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an Longfoirt agus na hIarmhí*  
Longford and Westmeath  
Education and Training Board

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Inaugural Review of  
Quality Assurance  
.....

## **SELF-EVALUATION REPORT 2021**

Longford and Westmeath  
Education and Training Board



**QQI**

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and Qualifications Ireland



**QQI REVIEW**



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## FOREWORD



I am very pleased to present this Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance by Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board.

This process has allowed us precious time to pause, reflect and consider all Quality Assurance processes currently in place within LWETB. This report highlights much of the excellent work that has been completed to date, goals achieved and milestones reached. Consistent monitoring and improvement is very important to us in LWETB and this report highlights the key areas that will receive increased attention in the future.

LWETB does not exist in a bubble. Participation in National Advisory Groups, support provided to National and EU initiatives provided by SOLAS, QQI and ETBI, collaboration with our ETB peers, industry, learners and other agencies has resulted in the development of a vibrant FET sector - supporting the learner as they proceed through their own learning journey.

I would like to thank the Self-Evaluation Steering Group (SESG), chaired by FET Director, Ms. Antonine Healy and all the staff, learners and stakeholders who have contributed to this review process and brought this report to fruition. The SESG have collated, collaborated, debated and consulted on all areas detailed in the report and produced a document that is an honest and true reflection of LWETB.

I am humbled at how our learners have adapted to new ways of learning since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and despite considerable challenges, did not let these challenges hinder their individual goals. Likewise, our dedicated, committed and highly skilled staff have always put the learner first by adopting, overcoming and continuing to deliver a high quality service in challenging times.

This report demonstrates that LWETB is a dynamic, inclusive and exciting place for learners and staff and I am very excited for its future.

We look forward to welcoming the Review Team to LWETB and continuing our strong relationship with QQI into the future.

**Liz Lavery**  
Chief Executive

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## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIS</b>	Assessment Instrument Specifications	<b>ITABE</b>	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education	<b>QGG</b>	Quality Governance Group
<b>AONTAS</b>	Aos Oideachais Náisiúnta Trí Aontú Saorálach (National Adult Education Through Voluntary Unification)	<b>ITEC</b>	International Therapy Examination Council	<b>QIP</b>	Quality Improvement Plan
<b>APMG</b>	Association of Project Managers Group	<b>IV</b>	Internal Verification	<b>QOG</b>	Quality Oversight Group
<b>ATC</b>	Athlone Training Centre	<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicators	<b>QQI</b>	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
<b>BTEI</b>	Back to Education Initiative	<b>LCDC</b>	Local Community Development Committee	<b>RAP</b>	Results Approval Process
<b>CE</b>	Community Employment	<b>LEO</b>	Local Enterprise Office	<b>RAPID</b>	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
<b>CESI</b>	Computers in Education Society of Ireland	<b>LTI</b>	Local Training Initiative	<b>RCCRS</b>	Results Capture and Certification Request System
<b>CPA</b>	Certified Public Accountant	<b>LWETB</b>	Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board	<b>RSA</b>	Road Safety Authority
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development	<b>MIS</b>	Management Information Systems	<b>RTITB</b>	Road Transport Industry Training Board
<b>CTC</b>	Community Training Centre	<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding	<b>SLMRU</b>	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
<b>DAC</b>	Designated Activity Company	<b>MRDATF</b>	Midland Region Drug and Alcohol Taskforce	<b>SME</b>	Small to Medium-size Enterprise
<b>DEIS</b>	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools	<b>NACE</b>	Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities developed in the European Community)	<b>SME</b>	Subject Matter Expert
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education	<b>NALA</b>	National Adult Literacy Agency	<b>SNA</b>	Special Needs Assistant
<b>DFHERIS</b>	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	<b>NFQ</b>	National Framework of Qualifications	<b>SOLAS</b>	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (Further Education and Skills Service)
<b>DoJ</b>	Department of Justice	<b>NLN</b>	National Learning Network	<b>SPA</b>	Service Performance Agreement
<b>DoJW</b>	Department of Justice Workshop	<b>NUIG</b>	National University of Ireland, Galway	<b>SST</b>	Specific Skills Training
<b>DSP</b>	Department of Social Protection	<b>NUIM</b>	National University of Ireland, Maynooth	<b>STA</b>	Skills To Advance
<b>EA</b>	External Authentication	<b>OSD</b>	Organisation Support and Development	<b>STB</b>	Services To Business
<b>ESER</b>	Executive Self-Evaluation Report	<b>PDA</b>	Performance Development Agreement	<b>STC</b>	Skills to Compete
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages	<b>PGG</b>	Programme Governance Group	<b>STEAM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics
<b>ETB</b>	Education Training Board	<b>PHECC</b>	Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>ETBI</b>	Education and Training Boards Ireland	<b>PL&amp;D</b>	Professional Learning and Development	<b>STP</b>	Specialist Training Providers
<b>FE</b>	Further Education	<b>PLC</b>	Post-Leaving Certificate	<b>TEL</b>	Technology Enhanced Learning
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training	<b>PLSS</b>	Programme Learner Support System	<b>TQAS</b>	Transitional Quality Assurance System
<b>FETQS</b>	Further Education and Training Quality System	<b>PUP</b>	Pandemic Unemployment Payment	<b>TUS</b>	Technical University of the Shannon
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology	<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance	<b>UDL</b>	Universal Design for Language
<b>ILM</b>	Institute of Leadership and Management			<b>VEC</b>	Vocational Education Committee (former statutory local education body in Republic of Ireland prior to commencement of ETB's)
<b>ILTA</b>	Irish Learning Technology Association			<b>VTCT</b>	Vocational Training Charitable Trust
				<b>VTOS</b>	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
				<b>YR</b>	YouthReach



