



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
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QUALITY IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET).

Education and Training Board (ETB)
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	4
City of Dublin Education and Training Board	10
Cork Education and Training Board	13
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board	18
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board	22
Kerry Education and Training Board	31
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board	37
Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board	45
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	48
Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board	56
Louth and Meath Education and Training Board	68
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board	71
Tipperary Education and Training Board	72
Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board	76



INTRODUCTION

The further education and training (FET) sector in Ireland continues to navigate a period of change, shaped by evolving learner needs, regulatory requirements, and the drive for continuous quality improvement. Recent challenges and opportunities include the integration of digital and blended learning, the expansion of inclusive practices, and the progression of implementation of quality assurance frameworks following QQI's inaugural review and sectoral report¹. These priorities are set against a backdrop of increasing diversity among learners, greater demand for flexible pathways, and the need to respond to national strategies.

This collection of case studies², drawn from the interim quality reports submitted in 2025 by all sixteen ETBs, provides a practical overview of how the sector is responding to these challenges. Each case study highlights innovative approaches, lessons learned, and the impact of new initiatives on learners, staff, and communities. The examples reflect the sector's commitment to evidence-based decision-making, collaboration, and shared learning—essential qualities as ETBs work towards embedding systematic quality reporting and delivering on the recommendations of recent reviews.

As ETBs continue to adapt and innovate, the insights captured here will inform ongoing quality enhancement, support strategic planning, and inspire further progress across Ireland's education and training landscape.

¹ https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-12/quality-assurance-of-fet-in-the-etb-sector_sectoral-report-2023.pdf

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



CAVAN AND MONAGHAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Using its tried and tested stage-gate programme development process, CMETB has embarked on the development of a suite of new QQI accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes. To date, two new special purpose awards (SPAs) at Levels 1 and 2 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) have been developed and successfully validated by QQI. CMETB is also currently working with SOLAS, via the Skills to Advance Innovation through Collaboration Fund, on the development of a number of sector specific English language micro-qualifications at QQI Level 5. In addition, CMETB has also prepared and submitted a comprehensive proposal and funding application for the re-development of existing ESOL programmes at Levels 3 and 4.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Historically, accredited ESOL provision within CMETB was limited to minor awards at Levels 3 and 4. Below these levels provision tended to be a mixture of unaccredited programmes and general literacy accredited programmes at Levels 1 and 2. Due to a significant shift in the profile of ESOL learners in recent years – with an increasing number of learners presenting with little to no English language competency and/or literacy difficulties in their native language – these ad hoc solutions were no longer fit for purpose.

Following discussions with the Director of FET, Adult Education Officer (AEO) and ESOL Co-ordinators, it was agreed that there was a need for accredited, high-quality ESOL programmes at Levels 1 and 2 that could meet the diverse needs of learners from different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. The lack of existing ESOL

programmes at these entry levels meant that there was a lack of uniformity in delivery nationally, leaving a growing cohort of migrant learners ill-prepared to interact in and integrate into Irish society. As such, the development of accredited programmes at these levels can ensure standardisation nationally providing migrant learners, who tend to be more transient than other sectors of Irish society, with skills that are transferable in many facets of their personal and professional lives.

ACTION

Once it had been agreed at ETB level to explore the development of accredited ESOL programmes at Levels 1 and 2, representatives from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service (QAES) engaged with QQI to seek their advice and support to develop these programmes against the draft broad standards for foreign languages. Following these successful interactions with QQI, CMETB proceeded to recruit and appoint Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to work with the Programme Development, Validation and Review (PDVR) Officer and the wider QAES team to progress programme development using CMETB's stage-gate process.

Commencing in Q1, 2023, the SMEs embarked on over 80 hours of research and seven months of development work which explored best practice in Ireland, Europe and Internationally and which resulted in the development of two SPAs at Levels 1 and 2. These programmes have not only been aligned to the broad standards, but also to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LASLLIAM) reference guide.

Each programme consists of three minor awards which can be certified separately or as a full SPA and separated into the key language skills areas – listening and speaking, reading and writing. At each level, the programmes are accompanied by a suite of learner and tutor resources to include learner and tutor workbooks, sample assessments and a comprehensive programme syllabus aligned to the CEFR.

Both of these accredited programmes sit alongside an unaccredited Entry to ESOL literacy focused programme which was developed at the same time and adopts the same format as the accredited programmes.

Keen to build on the momentum of developing dedicated ESOL awards at Levels 1 and 2, which have now been adopted by all 16 ETBs nationally, CMETB is hoping to progress the development of updated ESOL awards at Levels 3 and 4 in 2025. Pending receipt of funding to progress with this, CMETB is currently working on developing three micro-qualifications at QQI Level 5 in sector specific English language aimed at upskilling employees who need to develop their technical language skills in various roles across the healthcare, hospitality and engineering and manufacturing sectors.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Following the successful validation of the ESOL Levels 1 and 2 awards, coupled with the unaccredited Entry to ESOL programme, CMETB has developed a unique three-tier framework covering language and literacy provision up to A1 level on the CEFR in a way that complies with both national and international standards. The net result of this is that learners should now progress to ESOL Level 3 at a more standardised level rather than Level 3 being the standard accreditation access point for learners. Both awards have been positively received, and the 15 other ETBs have now successfully secured differential validation and are at various stages of rolling the programmes out in their regions.

In terms of the Level 5 sector specific language awards, these will be the first English for Specific Purposes (ESP) micro-qualifications to be developed and are aimed at providing employees working in healthcare, hospitality and manufacturing/engineering who may have good general English language skills, with the technical language skills necessary to enable them to succeed in their roles and/or progress to roles that may be more commensurate with their existing levels of qualifications.

KEY LEARNINGS

Some of the key learnings gained so far include:

- The need for accredited ESOL programmes at the lower levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Broad interest from across the FET sector in the development of transferable accreditation
- Viability and usefulness of the new Broad Standards at NFQ Levels 1 to 4, in particular the foreign language and literacy standards.



CASE STUDY 2: PREPARING FOR BLENDED LEARNING DELIVERY AT CMETB

INTRODUCTION

QQI's emergency sanction to offer blended/online programmes, introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, expired on 30 June 2025. Providers including ETBs wishing to incorporate any blended or online delivery after this date need to apply to QQI to extend their scope of provision. CMETB is currently in the process of applying to extend its scope of provision to include synchronous blended delivery.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

In considering its strategic position in respect of blended learning post June 2025, CMETB had to, in the first instance, explore and respond to QQI's updated Statutory Guidelines for blended learning provision. This was to ensure that all organisational, programme and learner related scenarios had been identified and addressed. In so doing, CMETB had to assess its capacity and infrastructure to support any potential learning provision.

Based on this assessment, it was agreed that CMETB would take a phased approach to the implementation of blended learning, with Phase 1 allowing for the introduction of synchronous blended learning for programmes at Levels 4, 5 and 6 only. It is CMETB's considered opinion that programmes with a high academic content will be best suited to blended learning. In all cases, it is stated in CMETB's Blended Learning Strategy that no more than 50% of a programme or module can be blended.

ACTION

In preparing for the proposed introduction of synchronous blended learning (Phase 1), subject to QQI approval, CMETB has developed a suite of documents that formally outline its approach. These documents include:

- CMETB Blended Learning Strategy
- CMETB Blended Learning Policy

- CMETB Blended Learning Action Plan
- CMETB Blended Learning Gap Analysis
- CMETB Blended Learning Self Evaluation

An internal review of these documents was conducted to check and proof-read the documents to identify any gaps in the information provided and to ensure clarity of language. This was followed by a review from an external panel as recommended by QQI. This external review allowed for further scrutiny by both a Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Quality Assurance (QA) expert and provided reassurance and valuable feedback on the proposed approach and supporting documentation.

As part of the overall process, CMETB also identified the need for appropriate staff training via micro-qualifications. This is to ensure a standardised approach to learning and assessment and parity of experience amongst learners. As such, a synchronous blended learning module has been developed and has successfully completed QQI's validation process. A follow on asynchronous blended learning module is currently under development, and it is expected that this programme will be submitted for validation later in 2025. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) applications will be considered as part of the application process for these micro-qualifications. As part of the RPL process, staff will be required to complete the prescribed assessments to help ensure the requisite standard has been met. All staff will be encouraged to participate in these programmes once available.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

CMETB is mindful that the introduction of blended learning will have an impact for all staff and especially for learners. It is for this reason that CMETB has opted to take a staged, incremental approach to its introduction with synchronous delivery being considered in Phase 1. Phase 2 will be introduced at a later stage, pending a review and an impact assessment of Phase 1, and will extend the scope to asynchronous delivery.

The Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Officer has also developed a range of guidance documents to include:



- Course implementation checklist
- Tutor checklist
- Blended Learning Toolkit
- Netiquette guidelines
- Technology requirements to support blended learning
- Learner induction in preparation for blended learning

In addition, tutor and learner evaluation surveys have been developed and will be completed at the end of each blended learning module. The results will be reviewed and collated by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Service (QAES) and the findings will be shared with the relevant centre or service.

In terms of securing formal approval and validation to proceed with the introduction of synchronous blended learning, CMETB has submitted a statement of intent and an action plan to QQI. Both of these documents were formally signed off by CMETB's Chief Executive and submitted in December 2024. CMETB is currently awaiting an update regarding the application process and costs involved.

In anticipation of CMETB successfully securing approval to proceed with the introduction of synchronous blended learning, the following policy areas are under review to reflect this development and the potential impact of blended delivery:

- Admissions Policy (pre-entry guidance, transparency of blended content to learners)
- Learner Attendance Policy (processes to record and monitor learner attendance during periods of synchronous delivery)
- Assessment and Appeals Policy (confirm all summative assessment to occur on site during periods of synchronous delivery)
- Secure Storage
- Assessment Malpractice (mitigations during learning and assessment)
- Deferrals
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Reasonable Accommodation

- Information Technology (IT)
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

KEY LEARNINGS

Feedback from the external review that was carried out allowed CMETB to further develop the various documents to ensure the following:

- Standardised and consistent use of terminology/language throughout in relation to the blends involved
- Further development of the approach for Phase 2 delivery – asynchronous learning and
- Reinforcement of CMETB's position in respect of Academic Integrity and to outline CMETB's future plans in this space.



CASE STUDY 3: CMETB EMPLOYER PORTAL

INTRODUCTION

CMETB formally launched its new Employer Portal and Job Finder Service at the CMETB Employment and Training Expo in May 2024. The portal allows employers from across the Cavan/Monaghan region advertise vacant positions within their organisations by engaging directly with current CMETB learners, as well as recent graduates and other local jobseekers.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The CMETB Employer Portal and Job Finder Service was developed to help bridge the gap between employers and jobseekers in the Cavan/Monaghan region and surrounding areas by providing a pathway for jobseekers to connect directly with local employers particularly, but not exclusively, in areas where CMETB had trained a pipeline of learners for these industries. The need for the portal emerged through the collaboration of the various CMETB FET Services, with employers expressing difficulties in recruiting staff and filling specific vacancies.

ACTION

The portal and job finder service were developed by the CMETB Employer Engagement Working Group, which is managed by CMETB's Training Services. This working group consists of representatives from the wide range of CMETB FET services including apprenticeships, Skills to Advance, Adult Education, Supply Chain, Logistics and Procurement, Skills for Work, Monaghan Institute and Cavan Institute.

A project team was formed in April 2023 to develop the portal specifications and procure a website developer. Following the launch of the portal in May 2024, continuous changes and adjustments have been implemented following feedback from employers. For example, a note tab has been added to the job vacancies pages and includes instructions on applying for a post.

The Employer Engagement Working Group also provided ongoing feedback to include the development of a short demonstration video to assist employers in registering for and using the portal. A separate video was also created for learners to guide them through the process of accessing the portal. This video is used by all teachers and instructors at the end of their courses when learners are completing course evaluations.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Employers

Local employers can use the portal to advertise job vacancies within their businesses at no cost. As such, this fosters stronger relationships between CMETB and employers leading to long-term partnerships and mutual benefits. The portal also serves as a valuable resource for employers to connect directly with CMETB's Employer Engagement Team, where they can enquire about funded training opportunities to enhance their workforce's skills and capabilities. This helps enable better collaboration on training needs and curriculum development that aligns with industry requirements.

By utilising the portal, employers can:

- Create a company profile and post job vacancies
- Easily manage and update job postings
- Direct candidates to their application procedures on their websites
- Reach a wider pool of potential candidates

Currently, the portal has 114 employers registered, with over 100 job vacancies advertised, showcasing its growing reach and relevance to the local employment market.

Jobseekers

The job finder is a free service that provides a pathway for learners to connect with current job opportunities with local employers upon completion of their studies with CMETB. With easy-to-use search and filter options, jobseekers can quickly find

relevant positions that match their newly acquired skills and qualifications and be directed to the employer to apply for the vacancy. Jobseekers can access the portal via www.cmetb.ie/job-finder/.

KEY LEARNINGS

Following the launch of the Employer Portal and Job Finder Service, CMETB conducted a short evaluation with employers to ascertain the usefulness and benefit of having such a resource.

To further enhance the understanding of the portal's impact, the Employer Engagement Unit is planning on tracking the journey of a CMETB learner who has accessed the portal and applied for a vacancy. This will provide insights into the experience of jobseekers using the portal. Additionally, CMETB will conduct a case study with an employer who successfully secured a new employee via the portal, highlighting the practical benefits for businesses while further refining the portal for future use.



Additional benefits include:

- Greater collaboration between CMETB and employers
- More timely local solutions to employer needs
- Local job opportunities for learners.



CITY OF DUBLIN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1:

RPL DEVELOPMENTS IN CITY OF DUBLIN ETB

INTRODUCTION

In October 2023, after City of Dublin ETB's Inaugural Review, City of Dublin ETB FET Quality Assurance Development Group (QADG) established Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Working Group.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The Inaugural Review identified 'Recognition of Prior Learning' as a priority, highlighting a need to develop informed, comprehensive, and inclusive RPL procedures, templates and tools to support learners and staff for use across range of City of Dublin ETB FET provision.

Answering: Labour market demands, increased attention to 'learner pathways' and 'Flexible Learning' drives. The demand for people to upgrade skills and the need for skills to be recognised.

City of Dublin ETB FET have increasingly engaged 'Recognition of Prior Learning', acknowledging an urgency to support learners and staff in an increasingly complex landscape, when quality of delivery and of outcomes imperative.

ACTION

- 2023-2024 City of Dublin ETB FET-wide RPL Working Group established under the QADG QA governance group.
- November 23 - April 24: 6 meetings, 4 online 2 in-person – to facilitate knowledge and understanding of RPL (International, National, Regional, and local application of policy and practice). Presentations: QQI and Donegal ETB.

- Developed proposal and implementation plan for an RPL approach in City of Dublin ETB.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

- City of Dublin ETB QADG approved proposal in line with recommendations to establish a 'Hub and Spoke' RPL process model. That CDU 'Hub' host to (central role) of RPL Coordinator with 'spoke' processes across centres where staff would have appointed RPL roles in their centres.
- August 24: RPL Coordinator appointed to work as part of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team to coordinate and expand the availability of RPL opportunities in the four FET campus areas of the city.
- September 24, new QADG RPL working Group established to create a standardised application process, procedures and templates for accrediting prior learning for QQI 4, 6, 6 CAS awards.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Knowledge/ engagement with RPL varied across FET service
- The establishment of a cross FET RPL working group brought many perintuition
- spectives to the working group and enhanced the knowledge of RPL across centres and different types of provision
- Appointment of RPL coordinator (Hub) supports a consistent approach across the ETB and allows for the development of resources to support centres in the quality assurance of RPL opportunities for learners this includes the development of a RPL staff SharePoint site that includes resources, templates, toolkits, online support materials
- Need to facilitate consistency and transparency in RPL across City of Dublin ETB FET

CASE STUDY 2: LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Following the inaugural review in 2022, City of Dublin ETB established the Learner Support and Engagement Service.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The review had found that while learner voice initiatives and activities were evident across the board, there was a need to develop more coherent and consistent systems of capturing both qualitative and quantitative data in a centralised way.

ACTION

- Annual FET Learner Survey designed, piloted and disseminated across all FET provision in ETB
- Reward programme for Student Councils introduced to incentivise promotion of survey at local level
- ETB's first FET Learner Conference held in March 2024 to disseminate survey findings directly to learner representatives, attended by 60 learner representatives, with 9 learners as speakers (panellists, lightning talks etc)
- Scoping review of the Student Councils in colleges undertaken in 2023-24
- ETB's first Learner Leadership Week held in November 2024. Highlights included an online introduction to learner leadership and meet and greet opportunity for new class reps and Student Council members, an orienteering team-building event for Student Council members from 12 colleges, Workshop on neurodiversity and allyship for Youthreach learners (in conjunction with AslAm)
- Sensory and environmental audits of FET centres led by AslAm and in conjunction with autistic learners undertaken following survey findings from neurodivergent learners
- Workshop for staff held to cascade the learning from the initial sensory audits with concrete suggestions for centre management teams to implement.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

- Year on-year increase in learner engagement with survey- up from 2,795 in 2023-24 to 3,265 in 2024/25
- Greater co-ordination of learner voice mechanisms across centres
- Mechanisms for feeding learner voice into enhancement priorities in centres and across the ETB
- Self-reported increase in confidence among learners in leadership roles as a result of training provided (e.g. Board of Management reps, Student Council members)
- Increased opportunities for cross-centre collaboration and communication for learners
- Increased participation of learner representatives in regional and national consultative fora through SOLAS, AONTAS, DFHERIS and DES
- Improvements to physical and sensory environments in centres
- Greater visibility of learners in activities

KEY LEARNINGS

- Student Council structures have evolved organically over the past 20 years, resulting in differences across colleges
- Learners in leadership roles need guidance, support and training
- Learner representatives and leaders are very keen to be involved in cross-centre activity, including training and events
- Partnership with learners at both local and ETB-level results in greater engagement



CASE STUDY 3: DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY AND RELATED MISCONDUCT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

City of Dublin ETB scope of provision spans from Levels 1 – 6 on the NFQ with our youngest FET learners in our Youthreach and Community Training Workshops (aged 15), and our oldest members in our adult education provision (90+). This FET provision includes 12 colleges of FET delivering full awards at Levels 5 and 6 on the NFQ.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Learners use Level 5 and Level 6 awards to advance to higher education or enter the workforce. In a high-stakes environment, maintaining academic integrity in teaching, learning, and assessment is challenging, especially with the rise of Generative AI. Other forms of academic misconduct, like “essay mills” targeting learners, have made it necessary to implement an organisation-wide policy. This policy needs to ensure a consistent understanding and approach to academic integrity. The policy and procedures created for use across Further Education and Training (FET) needed to be applicable to all levels, from 1 to 6.

ACTION

To address this challenge, City of Dublin ETB appointed a cross FET working group in 2023-2024 to write an overarching academic integrity policy and related misconduct procedures. The working group reported to the QADG governance group. The group reviewed the academic integrity policies and procedures from across the ETB’s provision, higher education institutions nationally and internationally and ETBs nationally. This included the [EU Guidelines on the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence and Data in Teaching and Learning](#), documentation produced by the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and the [National Academic Integrity Network](#).

The academic integrity policy was approved by the Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC) and implemented for the 2024/2025 academic year. The group then went on to produce a fair and transparent academic misconduct procedures for use across all FET provision. This involved updating City of Dublin ETB’s Malpractice Guidelines using NAIN’s Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management tools. It required three consultation meetings with the Quality teams from across all centres and service spheres on the role of the academic integrity advisor, introducing courageous conversations and the suitability of the proposed matrix and rubric for sanctions. The final documents were then reviewed by Billy Kelly, Chair of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN).

The introduction of both the policy and procedures was, and will continue to be, supported with resources for learners and educators, as well as training and ongoing support for staff in the academic integrity advisor role.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The working group developed an academic integrity policy and misconduct procedures for use across the City of Dublin ETB. The working group members have gained expertise in the area, and a consistency of approach to academic integrity and Generative AI is being fostered across our organisation via our quality teams and supporting material.

KEY LEARNINGS

View academic integrity as part of a wider systems approach. Better to focus on prevention than punishment. In academic integrity this includes:

- Creating a wider culture of integrity within colleges promotes good practice and reduces malpractice
- Integrate generative AI into teaching, learning and assessment
- Address over assessment of learners to reduce undue pressure that can promote misconduct
- Provide good guidance and tools to staff and learners to support appropriate referencing



CORK EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: INCLUSIVE SPACES PROJECT 2024/2025

INTRODUCTION

The Inclusive Spaces Project is a pilot initiative developed and rolled out by Cork ETB's Active Inclusion Support Services to 5 FET Centres across Cork City and County. The project encompasses two areas of exploration: an assessment of the learning environment, and the provision of staff awareness and strategies to support them in assisting the learners. Five factors are considered within the evaluation of the environment: sensory, communication, emotional, social and, where possible, physical.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The ambition is that the pilot will lead onto a longer-term project creating cultural awareness around inclusion through manageable changes, using Universal Design for all our learners and staff. Through UD, all accommodations provided for our neurodiverse learners ultimately benefit the greater Cork ETB community.

ACTION

Supported through Universal Design, a comprehensive and integrative assessment of the five centres was carried out. Prior to this, the following preliminary, preparatory steps were undertaken:

- Research – visit to Trinity College to meet with staff involved in development of a similar project.
- Team meetings to agree the pilot centres (one was selected from each geographical area).
- Getting support from Trinity College, Aslam, Shine and UCC.

