cetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chorcaí

Cork Education and Training Board

CORK FET

Cork Education and Training Board

Self-Evaluation Report 2021

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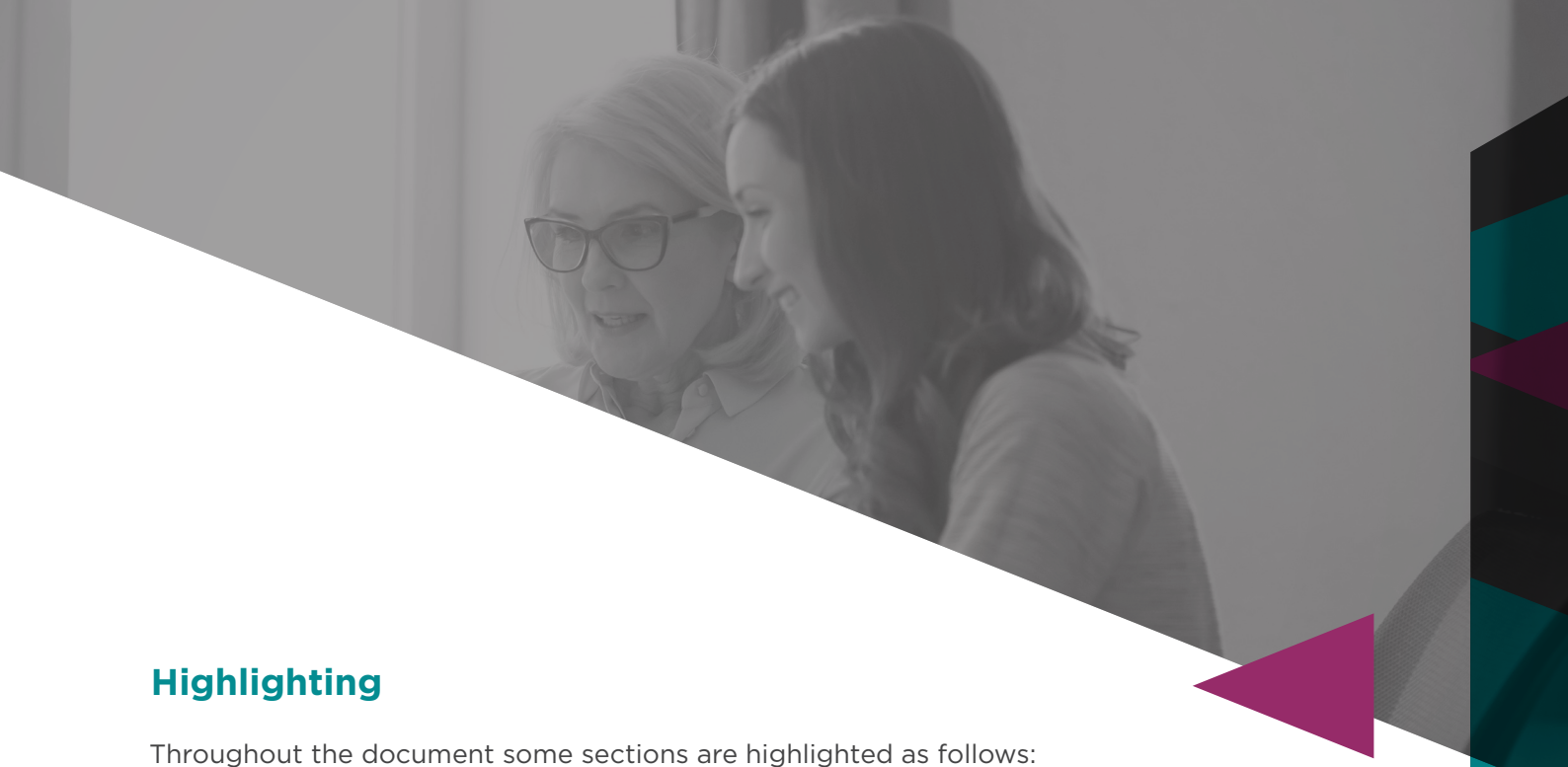


Highlighting

Throughout the document some sections are highlighted as follows:

EVALUATION SECTION	AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE/FOR IMPROVEMENT	CASE STUDIES

Glossary and Abbreviations

TERM	DEFINITION
AGMS	Adult Guidance Management System
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CandAG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CE	Community Employment
Cork ETB	Cork Education and Training Board
PD	Professional Development
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DE	Department of Education
DEFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DPO	Data Protection Officer
EA	External Authenticator/Authentication
ERT	Emergency Remote Teaching
ESER	Executive Self-Evaluation Report
ESF	European Social Fund
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FAR	Funding Allocation Request
FARR	Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting System
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FE	Further Education
FESS	Further Education Support Services
FET	Further Education and Training
FETCH	Further Education and Training Course Hub
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GVA	Gross Value Added
HE	Higher Education
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Information and Communications Technology
ITEC	International Therapy Examination Council
IV	Internal Verifier/Verification
MAEDF	Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund
MIS	Management Information System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NALA	National Adult Literacy Association
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance and Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications

OEC	Outdoor Education Centre
OSD	Organisation Support and Development
OSP	Occupational Skills Profile/Profiling
PAC	Programme Approval Committee
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
QA	Quality Assurance
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RACE	Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SME	Small/Medium Enterprise
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SPA	Strategic Performance Agreement
STP	Specialist Training Provider
STA	Skills to Advance
SWRSF	South West Regional Skills Forum
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
TQAS	Transition Quality Assurance System
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
YR	Youthreach

Foreword

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning".

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

We are pleased to present Cork Education and Training Board's Self-Evaluation Report (SER), prepared as part of the QQI inaugural Statutory Reviews Inaugural Review of Cork Education and Training Boards approach to Quality Assurance in our Further Education and Training Services.

Cork Education and Training Board, in its Statement of Strategy (2017-2021), set out its vision to be:

"... a driving force of education and training in Cork, providing high quality services which are innovative, responsive and inclusive."

Central to this vision was the commitment to ensure that, through Cork ETB, there would be:

"... a pathway for every learner."

Through our Further Education and Training services, Cork ETB seeks to ensure that every individual is provided with accessible opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge, and competence, to enable them to participate and contribute fully to the social, economic and cultural life and development of their communities, the region and the nation as a whole.

This review and self-evaluation process has provided our services with the opportunity to reflect, in a structured manner, on how they are delivering for learners, and responding to the Quality Assurance requirements, not only the requirements that are directed by the expectations and regulations set out by QQI, but those that emanate from Cork ETB's philosophy and approach to learner needs.

We recognize that this is a "snapshot in time" and reflects on where Cork ETB is in a process that is continuous and ongoing. Undertaken at a time when our services, staff and learners have been all dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 there are additional insights and observations that would not have been evident if it had been undertaken at any other time.

Cork Education and Training Board welcomes the opportunity to engage with the external peer review panel and believes that the insights and perspectives that will emerge from this engagement will inform and enhance our continued progress and development. We see Quality as a journey, rather than a destination and this is another milestone on that journey for all of us.

We would like to thank the learners, staff and stakeholders who have engaged with us throughout this process. The commitment of everyone is very much appreciated, as we undertake this inaugural review. In particular we would like to record our appreciation for the efforts and inputs from all our service managers, and the Quality Assurance team, who have led, guided, and supported throughout the self-evaluation process and played a key role in compiling the review documentation.

DENIS LEAMY

Chief Executive

JOHN FITZGIBBONS

Director of Further Education and Training

1. Overview of Cork ETB and Context

1.1 GENERAL

Cork Education and Training Board (Cork ETB) is one of the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETB's) established in 2013 by the Education and Training Boards Act. Cork ETB was formed from the amalgamation of the former County Cork and the City of Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC's) in July 2013, followed by the transfer of the SOLAS training function (formerly under the auspices of FÁS), to the new body on January 1st, 2014.

Under the Education and Training Board Act 2013, Cork ETB has statutory responsibility to provide, support, coordinate, administer, and assess a wide range of education services, including Youthwork Services in its functional area and, through co-operation with other institutions and bodies, provide support other agencies to deliver education and training programmes that cannot be met by mainstream education services in the region.

Figure 1 Cork ETB "Snapshot"

Cork ETB is the largest education provider in the region, catering for 29,560 learners in 2020, across its Primary, Post Primary and Further Education and Training Services. (Total enrolments in 2019 were 35,557, the reduction in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 and the impact of physical distancing restrictions on Further Education and Training provision generally). The total staff complement of Cork ETB is 4,160, making it one of the largest employers in the region.

Cork ETB has responsibility for two Community National Schools and 24 Post Primary Schools and Colleges, located within the region, catering for 395 and 12,317 learners respectively. In addition, at post primary level, Cork ETB is joint patron/co-trustee of a further 12 Community schools across the city and County.

Figure 2 Geographical Map of Cork ETB

The Further Education and Training (FET) service of Cork ETB is responsible for delivering a range of programmes, full and part-time, to learners who are generally over the age of 18 (the Youthreach programme caters for learners who are 16+). In 2020, Cork ETB delivered FET programmes to 13,792 learners across the region. Cork ETB's FET services are delivered through a network of over 60 FET centres, including 4 large, standalone Post Leaving Certificate Colleges, (three of which are located in Cork City), two Training Centres (in Cork City and Carrigaline), 12 Youthreach Centres, and a range of other centres of varying sizes dispersed across the county.

Cork ETB's FET services work with over 150 community groups and agencies in the delivery of FET programmes. This collaborative engagement enables Cork ETB and the community groups/ providers to share information about learner and employer needs, and to work together to provide appropriate services, reducing the potential for duplication and over supply.

1.2 POPULATION

Cork is the largest County in Ireland, covering over 7,500 square kilometres, and stretching over 200KM from the most Westerly point in the County to the border with Waterford County in the East. The 2016 Census indicated a population for Cork County of 542,868 (Central Statistics Office). Of this population, 124,391 resided in Cork City, the second most populous city in the state. In 2019, following a significant consultation process, Cork City's boundaries were extended. The boundary change took place on 31st May of that year, at which time the land area of the city area increased from 39 km^2 to 187 km^2, and the population within the city boundary increased to approximately 210,000.

The population is widely and non-uniformly dispersed across the region. Within the greater Cork Metropolitan area are situated the major urban towns of Carrigaline, Midleton and Cobh, each with populations in excess of 12,000 individuals, with Mallow and Fermoy located within 35 kilometres of Cork City having population of over 12,000 and 6,000 respectively.

Table 1 County Towns Population

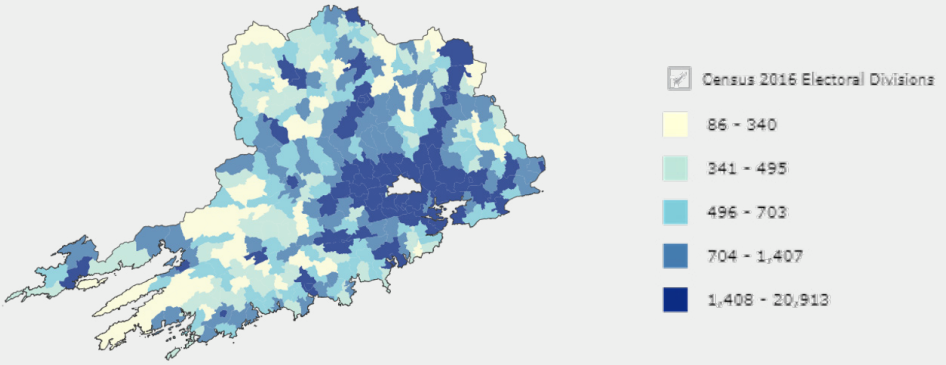
COUNTY TOWNS	POPULATION
Ballincollig	18,621
Carrigaline	15,770
Cobh	12,800
Midleton	12,496
Mallow	12,459
Youghal	7,963
Bandon	6,957
Fermoy	6,585
Blarney & Tower	6,014
Passage West	5,843
Kinsale	5,281
Carrigtwohill	5,080
Clonakilty	4,592

West Cork is generally considered a distinct area or region within the county as a whole, with large population concentrations in Bandon, Kinsale, Clonakilty, Bantry, Skibbereen and Castletownbere.

The population in the East and North East of the county is more dispersed, with Youghal in the east, and Mitchelstown in the north east, the most populous towns.

This map shows the distribution of population by density across Cork County.

Figure 3 Distribution of Population by Density Across Cork County



Just over 91% of the county population at the last census indicated that they were born in or were a citizen of Ireland or the United Kingdom (88.8 and 2.6% respectively). Almost 11% indicated that they spoke another language besides English, with Polish and French being the most common other languages spoken. 15.3% of the speakers of other languages indicated that they had either only basic English language skills, or none at all.

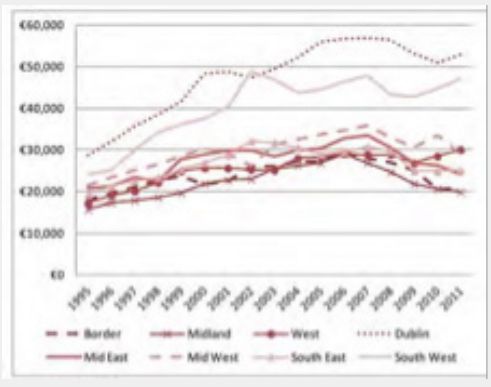
1.3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The 2016 CSO census figures show that 28% of the population of the County were 18 years old or younger, with 24% being 15 years or younger. Almost 13% of the population were 65 years old or over. 26% of the population aged 15 or over were indicated as having a level of education at lower secondary level or below. The number of people who had completed third level education was just slightly lower than the national average of 42% at 41%.

1.4 EMPLOYMENT

14.6% of employment in the state (Q4, 2019) resides in the South West Region.[1] The largest economic sectors for employment include manufacturing (pharmaceutical, biopharma, medical devices) as well as information and communications technology (hardware and services), food and drink processing, internationally traded services, tourism, marine activity, mariculture, forestry and agriculture. The service sector, in particular health and care related services, also features strongly in the region.

Figure 4 GVA from CSO Data



[1] The South West Region is a NUTS Level III statistical region of Ireland, and comprises the counties of Cork and Kerry

Economic activity in the region is not only through a large foreign multinational base but rather through predominantly micro, small, and medium enterprises. Cork has over one-third (35%) of all SME's in the Southern Region (or twice the number of Limerick and Waterford combined). Outside of Dublin, Cork has had the largest number of new business formations nationally (12%), three times that of the next location (Galway, at 4%) which indicates a burgeoning indigenous business ecosystem.

Industrial productivity in the South West is well above that in other regions, at €45,000 compared to €30,000 measured in Gross Added Value (GVA). See Fig 4 CSO data.

Cork has experienced strong employment growth in recent years, and the "*Cork 2050-Realising the Full Potential*" submission by the two local authorities identified the potential to generate 120,000 new jobs in the region by 2050, building on five Pillars of Interventions:

1. **People** – Skills / Research / Education
2. **Economic Conditions** – Floorspace / Quality of Life / Housing
3. **Connectivity** – ICT / Global Connectivity
4. **Business Development** – Innovation / Entrepreneurialism
5. **Organizational** – Governance / Promotion and Marketing

1.5 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The Cork Metropolitan Area is viewed as the key contributor to economic growth in the region, and the high level of productivity, which has been maintained for over 20 years, driven by Cork's export industry sectors, has the potential to contribute significantly to economic and employment growth in the greater Munster Region.

Much of the potential future economic development of the region is focussed on further development of existing economic sectors, with Financial and Business Services, Fintech, Leisure and Tourism, Technology and Research, and Education identified as sectors that will play a significant role in delivering growth to a broad-based, balanced regional economy.

With its significant manufacturing and export base, the region is more susceptible than others to global economic trends and impacts. Of particular concern at this time is the potential impact of Brexit. For Cork and the Southern Region, the impact on the pharmaceutical industry, which contributes significantly to overall Irish export volumes and values to the UK, is a particular concern. The ESRI have stated that other sectors such as agriculture, and food and beverages, are individually more dependent on exports to the UK and so the impacts could be more severe.

Unemployment in the region stands at 5.7% (Q3 2020), lower than the national rate and down considerably from the 14.8% experienced in 2012. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted significantly on employment in the region, with over 10,000 more people or 3% of the total workforce unemployed at the end of Q3 2020 than in Q1. The sectors that experienced the greatest decline were industry and manufacturing, (-6%) and the hospitality sector (-8%).

While unemployment in the region has generally been less than the national figure, there are marked differences across the region. In Cork City there are 5 Electoral Divisions (EDs) of the 79 nationally to be classified as unemployment blackspots. With a combined unemployment rate of 32.7% (2016) this was more than double the employment rate in the county as a whole at that time. While this figure has decreased somewhat in recent years, these five areas are still significantly disadvantaged, socially, economically, and educationally.

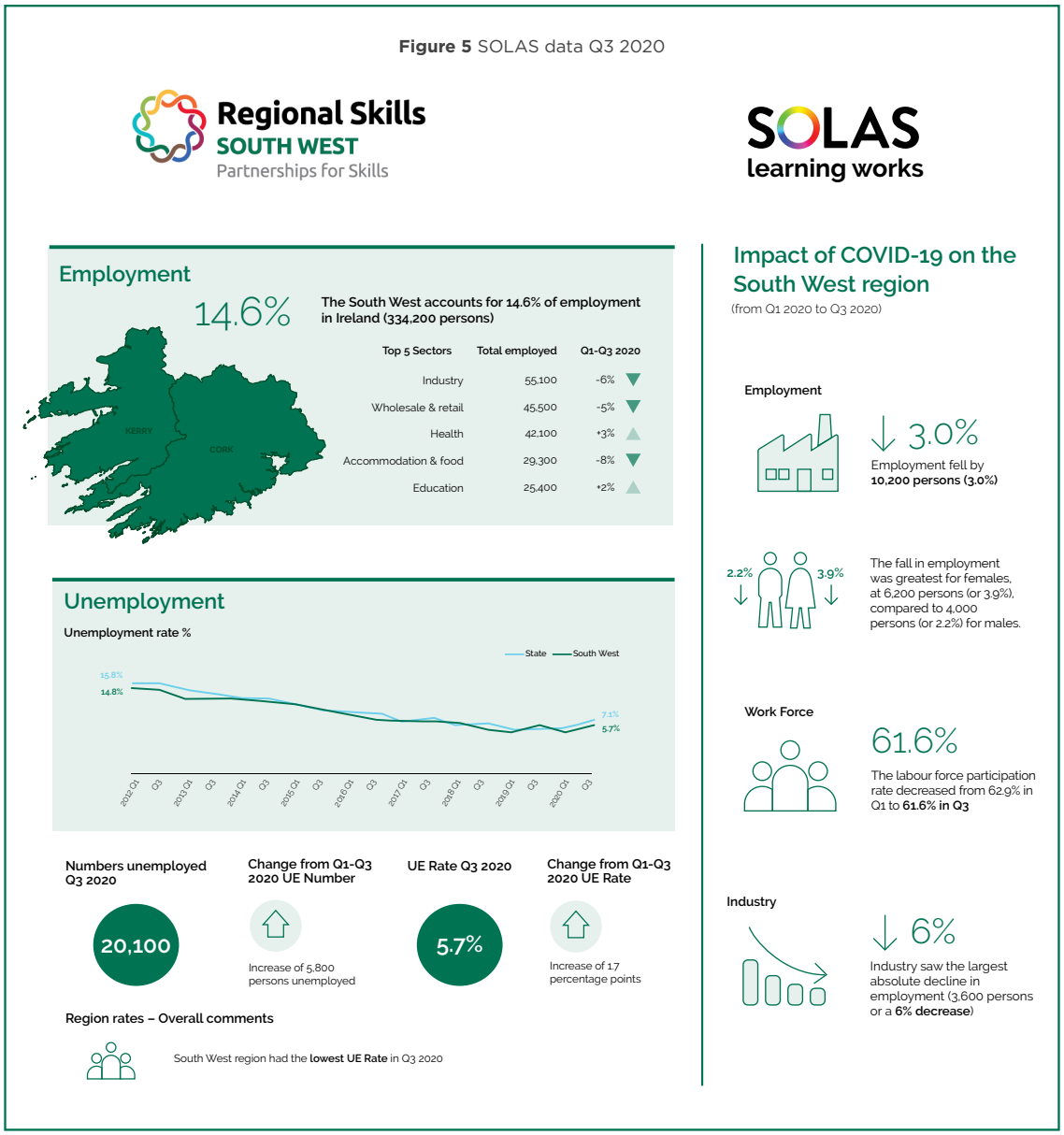
1.6 CHALLENGES

The three factors presented above, population, education attainment and employment across the region, give an indication of the complex challenges that Cork ETB faces in order to deliver appropriate Further Education and Training options to individuals within the region. While it is somewhat easier to provide for learners in the larger urban settings, the challenge of delivering programmes to individuals to upskill and be employment ready, as well as basic education interventions for those with less than upper secondary education is significant. And while the indicators referred to above clearly highlight areas of significant deprivation within Cork City, there are smaller similar pockets within every town across the region. Add to this the extent to which rural disadvantage features across large parts of the county, with high levels of isolation, poor or non-existent transport links, unsatisfactory broadband coverage and limited employment opportunities, the scale and complexity of the challenge cannot be overstated.

1.7 IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The impact on the region, and its resilience, is best evidenced by the data produced by the SOLAS Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) and the South West Regional Skills Forum.

Figure 5 SOLAS data Q3 2020



Overall, employment fell in the region by 3%, with the labour market participation rate reducing by just 1.3% between Q1 2020 (62.9%) to Q3 2020 (61.6%). Females were worst affected by the fall in employment, with over 6,200 females compared to 4,000 males becoming unemployed during this period. The higher numbers of females affected reflects the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on the following sectors, that traditionally attracted higher numbers of female employees:

- Retail
- Hospitality
- Tourism

The construction industry and the personal services sector have also been significantly impacted by the prolonged closures introduced to mitigate the transmission of the virus.

1.8 CORK ETB'S COVID-19 PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

The pandemic has impacted significantly on Cork ETB's activities and services, with FET activity being forced to adapt and evolve in a timeframe and manner that is without precedent.

Since March 2020, the majority of FET activity has moved from face-to-face delivery to models that incorporate online and blended approaches, necessitated by the full and partial closure of centres over the time period. The challenge for staff and learners cannot be understated, with everyone forced into new ways of thinking, adopting different approaches, and managing personal and professional challenges to the best of their abilities.

The many challenges that learners and staff faced included, amongst others:

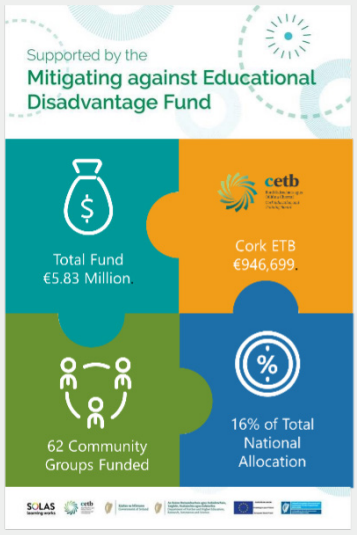
- Limited access to appropriate devices to deliver or avail of online activities
- Poor and/or non-existent broadband services
- Changing methodologies, approaches, and modes of communication
- Adapting assessment to learner requirements to enable them to complete course with minimal impact
- Increased isolation and mental health and wellbeing challenges

Cork ETB, its services, and centres were able to put in place a range of supports and measures to minimise the impact of these challenges to a significant extent:

- All staff provided with a laptop or appropriate tablet device
- Increased, focussed Personal Development (PD) inputs and supports
- Access to PD resource portal
- Extensive support and advice from the Quality Assurance team regarding programme/course delivery and assessment
- Facilitated access to centres
- Laptop/device loan schemes for learners across all services

1.9 DEMAND FOR SERVICES AT CORK ETB

Figure 6 MAED Funding 2020



The demand for FET services and courses if anything, evidenced an increase across the nine months of 2020 to the end of the year. Services found innovative and creative ways to maintain engagement with learners, including those who had no access to, or without the requisite skills to be able to avail of, an online learning option, by reverting to photocopying and mailing resource material to learners in many instances.

Through a Department of Further & Higher Education, Research Innovation & Science (DFHERIS)/SOLAS funded scheme to mitigate against the worst effects of education disadvantage exacerbated by the pandemic, Cork ETB secured €946,669 of a total national fund of €5,836,747 to provide supports, largely in the areas of digital device provision, for 62 local community groups and organisations (see Appendix 1).

Notwithstanding these efforts, and largely due to the restrictions on centre capacity and class sizes, the number of learners provided for in 2020 showed an approximate 25% reduction on the previous year.

Cork ETB has experienced significant changes in the profile of people seeking education and training opportunities as the pandemic has progressed, the type of interventions required (particularly for individuals employed in the tourism, hospitality, and retail sectors) and the modes and methods of delivery, with many programmes being delivered in online and/or blended formats as a response to government and public health restrictions in place.

1.10 PANDEMIC INEQUALITIES

The pandemic has magnified existing inequalities for educationally vulnerable adults (those with less than upper secondary education) and placed them at a particularly high risk of being left behind. While unemployment had reduced significantly before the impact of the pandemic, from the high of 15.4% experienced in 2012, youth unemployment is still at approximately double the rate of that for the general population, at 12.62%. The changing nature of work and work practices, with an increased reliance on digital skills, accelerated by the pandemic and its consequences, places those with low levels of digital skills in an increasingly vulnerable position. The need to upskill individuals, to augment existing skills and digital competency for everyone, including those seeking employment or already in the labour market, have become a key priority for Cork ETB services.

1.11 CORK ETB'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

At national and local levels strategic priorities have emerged for the sector, both in terms of upskilling generally and digital skills development specifically. The key role that Cork ETB's Further Education and Training service can play in this regard, given its broad community base across the region, its focus on learner development for personal and economic confidence, with opportunities for progression provided in a supported and accessible environment is significant. As the ETB FET sector develops over the coming years, its role in the emerging Tertiary Education sector will become even more important, as adaptive, flexible, and agile responses to emerging issues will be critical for social and economic development and cohesion. This will be achieved through a continued focus on improvement, an emphasis on quality and a commitment to continue to invest in our staff, supports for learners and improved engagement with all stakeholders in an ever-evolving working and educational environment.

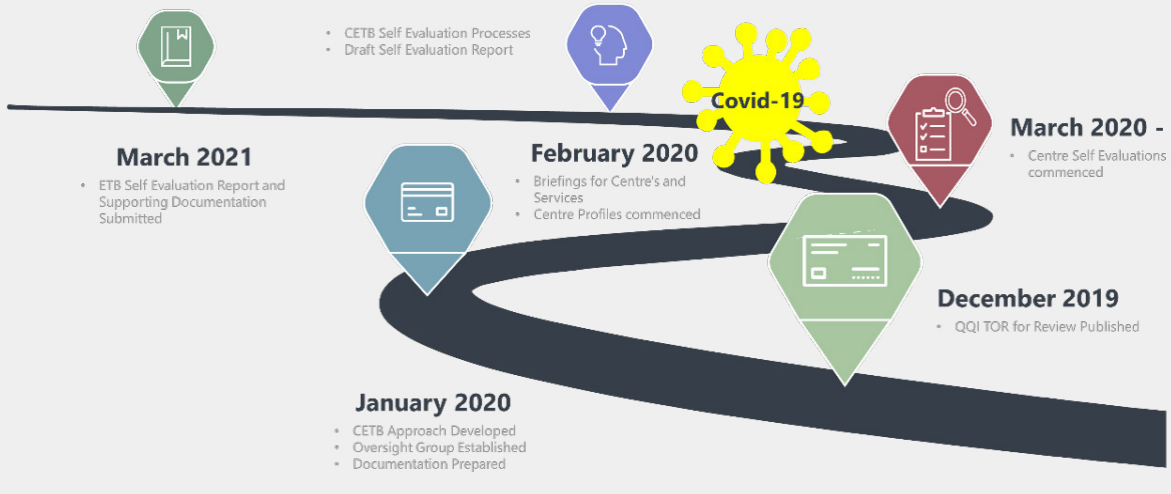
2. Self-Evaluation Review – the Approach Adopted

Following the publication of QQI guidelines and Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (December 2019), and extensive discussions between representatives from the sector and QQI on the direction and management of the review process, the Director of Further Education and Training established a Review Oversight Group, to oversee, manage and direct the review process.

The membership of this group is set out in Appendix 2, and includes representatives from across all FET services, including full-time and part-time provision, FET administration, administration, Quality Assurance, FET support services and ETB Senior Management.

The Review Oversight Group, in considering the terms of reference and guidelines issued by QQI, focussed on developing and implementing an approach to the review that would provide the most benefit and insight, not just for the external review panel but for Cork Education and Training Board as an organisation and its Further Education and Training services specifically. The Group identified the Review Process as providing an opportunity for the ETB to embed self-evaluation within the normal operation and delivery of programmes, to provide focus and direction for centres and services, and allow for the identification of areas of good practice, as well as areas where improvements could be made.

Figure 7 Review Roadmap in Brief



It was decided that the main focus of the review process would be initially on every centre or service undertaking a structured self-evaluation process, using standard template and instruments agreed by the Oversight Group (Appendix 3) and based closely on the QQI guidelines. It was felt that this would provide the ETB with a service assessment of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance approach, policy, procedures, and practices that have been developed and implemented since 2014.

To support the centres in this process, a Cork ETB Guide for Centres and Services was developed (Appendix 4), and briefing sessions for centre and service managers were held in January 2021. Communication and documentation sharing was facilitated throughout the process through a dedicated Review Teams site, with individual centres and services having their own dedicated channels to facilitate sharing of materials with the Oversight Group.

The schedule and programme of work to be undertaken by centres/services and the Oversight Group, while agreed in January 2020, was significantly impacted by the disruption brought about by COVID-19. Cork ETB sought, and were granted, a rescheduling of their Review panel engagement as a consequence of this disruption.

3. Governance and Management of Quality

3.1 CORK EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD'S MISSION AND CORE VALUES

Cork ETB plans, provides, supports, and coordinates education, training and youth services in Cork which are recognised internationally as a model of excellence.

Our vision is that Cork ETB is a driving force of education and training in Cork, providing high quality services which are innovative, responsive, and inclusive. Through Cork ETB there is a pathway for every learner.

In supporting our mission and vision we have guiding principles which underpin our strategic thinking, planning, decision making and our everyday actions as we strive to deliver our services and always act in the best of interest of learners.