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## PREFACE

### Process Timeline of Self-Evaluation



Steering Group  
Establishment

Agreement of  
Consultation  
Process

Provider Profile: MIS

Provider Profile:  
Enterprise  
Engagement

Provider Profile:  
Adult Literacy

Learner Feedback: C&J,  
Plumbing, Motor Mechanics,  
Apprenticeships

Ongoing Steering  
Group Meetings

Learner Feedback:  
Hairdressing &  
Engineering

Steering Group  
Meeting

Provider Profile  
Update Meeting

Quality &  
Governance  
Meeting

CTC Feedback &  
Survey

Finance Feedback  
Session

LTI Feedback &  
Survey

BTEI Feedback &  
Survey

Steering Group:  
Review SER Draft

Software  
Development Focus  
Group

VTOS Feedback &  
Focus Group

Focus Group  
Session

Drafting Final SER

Self-Evaluation  
Steering Group  
Sessions

Steering Group  
Meeting

Youthreach Staff &  
Learner Sessions

Steering Group:  
Provider Profile Final  
Version Sign-off

Adult Literacy  
Learner Sessions

Steering Group:  
SER Final Version  
Sign-off

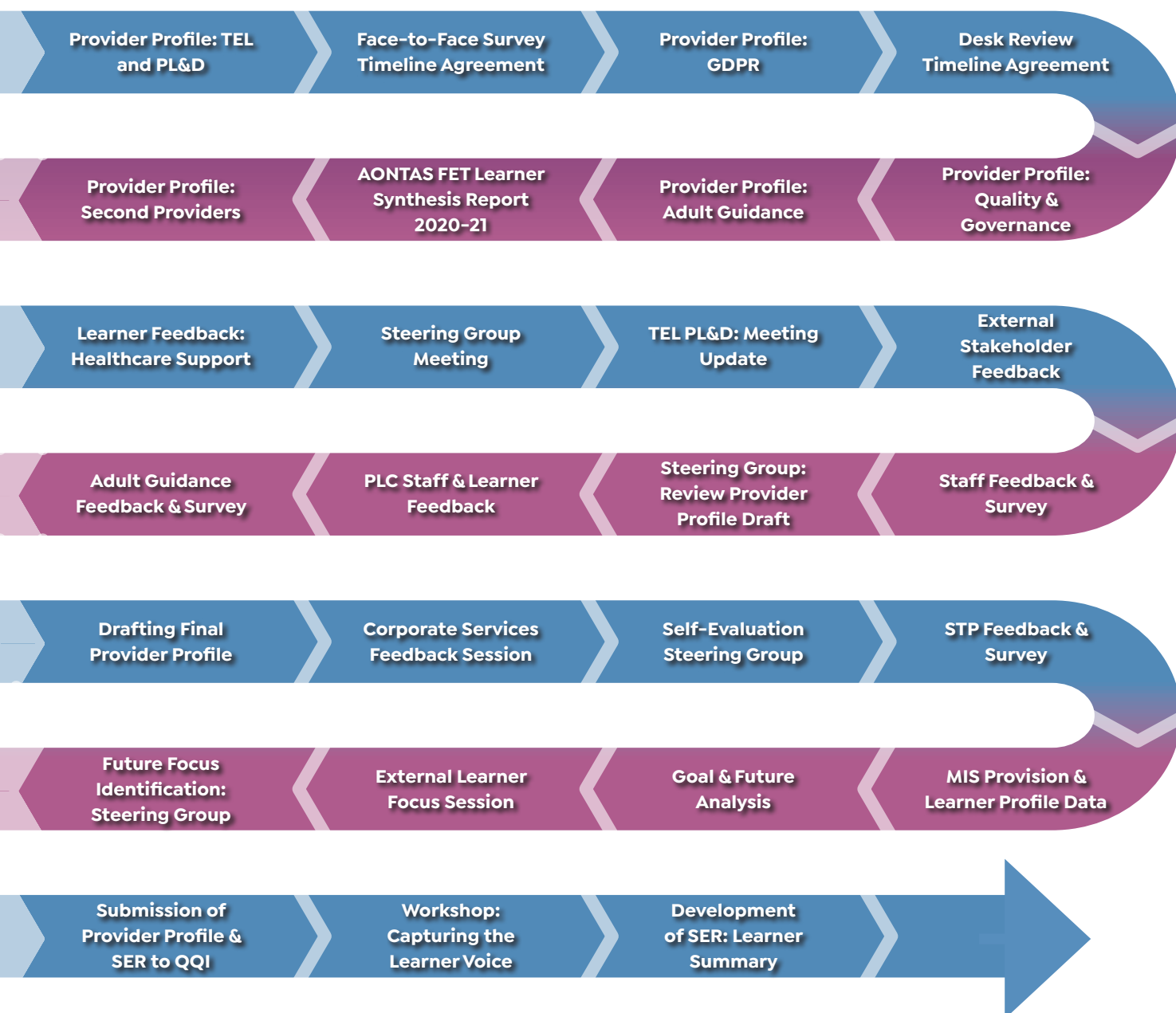
Data Analysis:  
Steering Group

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# 1. LWETB CONTEXT

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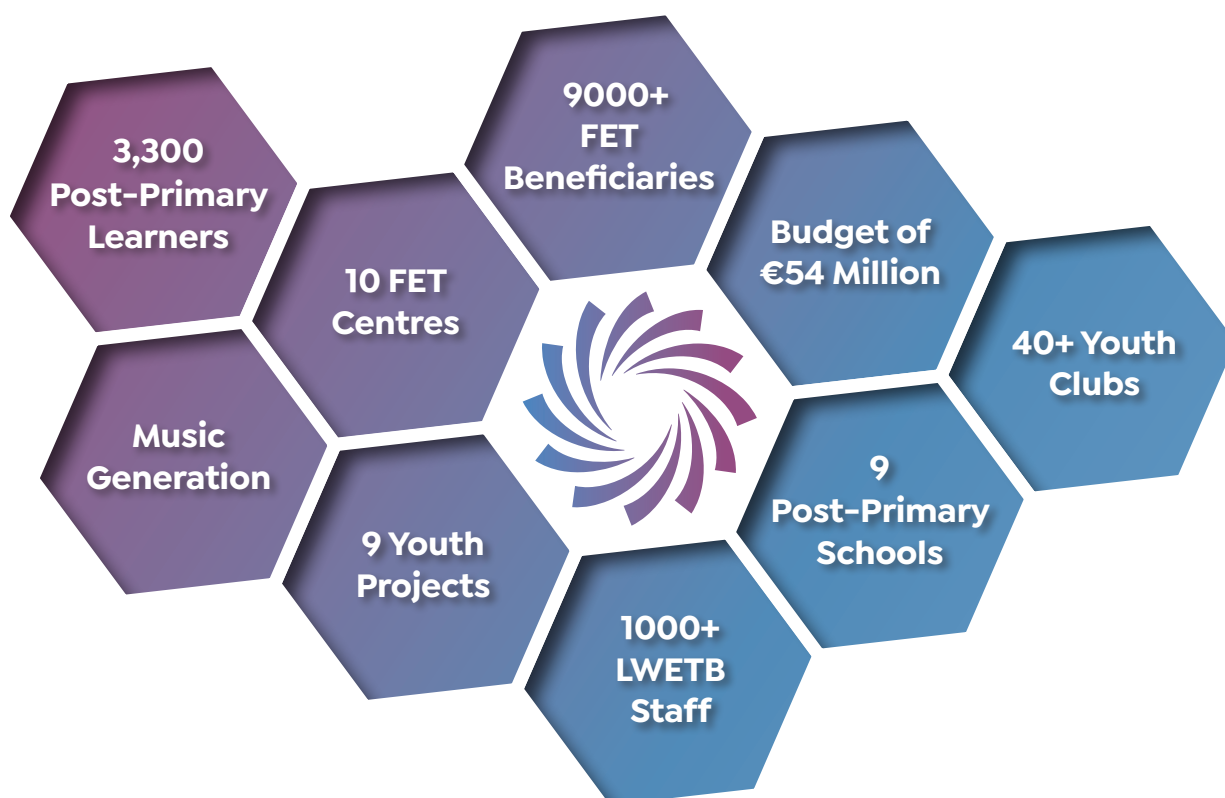
## LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD (LWETB)

### Introduction

Longford and Westmeath Training Board (LWETB) is the statutory body responsible for the provision of education and training services for the counties of Longford and Westmeath.

LWETB was established on July 1st of 2013 and operates under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013.

It is an organisation of considerable scale with a 2020 budget of €54 million, employing over 900 staff and over 14,000 learners, trainees and beneficiaries. It caters for a diverse population with different educational, social and cultural needs.



LWETB Further Education and Training programmes are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union:



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**SOLAS**  
learning works

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## LOCATIONS OF LWETB SERVICES (2021)

### Longford Locations Services

<b>Ballymahon, FET Centre</b>	Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative
<b>Ballymahon, Vocational School</b>	Secondary School
<b>Ballymahon, Youthreach Centre</b>	Youthreach
<b>Edgeworthstown, National Learning Network</b>	Specialist Training Provider
<b>Granard, Ardscoil Phádraig</b>	Secondary School
<b>Granard, FET Centre</b>	Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative
<b>Lanesboro, Community College</b>	Secondary School
<b>Longford Town, FET Campus, Battery Road and Church Street</b>	Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative, Community Education, Adult Guidance, Post Leaving Certificate Courses, Evening Training, Community Education, Administrative Offices, Music Generation
<b>Longford Town, National Learning Network</b>	Specialist Training Providers
<b>Longford Town, Youthreach Centre</b>	Youthreach
<b>Longford Town, EDI Centre</b>	Local Training Initiatives
<b>Longford Town, Templemichael College</b>	Secondary School, Post Leaving Certificate Courses
<b>Various County Locations</b>	Contracted Training Community Education

### An Longfort LONGFORD



#### Note:

Specialist Training Providers, Local Training Initiatives, Community Training Centres, Department of Justice Workshops, Community Education and Contracted Training are second providers of FET provision which are contracted, funded or grant aided to deliver programmes on behalf of LWETB.





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## Westmeath Locations Services

**Garrycastle, Athlone Training Centre**  
**FET Centre**

Bridging and Foundation Programmes, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Specific Skills Training, Evening Training, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, FET Recruitment, Adult Guidance, Services to Business, Enterprise Engagement, Online Test Centre

**Athlone, Community College**

Secondary School

**Athlone, Community Training Centre**

Vocational Training and Educational Opportunities for Early School Leavers

**Athlone, FET Centre, Clonown Road**

Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative, Community Education

**Athlone, National Learning Network**

Specialist Training Provider, Department of Justice Workshop

**Athlone, St. Anthony's School**

Secondary School

**Castlepollard, Community College**

Secondary School

**Delvin, Youthreach Centre**

Youthreach

**Kilbeggan, Youthreach Centre**

Youthreach

**Killucan, Columba College**

Secondary School

**Mullingar, Belvedere House**

Local Training Initiative

**Mullingar, Community College**

Secondary School, Post Leaving Certificate Courses

**Mullingar, Community Training Centre**

Vocational Training and Educational Opportunities for Early School Leavers

**Mullingar, FET Centre, Ashe Road**

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, Back to Education Initiative

**Mullingar, FET Centre, Marlinstown**

Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative, Community Education, Adult Guidance

**Mullingar, LWETB Head Office, Marlinstown**

Head Office Functions, Youth Service

**Mullingar, National Learning Network**

Specialist Training Provider

**Various County Locations**

Contracted Training, Community Education, Back to Education Initiative (Community Strand), Main Scheme Community Education



**An Iarmhí  
WESTMEATH**



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## LWETB PROGRAMME AND SERVICE PROVISION

### Adult Literacy

Supports learners with classes in literacy, numeracy and digital skills including ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education), etc.

### Youthreach

Supports early school leavers with educational and development courses in and out-of-school setting.

### Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)

Supports learners who completed a Leaving Certificate with vocational and technological courses.

### Traineeship

Traineeship combines learning in an education and training setting and in the workplace.

### MIS / PLSS Support

Supports for staff in management and IT systems tracking programme advertisement, learner enrolment, certification, etc.

### TEL AND PL&D

Supports staff in being an advocate for *Professional Learning and Development*, and *Technology Enhanced Learning*.

### FET Finance Support

Supports for staff and stakeholder in accessing and managing funding, budgets and payments, etc.

### Contracted Training

Supports learners with the use of external contractors to deliver programmes on behalf of LWETB across a variety of specialisms.

### Community Education and Training

*Education:* Supports learners in formal/non-formal education.

*Training:* Supports communities to deliver training locally as second providers including: STPs (Specialist Training Providers), CTCs (Community Training Centres), LTIs (Local Training Initiatives), NLNs (National Learning Networks), DoJWs (Department of Justice Workshops), etc.

### FET Recruitment

Supports for learners and staff in induction, enrolment, access, transfer and progression.

### Enterprise Engagement

Supports to address the needs of FET learners, local communities, industry and business.

### Training Standards Team

Supports staff and second providers in the quality assurance delivery of programmes and service.

### Apprenticeship

Supports training of learners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training and phased in-house practical and theory-based assessments for certification.

### Evening Training

Supports learners with modular courses delivered outside of normal working hours.

### Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)

Supports learners with flexible opportunities for adult education facilitating learners' other personal commitments.

### FET Adult Guidance

Supports learners looking for information, advice and guidance on training, education and career options.

### Service to Business

Supports learners with courses delivered with a large practical element and work experience element including: *Skills to Advance*, *Apprenticeship*, *Traineeship*, *CE*, etc.

### FETQS Team

Supports staff in the immersion of a quality culture through all service and provision to meet standards at every stage in the process of delivery.





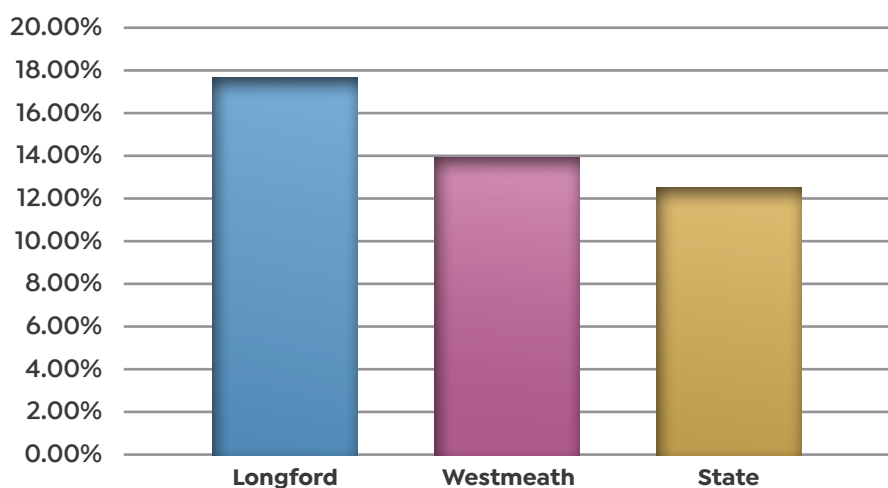
## POPULATION

The LWETB region has the smallest population of any ETB in Ireland. The population of County Longford is current at 40,873 and County Westmeath 88,770<sup>1</sup>. The population increased by 3.57%, just above the national average of 3.3%<sup>2</sup>. There is a high level of youth population within the region with 38,711 or 29.8% under the age of 20. There is a considerable number of non-Irish nationals in both counties with the figure from the 2011 census being slightly above the national average of 12%<sup>3</sup>. Polish and Lithuanian represent 60% of all foreign nationalities living in Longford, and 62% for Westmeath<sup>4</sup>. Longford has the highest members of the travelling community per head of population in the country.<sup>5</sup>

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

According to the Irish Census 2016, Longford has the lowest level of 3rd Level qualifications nationally at 32.5% (42% nationally) and also the second lowest age to cease education at 19.3 years (19.9 years). Westmeaths' average age to cease education at 19.7 years is comparable to the national average.