Once the centres had been identified the, AISS team met with centre staff to review the centre's environment and the demographics of the learners. Following on from that, both student and staff surveys were produced, consisting of questions around special environments, sensory complexities and on specific learning challenges. The information from the surveys and site visits was collated and reviewed, then recommendations on potential changes were drafted and a report given to each centre. The recommended changes were initially actionable steps focused on areas such as signage, furniture arrangement, lighting, specific sensory requirements, and staff awareness. Modifications were implemented at the centre level, and subsequent follow-up visits provided feedback for the final report.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

By making one change at each level (environment; sensory, communication, emotional, social and physical) we began the process of recognising the vast and diverse needs in all our learners. In addition to the changes made at centre level, the following outcomes were achieved as a result of this pilot programme:

- Assistive and diagnostic tools are being rolled out where a need is identified and required.
- A comprehensive resource Padlet has been developed and is now accessible to centre staff: Inclusive Learning Spaces. This contains bite-sized support videos for staff around sensory and learning strategies and is being continually updated. The Padlet also contains up-to-date resources from both professional bodies as well as well-researched projects, and strategies to support staff, in a quick and accessible way, as they encounter issues.
- A resource presentation on Neurodiversity has been developed and is ready to be rolled out in early 2025.



KEY LEARNINGS

- The project will be expanded to include other centres in 2025, as well as ongoing development of the Padlet.
- It is also proposed to introduce the use of Virtual Reality (VR) for smaller centres that don't have the space to provide a suitable relaxation space for learners.
- VR will also be used as a tool to engage and connect more remote groups of learners, embracing an andragogical approach where learners and their learning styles are centre stage to the process.

CASE STUDY 2: DIGITAL LITERACY

INTRODUCTION

In 2024 Cork College of FET Cobh Centre began collaborating with the Cobh branch of the Cork County Library Service in facilitating a series of "Smartphones and Digital Literacy" courses.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

These were 8-weeks courses, two hours a week (16 hours in total) taking place in Cobh Library with a Cork ETB tutor. The courses were incredibly successful with such a high demand that we have now scheduled a further three courses for 2025 starting in January, after Easter and in September.

ACTION

The initiative provided learners the opportunity to practice using their personal smartphone in a group setting enabling the learner to make the most of the features available. For example; taking and sending photos to friends and family, accessing emails and listening to podcasts. Learners shared advice and tips in the group whilst receiving support from the tutor.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

One of the most noticeable benefits of the collaboration was the increase in participants compared with previous courses run in either the local FET centre or the library due to the collaborative marketing effort and partnership approach. The library kept a list of names of interested participants and shared these with the FET Resource Worker who in turn informed them how to apply prior to the course starting.

KEY LEARNINGS

Following a wider review of this successful collaboration by both parties, similar courses are also being considered in other townlands across the county in which Cork ETB and the Cork County Library Service have services located.



CASE STUDY 3:

CORK COLLEGE OF FET CREATES PATHWAYS IN TRAVELLER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Cork College of FET- Bishopstown Campus has celebrated the graduation of Traveller specific welding training programme.

The TIG Welding programme was co-designed by Bishopstown Campus and the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) to build on the traditional trades, enterprise and craftwork inherent to Traveller heritage.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Cork College of FET is committed to breaking down the systematic barriers facing Travellers in education by creating accessible and culturally aware training opportunities for members of the Travelling community.

ACTION

The TIG Welding programme was co-designed by Bishopstown Campus and the TVG to build on the traditional trades, enterprise and craftwork inherent to Traveller heritage. Staff who worked on the programmes completed Traveller Cultural Awareness training in advance of the programmes commencing.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Seven Traveller men have successfully completed a certificate in TIG Welding, this is a continuation on from a previous programme in ARC welding completed by the group in 2023. Cork College of FET- Bishopstown Campus was honoured to receive a Traveller Ally award from the TVG in 2023 in recognition of the work being done to provide pathways for Traveller men through this course.

KEY LEARNINGS

Programmes such as the Traveller specific welding programme provide a pathway for learning and continue to build on further initiatives and work with the Traveller Community to break down barriers into the future.



CASE STUDY 4: TERTIARY DEGREES IN CORK COLLEGE OF FET

INTRODUCTION

The development of tertiary degrees in the Cork region has been a strategic priority in advancing access to higher education. Through the New Horizons Southern Strategic Alliance, a collaborative effort has been undertaken to integrate pathways that support student progression from further education into university settings. Active in this alliance are University College Cork (UCC), Munster Technological University (MTU), Cork and Kerry Education and Training Boards (CETB; KETB). This initiative reflects a commitment to breaking down barriers and fostering educational inclusivity.

The New Horizons Southern Strategic Alliance has been instrumental in enhancing tertiary opportunities within the Cork region. Recognising the need for structured progression routes, the alliance has facilitated collaboration between the educational institutions, enabling a seamless transition for students pursuing higher education.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

A key challenge in the Cork region has been the integration of tertiary opportunities across different educational institutions. Ensuring coherence between courses and alignment with professional competencies is essential. To address this, campus teams from both UCC and CETB's Cork College of FET, Morrison's Island Campus (MIC), conducted a detailed mapping exercise. This initiative examined modules thematically and in light of CORU competencies, ensuring that course content meets professional accreditation standards.

ACTION

As part of the response to this challenge, a structured pathway has been developed for students pursuing the Bachelor of Social Work at UCC. A dedicated tertiary degree route has been established between Morrison's Island Campus and UCC, following a '1 + 3' model. Under this model, students complete the Level 5 Social Studies (5M2181)

major award at Morrison's Island Campus in their first year. During this year, they also undertake 10 credits in Social Theory and Practice at UCC over two semesters.

Students are dual registered (registered with both institutions), enabling them to experience university-level learning while still being based at their College of FET. This dual registration system provides early exposure to academic expectations and university life.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The 1 + 3 structured approach has yielded several key benefits including the reduction of barrier to higher education through university integration. Students participate in UCC activities one day a week, fostering early engagement with the university environment. The initiative helps students adjust to university life, easing the transition from further to higher education.

The Learners can access the resources on the university campus including UCC's Skills Centre allowing students to develop academic writing and other essential competencies paving a route to success.

The collaborative approach has strengthened relationships between staff in both institutions, ensuring students receive comprehensive support. Upon successful completion of their first year, students transition into UCC's Bachelor of Social Work programme's second year to complete their degree.

KEY LEARNINGS

The implementation of the 1 + 3 model has demonstrated the effectiveness of structured tertiary pathways in promoting educational progression. Key takeaways include:

- The model provides a clear, supportive route into university for students from further education backgrounds.
- Early exposure to university learning and engagement with academic support services enhances student success.



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Qualifications Ireland

- Strong institutional collaboration is critical in ensuring seamless transitions.
- This initiative serves as a foundation for future tertiary education partnerships, paving the way for expanded engagement and additional pathways.

The New Horizons Southern Strategic Alliance continues to be a cornerstone in fostering tertiary opportunities in Cork, demonstrating the impact of collaboration in widening participation and enhancing student success.



DUBLIN AND DÚN LAOGHAIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: ONE-STOP SHOP FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT – THE PD HUB

INTRODUCTION

Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) is committed to fostering a culture of continuous Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) among its staff. Recognising the importance of accessible and efficient PL&D opportunities, DDLETB has developed and implemented the PD Hub, a comprehensive SharePoint platform designed to centralise and enhance PL&D activities. The PD Hub serves as a one-stop shop for staff, offering up-to-date news, information about PL&D opportunities, and the ability to register for workshops and courses instantly.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Before the implementation of the **PD Hub**, information flow about PL&D opportunities was identified as a challenge. Information was emailed to line managers, who would then cascade it down to their teams. Relying on this method at times led to low registration rates and high no-show rates for workshops and courses. Employees faced challenges in accessing and managing their professional learning and development resources, resulting in inefficiencies and a lack of engagement in courses and workshops.

ACTION

To address these issues, in a collaboration with the company Cloud Design Box, a Microsoft Partner, DDLETB developed and implemented the **PD Hub**. The platform (SharePoint website) offers a centralised repository of training materials, training opportunities, news, and short, bite-sized videos. Our staff can now be informed about their Professional Learning and Development opportunities and register right

on the spot. It includes automated line manager's approval to attend the workshops/courses, and automated emails to confirm attendance and reminder emails. It informs attendees about possible changes and notifies line managers if someone confirmed their attendance but didn't show up on the day. It also automatically gives access to the repository of the course/workshop materials to attendees. Additionally, the **PD Hub** provides information and direct links for external free courses and workshops in line with DDLETB's needs, as well as links to other DDLETB's websites and a FAQ section.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The implementation of the PD Hub has led to significant improvements in employee engagement and satisfaction with PL&D programmes. Feedback from staff showed that they appreciate the **PD Hub's** user-friendly interface. The incorporation of Universal Design principles exemplifies DDLETB's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility (Immersive reader, descriptive imagery, different content formats etc).

The centralised system has streamlined access to workshop/courses and resources, resulting in increased participation and completion rates for training workshops/courses. Since the start, there has been a **350% reduction in no-shows** to workshops and courses, and overall PL&D engagement has grown. It also helps with day-to-day automation (emailing) and record keeping.

KEY LEARNINGS

The success of the **PD Hub** highlights the importance of having a user-friendly and centralised platform for PL&D. Information flow has been improved with constantly growing PL&D engagement. The automated features have proven vital in ensuring attendance and keeping both employees and line managers informed, ultimately leading to higher engagement and reduced no-show rates. Additionally, the **PD Hub** has enabled the PD Unit to reach a larger audience, ensuring that more staff members are aware of and can participate in PL&D opportunities.



CASE STUDY 2: A RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) APPLICATION AND ITS IMPACT ON DDLETB POLICY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) is committed to providing high-quality education and training services that align with the needs of learners and the labour market (DDLETB 2022). As part of this commitment, DDLETB has been actively involved in the Skills to Advance initiative, which focuses on upskilling and reskilling individuals in employment to enhance their career prospects and meet the evolving demands of the workforce (SOLAS 2018).

In this context, a learner from one of DDLETB's training centres, who was enrolled in the Skills to Advance Level 5 programme, enquired about the application process for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for two components under the Major Award of Office Administration 5M1997: Work Experience 5N1356 and Customer Service 5N0972. The RPL process allows learners to gain formal recognition for skills and knowledge acquired through previous work experience, training, or life experiences, thereby facilitating their progression within the education and training system. However, at the time of the application, DDLETB did not have a formal policy, procedures, or processes in place for the practical application and resourcing of RPL.

This case study examines how an RPL application from a Skills to Advance learner informed a small-scale action research project, which in turn is guiding the plan for the future development of DDLETB Policy. It highlights the key actions taken, outcomes achieved, and lessons learned throughout the process.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The learner's need for RPL highlighted a significant gap within DDLETB's existing framework. The lack of structure posed several challenges:

1. Without a formal RPL policy, there was no standardised approach to guide the process. This lack of structure meant that decisions made during the research

phase needed to be sustainable to ensure consistency and fairness in assessing prior learning.

2. The absence of clear procedures meant that there were no established steps for the learner to follow when applying for RPL. This created some ambiguity and somewhat delayed the application process.
3. There were no dedicated resources allocated for RPL, making it challenging to engage a qualified Mentor and Assessor.
4. The practical application of RPL required a structured approach to ensure that the learner's prior experiences and skills were accurately assessed and recognised. This involved developing resources with clear criteria for evaluating evidence of prior learning.
5. Overall, it was crucial to ensure that processes undertaken were aligned with DDLETB's strategic goals and the available infrastructure, technologies, and resources within the organisation.

ACTION

To address the learner's RPL application, DDLETB took several key steps to support the process despite the absence of a formal policy. The Adult Education Services (AES) played a crucial role by providing the opportunity for the RPL applicant to meet with an AES Guidance Counsellor. This initial support was essential in guiding the learner through the RPL process.

The DDLETB Human Resources (HR) Department advised that the only option to pay a Mentor and an Assessor was through the part-time teacher (PTT) rate. This meant that the DDLETB Adult Education Services (AES) would be the first point of contact, as many of the tutors were on the PTT rate. Fortunately, this proved to be the correct approach, and a Mentor was located who had completed a Level 7 qualification in RPL with University College Cork and had also been involved as an Assessor in the Tobar project. The Tobar project was a national initiative aimed at recognising prior learning for members of the Defence Forces, enabling them to gain various awards based on their prior experience.



However, engaging an Assessor through the same method proved challenging. Nevertheless, through the promotion of the project, a DDLETB Teacher from a Further Education (FE) College offered her time voluntarily and without payment as part of her studies for the completion of the RPL Digital Badge with the Teaching and Learning National Forum. This voluntary contribution was invaluable in ensuring the learner's portfolio and associated evidence were thoroughly assessed by a subject matter expert.

Throughout the process, the Mentor was available to meet with the learner at mutually suitable times. Briefs were developed organically during these sessions as and when gaps were identified. It was found that the Mentor's support was instrumental in helping the learner navigate the RPL process and enhance their existing skills.

Once the RPL portfolio was completed, the Assessor dedicated her time to evaluate the completed evidence and provided a comprehensive report laid out as a rubric detailing her findings along with feedback to the learner.

By taking these actions, DDLETB was able to support the learner's RPL application despite the initial lack of formal policy and resources.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The RPL application process yielded several significant outcomes and impacts, demonstrating the effectiveness of the support provided and highlighting areas for future improvement.

The Mentor's availability and support were instrumental in guiding the learner even though they showcased exceptional competence throughout the process. The Mentor received specific praise from the External Authenticator (EA) for their role in enhancing and highlighting the learner's existing skills. The EA noted, "The support and input from the mentor to augment the process and outcomes have been invaluable." This recognition from the EA underscored the importance of having qualified and dedicated Mentors to support RPL applicants.

The EA also commended the Assessor's role in the process highlighting the feedback given to the learner, describing it as "excellent, and extremely positive and encouraging". This high-quality feedback was crucial in validating the learner's prior experiences and skills.

Overall, the entire RPL process was commended by the EA, who stated, "The use of RPL in the assessment of these components has been extremely successful and completed to a very high standard." This endorsement highlighted the effectiveness of the RPL process in recognising and validating the learner's prior learning.

KEY LEARNINGS

A business case evolved identifying the need for funding and a plan, for the following. However, it is recommended that the following areas would need to be addressed before DDLETB FET could commit to developing an RPL FET policy:

- The coordination and management of RPL – A central RPL Coordinator at DDLETB Head Office level to coordinate all applications is required to ensure a consistent approach to RPL.
- Guidance Counsellor appointments for all RPL candidates - This service is not available throughout DDLETB FET services, so this is problematic.
- Engaging Mentors and Assessors – The development of a panel for each would be an excellent solution. RPL cannot be facilitated through goodwill; this is not sustainable.
- Resourcing the roles of Mentor and Assessor – There are difficulties hiring Mentors and Assessors due to the limits of employment contracts.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

A recent RPL in FET Network meeting revealed that other ETBs, who are further along in implementing RPL, are also experiencing difficulties with resourcing and managing RPL. The new Adult Educator contracts may have implications for engaging future Mentors and Assessors due to staff availability and pay constraints. This underscores the need for a national solution to these issues such as an ETB panel of RPL Mentors



and Assessors which would provide a consistent and reliable pool of qualified professionals to support RPL processes throughout all 16 ETBs.

Additionally, a national ETB solution to pay arrangements for RPL Mentors and Assessors would remove a significant barrier to the process. The development of a national ETB policy for RPL would ensure that RPL is standardised throughout all ETBs, providing a clear and consistent framework for recognising prior learning. Furthermore, the coordination and management of RPL need to be ring-fenced in funding to ensure that all of the above can be maintained to the appropriate standard.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the RPL research project not only validated the learner's prior experiences but also provided several valuable insights that will inform the future development of a comprehensive DDLETB RPL Policy. One of the key learnings was the importance of having a structured and well-resourced RPL framework. The reliance on goodwill and voluntary contributions for engaging Mentors and Assessors highlighted the need for sustainable resourcing. It became evident that RPL cannot be facilitated through goodwill alone, as this approach is not sustainable in the long term.

The RPL application from the DDLETB Training Centre Skills to Advance learner underscored the necessity of a structured and well-resourced RPL policy to ensure consistency and sustainability in recognising prior learning. The insights gained from this project will in time inform the future development of a comprehensive DDLETB RPL Policy that aligns with organisational strategy and ensures the effective recognition of prior learning for all learners. By addressing the challenges related to policy, procedures, and resourcing, DDLETB can in time create a sustainable and effective RPL framework that supports learners in gaining formal recognition for their prior experiences and skills.

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GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1:

ORIENTATION FOR REFUGEE LEARNERS AT THE BALLAGHADERREEN RECEPTION CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

In addition to its general English and Literacy classes, GRETB staff also run a comprehensive orientation programme in the Ballaghaderreen Reception Centre, consisting of a mixture of classroom delivery and guest speakers. The ETB has developed a suite of materials addressing a variety of topics, from Irish Geography to Public Transport, Fire Drills, the Education and Health Systems, Public Holidays, Banking, and Irish Law. This material is delivered approximately twice per month in hour-long classes.

The ETB also organises a series of guest speakers that include workers from Tusla, the HSE, Psychology West, Citizens Information, and a range of other public bodies, organisations and charities. These guest-speaker sessions are also delivered twice-monthly and alternate with the orientation classes. The aim of the programme is to introduce various aspects of Irish life, society, and culture, and to ensure residents leave the centre with information and skills that will enable them to operate independently in Ireland and seek help from relevant services when needed.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Refugee learners are new in Ireland and unfamiliar with the workings of Irish systems, culture and society.

ACTION

Classroom delivery of orientation topics including Irish Geography to Public Transport, Fire Drills, the Education and Health Systems, Public Holidays, Banking, and Irish Law.

A series of guest speakers are engaged in collaboration with other local agencies and groups from throughout Ireland, such as Tusla, HSE, Psychology West, The Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, the Citizens Information Centre.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Learners receive a basic introduction to how Ireland works, how to navigate Irish culture and society, and where to get help when they need it.

KEY LEARNINGS

The level of information can be somewhat overwhelming, so it is important to deliver information in bitesize chunks.

Learners don't always retain all the information from the first offering, so sessions repeat frequently and build on each other.

Learners are from war-torn countries, so trauma awareness is important, especially around potentially sensitive topics.



CASE STUDY 2:

ESOL LITERACY FOR REFUGEE LEARNERS AT THE BALLAGHADERREEN RECEPTION CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

In ESOL Literacy, GRETB has developed a model delivering twenty-week programmes addressing two subjects:

- Communication and Speaking,
- Alphabet and Letters.

These classes are delivered across 4 levels which correspond to the LASLLIAM pre-A1 descriptors developed by the Council of Europe in 2023 to address levels below CEFR A1. Learners who may have a limited or patchy educational background can join our classes at LASLLIAM 1 level and progress through 4 discrete stages as they develop their literacy and communication skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Learners arrive with very low levels of pre-existing literacy, language and prior education.

Learners have weak oral language skills in their second language and no familiarity with the Roman script. Many learners are also pre-literate in their home language.

ACTION

The programme is delivered in two streams: a Communication and Speaking class to develop oral language, vocabulary and fluency, and an Alphabet and Letters class to develop literacy, reading and writing. Both classes are delivered at 4 levels corresponding to the LASLLIAM pre-A1 descriptors.

These modules also map well onto the new ESOL awards developed by CMETB at Entry Level, QQI Level 1 and QQI Level 2.

The first batch of the new Entry to ESOL awards, an un-certified course designed to prepare learners for the QQI Level 1 award will be handed out in February this year to students in our Alphabet and Letters 1 class. We hope to have the full suite of awards from Entry to Level 2 in place by the end of 2025.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Learners who are new to English and new to Literacy pass through 4 discrete stages on their language and literacy journey, with comprehensive literacy support throughout.

Learners complete the Alphabet and Letters 4 class with the ability to read and parse short sentences and multi-syllable words. They are then ready for a General English or regular ESOL class at A1 level.

KEY LEARNINGS

Moving the learners through the different stages of Literacy acquisition takes a long time. Each of Alphabet and Letters 1, 2, 3, and 4 take 20 weeks to complete, and the same for Communication 1, 2, 3, and 4, roughly 800 hours delivery in total.

Learners are keen to be tested to demonstrate skills acquisition and with good uptake for the inaugural round of Entry to ESOL assessments in Speaking and Listening.

Tutors require extensive onboarding and CPD to become familiar with the techniques required to reach students at these levels. ESOL Literacy is quite different to general ESOL and presents unique problems in terms of dealing with students with low levels of oral language, literacy, and prior education. All of the students in these classes are from war-torn countries, so trauma-awareness is key: this involves some training for tutors as well as intentional planning, delivery, and classroom management.



CASE STUDY 3:

ENGLISH FOR WORK AND EMPLOYABILITY PILOT

INTRODUCTION

GRETB received funding from the Collaboration and Innovation Fund under the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy to develop a pilot in English for Work and Employability. The ETB is at the end of this pilot programme, aimed at all adult residents of working age in the centre. GRETB delivered a 20-week course addressing a range of topics and industries including classes on construction, tools, kitchens, health and safety, hospitality, and retail. There was also several one-day and two-day workshops on manual handling, basic first aid, food safety, and CV prep.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Learners are interested in work and employment but often spend several years working on their language skills before specific work-related skills can be addressed. Learners are unfamiliar with the Irish labour market and how to look for and start work.

ACTION

- 2 trainings sessions for tutors funded by CIF
 - Development of a pilot programme
 - 20 weeks of delivery at 4 levels: CEFR pre-A1, A1, A1+ and A2
 - Evaluation pending

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The most successful aspects of the programme were the vocabulary classes and the one-day workshops. Learners retained much of the vocabulary input and used in relation to health and safety, construction, retail, hospitality, and other sectors. Uptake was good for the workshops in food safety, manual handling, and basic first aid.