Our guiding principles are:

- Prioritising the needs of learners
- Delivering a high-quality service
- Acting with professional integrity
- Doing the right thing
- Treating people with dignity and respect
- Being fair, open, and accountable
- Ensuring value for money
- Operating to the highest ethical, professional, moral, and legal standards

Figure 8 Cork ETB Guiding Principles

Our Core values, which were identified by staff and stakeholders as being an integral part of what it means to be part of Cork ETB and, also what Cork ETB stands for are:

- **Brave** – We put our learners' needs first and are not afraid to make the hard decisions required to deliver the best possible service.

- **Committed** – We have a clear vision and purpose with which we are fully engaged and on which we are determined to deliver
- **Positive** – We are optimistic and confident about our opportunities and challenges and believe we can make a positive difference to the lives of the people we serve
- **Leading** – We expect our people to be leaders – to have a clear vision, take the initiative, and to inspire and motivate learners and colleagues through their example
- **Innovative** – We are focused on constant improvement and being at the forefront of change and innovation in education and training
- **Caring** – We adopt an inclusive and respectful approach to our learners and staff and strive to ensure that each person using our services reaches his/her potential

Figure 9 Cork ETB Core Values

3.2 STRATEGY STATEMENT

Cork ETB published its first Strategy Statement for the period 2017-2021, and it afforded staff and all stakeholders the opportunity to define our vision, guiding principles and values, and to set out our aims and priorities for that period (Appendix 5).

The development of the Strategy Statement commenced in March 2017 and was led by the Senior Management team. A consultation process internally and externally took place. This consisted of internal meetings with staff, learners, and Boards of Management, and externally the consultation was with various stakeholders. An online survey was made available to all parties and was a key element in the process to ensure that a broad view was obtained in respect of identifying and refining the priorities and the actions for achieving our strategic priorities. In the development of the Strategy Statement, strategy documents of various stakeholders including SOLAS, and Department of Education and Skills were reviewed to ensure that our aims and priorities were aligned with national priorities.

Our strategic plan contains four primary pillars and includes the following priorities:

1. **Our Learners**

- To provide a positive and holistic learning centred experience for every learner
- Provide excellent teaching, training, and learning for all
- Positive learning environments with suitable resources
- Commitment to technology-enhanced learning to support independent and collaborative learning

2. **Our People**

- To attract and recruit the best people for the organisation
- To support the professional development of our people
- To provide a positive, professional, and supportive work environment for all staff

3. **Our Services**

- Review and develop education and training programmes
- Develop and promote the provision of youth services

- To enhance social and economic cohesion in our learners' communities through the provision of relevant knowledge and skills for lifelong learning, personal development, progression, and employment

4. Our Organisation

- To ensure an appropriate infrastructure is developed to make the best use of available resources
- To continue to develop an organisational structure which supports Cork ETB services
- Support ethical governance to ensure accountability and value for money
- To develop a strong recognisable Cork ETB brand
- Develop and enhance internal and external communications systems
- Strategic networking and partnerships with key stakeholders

Cork ETB is currently at the planning stages for the development of the Strategy Statement 2022-2026. Staff are being consulted and various workshops have taken place. There will be time to reflect on our current priorities and focus on new, emerging priorities as we review the achievements from our Statement of Strategy 2017-2021 and prepare for the next cycle in the ETB's development.

3.3 EVALUATION

Cork ETB's Vision, Mission and Strategy were developed through a consultative process with all staff and stakeholders. All aspects of our strategy are underpinned by the guiding principles and values that were identified by staff and stakeholders as being an integral part of what it means to be part of Cork ETB and what Cork ETB stands for. The past seven years have seen unprecedented and ongoing change in the Further Education and Training sector. Cork ETB is an amalgamated entity, formed when three organisations, with different policies, procedures, ways of operating and different cultures, transitioned into one organisation. The development and the strengthening of Cork ETB as a brand has been very positive and in all marketing campaigns, public information and brochures, Cork ETB is recognisable as a brand.

The commitment of the staff and the organisation to a technology-enhanced learning environment was evident across all provision and services in the past year since the COVID-19 pandemic impacted. Cork ETB continues to invest in resources and infrastructure that will contribute to a more positive and supportive learning environment for learners.

Throughout the Centres' own self evaluation process and in development of their reports, good examples of how Cork ETB's Mission and Strategy are being implemented are presented. The following are some extracts from a selection of the Centre's reports:

- Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI) programmes are designed to offer a wide range of flexible options which are appropriate to the unique circumstances of learners, enabling them to combine family, work, or personal responsibilities with learning opportunities. Flexibility continues to inform the delivery of BTEI programmes in the region and is key to learner engagement and retention
- Management and staff work consciously toward maximising every learner's potential, not only by reconciling educational requirements with workplace demands, but by seeking to develop the person as a rounded individual
- Another strategic goal is to develop 'Taster' courses within Community Education provision. These courses encourage progression for those who complete them. 'Taster programmes' run throughout the Community Education programme and assist initial engagement with hard-to-reach groups in the community. BTEI courses are also developed as a follow on and participants from the 'Taster' courses often progress onto these programmes

- The strategic focus is to ensure that the education or training offering is that most appropriate to learner needs, all resources available are fully utilised and that the best value for money is achieved
- While all Youthreach Centres work under the Cork ETB mission and values, each Youthreach centre has its own mission statement which helps to form the centre and staff team identity
- As evidenced throughout this document, a comprehensive and systematic process of quality assurance, delegated by Cork ETB, is applied to all interactions, materials, information, and services provided for learners and staff. In this context, the Mission Statement is a living document that underpins all of the practice, process and decision making within the PLC college

The implementation of standardised assessment policy and assessment procedures across all Centres ensures that learners are assessed in a fair, robust, and consistent manner. Quality is being embedded into all our activities. However, going forward Cork ETB is also focussing on ensuring greater quality and consistency of experience for learners in several different areas including:

- Access, Transfer and Progression
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Learning Supports for all learners

Cork ETB is committed to ensuring that these are available to learners, regardless of form or type of provision they engage with.

Cork ETB is also exploring opportunities for additional and alternative learning opportunities such as blended learning and the online delivery of programmes. The development of these areas will continue for some time and will be an enhancement of an integrated and robust FET provision, supported by a Quality Assurance system that underpins all FET activity in Cork ETB.

3.4 STRUCTURES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

A. Cork ETB Corporate Governance

Cork ETB was established under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, and Cork ETB corporate governance has regard to the statutory structures, functions and responsibilities as set out in the Act. In addition, Cork ETB operates in accordance with the provisions of Circular Letter 0002/2019[2] "Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards".

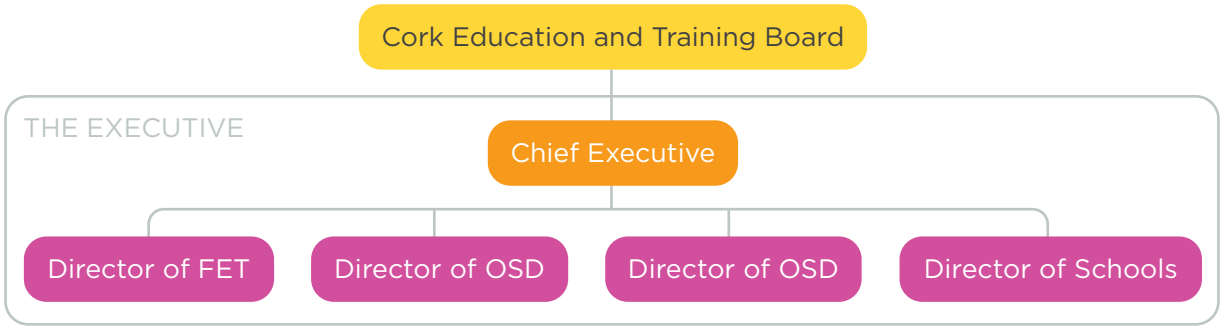
In accordance with the 2013 Act, Cork ETB is governed by a Board comprising of twenty-one members representing Cork City and County Councils, ETB staff, parents/guardians of children who are registered learners and who have not yet reached 18 years of age, and members who represent business, community, and other school management bodies.

The functions of the Board and the Chief Executive are clearly defined. Functions of the Board and the Chief Executive are referred to as "*Reserved*" and "*Executive*" functions. Reserved functions of the Board are defined by the Education and Training Board Act (2013) (Appendix 6). Anything that is not described as a reserved function is an Executive function. The Act does not prescribe a specific role for the ETB Board in terms of oversight of Further Education and Training services

[2] https://assets.gov.ie/12100/d9938b6ea7694558b3d052ea0f4c1560.pdf

and the attendant Quality Assurance requirements for these services. This is an Executive function and corporate responsibility lies with the Chief Executive and the Directors (the Executive).

Chart 1 Cork ETB Executive and Structure



The standalone Post Leaving Certificate Colleges have Boards of Management as defined by the Education Act, 1998[3], and these Boards are Committees of the ETB Board.

Cork ETB has established a number of Committees, termed to be Youthreach Regional Boards of Management, to have oversight and management functions for a number of Youthreach Centres in a geographic region.

B. Executive Level Governance

The Chief Executive (CE) of Cork ETB has overall responsible for the oversight of all Cork ETB activity, including Further Education and Training. Responsibility for Quality Assurance is an executive function as defined within the legislation (Education and Training Board Act 2013).

The Director of Further Education and Training has operational responsibility for the coordination and management of Cork ETB's FET services and activity, reporting to the Chief Executive, and is responsible for the planning and delivery of high quality and responsive FET provision and the governance and management of FET, as well as coordinating a FET Steering Group and having responsibility for workforce planning and performance management.

Two Directors of Organisation Support and Development (OSD) report to the Chief Executive of the ETB and are responsible for assisting the CE in leadership of the organisational administrative function and the governance and management of ETB services. The two Directors of OSD provide significant support to the Director of FET in areas such as financial planning and accountability, capital projects and procurement, staffing and reporting.

Under the 2013 Act, the ETB is required to produce a Statement of Strategy for the Board and its activities. Cork ETB's Statement of Strategy is included as Appendix 5, and this sets out the strategic priorities and objectives for all Cork ETB services, including Further Education and Training.

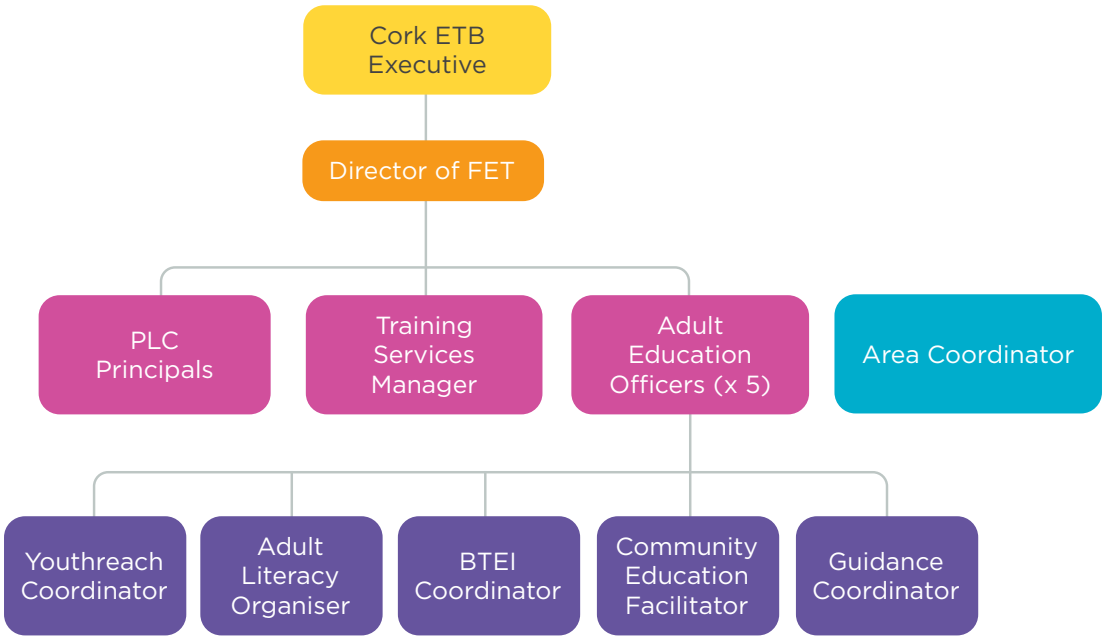
C. Management and Governance of Further Education and Training

Cork ETB has a tiered organisational structure in place to guarantee oversight, management and quality control of the education and training service delivered at centre-level. These groups report to the Director of Further Education and Training and the Cork ETB Executive.

[3] For PLC College Boards of Management, the Parent nominees to the Board are replaced by learner/student nominees

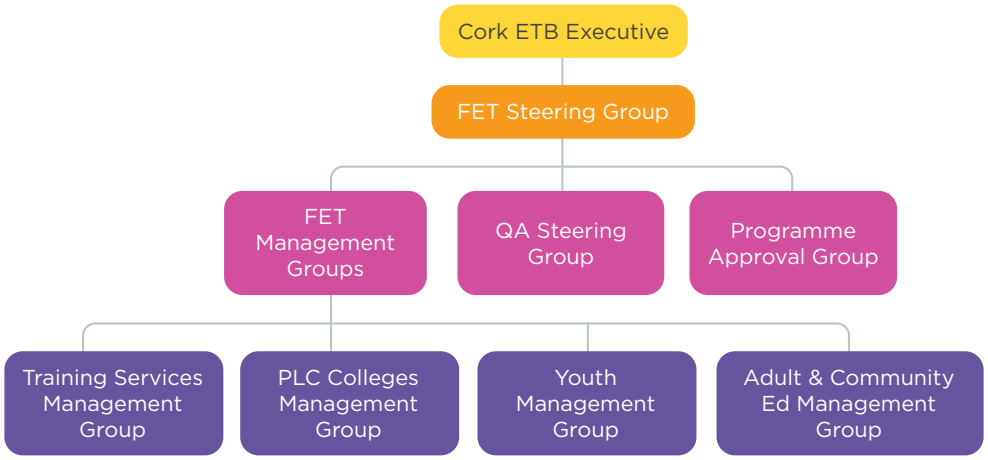
The diagram below shows the line management structure for the day-to-day management of FET:

Chart 2 Cork ETB Management Structure for FET



The diagram below shows the management and governance structures for FET.

Chart 3 Cork ETB Management and Governance Structure



Cork ETB's current management structures have developed from the structures that existed at the time of the establishment of the ETB. Management groups for a range of FET services have been formed, to provide for coordinated and integrated management and communication of services. The Adult and Community Education structure was significantly revised in the second half of 2020, following the appointment of two additional Adult Education Officers to the service.

These management groups are supported by a number of policy groups, including the Quality Assurance Steering Group, as well as a number of working groups with specific areas of responsibility. Working groups are established to address specific areas of development, both short and long term, and the membership and objectives of these groups are defined on their establishment.

The FET Steering Group has overall oversight of Further Education and Training. This group is responsible for approving an annual FET Plan for SOLAS, monitoring certification and completion rates, and approving strategy for the FET sector. See Appendix 7 for details of ETB planning, reporting and statistical tasks.

The Cork ETB FET Quality Assurance and Management Government Structure (Appendix 8) outlines the roles and responsibility of the FET Steering Group, the Quality Assurance Management Group, and the Programme Approval Group.

Through the principle of subsidiarity, Principals, Centre and Service/Programme managers have responsibility for the local management of their centre, service or programme in line with Cork ETB policies and procedures. Principals and Centre and Service/Programme Managers have responsibility to ensure that ETB governance arrangements are applied and observed uniformly across the centres and services that they are responsible for. Their responsibilities include, amongst others, the monitoring of provision, identification of PD needs, gathering learner and staff feedback and dealing with any complaints in line with Cork ETB policies. Principals, Centre managers and the Adult Education Officers are responsible to and report to the Director of FET. Service/Programme Managers report, in the first instance, to Adult Education Officers.

D. Management of Quality Assurance

Cork ETBs Quality Assurance Unit, established in February 2016, has overall responsibility for the management and coordination of Quality Assurance activities across all Cork ETB FET services. A senior member of staff (at AEO grade) is the designated Quality Assurance Officer for Cork ETB, and they oversee the development, implementation and coordination of Cork ETB's Quality Assurance policies and procedures for Further Education and Training. The Quality Assurance Officer is supported by four Quality Staff, members of Cork ETB's FET staff who have been seconded internally to the Quality Assurance office. An Assistant Process Coordinator supports the administration associated with programme development. The Quality Assurance Officer reports to the Director of FET and is supported by the Quality Assurance Steering Group, which they chair.

Cork ETB operated initially with three legacy Quality Assurance Agreements and their attendant policies and procedures. While there was considerable similarity and commonality within the three separate Quality Assurance models, particularly those that applied to the former VEC's, the standardisation and development of common policies, practices and procedures was a priority for the Quality Assurance Unit. Focusing initially on the area of assessment, a single set of policies and procedures for the management of all assessment related activities was developed. These have been followed by additional policies and procedures relating to all areas of FET and the Quality Assurance of same, meaning that all FET services are governed by a single approach to Quality Assurance.

The Quality Assurance Steering Group provides advice, oversight, and governance for the Quality Assurance of Cork ETB's FET provision, approving Quality Assurance policies and procedures and monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of these procedures. The role of this group is outlined in Appendix 8.

There are three working groups that report directly to the Quality Assurance Steering Group. Each group is chaired by a member of the Quality Assurance Steering Group:

- **Assessment Working Group**
- **Access, Transfer and Progression Group**
- **Recognition of Prior Learning Group**

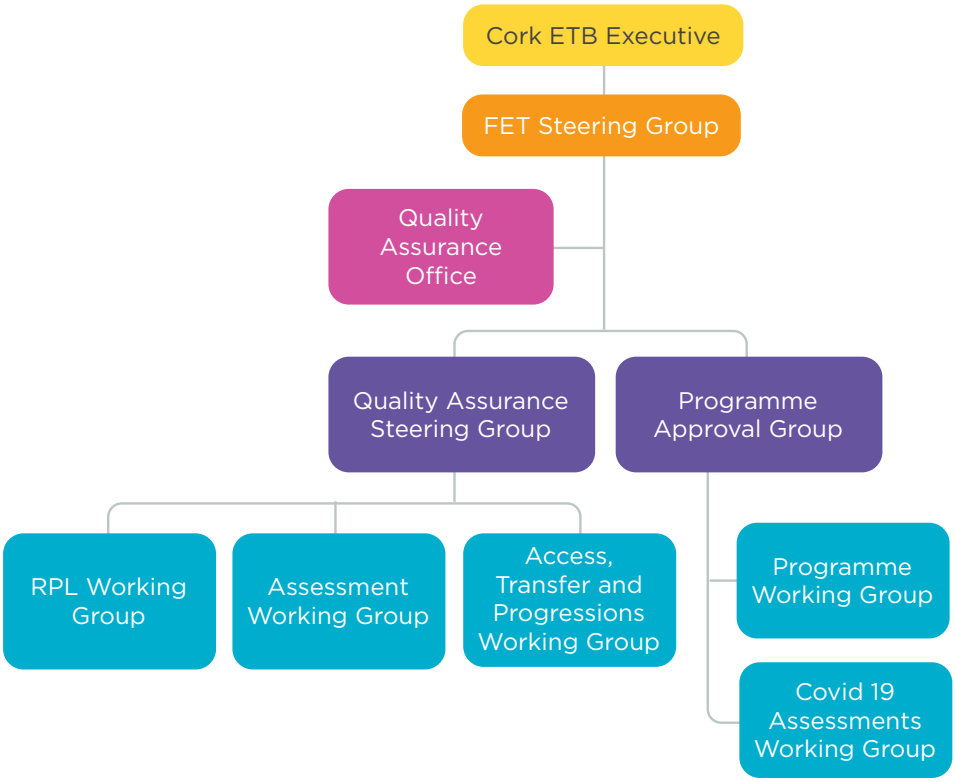
Membership of each group comprises of the Quality Assurance Officer, member/s of staff from the Quality Assurance Unit and representatives from relevant provision and services. Both Access, Transfer and Progression and Recognition of Prior Learning Groups also have a non – Cork ETB member.

Quality Assurance within Centres is the responsibility of the Centre Principal/Manager and there are designated staff in all Centres and Services, who as part of the role, co-coordinate the Quality Assurance Process and liaise with the Quality Assurance Unit.

E. Programme Approval Group

Programme Approval for Cork ETB is managed centrally, through the Programme Approval Group (PAG). The PAG considers proposals from Centres to develop or review Cork ETB programmes and oversees the programme development, validation, and approval processes. All proposals are processed through the Quality Assurance Unit for consideration by the Programme Approval Group. All reviews or programme development are project managed by the staff in the Quality Assurance Unit and Programme Development Groups are formed to work on the project. Membership of the group is representative of provision and services, with the Quality Assurance Officer, Director of FET, Assistant Process Co-Ordinator, and Employment Liaison Officer being part members.

Chart 4 Cork ETB Governance and Management for FET



3.5 EVALUATION

The governance arrangement within Cork ETB is robust and comprehensive to ensure that there is strong governance and management of all operations at all levels. There are clear and well communicated structures and procedures in place and all terms of references are published. However, apart from two working groups, we do not have representatives from stakeholders i.e., learner representative or industry-employer representative on our governance groups. A review of the terms of references for the Quality Steering group is currently taking place. This group was initially formed in 2016 and the landscape of Cork ETB and Quality Assurance has changed dramatically since then. Some of the changes to the terms of reference will be:

- All FET Sectors will be represented on the group
- The Quality Assurance Steering Group will be Chaired by a non-Cork ETB staff member, nominated to the role by Cork ETB. The external member will be required to have a knowledge of quality assurance, quality systems and governance
- The Director of FET and other members of the executive may attend meetings of the Quality Assurance Steering Group but will not be members of the group

Agendas and notes from both the Quality Assurance Steering Group and Programme Approval Group meetings are currently published internally on the Quality Assurance SharePoint site. However, to improve the visibility and transparency of other groups under the Quality Assurance Steering Group, agendas and notes should also be published on the Quality Assurance SharePoint Site.

The Quality Assurance Unit works very closely with the Management and staff that co-ordinate the Quality Assurance processes in the Centres and Services. All communication in relation to Quality Assurance is communicated to both Management and the Quality Assurance Contact in each Centre. Also, each Centre and Service has a designated Quality Assurance staff member that they can liaise with on any matters relating to Quality Assurance.

3.6 AN EXAMPLE HOW THIS OPERATES FROM KINSALE COLLEGE'S SELF EVALUATION REPORT

Director of Kinsale College has responsibility to ensure that Quality Assurance policies and procedures are being adhered to. This is done through the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator in the College, who is the first point of call for all staff. The Quality Assurance Coordinator ensures any changes to QA procedures are filtered down to all staff. This is done through having:

- Quality Assurance is on the agenda of every staff meeting
- Emails to relevant staff with any QA changes and updates
- The QA Co-ordinator ensures the IV and EA process is scheduled at appropriate times
- Kinsale College has a designated person in Cork ETB QA office who the coordinator can contact regarding any specific queries or questions
- QA Co-ordinator attends regular QA meetings organised by Cork ETB. She also sits on the Assessment Working Group for Cork ETB

3.7 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Robust and comprehensive governance arrangements are in place at Cork ETB Executive, Management and Centre level, with both PLC colleges and Youthreach Centres have structured board of management
- Governance Structures for FET Quality Assurance are clear and well communicated
- Terms of Reference for each group outline the decision-making process, reporting responsibility and the recommended membership

3.8 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Ensuring that the membership of groups is a representative of all provision in FET
- There is no schedule for reviewing of the terms of references for the various governance groups
- Limited number of Stakeholders are represented on governance groups
- Currently there is no induction programme for both staff members and external representatives on governance groups
- Ensuring that everybody within the organisation realises their role in governance, that governance underpins everything we do and is not just an Executive responsibility

3.9 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Develop and publish a schedule of review for all terms of references for all governance groups to ensure they are effective
- Review membership of groups to include external representation where appropriate
- Cork ETB will devise an induction programme on governance groups for all new members, both internal staff and external stakeholders
- Publish Agendas and notes on Quality Assurance SharePoint Site for all working groups that Quality Assurance Steering Group have oversight of
- Establish a Teaching and Learning Working Group under the remit of the Quality Assurance Steering Group

3.10 THE DOCUMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Cork ETB's Quality Assurance Unit was established in February 2016 and has overall responsibility for the management and coordination of Quality Assurance activities across all Cork ETB FET services. Cork ETB operated initially with three legacy Quality Assurance Agreements and their attendant policies and procedures. The first priority for the Quality Assurance Unit was to standardise and develop common policies, practices, and procedures across all provision under the remit of FET. The initial focus was on the area of assessment and the development of a single set of policies and procedures for the management of all assessments processes.

The Quality Assurance Steering Group was also formed in 2016 and provides advice, oversight, and governance for the Quality Assurance of Cork ETB's FET provision. The group approves Quality Assurance policies and procedures and monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of these procedures. The role of this group is outlined in Appendix 8.

During the academic year 2016/2017, under guidance from the Quality Assurance Steering Group, new assessment policies and procedures were developed which outlined the guiding principles, philosophy and approach for the management of all assessment related activities.

Extensive consultation on the drafted policy and procedures took place, commencing with information session for all management in all Centres prior to the consultation phase. This was followed up with focus groups for both staff and learners in all Centres in various locations throughout the county. There was also an opportunity for staff who could not attend focus groups to give feedback electronically.

The feedback was reviewed by Quality Assurance staff and representatives from various Centres and services over two days in late April 2017. As part of the consultations engaged in during the development of these new assessment procedures, learning practitioners identified the need to identify and document learner responsibility in terms of assessment. A Learner Assessment Contract was developed, and this outlines what the learner can expect and what is expected of them as a learner, and their responsibility in terms of assessment.

The procedures were then redrafted based on feedback and presented to the Quality Assurance Steering Group for approval. It was agreed to pilot these new assessment procedures during 2017/2018 academic year. The following were the new assessment procedures:

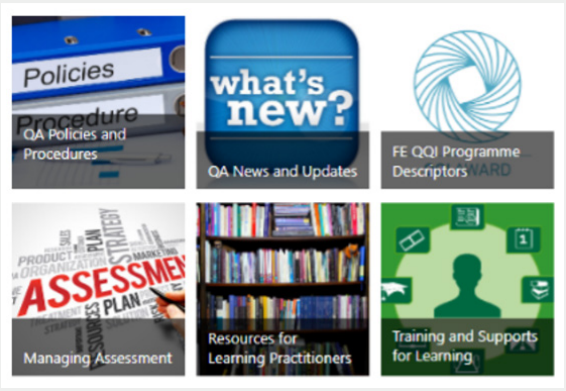
- QA 6.1 Cork ETB Assessment Information to Learners Procedure
- QA 6.2 Cork ETB Coordinated Planning of Assessment Procedure
- QA 6.3 Cork ETB Assessment Design Procedure
- QA 6.4 Cork ETB Implementation of Assessment Activities Procedure
- QA 6.6 Cork ETB Reasonable Accommodation in assessment of learners with specific needs Procedure
- QA 6.7 Cork ETB Extenuating Circumstances in Assessment Procedure
- QA 6.8 Cork ETB Repeats and Resubmission of Assignments Procedure
- QA 6.10 Cork ETB Assessment Malpractice Procedure

The assessment procedures outline the responsibility of the learning practitioner to ensure that they are delivering at the appropriate award level, and that the correct learning outcomes are assessed. This is reinforced using a standard brief template, assessment training, and an Assessment Handbook for Assessors delivering programmes at QQI levels 1-3, with a separate Handbook for those delivering programmes at QQI levels 4-6. These handbooks contain all the assessment procedures and the accompanying forms.

In parallel to the development of the policy and procedures, a staff SharePoint was developed and acts as the main repository and source of information relating to Quality Assurance for all Cork ETB Staff. Staff access this SharePoint with their Office 365 account. The SharePoint site contains the following information:

1. **QA Policies and Procedures**
2. **QA News and Updates**
3. **Descriptors for QQI Validated Programmes**
4. **Managing Assessment section**
5. **Information on Training and Supports**
6. **Resources for Learning Practitioners**

Figure 10 QA SharePoint



Since the initial policy and procedures were developed, the Quality Assurance Unit working with both the Assessment Working Group and Recognition of Prior Learning Working group, under the guidance of the Quality Assurance Steering Group have continued to develop procedures and include:

- QA 6.5 Cork ETB Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure
- QA 6.9 Cork ETB Security of Assessment Material Procedure
- QA 6.12 Cork ETB Assessment performed by third parties Procedure
- QA 6.14 Cork ETB Internal Verification Procedure

- QA 6.15 Cork ETB External Authentication Procedure
- QA 6.16 Cork ETB Feedback to Learners Procedure
- QA 6.17 Cork ETB Issuing of results and certification to learners Procedure
- QA 6.18 Cork ETB Learner Appeals Procedure
- QA 6.19 Cork ETB Results Approval Procedure
- QA 6.20 Cork ETB Return of Certification Data to QQI Procedure
- QA 6.21 Cork ETB Corrective Action Procedure

Policies and Assessment procedures are available in the review document support folder and are also publicly available.

In the past two years, as part of the Quality Assurance Cycle, the Quality Assurance Unit has reviewed and revised the procedures and all staff would have an opportunity to give feedback on the procedures to ensure that they are kept up to date and are fit for purpose. This in an ongoing process under the remit of the Assessment Working Group and the Quality Assurance Steering Group.

3.11 EVALUATION

Since the Quality Assurance Unit was established in 2016, the development of standardised Policies and Procedures across all FET provision has been one of its main priorities. There was wide consultation on the procedures when they were drafted. The feedback from staff who would be implementing the procedures was of great benefit in developing the final version. The representation of staff on various working groups ensured that any polices, or procedures were robust and fit for purpose.

While it is acknowledged that it was challenging to develop procedures that would incorporate all provision and all levels from QQI Level 1 to Level 6, and other awarding bodies, the result was that Cork ETB now has a comprehensive and coherent Policy and set of procedures. Cork ETB learners are assessed in a fair and consistent manner throughout our Centres. Currently there is no formal schedule of review for procedures but most of our procedures have now been reviewed at least once. In the past year, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, procedures had to be reviewed and changed in a very timely manner and this was possible with the support of the Assessment Working Group. Since the implementation of the use of Moodle as a Learning Platform, we have adapted some of our documents and templates so that they can be used electronically.