### % age of persons aged 15 years and over with no formal education and primary-only education, 2016



Source: CSO 2016

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/nt/#indicatorTitle\\_175170](https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/nt/#indicatorTitle_175170)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cypsc.ie/\\_fileupload/Documents/Resources/Longford%20Westmeath/Longford%20Westmeath%20CYPSC%20CYP%202020%20-%202022.pdf](https://www.cypsc.ie/_fileupload/Documents/Resources/Longford%20Westmeath/Longford%20Westmeath%20CYPSC%20CYP%202020%20-%202022.pdf) pg.16

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/LWETB-Service-Plan-2020-ENG-Final-.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Data using Athlone and Mullingar as the largest population hubs

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/LWETB-Service-Plan-2020-ENG-Final-.pdf>



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## UNEMPLOYMENT

Historically, Co. Longford has recorded the highest rate of unemployment in the state (19.6% compared to 12.9% as of the last Census), with urban unemployment particularly high at 29.3%. Westmeath having the 7th highest rate of unemployment in the country.

At the time of Census 2016, 1.45% of the population of the 2 counties held no formal education, with the average age ceasing education at 17.5 years of age, compared to a national figure of 19.9 years.

Longford has the lowest level of professional workers (4.8%) and the highest level of unskilled labour (27.7%) in the state, with Westmeath mid-range in both.

## REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Within the environs of Longford Town there are 970 active businesses employing 5,050 people. A quarter of these businesses are in less conventional sectors, with emerging business clusters such as Med-Tech, R&D and manufacturing industries. Longford has a strong manufacturing and food processing sector.

In Westmeath, Athlone and Mullingar are the 2 largest economic hubs. Athlone has 1,115 active businesses, with growing industries in Life Sciences, R&D, Med-Tech and Global Business Services Sectors. Mullingar has 1,410 active businesses with growing industries in Engineering, ICT, FinTech, Robotics Advanced Manufacturing and R&D.<sup>6</sup>

### Industry of Employment (Economic Hubs)

	Manufacturing, Engineering, Building and Construction	Commerce and Trade	Transport and Communications	Professional Services	Other Industries
Longford	20%	21%	6%	23%	31%
Westmeath	18%	23%	8%	24%	28%

## IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on the labour market. As of April 2021, the national adjusted measure of unemployment (assuming PUP<sup>7</sup> claimants are considered unemployed) stands at 22.4%. Given the skill level of the labour force, Longford and Westmeath would be expected to exceed the national unemployment rate. This adjusted unemployment rate is falling as the economy reopens (down 8% from April 2020)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/en/consultation/draft-westmeath-county-development-plan-2021-2027/chapter/05-economy-employment>

<sup>7</sup> PUP refers to the social welfare COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment for employees and self-employed people who have lost employment due to the public health emergency

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentapril2021/>



Data from the SOLAS Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) and the Midlands Regional Skills Forum<sup>9</sup> demonstrates the following effects of Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly (Q1 2020 – Q3 2020):



## Employment

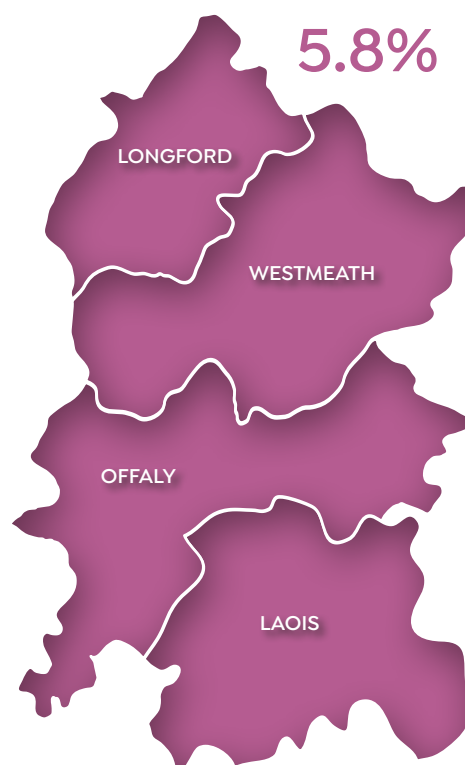
The Midland region accounts for 5.8% of employment in Ireland (134,000 persons).

### Top 5 Sectors

### Total Employed

### Q1 – Q3 2020

Industry	20,900	+7%	▲
Wholesale and Retail	19,400	-10%	▼
Health	16,700	-4%	▼
Public Administration	10,100	+33%	▲
Accommodation and Food	9,700	-10%	▼



## Impact of COVID-19 on the Midland region

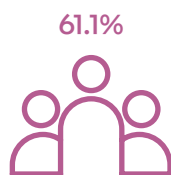
(from Q1 2020 to Q3 2020)

### EMPLOYMENT



Employment fell by 1,100 persons (0.8%)

### WORKFORCE



The labour force participation rate increased from 60.4% in Q1 to 61% in Q3

### GENDER



Male employment grew by 2,200 (3.0%) whereas female employment declined by 3,200 (5.3%)

### WHOLESALE AND RETAIL SECTOR



The wholesale and retail sector saw the largest absolute decline in employment (2,100 persons or a 10% decrease)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.regionalskills.ie/regions/midlands/regional-national-news-special-reports/15499\\_solas\\_slmru\\_info\\_2020\\_midlands.pdf](https://www.regionalskills.ie/regions/midlands/regional-national-news-special-reports/15499_solas_slmru_info_2020_midlands.pdf)





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## LWETB'S COVID-19 PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

The pandemic has significantly impacted on all aspects of the LWETB provision from March 2020. Following government guidelines, many centres were forced to close or partially close and where possible move to a remote or blended approach to complete courses. The challenges posed to staff and learners was immense – adopting a new way of working, teaching and learning on top of new family and personal dynamics due to lockdown restrictions. Many QQI component modules were redesigned or substituted to minimise learner disruption.

In August 2020, the LWETB COVID-19 Policy<sup>10</sup> outlined the commitment of LWETB as an employer to implement the COVID-19 Business Response Plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. In April 2020, LWETB developed a QQI Contingency Planning Report<sup>11</sup> which established an interim approach to support programme delivery, methods of assessment and certification processing. This report was prepared and approved by the Quality Oversight Group (QOG). The COVID-19 Task Team provides continuing guidance and support, ensuring the implementation of all requirements as dictated by the HSE and DES.

As a result of the pandemic, new challenges arose:

- Limited broadband, especially in rural areas.
- Many learners lacked the required computing equipment to facilitate their studies
- Supporting positive mental wellbeing for both staff and learners in challenging times
- Learning new ways of working and communicating online
- Certain courses were not appropriate for an online environment and had to be temporarily paused e.g. craft apprenticeships

LWETB put a large number of staff and learner supports in place to mitigate these challenges:

- Laptop loan scheme for learners who didn't have access to the appropriate IT facilities at home
- Staff had facilitated access to centres with HSE precautionary guidelines in place (temperature check on entry, appropriate hand sanitiser stations, etc.)
- Staff were provided with the necessary supports to work from home (laptop, desk, chair and general office supplies) as needed
- Mental Health portal available to staff with regular communications on updated national guidelines and policy
- Internet access installed where necessary
- Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) was provided by LWETB and made available to community education and training groups for the benefit of learners
- FET Adult Guidance Service continued to support learners by moving activities online and over the phone
- FET Recruitment Service continued to carry out their function by working online and over the phone
- FET Contingency Arrangements were put in place in response to the pandemic. Such arrangements included Common Award System (CAS) Modifications to allow for alternative QQI assessments and modules as necessary to accommodate learners completing their courses at home
- LWETB facilities modifications (installation of temperature checking technology, installation of sanitising stations, flexi glass screens, increased cleaning arrangements, etc.)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/LWETB-Covid-19-Policy.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LWETB-QQI-Contingency-Planning-Report.pdf>

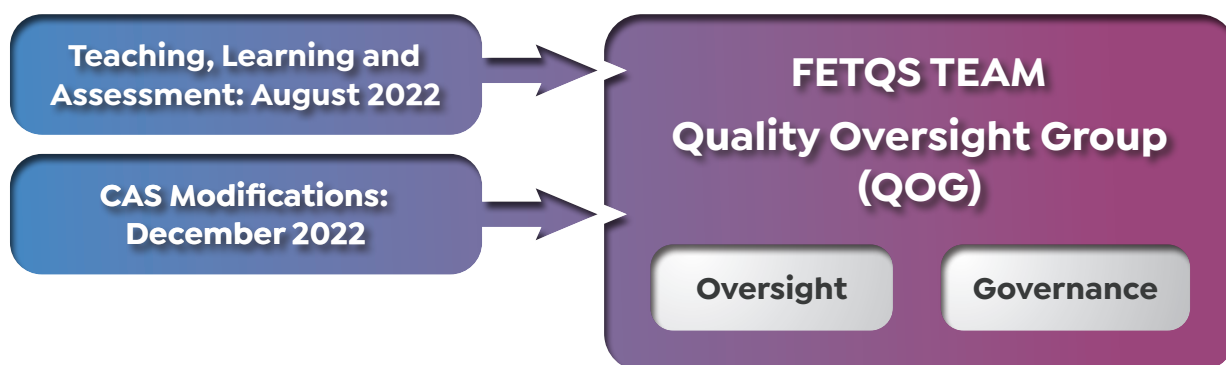


## CONTINGENCY AND CAS MODIFICATIONS

Where assessments could not be delivered in its original format, centres have been provided with support and governance oversight in contingency planning of assessments including teaching and learning guidance and support.

All contingency measures have been required to undergo oversight and approval processes facilitated by the FETQS Team who then review and present to the Quality Oversight Group (QOG).

To support these processes as outlined below, all staff and stakeholders have access to the LWETB Guidance on Contingency Assessments Document.



Approval structure and process of contingency arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment/authentication.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- Document Control Assessment Conversion Form
- FETQS Team QA Administration with QOG oversight and approval process

### Temporary CAS Modifications to QQI Awards

Centre level decision to deliver temporary alternatives to programmes leading to a major award

Notification of intent sent to FETQS Team via MS Forms for oversight of approved modifications to CAS Awards

- Document Control MS Form Application
- QA Oversight: Open clinics and one-to-one centre sessions FETQS Team QA administration and documentation quality checks with Quality Oversight Group (QOG)



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## TEMPORARY CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

### Work Experience / Work Practice / Work Placement

Where vocationally specific work placement is not currently possible or feasible, centres refer to the LWETB Guidance Document.

