

Submission for QQI in partnership with AHEAD and the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) -

-Rethinking Assessment: Inclusive Assessment and Standards in a Dynamic and Changing World.

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“If then Else”

–A Case Study of the piloting of Inclusive Assessment Practice for Young Traveller Women Engaging with a Kerry College Further Education and Training Beauty Therapy Skills Programme.

Abstract: *Tara O'Halloran Cronin has 25 years' experience in the Training and Education Sector specialising in the delivery of Beauty and Complementary Therapies. Tara was the Further Education and Training finalist for the John Kelly Awards, representing Kerry College for Universal Design for Learning implementation and practice in 2022. Tara is currently working in the Kerry ETB QA Unit developing a QQI Programme.*

This case study draws from a need for an inclusive learning environment and assessment practice for a group of Young Traveller Women who engaged in a Further Education and Training Programme in Beauty Therapy through Kerry ETB – Kerry College. Celebrating diversity and reflecting on the validity of assessment practice, an inclusive UDL model of delivery and assessment was created in response to the challenges and barriers presented within this group. The outcome of the project was positive and rewarding for the group and featured potential for further development, which was implemented into additional courses following this pilot.

“If then Else” Inclusive Assessment and Standards for FET Skills development for Beauty Therapy –

A Case Study of the piloting of inclusive assessment practice for Young Traveller Women engaging with a FET Beauty Therapy Skills Programme

A group of 8 young Traveller women, all of whom were early school leavers enrolled on their very first Further Education and Training course with Kerry College, Kerry ETB. This group, with an average age of 16 years old, had come from a difficult and often negative experience of school, assessment and education.

To take the brave step in engaging with a course for employment or progression was a huge break in the cultural expectation of a Young Traveller Woman from this Kerry community and for most, this was a paradigm shift that required support and inclusivity. Returning to an expectation of education that was built on previous experiences was a challenge for most of this group.

Upon induction, time was sculpted into the lesson plan to understand and hold space for the experiences, personal history with education and assessment and culture of this group. All had mentioned that the women in their families were early school leavers at early Post Primary School levels. The role of women, mothers and grandmothers traditionally was in the home. These learners were the first to engage in a programme leading to employment or progression and this was ground-breaking for this community of young Traveller women in Kerry.

Assessment for this group was considered and expected as something that was written and difficult, particularly for those who had literacy issues and more so for those with confidence with the system before them.

I was presented with a challenge as an Instructor to take into consideration the socio-economic, cultural and educational barriers to inclusivity within the delivery and assessment space, without impacting on the standards of assessment required to validate this group.

Reflecting on this, I arrived home to my then 12-year-old son who was frustrated with an assessment he had for homework. He was Computer Coding, trying to complete a game he was working on. He mentioned that he was so lucky to have access to the built in **“If then Else”** pathways in his computer programme. When I get stuck, I know that I have two options he said: – **IF** I encounter a block and my route evaluates to false, I can access the **ELSE**, or an alternative route. I had a breakthrough moment of a decision to embed an **“If then else”** mindset into inclusivity for these learners.

Contact was made with ITEC- the International Governing body for Beauty Therapy qualifications in the U.K. and a proposal to deconstruct a level one award into component certified standalone units was raised. The **iBT1D1 - VTCT (ITEC) Level 1 Diploma in Beauty Therapy 603/4053/8** was then registered as a suite of short hour individual modular awards – approval was given to split the qualification into 14 modules that could be delivered and assessed individually. Achievement of these could lead to both employment or progression into more modules, developing education and training pathways for this group.

These lighter introductory modules could be utilized to build up credits and could be internally assessed using alternative assessment methods, moving from the traditional theory/practical assessment model to a redesign space bespoke to the needs of the learners.

These were approved by ITEC and two of these component modular awards- **Skincare iUBT408** and **Basic Makeup iUBT347** became part of ITEC's international mapping of qualifications which will now allow all ITEC Centers Nationally and Globally spanning 48 countries to access these newly constructed award systems.

Piloting began for one of these new modular awards –**Level One component Award in Skincare iUBT408** and the focus was multiple means of action and expression, agency and inclusion for these young women. The timeline was set at a 6-week programme for this award.

Assessment was recreated using professional discussion and practical skills presentations and the use of symbolism when using consultation forms was incorporated to support literacy development. A shift was created away from traditional methods of assessment that these learners were used to from school.

All learners had a mobile phone and communicated well using apps amongst peers and family and suggested that they could select an app to integrate into their learning and preparation for assessment to identify products, research how they work and immerse easily in self-directed learning that was accessible to this group. They decided upon using Snapchat to archive class information and delve further into the products and knowledge required on the course. This led to confidence and a natural wave of meaningful class dialogue and exchange of views and ideas on the learning outcomes within this space.

Professional discussions replaced written assessments, technology using phones and apps to familiarize and understand the use of products, skin types and techniques were well received substituting conventional handouts, books and manuals.

The pinnacle of the learning journey and assessment practice was the inclusion of the family members – Grandmothers and Mothers who volunteered as clients for the practical assessment of skills. All participants, never had having any experience of a workshop, classroom or treatment space had immersion in assessment processes that were non-traditional, relaxed and skill based. Building confidence in training and education pathways and possibilities for these eight extended families. Breaking perceptions of school and educational spaces as somewhere beyond exclusion.

Utilizing what was established as part of this groups culture- the discussions that came so naturally to these women, the use of phones as means of technology and harnessing the natural attention to detail within the use of skills demonstrations enabled a fully inclusive assessment experience for all.

Ensuring that validity and equity of assessment was achieved when offering choice to learners with assessment formats was vital to this process, enabling achievement of learning outcomes and evaluation and standard of proficiency in skill.

The challenges to breaking the inherent conception and bias of groups entering FET Training that come from various educational, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds would be broad but surmountable with the right support systems for both programme developer, instructor and trainee.

The allowance for time within a programme to consult prior to delivery, listen to the needs of the groups and the flexibility to tailor assessment processes to match the cohorts preferred pedagogy would depend on the resources available. Kerry ETB were very generous with their resources and time allowance to construct this system holding the **“If then Else”** approach as fundamental to redesign and inclusivity.

Validity and standardization interwoven with an equitable methodology within assessment choices was vital to underpin a quality assured approach to learner evaluation. Exploring how the current assessment processes could be imbued with inclusivity relied on a Universal Design for Learning perspective throughout the process.

All of the cohort were successful in gaining a level one ITEC **iUBT408 Skincare** award recognized internationally.

Following this pilot, the Kerry ETB Schools initiative was launched and this system was piloted using a second award from the suite of 14 components – **ITEC Basic Makeup iUBT347** for Transition Year students beginning with one group that experienced this new system of delivery and assessment moving from one group of eight trainee Beauty Therapists initially to– 85 trainee Beauty Therapists in 2024.

2024 has offered the opportunity to build in the alternative assessment methods into a new application for a QQI Level 5, 16-week course proposal – **Eyelash and Eyebrow Beauty Treatments**, creating a new and learner focused, inclusive approach to this thread of change within skills training, delivery and assessment from the outset of the programme. Allowing the **“If then Else”** processes to be integrated naturally to new programme development processes building on the knowledge gained from the piloting of the Young Traveller Women and TY Schools Projects.