3.12 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Standardised Quality Assurance Policy and procedures implemented in all Centres
- The use of a Quality Assurance SharePoint site to share policy, procedures, and documentation for all staff to access in the same place
- Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures are also available to learners on Moodle and on Centres own websites or intranets
- Learners in Centres are given access to an Assessment Handbook appropriate to the level of programme being completed. This includes all procedures relevant to the learner
- Some of the other policies including admission policies, code of conduct, social-media conduct and anti-bully policies, have been developed in Centres and in some cases are standardised across FET provision

3.13 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- In one of the Centre's self-evaluation reports, it was identified how time consuming it can be completing the required documentation
- Ensuring that all staff, but particularly part time staff are not just aware of but engaged in accessing the Quality Assurance SharePoint and reviewing policies and procedures

3.14 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Develop and publish a schedule for the review of all policies and procedures
- Continue with the review and development of electronic documents and template
- All Quality Assurance policy and procedures for other awarding bodies and apprenticeship programmes to be available on Quality Assurance SharePoint site
- Explore the options of more standardised policies across the provision

3.15 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

A. Staff Recruitment Process

Recruitment of staff for FET service delivery is managed by the Human Resources Unit within Cork ETB. National agreements and procedures apply to the various grades/descriptions of staff involved in FET delivery and Cork ETB applies these to the recruitment of all staff.

In the case of teaching staff associated with PLC delivery, these staff must be Teaching Council registered. Cork ETB is allocated a number for teaching staff Wholetime Equivalents (WTEs) based on the PLC enrolment figures as returned to the Department of Education in October of the preceding year, based on a pupil: teacher ratio of 19:1 being applied. Due to falling PLC enrolments, and the fact that the vast majority of staff involved in PLC delivery have permanent contracts, Cork ETB has been operating at a level in excess of its authorised allocation. From January 2020 PLC teaching staff have been funded from the FET funding allocation to the ETB from SOLAS.

The determination of the levels of required staffing in other parts of the FET service is largely determined by required delivery levels, and the availability of funding within the overall FET budget.

The impact of falling PLC enrolments in recent years has impacted significantly on Cork ETB's ability to recruit new staff to this service, placing a serious constraint on its ability to implement new programmes. As a result of staff difficulties, sometimes teaching staff may have a split contract and have hours in more than one centre. This can be a challenge for centres timetabling as the timetable and modules offered are dependent upon the availability of the teachers. To provide specialist components, staff are sometimes shared across or between centres. This can make it challenging to hold staff meetings or events when teachers have commitments at other centres. From the staff member point of view, it is difficult to navigate two sets of centre management, operational procedures, and communications.

Due to previous employment embargoes and numerous retirements, Cork ETB adult and community education services have been the victim of staff shortages. Although these embargoes are now lifted, some of the impact and consequences remain. Due to the requirements imposed by national agreements and circular letters on which the HR guidelines are based, there can sometimes be delays in replacing staff and under Cork ETB HR guidelines and contractual obligations/entitlements it is not always possible to fully align the centres requirements with the staff members having an entitlement to the hours. For example, where a vacancy existed for teacher of metalwork in one centre, a teacher with less than a full hour's contract had an entitlement to be offered these hours

in the first instance. When they accepted the offer, their existing timetable forced the second centre to adjust the timetable delivery of the subject, impacting on the whole centre timetable.

The provision and management of substitute cover is a challenge for all centres. It can be difficult to find appropriately qualified cover staff, in particular for Training Services and Youthreach. In Youthreach, this can lead to members of the management team covering these classes at the expense of other duties. Similarly, staff shortages and substitution difficulties have, at times, meant that centres are unable to spare staff to attend training events.

The Resource Person grade in Youthreach service is poorly understood and often applicants for the post confuse the role with resource teacher in a school. The role of Resource Person in Youthreach is both a teaching and an administrative role, with many of the associated duties being more administrative in nature. This lack of understanding, combined with a different pay scale for a Resource Person than a teacher, cause difficulties for Cork ETB. Several Youthreach centres in their self-evaluation reports commented on the difficulty in both hiring and retaining Resource Persons. This is a national problem.

B. Contracted and Second Providers Recruitment

Contracted Training is a facility used by Cork ETB through Cork Training Centre to provide training programmes which, for whatever reason, the Training Centre cannot or chooses not to provide. Contracted Training is delivered by a number of Nominated Training Providers who were procured through a national tendering process, with each provider being identified as the "preferred" provider in a number of fields or specialisms. Contracted training provides a flexible complement to the courses delivered in-house by the Training Centre and allows the ETB to adapt a more flexible approach to meeting employers training needs than could be achieved through direct delivery alone.

Contracted Training providers are required to operate within the framework of Cork ETB's Quality Assurance procedures and guidelines. The recruitment of training staff is the direct responsibility of the Contracted provider, and as the contractors' responsibility to ensure they have sufficient staff with the appropriate skill sets to deliver on their contractual obligation with Cork ETB.

A number of Second Providers, including the Community Training Centres (CTC's), Local training Initiatives (LTI's) and Specialist Training Providers (STP's) are considered a separate form of contracted training. In each case, the contracted party is an independent organisation which contracts with Cork ETB to deliver training inputs for a specific cohort or grouping. Staff recruitment and management for Second Providers resides with the contacting organisation/body.

C. Self-Financing Adult Education (Evening Class) Recruitment

The recruitment of staff for Self-Financing Adult Education (evening class) delivery is conducted locally at individual centre level. Staff delivering evening classes are referenced as tutors under a Department Circular Letter (PPC 46_00) (Appendix 9) which sets out general arrangement for the delivery of Self-Financing Adult Education but does not define the qualifications necessary for tutors. Sometimes tutors may be recruited from the complement of staff who teach on the main programmes in the centre and who choose to deliver by night under an additional Part Time Tutor (PTT) contract. Staff will also be recruited through word of mouth, social media advertisements or references from another centre. Adult Education Directors (who have responsibility for Self-Financing Adult Education provision) have been reluctant to use the ETB's PTT Tutor Registration System, this was to be reviewed in 2020 but deferred due to current circumstance.

A significant amount of time can be spent on recruitment of staff and much recruitment is undertaken through the network of the Adult Education Directors, which takes time to build up. Cork ETB planned to develop and implement a central recruitment policy for staff on Self-Financing Adult Education classes however delays with this development means that all such recruitment is conducted in house. Thus, the qualifications and experience of tutors engaged to deliver Self-Financing Adult Education and the practices employed to recruit them vary across Cork ETB, with some centres interviewing all potential staff and assigning an existing staff member to mentor to the new tutor.

D. Induction of New Teaching Staff

An induction programme for all new Cork ETB teaching staff is held in late August each year. Although FET staff are included, because of the relative numbers involved, the induction session is often more focused on the needs of second level teachers. However, the purpose of the induction is to give new staff members an overview and understanding of the extent of Cork ETB's services, rather than to dwell on a particular sector or service. Unfortunately, delays in recruitment can mean that some FET teaching staff are recruited in late September and thus do not have the opportunity to engage in the Cork ETB wide induction session.

There is no national induction or mentoring process for FET staff – for example, there is no equivalent of the Droichead programme available for primary and second level staff. This is a challenge both for FET provision nationally and for Cork ETB; it is well established that a robust induction programme increases the wellbeing of Beginning Teachers (Helms-Lorenz et al, 2013, Ingersoll, 2012).

Staff induction for FET in Cork ETB therefore occurs mostly on centre level, both formally and informally. Some larger centres operate a formal mentoring system for new staff. However, some services, by their nature, are smaller and more dispersed and this makes induction and mentoring of new staff more challenging. For example, Adult Literacy Services operates in disparate locations – some dedicated adult education centres, but also in multiple out-centres and venues e.g., community halls, family resource centres, social centres, care centres. This makes the induction and mentoring of new staff difficult as these staff may, at times, be working in isolation from each other. Similarly, tutors on evening programmes may often be working in isolation and come into the building only to teach their programme, which makes induction difficult.

E. Professional Development

There is an ongoing commitment to professional development activity in Cork ETB FET services, both from the learning practitioners and service management. Local professional development training takes place in colleges and centres, with focussed training occurring at times of the year when student activity is reduced. In addition, delivery staff who wish to develop their own skills and competencies, in their own time, can apply for individual professional development supports (generally by way of fee subsidy) to undertake professional development programmes. Cork ETB also has put in place ETB wide initiatives in professional development for all staff, including work shadowing as part of the Erasmus initiative, supports in TEL, and the Cork FET Staff Placement in Industry Programme. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in the organisation of professional development with Cork ETB, and to articulate and implement an overarching strategy for Professional Development. Cork ETB is currently completing a process to appoint a Professional Development coordinator, and this will be a welcome move to further enhance and provide better structure to this area.

F. European Work Shadowing: Erasmus Initiative

Cork ETB has set out in its Vison that it aspires to Cork being recognised internationally as a model of excellence. In order to gain this recognition, it is necessary to both engage with, learn from, and contribute to the wider international dialogue pertaining to Further Education and Training, or, as our European partners refer to it, Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Individual Cork ETB centres have a long history of engagement with the Erasmus initiative and in benefiting from work shadowing across a range of European partners. St. John's Central College has been the leader for Erasmus for Cork ETB and have engaged in Erasmus initiatives since 2003, with partners in a number of different international jurisdictions. In 2018, twelve Cork ETB teachers engaged in a teacher mobility programmes under the Erasmus initiative.

Commencing in 2017, Cork ETB has developed a partnership with ROC Noorderpoort, Groningen, The Netherlands. In Autumn 2019, eleven Cork ETB senior staff members engaged in a three-day mobility visit to Noorderpoort. This visit allowed staff to observe areas of best practice

and investigate how these might be adapted to the Cork context, including the development of vocational educational tools, teaching, and learning and educational management strategies. A wider mobility initiative for Cork ETB staff was planned, but due to COVID-19 this has been moved to digital platforms for the present time.

A European Engagement Co-Ordinator has been appointed for Cork ETB to coordinate and increase European engagement across all provision. Cork ETB looks forward to engaging in mobility visits for all staff in the future.

G. Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

The focus on TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) had underpinned many of the development under the initial national FET Strategy and were reinforced in the current Strategy "*Future FET: Transforming Learning*". Cork ETB developed an initial TEL Action Plan in 2018 to cover the period from 2018 to 2020. The action plan identified a number of key areas for development, with two broad areas of focus:

- Investment in the development and standardisation of the ICT infrastructure, networking, and systems/platforms environment
- Provision of appropriate professional development supports for staff to develop TEL associated expertise and competencies

For the first two years of the plan, the main activity was on infrastructural development, with a view taken that without robust networks and systems in place, learners and staff would not be able to benefit to the fullest extent possible from the incorporation of TEL approaches to teaching and learning. Professional development opportunities were made available to staff, through either local, centre/service initiatives or through SOLAS led national initiatives through post graduate programmes in a number of HE institutions.

In late 2019, a member of teaching staff (PLC service) was internally redeployed to act as TEL support for the scheme. The original intention was that this support worker would develop a comprehensive plan for the development of TEL as a key part of FET service delivery for the future. With the impact of COVID-19, the TEL support role became even more critical, and due to the significant and diverse challenges experienced as all services moved from face to face to online delivery, this forced the Tel role to move largely from strategic development to an operational support role. This has been particularly the case in in smaller centres where the expertise that might have been available within existing staff resources was not present. To date TEL support function has focused largely on:

- Supporting centres in the development of their blended learning approaches
- Developing and delivering appropriate targeted PD interventions
- Developing standardised approaches to VLE utilisation
- Exploring approaches to maximise learner access to digital technology and resources through low-cost solutions
- Supporting online assessment development

The support provided by the TEL support staff member has been a significant success an aid to all Cork ETB FET services, with training provided across all FET provision. Significant PD supports have been developed for TEL, and Cork ETB has also invested in a PD platform (Wriggle Connect) for all FET staff. This platform provides access to a comprehensive range of PD input across multiple platforms, applications, and technologies, and can be utilised by staff in self-focussed and self-paced learning.

A significant investment in technology to support TEL has been made by Cork ETB, and while this was an intention dating to the 2018 Action Plan, the COVID-19 pandemic gave impetus to allow the ETB to deliver on its intention. Every member of FET teaching staff was provided with a

digital device (predominantly laptops) to ensure that they had the necessary tools to access online resources and deliver their courses remotely.

Additional resources to support the continued development of the TEL support role are to be allocated to this area, and it is planned to have additional TEL support staff in place for Q3 2021. Cork ETB's FET budget bid includes a significant submission to support the continued development of Tel resources and systems as well.

3.16 CASE STUDY: FET CORK STAFF PLACEMENT IN INDUSTRY PROGRAMME

The FET Cork Staff Placement in Industry programme provides Cork ETB learning practitioners with a deeper insight into current industry practices, the challenges of the workplace and will, in turn, enrich their programme delivery. It is an opportunity to update their knowledge, learn more about career paths and opportunities of related careers. The learning practitioner is partnered with a local employer who provides one week's work placement. The programme has run since 2017 and in that time 53 staff from the four stand-alone PLC colleges and one PLC co-located in a second level school have engaged in the programme in the following areas:

- Hospitality
- Travel and Tourism
- Financial services
- Administration Service
- ICT
- Early Learning and Care
- Healthcare
- Supply Chain
- Beauty
- Leisure and Fitness

This innovative programme is an excellent mechanism to enable staff to stay current with their area of expertise and to position Cork ETB to best respond to the needs of industry. It has been welcomed by many in local industry. One industry professional commented:

> "Delighted to have worked with the Cork ETB on their innovative staff placement in industry pilot – looking forward to providing more teachers with the opportunity to experience the practical application of their IT course content".

This programme was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is intended to resume in 2022. A future goal for this programme would be to extend the reach to other areas of Cork ETB provision including those delivering in Cork Training Centre and Youthreach.

F. Quality Assurance Training

The Quality Assurance Unit provide staff training related to quality assurance on a scheme, centre, and individual basis. Each Cork ETB centre has a designated Quality Assurance staff member who acts as a support person for that centre. This support initiative has been greatly welcomed by centres as providing a great support, especially for smaller centres who do not always have the same support capacity as the larger centres.

Since 2019 the Quality Assurance Unit has provided the following:

- Support in assessment writing to individual learning practitioners
- Support to Cork Training Centre as it transitions from use of the Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) to Locally Devised Assessment (LDA)
- Whole staff training at centre level on quality assurance procedures and the assessment process
- Whole staff training at centre level on writing examination papers
- Whole staff training at centre level in internal verification process
- Workshops to staff delivering Level 4 modules in Horticulture, Mathematics and IT on examination writing
- Workshops to staff from across all Youthreach centres on Integration of Assessment

Centres are invited to request additional training as required. However, the ability of the Quality Assurance Unit to provide staff training is constrained by available resources, particularly that of time. A further expansion of the Quality Assurance team and/or the appointment of a Professional Development Coordinator for Cork ETB would be welcome to enhance this area.

3.17 EVALUATION

Staff recruitment works effectively within the constraints that Cork ETB operates under. Staff recruitment in Cork ETB is organised centrally by the HR department. Recruitment is effective but is constrained by issues of funding, and there is a lack of consistency in some areas, particularly Self-Financing Adult Education. Induction of new staff is an area that could be improved and strengthened across provision; it is currently uneven across services. Professional development is an area of critical importance and needs to be improved across Cork ETB. The appointment of a Professional Development Co-ordinator and development of a Professional Development framework is needed to further enhance professional development within Cork ETB. This area is of increasing importance as Cork ETB responds to the strategic priorities of the FET Strategy to build skills in response to regional and national needs.

3.18 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

- Very good professional development practices exist within centres
- Cork ETB supports staff professional development through the subsidising of fees
- FET Cork Staff Placement in Industry Programme is an excellent professional development initiative for FET staff
- The Quality Assurance Unit provides effective training and supports for Cork ETB FET staff

3.19 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- It is a challenge to recruit staff in some areas and to manage staff over-subscription in other areas
- It is difficult to recruit cover staff, especially in Training Services and Youthreach
- Standardising recruitment practices and requirements for Self-Financing Adult Education
- Recruiting and retaining staff for the role of Resource Person within Youthreach
- Induction of staff remains a challenge for FET staff nationally and within Cork ETB

3.20 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- The development of a Cork ETB-wide induction programme for FET staff would be an enhancement to FET services. Blended learning and online delivery may be an avenue to facilitate this
- The appointment of a Professional Development coordinator to facilitate Cork ETB-wide professional learning opportunities for staff
- Further expansion of the European work shadowing under the Erasmus initiative across Cork ETB
- Further expansion of the FET Cork Staff Placement in Industry Programme
- Further expansion of the training and support offered by the Quality Assurance Unit

3.21 PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

A. Programme Development and Approval process

In 2017 QQI published the "*Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training*", which was more comprehensive than the previous validation process for FETAC awards. These guidelines were further revised in 2019 with the accompanying Guidelines for completing the CAS compound programme descriptor template (QQI, 2019). This was a welcome initiative and has led to the development of some new programmes for the ETB sector. Cork ETB has begun, in the last year to re-engage in programme validation.

B. History of programme validation in Cork ETB

Most of the programmes delivered in Cork ETB are legacies from the collaborative national programme development processes that were instituted across the VEC sector on the introduction of the CAS awards system, or are programmes developed under former FÁS structures that were retained on the transfer of training services to Cork ETB. As one of the largest FET providers nationally, Cork ETB had historically played a significant role in the shared programme development processes that had existed, providing programme writing expertise through SMEs, and the management and coordination of several major programme developments on behalf of the sector.

The early years of Cork ETB were mainly focused on organisational issues arising from the merger of the former City of Cork VEC, Cork County VEC and FÁS/SOLAS Training Services. Much of the efforts of the Quality Assurance Unit were devoted to developing a unified quality assurance system and central quality assurance policy and procedures for assessment. This process is now complete (for further details see Section 5.24). A unified quality assurance system was an essential first step before Cork ETB believed it would be in a position to engage fully in the programme development and validation process. With the achievement of a robust unified quality assurance system, Cork ETB is now in prime position to develop programmes under the new criteria for validation.

C. Cork ETB Processes for Programme Approval

The Cork ETB Programme Approval Group was formed to streamline the application process for centres adding new modules to awards and to submit applications for new awards. The programme development and review process are coordinated by the Assistant Process Coordinator, who co-ordinates the development and evaluation of the programme by SMEs who have been trained to evaluate programmes. Cork ETB was one of the first ETBs to engage with the new validation process. It has done so in two ways:

1. As a collaborating provider on Post 2016 Apprenticeships
2. Development of new programmes for use in Cork ETB

3.22 CASE STUDY: COLLABORATING PROVIDER ON POST 2016 APPRENTICESHIPS

Cork ETB has been active in engaging as a collaborating provider on Post 2016 Apprenticeships and is a collaborating provider of the following:

APPRENTICESHIP	LEAD PROVIDER	LOCATION WITHIN CORK ETB
Level 6 **Advanced Certificate in Accounting**	Accounting Technicians Ireland	Cork College of Commerce
Level 6 **Advanced Certificate in Auctioneering and Property Services**	CDETB	Cork College of Commerce
Level 6 **Network Engineering Apprenticeship**	Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)	Cork Training Centre
Level 6 **Software Development Apprenticeship**	Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)	Cork Training Centre
Level 6 **National Commis Chef Apprenticeship Programme**	Kerry ETB	Cork Training Centre
Level 6 **National Hairdressing Apprenticeship***	LCork ETB	St. John's Central College
Level 5 **National Craft Butchery Apprenticeship Programme****	MSLETB	Cork Training Centre

*First intake on the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship is January 2021

**First intake on the National Craft Butchery Apprenticeship is in Spring 2021

The experience of Cork ETB as a collaborating provider on these programmes has been invaluable in developing capacity and experience of the post 2016 Apprenticeships process. While Cork ETB has not yet been a lead provider in developing a Post-2016 Apprenticeship, it is a goal of Cork ETB to engage in this process in the years to come.

D. Programme Validation by Cork ETB

Upon the publication of the new QQI policy of validation (2017) Cork ETB began work as a pilot ETBs to develop a programme under the new validation criteria (see case study below). Initially this process was slow due to the availability of staff resourcing. Staff capacity in the Quality Assurance Unit was limited as previously mentioned, as much time and energy was spent on the development of a unified quality assurance process for Cork ETB. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) gave freely of their time to assist in the process but were also engaging in full time teaching duties, so this was limiting.

In 2019 the staffing allocation of the Quality Assurance Unit was increased and thereby increased the ability to fully engage in programme validation. Four of the Quality Assurance staff have engaged in continual professional development to increase their capacity in this area and have recently completed a *Postgraduate Certificate in Programme Development and Validation for the FET Sector* run by NUI Maynooth and the Further Education Support Service (FESS). This has given Quality Assurance staff the skills and ability to fully engage in the validation process as can be seen in the following case studies.

3.23 CASE STUDY ONE: LEVEL 6 ADVANCED CERTIFICATION IN MUSIC FOR COLÁISTE STIOFÁIN NAOFA (CSN)

In late 2017 QQI published the award specification for the Level 6 QQI Advanced Certificate in Music and the component specification for components Music Performance and Music Theory and Practice. Two Cork ETB teachers from CSN were involved in the development of the major award specification and the component specification for QQI. CSN approached the Cork ETB Programme Approval Group (PAG) with a proposal to develop a programme leading to Level 6 QQI Advanced Certificate in Music. The PAG granted approval and a programme development team was established, initially consisting of the two teachers, the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Officer and Cork ETB Assistant Process Coordinator. Initial work took place on the programme in 2018 and early 2019. However, progress was slow, and this was due to issues of capacity and resources within Cork ETB. The new criterion for validation requires a robust programme development process and demands time. Furthermore, as the Quality Assurance Unit engaged with the Validation criteria it became clear that a robust set of quality assurance procedures and a unified quality assurance system was a prerequisite for engagement in validation.

One of the resourcing issues was that the two subject matter experts (SMEs) were also full-time teachers delivering on level 5 and level 6 programmes. While the teachers were best placed from a professional and practice perspective to guide the content development associated with this programme, the fact that under current staffing arrangements there is little or no scope to release staff from their primary duties to engage in programme development (or other areas of work) creates an issue, with a reliance on "goodwill" being the only option available[4]. If staff who are best placed to act as SME's and in other development roles cannot be released to engage in these activities, it will continue to hamper the developments that are necessary across the FET sector.

Within the Quality Assurance Unit, the resource issue was addressed in 2020 with the addition of staff to the Quality Assurance Unit increasing capacity to engage in validation and the addition of another Cork ETB staff member to the Programme Development Team. The programme was finalised and submitted for validation in July 2020.

The overall aim of the programme is to guide learners in becoming prepared for employment in the music industry and/or the further study of music and it addresses both gaps identified in music education (Moore, 2015) and local demand as experienced by Cork ETB. The QQI validation panel convened remotely in October 2020 and the validation application was successful, with some recommendations made by the panel. The first learners to complete this new programme will be in June 2021 at which time an evaluation of the inaugural programme will be conducted.

[4] For many years, it has been acknowledged that the requirements of PLC colleges "do not sit comfortably with mainstream second level education" (NAPD, 2017, p. 15)

3.24 CASE STUDY TWO: LEVEL 4 SPECIAL PURPOSE AWARD IN CLEANING SKILLS FOR CORK TRAINING CENTRE

A second programme was developed for validation in Autumn 2020 – a Level 4 Non-CAS Special Purpose Award in Cleaning Skills. This development of this programme was inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic which has emphasised the need for and adherence to cleaning across a range of settings.

The lack of a generic cleaning programme across the ETB provision was noted by Cork Training Centre, who approached the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit to develop a programme for cleaning skills. Research was carried out, after this initial discussion, to discover what current QQI cleaning awards were available. Although there are QQI programmes in cleaning and hygiene specific to a particular industry such as healthcare and the pharma sector, there was no generic programme in cleaning skills. As a result, a request to develop a QQI Level 4 Special Purpose Award in General Cleaning Skills was made to the Cork ETB PAG, which was approved.

The second programme prepared by Cork ETB for validation was the General Cleaning Skills award, and the development and validation of this programme benefited significantly from the experience gained through the development of the level 6 Advanced Music Programme.

For the Cleaning Skills programme, a member of Cork ETB staff was seconded to work as a SME on the programme development. This released the SME from their teaching duties to concentre solely on the programme development process. Furthermore, as the General Cleaning Skills award is Special Purpose award, consisting of a single module component, the process was more streamlined than that for the development of a programme leading to a full Major Award.

This General Cleaning programme award was submitted for validation in January 2021 and Cork ETB awaits a date for the QQI panel meeting.

3.25 CASE STUDY THREE: LEVEL 6 SUPPLEMENTAL AWARD IN DOMESTIC GAS SAFETY FOR CORK TRAINING CENTRE

A third programme, a Level 6 Supplemental Award in Domestic Gas Safety was developed by Cork ETB in the winter of 2020. Cork Training Centre had delivered a Domestic Gas Safety programme for many years, leading to the QQI Level 6 Award in Domestic Gas Safety (6U16018). QQI deactivated this award in 2017 and published a new award specification for a QQI Level 6 Supplemental Certificate in Domestic Gas Safety (6U20556). It also published a component specification for Gas Safety Domestic 6N20553, which is the sole component in the award specification.

Cork Training Centre wished to continue to provide access to a framework of certification through which a craftsperson can acquire the required level of competence in gas installation and service as required by the industry. This programme was developed in conjunction with the Special Purpose Level 4 Award in Cleaning Skills. There were benefits to this – as both programmes were being developed for Cork Training Centre meetings held could address both programmes. However, it was occasionally difficult to manage the time resources needed to develop both programmes at the same time. This programme was submitted for validation in February 2021.

3.26 CASE STUDY FOUR: COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ETBS

Cork ETB engages in collaboration with other ETBs in programme development. As previously mentioned, Cork ETB is a collaborating provider for seven Post-2016 Apprenticeships. Additionally, Cork ETB is involved in the ongoing collaborative development of the new QQI award in Early Learning and Care. As part of the QQI review of QQI Levels 5 and 6 Early Childhood Education and Care awards, a programme development group was established and a member of staff from Cork ETB is a member of the group.

Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB) have taken the lead for the ETB sector to develop the new Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care. A Cork ETB staff member has been seconded to the Curriculum Development Team for this initiative and the Cork ETB Director of FET is the chair of the Programme Board. DDLETB will submit the programme to QQI for validation in April 2021, and at the same time Cork ETB will make an application for differential validation for this programme to QQI.

3.27 EVALUATION

It is challenging that many of the programmes used by Cork ETB are legacy programmes and need to be reviewed. In 2021 Cork ETB will conduct a scoping exercise to identify with centres the programmes that need to be prioritised for review and identify the resources and capacity to engage in further programme development.

The Quality Assurance Unit has significantly developed capacity in programme development in the past year. This will be of real benefit as Cork ETB continues to engage in programme development and validation.

Cork ETB is concerned that the requirements for programme development and validation place a significant resource requirement on a provider developing a programme and submitting it for validation. With the number of individual programmes delivered by Cork ETB, and the need indicated by many centres to urgently review and update a large number of programmes, the capacity of the ETB in its own right, and the sector as a whole to manage these requirements are questionable.

3.28 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- The new criteria for validation require providers to develop a robust programme. Cork ETB operates a unified quality assurance system across both all education and training provision. This was a real advantage in the validation process as Cork ETB had effective and robust quality assurance procedures to underpin the development of new programmes
- Engagement in the new programme validation has been an energizing venture for Cork ETB. Quality Assurance staff have developed the knowledge and skills to engage successfully in this process and this skill building will facilitate the continuation of Cork ETB's engagement in the validation process
- As one of the largest ETBs it its Cork ETB's intention to continue to engage in the validation process
- Programme validation requires cooperation and collaboration between diverse stakeholders. The practice of Quality Assurance staff member taking the project lead

for validation has proved effective as there is one person with oversight of the process

- Online collaboration tools such as One Drive and Microsoft Teams have facilitated collaboration of diverse stakeholders

3.29 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- One limitation in the validation process is limitations of capacity. As SMEs need to be involved in the process it means that each disparate programme requires a new SME. Cork ETB has, at this juncture, worked with 6 SMEs in the development of programmes from 3 disparate Fields of Learning. These SMEs may not be the SMEs needed for the next programme to be validated. Thus, while the Quality Assurance Unit is building its expertise, with each programme, the SMEs present as novices to programme writing. This challenge is overcome with support and direction for the Quality Assurance staff member leading on the programme
- Programme Development is a demanding task and is one that cannot be done "as an extra" to a full-time teaching contract. Cork ETB has learned from initial setbacks and has now taken the approach of releasing staff from teaching duties to engage in programme development. This has enhanced the programme development process. However, a challenge remains on how learning practitioners can be released from delivery if they are working in a field of learning where there are shortages of staff
- The significant volume of programmes that require review and the time implications under current validation requirements are a significant concern

3.30 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Cork ETB will devise a training programme to be completed by SMEs when they are initially released to programme development duties
- Cork ETB will review existing programmes at centre level and identify a suite of programmes to be developed in the short term

3.31 ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

Cork ETB's vision is to provide "*a pathway for every learner*". Cork ETB has thus far relied on provision focused and local arrangements to support students accessing and moving between and from various programmes. Cork ETB has recently begun to work on developing a specific Access, Transfer and Progression policy which will encapsulate all pre-existing policies.

A. Admissions Policy

Centralised Admission policies exist for each strand of Cork ETB provision. Different strands of provision operate different referral and admission procedures as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 Operation of Referrals and Admissions

SERVICE	LEARNER REFERRED BY
Adult Literacy **Community Education** **Back to Education**	• Open days • Social Media Campaigns • Information Days with DEASP

SERVICE	LEARNER REFERRED BY
Youthreach	• School Completion Programme • Education Welfare Officer • School Guidance Counsellor • Garda Youth Division • Youth Services • Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) • Social Workers • Parents • Self-referral
PLC	• Self-referral • School Guidance Counsellor • Open Day • Visits to targeted schools
Training Programmes	• Self-referral • Information Days with DEASP • School Guidance Counsellor • Apprenticeship Roadshow • Visits to targeted schools
Self-Financing Adult Education (Evening courses)	• Self-referral

In addition, Cork ETB operates additional support services for learners under the auspices of Cork Youth Services and its two Outdoor Education Centres in Kinsale and Schull. Learners access these services through:

- Self-referral
- Involvement of school/ FET service
- Parents/guardians

B. Access – Information to Learners

Learners undertaking any programme across all FET provisions receive information regarding access procedures for the chosen programme through the designated centre/college and wider Cork ETB information channels. Currently, information on access to all Cork ETB programme information is available on:

- The Further Education and Training Course Hub (FETCH), www.fetchcourses.ie
- The Cork ETB website, www.corketb.ie
- Cork ETB social media channels – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn
- Cork ETB Centre/College websites
- Cork ETB College prospectus
- Information leaflets
- Local and national media including radio advertisement and newspaper advertisements
- Noticeboards in local office of Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP)

Despite the availability of this information, information on access to programmes is presented in a disjointed manner. There is currently no "one stop shop" for prospective learners apart from the Cork ETB website, which is unwieldy, with information that is hard to find. Therefore, an Access Transfer and Progression Working Group was formed in 2020 with the aim of streamlining information for prospective learners. The group has been working on drafting a Roadmap for all

Cork ETB programmes, both accredited and unaccredited. The group envisage the roadmap to be available in hard and soft copy to accommodate all potential and existing Cork ETB learners. The publication of this Roadmap will streamline the information available for prospective learners and enable prospective learners, and those advising them, to choose the Cork ETB pathway best suited to their needs.