KEY LEARNINGS

The ETB found it difficult to appeal to a broad audience across a number of sectors with targeted lessons on particular topics. For instance, although these classes are coeducational and not divided by gender, participation trends indicate that men tend to enrol more frequently in construction and tools courses, whereas women show greater interest in classes related to textiles and food. By attempting to appeal to all sides, the ETB had taken a scattergun approach that ended up alienating stakeholders at times.

The ETB plans to repackaging this content into a series of shorter workshops that students can sign up for one-by-one. Instead of having a general class that attempts to address both construction and clothes repair as well as everything in between. There will be a short course focusing on vocabulary for the construction sector, a short course about textiles and clothes, and a range of other short courses addressing all the other subject areas that are of interest to our learners or in which they already have skills but lack specific vocabulary in English. This will allow people to opt in to their own areas of interest and opt out of areas that are not relevant to them.



CASE STUDY 4: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER (KT) INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION

The Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Arboriculture, provided by Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb), is a two-year apprenticeship programme tailored for individuals passionate about tree care and woodland management. It offers a blend of practical on-the-job training and formal education, equipping apprentices with a comprehensive skillset in arboriculture.

The programme, developed in collaboration with industry experts, includes education and training at the Petersburg Outdoor Education and Training Centre in County Galway and hands-on experience with approved employers. Apprentices engage in diverse tasks, such as tree felling, pruning, thinning, preservation, and protection, using advanced equipment to manage trees, hedgerows, and woodlands in urban and rural environments. Graduates earn a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Arboriculture and eleven Lantra certificates of competence that are required to work as qualified arborists. The programmes earn-while-you-learn structure ensures at least 50% of learning takes place in the workplace, offering invaluable real-world experience.

This apprenticeship is ideal for those who enjoy outdoor work, are passionate about the environment, and seek a rewarding career in tree and woodland management. With growing attention on maintaining safe and sustainable tree environments, demand for qualified arborists continues to rise across Ireland.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

As Ireland's sole provider of arboriculture education, GRETb plays a critical role in shaping the nation's tree management practices. The Level 6 programme addresses the need for skilled arborists to support sustainable urban forestry, biodiversity, and tree preservation. However, the demand for arborists greatly exceeds the number of graduates, highlighting the necessity for GRETb to expand its services.

ACTION KT EVENTS 2024

In 2024, GRETb Arboriculture launched a pioneering knowledge transfer initiative aimed at fostering collaboration and expertise-sharing across various sectors. This initiative brought together state agencies, universities, local authorities, environmental organisations, private companies, and community groups through workshops, seminars, outreach programmes, and case study site visits. Participation was free and open to current, past, and prospective students, mentors, employers, and programme stakeholders. 15 KT events were deployed during the initial pilot year.

Key events included:

- Agroforestry Systems Field Day with Teagasc Forestry Development Department
- Veteran Tree Management Seminar and Field Day with the Office of Public Works and the Tree Council of Ireland
- Atlantic Rainforest Restoration Seminar with Hometree Charity Ltd
- Urban Tree Planting Systems and Structural Soils Workshop with Greenleaf Ireland
- Timber Utilisation for Arborists Workshop with Atlantic Technological University Connemara and Fiachrua Timbercraft
- Trees and Bats for the Arborist Seminar and Field Day with Beoecology and Coillte.
- Level 1 Tree Inspection Training with Beith Tree Consultancy Ltd
- Suburban Tree and Woodland Surveying Field Day with UCD School of Landscape Architecture
- Electricity Safety Awareness for Arborists Seminar with ESB Networks
- Tree Pests, Pathology, and Protection Seminar with the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine
- Biochar for Tree Planting and Establishment Seminar with Probio Carbon Ltd
- Earth and Soil Science Seminar and Field Day with Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark
- Ash and Elm Dieback Research Seminar with Teagasc Forestry Development Department



KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The initiative has significantly expanded GRETB's stakeholder network to include state agencies, higher education institutions, NGOs, and private sector providers. Local community actors, landowners, and businesses also engaged actively. Events have driven strong participation from students, mentors, employers, and industry representatives, while functioning as open days for prospective participants. In addition, the initiative has:

- Strengthened CPD and lifelong learning systems for the sector,
- Addressed critical national knowledge gaps in arboriculture,
- Enhanced the curriculum and supported the development of new qualifications,
- Elevated GRETB Arboriculture's national profile,
- Helped position Petersburg House as a new National Centre of Excellence in Arboriculture.

KEY LEARNINGS

The workshops, seminars, field trips, and case study property visits have been met with a highly positive response, particularly due to their strong environmental and ethical focus. Participants consistently express a strong preference for highly tailored content that meets their specific needs and interests. They have also highlighted their appreciation for the programme's emphasis on cutting-edge scientific research, the integration of emerging technologies and innovations, and the in-depth focus on pest and pathogen management.

Additionally, participants value the national networking opportunities provided through these events, as well as the chance to engage in interactive Q&A sessions with leading specialists, scientists, and academics. There is a growing demand for advanced skills training, alongside increasing calls for certification or formal recognition of the knowledge and skills gained through these initiatives.

CASE STUDY 5: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

GRETB is currently in the process of piloting two Communities of Practice (CoP). The CoPs are discipline/subject led pilots for teaching staff, with a view to rolling out further subject area CoPs across GRETB FET. It is envisaged that CoPs will provide the opportunity for staff collaboration, more consistent programme delivery across the organisation, and the sharing of best practice thus enhancing learner experiences.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

GRETB runs a wide range of programmes across a large geographical area in Galway and Roscommon. Frequently staff are the only person delivering a module/subject in their Centre/Service. The QA Steering Group identified this as an issue and thus a working group was tasked with examining how CoPs could be established in order to enhance provision with improved outcomes for both staff and learners. At the core of this objective was the importance of establishing sustainable CoPs which could run independently.

ACTION

Exploration Phase

1. The QA Steering Group has established a number of working groups including the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) working group. The TLA has completed key pieces of work since it was established and in 23/24 and 24/25, the terms of reference for the TLA working group were to explore and establish Communities of Practice.
2. A comprehensive literature review of Communities of Practice was completed by the TLA working group.
3. Internal existing Communities of Practice were examined, with feedback provided to the working group.
4. External Communities of Practices, outside of GRETB were examined (setup, implementation, benefits/challenges encountered) and key learnings presented to the working group.



5. A meeting took place with an educational expert in the CoP field and another with a facilitator of several CoP in another ETB.

Planning Phase

6. Two key disciples were identified as pilot groups based on number of staff, geographical spread and staff isolation (generally one staff member per Centre) – Horticulture and Healthcare.
7. A CoP initial half day meeting took place in December 2024 with these two groups in the Connacht Hotel, Galway. The objective of this meeting was to establish whether there was an appetite to establish a CoP within the group; explore potential areas where a CoP would be beneficial; and identify next stage in the CoP development for pilot groups.
8. The invitation was extended to all teachers/tutors in these two disciples. Due to the linkage of Arboriculture to Horticulture and as Arboriculture is very niche, it was decided to invite this group of tutors to join the Horticulture group.
9. The meeting included:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Explanation of CoP
 - c. Group activities: Who do you currently collaborate with? What do you share (resources, practices, etc)? What are you hoping to achieve by coming here today? What are some of the successes/challenges you have experienced in your practice? How do you think a CoP could support you in your teaching practice? What would you like to see in a CoP? Next meeting ideas?
10. The outcome of this initial meeting:
 - a. Both groups actively participated in group activities
 - b. An evaluation distributed to both groups resulted in very positive feedback (informal feedback on the day concurred with this evaluation)
 - c. Both groups expressed a desire to move forward with the establishment of a CoP although two different outcomes for the next meeting were expressed:

- i. Horticulture – Next meeting to discuss approach to assessments
 - ii. Healthcare – Next meeting to plan how the CoP would work and areas prioritised for phased approach to support
- d. A follow up Padlet was sent to the group which recorded all flip chart activities, photos, slides, etc.

Execution Phase

The next meetings for both disciplines are currently in planning phase

Other CoP

A similar initial meeting is currently in the planning phase for “ESOL” tutors. Given that these are larger groups, it is envisaged that one meeting will take place in Roscommon and another in Galway

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

- Appears to be significant appetite to establish CoP
- Very positive feedback received formally and informally

KEY LEARNINGS

- Initial research was important before moving to setup phase in order to plan for success
- Appears to be significant appetite to establish CoP

Building sustainable CoP will take time and resources (several members of the TLA Working Group spent considerable time planning for the initial meeting, facilitating same and evaluating/follow-ups). Another meeting is planned for this group, and it is hoped that some of the members of the group will become actively involved. However, it is likely that in order to plan for success, some members of the TLA working group will be involved in the next meeting at least.

CASE STUDY 6: LEARNER SUPPORT AND INCLUSION SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The SOLAS FET Strategy has identified three Strategic Priorities in the strategy, one of these priorities is 'Fostering Inclusion' This priority has a focus on 'Consistent Learning Support' to ensure Inclusion. The strategy also identifies enabling themes including 'Learner and Performance Centred'.

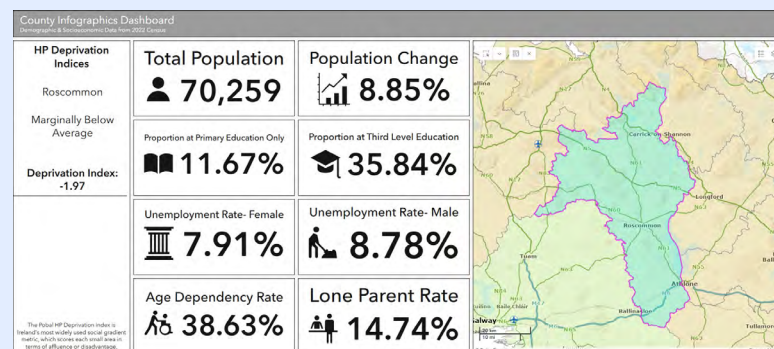
https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

This priority has always been at the heart of the provision of learner support for GRETB and inclusion is the responsibility of every employee in GRETB from the centre manager to the tutor, the caretaker. However, to ensure learner support and inclusion is provided in an equitable and consistent manner across overall FET in Galway and Roscommon, GRETB established the Learner Support and Inclusion Service in 2023. This service was designed to promote, facilitate and support the inclusion and support of learners in addition to providing leadership in building inclusive practices across FET.

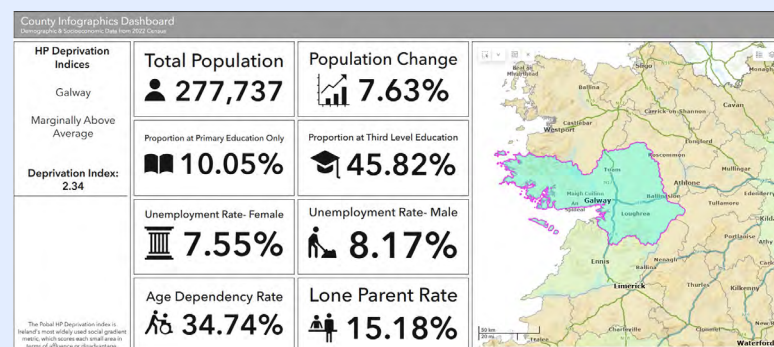
The need for such a service is underpinned by the Demographic and Socioeconomic Data from 2022 Census for both Galway and Roscommon:

Roscommon:



data.pobal.ie

Galway:



data.pobal.ie

Furthermore, disability prevalence is a crucial indicator of the need for additional supports and inclusion measures in Further Education and Training. According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census 2022, the rates of long-lasting conditions or difficulties experienced to a great extent varied across regions:



- Galway County: 7% of the population reported experiencing long-lasting conditions or difficulties to a great extent.
- County Roscommon: 9% of the population reported similar challenges. These figures underscore the importance of tailored support services in these areas.

<https://westerndevelopment.ie/>

ACTION

Since its inception, Learner Support Services has implemented a variety of person-centred supports designed to meet learners' needs. The primary goal is to help each individual participate equitably in their chosen course. Some of the supports include:

- Assessment of Learner Support Needs
- Design of a Learner Educations Needs Summary (LENS) in conjunction with the Learner
- Provision of Personal Assistance supports for people with disabilities
- Provision of Counselling Supports across FET – online and in-person
- Creation of a Learner Assistance Fund
- Coordination of the Laptop Loan Scheme
- Creation of an Assistive Technology Loan Scheme
- Identifying Inclusion Champions around groups or area where there are significant barriers in access and participation i.e. Disability, LGBTQIA+, People experiencing Domestic Abuse and/or Violence
- Development of an Online Learner Supports Hub
- Training in Disability and Inclusion for FET Practitioners
- Wellness and wellbeing Initiatives for Learners
- Development of Calm Spaces within out FET centres.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

In 2024 the number of Beneficiaries of the Service are as follows:

Support	Number of Beneficiaries
PA/Scribe/Sighted Guide	134
Referral for Counselling	165
Laptop Loan Scheme	482
Device Loan Scheme/Access to AT	35
Learner Assistance Fund	646
Referral and Signposting	128
Sign Language Interpreting	91
Training/Workshops to Support Learner Wellbeing	415



KEY LEARNINGS

A survey was conducted with Learners who engaged with the Learner Support Service and the feedback has been positive as the examples below outline. However, there is still scope for growth with the provision of additional supports and the targeting of harder to reach individuals and communities.

Examples of Learner Feedback:

- The assistance fund really helped me, I was about to give up the course, but this money gave me the kick start I needed!
- The access to counselling has changed everything for me!
- Being able to say what I needed and getting support with it was just brilliant.
- I just feel included, I feel I can be myself and that's ok to be me. The course has thought me so much more than IT skills.
- The app which reads out the documents has made such a difference to me.
- I love my course, the fact that sign language is provided, tells me, I matter!



KERRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE CAMPUS PLANNING PROCESSES

INTRODUCTION

Kerry College Clash, Denny St and Listowel Campuses have planning weeks built into their annual calendars to allow staff to come together in 'clusters' to discuss and plan for issues of importance. Meetings take place annually in October, December, February, April and May. This dovetails with key times in the academic calendar. Croke Park hours are provided to allow the process to take place.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

These processes develop an ownership of QA planning processes. They also encourage innovation, provide broad engagement in self-evaluation and promotes inclusion. They also allow for a collective response to address common teaching and learning issues.

ACTION

Groups of teachers meet at these times based on Clusters.

There is a standardised agenda with a flexibility to be course specific or add items.

All meeting minutes are collated and analysed for common themes, followed up at the next staff meeting.

This process has helped support the introduction of semesterisation and encouraged group review of EA reports, as this was an individualised process until this process commenced and labour intensive in sending out individual EA feedback to teachers. For example, all Creative Media courses will meet as one, as do all Guidance teachers Management who meet on identified weeks in the calendar as some teachers may be across a couple of course areas e.g. Communications teachers.

The process also supports the induction of new staff to FET and the Learning Support Department in planning and targeting support.

It allows for Cross Campus follow-up in Key College objectives- Consent Training, Amber Flag, Health Promoting College and Sustainability e.g. Guidance Meeting.

Common themes developed from meetings – around software/Apps, for example a decision to purchase Kahoot licenses developed from these meetings.

These meetings feed into the planning of Teaching and Learning meetings/Staff days.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

- It has led to more teacher involvement in reviewing courses/modules/programmes.
- It has also led to more focus on outcomes- certification levels- full/component awards.
- It supports the QA process – Exam boards/RAP meetings also.
- It can also lead to a wider discussion/forum around learner supports/best QA practice around extensions/RPL etc
- It generates (still a work in progress) more integration of assessment, sharing of resources, and UDL implementation.
- It highlights areas necessary for all staff CPD.

KEY LEARNINGS

Management cannot attend all meetings and therefore a reminder of the aim/focus of such meetings needs to be re-enforced. However, management has also found that to ensure value to the process it is important to be less prescriptive and allow the groups to take ownership. It has an impact on the learner experience and voice as it ensures greater balance across assessments and ensures learners are not overloaded.



CASE STUDY 2:

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING STAFF DAY: SHARING, LEARNING, GROWING

INTRODUCTION

In March 2024, the Quality Assurance Unit supported the organisation and delivery of the Further Education and Training (FET) Staff Day to 267 staff members.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The FET Staff Day focused on teaching and learning and provided a space for FET staff to share, learn and grow together. The event was not only about professional development, but it was also focused on bringing passionate educators together to develop connections and further build the FET community in Kerry.

ACTION

The FET Staff Day began with a session on the Kerry ETB Strategy Statement 2023-27, and a reflection on the past 10 years of Further Education and Training at Kerry ETB. The Irish Centre for Diversity delivered the keynote speech on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in FET. Fifteen evidence-based and interactive workshops were held on topics including AI in the Classroom, Mind Mapping, A Trauma Informed Approach to FET, Supporting EAL learners, Managing Challenging Behaviour in the Classroom, Introduction to Autism, Restorative Practice, and Developing new QQI Programmes for FET.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

All staff that attended were surveyed. The majority were very positive about their experience with 91% reporting the FET Staff Day as valuable, and 96% reporting that taking part in the workshops helped them in their work.

KEY LEARNINGS

Staff reported a variety of positive learnings from the event. See below for a sample of key learnings as identified by the participants:

- “The application of AI in teaching. Understanding of QQI, and how to write new programmes. The importance of Inclusion in everyday practices.”
- “Made me realise how much of an input I have in learners’ lives.”
- “That we need to learn about the Learners before we can help or teach them.”
- “The most valuable thing I got from the day was the connections that I made or reestablished. I spoke to others who tutor the same subject and shared ideas.”
- “How the kindness and influence of one person can change a person’s life.”
- “English as an additional language was particularly interesting given the diverse range of nationalities of our students.”
- “The success of Kerry ETB, it’s staff, policies and procedures to date.”
- “We’ve achieved a lot together!”



CASE STUDY 3: **PROGRAMMATIC SELF EVALUATION PROCESS: THE MOCK PANEL APPROACH.**

INTRODUCTION

This case study provides a descriptive summary of a Mock Panel established by Kerry ETB in November 2024 to conduct a self-evaluation a programme. The Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician (WTMT) Apprenticeship Programme, leading to the Advanced Certificate in Industrial Wind Turbine Engineering is under review, as Kerry ETB intends to continue to run the apprenticeship and put the programme forward for revalidation. The self-evaluation exercise was designed to take a critical look at the performance and direction of the programme to date and to evaluate the revisions being proposed to the programme.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The focus of the self-evaluation was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the programmatic review, submitted to QQI prior to the event. Phase 1 of these TOR identified the purpose and planned outcomes of the self-evaluation. The self-evaluation aimed to have a strategic focus, be forward looking, and provide a critical appraisal of the programme and the proposed revisions that would support the quality of programme being put forward for revalidation.

The QA Unit considered the expertise and experience of nominees for the Mock Panel and adopted a planned approach to the event. Members of the Mock Panel were given early notice to hold the date in their diaries and sent reminders close to the date of the event. Check-In meetings with individual members were organised two weeks and the week prior to the event. The QA Unit worked with the Panel Chair to finalise the agenda and arrangements for the event and assigned two staff members to respond to queries and requests for information, manage attendees and organise the running order of the event.

An experienced report writer from the QA Unit was assigned responsibility for drafting the Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The report aimed to be forward-looking and reflective, avoiding extended descriptive narratives on the current programme and the proposed changes.

Members of the Mock Panel shared their views on the self-evaluation process through a post event survey. Their responses provided Kerry ETB with a better understanding of planning and delivering a Mock Panel event, which will inform decisions about how to conduct the process in the future.



ACTION

Timing	Activity
6 weeks before event	Quality Assurance (QA) Manager submitted nominees for the Mock Panel to Kerry ETB Director of Further Education and Training (FET) for approval. Nominees contacted formally by QA Manager and invited to participate in the self-evaluation process. Confirmation of nominees' acceptance of a role in the process received and dates for the Mock Panel event agreed. Self-evaluation and support documentation prepared by the QA Unit.
3 weeks before event	An internal review report on the performance and direction of the programme to date and procedural guidelines on evaluating the revisions being proposed to the programme sent to Mock Panel members.
2 weeks before event	Proposed revised programme and assessment sent to Mock Panel members. Assistance/technical support provided to individual Mock Panel members (conference call/online call(s)) on questions raised from their review of PPR, the proposed revised programme and assessment. Requests from Mock Panel members for further information on the proposed revised programme and assessment received. Written response(s) provided to clarify matters raised.
1 week before event	Initial comments and views from Mock Panel members on proposed revised programme and assessment collated (single document) for the Panel Chair. Meeting agenda finalised under the direction of the Panel Chair and sent to Mock Panel members.
1 week after event	Draft Self-Evaluation Report (SER) sent to Mock Panel members for their consideration. Feedback on draft SER received from Mock Panel members and draft revised in response to matters raised. SER finalised under the direction of the Panel Chair. Signature received from Panel Chair confirming satisfaction with SER. SER forwarded to the Quality Council.
2 weeks after event	Survey issued to Mock Panel members on how event was organised and ways to improve the process.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The Mock Panel reviewed the internal review report on the performance and direction of the programme to date and evaluated the proposed revised programme and assessment. Members commended the work of those involved in developing the revised programme, and their constructive engagement with the panel at the event.

Based on their evaluations and discussions, the Panel arrived at a decision as to the outcome of the self-evaluation process, specifically whether the programme as proposed for the subsequent validation period meets the criteria as set out in the QQI Tool to support the evaluation of a programme by the provider against the QQI validation criteria.

The Panel recommended that the proposed programme be revised further in response to what has emerged to date from the process of review. It is the Panel's view that these recommendations will support and strengthen the submission for revalidation.

