens by which to assess the quality of provision. Data targets, while important, can often carry an implication that other elements of service are under-valued or of less importance. These concerns are valid. There are examples of discrepancies within SPA targets where certain cohorts/programmes are excluded from certain targets, even though they fit the profile of the target. What are the potential negative interpretations of this? While data-based targets can motivate and help drive activity in certain directions, there is a danger of demotivation too. This is particularly true of elements of the FET sector that are difficult to quantify. The attainment of 'soft skills', informal learner support, innovation-based on local knowledge or opportunity, these are fundamental elements of the FET sector, that have, arguably, made the sector what it is today. Does the language of data respect these key elements? WWETB has acknowledged the shortcomings of data in this regard in our FET Data Management Policy and a conscious decision has been made to not refer to our currently employed set of data indicators as 'performance' indicators as it is felt that 'performance' comprises a multitude of elements that would not be adequately represented by the data sets analysed in the current QA data process.

Another challenge linked to the relative infancy of the more central role of data within the sector would be the time and effort the ETB is expending to assist in making PLSS the efficient and responsive data system required by a business. We are working closely with key personnel within SOLAS to try to achieve that common goal.

## CONCLUSION

WWETB considers the management of FET data to be an area of strength for the organisation. Next year will see our current FET data policy and procedures reviewed and redeveloped. Even before this review takes place, the QA Team intend to make changes and improvements to the way the reports present data to the viewer. It is hoped that the new format will make the data more coherent and easily understood through the use of more sophisticated graphs and graphics.

The WWETB Strategy Statement 2023-2027 identifies a number of objectives with regard to data use within the organisation which illustrates WWETB's commitment to quality in the area of data management. These include:

- 1.1.16** Appointment of Data Officer – with responsibility for data, data analytics and data protection.
- 6.1.3** Enabling the organisation to use data for accurate reporting, by developing a formal data governance procedure to standardise how data is collected and processed within internal systems.
- 6.4.4** Enabling the organisation to use data for accurate reporting. Build data analytics capabilities within the organisation to consistently extract reliable data for reporting and generating business insights.

The WWETB QA Team has shared our current policy and procedures with other ETBs for reference upon request. The organisation is committed to collaborating with our fellow ETBs and stakeholders to aspire to best practice in the core quality pillar of Information and data management.



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