A Communications Steering Group was established in Q4 2020 with the task of coordinating, simplifying and bringing coherence and organisational consistency to all communications for Cork ETB. This group is developing an Integrated Communications plan for the organisation.

C. Guidance

The provision of guidance varies across Cork ETB, depending on the type of provision.

i. Guidance for Adult Literacy, Community Education, and the Back to Education Initiative

The Cork ETB Adult Guidance Service facilitates learners to make informed decisions about accessing education and training, transferring within, and progressing from Cork ETB. The Adult Guidance Service is an integrated part of Cork ETB Adult Education Services in Cork City and County. It covers a large geographical area with one of the lowest ratios of staff to learner in Ireland.

The Adult Guidance Service can be accessed in a variety of ways, by initially contacting either of the Information Officers (by phone or email) who will either provide detailed information as required or if deemed necessary, refer the client on to the Guidance Counsellor for a guidance appointment. Clients can also make an appointment by contacting the relevant Guidance Counsellor directly as all staff details are listed on the Cork ETB website or listed in the contact details of each local FET centre. There is no standardised approach; the Guidance Counsellor responds to local needs, in a flexible, professional, and responsive way.

It is very challenging for the staff of Cork ETB Guidance service to deliver an adequate service across all Cork ETB target groups, given the large geographical areas being covered and the large numbers of groups. In general, BTEI groups are prioritised as they are completing full major awards or several components and are more likely to want to progress onto further education and training courses or employment. Within the Adult Literacy service, learners who are completing programmes at QQI Level 3 are targeted.

ii. Guidance in Youthreach

Access to guidance in Youthreach services is inconsistent across the provision. Some centres have access to a Guidance Counsellor working directly with students to discuss career progression and possibilities for part of the week, however others do not, and this is a challenge. In centres who do not have access to a guidance counsellor, this gap is often filled by the Centre Co-ordinator or Resource Person, but as they have other duties, they may not have the time to properly dedicate to this important activity. Furthermore, as they are not trained Guidance staff, they may not have the skills and expertise needed to counsel learners.

iii. Guidance in PLC

The four stand-alone PLC colleges and centres where PLC is co-located in a second level school have access to Guidance as per the terms of DES Circular 0014/2019[5]. The four stand-alone PLC colleges have allocation for between one and two Guidance Counsellors, depending on the number of learners enrolled in the college. The four centres which are co-located in a second level school share their guidance allocation with the second level service. This brings challenges as the Guidance Counsellors have other demands on their time. Learners who attend Self Financing (Evening) programmes have no guidance provision and any guidance is provided informally by the course tutor. This limits Cork ETB's ability to provide a consistent pathway for every learner. The

[5] https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2019/14.pdf

role of Guidance Counsellor in PLC is three pronged and involves the provision of counselling to learners in need, guidance to learners on progression options and negotiating progression routes with HE institutes. A challenge in recent years has been demands on Guidance time as the number of learners self-referring for counselling support has increased. Therefore, some centres have linked with outside agencies to provide counselling for learners, and Cork ETB is in the process of tendering for a FET wide counselling service.

iv. Guidance in Training

The primary purpose of Training services is to provide for progression to employment. Therefore, there is no formal guidance provision in Cork Training Centre. Learners who require guidance may access informal guidance through the relevant Training Instructor or Assistant Manager. This is a gap in Cork ETB supports for learners and is an area for some development in the future.

Provision of guidance in Cork ETB is varied; some services have excellent guidance, whereas other have ad hoc (Youthreach) or no arrangements (Training Centre, Evening classes) in place. An aim for Cork ETB is to further standardise guidance provision across all aspects of its provision, to truly provide a pathway for every learner.

D. Recognition of Prior Learning

The Cork ETB Executive Self Evaluation (2017) identified a need for Cork ETB to develop structures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). To date Cork ETB does not have a specific policy, or the attendant structures in place to support the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Some local arrangements are in place to apply limited recognition for prior learning, but this facility is being requested more frequently by learners and the introduction of the restriction of 5 years for recognition of prior QQI certification has increased the demand for RPL from the learners. Cork ETB has been involved in the national RPL Tobar project targeted at Defence Force personnel with low certification. See the case study below for further details.

In 2019/2020, Cork ETB convened a Recognition of Prior Learning Working Group, under the remit of the Quality Steering Group. This group has developed a draft ETB-wide RPL procedure. Due to COVID-19, the roll out of this procedure has been delayed as it will involve extensive consultation with staff and staff training. It is now planned that the RPL procedure will be piloted in the academic year 2021-2022.

3.32 CASE STUDY: TOBAR PROJECT

The TOBAR project was piloted in ten ETBs and aimed to enable Defence Forces Personnel who had extensive professional experience and unaccredited learning to avail of RPL to gain accreditation for awards up to QQI Level 6. Six cohorts availed of the Tobar project through Cork ETB. Learners mostly attained component certificate at QQI Level 3 and QQI level 4.

The majority of the Defence Forces Personnel who participated in the Tobar Project were coming close to the end of their military contracts and were preparing for transition to the civilian world of work. The certification and affirmation they received through this programme significantly improved their readiness for this transition.

Experience in this pilot project has given Cork ETB significant experience of RPL which we will build on in 2021 as we roll out our RPL procedure.

E. Transfer

Transfer between Cork ETB centres and within centres could be improved. When transfer occurs, it is often ad hoc and driven by the learner themselves rather than formalised by or between centres.

In the larger PLC colleges, within centre transfer occurs with relative ease at the beginning of a programme. A learner who, at the beginning of a programme realises that they would be better suited to a different programme within that centre can request to transfer to that programme. However, this is dependent on spaces being available within that programme. Some transfer between PLC centres occurs but again, this is very much on an ad hoc individual basis.

Transfer is also often driven and requested by the learner with little formal pathways. This is an area that could be strengthened. Similarly transfer occurs on local basis between various Youthreach centres and BTEI, CTC and LTI programmes. However, such transfers are informal and again often driven by the learner rather than the centre.

The transfer routes for learners are not clearly defined or set out. Mapping and publicising these pathways is an area that can be improved.

F. Progression

Cork ETB operates progression pathways for learners both within Cork ETB and externally to Higher Education (HE). Pathways within Cork ETB have improved in recent years with good relationships being developed between the different Cork ETB services. External Progression is well defined for the stand-alone PLC Colleges, but less so for PLC provision in second level schools and for learners on Training programmes.

i. Progression within Cork ETB

Progression within Cork ETB usually involves learners progressing from a service offering Level 4 to a PLC College or Cork Training Centre. Learners at levels 1-3 progress to BTEI/Community Education.

ii. Progression from a Level 4 Programme to a Level 5 PLC Programme

The PLC Colleges offer an Access Support Structure for nominated second level schools and all Youthreach centres. An additional application and tracking form allow applications from these learners to be identified and tracked through the process, with feedback being required to the Youthreach Centre on application outcomes (acceptance/rejection) and upon interview, special consideration is given to those applicants with support forms.

Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, Cork College of Commerce and St. John's Central College offer course shadowing to learners from Youthreach, Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives, and other strands of Cork ETB provision, including Cork ETB second level schools. Course shadowing days allow prospective learners to attend classes in the course of their choice, and also meet current learners and learning practitioners. This initiative has anecdotally been successful in creating pathways for learners within Cork ETB. However, limitations include that the shadowing can take place over many weeks and this can be disruptive to learners. A dedicated course shadowing week with scheduled workshops may be a better use of resources and facilities and should provide a more coherent insight into student life.

3.33 CASE STUDY: COMMUNICATIONS CLASS LINKED BETWEEN YOUTHREACH AND CORK COLLEGE OF COMMERCE

In 2019 Cork College of Commerce initiated a programme with Youthreach centres in which existing learners in Youthreach could attend the college on Friday mornings to complete the QQI Level 5 Communications component. This was an effort to integrate them into a college environment completing college work whilst still being supported by their centres. It also reduces the workload for those who choose to progress to PLC by having one component completed. 21 learners commenced the programme in September 2019 and 17 were in active attendance prior to the March 2020 lockdown.

iii. Progression from a Level 4 Programme to Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship Services in Cork Training Centre engage with Youthreach services to encourage and facilitate learner progression to Apprenticeships. Youthreach Macroom and Cork Training Centre have developed a good working relationship and Cork Training Centre enables learners in Youthreach Macroom to access courses on a part-time basis based on identified training needs.

iv. Progression from Cork ETB Programmes to Higher Education

Cork ETB aims to provide opportunities for learners to progress to Higher Education. The national Higher Education Links Scheme[6] (HELS) gives learners the opportunity to use their QQI Level 5 or 6 major award to apply, through the CAO, for a place in the first year of a Higher Education programme. In addition to this, Cork ETB has been proactive in negotiating progression routes for Cork ETB learners including the Cork College Progression Scheme[7] (CCPS) with CIT (now MTU) and ACCESS+[8] (with UCC). Similar progression routes and agreements exist for some PLC courses with other Institutes of Technology and Higher Education institutions, both in Ireland, the UK and Europe. These progression routes are often available only for targeted and linked PLC Colleges.

A future goal would be to standardise and widen these progression pathways to learners attending Cork Training Centre. Although the primary purpose of its training services is to provide for progression to employment, some informal progression from Training Services to further studies does occur, and this may be an area for some development in the future.

3.34 CASE STUDY – CORK COLLEGES PROGRESSION SCHEME

First established in 2006, Cork ETB has had a long-standing joint progression initiative with CIT (now MTU Cork) – the Cork Colleges Progression Scheme (CCPS). CCPS is available to Cork ETB learners who complete a QQI Level 5 or QQI Level 6 programme with:

- Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa
- Cork College of Commerce
- Kinsale College
- Mallow College
- St. John's Central College

Under CCPS, a number of courses in MTU Cork Campus are linked to certain courses in Cork ETB. MTU Cork Campus reserves a number of places on these linked courses for applicants who achieve specified levels and other requirements in their QQI award. A CCPS working group comprised of staff from MTU Cork Campus and Cork ETB meets at least twice a year to discuss and review progression arrangements.

3.35 CASE STUDY – UCC ACCESS+ PROGRAMME

ACCESS+ was established by UCC PLUS+ in response to an identified need to support the significant numbers of students from DEIS second level schools in Cork City who were progressing to Further Education. Many of these students were identified as having an interest in, and the potential to succeed in, Higher Education. However, due to a range of social, cultural, financial, and educational barriers they were not in a position to proceed directly to Higher Education.

[6] https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/HIgher-Education-Links-Scheme-(HELS).aspx

[7] https://www.cit.ie/prospectivestudents.ccps

[8] https://www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/accessplus/

ACCESS+ aims to increase the numbers of students from under-represented groups in Higher Education, by supporting students on their transition through education, starting in second level (pre-entry to FE), throughout FE (post entry to FE) and then as they explore and apply for progression to HE. Supports are provided to learners both pre-entry to FET and when they enter FET. The ACCESS+ Officer was appointed in Winter 2019. Although the ACCESS+ Officer is located in Cork College of Commerce he supports learners in all the three city-based PLC colleges. The inaugural year of this initiative is currently being reviewed and feedback thus far is very positive. One learner commented:

> "I've accepted my offer for Commerce in UCC. I'm super delighted and can't wait to begin. Just want to thank you for always being there in regard to answering all my questions that I had and really someone I could talk to when I felt a bit unsure."

As the ACCESS+ initiative continues to grow this will be a great support for Cork ETB learners to assist them to progress to UCC.

v. Memoranda of Understanding between Cork ETB Colleges and other HE bodies

In addition to CCPS and UCC ACCESS+ there are several Memoranda of Understanding which exist between Cork ETB centres and HE institutes in Ireland and abroad as shown in Table 3 Advanced entry (i.e., entry to a year other than first year) is possible from some Cork ETB courses linked to specific linked HE programmes.

Table 3 Memoranda of Understanding between Cork ETB centres and HE institutes

CORK ETB COLLEGE/PROVIDER	HIGH EDUCATION INSTITUTION
Cork ETB	Waterford Institute of Technology
Cork College of Commerce	Advance Entry to MTU (Kerry Campus)[9]
Cork College of Commerce	Advanced Entry to Business Studies in Griffith College Cork
Cork College of Commerce	Nursing Degree programmes in the UK
Cork College of Commerce	Psychology Degrees in Scotland
Mallow College	Nursing Degree programmes in the UK
St John's Central College	Advanced Entry to MTU (Kerry Campus)[9]
St. Johns Central College	Advanced Entry into the Bachelor of Science Degree in Computing Limerick Institute of Technology
St. John's Central College	Veterinary Nursing in Edinburgh Napier University
St. John's Central College	TV and Video Production, Fashion Design, Interior Design, University of Sunderland
Kinsale College	Advanced Entry to BA (Hons) in Sculpture and Combined Media in Limerick Institute of Technology

[9] Under review as part of MTU/ETB engagement dialogue to develop broader MOU

vi. Progression to Employment

Cork ETB aims to provide learners with the knowledge, competence, and skills to progress to employment. Many Cork ETB courses provide for direct progression to employment, although some PLC courses are more focused on progression to HE. Organisation of progression to employment is variable across Cork ETB. Some centres have excellent practices which could be extended across Cork ETB. For example, some Youthreach Centres run a Workwise Skills programme which aims to prepare learners to progress to employment by providing structured, continuous, on-the-job practical work experience for students in placements including retail, manufacturing, hairdressing, hospitality, and Outdoor Education. The Youthreach staff work collaboratively with employers in developing a tailored curriculum to meet the needs of local employers whilst upskilling the student to aid their employment prospects. This has enhanced the reputation of the centre; one prospective learner commented "*I wish to come to Youthreach Macroom as I know I will get a job.*" This is a ringing endorsement for the programme.

Similarly, each year Cork College of Commerce organises a Recruitment Registration Day where learners meet HR representatives from recruitment companies such as La Creme, Collins McNicolas and Bluebird. Learners often pass on verbal feedback to course directors regarding these events highlighting skills or knowledge they require for employment or have learnt. However, no formal method has been used to assess the effectiveness of these. Employers often comment on the quality of the engagement by learners, but again in an informal way.

G. Skills to Advance/Compete

Skills to Advance (STA) is a SOLAS-funded initiative for the training and development of workers. It offers upskilling and reskilling opportunities for people in employment, with the training provided either at no cost to the employer/employee, or at a heavily subsidised rate. Three priority cohorts have been identified by SOLAS for the initiative:

- Those in lower skilled jobs
- Employees in an industry at risk of displacement
- Those aged over 50+ years of age

The initiative has three available routes for assisting company employee training:

1. Individual employee applicants can avail of an appropriate education or training intervention through existing night course planned delivery or through a planned day programme
2. Through the provision of a requested training intervention delivered to a number of companies within an industry/business sector
3. Through the provision of strategically important programmes for industries within the region

The importance of STA provision has been particularly highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, although its initial purpose was to better protect employees from the type of disruption encountered during the most recent economic downturn. Cork ETB's STA provision is being increased, and the employer engagement mechanisms to assist Cork ETB in identifying the needs of business and industries are being augmented. One of the key tools for effective STA delivery is the identification of employer and employee needs through a structured Skills Audit.

Skills to Compete is a further initiative piloted by SOLAS with ETBs as a consequence of Covid-19. Unlike Skills to Advance, there is no additional funding available for this provision, rather it is an "umbrella" description intended to simplify potential participant access to what can often be a multiplicity of confusing FET offerings. Some initial courses designed specifically for employees affected by the pandemic have been developed by Cork ETB, under the Community Education programme, and additional courses are planned.

H. Tracking Progression

The tracking of progression within Cork ETB needs to be improved. Some tracking of learner destinations is undertaken immediately after a course finishes or may be completed later as part of a requirement within PLSS to provide progression data. However, staff resource limitations mean that the extent to which this is followed up on is extremely narrow and varies across centres. Given that the outcomes, including progression for FET learners, are very often delayed, recording progression information solely on the basis of the first location after course completion is limited.

There is no dedicated *"follow on"* service or system to track learners' progression. For example, Cork ETB does not formally follow up with and track learners progress in the years after they complete a programme. Some centres do maintain contact with learners through e.g., social media networks but this is localised and is not formalised in any meaningful way. As the requirements of SOLAS require provision of more accurate and complete data on progressions, both immediate and long term, and the fact that this will be one of the key variables in a future funding model for FET makes this a priority area. SOLAS, as part of the Strategic Pilot initiative, which Cork ETB participated in, used a variety of national data sources including DEASP, CSO and Revenue to track more accurately learner progression over a longer period. This was a resource intensive project and required specific data sharing agreements and embedded SOLAS staff in the various organisations to extract and collate the required data.

Cork ETB obviously does not have the resources to undertake such an initiative on its own, however it recognises that this is an area which could be improved across Cork ETB.

3.36 EVALUATION

Admission policies are clear across Cork ETB. However, information regarding Access to Cork ETB programmes is varied and will be enhanced by the ongoing work of the Access, Transfer and Progression Group.

Guidance services are well established in some strands of provision such as BTEI and PLC but are lacking in Youthreach and Training. To meet the aim of providing a pathway for every learner, guidance services must be further enhanced.

Cork ETB has begun to develop capacity in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and this work will be ongoing over the coming year. Transfer within Cork ETB is underutilised and could be further enhanced. Individual centres have put a lot of work into progressing routes from ETB and these need to be enhanced and developed across Cork ETB. Some excellent practice exists for enabling learner progression within Cork ETB. However, there is an overall lack of data on tracking progression of Cork ETB learners, and this should be addressed. Some very good practices exist for Access, Transfer and Progression within Cork ETB, however there is much more work to be done.

3.37 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Clear admission policies for different strands of Cork ETB provision
- The TOBAR project has given Cork ETB significant experience of RPL.
- CCPS is an effective mechanism for enhancing learner progression to HE
- The ACCESS+ initiative is a good support for learners to progress to UCC.

3.38 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Information on Cork ETB courses could be presented in a more streamlined and coherent manner for potential learners
- Access to the Guidance Service is inconsistent across Cork ETB provision
- RPL procedures currently in draft form for Cork ETB
- Transfer options are poorly understood and underused within Cork ETB
- Lack of resources mean that the monitoring of progression rates is limited

3.39 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- The development of a Roadmap for access to Cork ETB services will be a welcome addition to better inform potential learners on the range of programme on offer
- The development of a coherent communications plan for Cork ETB services
- Extension of Guidance services across all strands of Cork ETB provision
- The Cork ETB RPL procedure will be piloted in the academic year 2021-2022
- As the ACCESS+ initiative continues to grow this will be a great support for Cork ETB learners to assist them to progress to UCC
- The extension of the Work Wise Skills programme to other Youthreach centres

3.40 ASSESSMENT INTEGRITY, ASSESSMENT DELIVERY, APPROVAL OF LEARNER RESULTS AND REVIEW

A. Integrity of Assessments

A guiding principle of Cork ETB is to be fair, open, and accountable and operate to the highest ethical, professional, moral, and legal standards. In line with these principles, Cork ETB operates a standardised assessment policy across all provision.

Initially Cork ETB inherited three diverse quality assurance systems from the legacy providers of City of Cork VEC, County Cork VEC and FÁS. When the Quality Assurance Unit was established in 2016 the first aim was to establish a standardised quality assurance system for the ETB.

The Assessment Working Group in consultation with the Quality Assurance Unit has devised the full range of assessment procedures as required by the QQI Guidelines on Quality Assuring Assessment (2018). All procedures are open for consultation with all Cork ETB staff before they are finalised, which enables all staff to have their voice heard and thus have ownership over the assessment procedures.

The adoption of a standardised quality assurance system was a substantial piece of work and has contributed to the development of a central and coherent Cork ETB identity. All Cork ETB staff have access to the quality assurance assessment policy and procedures on the Cork ETB Quality Assurance SharePoint site. Cork ETB approved module descriptors are also available on SharePoint. This enhances the culture of quality and efforts for consistency in Cork ETB.

The establishment of a standardised quality assurance procedures facilitated the pivot to emergency remote teaching (ERT) which has been a feature of the current academic year (2020-2021) as a consequence of COVID-19. All quality assurance procedures have been updated to consider the use of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment.

3.41 CASE STUDY – PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY OF ASSESSMENT DURING INITIAL COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

The closure of schools and all education settings in March 2020 presented many challenges for Cork ETB as provision across all levels pivoted to Emergency Remote Teaching. A main challenge that had to be addressed was how to conduct end of year assessments. The June submission period is the busiest certification time for Cork ETB. In consultation with QQI, it was decided to move all outstanding Skills Demonstrations and all end of year examinations to alternative assessment techniques. In doing this. Cork ETB was careful to ensure:

- That the assessment outcomes, and the certification awarded arising from the alternative assessment retained the validity, reliability, and integrity of the awards
- That amendments to planned assessment activities were aligned with the learning outcomes of the component award
- That amended assessments and changes were proportional, balanced, and fair

All alternative assessments were reviewed by the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit and when necessary adjustments were made. In total 700 assessments were reviewed by the individual centres and the Quality Assurance Unit, in a tight timeframe. In doing so, Cork ETB was assured that the integrity and quality of both the assessment and overall award were preserved.

B. Authenticity of Learner's Evidence

Cork ETB ensures the integrity of the assessment process and authenticity of work submitted by learners. The assessment brief template used across all Cork ETB centres includes a declaration of authorship i.e., that work submitted is the learner's original work. *QA6.3 Assessment Design for QQI Awards Procedure*[10] has been updated in 2020 to facilitate the use of Moodle. If the brief is being submitted via Moodle, clicking agree on submission statement is accepted in lieu of signature. This ensures authenticity of learner's work.

C. Examination Processes

All end of module examinations are organised and held in individual centres. Each centre has a Quality Assurance Coordinator, whose responsibilities include the organisation and upholding of the integrity of examinations. In some larger centres, there is an additional role of Examinations Secretary who holds this responsibility. All Cork ETB centres adhere to the unified *QA6.4 Implementation of Assessment Activities Procedure*[11] and use a standard examination paper template. Cork ETB operates a reasonable accommodation in assessment policy and provides for reasonable accommodations in examinations across all provision.

D. Certification Process

The QQI certification process comprises of six interlinked steps as shown in Chart 5:

Chart 5 QQI Certification Process

[10] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[11] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

- Each centre has responsibility for entering learners into the QBS or RCCRS system. Each centre has a Quality Assurance Coordinator/ Exam Secretary who fulfils this role
- Each Assessor devises their assessment techniques in line with Cork ETB Quality Assurance Assessment Policy and procedures
- Internal verification is conducted at centre level, following the Cork ETB *QA6.14 Procedure of Internal Verification*[12]
- External authentication is organised by the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit. Each centre is asked to submit an estimate spreadsheet detailing the number of learners who will present for certification in order to request an external authenticator. The external authentication report is submitted to both the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit and the centre
- Centres notify the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit of the date of the Results Approval Panel and request external representation to attend the panel meeting
- Provisional results are issued by the centres; learners are informed as to how they can appeal their results
- Learners are issued with certification of their results by the centre

E. The Role of the Assessor

Each Assessor has responsibility for the devising of assessment instruments and the marking of learner work. The Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit, in conjunction with the Further Education Support Service (FESS), provides training each year for new assessors on writing assessment briefs. Cork College of Commerce operates a standardised assessment within the centre; assessors coming together during the year to devise standardised assessment briefs when a module is taught to a multiple class group. This good practice is now being rolled out in other PLC Colleges, and the intention is that it will be developed into a scheme wide process. Youthreach centres have come together in Communities of Practice to share good practice in assessment in literary and numeracy. Each centre operates an informal mentoring system for new assessors. A mentor acts as a support for new assessors in devising and marking of new assessment. This system is informal and varies across centres. A strategic aim is to formalise this mentoring system to ensure that all new assessors are supported in devising and marking assessment.

Cork ETB encourages integration of assessment where appropriate within programmes. In Spring 2020, the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit provided training on integration to staff from the twelve Youthreach Centres and this is being piloted in the centres.

F. Internal Verification – Training for Internal Verification

Cork ETB operates a common policy for internal verification across all centres, *QA 6.14 Cork ETB Internal Verification Procedure*[13].

Training is provided to all internal verifiers by the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit to ensure that internal verifiers are aware of their responsibilities in this role.

G. External Authentication

Cork ETB operates a common policy for external authentication across all centres, *QA 6.14 Cork ETB External Authentication Procedure*[14].

The Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit coordinates the external authentication process. Each centre submits a request for external authentication to the Quality Assurance Unit ahead of the certification period. External Authenticators are appointed from the ETBI national External Authenticators panel. A briefing is held for external authentication in advance of the June certification period to

[12] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[13] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[14] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

ensure that all external authenticators are aware of Cork ETB assessment procedures. External authentication is conducted on a sampling basis.

External Authenticators complete a standard reporting template for return to the Quality Assurance Unit. These reports have provided Cork ETB with valuable information on areas within centre delivery which require attention and have allowed for the Quality Assurance Unit to provide targeted support and advice to centres.

H. Results Approval Panel

Cork ETB operates a common policy for results approval across all centres, *QA 6.19 Cork ETB Results Approval Procedure*[15].

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) is formed at the end of each programme for each centre and makes the final decision on results and putting learners forward for certification. The Results Approval Panel has representation external to the centre and allows for examination at centre level of quality assurance procedures. A full report is provided by the Centre to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit at the completion of the process.

It had been planned to provide training to senior Cork ETB staff who would act as external representatives, within the ETB on Results Approval Panels, but external to the centre, on the RAPs panel. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, training was postponed. Currently the Cork ETB Quality Assurance staff fulfil the role of external representation. This is unsustainable due to other demands on their time.

A short-term goal of the Quality Assurance Unit is to expand the pool of external representatives for RAPs. External representation on RAPs provides an additional check on centres' quality assurance processes and ensures that Cork ETB centres keep high standards.

I. Submission to QBS and RCCRS

After the RAPs meeting, each centre submits learner results to the QBS system. Cork Training Centre also enters learners to the RCCRs system.

J. Appeals Process

Cork ETB operates a common policy for learner appeals across all centres, *QA 6.18 Cork ETB External Appeals Process Procedure*[16].

All learner appeals are centrally processed through the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit. The Appeals process is discussed in more detail in section 7.41.h).

3.42 CONTRACTED AND SECOND PROVIDERS INCLUDING COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

A significant part of Cork ETB's FET provision is delivered on its behalf by other providers, including Contracted Training Programmes, Community Training Centre provision, Local Training Initiatives and Specialist Training Providers. All of this provision is governed by Cork ETB's Quality Assurance policies and procedures, and it is part of the contractual agreement with Cork ETB that these contracted and second providers apply and are bound by these procedures.

[15] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[16] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

Similarly, in a number of instances community education groups/organisations receive grant funding to deliver FET programmes on behalf of the ETB. These groups and organisations enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Cork ETB that sets out, amongst other responsibilities, the obligations relating to Quality Assurance adherence.

Monitoring of the activities of these contracted and second providers falls within the remit of the service issuing the contract or SLA. Contracted training, CTC's, LTI's and STP's are monitored by training service staff, however there are inconsistencies in the form and approach to monitoring across these different provision types, and it is planned to develop a standardised approach to monitoring of programme delivery for quality assurance purposes.

Community providers who deliver on behalf of Cork ETB's adult and community education service are monitored by staff from within that service, principally the Adult Education Officer and/or Area Coordinator in their region. Adult Literacy Officers and BTEI Coordinators also play a role in the monitoring of this provision. There are variations in the approach to monitoring, and the planned, standardised monitoring approach for programme delivery will apply similarly to this area of activity.

An area that is becoming an increasing focus for Cork ETB is that of community providers who were previously recognised by QQI as providers in their own right, with their own quality assurance processes and procedures and who had responsibility for their own programmes. The requirements from QQI for providers as set out in the QQI Reengagement Process are quite onerous for smaller providers, and many of them do not have the capacity or resources to engage in this process, particularly when the volume of QQI certified activity they would be involved in is quite small. Even though the certified element of their overall activity is small, they play an important part in the community education and development landscape, and QQI and the ETB sector are anxious to ensure that they will have the avenue open to them to deliver QQI certified programmes in the future. QQI have been actively encouraging these providers to engage with their local ETB and to enter into a partnership arrangement with the ETB to overcome any possible difficulties in this regard.

Cork ETB has established relationships with many of these Community providers in the Cork region, going back over a long period of time. In these cases, the programmes delivered by the provider are Cork ETB programmes, the staff are Cork ETB staff, paid by Cork ETB, and Cork ETB's policies and procedures for Quality Assurance apply to this activity.

Cork ETB is willing to extend this arrangement, or a variation of it, to other Community Providers who wish to engage with the ETB and is currently engaged with a number of providers in this regard. One of the key requirements with any extension of these arrangements will be the need for monitoring support from Cork ETB. Within the current resources available that will be extremely challenging, and to ensure the effectiveness of such arrangements, the resources required will have to be identified and provided.

Monitoring across all second provider activity is variable, and for effective assurance the following are identified as essential components:

- Development of a standardised model and approach to monitoring of programme delivery for quality assurance purposes
- Allocation of the necessary resources to ensure that monitoring is accrued out effectively and consistently

3.43 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

A core Cork ETB value is to be innovative and continually improve. In 2019, the Quality Assurance Unit introduced a continuous improvement planning mechanism. Centres were asked to review their EA reports and identify specific quality improvements to be achieved in the coming academic year through a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). Each centre was required to submit their plan to the Quality Assurance Unit. This process was very useful for setting targeted improvement goals for the year ahead and for identifying areas of improvement and for the maintenance of high standards. One PLC College in their Centre Self-evaluation report commented that:

> "this support will... ensure(d) professional standards are maintained across the college".