KEY LEARNINGS

Some key learning emerged such as:

- To tailor the Terms of Reference for the wider programmatic review to deliver on the focus required for achieving a forward-looking and reflective self-evaluation. This includes giving due consideration to the type of the expertise and experience required of nominees for the Mock Panel and aims to achieve a balance of both. The documentation that Mock Panel members are required to review is both specialised in nature and extensive.
- To ensure sufficient time is given to the Mock Panel members to make amendments to the draft Self-evaluation Report (SER), maintain contact with members to update them on the report's status.
- To actively seek members views on what can be improved, at the close of the process. Design the feedback tool to capture all stages of the process, from initial engagement through to panel event and finally to assisting in the preparation of the SER.



CASE STUDY 4: EMPOWERING MARGINALISED GROUPS: SAILING INTO WELLNESS- THE EXPERIENCE OF ADULT LEARNERS IN KERRY

INTRODUCTION

This programme aimed to encourage specific community groups to participate in an adult education programme focused on confidence building, empowerment, and mindfulness. The unique approach utilised sailing to promote participation among these groups.

A proposal was submitted to the Kerry Educating and Training Board Community Education Programme under Reach Funding 2024. The programme targeted specific community groups for an adult education initiative that emphasised confidence building, empowerment, and mindfulness. Sailing served as a novel method to encourage participation.

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- Team Project: scheme for individuals recovering from addiction (<https://newkd.ie/employment/team-project/>)
- Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project: An organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life for the Traveller Community in Kerry (<https://kerrytravellersproject.wordpress.com/>)
- Kerry Women's Centre: A group of volunteers from independent parent groups and women's support groups focused on engagement, education, support, and empowerment for women in Kerry (<https://www.kerrywomenscentre.ie/>)

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

An initial meeting was held among partners to discuss programme goals, participant needs, and logistical arrangements. As none of the participants had prior sailing experience, careful attention was paid to managing anxieties and fostering excitement.

The "Sailing Into Wellness" day-sailing programme commenced on August 6th, 2024, in Fenit Harbour, Co. Kerry. The programme ran for four weeks, with each of the three groups attending on designated weekdays. Funding for the programme was provided by Kerry Education and Training, under SOLAS, Reach Funding.

ACTION

In the first instance, the partners met to discuss aims and objectives, participants' needs, and practical organising of the Initiative. None of the participants had ever sailed previously so managing fear and excitement was carefully facilitated.

The Team worked to build confidence among participants week after week seeing real change develop for individuals as the course progressed.

Sailing Into Wellness' Day-Sailing Programme commenced on 6th August 2024 in Fenit Harbour, Co. Kerry and ran on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for 4 weeks. Three groups attended this programme: Team Project, Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project and Kerry Women's Centre. Each group met on an assigned weekday, each week.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Primary Research: Learner Feedback

Feedback from Kerry Travellers Women:

- Overcoming fear of being on a boat
- Building camaraderie with other participants
- Meeting new people
- Mindfulness and relaxation benefits

Challenges encountered:

- Initial nervousness, alleviated by peer support
- Difficulty with boat movement
- Balancing family commitments with programme participation
- Building confidence to participate



Areas of improvement:

- Increased confidence
- Learning to sail and enjoying the experience
- Enhanced mindfulness

Feedback from **Team Project:**

- Improved mental well-being and focus
- Enhanced feelings of peace and gratitude

Feedback from **Kerry Women's Centre:**

- The unique experience of being at sea for the first time
- Appreciation for the instructors' expertise
- Escape from daily routines and stress
- Fostering trust among participants and instructors
- Development of teamwork and self-awareness
- Increased calmness and inner peace
- A sense of empowerment while steering the boat

Challenges encountered:

- Learning a new skill (sailing)
- Adapting to challenging weather conditions
- Initial nervousness and fear of the sea

KEY LEARNINGS

- The importance of interagency collaboration in providing valuable and cost-effective programmes that meet participant needs.
- The effectiveness of incorporating external expertise to promote lifelong learning among participants and staff.
- The significance of clear communication between partners, instructors, and learners.
- The positive impact of nature, water-based activities, and teamwork on mental health, social isolation, and access to opportunities for adults facing educational, economic, and employment barriers.

This programme demonstrates the potential of using sailing as a tool to promote adult education, improve mental well-being, and empower marginalised communities.

KILKENNY AND CARLOW EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

INTRODUCTION

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) has had a unified approach to assessment across Further Education and Training (FET) since the issuing of the KCETB Assessment Policy in 2020. Comprehended in the policy were the procedures for processing alleged malpractice allegations. Plagiarism detection tools have been incorporated into Microsoft Teams and Moodle as standard. Since then, the landscape for academic integrity has changed dramatically. This case study will outline the academic integrity initiatives undertaken by KCETB.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

KCETB is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. As part of this commitment, KCETB endeavours to provide the necessary information, training and resources for staff and learners to support the integrity of assessments. Activities and initiatives in this area since the issuing of the KCETB Assessment Policy are highlighted below.

ACTION

Phase 1 – Highlighting concerns

The Quality Assurance (QA) portal is an internal SharePoint site used to provide resources for KCETB FET staff. To provide information and support in a timely manner, QA created an Academic Integrity Resources page. This featured a poster highlighting threats to Academic Integrity and information and links to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) advice and FAQ on Section 43a.

The annual FET forum with a Quality theme was a full day event held in June 2023. This provided an opportunity to highlight and discuss:

- Artificial intelligence
- ChatGPT
- Section 43a
- The KCETB RACE approach (Recognise Alert Capture Escalate)

Phase 2 – Creating resources

In September 2023, KCETB Academic Integrity policy approved by QAOC and published on the KCETB QA website. This new policy comprehended procedures for assessment malpractice previously included in the Assessment Policy. The policy also outlines the principles and responsibilities for academic integrity within KCETB FET centres and colleges and the expected behaviours and practices regarding academic conduct for all learners and staff.

Leaflets and posters were developed to support staff in relation to referencing. These were circulated to centres and published on the QA portal.

The QA portal was also updated with resources including the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) handbooks.

In 2024, additional resources were created to further support learners in learning how to reference correctly using the Harvard referencing system.

Phase 3 – Implementation and Training

The Academic Integrity policy was issued and published at the start of the academic year. QA, in conjunction with Professional Development and Technology Enhanced Learning (PD and Tel), delivered a series of training on Academic Integrity in September 2023. Recorded sessions are available on the QA portal for staff to access remotely.

- Academic Integrity Webinar 1: Introduction to Academic Integrity
- Academic Integrity Webinar 2: Challenges to Academic Integrity
- Academic Integrity Webinar 3: Academic Integrity Policy

To further support staff in upskilling around Artificial intelligence, a series of webinars were held:

- Welcome session to the course introduction to generative AI and its uses in FET
- Introduction to AI and its uses in FET
- Generative AI and FET Education making you more productive

Phase 4 – Communicating with learners

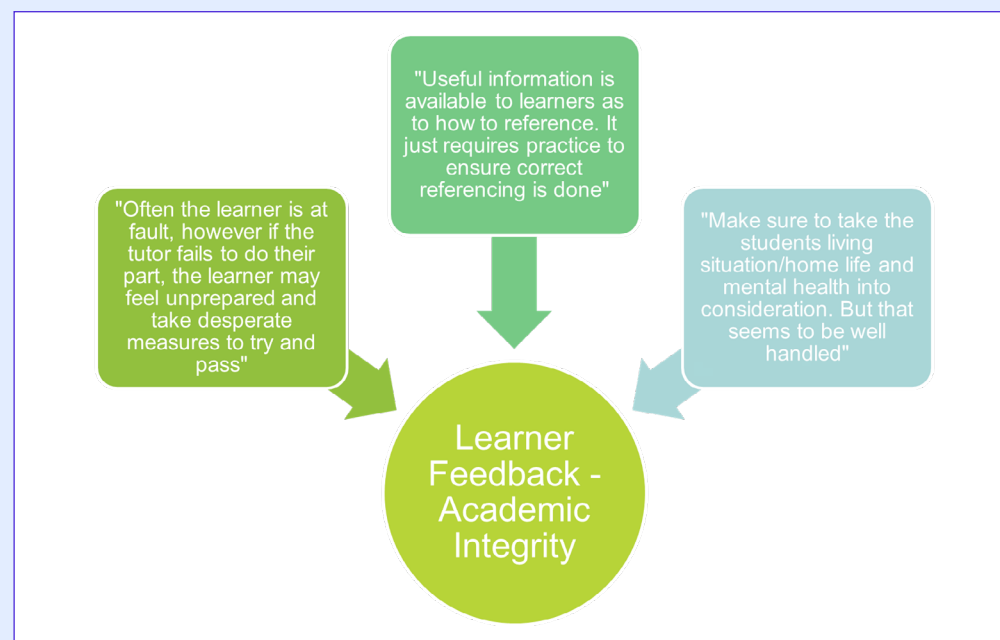
To promote discussion and focus on Academic Integrity, National Academic Integrity week was held from 16th to 20th October 2023. This was in line with a national initiative promoted by QQI and NAIN.

At KCETB we had a number of initiatives to focus on each day:

- Monday: Academic Integrity - Recognising the Challenges
 - Tuesday: Artificial Intelligence - What's good? What's not so good?
 - Wednesday: The Learner Perspective on Academic Integrity
 - Thursday: Focus: A Learner's Guide to Academic Integrity
 - Friday: KCETB policy and procedures - Key questions
- (an opportunity to reflect on the awareness of published documents in this area)

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Learners gave some valuable feedback to the survey questions, and some quotes are included below:



As part of continuous improvement and the 'Plan Do Review' approach to quality, established policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. To further develop investigating reporting and monitoring procedures, the Academic Integrity Policy was updated to reflect the ongoing challenges with widespread access to artificial intelligence tools. Specific individual procedures were also issued to make it easier for staff and stakeholders to access specific information in relation to assessment malpractice actions. Additional resources to support staff and leaders included the 'Use of Artificial Intelligence in Assessment form' and the Plagiarism Spectrum with two versions: one for learners and one for staff.



The KCETB Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC) committee has also approved the creation of an Academic Integrity Committee. Members of this committee will be responsible for reviewing allegations of assessment malpractice and notifications of any contract cheating services that are identified. The committee will also monitor ongoing threats and developments in artificial intelligence, review monitoring of academic integrity and support staff, when required, to make assessments more robust.

KEY LEARNINGS

KCETB as an education provider has recognised threats that exist to academic integrity. Academic integrity is central to the fair and consistent assessment of all learners. Individual assessors are aware of the risks and have been supported in the form of professional development opportunities and developed resources to support them in assessment. Ongoing vigilance in academic integrity is a priority for Quality Assurance.

CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY ASSURANCE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In January 2024, KCETB commissioned an independent consultant to review its FET QA governance system, in consultation with its governance members and the QA team. The purpose of the review was to identify the strengths of the current system, which has been in existence since 2018 and to recommend improvements that could be made as it continues to develop. In carrying out this review a wide variety of sources were reviewed including agendas and minutes of the Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC), presentations to the QAOC on Working Group outcomes, key policies and procedures along with questionnaires and focus groups with key stakeholders. The recommendations were presented to the QAOC in March 2024, and work has commenced on implementing these findings. This case study will detail the process undertaken and the tasks undertaken since.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The review of the QAOC and its working group structure revealed several significant governance challenges that required strategic attention. Despite previous effectiveness, the existing system experienced operational and structural complexities that impacted its overall performance. Key observations indicated fundamental uncertainties about the QAOC's core role, with members unsure whether they should provide strategic direction or merely acknowledge operational reports. Working groups were predominantly task-oriented, increasingly operating at an operational level rather than a governance layer. Their work plans were not being informed by the QAOC, and conversely, the QAOC was not providing clear parameters or expectations to these groups. The working group structure was inconsistently functional, with some groups inactive for months, creating challenges for the Quality Assurance team's progress. While some groups like the Programmes and Awards Committee operated systematically, others struggled with consistent oversight.



A notable concern was the policy development process, where working groups were developing documents and submitting them directly to the QAOC for approval, inverting the intended governance hierarchy. Additionally, the terms of reference for the QAOC and its working groups lacked specificity regarding approval and recommendation responsibilities. The Quality Assurance team's supportive role was expanding and required more precise documentation. While the current model was effective initially, the increasing operational burden had led to member fatigue, signalling a need for strategic restructuring.

KEY OUTCOMES/ IMPACT

The review led to strategic recommendations that transformed the governance structure and quality assurance processes. Four key strategic areas were identified and are detailed below.

1. Terminology and Structure:

Significant changes were recommended around the clarify organisational oversight. It was recommended that the terminology shifted from “working groups” to “committees” to emphasise governance-level responsibilities. Comprehensive terms of reference were developed for the Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC) and its associated committees, establishing clear boundaries between strategic oversight and operational execution. To further enhance this separation, the chair of the QAOC no longer chairs the oversight, evaluation and reporting element of the structure, Figure 1 below details this revised structure.

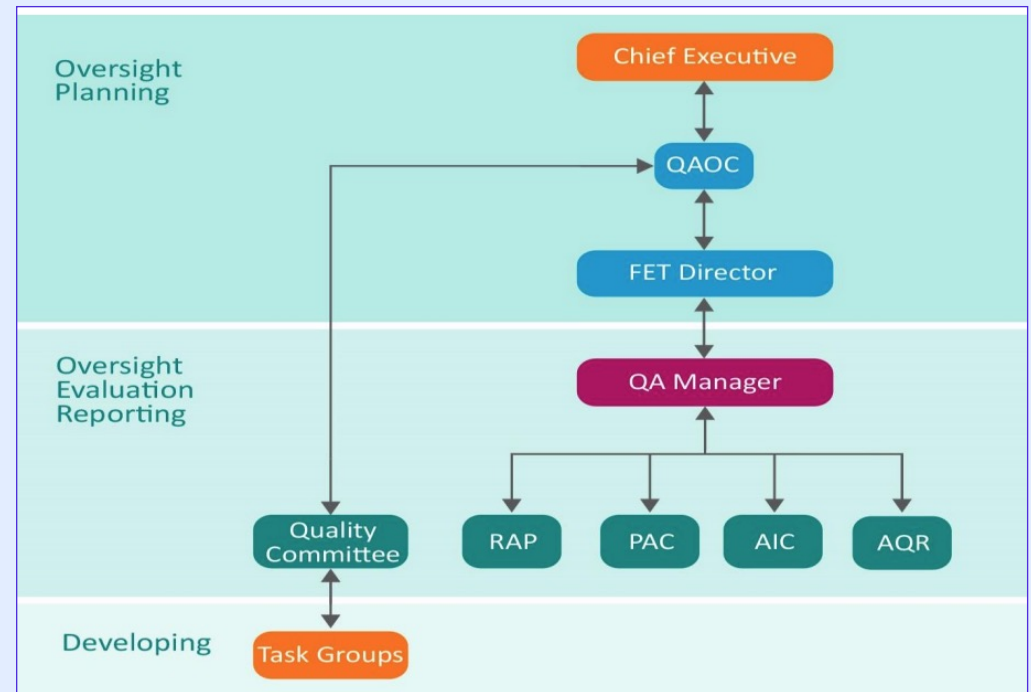


Figure 1 KCETB Governance Structure for QA and Associated Subgroups

2. Working Group Management:

The significant work undertaken by the working groups to date was acknowledged by the reviewer. To move to the next phase, it was recommended more task-specific groups be established. These groups would only be established for substantial developmental tasks with clear tasks set by the QAOC with further guidance set by the Quality Committee (QC). The Quality Assurance team are now coordinating and managing the task groups. The task group will report regularly to the QC and will report to the QAOC. Once the task is completed the group will be disbanded.



3. Strategic Planning:

As a result of the review clarity was provided for the QAOC around the strategic role they hold in the governance structure. The revised structure has been repositioned to drive strategic direction by:

- Developing annual priority frameworks aligned with FET strategic objectives
- Collaboratively establishing annual work plans with committees
- Defining precise scope and priority outcomes for each organisational work area

These key priorities have been set for the QC and the Task Groups for 2024-2025, covering Blended Learning, Employer Engagement and Learner Support. These groups have been established, with membership from across all of FET.

4. Reporting and Accountability:

It was acknowledged during the review that while there were reporting structures in place these needed to be to improve transparency and oversight. The following areas were identified and are being progressed:

- The QAOC was mandated to submit annual reports to the Chief Executive
- Committees were required to provide periodic progress updates and highlight potential implementation barriers
- Communication protocols were strengthened to ensure organisational transparency

KEY LEARNINGS

The review found that KCETB has a mature and evolving quality management system with several notable strengths and strategic development opportunities. Introduced in 2018, the QA governance system has become a well-established decision-making framework across the organisation. During the review the consultant acknowledged the strengths of the governance structure namely the presence of external membership, commitment from enthusiastic team members, the presence of an inclusive policy development process and the presence of a comprehensive “Governance and Management of Quality Policy” was also noted.

The review has provided KCETB with a clear road map to continue enhancing and developing its FET QA governance system. The recommendations received were strategically focused on the current governance structure, QAOC and working group roles, and enhancing documentation to support governance operations. Implementation of the recommendations is well underway, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement. KCETB is positioning itself as a forward-thinking education and training board dedicated to high-quality provision and ongoing organisational development.



CASE STUDY 3: LEARNER SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

In mid-May 2024, a Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator was appointed. While each FET centre/service provides a range of learner supports to their learners and clients, the appointment of a designated staff member and the establishment of a FET Learner Support Service, as a central resource for learner support services across all FET centres/services was significant move towards our commitment to ensuring that all learners are supported in a consistent manner. This case study will detail the key priorities undertaken to ensure consistency in learner support across all FET provision.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

In line with strategic priority number 6: Fostering Inclusion, of the *Future FET: Transforming Learning: The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024* the Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator in collaboration with all FET centres/services has a responsibility to oversee, develop and progress the work of the FET Learner Support Service and ensure that KCETB engage in providing the highest level of quality and standardised learners supports. Given the diverse nature of FET there was a wide range of learner supports in place across provision. There was not, however, a consistent process in place in terms of how learners accessed or were informed about these supports.

ACTION

Acknowledging the diversity in supports across FET, one of the first pieces of work completed by the Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator which laid the foundation for developmental work was the completion of a survey, aimed at identifying and mapping current learner supports (academic and non-academic) across all centres/ services.

This survey covered several different areas in relation to academic and wellbeing (non-academic) supports in each FET Centre, under the following headings:

- Designated learner support staff
- In centre supports
- Learner handbook
- Initial assessment
- Type of disability / learning difficulty / illness
- Needs assessment
- In class supports
- Assistive technology
- Reasonable accommodation

Following collection, the data from the survey was compiled and analysed. The final report included the presentation of data analysis (quantitative and qualitative), and a number of key recommendations. As part of this process, consideration was also given to the relevant requirements outlined in the SOLAS FET Strategy, *Future FET: Transforming Learning: The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024*¹ and *QQI Core Statutory Assurance Guidelines 2016*². In July 2024, SOLAS published a position paper entitled *Learner Support in Further Education and Training: Towards a Consistent Learner Experience*. As part the conclusion section, it was noted that:

...in line with the ETBs' QA requirements, set and monitored by QQI, we have conceptualised Learner Support in a broad sense, with learner supports including, but not limited to, individualised supports for people with a disability. We recognise that supports are provided along a continuum and can assist learners not only with their academic engagement, but also in related personal, social, and financial issues. (SOLAS, 2024)

It was also fundamental to develop awareness and a clear understanding of the Guidelines for Funds with Students with Disabilities. This would be essential to ensure that the guidelines were central to the work of the Learner Support and Wellbeing



Co-ordinator and the development of clear procedures and processes for learners, for example developing a standardised Needs Assessment Form and a Learner Educational Needs Summary (LENS report). The link to the guidelines is provided here [FSD-Guidelines_2024_25.pdf](#).

Having access to the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)⁴ means that learners in colleges of further education (Level 5 and 6) can avail of necessary assistance and equipment which will enable them to fully participate and successfully complete their FET course. As part of the report and future work in this area, it was important to incorporate and align the Fund for Students with Disabilities, as there are a number of procedures which are required as part of the implementation of this funding. The development of a system to facilitate the collection of learner data will be an important part of the role of the Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator. Since 2020 SOLAS, at a national level have taken on responsibility to oversee and monitor the Fund for Students with Disabilities. During the summer of 2024 SOLAS began work on Guidelines for a Fund for Learners with Disabilities (FLD). The aim of which is to broaden access to the fund for other learners in FET, including learners attending VTOS and Youthreach-funded programmes (full time courses).

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The Learner Support and Wellbeing Mapping Report was finalised in August 2024 and in September the Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator presented the report and its findings to members of the FET Forum⁵. The report included a breakdown of the survey results and infographics, supporting information gathered on the site visits, recommendations and a number of appendices.

There were a number of key recommendations outlined in the report, some of which include the following:

- Learner Support Service: to promote, implement and grow the Learner Support Service across KCETB FET provision, including for e.g. supporting learners to register with the Learner Support Service via the FET Learner Support Portal.
- Learner Handbook: following on from the site visits, it was proposed that one of the first important areas of work is the development of a standard Learner Handbook for all FET learners.