- Document Control: MS Form Application
- QA Oversight: Open clinics and one-to-one centre sessions
- FETQSTeam QAadministration and documentation quality checks with Quality Oversight Group (QOG)

### Simulation

Where work experience/practice/placement is not currently possible, simulation of learning outcomes (LOs) may be possible. Staff to refer to the LWETB Guidance Document for guidance and process

- Document Control: MS Form Application.
- QA Oversight: Open clinics and one-to-one centre sessions
- FETQSTeam QAadministration and documentation quality checks with Quality Oversight Group (QOG)

### Centre Support

- Training Sessions
- One-to-One Clinics
- QOG Governance Meetings and Oversight Approval
- MS Teams Tiles and Meetings
- Email Updates and Online Support
- Contingency Version Updates in-line with QQI developments
- QQI Adherence and QQI Holding Statement
- LWETB Contingency Report

#### Goal 1:

*Deliver professional high-quality, learner-centred FET service.*

#### Goal 5:

*Support a culture of continuous development with staff.*

*In alignment with the LWETB Service Plan 2022*





## 2. SELF-EVALUATION REPORT: PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

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## SELF-EVALUATION REVIEW - THE APPROACH

Following the publication of the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards Review Handbook, Sectorial Report Terms of Reference and Review Schedule by QQI in 2019, LWETB was assigned to Phase 3 of this Self-Evaluation process. After much thought on the best approach to achieve a self-evaluation report on Quality Assurance that was a true reflection of LWETB, the Director of Further Education and Training, established a Self-Evaluation Steering Group and a Lead Co-ordinator position, to oversee, manage and direct the review process.

After much discussions, the Self-Evaluation Steering Group was formed in June 2021. The FET Director in conjunction with the Area Training Manager and Adult Education Officers identified membership of this steering group to represent the different stakeholders and learner bodies within LWETB while at the same time, not too large a group as to become over burdensome on the process.

The Self-Evaluation Steering Group representation:

- Director of Further Education and Training (Chairperson)
- Director of Schools, Youth and Music
- Director of Organisation, Support and Development
- Adult Education Officers
- Area Training Manager
- Assistant Manager
- Educator
- QQI Review Co-ordinator
- PL&D/TEL Co-ordinator
- General Manager (Athlone CTC)
- QA FET Standards Officer
- Adult Guidance Co-ordinator
- Training Standards Officers
- Integrated Services Manager (National Learning Network)
- FET TEL and PL&D Co-ordinator

Membership of the Self-Evaluation Steering Group was voluntary, with consensus at the inaugural steering group meeting that the overarching ethos would be one of honesty, openness and transparency. The self-evaluation report allows for self-reflection of all quality assurance arrangements in LWETB as a whole, celebrating achievements and offering an opportunity to learn from the past and aid improvements/developments in policies and procedures to meet the future needs of the counties of Longford and Westmeath.

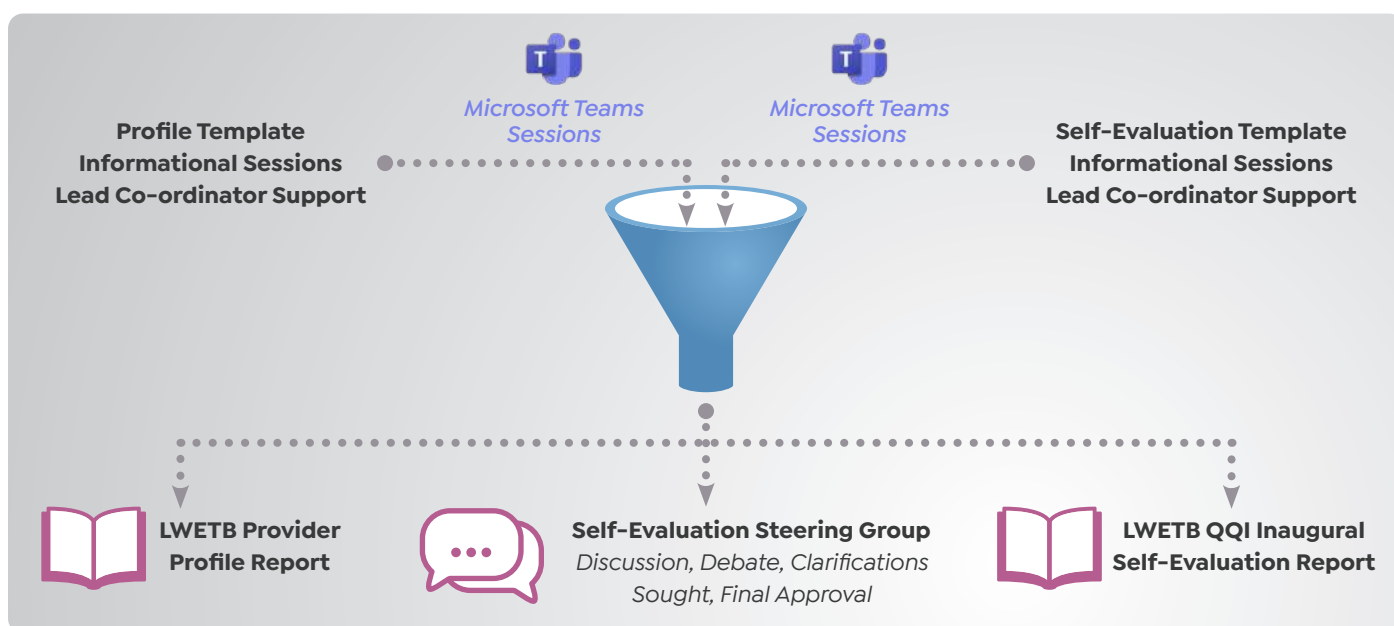
Initially, the steering group decided that the optimal approach to undertake this self-evaluation was for each centre/service to complete a Profile and Self-Evaluation structured template, considering each area highlighted in Annex B and C of the QQI Inaugural Review of QA Handbook. Upon distribution of the documents, it became evident that Microsoft Teams meetings would be more fruitful and efficient, so this approach was adopted.

One-to-one and group MS Teams sessions allowed the lead Co-ordinator to probe managers and Co-ordinators for further detail as they progressed through the various areas covered in the report. Managers/Co-ordinators are representing the views of their department, centres, interactions with staff and learners including facilities and resources etc. The experience was one of positivity for centres to allow them to reflect, acknowledge strengths, identify challenges and converse with peers.

The following Co-ordinators and Managers were consulted in both Longford and Westmeath (where applicable):

- Community Training Centre (CTC)
- Local Training Initiative (LTI)
- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)
- Adult Literacy Provision
- Back to Training and Education Initiative (BTEI)
- Community Education
- Youthreach
- FET Guidance Service
- Specialist Training Providers (National Learning Network)
- Athlone Training Centre
- VTOS
- HR Department
- Corporate Services
- Finance/Procurement Department
- Contracted Training (External Provision)
- FETQS Team
- Enterprise Engagement
- Buildings Department
- IT Department
- GDPR Department
- Training Standards Office Department (TSO)
- Recruitment Department

The findings were collated into a cohesive document and written by the lead Co-ordinator following lengthy debates, clarifications and revisions before being approved by the Chairperson and steering group members, presented to the Chief Executive for ratification prior to submission to QQI.



The schedule and programme of work to be carried out by each centre/service and the Self-Evaluation Steering Group, included contingency planning due to the pandemic to ensure all deadlines were met.

**Appendix 1** details the participants on the Self-Evaluation Steering Group.

**Appendix 2** links to the Profile and Self Evaluation Template provided to each centre/service.



# 3. OBJECTIVE 1: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

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## LWETB MISSION AND STRATEGY

# OUR MISSION

*IS TO PROVIDE DYNAMIC, DIVERSE AND INNOVATIVE  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE  
OF LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH*

This Mission Statement is the core purpose of our organisation. It defines what it is LWETB aims to accomplish in everyday work and underlines what each staff member strives to achieve, regardless of their job title or occupation.

It outlines what those who utilise our services can expect and how LWETB seeks to enhance their experience.

This applies to all services delivered within and by LWETB.

# OUR VISION

*IS TO DEVELOP AND DELIVER NATIONALLY AND  
INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED HIGH QUALITY, VIBRANT,  
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICES*

This Vision Statement outlines what LWETB as an organisation needs to do to achieve our mission.

LWETB endeavours to ensure that the dynamic and innovative services meets the needs of young people and adults across the counties of Longford and Westmeath.

LWETB adheres to the essential operational values which guide the organisation to provide a progressive range of services.



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## VALUES

LWETB values can be summed up in 4 key areas and guide the organisation in providing such a range of services:

- Learner Centred - We place the learner at the centre of everything we do
- Celebrates Diversity - We celebrate equality and welcome all learners
- Acts with Integrity - We operate in a manner that is ethical, transparent and accountable
- Leads with Innovation - We lead innovation by fostering new ideas and promoting creativity



**LEARNER  
CENTRED**

**CELEBRATES  
DIVERSITY**

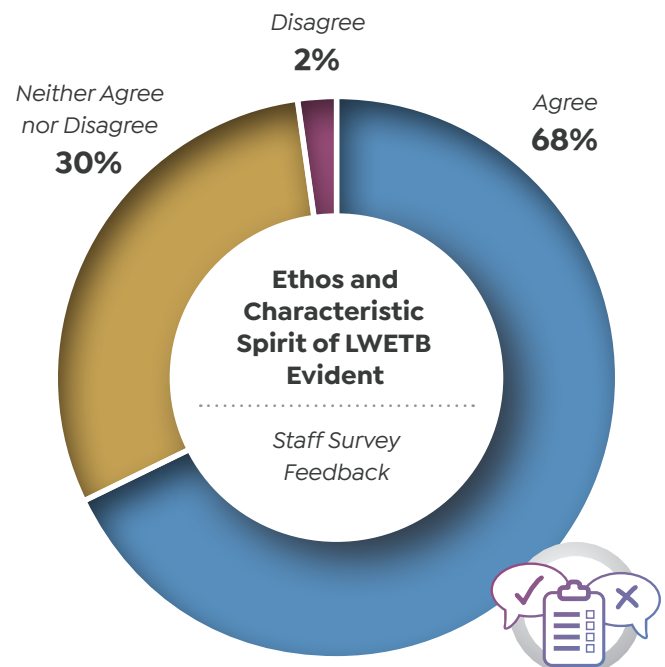
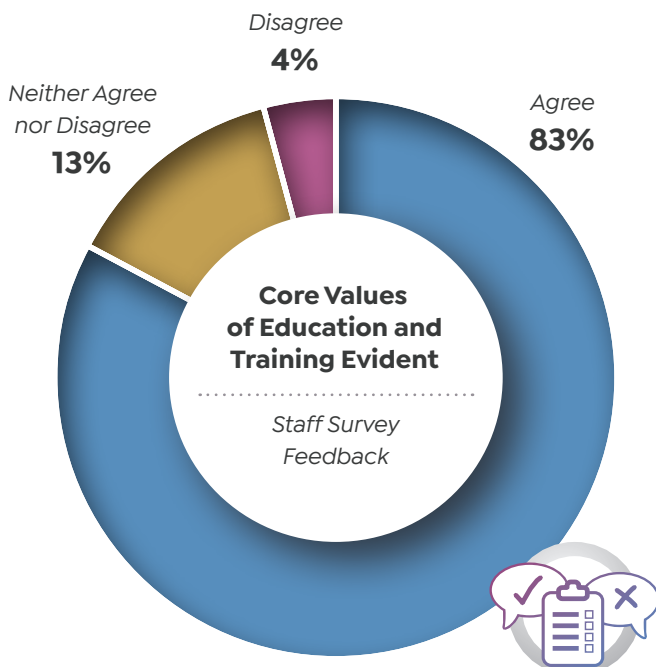