Similarly, the BTEI service notes that:

> "Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) are central to the continuous development of appropriate quality assurance process."

The process facilitated the Quality Assurance Unit to identify and provide targeted supports to centres, for example, individual support in assessment writing.

The CIP process was paused in 2020 as centres were focused on adapting to COVID-19 regulations and contingency delivery and assessment arrangements. However, the CIP process will be reinstated in 2021 so that the culture of innovation and continuous improvement can continue.

3.44 EVALUATION

Cork ETB operates a robust and standardised quality assurance of assessment policy and procedures. This ensures the integrity and high quality of assessment across Cork ETB. The benefits of this robust quality assurance system have been seen in the context we find ourselves working in during the current pandemic. Use of Moodle had been inconsistent between centres. However, the appointment of a TEL co-ordinator has enhanced the use of Moodle, and this is a key tool in supporting programme delivery, assessment, and quality.

The Quality Assurance Unit has an active role in the assessment process and supports centres to ensure they adhere to all assessment procedures. Induction and support for new assessors is conducted in centres and this could be improved and conducted centrally.

3.45 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Standardised quality assurance assessment procedures across centres facilitates robust and coherent assessment across all Cork ETB provision
- The use of Moodle enhances and supports effective assessment
- All staff are provided with training on the internal verification process
- External authentication process coordinated by the Quality Assurance Unit
- External representation on Centre's RAP meetings facilitates good governance
- Continuous improvement planning at centre level encourages and creates a culture of continuous improvement in each centre

3.46 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- To further develop the use of Moodle and TEL in the assessment process
- Need to provide a more formal and organised support and mentoring for new assessors in the use of quality assurance procedures
- Need to train senior ETB staff to participate as members at results approval meetings, in addition to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance staff

3.47 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- It would be an enhancement to devise a centralised induction programme in quality assurance procedures for new assessors
- To continue to support and to increase the implementation of integrated assessment to avoid overburdening the learner
- It would be an enhancement to use standardised assessment across all larger centres where components are taught in more than one course

3.48 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT, REPORTING

Cork ETB utilises a range of data management systems to store and manage data and to perform a variety of administrative and operational functions. Many of these are legacy systems, inherited from the former VEC's and FÁS/SOLAS and Cork ETB would ideally like to streamline its data management. However, this depends on the development of common systems for collecting and storing information at a national level, and a number of sector wide initiatives to harmonise and consolidate systems into a uniform structure. While there has been some progress in this area, (with the introduction and development of the PLSS system as the single national data management for programmes, courses, and learners, and the gradual roll out of the ESBS ETB shared Payroll Project, which will standardise the payment system for all FET learners), progress in this area has been extremely slow, and it is likely to be several more years before a single, integrated system begins to emerge.

The myriad of data management and reporting systems can be categorized broadly under the following heading[17]:

A. Information Sharing and Communication Systems

- SharePoint
- Workvivo

B. Human Resources Systems

- Core Hr
- Part Time Tutor (PTT) System

C. Financial Systems

- SAP
- SUN Financials
- Purchase to Pay (P2P)
- Time and Attendance Clocking System (TACS)
- Trainee Apprentice Payroll System (TAPS)

[17] A fuller description of these systems is set out in the support folder

D. Learner Management, including Application Management Systems

- Programme Learner Support System (PLSS)
- VsWare
- Salespulse
- FETCH Courses
- MIT Enrol
- QBS
- RCCRS

E. Virtual Learning Environments

- Moodle
- Google Suite

This multiplicity of systems, some linked and interdependent, and others independent, creates significant challenges for staff across all Cork ETB FET services. While the HR and Financial services are to some extent interlinked (for staff contracts and payment, learner payments etc.), they share few design characteristics, and operators interfacing with them consistently refer to the complex and unfriendly end user experience they exhibit. Centres consistently report how difficult it can be when a user familiar with a system is absent, and the challenges that arise in ensuring that operations happen effectively and/or in time, for example that orders are placed, or payments made.

While the development of PLSS has created a single national database for FET programmes and learners, due to some limitations in the features offered by PLSS it is still necessary to maintain additional learner management systems in some services, notably PLC. PLSS has no comprehensive course scheduling system or day to day attendance or learner's records system built in. To provide these functions, the PLC colleges use VSWares college management system.

Similarly, the application management functions included in PLSS do not have the level of detailed control and management necessary for centres managing hundreds of course applications, each with a number of possible course options selected, and therefore Cork ETBs PLC colleges use MIT's Enrol system to manage applications. This gives rise to a situation where multiple unlinked datasets for the same programme or course exist and have to be maintained, consequently creating the potential for data error or loss. Data can be transferred between the systems, but this is not a seamless or integrated process and all data fields are not always correctly mapped, giving rise to corrupt data in one or more of the systems.

The responsibility for the entry and management of learner data resides primarily at each centre or service level, due to the number of learners provided for on an annual basis. Data recording has improved significantly in recent years, although after the initial recording of learner information on PLSS, the updating of this data is variable across centres and services.

Similarly, the entry of learner results on QQI's QBS is done at centre level.

Reporting on learner data occurs both at centre, service, and Cork ETB levels. The quality of the data reports is entirely reliant on the accuracy of the data contained within PLSS. The data reporting tools available within PLSS are comprehensive, and while there is a fairly steep learning curve associated with this, the output reports generally provide the detail required.

3.49 GDPR LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Upon the adoption of the GDPR regulation in 2018 all Cork ETB staff were required to compete the ETBI GDPR training. Notifications and training records are managed by the Corporate Services Department. All new Cork ETB staff are required to complete GDPR training. QA6.9 Secure Storage of Assessment Material Procedure reflects all GDPR requirements. The review has identified that refresher training on GDPR obligations should be provided for staff.

3.50 EVALUATION

The various administrative systems in operation in Cork ETB create significant challenges for staff at centre and service level. While it is acknowledged that many of these systems can only be done away with when integrated national systems are fully developed and implemented, ever effort should be made to bring this about as soon as possible.

The communications and data sharing systems are used inconsistently across the ETB. There is no clear road map or plan for the configuration of either SharePoint or WorkVivo. This can create difficulties for staff attempting to access certain information or lead to incorrect information being used when it is not clear that a document has been superseded by a new version.

The systems used to manage learner information and applications are inefficient and causes unnecessary duplication of work. The systems do not align and require individual staff members to process some elements manually. This is inefficient, a waste of time and leave centres open to the possibility of errors.

3.51 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- All Cork ETB staff are being provided with a Cork ETB email address
- All Cork ETB FET staff have access to QA SharePoint through their Cork ETB email
- All Cork ETB staff have completed training in GDPR
- QA 6.9 Secure Storage of Assessment Material reflects all GDPR requirement

3.52 CHALLENGES

- The complex systems for manging learner enrolment cause excessive work and duplication of work for Cork ETB FET staff
- Ongoing work is needed to improve the information and data management of Cork ETB

3.53 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENT

- There is a need to streamline learner data management systems nationally and to make these systems user friendly and fit for purpose

3.54 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Cork ETB, as a public body, is covered by the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014[18]. In accordance with Section 8 of this Act, Cork ETB publishes as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis and as part of normal business activities.

Cork ETB has not had an overall, ETB wide communications plan or strategy, and much of the information communicated to external parties has come from individual centres, services, and courses, without any consistency of approach and a lack of uniformity in presentation and style. Cork ETB has established an ETB Communications Steering Group to develop a communications strategy, policy and plan for the ETB, including all services and centres. This communications strategy will include all forms and modes of communication and will review and incorporate any individual existing policies relating to communications and incorporate them into the overall strategic framework for this area.

All units and services within the ETB are represented on the Communications Steering Group and they plan to have an initial draft available for consideration in early Q2 2021.

A. Social Media Policy

Cork ETB Social Media and Branding Guidelines along with a Social Media Policy[19] set out the procedures in place for setting up, operating, and communicating using social media sites.

B. Websites – Cork ETB and Centres/Service Websites

The Cork ETB website, www.corketb.ie provides information on Cork ETB as an organisation and on the individual services and centres. Cork ETB Corporate Services Department has responsibility for updating relevant service information on the Cork ETB website, as well as Cork ETB social media platforms and channels.

Each PLC College and Cork Training Centre has their own website which hosts information on the programmes and services offered by the centre. The Adult Literacy, BTEI, Community Education and Adult Guidance Service do not have their own website but have a space on the ETB website. Some Youthreach Centres have their own website. The time and resource demands needed to operate a centre website is considerable. Nevertheless, an accessible website is considered essential in order to ensure that centres can communicate effectively with the public.

The Cork ETB website, as a corporate communications tool, presents a fair overall picture to the public. However, it is extremely difficult for members of the public, particularly learners, to find and access information about services and courses. As part of the overall ETB communications strategy, the Director of FET has requested that a dedicated FET services website be developed for the sector, linked to the main ETB website but to provide a more accessible, easily navigable portal for learners and employers.

C. Social Media Accounts

Most Cork ETB centres and services have their own social media accounts across the most popular social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Social media accounts are an ideal way to share information on activity in the centre/service with current and potential learners and the public. However, the operation of these accounts requires a significant degree of management and oversight, to ensure that they are up to date and relevant, but also that the material being published conforms to the centre and ETB's standards. This creates an additional duty for management and staff in addition to their normal responsibilities. Nevertheless, maintaining a relevant social media presence remains an essential task for each centre.

[18] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/30/enacted/en/html

[19] http://corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SOCIAL-MEDIA-POLICY-FINAL-approved.pdf

Cork ETB also maintains a presence on number of social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn. Cork ETB Corporate Services has responsibility for updating information on Cork ETB social media channels and often re-shares material published by individual centres on their own social media platforms.

D. Local Media

Cork ETB regularly commissions advertising campaigns in the local, including radio and print as well as billboard campaigns. This is coordinated by Corporate Services in order to provide a coherent, consistent FET brand.

3.55 CASE STUDY: JUICE FM

Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa (CSN) runs a QQI Level 5 and QQI Level 6 in Radio Broadcasting. As part of this programme CSN hosts its own radio station, Juice FM. Juice FM broadcasts digitally nationwide over FM radio. This provides a vibrant way for CSN and Cork ETB to communicate with the public.

Juice FM has been recognized nationally for its work. In 2019, Juice FM won an award for its *"A Taste of Ireland"* radio show as part of the 'World College Radio Day', placed first in a cohort of 500 college-based radio stations globally. It also won the Smedia Award for *'Best Radio Presenter'* that year.

3.56 CASE STUDY: CORK CITY LEARNING FESTIVAL

The Cork Lifelong Learning Festival (LLF) was established in 2004. It is funded by Cork ETB and other Learning City MOU partners[20], and is the region's premier annual learning event. Held over seven consecutive days, it is a leading example and internationally recognised model of community education best practice and presents an excellent case study. Each year the LLF provides learners of all ages across the broadest range of communities with almost 600 free events in a diverse variety of locations, showcasing a multitude of choices and opportunities for them to come along and try a new skill or participate in activity which is something new and creative. The festival's motto is *Investigate, Participate and Celebrate*.

Cork College of Commerce contributes in an extensive way to the Cork City Learning Festival every year by providing more than twenty seminars/presentations to the public in order to remain a vibrant and integral part of the Cork city community. Recently the West Cork Campus have come on board and in 2019 the college engaged in a joint launch of the contribution to the learning festival involving both staff and learners in both campuses through a Skype link.

[20] Cork City Council, UCC, MTU, HSE

3.57 MARKETING TOOLS

Cork ETB uses a diverse range of marketing tools to promote and publicise their services as shown in chart 6:

Chart 6 Cork ETB Marketing Tools

A. Open Days

The PLC Colleges and Cork Training Centre hold open days each year for school leavers and other potential learners. Since 2017 the Open Day for the Cork City based Colleges has been held on the same day to facilitate school leavers who may be travelling distances to attend all three on the same day. Open Days are an excellent way to give potential learners an insight into the centre.

B. Apprentice Roadshow

Apprenticeship services in Cork Training Centre regularly hold Apprenticeship roadshows across Cork city and county. These roadshows inform potential apprentices, guidance counsellors, and employers about apprenticeships options, including the Post 2016 Apprenticeships.

C. Promotional Videos

Corporate Services have coordinated the creation of professional promotional videos to market the PLC Colleges. Individual colleges and centres have used promotional videos effectively on social media to showcase the centre and learner testimonials.

D. Printed Publications

Printed publication remains an essential tool for public information, communication, and marketing. All centres use printed prospectus and brochures to advertise their courses. For Adult Literacy, BTEI and Community Education these brochures are produced for local services Any promotional material (on-line or print) designed at a centre/ service level must be approved prior to publication and copies sent to a designated administrator for filing.

3.58 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Cork ETB is a large and diverse organisation, with a total staff complement of over 4,100 across a wide geographic area and a significant number of locations. This has caused difficulties in internal communication as systems have not kept pace with the expansion of Cork ETB. Consequently, Cork ETB through its Corporate Services unit have introduced a new online internal communications platform, "My CETB", powered by Workvivo. This platform will replace the existing, inconsistently used Staff Intranet.

"My CETB" provides a people-centric experience which facilitates a truly engaged workforce and incorporates easy access to company content and apps. It is intended that "My CETB" will provide a central location for Cork ETB staff to streamline communication, share information and join social groups, including online running clubs and book clubs.

3.59 EVALUATION

Public communication has improved in recent years with a coordinated social media policy. Cork City Lifelong Learning Festival is an excellent avenue for public communication. Cork ETB has effective communication with the public. However, there are also challenges and room for enhancement in the future.

3.60 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Very effective communication and marketing strategies
- Individual centre social media channels are a great way to communicate
- Cork City Lifelong Learning Festival is an exemplar of excellent practice in communicating Cork ETB's message to the public

3.61 CHALLENGES

- The maintenance of social media accounts is essential for centres communication with the public but is resource and time heavy for Centre Management and staff
- Effective internal communication has been a challenge as Cork ETB is a large and diverse organisation

3.62 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- The development of an ETB wide communications strategy and plan
- "My CETB" powered by Workvivo will enhance Cork ETB internal communication

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

4.1 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A. Physical Environment

FET provision in Cork ETB is diverse and operates in a wide range of facilities and buildings:

- Purpose built facilities
- Converted and re-purposed second level schools
- Second level schools
- Converted facilities
- Community halls
- A purpose-built education unit in Cork Prison
- An Outdoor Education Centre

The physical environments within which FET services are delivered vary considerably. Cork ETB has some excellent purpose-built or appropriately adapted facilities, including the Westside Hospitality Unit, Carrigaline Biopharma Unit, The Glen Youthreach and Community Education Centre and the FET hub in Fermoy. The premises where other services are located are less than ideal in some cases, notwithstanding considerable upgrading and investment undertaken by Cork ETB over recent years. For example, some Youthreach services are in converted industrial buildings which can be cold and have confusing layouts.

It is a testament to the staff in these centres that these challenges are, almost fully negated by the warm caring atmosphere they create. One such centre underwent a Whole Centre Evaluation (WCE) in 2016, and in the final report it was noted that:

> "Classroom atmospheres were positive, inclusive, supportive, and learner centred."

4.2 CASE STUDY: WESTSIDE HOSPITALITY UNIT

The Westside Hospitality Unit is a customised facility adapted for FET provision related to the hospitality sector which commenced operation in 2019. It accommodates both Training and PLC provision including:

- Level 6 Commis Chef Apprenticeship delivered by Cork Training Centre
- Level 5 Certificate in Professional Cookery delivered by Cork College of Commerce
- Level 5 Craft Butchery Apprenticeship delivered by Cork Training Centre

The Westside Training Centre is equipped with the very latest and most modern facilities including:

- 3 Training Kitchens
- Serving area / front of house
- Restaurant/dining room
- Barista training room
- Fully operational training bar
- Accommodation Suite
- Seven classrooms, including three IT enabled classrooms.

4.3 CASE STUDY: CARRIGALINE BIOPHARMA UNIT

The Carrigaline Biopharma Unit opened in 2006. It is a hands-on training facility where learners can gain the practical skills required to work in the Life Sciences sector. It is a multi-million-euro investment on behalf of the Irish government and is primarily focused on skills-based learning for the workplace. The centre hosts 3 classrooms, administration offices and a large bio-processing workshop which is a mimic of what can be found in any large bio-pharma production facility.

4.4 CASE STUDY: CORK PRISON EDUCATION UNIT

In 2016, a new prison was opened in Cork City which replaced the old Georgian building which had been deemed to be not fit for purpose. The new prison has a purpose-built Education Unit with 13 classrooms including, dedicated woodwork, computer, art, ceramics, and home economics rooms. All the computers in the computer classroom have had assistive learning technology software installed. The education network in the prison operates a 'Secure Prison Academic Network' Span, which holds education software. Learners do not have access to the internet, but all learners are allowed use computers in the school once their password is activated. All learners also have their own folder automatically created on the SPAN network when they are committed to prison. A library operated by Prison Officers is located at the end of one of the school corridors.

4.5 CASE STUDY: KINSALE OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

The origins of Kinsale Outdoor Education Centre (OEC) are based in a converted Primary School on St. Johns Hill in Kinsale. Most activity happens outdoors and on the water. Kinsale is a maritime town and Kinsale OEC has a reputation for excellence in water sports. Sailing, Windsurfing and Powerboat Courses all take place in the nearby Kinsale harbour.

4.6 CASE STUDY: ST. JOHN'S CENTRAL COLLEGE DIGITAL HUB

St John's Central College Digital Hub is an Apple Regional Training Centre, offering free Apple courses to teachers and education staff in the greater Cork region. The College hosts multiple PC and Apple laboratories boasting a breadth of software. Through this activity St John's Central College contribute to creating a community of educators who share best practice and inspire excellence through teaching with Apple Technology.

B. Facilities and the FET Strategy: FET College of the Future: Green Campus

The FET Strategy "Future FET: Transforming Learning" (SOLAS, 2020)[21] sets out a vision for the next stage in the development of FET that places at its core a new model for FET provision based on the model referenced as "The FET College of the Future".

> "Key to successful development in relation to skills, pathways, and inclusion will be the evolution of FET facilities and provision into a distinct integrated college of FET that can serve as a beacon of community-based learning excellence which can start to change the hearts and minds of Irish society with regard to school leaving and lifelong education options".

The concept presented is more than a physical adaptation of existing structures and it asks the sector to reconceptualise its approach and thinking regarding FET structures and delivery.

Cork ETB and the wider FET sector are working on their responses to this strategic priority, and as these crystalise and implementation commences, they will fundamentally change the FET landscape. There is no doubt that to achieve this goal, significant capital investment will be required, not solely to develop new facilities where required, but also to upgrade and modernise existing ones.

One of the characteristics identified for this has FET College of the Future is that it will be a "Green" Campus. Several Cork ETB centres have made great strides in the area of environmental management and awareness, and sustainability.

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

4.7 CASE STUDY: KINSALE COLLEGE GREEN CAMPUS

In December 2020, Kinsale College was the first Further Education College to earn An Táisce Green Campus status.

Kinsale College has been delivering QQI Level 5 and QQI level 6 in Horticulture since 2001, with a special focus on sustainability. To achieve the Green Campus status Kinsale College focused on the areas of biodiversity enhancements and waste reduction. Certain areas of the college grounds have been "re-wilded", and each year the college plants more trees and shrubs. No chemicals or fertilisers are used on site, instead the college relies on natural cycling of fertility and compost made on site. Bird boxes and insect hotels have also been constructed and placed around the site.

Each classroom now has 3 bins: for general waste, recycling, and composting, which has reduced general waste. There has been a large increase in composting onsite with 9 composting bays and bins now producing important organic matter, which is funnelled into the vegetable growing areas. Kinsale College is a leader in the field of sustainability in education, reflecting the strategic goal in the FET Strategy.

C. Resources for Specific Programmes

Cork ETB is committed to providing appropriate facilities and resources for all courses. Many Cork ETB programmes require specialist facilities and resources to enable learners to engage in real life learning. Some examples of these facilities include:

- Energy facility in Cork Training Centre for providing training in Level 6 Supplemental Award in Domestic Gas Safety
- A fully equipped Nursing Room in Cork College of Commerce for delivering QQI Level 5 Health Service Skills and QQI Level 5 Nursing Studies
- A fully equipped Hairdressing studio in St. John's Central College to deliver the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship
- An animal grooming studio for the QQI Level 5 and QQI Level 6 in Animal Care in St. John's Central College
- Fully equipped Beauty rooms in Cork College of Commerce
- Substantial investment in apprenticeship workshops in the training Centre include a new Heavy Vehicle Mechanic workshop and a new Pipe Fitting workshop
- A fully equipped radio station in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa for the QQI Level 5 Radio Broadcasting
- A sound engineering studio in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa for the QQI level 5 in Sound Engineering, the QQI Level 5 and Level 6 in Music
- A music rehearsal studio and mini stage in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa for the QQI Level 5 and Level 6 in Music
- An animal grooming studio for the QQI Level 5 in Animal Care in Mallow College

Sustaining and maintaining these facilities and providing additional required facilities can be a challenge in the context of limited funding availability but Cork ETB will continue to make every effort to develop these facilities in the future.

D. ICT Infrastructure and Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

Cork ETB's approach to TEL is guided by national strategies, including the SOLAS TEL and FET strategies, and the ETB's TEL action plan. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated TEL developments, and in many ways provided the ETB with a more extensive foundation on which to build its blended and online learning options in the future.

The vision from the Cork ETB TEL Action Plan is:

> To create an organic learning environment and enhance access and engagement for students and teachers while maintaining quality in Cork ETB services.

To achieve this vision Cork ETB has identified and is working to progress the following:

- Using technology to support a TEL/Blended Leaning environment to enhance quality of teaching
- Providing a more flexible learning environment
- Upskilling staff members digital skills to enable sharing in a Blended Learning environment
- Adopting new technologies
- Improving the quality of student access and increase student engagement
- Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning

The roll out of Cork ETB TEL Strategy has been escalated due to the pivot to remote teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. All staff have now been provided with their own personal device to facilitate emergency remote teaching and learning and a laptop/device loan scheme has been rolled out for learners across all services. A TEL coordinator for Cork ETB was appointed just prior to the March 2020 lockdown and this has been opportune in increasing TEL capacity across Cork ETB. However, the size of Cork ETB means that this role needs to be further expanded. It is planned to appoint further staff to work in the role of TEL support. This will allow further roll out of TEL across Cork ETB.

As well as increasing the TEL support resource, three priority areas have been identified for continued development and investment:

- Improving Cork ETB IT systems
- To further incorporate digital tools in teaching and learning activities
- To deliver a comprehensive CPD programme in IT for staff

E. Holistic Approach to Learner Experience

Cork ETB centres echo with laughter, talk and busy footsteps - a real sense of a great buzz reverberates in each centre. Centres put the learner at the core of all their activities and plan activities and extra events to support the holistic learner experience. For example, Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa music students host music gigs for learners at lunch time which creates an electric atmosphere.

Learner testimonials often comment on the care they received from their centre. One mature learner of QQI Level 5 Applied Social Studies in Cork College of Commerce comments in her testimonial:

> "Once you are there, you'll be guided throughout your time here with empathy, care and encouragement. It is an incredible fun experience, and it opens the mind beyond whatever I thought it would and could have. It's hard, really hard at times but the support you get from lecturers and fellow students all helps to make it a little easier and achievable. You go at a pace that suits you. So, don't be afraid of getting left behind, the teaching staff won't let that happen. They guide you all the way."

Similarly, a Level 5 Creative Design and Media learner from St. John's Central College in his testimonial commented on the:

> "great teaching staff that felt like friend and colleagues more than lecturers".

Similarly, a learner who completed Level 5 and Level 6 in Software Design in Mallow College commented:

> "I was supported by very friendly and encouraging staff who are more than willing to help out with any issue and provide an enjoyable learning atmosphere with fellow students."

A BTEI Learner in West Cork, gives testimony to the important role of the BTEI staff and centre in their educational journey:

> ''I loved my time studying in the centre in Clonakilty where I felt at home from the first day, I set foot in there for a chat with staff, on what direction to take. [Named tutor] was always extremely friendly and informative. I was put at ease straight away as this was going to be a big step for me. They reassured me that it was all very manageable and that it would be of huge benefit to my future ambitions. The atmosphere was always extremely warm and pleasant. I made great friends there and it made me feel like I was part of a small and fun community''.

Every year the twelve Youthreach services hold a "Talk Back Day" for learners to share their opinions and have their voice heard. The holistic care experienced by learner is evident from some of the learner comments:

> "They [the teachers] don't force you, they help you".
>
> "I like the teachers support; it boosts my confidence."
>
> "[The teachers] help people with disabilities and learning difficulties to learn better".
>
> "Youthreach helped me with education".

4.8 LEARNER VOICE

Cork ETB focuses on "treating people with dignity and respect". Thus, Cork ETB has engaged in ongoing work to integrate and listen to the learner voice for FET provision. Cork ETB has engaged with AONTAS, the national adult learner body to develop its learner voice approach and had planned to establish a number of regional "Learner Forums" in 2020 but plans for these were put on hold due to the pandemic.

To provide for the learner voice in centres and services a number of mechanisms are in place across the ETB:

- Learner Council in PLC Colleges
- Students Councils in Youthreach Centres
- Learner representatives on PLC Boards of Management

Cork ETB is committed to delivering more in this area which aligns with the FET Strategy: Enabling Theme, that FET provision must be Learner and Performance Centred.

4.9 CASE STUDY: AONTAS/CORK ETB LEARNER FORUM

On March 6th, 2020, 74 learners from Cork ETB FET programmes participated in a Learner Forum facilitated by AONTAS, with representation from all strands of provision. Cork ETB aims to provide a "pathway for every learner" and to demonstrate the value of Care in their work. The Learner Forum found learners spoke highly of the quality and atmosphere of the Cork ETB Learning Environment and the care provided to them by Cork ETB staff. Learners felt welcome and supported by Cork ETB.

> "You can get a cup of coffee, they're sociable and you can sit down and chat. It's not a question of learning, there's the social aspect of it."

> "They're excellent. You can talk to them about profession...about CAO. You can talk to them about how you're feeling. Their doors are literally always open"

> "When I did the first course. I was going to finish there, but my tutor said – "you're well able for the next level" – and that's the course I'm on now."

Room for improvements were also noted by the forum participants.

LEARNER GROUP	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS
Levels 1-3	• More guidance to ensure correct course placement
Level 5	• Printing facilities • Parking facilities • Childcare, including After-school Care
Level 6	• Grants and financial supports to reflect the real costs of work placement. • Better monitoring of work experience

4.10 CASE STUDY: YOUTHREACH STUDENT COUNCILS

Each Youthreach Centre has established a Student Council as per section 27 of the Education Act, 1998 and Section 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which gives students:

> "the right to have their voice heard on issues which affect them".

The Irish Second-level Students Union provided training on January 28th, 2020. Following that, a Youthreach Student Council Policy was drafted and following consultation was approved by Cork ETB Executive. The policy outlines roles, responsibilities, and the supports

available, general rules to be followed and how the student council will communicate with the centre, Cork ETB and others if necessary. It also provides templates for an agenda, minutes, contract, etc. Each Student Council is required to prepare a report for each Board of Management meeting, three times per year, outlining what is working well in the centre and raising any issues they have identified.

4.11 LEARNER CHARTER

Cork ETB is currently working on a FET Learner Charter which will set out our values and provide a framework that learners, staff, teachers, and tutors to know and understand their respective responsibilities. It will be based on the principle of collaboration and cooperation between FET learners and staff.

A draft of the Charter will be circulated for consultation and feedback in Q2 2021.

4.12 INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Innovation is a core value of Cork ETB. There are many examples across Cork ETB of how this is embedded into all aspects of teaching and learning. This is especially the case in Adult Literacy and Community Education. These services target reluctant leaners who have low levels of educational confidence and literacy and numeracy. Cork ETB has designed several innovative programmes in these areas.

4.13 CASE STUDY: ARTS FOR ALL ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE[22]

Arts for All is an art-based Adult Literacy initiative was run in three locations on the Northside of Cork City. The aim was to teach literacy and soft skills through the medium of music, dance, and the visual arts. Learners represented a variety of groups such as people with physical restrictions, learning disabilities, the homeless, asylum seekers and those in direct provision, unemployed, elderly, members of the travelling community and those presenting with low levels of literacy skills.

The Adult Education Officer (AEO) for the area commented that:

> "This course is about changing people's lives and making a difference and giving them the core values to move forward".

Learners were overwhelmingly positive about their experience; one learner commented that:

> "It takes the fear out of learning for me".

4.14 CASE STUDY: FAMILY LEARNING – COOKING ON A BUDGET

The Adult Literacy Family Learning programme gives vital supports to parents whose own education has been limited. They improve confidence and skills in literacy and numeracy

[22] Link to promotional video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvAE0pDyIcg

and contribute to the development of literacy and learning for all age groups. Programmes are themed to integrate the literacy and numeracy skills to real life scenarios.

"Cooking on a Budget" was a family learning programme run in Mallow. The general aim of the programme was to develop parents' learning skills to support children's learning in the home.

Cookery is an attractive themed course to get learners into learning for the first time. As parents cook in the home, they can bring their knowledge, skill, and life experiences into this cookery course.

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the local Credit Union funded the cookery utensils pack for each learner on the course which they could use in their home when the programme was completed. The pack included small weighing scales, spatula, bowl and the MABS Cookery book "101+ Square Meals". The family learning course ran in the Adult Education Centre Mallow with other Cork ETB courses. This learning environment gave learners the opportunity to integrate with other students and see the opportunities to progress to other FET courses.

4.15 CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY EDUCATION MEN'S ART CLASS FAIRHILL

The Men's Art Group in Fairhill is a joint initiative between Cork ETB and Cork City Partnership. The art tutor is funded by Cork ETB. Fairhill is in a RAPID area; characterised by lower educational attainment, poorer health, high proportions of local authority housing and low employment. The group of eight retired men have been working together for five years and have exhibited their work in the Crawford Art Gallery. One of the participants described it as:

"One of the best things ever to have happened to me."

4.16 EUROPEAN PROJECTS AND ERASMUS

Cork ETB has engaged in European projects and the Erasmus programme for many years. St. Johns Central College and Mallow College have been leaders in this field for Cork ETB in both staff and learner mobility projects. These two centres have recently achieved Erasmus Accreditation status which will further develop their capacity to expand European activities.