- Learner Support Policy: the development and implementation of a FET Learner Support Policy across FET centres/service.
- Designated Learner Support Roles and Open Learning Hubs/Centres across all FET centres. Through the hubs support can be provided to learners in a number of practical ways for e.g. IT support, literacy / numeracy support. This support is currently available in a small number of FET centres. Further developmental work is needed to embed this across FET provision as relevant.
- Standardised Needs Assessment: a standardised needs assessment form to be developed by the Learner Support Service and associated guidelines for use.
- Standardised LENS (Learner Educational Needs Summary) report to be developed. The LENS report will assist teaching staff ensure that the learner has access to their appropriate supports and will be completed after the needs assessment.
- Reasonable Accommodation: at present the reasonable accommodation policy sits within the assessment policy of KCETB. It is proposed the Reasonable Accommodation application form AP04 be completed at the same time as the Needs Assessment.
- Universal Design for Learning and Plain English Training: continued focus on UDL and plain English training. Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator to work with PD and TEL (Professional Development and Technology Enhanced Learning) Co-ordinator to organise and promote staff training in this area. A simple UDL checklist/toolkit should be created and distributed to KCETB FET teaching staff and shared on the QA portal.

To progress the recommendations outlined in the Learner Support and Wellbeing Mapping Report and to support the ongoing work of the Learner Support Service, a further recommendation was proposed in the report. That was to establish a Learner Support and Wellbeing Working group, to include representation from each FET centre/service and to include different staff roles, e.g. management, teaching, support etc. The initial meeting for this group was held online in November 2024 and at this time it was agreed that the group would be re-named as the Learner Support and Wellbeing Advisory Group.

This group has met twice since its establishment, and a further meeting was held on the 31 January 2025. The advisory group is currently focused on the development



of the FET Learner Handbook scheduled for circulation to learners in the September 2025 (2025/2026 academic year).

KEY LEARNINGS

The appointment of a Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has been a significant enabler. The completion of the Learner Support and Mapping Report has laid the foundations of the current and future work of the Learner Support Service in KCETB FET. By the end of the 2024/2025 academic year Kilkenny and Carlow ETB's commitment to developing a FET Learner Handbook and the continued development and updating of the FET Learner Support Portal will have materialised. Moving into the 2025/2026 academic year, all FET learners will have access to a KCETB handbook (digital and/or printed) and the ongoing development and updating of the Learner Support Portal will have the benefit of both learner and staff feedback, which will assist in shaping the learner resource to ensure it meets the needs of all learners in KCETB.

Other recommendations outlined in the report including the Needs Assessment Form and the LENS report have been progressed, and further work will be completed on these in Spring 2025.

The establishment of the Learner Support Advisory Group will further support and enhance the work of the centralised Learner Support Service. Building capacity and ongoing development and improvement in this structure will prove an important resource for both learners and staff.

Ultimately the work of the Learner Support Service and the Learner and Wellbeing Co-ordinator is ongoing, to ensure that the needs of the learner and FET are identified and met in a consistent way across all of KCETB FET centres/service. This work is incremental and visible and can be achieved through a collaborative approach across our FET provision. In KCETB we strive to ensure that all our learners "flourish through learning"⁶ and the development of a fit for purpose, responsive central Lerner Support Service is core to achieving this.



LAOIS AND OFFALY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1:

INTRODUCTION OF SAFE EXAM BROWSER ON MOODLE FOR ONLINE EXAMS

INTRODUCTION

LOETB is committed to ensuring that assessments are conducted with the utmost integrity. Since Covid-19, all exams at Levels 5 and 6 are conducted online, with learners completing the exam on Moodle in their classroom, invigilated by an Exam Supervisor. This led to significantly increased efficiencies, including no paper being used, corrections completed online, and in some cases corrections are automated.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

There was a risk that learners might access other IT applications (e.g. Google, or their own course notes, or may be able to email each other) during the online exam. A few cases had been detected, and the malpractice was dealt with appropriately. This would significantly impact on the integrity of the assessment process. Strategies were put in place to decrease the likelihood of this happening, e.g. exam supervisor at back of the room, or moving around the room, to be able to see the learner's screen during the exam. However, while this reduced the risk, it did not fully remove the opportunity for malpractice.

ACTION

In Summer 2024, the QA Team researched and trialled the use of Safe Exam Browser software on Moodle, which would disable all other applications on the device while the exam was in progress. The software was successfully installed and introduced for all exams in all centres from September 2025. Roll-out of this software required all classes having to do a trial run to ensure that the software was working. Teachers cooperated willingly with the implementation process due to the clear and unarguable rationale for

the software, and the implementation process has been very smooth.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The impact of this software is that there is extra reassurance that the integrity of the assessment is safeguarded. Assessors and supervisors are confident that the software is effective while also being non-adversarial – learners do not feel like they are being watched.

KEY LEARNINGS

The introduction and implementation stages were very important in this case – it was important that the software was trialled during the summer for text exams to identify any pitfalls or specific actions that needed to be taken, or any potential pitfalls. It was also very important that assessors were supported in setting up their exams and ensuring that Safe Exam Browser was installed, and that the trial runs were conducted to identify any issues prior to the day of the exam. These actions helped to make the transition process easier.



CASE STUDY 2: INCLUSIVE EXAM EXPERIENCE FOR LEARNERS

INTRODUCTION

LOETB is committed to ensuring that FET provision is as inclusive as possible for our learners, and that our learners are facilitated and accommodated in a comfortable and reassuring way based on their own individual needs.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

LOETB had noted an increasing level of requests for Reasonable Accommodation (RA) requests in recent years – due in some part to learners' increased awareness of the supports that are available through both the FET Access Officer and each centre's Learner Support Workers. There was a huge increase in learners being granted readers for exams – this meant centres needed extra exam rooms, and readers, and yet, it had been observed that often the learner would not always require the reader or may not have had the confidence to ask the reader to repeat the questions for them.

ACTION

The FET Access Officer queried the availability of software on Moodle that would enable the learner to listen to an audio version of the exam questions during the exam. On further investigation, the QA team researched and tested the capability to have audio recorded by the assessor for each question on the exam. With the support of the FET Access Officer, the facility was trialled in some centres in Semester 1 of the 2024/25 academic year. Learners that would normally have a reader were given the option of using the audio technology – most were happy with this option, while others preferred to have their own exam space, and this was facilitated without issue.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The introduction of this facility has made the exam process a more inclusive experience for learners. Feedback from learners that used the software was very positive; they were happy to be able to stay in the exam room with their peers and

were more comfortable replaying the audio several times than they would have been asking the reader to repeat the question. Learners also commented that listening to their teacher's voice asking the questions provided some reassurance for them, rather than it being an automated voice.

The added benefit of this facility is that all learners can benefit, not just learners that require RA. Assessors found the process to be very straightforward, and are happy to record the audio for all exams, regardless of whether there is a learner that needs RA. This approach is in line with LOETB's dedication to UDL.

KEY LEARNINGS

The key learning here is being able to offer choice, to ensure the learning environment is more inclusive. LOETB is committed to ensuring that learners are facilitated to make choices about their own learning and their own needs.



CASE STUDY 3: ENCOURAGING LEARNER VOICES

INTRODUCTION

LOETB acknowledges the importance of listening to the learner voice to help steer the future of FET in Laois and Offaly. Learner feedback is very important to the organisation and helps to inform decision making.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

LOETB is keen to adopt a multi-faceted approach to listening to learners about their experiences and their motivation for returning to education. The approach involves several opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences, through surveys, AONTAS Learner Forum events, and through regular monitoring activities by centre and service management and staff.

ACTION

The Adult Literacy Service engaged in an innovative project with AONTAS whereby a number of our learners engaged in Ambassador training to empower them to tell their stories of their motivation for engaging in further education and training, and their experiences of FET, and how it has enhanced their lives. Following this hugely beneficial training, learners were provided with the opportunity to tell their own story and for it to be recorded in a series of videos.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The final product was a collection of beautiful videos that were officially launched at LOETB's FET Staff Day in October 2024. During a very moving session, one of the learners involved spoke to an audience of over 300 FET staff about the literacy challenges she faced all her life and how she overcame them, with the support of LOETB's Adult Literacy Service. This lady's video, and those of her peers, had a profound effect on the staff team.

This initiative has been nominated for an AONTAS Star award which is a great achievement for all involved.

KEY LEARNINGS

We are very aware that hearing learner stories from the learners themselves is more meaningful and effective than through data about levels of satisfaction. Qualitative data provides a much more complete picture of the learner experience.

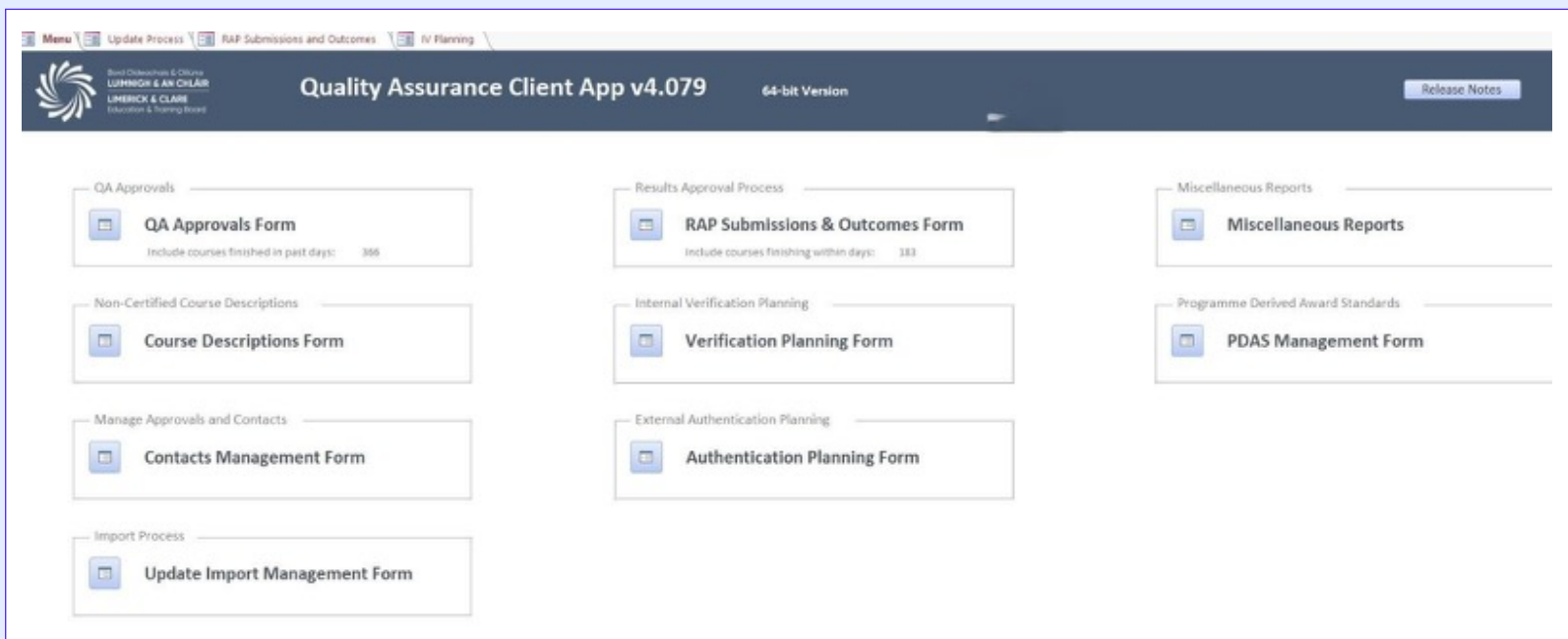
LIMERICK AND CLARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

LCETB CASE STUDY 1: QA CLIENT APP – INTEGRATION OF CERTIFICATION PROCESS, PLANNING AND RECORDING

INTRODUCTION

A National Course Calendar (NCC) course approval process, developed and overseen by the LCETB College of FET QA Support Service and the FET Operations team, has been in place across the organisation since October 2022, via an application called the QA Client App. This has featured in a previous case study submitted to QQI, [education-training-board-follow-up-reports-2025.pdf](#) p.45. Since September 2024, the functionality of the app has been extended to include capability to support the

planning for each QQI certification period and the recording of outcomes for same. The integration of these functions into the app replaces legacy processes that were in use across the different Campuses in the College of FET. This business process aims to provide an up-to-date view of the entire certification process for both FET centres and the Quality Assurance Support Service. The use of the QA Client App also supports the requirement in our *Teaching Learning and Assessment policy* that certification for learners is processed within 90 days of course finish date.



The screenshot displays the 'Quality Assurance Client App v4.079' interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Menu', 'Update Process', 'RAP Submissions and Outcomes', and 'IV Planning'. The main dashboard is organized into a grid of form categories, each with a sub-header and a list of forms:

- QA Approvals**
 - QA Approvals Form (Include courses finished in past days: 366)
- Results Approval Process**
 - RAP Submissions & Outcomes Form (Include courses finishing within days: 383)
- Miscellaneous Reports**
 - Miscellaneous Reports
- Non-Certified Course Descriptions**
 - Course Descriptions Form
- Internal Verification Planning**
 - Verification Planning Form
- Programme Derived Award Standards**
 - PDAS Management Form
- Manage Approvals and Contacts**
 - Contacts Management Form
- External Authentication Planning**
 - Authentication Planning Form
- Import Process**
 - Update Import Management Form



DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The LCETB College of FET (CFET) QA Support Service identified a number of areas where improvements could be made:

- **Collating of certification estimates** - QQI Certification estimates were gathered previously via the sharing of Excel files by QA Support Officers with centres from across the organisation. The potential for files to be edited/deleted was identified as a risk. It was also difficult for the QASS to identify the subject areas requiring External Authentication across the organisation when dealing with multiple excel files.
- **Ensuring the timely processing of certification** - Planning for each period is supported, as the app highlights which modules are due for submission based on our 90-day certification rule. All certified courses scheduled on the NCC are included in this process.
- **EA bookings** – The booking of External Authenticators is managed through a centralised system by the CFET QASS. In the past, this resulted in multiple emails sent to centre co-ordinators providing details of EA bookings, etc. Any amendments required further emails. The app now provides near real time data for all those involved in the certification process.

ACTION

Development Stage

Following a number of initial meetings between QASS and FET Operations, this further development of the app was progressed. The excel files used to gather certification estimate information was used a template for the development of the RAP Submissions and Outcomes Form. Course information was automatically transferred from the NCC, thus reducing the need for manual input of estimates details and reducing the risk of errors.

Centres can only see their own estimates and their IV Planning Form. QASS centrally book all EAs and enter this information into the Authentication Planning Form. This information then automatically transfers to the centres IV Planning Form so they can see EA booking details.

Approval Stage

The proposal that the QA Client App be used for the planning of certification and recording of outcomes for same was approved through our local QA Governance processes. It was decided that the December 2024 certification period would serve as a pilot.

Rollout Stage

A briefing session was held for all staff in mid-September 2024, to put forward the rationale for the change in process and demonstrate the new functions of the app. A working group was established consisting of QASS, FET Operations, centre coordinators and staff with QA responsibility.

All centres submitting for the December 2024 period were supported throughout by the QA Support Officers and FET Operations with one-to-one clinics and centre briefings as required.

Multiple working groups and sub-working groups have been established to support the differing requirements of centres e.g. Training Provision, multi-Provision campuses.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

1. This new process is still in its infancy, and LCETB is still applying the learning from each iteration of the Client App and each certification period.
2. The current limitations of QBS pose a risk to centres when processing learner certification, where learners have undertaken both CAS and PDAS modules or a multiple number of PDAS modules. The app supports centres by highlighting PDAS modules. While this is not a copper fastened system, it does offer a layer of protection and is the only solution we have to this issue at present.
3. PDAS modules are now flagged in the app making the tracking of same easier for centres. This helps with the current shortcomings of the QBS, which does not facilitate the submission of (a) multiple PDAS in one certification period and (b) PDAS and CAS in the same certification period.
4. The digitalisation of this process now provides QASS with a helicopter view of all certifications (QQI and other awarding bodies) across the organisation, to include IV planning and EA bookings.



5. There is a built-in capability in the app to generate and download a number of reports including that for due and overdue modules.

KEY LEARNINGS

1. The introduction of new business processes requires adequate resources to ensure effective implementation.
2. The introduction of the app required training and support, and this was very much dependent on the level of IT literacy among staff.
3. The standardisation of systems and processes across the organisation can be challenging due to the variety of legacy processes in place.
4. There were a number of working groups and sub-working groups formed throughout the rollout of this process. This was a critical part of ensuring everyone was kept abreast of changes, across the organisation, and could input into the process.
5. The harmonisation of process and systems across the College of FET is a challenge. The learnings from the rollout of this new business process are critical to any future such projects.

LCETB CASE STUDY 2:

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, as part of its learner-centred approach, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's College of Further Education and Training (FET) Strategic Framework (2022-2025) has prioritised the development of mechanisms to recognise prior learning. Led by the organisation's Quality Assurance Support Service Team (QA), these developments include RPL policies and procedures, an RPL-specific budget, and RPL projects for learners and staff. QA-led Professional Learning and Development has increased staff capacity in RPL. This approach is now embedded in FET operations.

In 2024, the focus turned to increasing the number of RPL applicants by engaging with our organisation's Marketing and Communications Team to raise awareness of RPL as a route to certification, progression, employment, and an enabler of lifelong learning.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Working with the Marketing and Communications Team, we identified our target audiences for RPL. It is important to note that although RPL is for everybody, some audience segments include hard-to-reach communities, those whose first language is not English, and those who have experienced difficulty with formalised education or have literacy issues. Therefore, taking a 'plain language' approach to our communications is key.

The concept of RPL is not widely known or understood by the public. The strategy devised by our Marketing and Communications Team to raise the profile of RPL in our region involved creating a public awareness campaign encouraging prospective learners to "Recognise Your Past" and "Empower Your Future" through RPL. The campaign features five RPL Heroes who share their unique and inspiring stories of completing RPL and transforming their lives.



ACTION

Having developed an information document outlining RPL policies and processes and how prospective learners can contact the RPL team, we worked closely with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) to prioritise and implement a ‘plain language’ approach. This was key to making the information inclusive and accessible. This content went through a further layer of revision as our Marketing and Communications Team revised it to ensure it could be easily interpreted and understood by all audience segments.

The Marketing and Communications Team asked us to identify RPL Heroes with unique backgrounds and inspiring stories to share while being mindful of diversity and the importance of representation. We identified five RPL Heroes: Michelle, Nataliaia, Thomas, Matoko, and Cristina.

The Marketing and Communications Team interviewed the heroes to learn more about their past and the impact that RPL is having on their future. They created case studies based on their findings. Next, they invited the heroes to partake in a photoshoot and videography session to capture content that is being used for marketing purposes. This content has resulted in the creation of various campaign assets across print, digital, social media and out-of-home advertising.

The messages of lifelong learning, mobility, progression and employment are key to what we want to communicate about RPL and come best from those who have been through the RPL process themselves.

“RPL has completely transformed my life and that of my family. I am now employed in a job that I never thought possible when I first arrived in Ireland.”

— Cristina, Early Years Educator

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Key Outputs:

As mentioned, undertaking this work has resulted in developing various campaign assets to effectively communicate RPL’s message to its target audiences. These outputs include the following:

- An Information Guide that details all the information needed to understand how RPL works and how to apply. It includes case studies based on our heroes that communicate the value and impact of RPL. A plain language approach was undertaken to lower communication barriers, making the content more accessible and inclusive.
- A suite of videos telling the stories of our heroes, highlighting the transformative impact of RPL on their lives.
- A new and optimised RPL landing page that enables prospective and current learners to access information easily.
- Out-of-home advertising featuring our heroes (e.g., billboards, buses, commuter squares, retail points, etc.) directs audiences to the RPL landing page.
- Social media advertising (e.g., paid and organic content on ETB social channels).
- New Pull-Ups featuring our RPL Heroes.
- Additional PR pieces and articles celebrating RPL and highlighting our heroes’ stories.

So, what was the impact?

- After only two weeks, we saw an increase in awareness and enquiries for RPL in our region.
- Engagement levels were high across our social media content.
- There was a significant rise in traffic to the RPL landing page.
- Despite being a newly published landing page, our collegeofFET.ie/rpl is beginning to rank in the top search results on Google locally.
- The campaign’s second phase will be bigger, with further channels and content being leveraged to generate awareness, engagement and enquiries.



KEY LEARNINGS

The initial two-week campaign has generated a lot of interest in RPL locally. We have received many enquiries relevant to FET. However, other enquiries were better suited to higher education as the individuals concerned hoped to achieve qualifications on the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). We redirected these enquiries to the relevant teams in the region's higher education institutions. By developing our relationships with these teams, we can create a two-way channel where prospective learners can be redirected based on their suitability. Over the coming weeks, we will work with our Marketing and Communications Team to review the first iteration of the campaign before moving on to the second phase.

RELEVANT LINKS

[Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) | College of FET](#)

CASE STUDY 3:

TEL AND QA SUPPORT SERVICES COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO AN EVOLVING DIGITAL ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE.

INTRODUCTION

This case study details the collaborative approach undertaken by the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Quality Assurance (QA) Support Services in addressing critical areas within the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). These areas encompass the development of robust assessment guidelines, a strategic response to the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, and the design and implementation of comprehensive professional development (PD) programmes for staff. It demonstrates the effectiveness of this collaborative model in fostering innovation, ensuring quality, and promoting ethical practices within the FET. The coordinated effort between TEL and QA led to more effective outcomes, particularly when it came to the College of FET's ability to respond to a rapidly evolving landscape with digital technologies and assessment methodologies.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The ETB College of FET faced a series of interconnected complex challenges that necessitated a coordinated and strategic response:

1. Need for Updated Assessment Guidelines:

As the digital transformation of FET became a central focus for the organisation, a move to more fully digital assessment necessitated significant reform of practices, policies and procedures that were initially designed as paper-based and where assessment methods and guidelines failed to fully leverage the potential of digital tools and resources. There was also pressing need to align assessment practices with evolving QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) certification standards, ensuring that digital assessments met the required quality benchmarks. The shift towards remote and mixed-mode learning environments, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, further underscored the urgency of developing comprehensive digital assessment guidelines.