**ACTS WITH  
INTEGRITY**

**LEADS WITH  
INNOVATION**



### OUR VALUES







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## STRATEGIC FOCUS

LWETB's Strategy Statement 2017-2022<sup>12</sup> charts the 5 strategic goals for the organisation:



The LWETB Strategy Statement 2017-2022 was the first of its kind and is a high-level document that sets out the direction for LWETB over a 5 year period. Our Strategy Statement outlined the vision, mission and goals of LWETB as a new organisation and has progressed our service and provision throughout Longford and Westmeath over the years.

This Strategy Statement was guided by a number of national policy documents from both the Department of Education and SOLAS. The strategy was grounded in the current socio-economic and educational reality of life for people living in the region and has guided us through an effective time management period. LWETB is continually committed to working with all our partners and stakeholders to improve the delivery of education and training services for young people and adults in Longford and Westmeath.

The key to this strategy was a focus on the development of continuous improvement processes and enhancing the quality of learning experiences for all learners.

The Strategy Statement 2022-2027 is currently in consultation with all stakeholders internal and external to LWETB.

<sup>12</sup> <https://lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LWETB-Strategy-Statement-2017-2022.pdf>



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The strategic focus from the LWETB Annual Report 2020 allows for a number of quality assurance measures to be identified to achieve each goal:

	Task Completed
	Implemented, Continual Process
	Not Achieved

## Goal 1:

### Deliver professional, high quality, learner-centred education and training services

1.1	Create a learner charter
1.2	Develop a teaching and learning strategy
1.3	Enhanced planning and coordination of programmes
1.4	Expanding quality assurance provision by establishing QA Teams in all sectors to ensure quality provision and results
1.5	Identifying innovative responses to current and future needs

## Goal 2:

### Enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for learners

2.1	Enhancing feedback from learners and parents
2.2	Investment in ICT enhanced learning
2.3	Tracking and reporting on inputs (learner attendance, retention and attainment)
2.4	Improving facilities and resources
2.5	Enhanced Staff CPD/mentoring

## Goal 3:

### Foster effective communication, collaboration and partnerships

3.1	Develop an ICT Strategy including reuse of systems and programmes
3.2	Develop a communication strategy
3.3	Create Collaborative Teams
3.4	Enhance partnerships and alliances with external stakeholders and bodies

## Goal 4:

### Progress the development of effective organisational structures

4.1	Develop an approach that builds capacity for change management
4.2	Embed good governance across LWETB
4.4	Participate in national initiatives and fora

## Goal 5:

### Support a culture of continuous development with staff

5.1	Develop a CPD strategy for LWETB
-----	----------------------------------

Within the identified strategic goals, as seen overleaf, LWETB is focusing on the following areas to further develop the FET provision:

## Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

TEL will support alternative ways of learning in a more flexible way, using available technology to enhance the learning experience and supports active learning. It allows for more flexible part-time course options in a cost effective and timely manner in response to reduction in demand for full-time course due to falling unemployment.

## Improvements to Course Outputs and Learner Outcomes

Particular improvements are planned as follows:

**Assessment of Learners** – The implementation of more formalised recruitment processes prior to course. This will better determine the most appropriate level and type of programme suitable for the learner and improve subsequent retention rates

**Modular Approach** – Provide the learner with more part time options whereby they may build towards a major award by achieving component modules

**Structured Work Placements** – Review a number of specific programmes with the purpose of providing enhanced work experience in relevant industry clusters. This would increase placement into employment where there are identified skills shortages

**Awarding Bodies** – Offer alternatives to national certifications which may be more appropriate for certain industry requirements

## Staff Profile

Developing a comprehensive Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) Plan for FET staff in line with SOLAS FET Professional Learning and Development Strategy 2020-2024<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1e2e117467/solas-professional-dev-strategy.pdf>

## Quality Assurance (QA)

As part of the process of continuous improvement in Quality Assurance and in compliance with QQI statutory guidelines, an Executive Self-Evaluation Report (ESER) has been completed and a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to 2022 is implemented with identified actions and milestones. Each task identified in the QIP has been aligned to a new QQI Policy area and also to one of LWETB's 5 strategic goals.

## Enhance Enterprise Engagement Mechanisms

LWETB is continuing to build its enterprise engagement resources, facilitated by the Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator to fulfill LWETB's responsibility to employers and enterprise. This will create, consolidate and improve LWETB links and brand awareness with the business community.

## Evolving and Innovative Labour Market Focus

LWETB is actively increasing its activities in labour market focused programmes through short modular courses, course delivery using remote learning and an expansion of evening training provision.



*Athlone Training Centre  
Winners of the Excellence in Services  
Education Training 2020*





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## QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND MISSION AND STRATEGY

The mission, vision and values of LWETB are broad and all encompassing. They provide a working guideline as to how all staff should conduct themselves within LWETB. It is evident from the policies and procedures in place that the mission, vision and values have permeated in a very positive way into these documents. Documents developed are inclusive, learner centred, have integrity and form part of a continuous improvement plan.

Quality Assurance arrangements provide procedures and mechanisms that support the strategic goals. The FETQS Team refer to these strategic goals in policy development directly, such as focusing on updating a particular policy e.g. Teaching and Learning Policy or indirectly, by supporting the ethos of a goal, such as the Learner Charter.

### Risks and Challenges for LWETB

A series of risks and challenges have been identified which could constrain LWETB's ability to successfully deliver on its Strategic Performance Agreement:

- **Availability of Learners** – With the reduction in unemployment levels, the availability of learners to attend full or part time FET provision is reducing
- **Duplication of Provision** – Competition from other providers e.g. Skillsnet, partnership companies where programmes may be delivered over shorter duration of where it may be uncertified leading to an oversupply of specific programmes
- **Management of Time and Resources** – Due to a multiplicity of systems, FET managers are spending increasing amounts of time on systems at a risk of being less learner focused. This needs to be reversed
- **National Agreements** – Some national labour agreements with categories of staff do not take full account of the evolving needs of the FET provision
- **Capital Requests** – The amount of available funding in this category does not meet the needs of LWETB
- **Upskilling FET Staff** – A Professional Learning and Development team (not just Co-ordinator) is required to allow LWETB identify and deliver on the local and national requirements for the upskilling of FET staff
- **TEL** – Dedicated TEL developer is necessary to provide support and direction to staff during implementation and into the future
- **Staffing** – The funding and sanction of essential roles with identified target areas in the FET strategy is not always awarded
- **Traineeships** – Developing relevant traineeships is challenging as market demand can be difficult to anticipate (especially within a pandemic). A large portion of these programmes are work based so a large number of employers are required to provide work practice and updating staff skills takes time
- **Apprenticeships** – The ambition to be a leader in developing new apprenticeships is challenging as the time required from inception, validation and delivery can be a number of years, requiring significant investment in both human and capital resources. This is compounded by the difficulty in predicting the level of continued demand over the long-term



Garda Youth Awards  
Youthreach, 2019



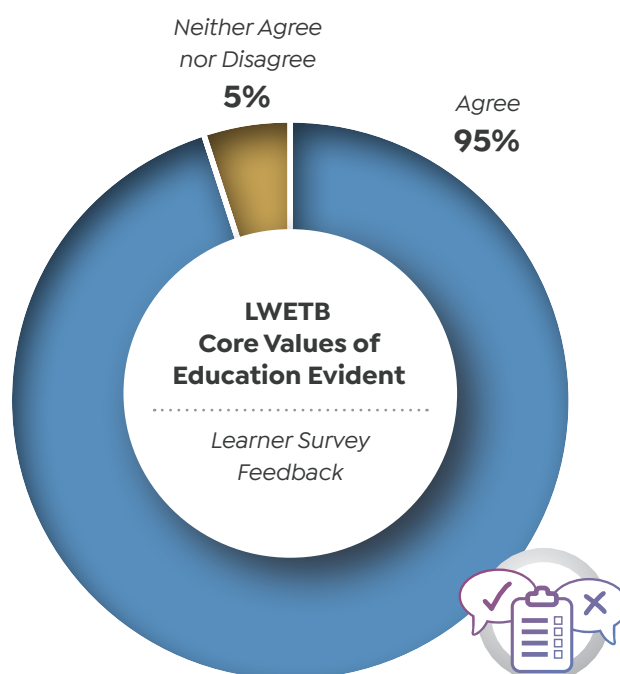
Implementation of the Shared Services Payroll Project  
where payroll, subsistence and travel expense activities  
are being migrated to the Education Shared Business  
Services Centre (ESBS) in Dublin.

Organisational restructuring at LWETB Head Office  
Mullingar, 2019

## EVALUATION

The Mission Statement, Vision and Values state intrinsically what LWETB is and what it represents. They represent mottos we strive to achieve daily, developed after much consultation, discussion and thought with both internal and external stakeholders. By adhering to the principles that they represent, LWETB will continue to provide a positive and energetic place to work and serve the needs of learners, the wider community and industry to the highest of standards.

Testament to our dedicated staff, despite 2020 and 2021 being very difficult periods for everyone, LWETB still maintained its strategic goals, continued serving Longford and Westmeath with quality programmes and offered innovative solutions to programme delivery during Government imposed restrictive measures. LWETB are very humbled that learners, community and industry embraced remote and blended learning platforms, new technology and assessment methods to achieve their learning potential.





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## STRUCTURE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

### Corporate Governance

LWETB is governed by a Board currently with 21 members. The primary role of the Board is governance, providing direction and oversight. Executive functions are carried out by the Chief Executive (CE) and reserved functions are carried out by the Board. Reserved functions are set out in Section 12(2) of the Education and Training Board Act 2013<sup>14</sup>. The executive assists the members of the board in the performance of their functions as the members may require.