To further increase Cork ETB centres and services engagement with European projects and initiatives. An Erasmus Co-Ordinator has been appointed by Cork ETB and it is hoped that more learners will engage with the mobility placements through the Erasmus programme in the coming years. Learners who engaged in mobility placements reported that the activity added to their Vocational Education and Training in a number of ways:

- Increasing learner's practical vocational skill level
- Significant addition to learner's Curriculum Vitae
- Learners can compare work practices between the countries
- Learners reach, as a minimum, a basic level in the language of their host country and reported a greater understanding of the importance of language learning
- Learners experience personal growth having completed the project, often demonstrating a greater degree of maturity and added commitment to their areas of vocational study. having completed the project

- As learners usually travel in small groups on mobility, teamwork is very much encouraged
- Learners report significant cultural learning, greater tolerance for diversity and greater awareness of European Union citizenship
- Learners expand their digital competence by using digital technology extensively in the preparation and mobility phase of their project

4.17 WORK BASED LEARNING

Work Placement is an integral part to all Cork ETB programmes. All Cork ETB learners who achieve a Major award must complete Work Placement as part of the award. Some FET programmes are predominantly work based, for example the Craft Apprenticeships and Post 2016 Apprenticeship align the apprentice with an employer for the full duration of their apprenticeship and at least 75% of their time is on the job, work-based learning. Traineeships also incorporate a minimum of 30% of the programme duration in the workplace. These programmes are partnerships with employers and thus have excellent placement outcomes on their completion.

Although the role of work-based learning is integral to all Cork ETB delivery, the standard and length of the placements are varied. Depending on the programme of study a learner may source their own work placement, and some placements are not directly related to the area of study being pursued by the learner.

Assessment undertaken on work experience by Cork ETB staff is not monitored. The work placement receives documentation from the centre with information about what is expected and how assessment should be carried out in order to standardise the assessment procedure in the workplace. However, this could be much improved. It is planned to form a Work Based Learning group which will strengthen the governance and provision of work-based learning across Cork ETB. Structured training for workplace supervisors and mentors will be considered by the group, possibly to be delivered through an online or blended option.

4.18 COVID-19 AND THE IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

COVID-19 has affected every aspect of Cork ETB, but none more so than teaching and learning. In the past year, all Cork ETB staff have pivoted from delivering face to face to delivering completely online using a variety of platforms, including the Big Blue Button/Microsoft Teams/Zoom/Google Meet.

Staff have shown great resilience, adaptability, and flexibility in embracing this “new normal”. Examples of innovative practice in teaching and learning include:

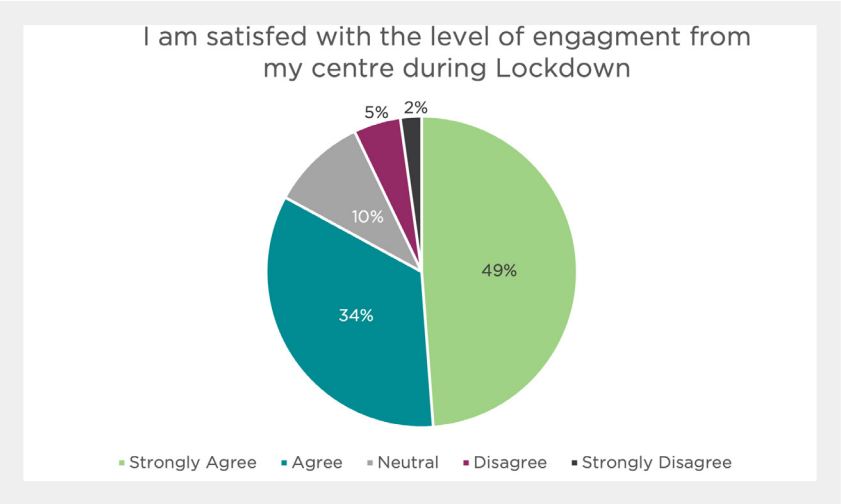
- A Cork College of Commerce Nursing teacher made a series of videos to support learners in the development of their practical skills
- Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa is planning to hold a series of Zoom concerts for the Level 5, and Level 6 Music students
- Mallow College operates a skills centre which is a drop-in service for full-time students to meet with a teacher and improve their study skills, writing technique and presentation skills. This service is accessible online due to Covid-19 restrictions

A learner survey was conducted after the initial March 2020 lockdown to ascertain learner experience of teaching and learning during the pandemic. 633 learners from across Cork ETB FET provision took part. Some key results were:

i. Satisfaction with Level of Engagement by Centre during COVID-19.

Learners were generally satisfied with the level of engagement provided to them by their centre during the initial March 2020 lockdown as shown in figure 11:

Figure 11 Satisfaction of Engagement From My Centre During Lockdown

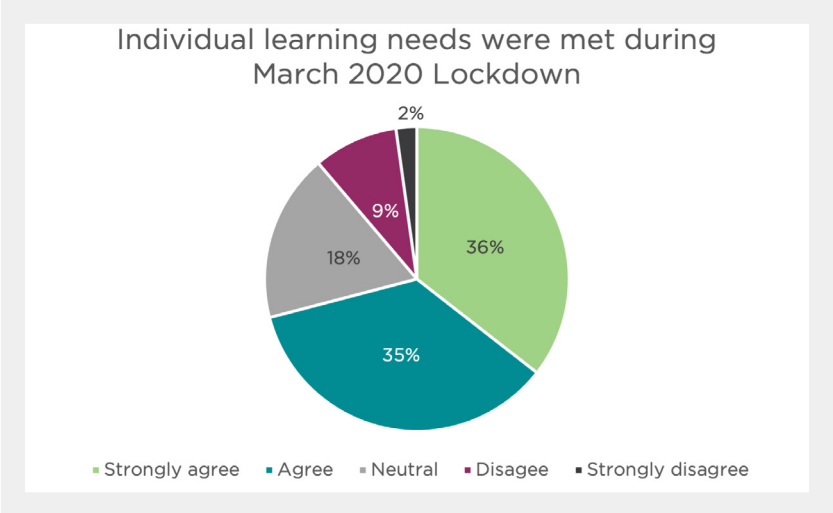


49% of learners (n=309) strongly agreed and 34% (n=216) of learner agreed that they had satisfactory engagement from their centre during March 2020 lockdown. 10% of learners (n=63) were unsure. 5% (n=31) of learners disagreed and 2% (n=14) of learners strongly disagreed that their centre had provided. Thus, the data indicates that learners were broadly satisfied with the level of engagement provided by their centre during March 2020 lockdown.

ii. Individual Learning Needs:

Learners felt their centre supported their individual learning needs during the initial March 2020 lockdown as shown in figure 12:

Figure 12 Individual Learning Needs

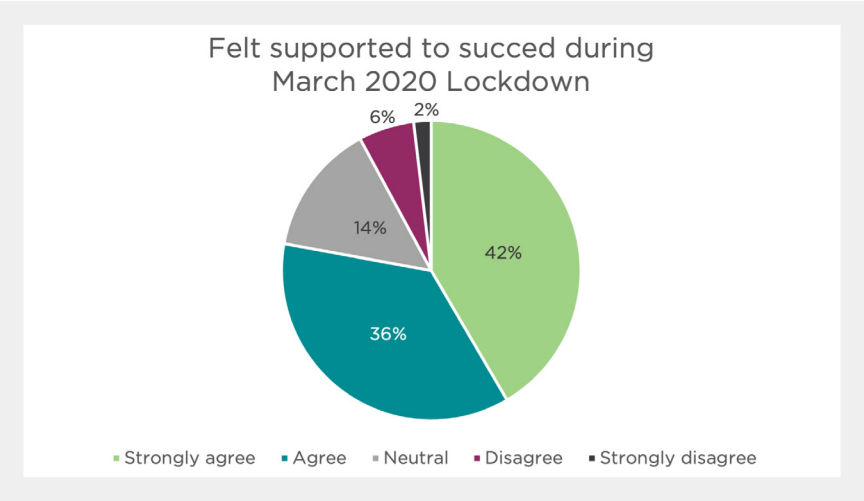


36% of learners (n=225) strongly agreed and 33% (n= 224) of learners felt their individual learning needs were met by their centre during March 2020 Lockdown. 18% of learners (n=113) were unsure. 9% (n=57) of learners disagreed and 2% (n=14) of learners strongly disagreed that their individual learning needs were met by their centre. Thus, the data indicates that learners were broadly satisfied with how their centre met their individual learning needs during March 2020 lockdown.

iii. Supported to Succeed:

Learners generally felt supported to succeed by their centre during the initial March 2020 lockdown as shown in Figure 13:

Figure 13 Supported During Lockdown



42% of learners (n=263) strongly agreed and 36% (n= 230) of learner agreed that they had satisfactory engagement from their centre during March 2020 lockdown. 14% of learners (n=90) were unsure. 6% (n=38) of learners disagreed and 2% (n=16) of learners strongly disagreed that their centre had supported them to succeed during the March 2020 lockdown. Thus, the data indicates that learners broadly felt supported to succeed by their centre during March 2020 lockdown.

4.19 EVALUATION OF THE LEARNER EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING MARCH 2020 LOCKDOWN

Although the above survey was small in scale, it does give an indication as to the performance of Cork ETB in teaching and learning during the March 2020 lockdown. It is positive to note that the majority of learners felt supported by their centre during the March 2020 lockdown. However, there was a dip in the numbers of learners reporting that they felt their individual learning needs were being met and feeling supported to succeed by their centre. There is room for improvement in how Cork ETB, centres/services and staff can meet learners' individual needs and support learners, not just through COVID-19 but in the post-pandemic world.

4.20 EVALUATION

Cork ETB provides a positive and supportive learning environment for learners with some excellent facilities. Significant efforts are made to ensure that facilities are fit for purpose and there are excellent examples of specific resources for specialist programmes. Cork ETB has a TEL Strategy and plans to further roll out TEL across all provision. The holistic learner experience is at the core of everything. Learners report feeling well cared for and supported in their learning environment. Mechanisms exist to ensure the learner voice is heard. Cork ETB shows innovative practice in teaching and learning, especially in the areas of Adult Literary and Community Education. Engagement in European Projects and work-based learning making for a rounded learner experience. COVID-19 has affected all lives and has temporarily altered the learning environment beyond recognition. Learners felt generally supported during the March 2020 lockdown although there is room for improvement in supporting learners and meeting learners individual learning needs.

4.21 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Cork ETB has excellent purpose-built facilities, including Westside Hospitality Unit, Carrigaline BioPharma Unit, and the Cork Prison Education Unit
- Kinsale College Green Campus is an example of excellent practice in meeting the strategic goals of the FET strategy
- Cork ETB centres respect and care for their learners and learners feel supported
- Cork ETB has excellent mechanisms to listen to the voice of FET learners
- Initiatives in Adult Literacy and Community Education show excellent innovation in teaching and learning
- Cork ETB showed effective practice in teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and built capacity for future directions

4.22 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The fabric and facilities in some Cork ETB buildings remains a challenge for staff and learners
- To continue the roll out of TEL and increase Cork ETB TEL capacity
- To increase the governance of work-based learning across Cork ETB

4.23 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENT

- Continuing expansion of TEL capacity and to develop a Blended Learning Framework
- The development of a FET Learner Charter will further enhance the role of the learner voice within Cork ETB
- Further develop and replicate innovative practices in Adult Literacy and Community Education
- Formation of Work Based Learning Group to increase the governance of work-based learning across Cork ETB

4.24 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Cork ETB is committed to a transparent, consistent, accessible, and fair process of assessment of learners. Cork ETB considers assessment an essential element of the learning process, as a mechanism to facilitate learner access, transfer, and progression in terms of labour market needs and the National Framework of Qualifications.

All Assessment procedures and associated forms/templates are available to all staff on the Quality Assurance SharePoint site. These procedures have been standardised across all Centres and services since their development in 2017. These procedures are also made available to learners through the learner handbooks and through the Centre's website and Moodle platforms.

To supplement these procedures a Referencing Handbook[23] and an Academic Writing Handbook[24] for learners have been developed by Further Education Support Services (FESS) and ETBI in conjunction with ETBs. The Referencing Handbook promotes a standardised referencing style for all use by learners at relevant levels. The Academic Writing Handbook for learners provides guidance on writing for learners who are engaged in programmes of learning equivalent to levels 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). However, it is important to note that these resources may also be a useful tool to other learners at other learning levels and may also support staff in structuring or approaching the teaching of writing skills.

All the Assessment processes are managed at local centre level, with oversight of the whole process by the Quality Assurance Unit and all documentation used is standardised across all provisions.

4.25 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

F. Planning Stage

QA 6.1 Assessment Information for Learners Procedure[25] outlines the information that needs to be provided to learners to ensure fair and consistent assessment. It includes information that is required before a learner commences a programme, during the programme and when assessments are devised. QA 6.2 Coordinated Planning of Assessment Procedures[26] ensures that the assessment of learners is planned, coordinated, and delivered in such a way as to be fair and transparent while satisfying the requirements of the awarding bodies. All Learners are issued with a schedule of assessments when the programme commences and in Centres where there is more than one Assessor involved in the programme, the assessment plan is devised with all Assessors to ensure that there is no overabundance of assessments at a given time. This assessment plan includes the assessment techniques, outlining provisional dates when assessments are due or when exams will take place.

G. Assessment Development

All assessments (excluding apprenticeship) are devised based on the assessment criteria in the module descriptors All modules are already developed, and all learning outcomes are mapped to assessment techniques. Each assessor devises briefs/exams to match the criteria in the module. The learning outcomes and the assessment techniques are specified in the QQI component specification and in the development of module descriptors. Assessments are then developed based on a set of specific criteria and learner's evidence is graded on their achievement of the learning outcomes and against the set of specific criteria.

QA 6.4 Assessment Design Procedure for QQI Awards[26] outlines how assessments should be designed for QQI awards in a way that is fair and consistent to learners and satisfies the requirements of the awarding body. It outlines how learners should have sufficient opportunities to generate evidence to demonstrate achievement of the standards of knowledge, skill, or competence. There is a standardised template for briefs, examination paper and detailed marking scheme to be used by all Centres.

Assessment in the Further Education services is based on the Locally Devised Assessment (LDA) model, where the responsibility for developing and administering the appropriate assessment instruments and the recording and reporting of the assessment outcomes lies essentially with the individual assessor.

Traditionally Training services operated under a different assessment model, with assessment instruments being centrally devised and set, without input from the learning practitioner directly responsible for course delivery. This system relied on the former FÁS Common Assessment Management System (CAMS) for its effective operation. Unfortunately using this system did not

[23] https://www.fess.ie/images/stories/ResourcesForTutors/Referencing_Handbook_files/Referencing_Handbook_February_2019.pdf

[24] https://www.fess.ie/images/stories/ResourcesForTutors/AcademicWritingHandbookForLearnersInTheFETSector.pdf

[25] All X.X documents are provided in the support information folders

[26] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

ensure that the assessments were revised and kept up to date in line with current changes. A decision was made in June 2019 by the Quality Assurance Officer in conjunction with management in the training centre to commence the development of new assessments for training courses using the locally devised assessment model.

Significant training has been provided for learning practitioners and coordinators over the past number of years to ensure that everyone is aware of the assessment standards and procedures in place. This training was initially delivered by the Further Education Support Services supported by Quality Assurance Officer, and now with the increased staff number in the Quality Assurance Unit, is delivered by Quality Assurance Unit. The training covers:

- Ensuring an Understanding of the Standard
- Devising Assessment Instruments
- Exam Papers, Marking Schemes, Outline Solutions
- Conducting Assessments
- Quality Assurance Procedures

One to One training is also being delivered to new assessors by Quality Assurance staff throughout the academic year and this ensures every step in the Assessment process is understood and implemented by the new assessor.

H. Implementation of Assessment Activities

The purpose of QA 6.4 Implementation of Assessment Activities Procedure[27] is to ensure fairness and consistency in the implementation of assessment activities across Cork ETB centres. These procedures and associated documents ensure consistency and standardisation of assessment activated across the Centres. This procedure outlines the use of dictionary in examinations, various assessment submission sheets, attendance sheet for examinations and Assessor QA Checklist. The Assessor QA Checklist ensures that the Assessor includes all documentation when submitting the evidence for the next stage of the process.

Complementary to the implementing of assessment activities procedure are other Quality Assurance Procedures which are embedded in the Assessment of Learners.

I. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment of Learners with Specific Needs

Cork ETB is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and welcomes learners with disabilities and specific learning needs. QA 6.6 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment of Learners with Specific Needs Procedure[28] provides details of the range of reasonable accommodations to ensure a fair assessment process for learners with specific needs, as required by Equal Status legislation. The purpose of this procedure is to outline how centres make Reasonable Accommodations in assessments to enable a learner with a specific need to demonstrate his/her level of actual attainment. The procedure aims to ensure that in allowing reasonable accommodation the validity and reliability of the assessment process is not compromised.

J. Extenuating Circumstances Relating to Assessments Activities

In the interest of fair and consistent assessment of learning Cork ETB operates a strict deadline policy. However, from time to time there may be extenuating circumstances that may impact on a learner's ability to complete an assessment. The purpose of the procedure QA 6.7 Extenuating Circumstances Relating to Assessments Activities[29] is to outline how learners can apply to defer an assessment activity (i.e., complete the assessment on another occasion) in the case of temporary,

[27] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[28] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[29] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

exceptional circumstances that prevent them from undertaking a specific assessment activity at that time.

K. Repeats of QQI Assessments

QA 6.8 Repeats of QQI Assessments Procedure[30] outlines the rules governing repeats of QQI assessments for learners. This procedure relates to QQI awards, however, depending on the assessment process at levels 1, 2 and 3 this procedure may not be relevant. It is the responsibility of the Principals/Centre Managers to inform learners of their entitlement to repeat an assessment where the required standard has not been attained and for facilitating the repeat assessment process.

L. Assessment Malpractice

Cork ETB developed procedure QA 6.10 Cork ETB Assessment Malpractice Procedure[31] to ensure the integrity of the assessment process and the subsequent validity and currency of learners' results. The procedure outlines how to address and manage suspected learner malpractices promptly and consistently across Cork ETB. The procedure also outlines the communication of such instances and thereby ensuring the process of continuous improvement and quality enhancement is facilitated.

M. Feedback on Assessment to Learners

When the Quality Assurance Unit was developing QA 6.16 Feedback on Assessment to Learners Procedure[32] it was noted that the QQI guidelines, when developing their quality assurance system, providers' procedure on feedback to learners should seek to ensure that:

> "Individual learners receive timely and constructive feedback on their assessments which informs their participation on the programme. The feedback is appropriate to the nature of the assessment, i.e., formative or summative".

The purpose of the procedure is to outline how Centres provide and record high quality feedback to learners to enhance the learning process. This approach allows learners to know where they are doing well and what areas they need to improve on and gives learners a chance to reflect on their work. As a result, learners are aware on what needs to be improved on in future performance. Feedback can take several forms and varies depending on the programme or level being delivered.

N. Internal Verification

QA 6.14 Internal Verification Procedure[33] outlines the process by which the Cork ETB's assessment policies and procedures relating to planning, managing, and operationalising all aspects of assessment practices are internally verified. The overall purpose of the internal verification process is to ensure that a Cork ETB centre is monitoring its own systems and procedures regarding assessment from planning of assessment to finalising results, ensuring that there is adequate learner evidence, and that results, and grades are correctly calculated and recorded. The Quality Assurance Unit schedules and delivers training in Cork ETB's internal verification procedure to staff engaged in internal verification in every centre under the remit of Cork ETB. There is also a sampling strategy which allows for the cut-off points between the grades to be established and is adhered to by all Centres.

[30] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[31] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[32] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[33] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

O. External Authentication

External Authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards. It establishes the credibility of the provider's assessment processes and ensures that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements of the award (Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers, Version 2 Revised, QQI 2018). The purpose of QA 6.15 External Authentication Procedure[34] is to outline the procedure surrounding external authentication in Cork ETB and the role of the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit, individual centres, and External Authenticators in the authentication process.

Since 2017 all Centres submit an estimate form to the Quality Assurance Unit, detailing the award titles, components titles and the number of learners that will be submitted for certification in all QQI's six certification periods. The staff in Quality Assurance appoint suitable External Authenticators from the ETBI national panel and liaise with both Centres and External Authenticators. There is a briefing session held with External Authenticators before the June Certification period and the focus of this briefing is on different aspects of Quality Assurance each year. All external authenticator reports are submitted to the Centre Management and to the Quality Assurance Unit after the external authentication takes place.

P. Results Approval Panel

The results approval process ensures that results are fully quality assured and signed off by the provider prior to submission to QQI following internal verification and external authentication (Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers, Version 2 Revised, QQI 2018). QA 6.19 Results Approval Procedure outlines the procedure surrounding results approval in Cork ETB and the role of the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit, individual centres, and External Authenticators in the Results Approval Process. The membership of the panel, terms of reference for the panel and the responsibilities of the panel are included and there are accompanying documents which are used for the Agenda, notes of the meeting and the report of the panel. There is an external person to the Centre who is a member of the Panel and as mentioned previously this role is being fulfilled by Quality Assurance Staff. The requests to QQI for certification are completed at centre level.

Q. External Appeals Process

QA 6.18 – Cork ETB QQI External Appeals procedures[35] ensures that an External Appeals Process is in place for all learners in all Centres offering QQI assessments. Learners are entitled to appeal their final result/s awarded for individual components. The final result is the result that has been externally authenticated and approved by the Results Approval Panel. This information is communicated to all learners when their final results are issued by the Centre to them and outlines how a learner may appeal. The Appeal process is managed centrally by the Quality Assurance Unit.

R. Work Placement Assessments

Most of Cork ETB programmes at QQI Levels 3–6 have a mandatory module of either work experience or work placement. The purpose of the Work Experience module is to equip the learner with the relevant knowledge, skill, and competence to participate in the workplace for a limited time, carrying out work-related tasks independently while under general direction.

To obtain a QQI major award a work experience placement of minimum 60 hours must be completed in an established organisation that has been deemed suitable to provide appropriate work experience. Work placement is a longer duration of hours and may vary according to the programme. It is in the learner's interest that work experience be as relevant and meaningful as is possible, and it must be appropriate to the vocational area. Some vocational areas will require additional work experience time. Resources have been developed to support organisation of the work experience placement. These include Centre/College Guidelines, Guidelines for Employers

[34] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

[35] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

and templates for letter requesting a placement, work experience agreement form, and letter of understanding. These resources are not mandatory: they may be adapted to suit the individual setting, or centres may prefer to continue using what they have already developed. To pass this module, the learner must complete a work experience placement of 60 hours (or more as required in some programmes) and must achieve at least a pass mark (50%) in the Skills Demonstration which is completed during the work experience.

All Apprenticeship programmes include on-the-job assessments. In the case of craft standard based apprenticeship i.e., electrical, plumbing, etc., workplace assessors are trained by staff in the Apprenticeship services in the Cork ETB and assessments take place throughout the apprentice's time with the employer over the four years. With regard to new apprenticeships i.e., Commis Chef, Butchery, Auctioneering, the workplace assessor's complete workplace assessment and mentoring training which is delivered by the collaborating provider. These assessments take place throughout the apprentice's time with the employer.

4.26 CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS DURING COVID-19

On March 12th 2020, Cork ETB, in line with Government direction and guidance, closed all its schools, colleges and centres, and commenced operating contingency arrangements for the continued delivery of services, including teaching and learning, using remote and online resources and systems. Contingency plans to provide for learner assessment were developed and part of the planning was to takes cognisance of several possible scenarios, one of the biggest issues was the variable and unknown duration and nature of the restrictions. To try and plan in this changing landscape required Cork ETB to have a number of plans (Appendix 10), and there was a need to adjust and modify these as the circumstances dictated.

All elements of Cork ETB's contingency planning have focused on ensuring that all our learners gain the certification and qualifications that they expected on the commencement of their course. The contingency arrangements and supports that Cork ETB put in place and were developed with all our centres and services have been geared to that outcome. The contingency planning for assessment was focussed on doing everything possible to enable learners to achieve their qualification and progress either to work or further studies.

The reality for many courses was that a considerable amount of the delivery and assessment had already been completed before the decision was made by Government to close education and training centres. At the same time, there were parts of courses that required completion, and assessments that needed to be completed. While recognizing the challenges that this created for all staff and all courses, Cork ETB were also cognisant that the challenges in some areas were greater than in others, where specialist equipment, materials, facilities etc. were required for a particular course. There were some instances where the course could not be completed until staff and learners regained access to centres. It was Cork ETB's desire to keep such instances to a minimum, while at the same time ensuring that the learners' outcomes were valid and retained their integrity.

Where proposed assessments or assessment arrangements required revisions or alterations, the Assessor's professional expertise, knowledge and integrity were at the centre of the approach and contingency arrangements Cork ETB had developed. QQI had issued guidance to support the required actions in the COVID-19 situation, and there were additional support materials available through our Quality Assurance Unit and the Further Education and Training Support Service (FESS) website.

Five principles were adopted and underpinned Cork ETB's approach:

1. Learning outcomes-based approaches
2. Integrity of assessment
3. Proportionality
4. Support for staff and learners
5. Confidence and transparency

Cork ETB was committed, insofar as was possible, to ensuring that assessments would be completed, and results issued in line with the timelines that would normally apply to courses. In any exceptional cases where this was not possible, learners were advised of the arrangements that will be made to allow the courses affected to be completed and assessments proceed when the conditions allowed.

Cork ETB was particularly conscious of situations whereby some learners were unable to complete elements of their work experience or work practice components. The assessment contingency planning provided for these situations, and in most cases the contingency arrangements allowed learners to gain the required certification for work experience/work practice. However, in some instances it was necessary for learners to complete the outstanding hours of placement when this was provided for by employers.

All colleges, centres and services under Cork ETB were encompassed within our contingency planning, and while slightly different measures and responses were required in respect of some courses or components, everything was premised on ensuring that the integrity, value, and recognition of the qualification that the learner was undertaking was not compromised or undermined.

4.27 EVALUATION

The Assessment Process in all Centres in Cork ETB is robust and fit for purpose and ensures integrity and consistency across all assessments and all provision. All learners are informed of the assessment process at the beginning of the course and receive feedback throughout their course on their progress on the course and receive feedback on their assessments.

It is very evident from the individual Centres self-evaluation reports that the Cork ETB Assessment policy and procedures are embedded into the teaching and learning. The following are a sample from Centre's own self-evaluation reports:

Cork College of Commerce

Assessment briefs, guidelines, examinations, marking schemes and outline solutions are prepared at subject meetings with all teachers teaching the component collaborating. These become the common assessment instruments and are used across all courses. Two examination papers with associated outline solutions and marking schemes are submitted every year into the assessment bank. This copper fastens the integrity, consistency, and validity of all assessment tools.

The college has three dedicated work experience coordinators. Work experience induction sessions are carried out at the commencement of the year and every learner has a pack with the necessary forms, insurance details etc. All work experience placements are logged by the work experience coordinators. Learners are monitored by phone when on work experience by teachers and documentation kept.

There is a partnership arrangement in place for some courses where one day per week work placement is featured and the relationship between college and work is more closely aligned. In the Nursing Department a member of the department carries out placement visits where this has been requested by a hospital. Any issues arising during work experience are dealt with by the work experience co-ordinators.

In the case of apprenticeship there is a much stronger link and employers are provided with mentoring sessions etc. To support the programme, college staff also host employer and apprentice meetings to ensure the programme is serving the needs of the apprentice and industry. The college staff engage in ongoing weekly communication with the employers to ensure that both they and the students are supported.

The work placement employer receives documentation from the college with information about what is expected and how assessment should be carried out to standardise the assessment procedure in the workplace. The work experience coordinators are always available to the placements for advice, clarification and problem solving. This is the best that can be achieved on the basis that over 1,000 employers are involved.

Mallow College

Learners are supported throughout the assessment process by a combination of subject teachers, course coordinators, guidance department and study centre. Learners are encouraged to submit draft assessments for review and feedback prior to final submission. Assessments are submitted through our online Virtual Leaning Environment (Moodle) to ensure a fair and transparent record is maintained. Feedback is at the forefront in the College and all learners are continuously given feedback in line with Cork ETB QA guidelines.

Cork ETB has developed a recognition of prior learning policy and procedure through the recognition of a prior learning working group which is under the remit of the Quality Assurance Steering Group. The policy and procedure will be implemented on a pilot basis in the next academic year for both learners on full time courses and for learners that are in full time employment that are availing of training through skills to advance under the remit of the Training Centre.

It is acknowledged that the there is no mentoring programme in place at present for workplace mentors (non-ETB staff) that assess learners during work placement. There are guidelines and documents given to workplace mentors to support them, but this is area that through this evaluation process has been noted as an area for further enhancement. Currently there is a training mentoring programme available for Apprenticeship, so this is something Cork ETB needs to build on and ensure that standards are set and maintained when learners are assessed during work placement.

4.28 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Standardised policy and assessment procedures
- Standardisation of briefs within Centres
- Robust Assessment procedures across all provision
- External Authentication is centralised so there is oversight at Cork ETB level
- An external person to the Centre who is a member of the RAP Panel appointed by the Quality Assurance Unit

- Cork ETB showed through the contingency assessment arrangements during the COVID-19 Pandemic that the learners were assessed in fair and consistent manner

4.29 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The continuous intake of students and the varying levels of students in classes can be challenging in some Centres
- Students benefit from portfolio-based learning and working at their own pace. However, this presents a challenge to teachers as students can be working on multiple assignments, at different levels, in the one class
- There will be a challenge in the integration of RPL. The challenge will be around the manpower required in a very short space of time to review and assess the required evidence across potentially a wide variety of components and evidence types

4.30 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENT

- Develop a training mentoring programme for mentors (non-ETB staff) who assess learners during work experience
- Engage with employers to ensure that workplace mentors are being supported in their role
- Supports to be put in place both at Quality Assurance and at Centre level to ensure that RPL policy can be implemented fully in Centres
- Explore the option of having an online exam platform available which would ensure the integrity, and validity of online examinations
- Quality Assurance Unit to develop online training for all aspects of the Assessment Process

4.31 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

Cork ETB provides supports to all learners in education, training, and youth services. Through these supports there is a pathway for every learner. Cork ETB's Strategy Statement 2017-2021 aim for learners is to 'provide a high-quality learning experience for every learner'.