2. Emergence of AI in Education:

The public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 triggered widespread discussions and concerns regarding the integrity of traditional assessment methods. There was a perceived threat that AI could be used to undermine academic integrity, leading to questions about the authenticity and reliability of student work. It was also necessary to respond to the AI in a manner that was inclusive and harnessed Learning Practitioners required clear guidance on how to manage the use of AI in assessments, balancing the potential benefits with the risks of misuse. It was also critical to ensure that the integration of AI aligned with the organisation's core values, promoting ethical, inclusive, and equitable practices. There was a need to provide pragmatic advice and support to teachers, enabling them to use AI in a way that enhances learning without compromising academic standards.

3. Professional Development Requirements:

The successful integration of digital assessment methods and guidance on AI into practice in teaching, learning and assessment depended heavily on the skills and confidence of Learning Practitioners as well as all those involved in internal verification and external authentication. Many learning practitioners required training and support to effectively use digital platforms such as Moodle and Microsoft Teams including features such as inbuilt AI, gradebooks and rubrics. In addition, the emergence of AI required teaching staff needed to be supported in navigating the challenges presented for assessment whilst ethically and safely harnessing the potential of AI tools.

ACTION

To effectively address these challenges, the TEL and QA Support Services adopted a multifaceted, collaborative approach:

a. Development of Assessment Guidelines:

LCETB College of TEL and QA teams initiated a comprehensive consultation process in spring 2022 involving all relevant stakeholders, including teaching staff, line managers, and external authenticators, to gather input and ensure that digital assessment guidelines were practical and relevant. Recognising the importance of a consistent user experience, the services promoted the use of Moodle and Microsoft Teams as the primary platforms for digital assessment, providing training and support for both

systems. The guidelines provided a clear definition of digital assessment, outlining acceptable practices for the submission and grading of digital evidence, while explicitly prohibiting the use of unapproved platforms and storage devices such as USB devices for summative assessment. It also laid out a detailed roadmap from 2022 to 2025, which charted a strategic progression towards fully digital assessment on approved platforms by September 2025.

b. Response to AI:

Following the launch of Generative AI into the public domain/mainstream in late 2022 LCETB College of FET was the first ETB and amongst the first educational institutions to develop AI and assessment guidelines. The response to the emergence of Generative AI occurred in distinct stages as follows

- Initial Awareness Raising: The TEL team proactively initiated discussions and workshops to raise awareness among staff about the emergence of AI tools and their potential impact on teaching and assessment. Initiatives included a lunchtime 'Show and TEL' webinar on AI use showcasing ethical and unethical use in January 2023 and a workshop for managers as part of a digital transformation of FET event in February 2023.
- Guideline Development: Drawing on their combined expertise, the TEL and QA teams drafted and circulated comprehensive draft guidelines on the ethical and inclusive use of AI in assessment, providing practical advice and support for learning practitioners. The guidelines were approved and adopted by the College of FT following stakeholder feedback in early 2023. To provide clarity and flexibility, the guidelines included four distinct options for AI use in assessment, ranging from a complete prohibition to unrestricted use, with appropriate acknowledgement and transparency.
- Professional Development: The TEL and QA team collaborative effort continued with the design and delivery of a series of professional development workshops, focusing on practical strategies for using digital assessment tools and AI effectively. These workshops were promoted which over 200 learning practitioners attended incorporated hands-on activities, case studies, and group discussions, providing participants with opportunities to apply their learning and share best practices.
- Resources and Support: Recognising the importance of ongoing support, the teams

provided a range of resources, including videos promoting the AI in assessment guidance, online tutorials, one-to-one support clinics, and access to campus-based digital champions to support teachers in assessment design and in ensuring that they were enabled to effectively apply both the digital assessment and AI in assessment guidelines.

- AI ethics and the Critical AI Project: Recognising the need for ongoing evaluation and informed decision-making the TEL Support Service launched a “Critical AI project” to assess a range of AI tools for teaching and learning. This project involved learning support staff and teachers in a structured evaluation process, using a rubric based on the ETBs values and our public sector duty that considered ethical factors such as data use, inclusion and impact on the environment as well as the impact on teaching and learning. The project has now been mainstreamed into policy so that all technologies procured and supported by the College of FET are evaluated using the critical evaluation process.

c. Ongoing TEL and QA collaboration

The success of the collaborative effort on digital assessment and AI guidance has resulted in an ongoing collaboration where the TEL and QA teams meet twice monthly to respond to the evolving technology and assessment landscapes. Among the outcomes of this collaborative effort is the updating of our guidelines to V2 in 2024. The teams are currently exploring models to enhance both our guidelines and CPD including engagement with Professor Danny Liu and an exploration of the potential application of the 2-lane model adopted by University of Australia to FET. We are also currently designing a PD workshop series on assessment design for Learning Practitioners which will combine the move to digital assessment, applying the AI guidance and UDL principles to assessment design.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The collaborative approach adopted by the TEL and QA Support Services yielded a range of significant and positive outcomes:

- **Clear and Consistent Guidelines:**
 - The development and implementation of clear, consistent guidelines for digital assessment and AI use ensured that all staff were working to the same standards.
 - The guidelines helped to reduce confusion and anxiety among learners and learning practitioners, providing them with the confidence to embrace new technologies and assessment methods.
- **Increased Awareness and Understanding:**
 - The proactive awareness-raising activities increased staff understanding of the benefits and risks associated with AI, enabling them to make informed decisions about its use in their teaching practice.
 - The collaborative approach ensured that both the technical and quality assurance aspects of AI were considered, leading to a more holistic and balanced perspective
- **Enhanced Skills and Confidence:**
 - The professional development workshops improved teaching staff skills in using digital tools and AI for assessment, enhancing their confidence and competence in a digital learning environment.
 - Participants reported that the workshops were highly useful and relevant, providing them with practical strategies and resources that they could apply in their own practice.
- **Reinforced Inclusive Practices:**
 - By promoting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and accessible assessment methods, the collaborative approach reinforced inclusive practices, ensuring that all learners could benefit from digital assessment and AI.
 - The focus on multiple means of action and expression enabled learning practitioners to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of their learners.



- **Informed Decision-Making:**

- The Critical AI project provided a structured and evidence-based approach to evaluating AI tools, enabling the LCETB to make informed decisions about which technologies to adopt and support.
- The project ensured that ethical considerations and learner needs were central to the decision-making process, aligning technology use with the organisation's core values.

- **Positive Feedback and Engagement:**

- Feedback from professional development sessions indicated high levels of satisfaction, with participants praising the relevance, practicality, and collaborative nature of the workshops.
- The engagement of learning support staff, teachers, and digital champions in the Critical AI project fostered a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the successful integration of AI.

KEY LEARNINGS

This case study underscores several key lessons that are relevant to educational institutions seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by digital assessment and AI:

- **Collaboration is Essential:**

- A collaborative approach between TEL and QA Support Services is highly effective in addressing complex issues that span both technical and pedagogical domains.
- By combining their expertise and resources, these services can develop comprehensive and practical solutions that are aligned with the organisation's strategic goals.

- **Proactive Engagement is Key:**

- Addressing AI proactively, rather than simply banning it, allows for the development of ethical and inclusive practices that harness the potential of these technologies to enhance learning.
- By engaging staff in discussions and providing clear guidance, organisations can foster a culture of innovation and responsible technology use.

- **Professional Development is Crucial:**

- Providing ongoing professional development and support is essential for the successful integration of digital tools and AI in education.
- Training programmes should be practical, hands-on, and tailored to the specific needs of learning practitioners, enabling them to develop the skills and confidence to embrace new technologies.

- **Values-Driven Approach is Paramount:**

- Basing decisions about technology use on core values such as inclusivity, ethics, and learner-centeredness ensures that technology is used in a way that aligns with the organisation's mission and benefits all learners.
- A values-driven approach can help to mitigate potential risks and biases associated with AI, promoting equitable and responsible technology use.

- **Critical Evaluation is Necessary:**

- Continuously evaluating tools and practices is necessary to adapt to the rapidly changing technological landscape and ensure that technology is being used effectively and ethically.
- Evaluation processes should involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including learning practitioners, support staff, and learners, to gather a broad range of perspectives and insights.

By adopting a collaborative, proactive, and values-driven approach, the TEL and QA Support Services at LCETB effectively navigated the challenges posed by digital assessment and AI, fostering a culture of innovation, inclusion, and ethical practice within the organisation. This case study provides a valuable model for other educational institutions seeking to embrace the potential of technology while upholding the highest standards of quality and integrity.

RELEVANT LINKS:

[CFET Guidance on Artificial Intelligence](#)

[Links to CFET QA Assessment Procedures and Forms](#)



LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: CAPTURING THE LEARNER VOICE

INTRODUCTION

In recent efforts to gather feedback across various Further Education and Training (FET) provisions—including Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Adult Literacy, Apprenticeships, Youthreach, Contracted Training and Incentre programmes—challenges were identified in accurately capturing the experiences and needs of both learners and staff. Previous attempts, which included digital surveys via MS Forms and initial pilot projects, fell short of providing a comprehensive view. The feedback gathered through these methods often lacked depth and context, which limited our ability to fully understand the unique challenges within each provision.

This was the first time such in-person focus groups were used to gather direct feedback from learners, marking a shift from the initial plan to collect insights via a Microsoft Forms survey. The decision to hold face-to-face sessions was made to foster a more engaging and open dialogue, allowing for richer insights and a deeper understanding of learners' experiences and needs.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

It was noted that previous ways of collecting learner feedback such as the MS Forms submitted to each learner at the end of their programme was not sufficient. Digital surveys, conducted through MS Forms, often yield brief or surface-level responses. Learners may not fully elaborate on their experiences or concerns, especially if they feel restricted by standardised questions or limited response options.

Many learners may view surveys as impersonal, which can reduce their willingness to participate. Additionally, learners who may not feel confident in their literacy or digital

skills may be reluctant to complete forms, leading to underrepresentation of certain voices.

Digital surveys offer no way to immediately follow up on interesting or ambiguous responses, which means that important details can be lost. As a result, the richness of qualitative feedback is often compromised.

The Learner Voice was embedded into the agenda of the PGG. It was decided that a more holistic approach be taken when gathering the Learner Voice. Onsite visits were scheduled across FET to capture this.

ACTION

These in-person interactions offered distinct advantages over previous methods by allowing for real-time discussions, active observation, and a deeper exploration of stakeholder experiences.

By engaging directly with learners, educators and support staff in their respective environments, LWETB was able to obtain a more complete and authentic understanding of the specific needs, challenges, and successes across each provision. This approach not only ensured that all voices were heard but also fosters trust and openness, setting the stage for meaningful improvements tailored to each provision's context.

The in-person visits offered a chance to directly observe and engage with staff and learners. During on-site visits, focus on structured discussions, including group conversations, interviews, and observational feedback. This approach most certainly appeared to yield richer qualitative insights into each provision's unique context and challenges.



Switching to in-person visits provides a valuable opportunity for more meaningful engagement. With direct interaction, it's possible to gather more information than digital forms.

The objective was to create a Learner Voice Report that could be presented to all FET leaders in an efficient and clear format so that they could gain the knowledge required to improve, sustain and, more importantly, learn.

What LWETB did to gather the Learner Voice

- Devised a list of questions/areas for discussion that could be adapted to all provision types.
- We gathered and analysed the information collected, identifying recurring themes or unique challenges within each provision.
- Held small group discussions, ensuring everyone had a chance to voice their experiences and suggestions.
- Offered private interviews with learners who felt more comfortable sharing feedback in a one-on-one setting.
- Shared summarised feedback with stakeholders to validate findings and demonstrate that their learners input was valued.

KEY FINDINGS/OUTCOMES/IMPACT

Face to Face Focus groups were scheduled throughout FET. This allowed LCETB time to prepare by identifying a diverse group of learners from each provision to ensure a range of perspectives.

It also allowed the ETB to prepare a list of guiding questions and themes based on known challenges, focusing on areas such as engagement, resource access, delivery consistency, and learner outcomes, and to be able to tailor our questions to the specific context of each provision (e.g., Youthreach vs. Adult Literacy) to make the sessions more relevant and engaging.

In-person visits not only helped in identifying specific issues but also fostered trust among learners and staff, showing them that their experiences matter. Structured discussions and observations uncovered deeper insights into each provision's specific needs, leading to more informed decisions and tailored solutions.

A Learner Voice Report was devised and presented to all provisions on 20 June 24 at the FET Leaders Meeting. It was presented by the AEO Nicola Galvin and distributed to all provision leaders the following week.

KEY LEARNINGS

During this process our key learnings were as identified below:

- It was our first attempt at putting this style of report together and there was great learning throughout for all involved. An initial draft was produced and reviewed by middle management, feedback was given and taken onboard to produce the finalised piece.
- Going forward an online feedback portal may work well where each provision can access their own individual feedback which will give an insight specific to their provision.
- Creating a feedback portal would not only streamline access to provision-specific insights but also foster a sense of ownership and continuous improvement within each team, making it easier for them to respond to and address feedback proactively.
- Offering learners the option to meet in private rather than in a group setting could be highly beneficial. For some learners, particularly those who may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of others or who have personal or sensitive feedback, a one-on-one setting can provide a safe space for honest expression. Providing this option, alongside group settings, would ensure that all learners have an environment suited to their communication preferences, thereby enriching the quality and inclusivity of the feedback collected.



CASE STUDY 2: LEARNER SUPPORT – ITEMIT SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many learners faced significant barriers to accessing education due to a lack of personal computers or reliable internet. To address this, our ETB (Education and Training Board) provided laptops to learners, allowing them to continue their studies and engage in online teaching and learning. This rapid shift underscored the importance of technology in education and highlighted the specific needs of learners for reliable digital access.

The practice of loaning laptops to learners has continued post-pandemic, requiring each learner to sign a loan agreement within their specific educational provision. This year, the Learner Support Department implemented an Asset Management System (ITEMIT) as a centralised database to streamline the process of tracking and managing these laptop loans. The system has proven instrumental in enhancing the educational experience for learners, ensuring they have access to essential resources from the start of their programs, without concerns over the financial burden of acquiring a device.

The LWETB Asset Management System (ITEMIT) supports equitable learning opportunities by ensuring all learners, regardless of socioeconomic status, have the technological tools they need to succeed. Additionally, the system aids in auditing and oversight, promoting efficient resource management for the ETB. This case study explores how this asset management system has improved learner support and contributed to a more inclusive educational environment.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The primary objective was to improve technology accessibility for learners by addressing insights gained during Covid-19 and feedback gathered through learner voice initiatives. Equipping learners with the necessary digital tools was essential for their success in Education and Training Board (ETB) programmes.

Challenges Faced:

While laptop loans significantly enhanced learners' ability to meet the digital demands of their courses, several challenges emerged, particularly in asset management:

- **Inefficient Distribution:** The distribution of laptops was managed locally and tracked through spreadsheet-based records, creating inconsistencies in the recording process.
- **Inconsistent Record-Keeping:** Record-keeping methods varied from location to location, resulting in inconsistent data about the loaned laptops.
- **Varied Loan Processes:** Each location used different processes for laptop loans, leading to variations in the types and quality of information recorded.
- **Lack of Reporting Functionality:** The previous system lacked reporting capabilities to assess and improve efficiency.
- **Limited Stock Oversight:** Without real-time stock tracking, it was difficult to assess usage and reallocate laptops to centres with the greatest need.
- **No Central Oversight for Compliance:** The absence of a centralised system limited our ability to conduct internal compliance reviews.
- **Difficulty in Tracking Specialist Equipment:** There was no system for monitoring the availability of specialised support devices, which impacted learner access to essential equipment.

ACTION

To resolve these challenges and enhance accessibility, LWETB undertook the following steps:

1. LWETB conducted a review of various asset management solutions to identify a tool that would effectively meet needs. Including a pilot and gained feedback from some current end users.



2. Considered the storage of all information to ensure GDPR standards were met.
3. Implementation of a centralised asset management system: All existing loaned technology was registered within the selected asset management tool, allowing the ETB to create a comprehensive and easily accessible database.
4. Trained all staff and created an escalation point for support requests.
5. Built a scalable solution which can evolve with new technologies and support demands.
6. Improved resource allocation by utilising real time data to plan to streamline asset allocation.
7. Optimise accessibility to all resources, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for learners. By improving asset management processes, LWETB aimed to not only increase technology accessibility for learners but also to boost staff confidence in issuing and managing essential digital equipment. This case study explores how these steps enhanced our service and ensured that learners could access the resources they need to succeed in their educational journeys.

KEY FINDINGS/OUTCOMES/IMPACT

This asset management tool enables a tailored approach for supporting all learners without easy access to a laptop by efficiently tracking and managing specialised equipment, including adaptive technology, assistive devices, and customised learning materials. This centralised system ensures that necessary resources are available, functional, and aligned with each learner's unique needs, supporting a more personalised learning experience.

Detailed records of assets allow educators to customise learning plans based on individual requirements, ensuring that each student receives the right tools for their educational journey.

Effective asset management has optimised resource accessibility, allowing us to allocate equipment where and when it's needed, reducing downtime, and enhancing accessibility for students. Regular tracking and maintenance, facilitated by the asset management system, ensure that all resources remain in optimal condition. This is especially crucial for assistive technologies that require consistent performance and

updates to support learners effectively.

In addition, this asset management tool supports compliance with accessibility regulations and provides necessary reporting for funding or audit purposes related to disability services. By fostering streamlined communication between staff, caregivers, and educators, the system ensures a coordinated approach to addressing learner needs. Furthermore, this asset management approach is scalable, enabling LWETB to adapt as learner needs evolve or as new technologies emerge, thus creating an inclusive, supportive, and adaptable learning environment for all students.

KEY LEARNINGS

Implementing this new asset management tool for supporting learners with disabilities brings valuable insights, starting with a deeper understanding of user needs.

Engaging directly with learners, educators, and caregivers allows LWETB to identify specific requirements and preferences, enabling a more tailored and effective tool.

Additionally, training is critical; thorough guidance for both staff and users ensures that they understand how to navigate the tool, access essential resources, and leverage its full capabilities to support learning outcomes.

A continuous feedback loop is essential for adapting the tool to evolving needs. Establishing regular channels for feedback helps identify areas for improvement and keeps the system aligned with user demands. Moreover, learning to interpret and utilise the data collected by the tool allows for more strategic decision-making regarding resource allocation, helping to enhance its overall effectiveness.

Addressing integration challenges with existing systems and processes is also crucial, as it helps smooth future implementations and ensures a cohesive experience for all involved.

Other key learnings include the need for flexibility and adaptability to accommodate changing educational methods and emerging technologies. Encouraging collaboration and open communication among staff, caregivers, and learners fosters a supportive environment, while the tool facilitates this collaboration.



Additionally, understanding resource management, maintenance requirements, and the financial aspects tied to assistive resources informs better budgeting and funding strategies. Together, these insights promote an inclusive learning atmosphere, raising awareness among staff and stakeholders about the diverse needs of learners with disabilities and driving continuous improvements to support educational inclusivity and success.

CASE STUDY 3: REGIONAL ADULT LITERACY ORGANISER

INTRODUCTION

Adult Literacy for Life Strategy (ALL)

The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy sets a ten-year roadmap to improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills across the country. It aims to ensure that everyone has access to these essential skills, empowering individuals and communities while reducing social inequalities.

The ALL Strategy is led by SOLAS and the Further Education and Training Boards. The strategy focuses on creating a more inclusive, empowered society by addressing the foundational skills gaps that impact many adults.

The strategy specifically focuses on potentially vulnerable cohorts for targeted funding such as Older Adults, Members of the Travelling Community, Persons with Disabilities, Low paid Workers, Carers, One-parent households, Incarcerated Persons and Ex-offenders, Persons recovering from addiction, Long-term unemployed, Migrants, International Protection Applicants and People with language needs.

The National Adult Literacy for Life Strategy Programme Office operates as a central, coordinating body across Government departments and other relevant stakeholders. The National Programme office, with SOLAS acts as a driver of collaboration and overall strategy implementation through the national network of Regional Literacy Coordinators.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

As identified in the Inaugural Review, a Regional Adult Literacy Coordinator had not been appointed. This appointment has now been filled since February 2024. The role of the Regional Literacy coordinator focuses on working with stakeholders at a local level, as well as colleagues across the education, health, community development and local government supports and services to embed the required systems-based approach to addressing unmet literacy needs.

ACTION

Objectives/aims since appointment to role:

1. Set up the Regional Adult Literacy Coalition - currently the LWETB Coalition is composed of the following: Regional Literacy Coordinator, LWETB Education and Training Board (LWETB), Longford Community Resources CLG, Granard Family Resource Centre, Longford and Westmeath Libraries, Home school and Community Liaison representative, MABS, HSE and DSP representatives from both counties as well as County Council personal from Longford and Westmeath including the Integration team and Healthy Ireland. The Coalition is responsible for developing the annual literacy action plans to address regional and local literacy numeracy and digital inclusion needs. These plans are submitted to the National Programme office.
2. Identify Initiatives that align with the strategies goals, promoting collaborative and innovative solutions to expand and improve literacy services across the country

KEY FINDINGS/OUTCOMES/IMPACT

- LWETB Coalition was developed as above
- Number of Collaboration and Innovative Projects ran in 2024 as below:

Men of Steel

This is a 10-week practical skills course in Metalwork. It is a combination of literacy, digital and numeracy themed learning with a focus on new skill and improving basic skills. The aim is to engage older men from the community. This cohort have been identified as a group at risk of social exclusion. Athlone FRC in collaboration with LWETB delivered this project in Athlone and surrounding environs. Participants were recruited through the Social Prescriber in the area. For this reason, this project was submitted into the AONTAS STAR Award competition.