A brief outline of the reserved function of the board includes:

- Appoint CE
- Give opinions and adopt LWETB's strategy statement
- Adopt LWETB's Annual Report and Annual Service Plan
- Appointment/Removal of committee members
- Receipt of report from Finance Committee as well as Audit and Risk Committee and determine action
- Determine the Terms of Reference of a committee

To ensure LWETB meets the needs of learners in the future, throughout 2021, a working group is revising and formulating new strategic goals for LWETB to guide us into 2022 and beyond, ready to embrace the ever-evolving FET sector.

### Executive Governance



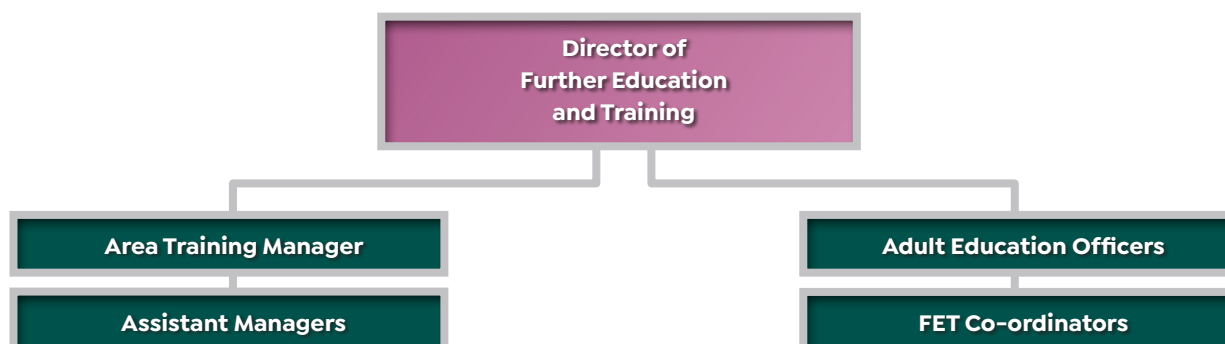
The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for all of LWETB's activity. The Director of Further Education and Training (FET) duties includes the delivery of high quality and responsive FET provision and its governance and management. The Director of Organisation Support and Development (OSD) is responsible for the governance and management of HR, corporate services and finance functions. The Director of Schools, Youth and Music governs and manages Post-Primary Schools, Youth Work Unit and Music Generation.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/11/section/12/enacted/en/html>





## Further Education and Training Governance



The Director of Further Education and Training has overall responsibility for the provision of FET, providing leadership, guidance and support. An Area Training Manager and Adult Education Officers are responsible for individual FET provision. Local centre Co-ordinators manage the day to day running of each centre.

The tiered organisation structure provides good governance, guaranteeing oversight, management and quality control of the education and training service delivered at centre level.

## Organisation Support and Development (OSD) Governance



The OSD function is responsible for the design, direction and delivery of organisational governance and corporate services including:

- Human Resource (HR)
- Corporate Services (includes supporting departments such as procurement, buildings and ICT)
- Finance

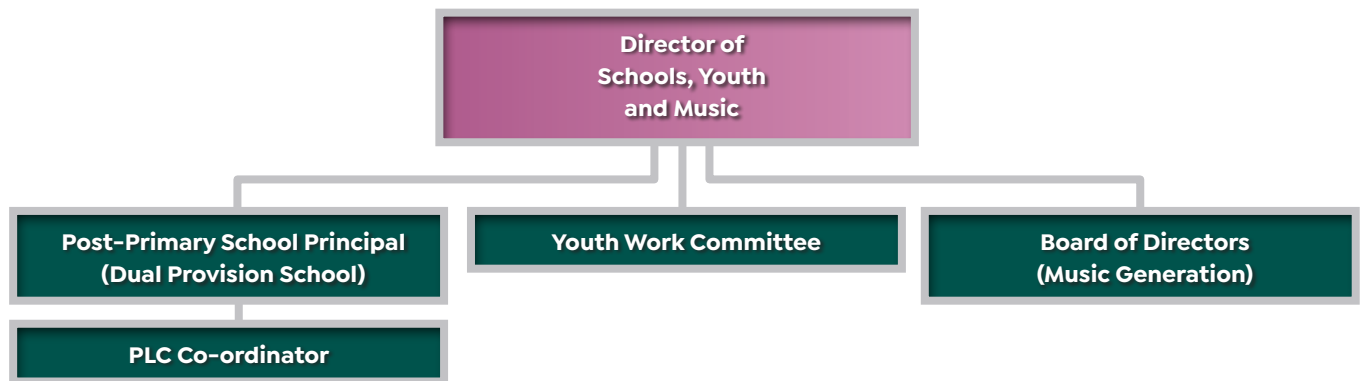


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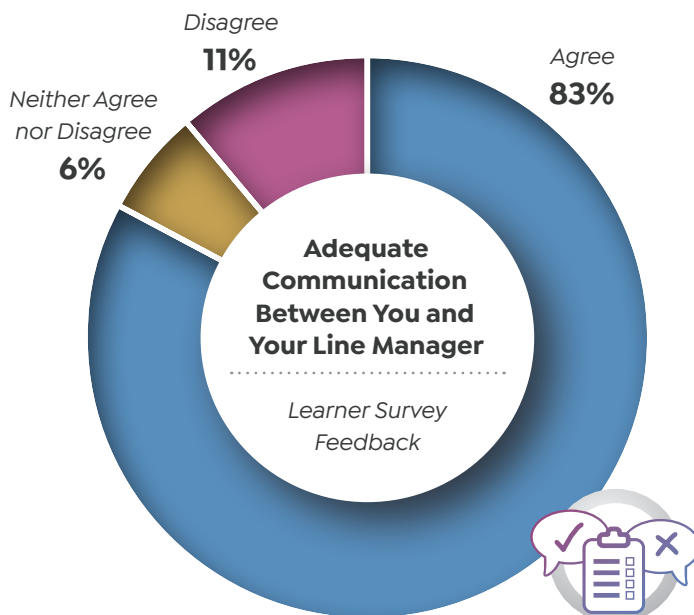


## Schools, Youth and Music Governance



Some secondary schools offer dual provision (secondary school along with PLC provision). A School Principal manages PLC provision, reporting to the Director of Schools, Youth and Music. Day to day PLC management is undertaken by a PLC Co-ordinator. Some secondary schools extend their service to deliver part-time and evening classes that cater to both PLC learners and that of the public.

The Youth Work Unit functions are identified by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 and on the recommendation of ETBI established a Youth Work Committee. The remit of this committee is to:



- Be informed of the youth work function conducted by LWETB
- Inform the Director of Schools, Youth and Music on information relating to youth work
- Provide oversight of the LWETB youth work function

Music Generation is managed by Longford Local Music Education Partnership, led by LWETB in partnership with Longford County Council and with support from Creative Ireland. It is managed by a Board of Directors of Music Generation DAC that is non-executive and independent. The board is responsible for providing leadership, development strategy, identifying and mitigating risk, along with monitoring the budgets and outcomes of the organisation.



## GOVERNANCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

There are currently 4 active<sup>15</sup> QA arrangements in place in LWETB:

1. FE Programme provision in Westmeath
2. FE Programmes provision in Longford
3. PLC Provision in Mullingar Community College
4. Transition Quality Assurance System (TQAS) in Athlone Training Centre

Identified in the Executive Self-Evaluation Report (ESER) was a need to evaluate all 11 Core Guidelines of QA and establish common policy across all provisions. The ESER report, along with the LWETB FET Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2017 outlines quality improvement objectives, key tasks and activities to be completed, along with timelines and benchmarking to achieve this objective.

At its core, Quality is at the fulcrum of our strategies and action plan within LWETB. The Quality Team commenced in 2019 to work on aligning FET policies and procedures. The Quality Team has evolved into its own brand within LWETB of the FETQS. The FETQS Team remit is to develop and enhance and build on a quality culture and environment within our centres, for our staff and stakeholders. The FETQS Team remit is to cultivate and implement a strong foundation and structure of a quality system. It integrates into the workings of our services and standards while also contributing to a continuous improvement framework.

The FETQS Team has developed Terms of Reference (ToR) for our governance structures while also implementing a developmental and operational plan for the Quality System Index (QSI). The QSI holds QQIs 11 Core Guidelines that are current and developed FET policies, procedures, guidelines and templates.

Documents, presentations and support materials updated or created by the FETQS team bear the FETQS logo. This logo denotes FETQS team and relevant governance group approval and are suitable for organisational-wide use:



This is a large scale undertaking in creating FET common policies and seeking agreement across provisions is proving challenging.

As part of this process, the Quality Oversight Group (QOG) was formed, with delegated authority to the Quality Governance Group (QGG) and Programme Governance Group (PGG).

The QOG oversees the planning, co-ordination, quality, development and improvement of all aspects of further education and training provision of LWETB.

<sup>15</sup> There are also two additional QA arrangements which are inactive with no courses currently taking (PLC provision in Athlone Community College and Columba College, Killucan). At this time there are currently no plans to offer accredited courses in these centres in the future and hence not included in this report.