There are a range of supports available to learners across all Cork ETB programmes, however these supports can differ in each provision and some of these supports are unique to each provision. Ongoing supports are made available to learners on a day-to-day basis via Programme Mangers, Coordinators, Principals, Resource Workers and Learning Practitioners. Identification of supports to learners is normally identified on registration and induction to a programme. One of Cork ETB's guiding principles is to 'prioritise the needs of learners'. In response to this, all learners are encouraged to approach relevant staff within their provision. This approach reinforces Cork ETB's value of 'Caring' to ensure all centres and provisions *'adopt an inclusive and respectful approach to our learners and staff and strive to ensure that each person using our services reaches his/her potential'.*

A. Reasonable Accommodation and Learner Supports

Cork ETB provides equal opportunities and a level playing field for all learners with disabilities and specific learning needs. A range of reasonable accommodations are available to ensure a fair and consistent assessment process for all its learners, allow a learner to demonstrate his/her level of actual attainment and to further enable the learner to reach their full potential. (*QA6.6 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment of Learners with Specific Needs Procedure*[36]).

[36] https://www.corketb.ie/about-cork-etb/further-education-training-f-e-t/quality-assurance-in-f-e-t/

All reasonable accommodations are identified on a local basis in each centre/college. Each centre/college takes responsibility to ensure this information is made available to every learner on induction and details are also included in the learner handbook.

Reasonable accommodation requests can be made on the following grounds:

- Learning Difficulty
- Hearing Difficulty
- Visual Difficulty
- Physical Difficulty
- Mental Health or Behavioural Difficulty

It is becoming more apparent in recent times that a large proportion of our learners have learning difficulties, some diagnosed and some not and most have negative prior engagement with education. This has resulted in added pressure to centres/colleges at local level.

B. Disability Supports

Cork ETB welcomes applications from learners with disabilities, medical conditions, and special needs. Supports for learners within Cork ETB go far beyond that of reasonable accommodation. Cork ETB PLC Colleges have access to funding (Funding for Students with Disabilities – FSD) that is provided by SOLAS to provide supports for learners with disabilities. All learners presenting with disabilities can make an application for such funding, and if deemed eligible they are provided with the necessary support to access, fully participate in and successfully complete their chosen course of learning. Supports which are covered under this funding:

- assistive technology equipment and software
- non-medical helpers (e.g., personal assistants, notetakers)
- academic/learning support
- deaf supports (sign language interpreters, Speedtext)
- transport support

The FSD fund was previously provided through the Higher Education Authority. From September 2020 it has been allocated by SOLAS and the ETB has a greater role in managing the funding. Cork ETB's Active Inclusion worker based on guidelines and templates produced by SOLAS has engaged with the Active Inclusion/Disability support staff in colleges to manage the funding applications and allocations in a more streamlined and timely manner than was possible with the HEA.

Other Cork ETB services who cannot avail of such funding mentioned above offer their own support services in centre. This however is proving to be a further strain on centres as more learners are presenting with various needs, unfortunately the centres have not always got the supports to facilitate the needs of the learner.

Cork ETB is reviewing the funding and supports available to learners and with sufficient budget allocation will be putting in place a more comprehensive system than that allowed for under the FSD measure.

C. Literacy and Numeracy Supports

Literacy and numeracy support is provided in all Cork ETB centres/colleges to learners who need it. Each provision adopts their own approach in response to literacy and numeracy support required for their learners. The Adult Literacy Provision provides a direct service catering for literacy and numeracy supports. This is done through small group and some 1-1 tuition in reading, writing and maths to adults with a basic skill need for adults with literacy difficulties. Generally, NFQ levels 1-3 are offered in this provision. An Integrating Literacy Strategy was launched in 2020 across the Youthreach provision to integrate literacy and numeracy, using a whole centre approach.

D. Active Inclusion

Cork ETB appointed a coordinator for Active Inclusion across FET services of the ETB. The appointment of the Active Inclusion role followed from an initial pilot undertaken by Cork ETB to identify and develop good practices in inclusion through an Active Inclusion network. This initiative, which was supported by Ahead (the Higher Education disability support body) provided a direction and focus for the role, with key priorities being:

- Developing appropriate support guidelines and structures for all FET centres and services
- Identifying areas for staff development to assist learners with disabilities
- Supporting centres in the adoption of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach

In the time since the Active Inclusion coordinator has been in the role, they have delivered an online conference on Inclusion for practitioners within Cork ETB and other ETBs in November 2020. This gave learning practitioners an opportunity to share experiences and practical suggestions about how to help learners of all ages and abilities to participate fully, enjoy their learning and realise their potential. Topics covered:

- Inclusion and Communication
- Technology for assessors
- Supporting Autistic Learners
- Working with Anxiety
- Mental Health wareness
- Assistive Technology

Identifying the needs of a learner can be one of the most demanding elements towards providing the necessary supports. Cork ETB and the Active Inclusion coordinator identified the need to provide professional upskilling opportunities for staff working with people with disabilities to allow them to identify learner needs more accurately and confidently, without recourse to the services of an educational psychologist (which remain a necessity in some limited circumstances).

The Active Inclusion coordinator identified and coordinated assessor training for a number of staff working with learners with disabilities. The training included:

- Professional Test Administration
- Working with The Woodcock Johnson IV. (revised Irish and UK edition). This will allow staff to assess Reading, Writing, Spelling and Math for all of learners of all ages

This is a new national standard, working with a test kit that is RACE and DARE compliant and just phase one of an assessment plans for the present FET strategy and Cork ETB's commitment to Inclusion.

E. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Cork ETB in conjunction with AHEAD piloted UDL initiative across FET Colleges in 2017/2018. This innovative pilot was the first of its kind in Ireland. The pilot's main aim was to support learning

practitioners by collaboration and to devise a more inclusive system and to ensure all learners were being catered for adequately in our FET centres. The number of learners with disabilities accessing the FET sector is growing every year and furthermore these learners have an expectation to access any programme and to be included in all aspects of the programme, including work experience and social activities.

The initiative was led by Kinsale College in collaboration with St. Johns Central College, Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa and Cork College of Commerce, with a UDL champion in each College. The initiative allowed staff to share their innovative inclusive practices, collaboration with other staff and to learn from each other.

The initiative has been enhanced in recent years with more Cork ETB FET Centres taking on the UDL digital badge raining programme provided by AHEAD and UCD in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Framework. This is a 10-week programme in redesigning learning practitioner's mindset and teaching practice to foster and promote Inclusion in all their learning environments. Many of these participants are also considering doing the Facilitators Badge so they can roll out this training with their colleagues, once they are qualified with their badges.

F. Maths/Drawing Supports for Craft Apprentices

A Resource Person was appointed to Cork Training Centre in 2018 to support any Craft Apprentices who might have literacy or numeracy requirements. The Resource Person supports Craft Apprentices in other areas such as:

- Basic IT skills
- Navigating Moodle
- Assistance to set up revenue online accounts
- Assisting in accessing CoreHR (for payments)
- Reading and taking notes effectively
- Time Management
- Form filling etc.

There is a designated consultation room for meeting learners with an open-door policy and the Resource Person is contactable by email, phone, or text.

The Resource Person is part of the National Support to Apprentices Group (SAG). This group has created resources to support craft apprentices nationwide including:

- Study skills handbook
- Trade maths workbooks
- Electrical Practice tests
- Integrating Literacy handbook for instructors
- Phase 1 and 2 maths assessments

The Resource Person provides evening support classes to apprentices outside of their timetabled classes. Topics for the evening support classes can include:

- Maths
- Electrical support
- Technical Drawing Support

G. Guidance

Cork ETB provides guidance for learners to support them in accessing, transferring, and progressing between programmes. The Adult Guidance Service supports learners of Adult Literacy, Community Education and Back to Education Initiatives. Each PLC College/PLC provision in second level schools have a Guidance Counsellor allocation as per local agreement. However, Youthreach learners, Training Service and Evening classes do not have access to guidance services.

Further information on Guidance in Cork ETB is available in section 7.31.c.

H. Wellbeing

Cork ETB operates under the Value of Care for all learners. This ties into the SOLAS FET Strategy, which sets consistent learner support as a strategic priority. Each Cork ETB centre aims to support learners in their wellbeing. This is especially the case in Youthreach Centres who often are working with vulnerable learners. Youthreach services offer a range of supports for learner wellbeing including:

- Breakfast and Lunch Club
- Summer Programme
- The provision of Counselling for learners
- Training and Travel allowance
- Midterm and Easter break extracurricular activities
- Key working
- Local community links to access supports as needed

4.32 CASE STUDY: COLÁISTE STIOFÁIN NAOFA – QUIET ROOM

Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa provides a quiet room for learners to visit as appropriate. This room is a multi-purpose space that is dedicated to noise-free activities. Students may use the room for stress relief, to get away from everything for a few minutes or just to relax and catch their breath, slow their heart rate etc.

4.33 CASE STUDY: KINSALE COLLEGE CARE SUPPORT TEAM

In 2018, a Care Support Team was established in Kinsale College to support students' learning. The Care Team is comprised of the Guidance Counsellor, Personal Assistants (PAs) and the Disability Coordinator. The team meets once a week to discuss student issues and to identify who needs support. This has been found to increase and enhance retention within the college The Care Support Team feeds back to Director of Kinsale College any items which are outside the scope of Care Team. The Director of Kinsale College may liaise with outside services such as Kinsale Youth Services, St. Vincent de Paul or the local Gardaí Síochána to help learners access the supports they need.

These supports help to meet learners' holistic needs so they can best benefit from the learning environment. Similarly, supports are available in PLCs to manage and support learner Wellbeing including:

I. Financial Supports

Financial Supports are available to some FET learners, depending on the type of programme they are pursuing and their personal circumstances. Post Leaving Certificate students may be eligible for financial supports under the provisions of the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) scheme. Applications are made to SUSI in the same manner as for students attending Higher Education. Youthreach students are eligible to receive training allowances, the level of which varies depending on their age. All such allowances are contingent on attendance. Learners may also be eligible for travel and meal allowances. Learners on VTOS programmes are entitled to a training allowance which in effect replaces their social welfare payment, with an additional allowance in some cases. Learners may also be eligible for travel and meal allowances. Participants on full-time training programmes may be entitled to a training allowance which replaces any social welfare payment entitlement. Learners may also be eligible for travel and meal allowances. These financial supports are of great benefit to learners to access education.

J. IT Supports

The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the "digital divide" that can exist and the need for learners to have equitable access to IT. Prior to COVID-19, Cork ETB had made the Microsoft Office suite available to all staff and learners so that all learners had access to email and the relevant software to assist in their studies. When all centres closed for the initial shutdown on March 12th, 2020, it became clear that some learners would not have the IT resources at home to complete their programme. Centres found innovative and creative ways to maintain engagement with learners. Some centres had laptops that were loaned out to learners. Others reverted to photocopying and mailing resources to learners. The three City based PLC Colleges and Cork Training Centre have an IT Technician who supports the IT needs of learners and staff. This is of great benefit to helping learners and staff with everyday IT problems. Furthermore, some centres have designated "Drop in" IT support sessions to help learners with IT issues, including the use of Moodle. It remains a challenge to roll these supports out equitably to smaller Cork ETB centres.

The Department of Further and Higher Education (DFHET) made funding available for a laptop loan scheme for learners for the academic year 2020-2021. This was a great support to learners who are currently engaging in Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning.

K. Childcare

Cork ETB operates two Early Years Services to help meet the childcare needs of some FET learners. Cuddles Crèche is based in St. John's Central College. Full day care is provided for children under the age of 6 whose parents are learners or staff in St. John's Central College or the nearby Cork College of Commerce. Lios na nÓg Crèche is in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa and provides early years and after-school care for the children of staff and learners. Both facilities are an excellent support to enable learners to access programmes.

4.34 EVALUATION

Many learners engaging with FET programmes are presenting with a range of complex needs that are, at the current time, not being fully addressed and provided for. Cork ETB tries to meet these needs but there is room for further improvement. Learning Supports vary across provisions and this could be further standardised. Similarly, guidance provision for Cork ETB varies across provisions. Learner Wellbeing is at the core of what we do, and centres have put good initiatives in place to support Wellbeing which could be further built on. Financial, IT and Childcare supports are available for learners which facilitates their learning.

4.35 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- The Resource Person is an effective support for craft apprentices
- Some excellent practice exists to support learner wellbeing in Cork ETB centres
- Kinsale Care Support Team provides great support and care for learners in Kinsale College
- Good financial supports exist for Cork ETB learners who meet different criteria
- The provision of childcare for learners in Cork College of Commerce, St. John's Central College and Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa facilitates parents to return to education

4.36 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- To effectively support Learner Wellbeing
- To support learner and staff IT needs in smaller centres

4.37 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENT

- To expand Guidance provision to all Cork ETB centres
- Educational Psychologist as needed
- Regular visits from Career Guidance personnel
- Provision of additional Resource Worker or Educational Support Workers would also be of benefit

5. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

5.1 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Cork ETB is committed to the quality assurance of all its programmes and services, and through different mechanisms of self-evaluation, monitoring and review at different stages and processes throughout the year, it can capture any early warning indicators of areas that need improvement, or areas that may need interventions or supports to be put in place.

5.2 EXECUTIVE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

During the third quarter of 2017, Cork ETB undertook an Executive Self-Evaluation process, conducted in accordance with QQI Statutory Core Quality Assurance and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for the Education and Training Boards and within the nationally agreed Terms of Reference for Education and Training Boards Executive Self Evaluation.

As per QQI Statutory Core QA Guidelines:

> "The purpose of such self-evaluation is to review, evaluate and report on the education, training, research and related services provided by the provider and the quality assurance system and procedures which underpin these. In doing so, existing effective practices is identified and maintained, while areas needing improvement are addressed."
>
> (P. 21).

Cork ETB approached the Executive Self Evaluation as an opportunity to identify its current level of compliance with the requirements of QQI, as set out in the Quality Assurance guidelines, to assist in building capacity within the ETB, and to identify potential gaps or deficits within Cork ETB structures, policies, and processes in Quality Assurance. The process facilitated an enhanced understanding and ownership of quality and quality enhancement processes at senior management level within the ETB and has resulted in recommendations for improvement and priority actions for Cork ETB, as set out in an Improvement Plan. The Executive Self-Evaluation Report and the Quality Improvement Plan were published in October 2017 (Appendix 12), and the process was enhancement based, focussing on improvements and enhancements to policies, structures, and processes to improve the quality of learning opportunities for all learners within the ETB.

5.3 ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Since the Executive Self Evaluation Report and Quality Improvement Plan were developed and submitted to QQI in 2017, a Quality Improvement Plan is drafted and submitted to QQI annually by Cork ETB. This plan forms the basis of annual dialogue meetings with QQI.

Through the annual Quality Improvement Plan, Cork ETB is afforded the opportunity to review its quality assurance arrangements and priorities under the following headings of:

- Governance
- Delivery of Further Education and Training
- The Learning Experience
- Information and Data Management

5.4 CENTRE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

In the academic year 2019/2020 all Centres were requested to submit a Centre Quality Improvement Plan to the Quality Assurance Unit. This plan consisted of two sections, in Section 1 the Centre was to identify recommendation/(s) from the External Authenticator Reports for 2019 Assessment periods, what target it plans to set for 2019/2020 to implement the recommendation/(s), and what action it thinks may be required to assist in implementing the recommendation/(s). In Section 2, a Centre was to identify other areas it has identified for improvement (apart from areas identified by the External Authenticator) and to include recommendations from Results Approval Panel Meetings. Quality Assurance staff liaised with Centres and offered support in specific areas identified in the plans as required. A sample Centre Quality Improvement Plan is included at Appendix 12.

5.5 MONITORING OF IMPLEMENTING QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

In 2018 the Quality Assurance Steering group decided to monitor and evaluate the assessments procedures to ascertain if they were effective and fit for purpose and how they were being implemented in the Centres. The first stage of the process was that all Centres had to complete a self-evaluation monitoring and evaluation report and submit to the Quality Assurance Unit. Based on the information in these reports a representative sample of Centres were selected for onsite monitoring visits. The visits took place over a four-month period and Centres were issued with a checklist for Monitoring in advance of the visit. At the end of the process a report was submitted to the Quality Assurance Steering group and there was follow up by Quality Assurance staff with the Centres.

5.6 REVIEW OF EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATOR REPORTS AND RESULTS APPROVAL REPORTS

All External Authentication and Results Approval Reports are reviewed by Quality Assurance staff when they are submitted at each of the QQI Certification periods. Recommendations and any issues highlighted in the reports are discussed with management in the Centres and if required supports are put in place to implement any improvements or enhancements that are required.

5.7 REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Since the Assessment Policy and assessments procedures were piloted in 2017, reviews of the effectiveness and implementation of these have taken place under the remit of the Assessment Working Group. A consultation phase takes place, and all staff can give feedback on the assessment procedures. In the past year numerous assessment procedures have been reviewed and updated based on contingency arrangements due to COVID-19. Also, with the Moodle platform being used by learners and assessors, our procedures had to be updated to ensure that the learners' evidence that was being submitted via Moodle was being captured in the relevant procedures.

5.8 MONITORING OF CONTRACTED TRAINING AND SECOND PROVIDERS

Cork ETB, through its training service, has procedures in place regarding sub-contracting of training provision including CTC, LTIs, STPs and Contracted Training. Procedures include:

- The application process
- Evaluation
- Business planning
- Financial and non-financial monitoring
- Review of programmes

A. Contracted Training Providers

Procedures are in place for tendering and awarding of contracts to second providers for the provision of delivery of training programmes. Contracted Training providers are required to adhere to Cork ETB Quality Assurance policies and procedures and are monitored on a regular basis by training services staff. Monitoring of all aspects of the programmes takes place also by a Contracted Training Officer at different intervals during the programme.

B. Community Training Providers and Specialist Training Provider

A business planning process exists for both the Specialist Training Provider and Community Training Centre programmes. This involves three business plan meetings. In November of each year, each of the second providers for these two programme types are issued with a Business Planning template which is completed and returned by a specified due date. A Business Planning meeting is then arranged to discuss the individual submissions and agree the Business Plan for the year ahead.

A mid-year review meeting takes place to discuss progress, achievement of goals and target etc. At the end of each year a final review meeting is held. This meeting normally takes place at the same time as the initial meeting for the following year. These meetings are attended by the Training Centre Manager, Assistant Manager with responsibility for the Community Training programmes, the relevant Community Development Officer for the Training Centre as well as representatives from the sponsoring organisation. Cork ETB Quality Assurance policies and procedures are required to be adhered to and are monitored on a regular basis by training service staff.

C. Local Training Initiatives

In the case of Local Training Initiatives, an application process exists whereby a sponsoring organisation identifies the need within a community for delivery of a programme and applies to management in the Training Centre for funding. Cork ETB Quality Assurance policies and procedures are required to be adhered to and are monitored by training services staff. Community Development Officers also conduct several financial and non-financial visits throughout the lifespan of each contract.

D. Evaluation of Strategic Performance Agreement from SOLAS

SOLAS developed, with the ETB sector, a series of "Strategic Performance Agreements" in 2018, following a pilot process with three ETBs (of which Cork ETB was one). These performance agreements, which cover a period of three years, set out the expectations for the ETB in a number of areas including, among others:

- Learner participation rate
- Learner completion and certification outcomes
- Targeted industry/business sectors for provision
- Progression rates to employment and further study

SOLAS conduct an annual Review Meeting with individual ETB's, (the 2020 meeting was postponed due to Covid-19 and staffing changes in SOLAS). At these meetings, the ETB, represented by the Executive and mangers from across the FET services, engage in a dialogue with SOLAS senior management regarding current progress and challenges in relation to the performance targets, and future opportunities/specific initiatives.

These Strategic Performance agreements will form a central part in the revised funding model being developed by the sector by SOLAS. They also serve to guide and inform the ETB's annual plan and report.

5.9 EVALUATION

In the process of evaluating the self-evaluation reports from the Centres there are many very good examples of how the self-evaluation, monitoring and review takes places at different times throughout the year in Centres. The monitoring and evaluation of Quality is recognised in all Centres as a very important in the Quality Cycle. Below are some extracts from our Centres' own self evaluations repots which outline different monitoring and evaluation that take place within Cork ETB Centres:

Adult Literacy

At regular intervals throughout the year the area teams meet to review the plans and various reports (outlined across). These teams consist of AEO, Area Co-Ordinators, Programme Co-Ordinators and Resource Workers. Challenges, successes, and areas for improvement are discussed. Where changes to the current approved plan are required, approval is sought through the AEO from the Director of FET. These are examples of the review instruments used:

Youthreach

All twelve Cork ETB Youthreach centres carry out a whole Centre Evaluation and Improvement Plan (CEIP). This process normally takes place at the end of each calendar year over the course of two days. All staff and learners are involved in evaluation process. The process enables centres to evaluate their service as a whole and allows them to focus on areas for enhancement for the following year and an action plan is put in place to ensure progress is being made. This is then reviewed on a continual basis at regular staff meetings and evaluated then again prior to the next CEIP. Such areas can be teaching and learning, administration, literacy, and numeracy etc. which are relevant to each individual centre.

The Glen Youthreach Centre

The centre produces a Centre Evaluation Improvement Plan (CEIP) and Special Education Needs Initiative (SENI) Report annually. These plans schedule actions and prospective improvements for the year following consultation with students, parents, staff, management, and external stakeholders. CEIP and SENI reports are available on the centres SharePoint site. Any actions arising from this dual self-evaluation process are monitored at staff meetings and documented in the subsequent CEIP and SENI Report.

The CEIP Process feeds directly into this Inaugural Statutory review. Continuous Improvement Plans are submitted to Cork ETB QA Department following feedback report from the E.A. and CEIP.

St. John's Central College

Learners are asked to provide feedback on their programme during each academic year. Typically, in the first term, the response rate has been good. The surveys are currently conducted via paper survey – online methods of feedback such as Monkey Survey are to be explored. However, experiences with online student surveys have proven that unless the learners are requested to do it during class time, feedback levels are very low.

Feedback reports are submitted to the Deputy Principal and the Senior Management team then analyse the data. The Principal then meets with individual members of staff to discuss the feedback. This feedback is confidential to the Principal and the member of staff. This method provides an appropriate developmental opportunity for the member of staff and allows the Principal to be aware of any issues that may be arising with an individual's teaching. This informs our staff CPD programme and allows trends to be identified.

Mallow College

Self-evaluation is a continuous process within Mallow College for both full and part-time course provisions. The College's commitment to ongoing self-evaluation and improvement of quality is illustrated as a central tenet of the college's Strategic Plan.

> "We are proud of our reputation as a caring and trustworthy College that puts service and excellence at the heart of its business. Continuous improvement is part of everyone's job; student satisfaction is everyone's responsibility. We support staff development and recognise their achievements."

This process covers all areas of College life. It encompasses areas such as staff CPD for both day and night staff, programme design and review, policy development, system reviews and management structures.

In practical terms this process is carried out in the College through daily interactions with colleagues, students, graduates, applicants, partner educational institutes, local employers, local community, Cork ETB and all other stakeholders. These interactions inform practice and decision-making processes.

Management team meetings are held regularly, both formally and informally. Planning decisions are discussed at these meetings and are reviewed through the prism of Cork ETB and QQI policy as appropriate as well as with an eye on the colleges stated mission and vision. Naturally financial and resource limitations must be factored into planning but, notwithstanding, this, all reviews and planning seek to ensure the best outcome for all stakeholders.

Cork ETB acknowledges that the annual Quality Improvement Plan submitted to QQI is developed at Senior Management level. In the development of the plan various reports from both Centres and Services are considered, however, consideration should be given to developing a mechanism to allow all Centres to have an input into the development of the annual Quality Improvement Plan going forward.

Throughout our Centres some of the processes and documentation that are used for self-evaluation and monitoring for both internal reporting and external reports are standardised. However, through this self-evaluation process it has emerged that there may be duplication of paperwork in some areas so it should be explored to see if processes and associated documentation can be streamlined in some cases.

The self-evaluation, monitoring, review, and reporting systems that are currently in place in place for Cork ETB underpin our quality assurance system and procedures, however the development of a monitoring framework would enhance the current arrangements. This monitoring framework could include all types of monitoring and reviewing that would take place in each quarter of the year both at Centre level and at Cork ETB level. While some of this monitoring is currently taking place, if it were supported by a framework, it would ensure that all staff knew at any given time what monitoring or review event was taking place. The monitoring framework would also enhance the self-evaluation reports that Cork ETB would be completing for QQI in the future and ensure that all information gathered through the self-evaluation, monitoring and review were captured.

5.10 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- Standardised monitoring and review systems in place in Centres
- Self-evaluation, monitoring, and reviews processes all documented, and evidence based

5.11 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Ability to provide the necessary resources required for every area of activity

5.12 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Develop a quality monitoring framework which will include a Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, Procedures, and documentation
- Review all documentation and practices in relation to the monitoring of all second providers and contracted training providers under the remit of the Training Centre

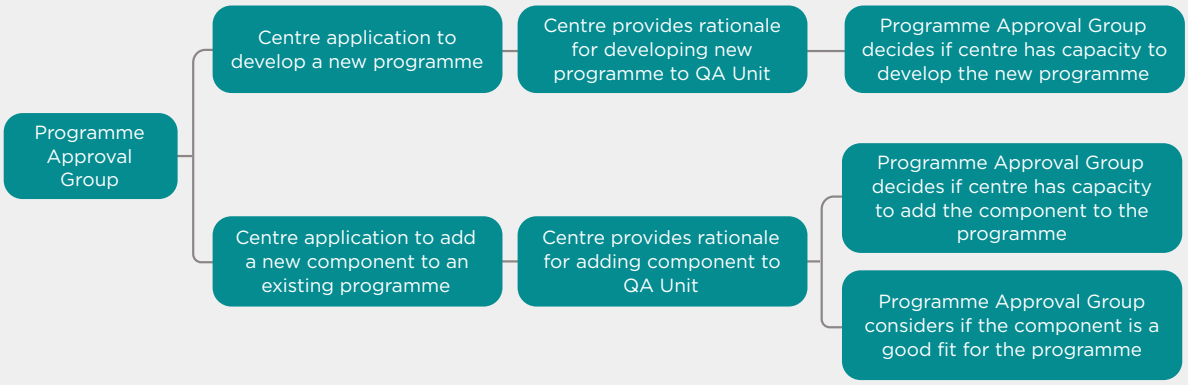
5.13 PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

A. Programme Approval Group

Cork ETB has a Programme Management system in place whereby centres can propose to develop a new programme for delivery, make amendments to an existing programme or request a review of an existing programme/programme module. The Programme Approval Group (PAG) is the

corporate representative governance group for programme management and development. PAG manages the programme approval process for Cork ETB as shown in Figure 14. The programme approval process as represented in Figure 11 has two strands, one for developing new programmes and one for adding new components onto existing programmes.

Figure 14 Cork ETB PAG Process



Centres that apply to PAG to develop a new programme must provide a rationale for developing the new programme. *The Centre Guide to Managing Programmes across Cork Education and Training Board Centres and Services*, includes the application forms for requests to develop a new programme/ to add a new component to an existing award.

The application process requires the centre to provide the following information:

- Identify the reasons for proposing the development of a programme or component leading to the award(s) listed, information on research undertaken to support the proposal
- Include reference to national/regional/local studies indicating a lack of current provision of programmes leading to the type of award(s) listed
- Include any consultation or engagement with relevant stakeholders, including industry representatives
- Outline the capacity of the centre to deliver the programme/programme module considering staffing and resource requirements

PAG meets at least six times a year and has representation from PLC, Training, Adult and Community Education, Industry Liaison, and the Quality Assurance Unit.

B. Programme Reviews Completed at Centre Level

At a Centre or Service local level programme delivery is monitored and overseen by the Principal or Centre Manager. Cork ETB relies on Principals and Centre Managers to monitor the delivery of programmes in their centre/service, with issues identified being reported to their immediate manager. Some issues with programme design and delivery are also identified and followed up through the Internal Verification and External Authentication processes.

External Authentication (EA) reports are considered at centre level at the Results Approval Panel meetings and areas for improvement are identified. EA reports are forwarded to the Quality Assurance Unit for review and to enable issues that require addressing to be identified. These may be:

- Commonly occurring issues that need to be highlighted and addressed with all centres/services
- Issues particular to a specific centre
- Issues with the descriptor

These issues are brought to the attention of the PAG, the Quality Steering Group and the FET Steering Group to inform planning, highlight areas requiring information (additional) to centres and CPD inputs, as well as areas/issues requiring review of processes and procedures.

If an issue is identified in a programme/component which affects several Cork ETB centres, a review group may be formed. In recent years, review groups have been formed in the areas of:

- Healthcare Level 5 Advisory Groups
- ICT Level 5 and 6 Advisory Group
- Art Advisory Group
- ICT Level 3 and 4 Advisory Group
- Science Advisory Group

5.14 CASE STUDY: HEALTHCARE LEVEL 5 ADVISORY GROUP

In late 2017 a request came to PAG from one PLC College to review the component 5N2706 Care of the Older Person. This request came from teachers' experience of delivering the module and feedback from the external authenticator report from the previous June certification period. This module was taught on three Level 5 programmes across seven Cork ETB centres.

An Advisory Group was convened with representatives from the seven centres where it was delivered. It became clear in the discussions that there were issues in the mapping of Learning Outcomes to the assessment techniques as per the module descriptor. Furthermore, it became apparent that because many centres integrated the assessment of 5N2706 with 5N2770 Care Skills, that any review of 5N2706 would also have to review 5N2770.

From this review, the mapping of Learning Outcomes for 5N2706, the guidelines for assessment activity and assessment criteria for the Skills Demonstration were revised. The Skills Demonstration for 5N2770 and 5N2706 now mirror each other to facilitate ease of integration of assessment. An External Authenticator was commissioned to devise sample standardised assessment briefs to be used for 5N2706 and 5N2770.

Cork ETB has mechanisms to review programmes at provider level. However, this review process is constrained by limitations of time and the limitations associated with the CAS awards structures and rules. Currently 20% of a programme can be reviewed without entering the formal validation process, as outlined in section 7.21.

C. Monitoring and Review of Recently Validated Programmes

All programmes which are validated under the new QQI validation policy must include detailed procedures for programme monitoring and review. Cork ETB has successfully validated the QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Music, and the first intake will complete their studies in May 2021. The programme will be reviewed in line with the programme document. A date has been set for the Programme Development Group to reconvene and to meet with the programme teaching staff. Items to be discussed are:

1. An overview/feedback on how the programme ran this year
2. Discuss each module – what went well and what changes may need to be made to improve the programme

Any changes which may be needed to course content or assessment techniques will be communicated from the Programme Development Group to PAG who have governance for all Cork ETB programmes.

D. Review of Programmes by Provision at National Level

Review of provision in Cork ETB also takes place at national level. Cork ETB is proactive and engages on a national level in review of all provision. In 2018 a national review was undertaken of the QQI Level 5 and QQI level 6 awards in Early Childhood Education and Care. Cork ETB was represented on this group, who competing the drafting of the Professional Award Type Descriptor (annotated for ELC) in 2019.