SOS – Save Our Seeds - Seeds Library – A Collaboration between Westmeath County Council and LWETB

The SOS project aims to facilitate planting, harvesting and re-distribution of organic open-pollinated seeds. Numerical literacy, digital literacy and literacy needs being met

through a series of educational workshops aimed at coaching participants in planting, growing and harvesting skills. Information leaflets and books were also purchased to support participants learning.

The seed library initiative was learner- centred. With hands on learning participants engaged directly with seeds, planting, and nurturing them. This fosters experiential learning and a deeper understanding of plant biology and ecology. By allowing individuals to select seeds that interest them, the initiative empowers learners to explore what resonates with their personal gardening goals and local environments. Workshops and events were organised around seed saving and planting to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among community members, which enhances social learning and community engagement.

This project has also been entered for an AONTAS STAR award as promoting biodiversity, enhancing food security, reducing environmental impact, fostering community engagement, and providing educational opportunities, seed libraries strengthen local ecosystems and empower individuals who will in turn pass on knowledge and skills to future generations.

READ, WRITE and THRIVE Literacy/Numeracy and Digital Skills for All

Introducing 'Read, Write, and Thrive': an innovative adult literacy initiative jointly developed by two Family Resource Centres in Co Longford. It aims to bolster literacy, digital, and numeracy skills to complement formal education provided by LWETB. This project engaged participants from refugee communities such as Syria and Ukrainian as well as Roma families. Through interactive sessions featuring drama, role plays, and storytelling, participants enhanced conversational English. Additionally, activities such as form filling, health visit simulations, and numeracy games and digital skills were incorporated to bridge literacy gaps. The initiative created supportive networks to ensure learners could access career progression opportunities and life enhancing methods.

Well-Westmeath

Well Westmeath is a Health Literacy project run by Westmeath Libraries, Age Friendly Council- Westmeath and Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme. It is delivered in plain English to empower participants to become more confident when



discussing their health and health history. It aims to empower participants when accessing information, asking for clarification, understanding diagnosis, understanding medications and dosages and understanding instructions. The training addresses literacy, numerical literacy and digital literacy challenges amongst the target groups. It gives the participants the tools and the confidence to voice their concerns and reduce any misunderstandings they may have when interacting with healthcare professionals.

Learning Together

The aim of this project was to support the English language literacy skills of disadvantaged communities in Longford in a fun, supportive environment. The project was delivered as series of workshops through English to encourage participants to practice their English conversational skills. Numeracy and Digital literacy were also supported. Workshops included Cookery and IT; Bike Repair; Art and Well-being; Weaving; Music and Dance. These workshops were led by a range of experienced tutors, supported by LCRL and EDI over seven weeks in July /August 2024.

Empower our Vote

This project was a collaboration between St Christopher's Service CLG and Longford Women's Link to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to actively participate in society and exercise their fundamental right to vote.

This project used visual aids and easy-to-understand formats tailored to the needs of the participants. This initiative created learning opportunities to inform the participants about the significance of voting, their rights as citizens, and the process of effecting positive change through active participation in the electoral process.

By fostering an understanding of civic responsibility and imparting essential skills for voting, the project aimed to equip the group with the confidence and ability to engage meaningfully in the democratic process, thereby promoting inclusivity and empowerment within the community.

Empower55 - Literacy Digital Skills and Money Management for Women 55+

Empower55 aims to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where women aged 55 and over can thrive, gain confidence, and unlock new opportunities for personal and professional development.

The programme is being delivered in SWEETS Training Rooms in Kilbeggan Co. Westmeath with a capacity for 15 learners over a six-week period. The programme follows a workshop style, combining interactive presentations, hands-on activities, group discussions, and one-on-one support. Sessions are led by experienced facilitator with expertise in literacy support, digital skills training, and money management. Participants receive personalised attention and guidance to ensure their individual needs are addressed.

Digital Support Hubs

This service was available through the library network in Longford and Westmeath for adults in the area. People who needed help, advice, or assistance on their device made an appointment with a tutor and called to the library at the appointed time. The tutor assisted them with their query maybe downloading an app, printing a bank statement, setting up email, showing them how to text, WhatsApp, using Facetime or video calls, etc. This was a bespoke service for the client. This service was promoted via the library service, LWETB, PPN, OPC, Community Safety Network, Healthy Homes, and Sports Partnership to reach as many people as possible.

Participants also received information on follow-on services that might interest them. A progression workshop assisting people with online FETCH registration in all libraries across Longford and Westmeath is also organised to take place in mid – November. The workshop is an additional component of the digital support hub project and provides follow-up assistance in accessing further LWETB digital up-skilling courses.

From a learner's point of view the Collaboration and Innovation and ALL additional fund projects have provided new learning opportunities offering participants a sense of self- belief thus building confidence. The social and supportive learning environment provided an increase in social engagement and an opportunity to create new friendships.



A key theme throughout many of the Collaboration and Innovation and ALL additional fund projects is that of digital Literacy. This is in line with the ALL-Strategy's focus on digital skills, the need for an emphasis on digital literacy in assisting adults gain the skills needed to engage with technology in work, community, and everyday life. Much of this work ensured digital literacy programs were accessible, especially in areas with lower internet access or technological infrastructure

Learning about other opportunities inside and outside of the ETB allowed participants pathways to continue their learning journey if they wish to do so.

KEY LEARNINGS

Central to the role of Regional Literacy Coordinator (RLC) is assessing literacy needs in their specific region. This work provides an opportunity to highlight existing literacy provision within the ETB whilst also identifying areas with the highest demand for services. These assessments with the support of Adult Literacy for Life funding help develop or tailor literacy programs to meet the unique demands of each community, ensuring culturally relevant, inclusive, and accessible learning opportunities.

The role, the Regional Adult Literacy Coalition and the associated funding to support the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy projects has provided an effective and efficient platform to foster collaboration among service providers, such as local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), libraries, community organisations, and employers, to ensure that literacy services are accessible and cohesive.

This work has also assisted in developing a multi-agency network where various local and national stakeholders—such as health services, libraries, social services, and employer groups—collaborate to support literacy.

CASE STUDY 4: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT DATABASE

INTRODUCTION

Effective professional learning and development (PL&D) systems are critical in fostering continuous improvement among Further Education and Training (FET) staff. This case study explores the development and implementation of a centralised database to record and manage staff PL&D activities. It highlights the challenges, actions taken, outcomes, and key learnings from the initiative.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Historically, no formal system was in place to record the PL&D activities attended by FET staff. This lack of record-keeping presented challenges in tracking participation, evaluating the impact of training programmes, and ensuring equitable opportunities for professional growth across Further Education and Training (FET) in LWETB.

ACTION

To begin to address this gap, the TEL.PL&D team developed a PL&D database. It included key steps as follows:

1. **Design and Deployment:**
 - A database was created to record essential details, including the name and role of the staff member, the type of training undertaken, and their line manager's details.
2. **Implementation of Data Collection Protocols:**
 - Quarterly templates were distributed to FET Coordinators, who facilitated data entry among staff. This ensured a standardised approach to data submission.
3. **Engagement and Communication:**
 - Regular reminders and updates were provided to stress the importance of maintaining accurate PL&D records.
 - Support services within FET were engaged to share training records from their respective departments.



KEY FINDINGS/OUTCOMES/IMPACT

The implementation of the Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) database has provided critical insights into both its successes and ongoing challenges. Below is a detailed exploration of the key findings:

Progress in PL&D Record-Keeping

Before the initiative, there was no centralised mechanism for tracking professional learning and development activities among FET staff. The introduction of the database has addressed this gap to a significant extent, achieving a 60% compliance rate. This improvement reflects a positive step toward structured data management and has increased the visibility of staff engagement in training activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Standardised templates and reporting protocols have brought a level of consistency to PL&D data collection.
- FET coordinators now play an active role in encouraging and overseeing staff participation in the process.

Persistent Data Accuracy Challenges

While progress has been made, issues with data accuracy and completeness remain a significant challenge. Missing, incomplete, or incorrect entries require frequent follow-ups, consuming time and administrative resources.

Common Issues Identified:

- Missing critical details such as training dates, session descriptions, or staff identifiers.
- Duplicate entries due to inconsistent data submission practices.
- Misaligned data when records are transferred from other departments or systems.

Dependence on Key Individuals

The success of the PL&D database is highly dependent on two primary factors:

- FET Coordinators' Leadership:

Coordinators play a crucial role in stressing the importance of record-keeping to staff and ensuring compliance.

- Individual Staff Responsibility:
The initiative's success hinges on staff members' commitment to logging their PL&D activities accurately and on time.

This dependence highlights the variability in compliance rates, which can fluctuate based on individual motivation and the prioritisation of PL&D record-keeping by coordinators.

Challenges with Centralised Data Management

The decentralised nature of FET operations and the lack of a unified system for managing PL&D records make it challenging to maintain a centralised and complete database. While some data consolidation has been achieved, gaps still exist in capturing the full spectrum of training activities across departments.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Records from certain support services or training departments are inconsistently reported.
- Manual data collection processes contribute to delays and errors.

Incremental Progress Compared to Peers

Despite challenges, this initiative has progressed further than similar efforts in other ETBs. The database represents a pioneering effort that has the potential to set a benchmark for the sector.

Comparative Insights:

- Many ETBs face similar issues with PL&D tracking, but few have implemented a system as structured as this database.
- This highlights both the achievements and the need for continued advocacy for a national-level solution.



Importance of Continuous Engagement

The compliance rate of 60%, while an improvement, indicates that a significant proportion of staff are still not consistently engaging with the database. This highlights the need for ongoing efforts to embed PL&D tracking into the organisational culture.

Factors Affecting Engagement:

- Competing priorities for staff and coordinators reduce the focus on maintaining accurate records.
- Limited awareness or understanding of how the data contributes to broader organisational goals.

Potential for Data-Driven Insights

Although the current focus is on compliance and accuracy, the database has the potential to provide valuable insights into professional development trends, such as:

- Identifying high-demand training areas.
- Spotting gaps in staff development opportunities.

Administrative Resources

We have identified a need for dedicated administrative support to manage the database effectively. The absence of allocated resources has led to challenges in maintaining data integrity and ensuring timely follow-ups.

Impacts of Limited Resources:

- Reliance on coordinators and staff adds variability to the process.
- Significant time is needed to enter the data
- Significant time is spent on manual data validation and error correction.

Record Submission from Support Services

Not all FET support services or departments consistently share training records, leading to incomplete datasets. This lack of alignment creates gaps in the overall picture of staff engagement in professional learning activities.

Examples of Gaps:

- Records of external training sessions are sometimes missed or delayed.
- Internal department-led training initiatives are not uniformly logged in the system.

KEY LEARNINGS

The development and implementation of the Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) database provided critical insights into the complexities of managing training records across a diverse FET workforce. Below is an in-depth exploration of the key learnings from this initiative:

1. Sector-Wide Challenge

- The absence of a unified system for tracking PL&D records is not unique to LWETB. It reflects a broader, national issue across Education and Training Boards (ETBs). While some progress has been made locally, the challenge underscores the need for a strategic, national-level approach to standardise PL&D tracking, ensuring consistency and comparability across regions and institutions.

Potential Solutions:

- Advocacy for a centralised, ETBI or SOLAS-supported PL&D platform.
- Collaborative workshops across ETBs to share best practices and develop joint solutions.

2. Administrative Support

- A significant finding was the need for dedicated administrative resources to support the database's functionality and usability. Ensuring timely data entry, monitoring, and validation requires continuous oversight, which cannot be solely dependent on existing staff responsibilities.



Key Insights:

- The lack of dedicated administrative hours leads to delays in follow-ups and inaccuracies in the data.
- Administrative support can serve as a central point of accountability to ensure compliance and address staff queries.

Recommendations:

- Allocate resources for administrative time to dedicated to managing PL&D records.
- Train administrative staff to use database tools effectively and efficiently.

3. Emphasising Communication and Awareness

- Despite the availability of the database and templates, staff compliance is only at 60%, partly due to inconsistent communication and prioritisation of PL&D record-keeping. Clear and consistent messaging about the importance of accurate records is vital.

Approaches for Improvement:

- Deliver regular briefings, both in-person and virtual, to underscore the significance of PL&D tracking for personal and organisational development.
- Incorporate reminders into routine staff communications, such as emails, mailshots, at training events and during team meetings.
- Cultural Shift: Embed a culture across FET where PL&D is viewed not just as a compliance activity but as an integral part of professional growth and accountability.

4. Collaboration Enhances Data Accuracy

- Effective collaboration with support services and departments within FET is vital for ensuring comprehensive data collection. Training records often exist across multiple channels, and streamlined coordination is required to centralise these records.

Strategies for Collaboration:

- Establish clear workflows for sharing training records between departments.
- Use shared digital platforms like MS Teams for real-time updates and communication.
- Create a reporting calendar to align all departments on submission deadlines.

5. Data Integrity

- Incomplete or inaccurate records continue to hinder the effectiveness of the PL&D database. Issues such as missing data fields, incorrect dates, or duplicate entries require significant time and effort to address.

Proposed Solutions:

- Implement mandatory data validation steps in the submission process to reduce errors.
- Automate the detection of incomplete or inaccurate entries, with prompts for correction before submission.
- Provide training sessions for staff on how to fill out PL&D templates accurately.

6. Digital Transformation Opportunities

- The initiative highlighted the need for more advanced tools and systems to manage PL&D records. A more robust digital solution could improve efficiency and accuracy while reducing administrative burden. Future Directions:
- Explore the adoption of cloud-based PL&D management systems with features such as automated reminders, analytics dashboards, and integration with HR systems.
- Investigate mobile-friendly applications that allow staff to log training activities in real-time.



7. Long-Term Strategic Value

Beyond compliance, the database offers strategic benefits, such as identifying skills gaps, tracking training trends, and informing resource allocation for future PL&D programmes. However, these benefits can only be realised if the system is consistently maintained and utilised.

Embedding Strategic Value:

- Link PL&D records to performance reviews and career development plans.
- Use aggregated data to highlight successes and advocate for additional funding for professional development initiatives.

8. National Advocacy and Benchmarking

This initiative has progressed further than most other ETBs, positioning it as a potential leader in the sector. Sharing learnings and outcomes could inspire similar efforts elsewhere.

ACTION STEPS

Present findings and recommendations at national ETB forums.

- Advocate for benchmarking tools to measure progress against other ETBs and identify areas for collective improvement.
- It will take a national approach to Cultural Shift where PL&D is viewed not just as a compliance activity but as an integral part of professional growth and accountability.

By applying these learnings, the organisation can build a more robust and sustainable framework for tracking and enhancing professional learning and development, setting a benchmark for other ETBs to follow.



LOUTH AND MEATH EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1:

DUNDALK YOUTHREACH QQI ASSESSMENT INTEGRATION PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Having attended a national Youthreach conference at which a colleague delivered a compelling presentation on the integration of assessment in QQI accredited programmes, the Youthreach Coordinator in Dundalk began to consider alternative approaches to assessment within their provision. The concept of integrating assessment was as a response to dealing with issues particular to Youthreach settings. The presentation at the conference aligned fully with the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework created by CAST, the Centre for Applied Special Technology, who define UDL as ‘a teaching approach that works to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners and eliminates obstacles in the learning process’.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The centre coordinator observed that whilst assessment practices were endorsed in the internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and Results Approval Panel (RAP) processes, much of the assessment events were carried out in isolation, resulting in a lack of meaningful connections for the learners across different modules. A common concern from learners was the repetition of certain tasks, as they found themselves repeating similar activities across different modules; some of which were delivered in different styles and formats. This not only added unnecessary work for both learners and staff but also sometimes caused confusion and frustration on the part of the learner.

Another recurring issue was the personal challenge many learners faced in completing their portfolios. Frequently staff would report that learners may have completed only 80% of their portfolio, or as the year neared completion, the service would see learners completing numerous exercises or worksheets to address gaps in their work where the submission would not meet the assessment criteria. Learners found this exercise

frustrating and was viewed as having little to no relevance to their learning.

There was initial hesitation to the integration project from both staff and learners. The colleague who had presented at the Youthreach Conference visited the centre and worked closely with the coordinator and staff to address their wish for change and to work with learners across different subjects to integrate their assessment.

ACTION

Work began in September 2023 between the centre coordinator, teaching staff and a specialist External Authenticator (EA) who had experience of designing integrated assessments and signposting the evidence of integrated assessment for the purpose of the external authentication process. The integration process required significant changes in the planning and delivery of assessment, including the systematic coordination of assessment activities to allow assessment of Learning Outcomes (LOs) across multiple subjects, with the achievement of each LO carefully signposted back to the relevant module descriptor. Teachers in the centre worked collaboratively across a number of separate programme areas to design and deliver much broader Teaching and Learning projects, incorporating LOs from a number of discrete programme descriptors without compromising the integrity of each programme descriptor’s assessment requirements. Furthermore, each assessor had to be assured that their individual LOs would be guaranteed to meet both IV and EA requirements as part of the Quality Assurance process. By working collaboratively with other assessors, and in cooperation with the centre coordinator and the EA, the project gained momentum, with colleagues sharing resources and actively supporting each other in the design of overarching projects. The centre coordinator prioritised time for teaching staff to meet, plan, assess and periodically review their work.

The centre developed four distinct Teaching and Learning projects throughout the year. These were often based on locally arranged events of particular interest to the learners such as the Christmas Fair. In practice, much of the prescribed material across a number of different modules was being completed by learners engaging in activities such as group discussions and record-keeping, through creating tables, planning events and



designing the communications and marketing to support these events. The process made for a much more enjoyable and much less repetitive learning experience for the learners.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

At the end of the first year of piloting the integration of assessment, Dundalk Youthreach saw a significant increase in the number of full awards achieved within the centre compared to the previous year. This was a hugely encouraging result. However, the project is still a work in progress. Whilst there have been significant improvements in staff morale, in learner engagement and in the overall outcomes of the project, there is more to do to refine and further strengthen the process.

KEY LEARNINGS

There were several key learnings for all parties in the integration of assessment project across a number of different modules. Primarily, systematic design of the assessment events in advance of delivery allowed for integration of assessment opportunities, thus avoiding a situation where learners repeatedly produced the same or very similar pieces of evidence for assessment.

For the Youthreach service, the integration of assessment provided several valuable benefits namely:

- Improved engagement in the learning process from those learners who participated in projects which allowed for integrated assessment
- Increased completion of modules and thus QQI certification over the course of the academic year
- Improvement in staff morale, together with a boost in team spirit and sense of camaraderie

It is hoped that further development of opportunities to integrate assessment will continue to benefit the learners, who view Youthreach as a second chance to achieve their much-needed qualifications and to progress in their education journey, as well as enhancing the teaching and learning environment for the learners, teachers and support staff.

CASE STUDY 2:

REVIEW OF INTERNAL VERIFICATION PROCESS IN DUNBOYNE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION (DCFE)

INTRODUCTION

Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE), as part of its ongoing review of its QA processes, continues to work on making improvements to its existing internal verification (IV) procedure. The entire IV process had been subject to a full review in the past academic year and implementation of LMETB's standardised Internal Verification Guidelines assessed with a view to ensuring that it was implemented in the most effective way.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The year-on-year increase in learner numbers in DCFE necessitated an internal review of the way in which the IV process was administered to manage the increased provision. A comprehensive review was carried out on the IV process leading to a number of quality enhancement activities described below. The expansion of learner numbers in DCFE had also resulted in an increase in the number of staff conducting internal verification.

ACTION

DCFE introduced a system of peer internal verification, with teacher pairings allocated at the commencement of the academic year, on the understanding that staff changes could result in changes to partnered pairs. The intention was that paired colleagues would be drawn from a variety of subject areas to avoid teachers focusing on their own specialist area. This was intended to foster a greater understanding of the process. The IV process was structured to ensure that Stage 1 of the process, which focuses on the review of assessment briefs, took place at the beginning of the academic year. All IV forms and reports were uploaded onto the MS Forms platform to streamline the process and to allow for a more efficient feedback process.



KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Moving to an electronic IV process via the use of MS Forms allowed for the filtering of all responses at an individual, award or programme level. This in turn allowed for the identification of good practice and ensured that if any follow up action was necessary, this could be identified quickly. A meeting with the relevant staff member to discuss any issues raised on the MS Form, allowed action to take place in a timely manner. DCFE set aside time for the completion of all IV stages, so that intervention could take place within a time dedicated exclusively to all IV matters. This change came about in the college because of IV issues identified in its previous approach. The implemented changes have resulted in an improvement in the process approach adopted to IV. IV issues identified either in the paired IV meetings or at any point further along in the process, were referred to the person who has carried out the IV, thereby conferring ownership of the process to this person. To date, there has been an increased focus on ensuring that there is a strong and robust IV process and this, in turn, has followed through to the external authentication process and onward to the RAP process, with a reduction in the number grade changes and a reduction in the overall administration issues raised by EAs over the past series of authentication periods.

KEY LEARNINGS

There were several key learnings for all parties arising from the use of MS Forms and the enhancement of the IV process. These are documented below with further enhancements planned:

- The additional stage in the checking process allows for corrective action to be taken in the initial IV Stage, before the sample progresses to the EA stage
- Using technology, via the integration of the IV checklists/reports to MS Forms, allows the filtering of responses, enabling the quick identification of good practices and also any issues and allow for a speedy response.
- Moving to MS Forms has allowed for an IV Form to be viewed on an individual module basis, further streamlining the process for the EA to encourage greater efficiency

- There has been a reduction in the number of issues raised by the EA, prior to the RAP process and this therefore represents an enhancement to the current IV process as part of DCFE's quality enhancement processes.
- Further enhancements to the IV process are anticipated because of ongoing IV training across FET provision and the sharing of good practice amongst diverse FET centres and colleges.