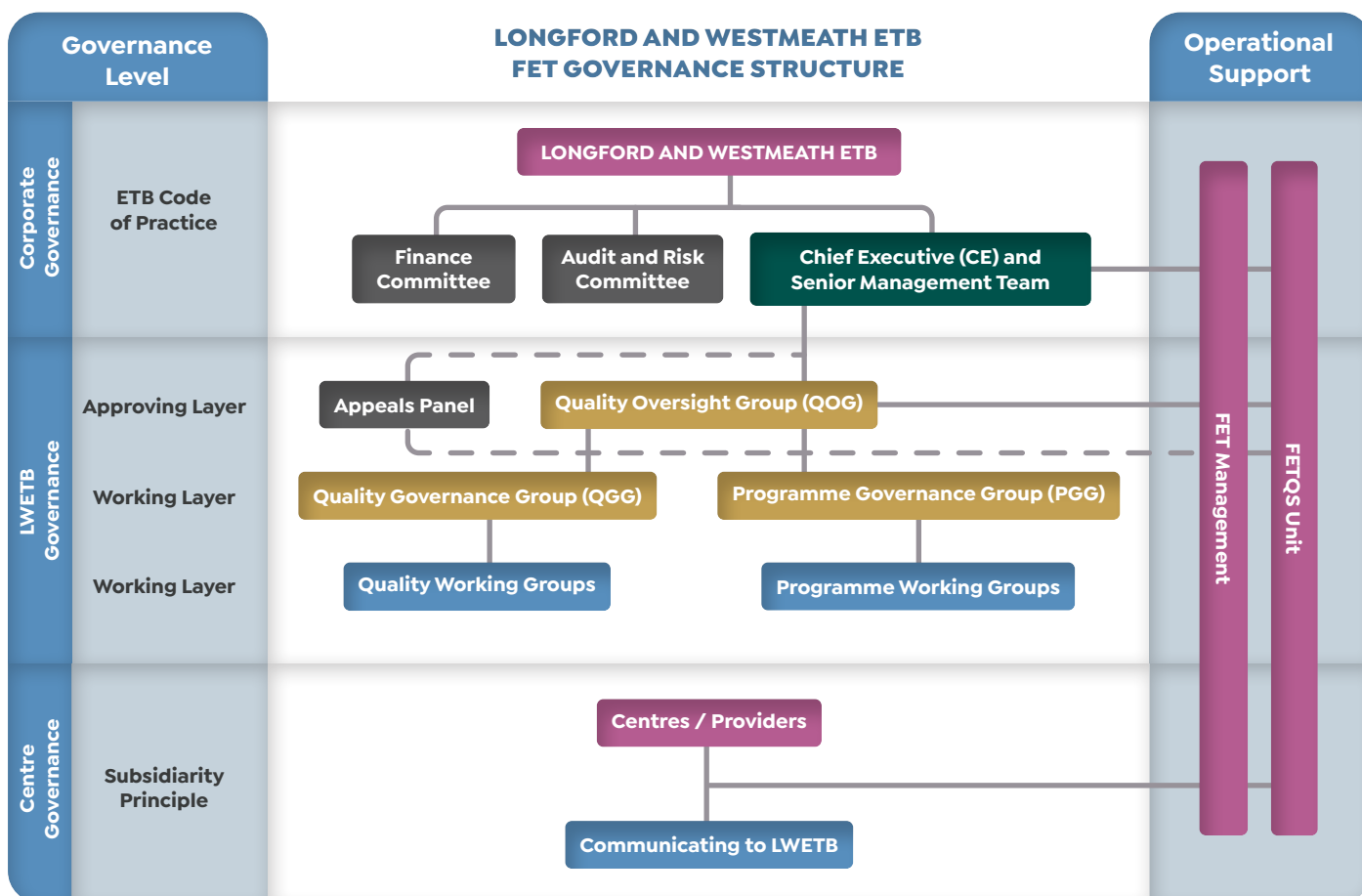
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The Quality Governance Group (QGG) oversees the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination, and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures and processes, while the Programme Governance Group (PGG), carries out the same role but for programmes.

Programme and Quality Working Groups are established to update programmes, policies and procedures. These documents are distributed to the relevant provisions for consultation before being reviewed by the QOG/QGG for final ratification by the QOG.





## ETHOS OF FETQS

The ethos of FET policies, procedures and documentation is always about serving the learner by:

1. Having one fit-for-purpose set of core guidelines that covers all 11 core areas of quality assurance
2. Having documentation and forms that are easily understandable, non-discriminatory and learner centred
3. Having policies, procedures or documents that improve the integrity and quality of process
4. Having policies, procedures or documents that add efficiency, integrity or structure to a process



### FETQS Procedures

*How LWETB strategise our policies into action and how it is that this is achieved from the perspective of staff, learners and stakeholders*

- Access, Transfer and Progression
- Recruitment Appeals
- Examination Procedure
- Internal Verification
- External Authentication
- Procedure on Consultation
- Consistency in Assessment
- Malpractice and Maladministration
- Procedure for Results Approval Panel
- Learner Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment
- Security of Assessment Material, Evidence and Records
- Engagement of External Authenticators
- Documented Approach to Quality
- Recruitment of Learner
- Learner Induction to LWETB
- Academic Integrity
- Assessment Deadlines
- Internal and External Communications in Quality
- Extenuating Circumstances in Assessment

### FETQS Policies

*LWETB, government, legal and statutory policies that govern the operational and developmental sphere and systems of FET*

- Access, Transfer and Progression
- Learner Admissions
- Development Approach
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Reasonable Accommodation
- Assessment Policy

### FETQS Guidelines and Templates

*Ensures that the documented approach taken by policies and procedures are robust, fit-for-purpose and accountable in guiding staff, learners and stakeholders through a systemic approach to a policy, procedure, application or system*

- Quality System Index
- Internal Verification Checklist
- Internal Verification Report
- Staggered Internal Verification Checklist
- Answer Booklet for Theory Examinations
- Learner Induction Presentation
- ToR for Communities of Practice
- QOG Results Ratification
- Programme Proposal Form
- Teaching and Learning Guidelines
- Learner Support Guidelines
- Annual Certification Plan
- RAP Report and Minutes
- QQI Key Certification Dates



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When in consultation throughout the development of LWETB FET QA policies, procedures and QA documentation, all FET sectors are represented. This includes having a clear timeline structure for the process as well as once QA documentation is approved by governance structures. This includes dates for review to ensure a fit for purpose approach is standard practice.

The FETQS Team present a quarterly plan of action to the Director of Further Education and Training including FET Managers. This FET Business Planning Support Services Group meet every quarter to review the previous quarter and the work proposed for next. Development of a service plan by each department is presented and how proposals align with strategic goals and the current QIP's discussed. Service Departments learn from each other, grow knowledge of other department priorities and areas of work as well as develop a more meaningful collaborative approach to provision. Departments and staff that collaborate include:

- FET Senior Management
- FET Enterprise Engagement
- FET Technology Enhanced Learning
- FET Adult Guidance
- FETQS Team
- FET Recruitment
- FET Professional Learning and Development
- FET Management Information Systems

All departments provide updates, progress against tasks assigned, actions to commence as well as proposed work under the consultation category to the Quality Oversight Group (QOG). The QOG steer the FETQS Team, to ensure adherence to decisions and work within parameters given to ensure a documented approach to quality.

The visibility and transparency of QA governance and management is very important. This is achieved by:

- Regular FETQS Unit briefing sessions to inform provisions on new developments, changes, supports and training opportunities
- Quarterly FET QA newsletter distributed to all staff
- Agenda, minutes, memberships and presentations of all Quality Units work is available on the FETQS portal
- Information for learners, general public and external stakeholders is available on the ETB's website at: [www.lwetb.ie/quality-assurance](http://www.lwetb.ie/quality-assurance)
- Summary of certification numbers (by provision, by monthly, or cumulatively) regularly distributed to Senior Management and governance groups
- External Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) used for assessment updates
- External Authenticators used for assessment, certification and authentication
- External Consultants used on an ad-hoc basis for expertise
- External Quality Assessors (EQA) used by some awarding bodies e.g. City and Guilds, VTCT, etc.
- Accreditation body audits





### Internal

- Regular FETQS unit briefing sessions to inform provisions on new developments, changes, supports and training opportunities
- Quarterly FET QA Newsletter distributed to all staff
- Agendas, minutes, memberships and presentations of all quality units work is available on the FETQS portal
- Information for learners, general public and external stakeholders is available on the LWETB website at: [www.lwetb.ie/quality-assurance](http://www.lwetb.ie/quality-assurance)



### External

- Summary of certification numbers (by provision, monthly or cumulatively) regularly distributed to senior management and FETQS unit
- External Subject Matter Experts (SME) used for assessment updates
- External authenticators used for assessment, certification and authentication
- External consultants used for an ad-hoc basis for expertise
- External quality assessors (EQA) used by some awarding bodies e.g. City and Guilds, VTCT
- Accreditation body audits

## Future Focus

The FETQS Team identified the initial areas of work to focus were:

- **QA5:** Teaching and Learning
- **QA6:** Assessment of Learners

Our work thus far reflects areas identified by staff and stakeholders as requiring attention and work will continue in these areas of priority.

## Assessment Handbook and Learner Handbook

The FETQS Team has commenced Working Groups with representation from across FET including external stakeholders. This work is ongoing and the production and need of upholding policies and procedures and QA documentation reveals itself at many stages of both handbooks.

## Programme Development and Validation

The FETQS Team have representation on all governance groups and will work with the Programme Governance Group (PGG) to commence the development of a Programme Delivery, Development and Validation Policy and subsequent procedures to ensure a strategic focus in line with QQI Guidelines (Core, Sector Specific for ETB's, Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes).



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## Communities of Practice (CoPs)

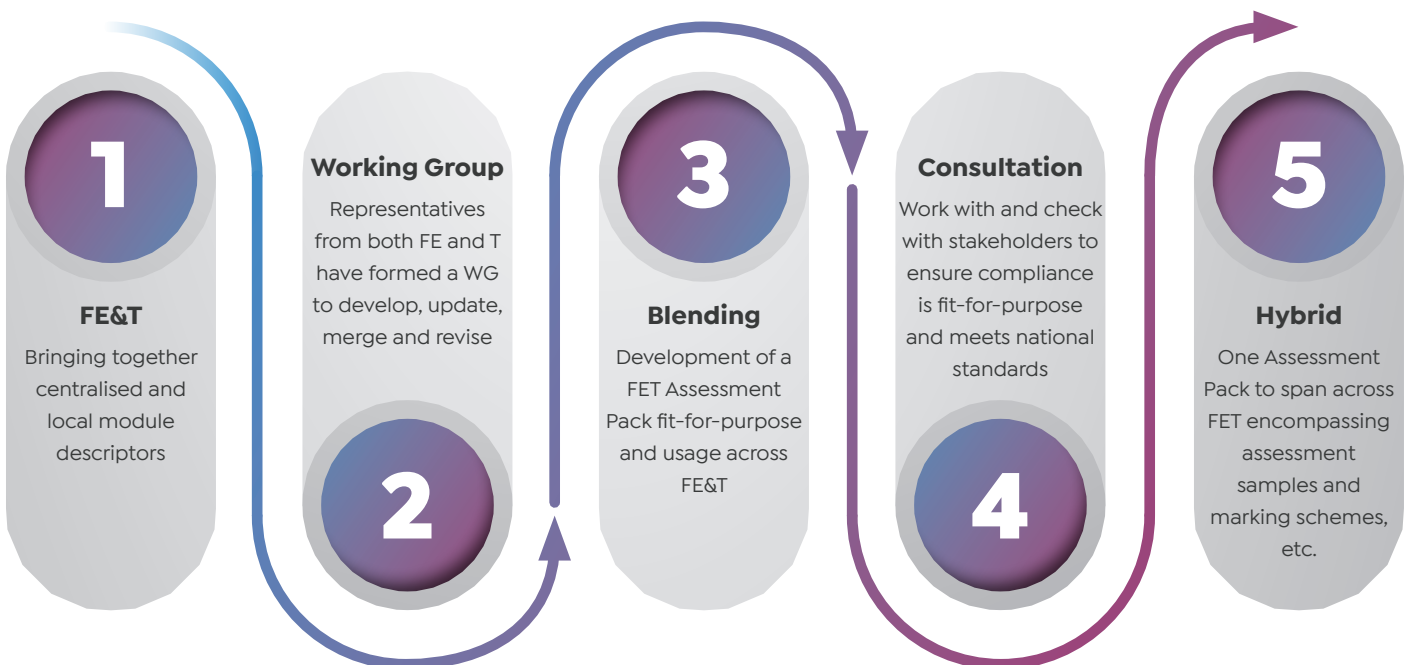
LWETB are currently in the process of the development and commencement of Communities of Practice both within LWETB and also with ETBI. Staff can move within their respective fields of learning to share their passions, resources, skills gained, knowledge and competencies in their respective subject matter areas. It is also an opportunity to develop, enhance and improve both Module Descriptors and AISs to ensure fit-for-purpose assessments, learning outcomes and methodologies are being utilised. These CoPs have a common goal of improving the delivery of service to learners while also sharing experiences and practice while creating positive collaboration across programme / provision / NFQ Levels.