A new programme at Level 5 and Level 6 in Early Learning and Care is currently being developed by Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB). A Cork ETB staff member has been seconded to the Curriculum Development team for this initiative and the Cork ETB Director of FET is the Chair of the Programme Board.

E. Review of Assessment Instrument Specification and FÁS Descriptors in 2019

Prior to September 2019, Cork Training Centre had been using the former FÁS Common Assessment Management System (CAMS) to manage assessment using standardised Assessment Instrument Specification (AIS). The AIS were centrally devised and set, without input from the learning practitioner directly responsible for course delivery. This system did not ensure that the assessments were revised and kept up to date in line with current changes.

Furthermore, Cork ETB aimed to have one standardised Quality Assurance system across all provision.

A decision was made in June 2019 by the Quality Assurance Officer in conjunction with management in the Training Centre to commence the development of new assessments for training courses using the locally devised assessment model. A pilot project of transferring old AIS to Locally Devised Assessment began in September 2019. 103 components were selected for the pilot project.

Staff from the Quality Assurance Unit were paired with staff from the Training Standards Office of Cork Training Centre and a team of assessors who had expressed interest in this project. Training in writing assessment was provided by FESS. The initial project was a success and has since been expanded.

Cork ETB has been a leader in this regard across the ETB sector. Most ETBs are still using the CAMS system and the old AIS for Training Services. This development has been welcomed and positively commented on by external authenticators.

F. Developing Current Schedule of Programmes to be Reviewed

As outlined in section 7.21 Cork ETB has recently increased capacity for programme validation. With this increased capacity it is planned to devise a schedule of programmes to be reviewed. Cork ETB will review existing programmes at centre level and identify a suite of programmes to be reviewed and re-developed in the short term.

5.15 EVALUATION

Effective mechanisms for review of programme and components exist in Cork ETB. However, the restriction of the CAS awards structure and demands on time of both the Quality Assurance Unit and staff in centres, means that this review work has been slow. Cork ETB has increased capacity in programme development and review as outlined in section 7.21. Therefore, it is intended to engage in more Cork ETB level reviews of programmes. Mechanism for review of programmes within centres are currently very dependent on local processes. A future direction for the Quality Assurance Unit will be to engage in more

centre level monitoring and review of programmes. The ongoing work in moving Cork Training Centre from using the outdated AIS to more flexible Locally Devised Assessment is a success. Cork ETB has led the ETB sector in this, and the move has been welcomed and positively commented on by external authenticators.

5.16 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

- PAG operates effective mechanisms for managing programmes across Cork ETB
- PAG operate effective mechanisms for reviewing programmes at centre level
- Cork ETB engages in programme review on a national level

5.17 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The constraints of the CAS award system means that Cork ETB is limited in the number of programmes reviewed which can be carried out without engaging in a full re-validation
- The Quality Assurance Unit would benefit from further resources to be able to systematically monitor all Cork ETB programmes

5.18 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Devise and implement formal procedures for centre level review and monitoring of programmes
- Cork ETB will conduct a scoping exercise to identify programmes which will be re-validated/ developed by Cork ETB
- Complete the roll out of the LDA project within Cork Training Centre

5.19 OVERSIGHT, MONITORING AND REVIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL/ THIRD PARTIES

Cork ETB has an extensive network of engagements and relationships with other bodies and organisations in the region, and constantly seeks to ensure that these are maintained and developed.

G. Community Education Partners and Local Planning Networks

Engagement with community education organisations is a central feature of Cork ETB's Adult and Community Education Service. These relationships extend back to the period before the ETB was established and have built on in the years since its formation. Cork ETB engages with over 150 different groups of different size, priorities, and purpose, all with an aim of developing and delivering programmes to learners in communities relevant to their needs.

There are well established Community Education Networks with the City and County areas, and Cork ETB staff participate actively in these networks. Input from the Community Education networks informs and directs the Local Area Planning processes of the ETB, and the majority of the Adult and Community Education provision across the region is delivered by Cork ETB tutors working in partnership with community groups and organisations. All of this community delivery is governed by Cork ETB Quality Assurance requirements, policy, and procedures, and is monitored by Cork ETB staff.

Some of the larger community education groups were recognised under former FETAC arrangements as providers in their own right, however with the requirements under QQI's provider engagement policy, many of these providers have determined that they do not have the capacity or resources to engage with this process and have sought to come under Cork ETB's arrangements with QQI. Formal MOU's and agreements are currently being finalised with a number of providers in this regard and it is expected that these arrangements will be finalised by the end of Q2 2020 for providers who wish to engage.

While monitoring occurs as part of the oversight community and adult education delivery, there is a need for a consistent monitoring framework to guide and direct this monitoring and Cork ETB has identified this as a priority need.

5.20 SECOND PROVIDERS

Contracted Training Providers, Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives and Specialist Training Providers, as part of their contractual and business relationships with Cork ETB participate in formal business planning and monitoring processes throughout the programme cycle. The monitoring of this provision is undertaken by Community Training staff and reviewed by Training Services Management.

Cork ETB is identified as a "second provider" or "collaborating provider for the following programmes:

Table 4 Cork ETB Collaborating Provider for Programmes

PROGRAMME	COORDINATING PROVIDER
National Craft Apprenticeships	SOLAS
Commis Chef Apprenticeship	Kerry ETB
Accounting Technician Apprenticeship	Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI)
Auctioneering and Property Services Apprenticeship	Dublin ETB
Hairdressing Apprenticeship	Limerick and Clare ETB
Network Engineer Apprenticeship	Fastrack IT (FIT)
Software Developer Apprenticeship	Fastrack IT (FIT)
Cyber Security Apprenticeship	Fastrack IT (FIT)

Under the regulations associated with these apprenticeships, Cork ETB participates in regular monitoring and evaluation by the coordinating providers.

5.21 HIGHER EDUCATION

Cork is well served by in terms of Higher Education options for learners seeking to progress, and Cork ETB has long established relationships with both UCC and Cork Institute of Technology, now MTU. The ETB Executive is represented on the Governing Bodies of both Institutions.

Progression from Cork ETB to the two Institutions has been a significant feature of the PLC sector in particular, and progression opportunities have been developed over the years that greatly benefit learners. The Cork Colleges Progression Scheme, CCPS, with CIT provided additional entry and advanced entry options for many PLC graduates, and this will be revised with MTU under the arrangement currently being developed between Cork ETB, MTU and Kerry ETB. The development

of a similar formal agreement with UCC is something that Cork ETB intends to pursue, and the strategic focus of the ETB is to formalise arrangements with the HE Institutions to provide for "two + two) programme delivery.

5.22 EMPLOYERS

Engagement with employers and employer representative groups is good across the ETB but to now has lacked a coherent structure or framework to ensure that approaches to employers or information from employers was handled in a coherent manner.

We are establishing an Employer Engagement service/team to ensure the ETB becomes a clearly identified and readily accessible resource and support for enterprise, assisting employers to identify their future skills needs, support the up-skilling and re-skilling of existing employees, and deliver professional development and management supports required by businesses and industry sectors within the region. The Employer Engagement service will draw on the knowledge and relationships that currently exist to provide a "single point of contact" for employers, with employer and sector information shred across the ETBs services.

5.23 EVALUATION

There is extensive Engagement with third external/third parties across the ETB, but much of this is locally based and lacks structure and coherence. Engagement with Community Education partners is good, and their involvement in the local area planning processes is something that has become well established and need to be maintained and fostered in the future. The formalising of Quality Assurance arrangements with interested Community Education Providers is something that Cork ETB is pursuing, although there are some concerns regarding the resource availability to support and monitor these groups in addition to the current requirements in this area.

The relationships with Higher Education need to be maintained and expanded, the development of formal agreements with MTU and UCC need to be pursued, as well as the opportunities for enhanced progression to HE from FET courses.

A priority for Cork ETB is to establish a coherent framework and structure for engagement with employers. While there is much positive engagement at local centre and service level, this is fragmented and disjointed, leading to missed communications and opportunities for both sides. The development of an Employer Engagement Service to act as the focal point for employers is a priority.

5.24 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

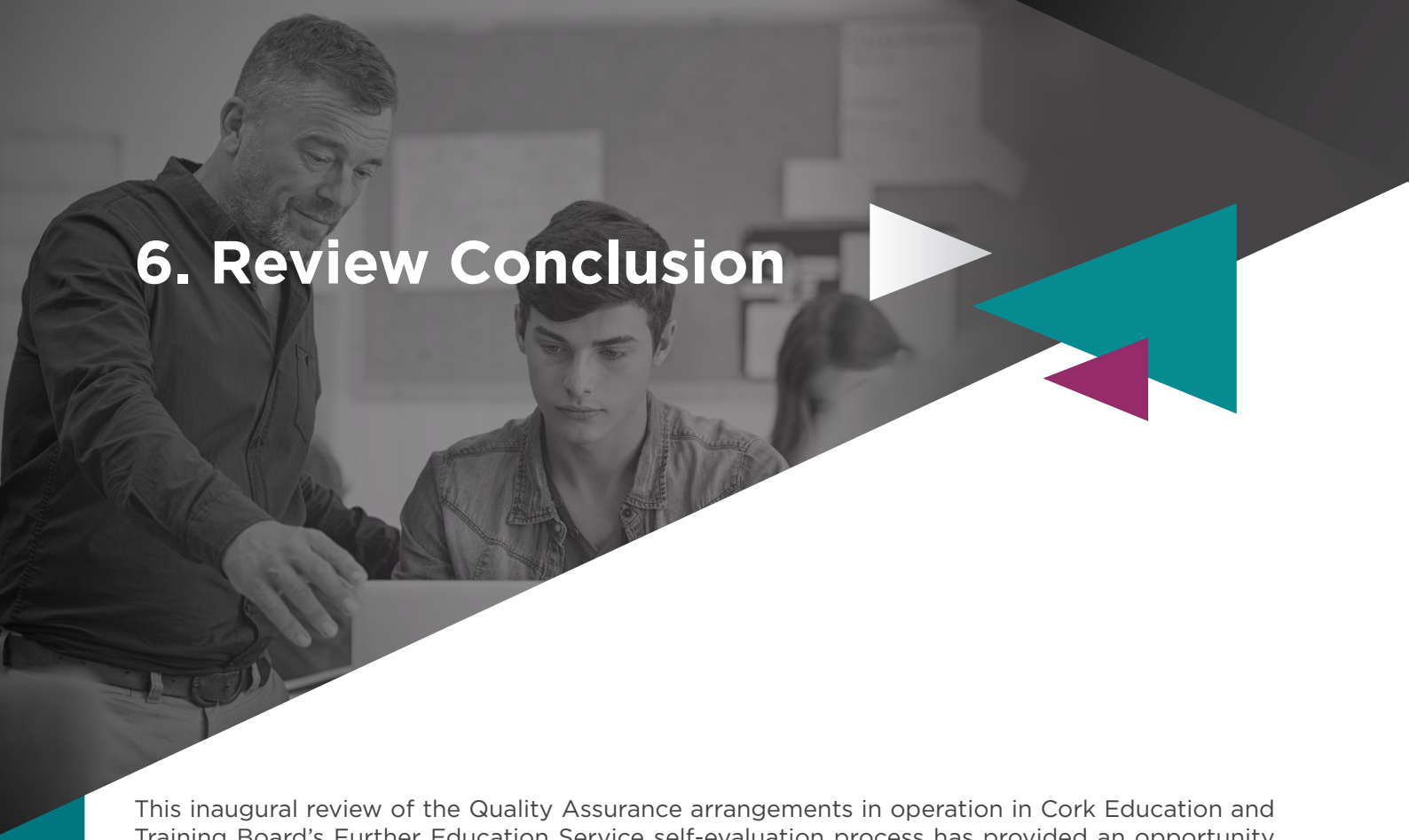
- Participation of community groups in local planning processes
- Cork ETB participation on HE Governing Bodies
- Cork Colleges Progression Scheme for PLC graduates

5.25 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Providing for Community Education providers who wish to come under the ETB's Quality Assurance arrangements
- Developing Higher Education progression arrangements that allow FET learners progress to year 3 of Level 7 and 8 HE programmes
- Developing a coherent employer engagement process and structure, single point of contact for employers

5.26 POTENTIAL FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Co-development of programmes with Higher Education Institutions, "two + two" model
- Developing "key tutors" in communities/groups, for example from within the Traveller, Roma and migrant communities



6. Review Conclusion

This inaugural review of the Quality Assurance arrangements in operation in Cork Education and Training Board's Further Education Service self-evaluation process has provided an opportunity for Cork ETB, its individual centres and services, to review and reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of arrangements that have been developed and implemented for the governance and management of Quality Assurance over the past number of years. It has allowed us to highlight areas of good practice and innovation, elements which very often go unnoticed or unpublicised. It has also provided the opportunity to identify areas where improvements are necessary, and these will inform our strategic response from the review.

By placing the initial emphasis on the centre and service self-evaluations, our approach has created a solid foundation for ongoing structured self-evaluation and reflection. The approach and processes will need to be adapted, based on the experiences in this review, but we are very much of the view that the centres and services have a new sense of understanding and ownership of the self-evaluation process, and its place in the Quality Cycle.

Undertaking the review when Further Education and Training was disrupted so significantly by Covid-19 and continues to adapt to the changing environment created by the pandemic has been challenging. However, in reviewing and reflecting on our processes and procedures during this time, we are generally satisfied that they have been effective and sufficiently robust to meet the demands placed on the system. We cannot say that our learners, who are at the core of everything we do, have not been adversely affected in so many ways by the impacts of the pandemic over the last twelve months, however we are satisfied that the adjustments and changes that we have had to introduce in programme delivery and assessment conformed to the expectation of Quality that we have sought to foster across our Further Education and Training Service.

The outcomes and learning from the review process will greatly assist Cork ETB as we develop our Strategic Statement for the period 2022 to 2026, and above all as the ETB continues its work on developing and implementing its model, based on the "FET College of the Future", as identified in the national FET Strategy, for the next phase of development in Cork ETB's Further Education and Training Service.

This review process was a significant task, and its successful undertaking and completion required considerable input and collaboration across all our stakeholder group. We would like to record our sincere thanks and appreciation to the learners, staff, and Managers who have contributed in a significant way to the quality of this report. In particular, we would like to highlight and acknowledge the central role that the Quality Assurance Team have played throughout.

7. References

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Ingersoll, R.M. (2012). Beginning teacher induction: what the data tells us. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(8), 47-51.

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8. Appendices

8.1 APPENDIX 1 – CORK ETB REPORT ON MITIGATING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE FUND 2020

Full report at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Final-Report-Cork-ETB-Mitigating-Against-Educational-Disadvantage-2020.pdf**

8.2 APPENDIX 2 – CORK ETB REVIEW OVERSIGHT GROUP

NAME	POSITION/REPRESENTING
J Fitzgibbons	Director of FET
C Quinlan	Quality Assurance Office
N Gaine	Quality Assurance Office
K O'Reilly	Quality Assurance Office
T O'Sullivan	Adult Education Officer
S Flynn	Director OSD
M Reville	Youthreach
V Cowman	Training Services
V Lucey	Human Resource Manager
R Griffin	Adult Education Officer
C Cooney	PLC Deputy Principal

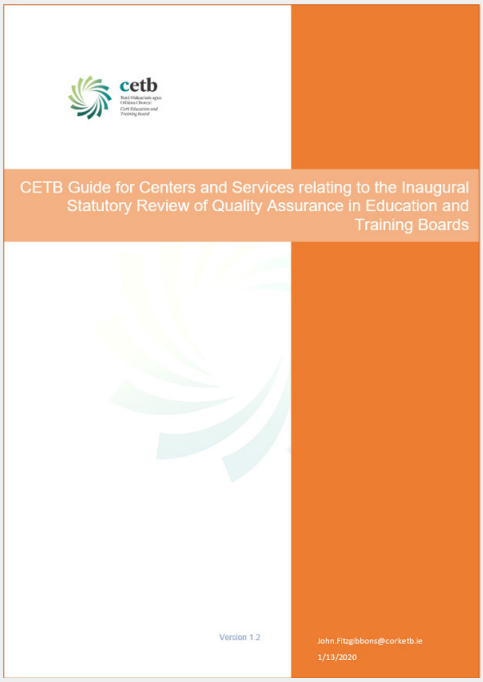
8.3 APPENDIX 3 – CORK ETB CENTRE REVIEW TEMPLATES

Templates available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Centre-Service-Profile-template-final.pdf**

https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Centre-Service-Self-Evaluation-Template-Guide-final.pdf

8.4 APPENDIX 4 – CORK ETB REVIEW GUIDE

Full document available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CETB-Guide-for-Inaugural-Sectoral-Reviews.pdf**

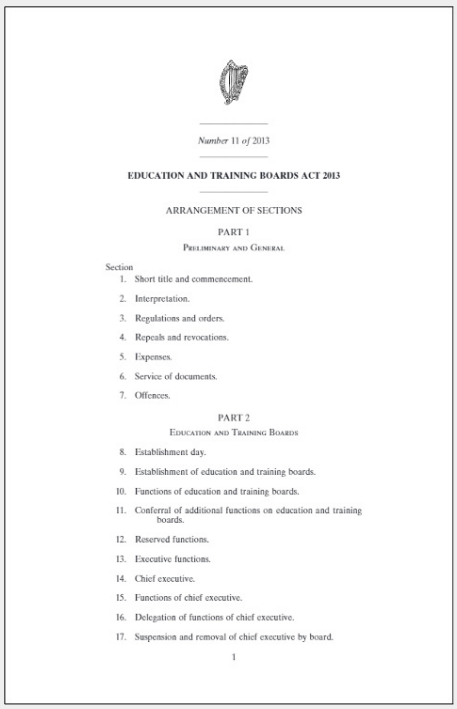


8.5 APPENDIX 5 – CORK ETB STRATEGY STATEMENT

Full document available at: **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Cork ETB-Strategy-Statement-2017-2021-A4-ENGLISH_7.pdf**

8.6 APPENDIX 6 – EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS ACT 2013

Full document available at: **https://www.etbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/a1113.pdf**



Number 11 *of* 2013

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS ACT 2013

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART 1

PRELIMINARY AND GENERAL

Section

1. Short title and commencement.
2. Interpretation.
3. Regulations and orders.
4. Repeals and revocations.
5. Expenses.
6. Service of documents.
7. Offences.

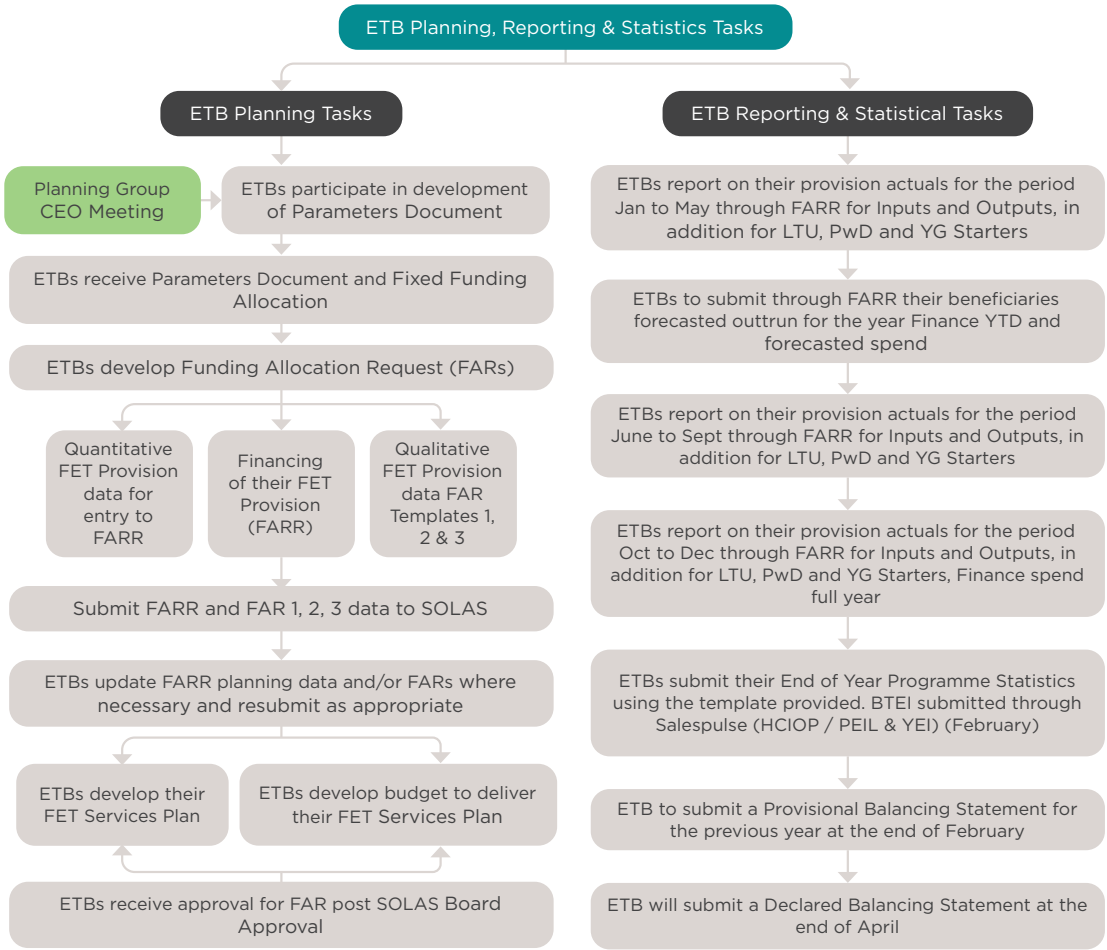
PART 2

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS

8. Establishment day.
9. Establishment of education and training boards.
10. Functions of education and training boards.
11. Conferral of additional functions on education and training boards.
12. Reserved functions.
13. Executive functions.
14. Chief executive.
15. Functions of chief executive.
16. Delegation of functions of chief executive.
17. Suspension and removal of chief executive by board.

1

8.7 APPENDIX 7 – CORK ETB FET ETB PLANNING, REPORTING AND STATISTICAL TASKS



8.8 APPENDIX 8 – ROLES OF FET STEERING GROUP, THE QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGEMENT GROUP, AND THE PROGRAMME APPROVAL GROUP

FET Steering Group

- Oversee Further Education and Training and related activities
- Approve annual FET Plan including which programmes are delivered
- Overall Strategy for Cork ETB
- Objectives are specified at every level and are aligned with the provider's mission, strategy and obligations to external stakeholders (statutory, regulatory, professional and other)
- Reviews if Cork ETB is meeting its objectives and reviews the suitability of objectives in light of Cork ETB's mission and other criteria
- Undertake quality reviews of staff performance, training, academic, administrative, and service areas or units as appropriate in all constituent centres and colleges (sector specific guidelines)

Quality Assurance Steering Group

- Provides oversight and governance for Cork ETB QA System
- Oversight of self-evaluation and monitoring
- Approval of QA Policies
- Staff Development and Support
- Monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of these procedures
- Protects the integrity of academic processes and standards
- Consideration of risk
- Considers internal and external evaluation
- Development and planning of systems to promote quality teaching and learning in all relevant learning environments
- Development and planning of systems to oversee the implementation of procedures for the assessment of learners to ensure fairness, consistency and fitness-for-purpose and monitor this at centre level and at ETB level
- Establish a procedure to ensure the reliability and integrity of learner records and results of learner assessment

Programme Approval Group

- Programme and curriculum development prior to approval
- Submission of programmes for evaluation or validation
- Programme approval
- Determining the capacity of a centre to provide a given programme of education and training (sector specific)
- Centre approval to run courses
- Coordinates programme development, validation and approval process
- Overseeing programme reviews and follow up

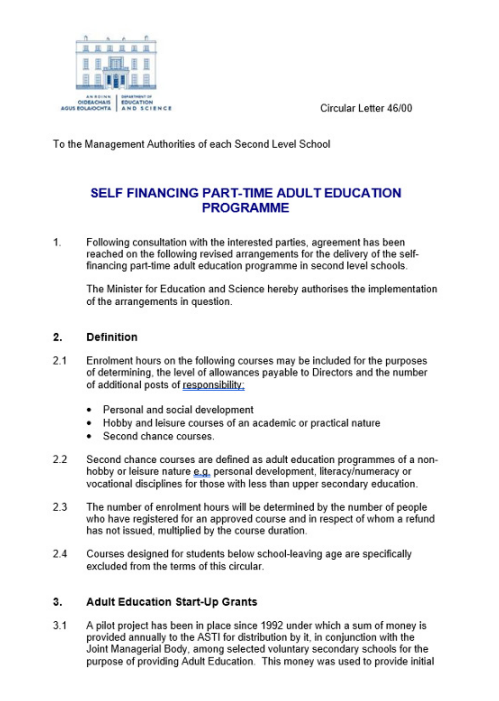
Quality Assurance Team

- Oversees the establishment and management of a QA and Management office
- Oversees the development, implementation and management of Cork ETB's QA policies and procedures for all Cork ETB FET provision, reporting to and liaising with Cork ETB management

- Assists Cork ETB centres with advice, information and support
- Coordinate programme development, validation and reviews
- Assist with and advise on staff development requirements
- Prepares and disseminates statistical reports relating to the certification of Cork ETB programmes
- Quality Assurance Implementation – centre managers
- Ensuring that a centre has the capacity and necessary resources to provide the programmes it is planning to run
- Ensuring Cork ETB QA and other policies and procedures are followed
- Consult with staff and learner regarding quality and give feedback
- Staff planning, performance monitoring and capacity development having regard to the need for vocational trainers to keep up to date with their vocational skills (in addition to any pedagogical skills)
- Maintain a culture of quality and continuous improvement
- Manages the oversight of assessment, internal verification, external authentication, and results approval in line with Cork ETB policies and procedures

8.9 APPENDIX 9 – DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR GOVERNING SELF-FINANCING ADULT EDUCATION

Full document available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Circular-46-00.pdf**



Circular Letter 46/00

To the Management Authorities of each Second Level School

SELF FINANCING PART-TIME ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. Following consultation with the interested parties, agreement has been reached on the following revised arrangements for the delivery of the self-financing part-time adult education programme in second level schools.

   The Minister for Education and Science hereby authorises the implementation of the arrangements in question.

2. Definition

2.1 Enrolment hours on the following courses may be included for the purposes of determining, the level of allowances payable to Directors and the number of additional posts of responsibility:

- Personal and social development
- Hobby and leisure courses of an academic or practical nature
- Second chance courses.

2.2 Second chance courses are defined as adult education programmes of a non-hobby or leisure nature e.g. personal development, literacy/numeracy or vocational disciplines for those with less than upper secondary education.

2.3 The number of enrolment hours will be determined by the number of people who have registered for an approved course and in respect of whom a refund has not issued, multiplied by the course duration.

2.4 Courses designed for students below school-leaving age are specifically excluded from the terms of this circular.

3. Adult Education Start-Up Grants

3.1 A pilot project has been in place since 1992 under which a sum of money is provided annually to the ASTI for distribution by it, in conjunction with the Joint Managerial Body, among selected voluntary secondary schools for the purpose of providing Adult Education. This money was used to provide initial

8.10 APPENDIX 10 – CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS DURING COVID-19

Full documents available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Combined-Assessment-Arrangement-Covid-19-2020.pdf**

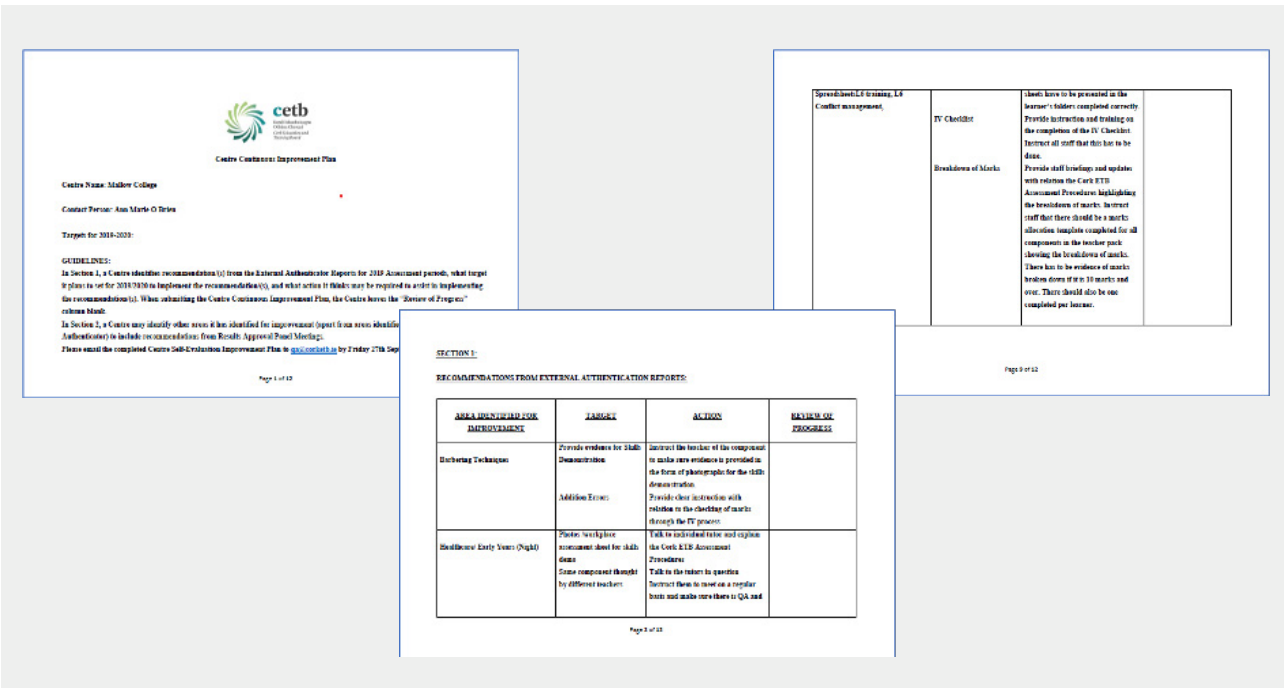
8.11 APPENDIX 11 – EXECUTIVE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT AND THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Full documents available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CETB-Executive-Self-Evaluation-Report.pdf**

https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CETB-Quality-Improvement-and-Development-Plan.pdf

8.12 APPENDIX 12 – SAMPLE CENTRE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Full document available at **https://www.corketb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Mallow-College-Continous-Improvement-Plan-2019-2020.pdf**



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