MAYO, SLIGO AND LEITRIM EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: PART -TIME SERVICES QA LEAD

INTRODUCTION

Mayo, Sligo, and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) identified a growing need for enhanced support for educators in ensuring high-quality teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

With new staff members, new procedures and new programmes, it became evident that additional support was required to improve quality and compliance in the delivery of further education and training programmes. Due to the part-time nature of BTEI and the completion times being out of sync with other services there was also a need to make the internal verification process timelier, for example to be completed within a set timeframe after the programme finished. BTEI Coordinators and their line managers developed the solution after discussions with QA regarding the creation of a new role a BTEI QA Lead.

ACTION

MSLETB BTEI designed and implemented the QA Lead role with clearly defined responsibilities, focusing on three core areas:

1. Support for Educators: The QA Lead provides direct support to teachers and tutors, offering guidance on best practices in assessment and feedback. This includes training sessions, workshops, and one-on-one mentoring to ensure a clear understanding of QA requirements.
2. Authentication Process Oversight: The role involves coordinating and supporting internal verification and external authentication processes, ensuring consistency, fairness, and compliance with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) standards. This includes reviewing assessment documentation, facilitating standardisation meetings, and addressing any concerns raised during authentication.
3. Continuous Improvement and Compliance: The QA Lead works closely with programme coordinators and management to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. By collecting feedback from educators, learners, and external authenticators, they help refine policies and procedures, ensuring alignment with evolving educational requirements.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The introduction of the QA Lead role within BTEI has had a significant positive impact on the overall quality and efficiency of BTEI programme delivery. Educators now receive structured and timely support, leading to increased confidence in their assessment practices. The authentication process has become more transparent and streamlined, reducing discrepancies and ensuring compliance with national standards. Additionally, the role has fostered a culture of continuous learning and improvement, enhancing the overall learner experience.

The MSLETB BTEI's commitment to quality assurance through this new role demonstrates a proactive approach to supporting educators and maintaining high standards in further education and training. By embedding quality assurance into everyday teaching and assessment practices, MSLETB BTEI continues to uphold its mission of providing accessible, high-quality education that meets the needs of learners and the wider community.

KEY LEARNINGS

MSLETB is now examining this practice to determine if it could be applied to other areas of service provision. The structured approach to quality assurance has proven beneficial not only for educators but also for learners and administrative processes. By evaluating the successes and challenges of the QA Lead, MSLETB aims to explore opportunities for implementing similar strategies in other educational and training programs. This initiative underscores the value of continuous improvement and adaptability in maintaining excellence across various service areas.

TIPPERARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: SUCCESSFUL RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL) IN TIPPERARY FET COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Background: The FET Development, Support and Quality (DSQ) has been exploring the expansion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) practices in Tipperary ETB. This initiative is part of a broader integration project aimed at consolidating legacy RPL policies. Currently, RPL for certified learning is managed at the centre level.

Pilot Project: In 2024, a pilot project was conducted to assess the feasibility of recognising experiential learning (RPEL) for an applicant who wanted to have their IT skills formally recognised. The FET Quality Assurance (QA) Office led this project acting as coordinator and mentor to the applicant.

ACTION

Process:

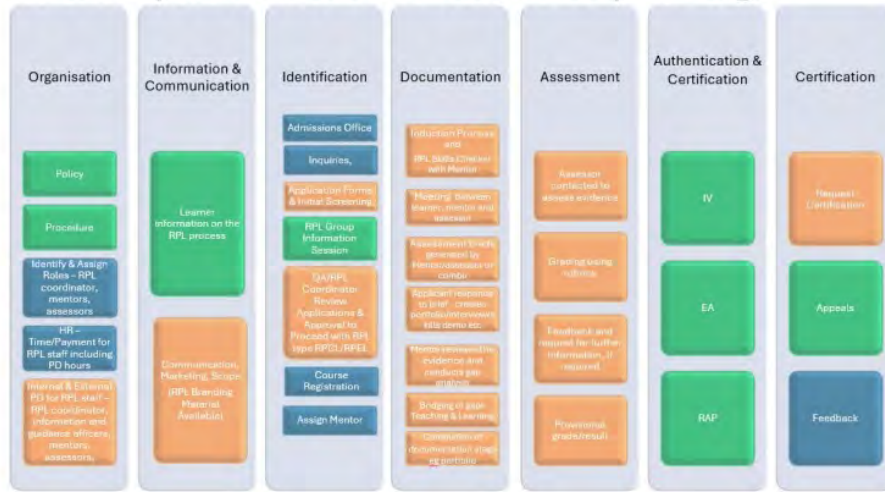
1. Information: The FET QA Office provided detailed information about the RPEL process to potential applicant, outlining the steps, criteria and required evidence and documentation.
2. Identification: The applicant was screened through an interview process to ensure they met the criteria for RPEL. The applicant had significant experiential learning in the IT field, but little certified learning, making them a suitable candidate for the pilot.
3. Documentation of Evidence: The applicant, guided by a mentor, was required to compile and submit evidence of their experiential learning. This included work experience records, skills demonstrations and any relevant achievements.
4. Assessment: The submitted documentation was rigorously assessed by an IT assessor against the learning outcomes of the IT component specification award. This involved a detailed review of the applicant's work experience, skills and knowledge and submission of a portfolio to the authentication process.
5. Certification: Upon successful review by the Results Approval Panel, it was recommended that the IT component award be requested from QQI. This recognition validated the applicant's experiential learning and provided them with formal certification.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Pilot Project





RPL Requirements and Resources per Stage



KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The pilot project was successful, demonstrating the viability of an RPEL process in Tipperary. The applicant received the IT component award, marking a significant achievement in the integration of RPL practices.

Throughout the pilot project, the RPL process was thoroughly documented. Templates, assessment briefs and rubrics were developed to standardise the evaluation process and ensure consistency. There is capacity within the ETB to further develop and expand RPL practices. The outcome also highlighted the need for additional resources to upscale RPL practices in the future.

KEY LEARNINGS

Conclusion: The pilot project highlights the potential of RPEL to recognise and validate experiential learning, providing learners with formal qualifications and enhancing their career prospects. The FET DSQ's initiative to expand RPL practices is a positive step towards a more inclusive and flexible education system.

CASE STUDY 2:

DEVELOPING A PROCESS TO DOCUMENT NON-ACCREDITED COURSES

INTRODUCTION

Background: Community Education, Adult Literacy Service (ALS) and Development Support and Quality, collaborated to develop a structured process for documenting non-accredited courses. This initiative aimed to enhance the quality and consistency of non-accredited programmes offered within the community.

Project Overview: The project focused on creating a framework and template for documenting non-accredited courses. Additionally, professional development (PD) sessions were conducted to train staff on writing programme aims, objectives, and learning outcomes.

Action Process:

- 1. Framework and Template Development:** The FET QA Office, in collaboration with Community Education and ALS, developed a comprehensive framework and template for documenting non-accredited courses. This framework included guidelines for structuring course content, defining learning outcomes and setting clear objectives.
- 2. Professional Development:** Professional development sessions were delivered to Community Education staff. These sessions focused on enhancing skills in writing programme aims, objectives, and learning outcomes. The PD was well received, with participants appreciating the practical guidance and support provided.
- 3. Implementation:** The newly developed framework and template are in use by Community Education and Adult Education. Staff were encouraged to use these tools to document existing and new non-accredited courses.



KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The project successfully increased the capacity within Community Education to develop and document non-accredited courses. As a result of continued work by Adult Education and Community Education, there are now a range of non-accredited programmes documented and shared on the QA SharePoint demonstrating the effectiveness of the new process. The process also provides a governance stage to ensure the consistency and quality of the documented process. Most recently, a programme for an Irish Sign Language course was documented.

KEY LEARNINGS

Conclusion: The collaboration between Community Education, Adult Literacy Service and the DSQ, has led to a more structured and consistent approach to documenting non-accredited courses. The professional development provided has empowered staff to create high-quality programmes with clear aims, objectives, and learning outcomes. This initiative has significantly enhanced the capacity of Community Education to offer well-documented and effective non-accredited courses that further add to students' experiences.

CASE STUDY 3:

TY TASTER PROJECT 2024/2025

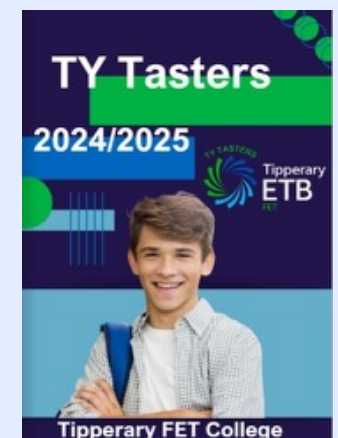
INTRODUCTION

The Senior Cycle Reform [Transition Year FET Taster](#) project is aimed to support Senior Cycle reform by increasing student participation in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. These tasters provided TY students with opportunities to explore different career paths and areas of study, helping them make informed educational choices. The primary goal was to introduce students to new learning experiences, career exploration, skill development, and lifelong learning opportunities. The tasters encouraged creativity and personal growth while broadening students' understanding of future education and career options. Tipperary ETB also used this pilot as a county-wide FET promotional campaign to raise awareness in all Tipperary schools and homes about FET.

ACTION

The project was managed by the FET DSQ - FET Programme Office, with centre/programme managers overseeing content, scheduling, staffing, and determining suitable durations within their already busy centres. Key activities included collecting feedback from principals, career guidance teachers, TY coordinators, and students through various interactions and Open Days. The TY Tasters courses varied in length, ranging from one to four days, depending on the selected TY Taster and its content. These tasters were available at six Tipperary FET College locations across the county, offering 11 different options to ensure a wide range of opportunities for students. Courses included: Beauty Therapy, Entrepreneurship and Business, Fashion Design, Film Production, Fitness and Instruction, Hairdressing, Inclusive Fitness and Trade Skills. This new initiative was available to all schools in County Tipperary.

The Admissions Office, with support from the FET Programme Office, handled marketing, advertising, and



recruitment. During the summer, digital promotional material was created to outline the available TY Taster Modules, and videos were produced to explain the offerings and registration process. Additionally, TY Certificates and TY hoodies were designed and purchased for participants. The Official Launch and registration opened on 1st September 2024. One of the key challenges was the limited budget, which was addressed by researching and integrating cost effective solutions.

KEY OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

Although the project is ongoing, with six TY Taster sessions still to be completed, it has already provided valuable insights and hands-on learning experiences for students with very positive feedback from all stakeholders including SOLAS. A full evaluation of the process will be carried out once all tasters have been completed. It has been agreed by FET Senior Management Team in January 2025 to continue the pilot for the 2025/2026 post primary academic year.

TY students proudly showcase their achievements in the TY Taster Trade Skills programme. Their hard work, dedication, and hands-on learning have truly paid off!

KEY LEARNINGS

To date, this project has been very successful for both post primary schools, students and families and Tipperary FET College. It highlights the importance of collaboration, problem-solving, and informed decision-making in education. It has reinforced the value of offering diverse learning opportunities to TY students and has positively impacted career exploration, student engagement and progression opportunities in FET from post primary. Following the success of the 2024/2025 pilot, preparations have already begun for next year's offerings.



WATERFORD AND WEXFORD EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

CASE STUDY 1: THE WWETB TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT NETWORK

INTRODUCTION

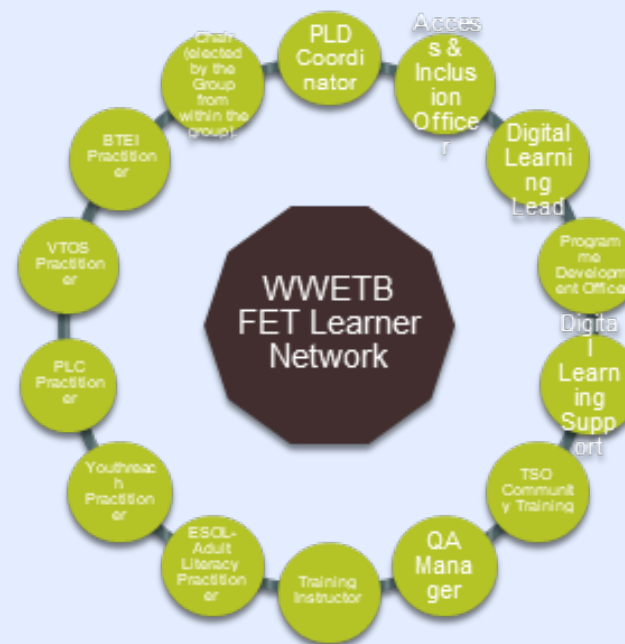
The External Review Team made a recommendation as part of the 'Assessment of Learners' section of the review process that WWETB would establish a new group that would form a part of the overall governance structure:

'The review team recommends that WWETB include a Teaching, Learning and Assessment group as part of the QA governance structure (see SER (p. 35, figure 2.3) to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB.'

This Case Study serves to give some detail as to the establishment of this group within our FET provision.

CASE NARRATIVE

The WWETB Teaching, Learning and Assessment Network was established in 2023. A Chair was elected from within the group during the initial meetings and a Terms of Reference was agreed. The composition of the group is as per the diagram below.



Early meetings were given over to the identification of areas of teaching, learning and assessment that could form a project for the TLA Network. The network agreed democratically that the first project for implementation would be based on the principles of 'Universal Design for Learning' (UDL).



The Network adopted a Design-Thinking approach to identify an overall objective for the project. A series of actions was proposed by the members of the Network, and these were written into a project action plan. The 'National Charter for Universal Design' was used as a reference point for the action plan to ensure that all actions were relevant and that each pillar in the charter was being considered. Each action was listed with persons of responsibility, an indicative timeline for completion and a status update facility. The Network met periodically to feedback and collaborate on actions. The QA Officer reports to the WWETB QASG on the work of the Network and the AEO with responsibility for Access and Inclusion participates in the Network and sits on the QASG.

Some of the actions were amended or adapted to overcome barriers and the project resulted in the achievement of several outputs. The Network are currently engaged in a review phase; both project and the group itself in terms of effectiveness and ways of working. The success of the UDL project has promoted an enthusiasm to optimise how this relatively new group operates.

OUTPUT

1. Significant piece of research into IT Platform use across FET Centres (Coordinators and Practitioners).
2. Amendment to FET Programme Development and Validation policy with respect to UDL principles.
3. 4 professional promotional videos developed and shared on PLD Hub. Together with the UDL practitioner's re-designs, this serves as a robust UDL Hub and digital Community of Practice.
4. Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting format adapted to promote/record discussion of UDL training in practice within centres. (FE).
5. Promotional poster developed for centres.
6. Formal QA Guide to UDL in Assessment
7. New Scheme of Work templates developed for practitioners to assist with planning of UDL practice.
8. UDL Resources folder created for QA SharePoint site.
9. Digital Hubs established.

10. Plain English training rolled out to practitioners (funded through ALL). Plain English promotional page developed for Staff Hub
11. Plain English Booklets distributed to FE Centres.

PROJECT OUTCOMES / CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the establishment of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Network (TLA) Network has been a successful endeavour within WWETB FET provision. The Network operates by way of the principles of collaboration, equality, democracy, innovation and quality, and is an authentic and successful community of practice. The Network is reaping the benefit of learning from the UDL project as described above and the collaboration of the Network has helped achieve a number of project deliverables that will assist in the underpinning of UDL principles across WWETB FET provision. Review findings are being consolidated at the moment for discussion at the next TLA Network meeting in March.

CASE STUDY 2: THE WWETB SYMPOSIUM – ‘CONNECTING THROUGH LEARNING- LEARNING THROUGH CONNECTING’

INTRODUCTION

The WWETB FET Symposium was initiated by the Director of Further Education and Training who first established a ‘Research in Action Group’. The Research in Action (RIA) Group was spearheaded by the FET Research Coordinator and our AEO with responsibility for Community Education. The Director, AEO, Research Coordinator and the RIA Group collaborated on the planning and hosting of an event that would showcase and celebrate research and good practice models established both within WWETB and by other external participating colleagues. SETU were invited to partner with WWETB in an annual collaboration that would see the hosting of the event alternate annually between the two institutions.

THE SYMPOSIUM

An online invite was shared by WWETB in December 2023 calling for submissions to deliver a combination of topics in experiential framework and practical application of theory in both Higher Education (HE) and Further Education and Training (FET) for the proposed symposium. The entries were requested to be delivered through picture, poster, or formal presentation. This partnership event highlighted the story of the everyday in FET and HE and lessons learned in both provisions from all subjects, departments, and faculties. It was delivered to 175 delegates from both FET and HE practice. The presentations shared good practice and current research while exploring the learner’s voice and experience. There were displays of over thirty picture and poster presentations and forty formal presentations, with online contributions from institutions based both outside and within Ireland. The varied topics included Learner Inclusion, Staff Engagement, Digital and Technology exploration to name a few.

In addition, there was a panel-based event. The lively and engaging panel discussion included contributors from AONTAS, Distinctions, EPALE, SETU, SOLAS, and WWETB. The event took place at Wexford College of Further Education and Training, one of the first colleges of its kind to open in Ireland in September 2023. This college

brings together education and training across a wide range of programmes, including Apprenticeship and Training, part-time and full-time courses, and Community Education programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

The Symposium was a hugely successful event for many reasons. It presented as an opportunity to celebrate the fantastic work and research from all institutions and practitioners involved. It also served as a great networking event allowing practitioners from various institutions and codes to connect, discuss the various exhibits and presentations, to collectively enjoy the atmosphere, the live music performance, the food. The event strengthened the collaborative bonds between WWETB and SETU and has established a synergetic event that has practitioners and learners at its core, a learning event for a community of practitioners who regardless of provision type or level, share common aspirations, common skill sets and a common vocation. An official Book of Extracts from the symposium event will be available in early March and will be available in several formats including on the WWETB website.





CASE STUDY 3: SAFEGUARDING THE AUTHENTICITY OF FE ASSESSMENTS (INCLUDING THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TECHNOLOGY)

INTRODUCTION

2023 heralded a leap in terms of the availability of, and widespread access to free generative AI tools. This leap presented as both a huge opportunity and challenge within the education sectors. The opportunities are manifold. One immediate challenge that quickly materialised however, was around the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) tools by learners at assessment time. With many opinions, perspectives, and various levels of understanding of the implications for Gen AI use in this context, it was apparent that clear guidance and direction was required within WWETB, in order to ensure that the principles of assessment are upheld and that the WWETB quality assurance processes remain robust.

THE PROCEDURES

In the first half of 2024, the Quality Team began to compile information from across provision on the use of Gen. AI including any perceived challenges that were being faced. The challenges were brought to the Quality Assurance Steering Group for discussion in May that year. Following the meeting, the Quality Team began to draft procedures that would help mitigate some of the challenges being faced in respect of learner use of Gen AI at assessment time, promote more ethical application of Gen AI technology, and promote more authentic approaches to assessment. These new procedures were brought to the FET Leadership Team in the September and approved for use in their draft form across FE provision.

The procedures were divided into six distinct but connected sections. Each section was written into an overall procedure entitled: 'Process for Safeguarding the Authenticity of FE Assessment (including the use of generative Artificial Intelligence).'

[Process-for-Supporting-Safeguarding-the-Authenticity-of-FE-Assessments-Draft-1.0.pdf](#)

For each section, there is a guide to respective roles and responsibilities, and a host of supplementary guides and templates were devised to assist WWETB providers implement a more definitive and comprehensive approach to authenticity at assessment time. See below for a list of the supplementary documents associated with each section:

Section 1: Information

- Note to WWETB FET Learner on Plagiarism and Use of AI Technology.
- Academic Integrity Poster
- WWETB Guide to Academic Integrity

Section 2: Authentic Assessment

- QA Guide to Authentic Assessment
- Section 3: Assessment Briefing
- New Assessment Brief Template (Levels 4-6).
- QA Guide to Sanctioning the Use of AI Tools at Assessment.

Section 4: Plagiarism and AI Detection Tools

- Guide to Plagiarism and Use of AI Detection Software
- QA Submission Authenticity Checklist

Section 5: Learner Rectification

- QA Guide to Courageous Conversations and Suspected Assessment Malpractice Interviewing

Section 6: Assessment Malpractice Procedures

- QA Guide to Courageous Conversations and Suspected Assessment Malpractice Interviewing
- All elements of the developed procedures work seamlessly into the already established assessment malpractice procedures.

Upon approval from the FLT, the procedures were issued to all FE Coordinators and the Quality Team set about delivering briefings in all locations where there are programmes deliver at levels 4, 5 or 6. This gave practitioners across provision the



opportunity to become more acquainted with the procedures, to ask questions about their implementation, to get clarity and stress test them through hypothetical situations previous, or indeed previous genuine ones.

CONCLUSIONS

The WWETB Quality Team proactively responded to reports and fears that Coordinators and Practitioners were having, that learner use of AI was making it difficult to stand over the acquisition of learning by those learners in the context of assessment. After investigating the state of play across provision it was felt that comprehensive and definitive procedures were required to ensure that Practitioners could maintain certain controls on learner use of AI in order to allow best practice in this regard to be developed over time, at a pace that each practitioner could be comfortable with. The procedures established a clear message, a clear responsibility and a clear mechanism for Practitioners to support them in the fact that, the use of generative AI by learners is a positive thing, but only when the tools are used ethically at assessment time. The practitioner must be comfortable that they can ensure robust, authentic assessment events, where responses accurately reflect the learners' intrinsic acquisition of knowledge, competency and skill. In this way we safeguard the veracity of the certification we bestow at the end of programmes. In this way we guarantee learners high-standard and reputable awards.



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