## FET Assessment Pack

Currently underway is a pilot scheme for Level 4 Information Technology Skills (4N1125). This pilot brings together centralised and local module descriptors to devise a one FET assessment pack to meet the required standards for both further education and training. Lessons learnt from this pilot scheme will shape future Terms of Reference for the development of assessment packs through our CoPs for programmes and modules requiring enhancement and criteria required to meet national standards.

### FET Assessment Pack

Information Technology Skills 4N1125

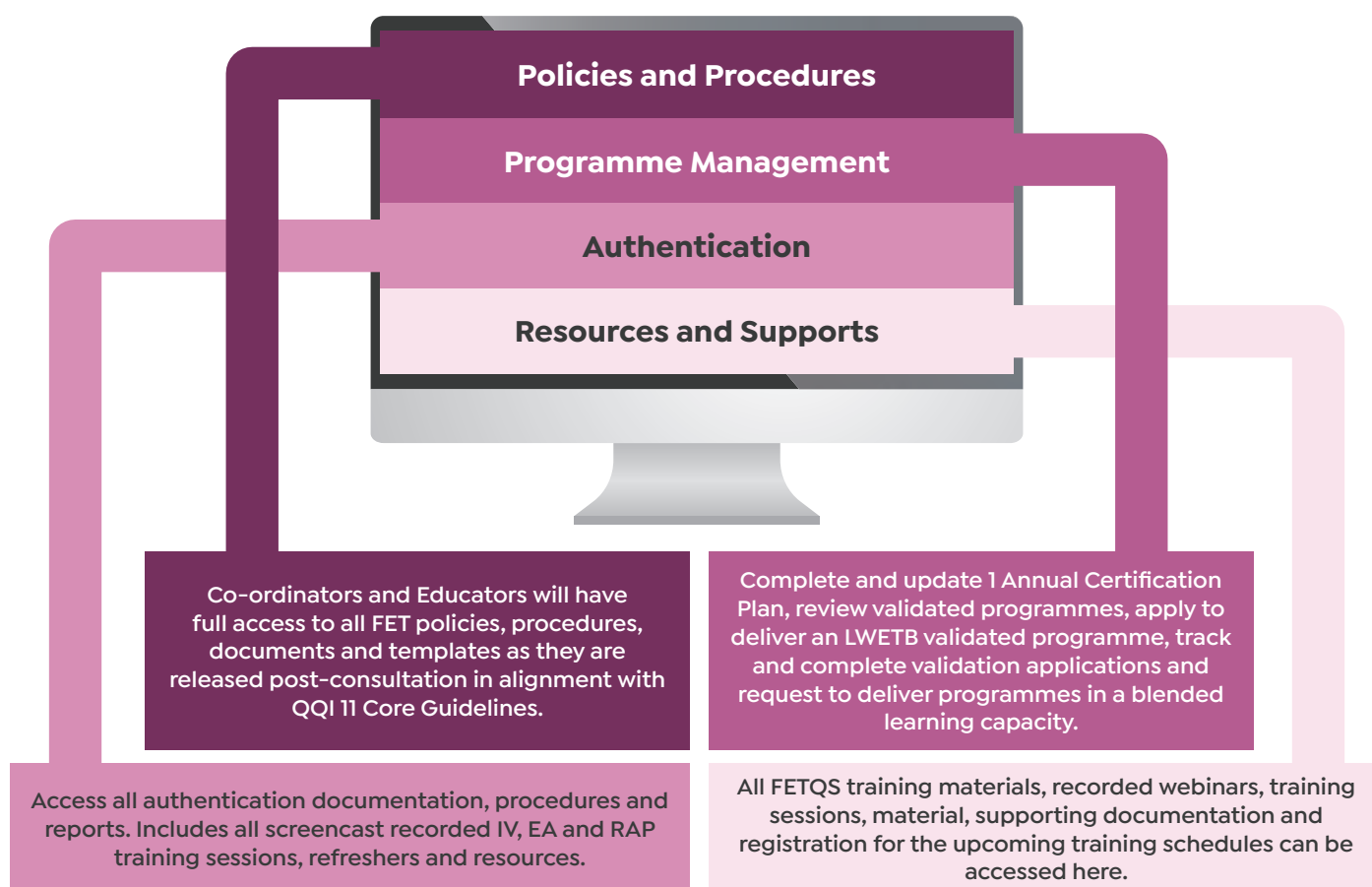




## Modular Management System – MMS

The FETQS Team have embarked on the development of a Modular Management System (MMS). This system will provide centres with the opportunity to access their approved assessments and manage their own programme requests directly through the central log-in system. The MMS will be overseen and managed by the FETQS Team who can support the day to day activities, update training and resource sections and review Annual Certification Plans.

The MMS focus is on quality assurance while also providing support to centres and programme proposals, accessing FETQS policies, procedures and documentation as well as requests for additional professional supports. The MMS will allow for autonomy at centre level in accessing validated programmes while acting as a centre level access point for staff as outlined below. This advancement will support centres to access QA updates and material, templates, documents and reference material.



A central portal for all FET centres to access FETQS documentation, supports, programme requests, etc. specific and tailored to the needs of provision and centre.

Receive up-to-date notifications and programme application status progression indicators.





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## Co-ordinators/Centre Managers

Access to all areas of the MMS and authority to access the Centre Programme Management Application (PMA) to apply direct to their respective Area Training Manager/Adult Education Officer for programme validation requests as shown in the image below.

## Assessors/Educators

Access to all areas and ability to download centre validated programme module descriptors. They are restricted in accessing the Programme Management Application (PMA). They may request professional development opportunities and access training material, resources and supports.

## Area Training Manager/Adult Education Officers

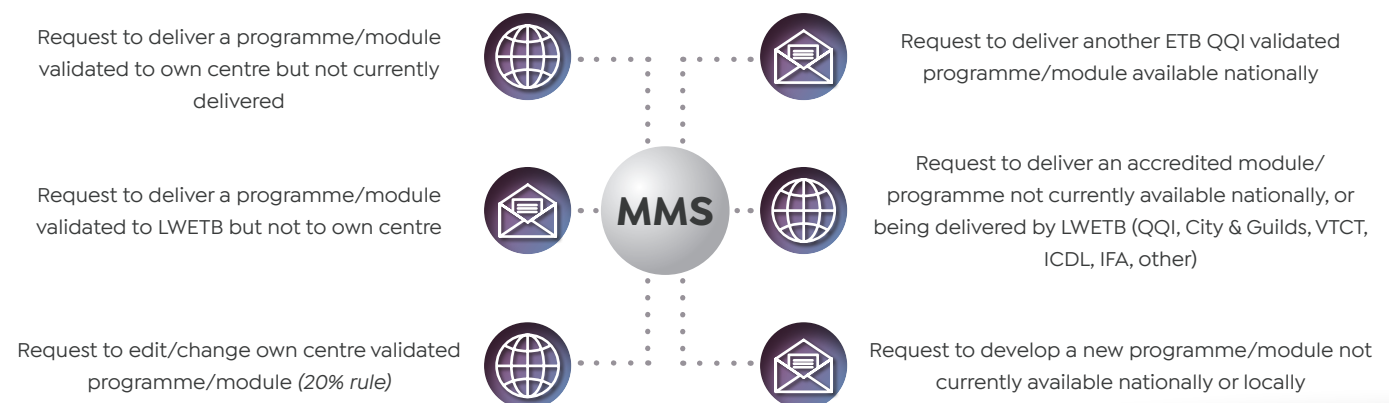
Access to applications made as outlined below with the opportunity to; suspend an application pending further information/document request, approval in principle to present to the PGG board or decline with reasoning.

## FETQS Team

Access all areas, update, remove, upload and renew documentation while updating centres on news, certification, accreditation or application status' as it occurs. The FETQS Team will have a built in Annual Certification Plan to allow for the assurance of Internal Verification dates, including IV personnel to ensure up-to-date training, appoint external authenticators to centre, etc. The FETQS Team will be able to ensure that all documentation, administrative resources, supports and material is up-to-date and is relevant to each centre / provision.

## MMS – Modular Management System

Apply online to manage centre programmes. Receive up-to-date notifications and programme application status indicators:





The MMS will have a live update section for all centres including the ability to update individual centres on status changes of applications, certification cycles etc.

- **Phase 1:** Creation and Development has now been completed
- **Phase 2:** Development commencement will address the complexities of centre level access and that of oversight
- **Phase 3** will involve live trials of the system both at centre and FETQS Level
- **Phase 4** will address any edit and modification requirements.
- **Phase 5** will see an organisational wide rollout

## EFFECTIVE

- The FETQS Team, along with the QOG, PGG and QGG are tasked with creating a much needed common structured approach and framework to QA that meets the requirements of a modern FET sector
- As a result of the FETQS Team's work, developments such as the introduction of an Annual Certification Plan is now in place across all provisions. This allows provisions to plan, seek approval and submit learner assessments to the Results Approval Panel (RAP) up to six times per year, reducing the wait time for certification by learners significantly
- The FETQS Team have oversight and management of the Annual Assessment Plan across FE, streamlining assessment certification periods, management of External Authenticator bookings and development of key certification dates to assist centres to align to procedural timekeeping deadlines in the authentication process
- Through the QGG, the FETQS Team was requested to commence the Assessment Handbook Working Group. This group of individuals are stakeholder staff throughout FET ranging from educators, administrators, centre managers and Co-ordinators. The aim of the group is to complete a comprehensive assessment handbook to guide, assist, and support. It details to staff how to carry out teaching, learning and assessment to best practice initiatives underpinned by a FET policy, procedure and process. The assessment handbook has direct links to administrative documentation and panels as appropriate
- Common Assessment Packs are now in place (containing sample assessments). This assists educators to develop assessments more uniformly across provisions, meet national standards and ensure assessments are in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Organisational adjustments with a dedicated Quality Assurance Department within LWETB has strengthened standards and the communications structure



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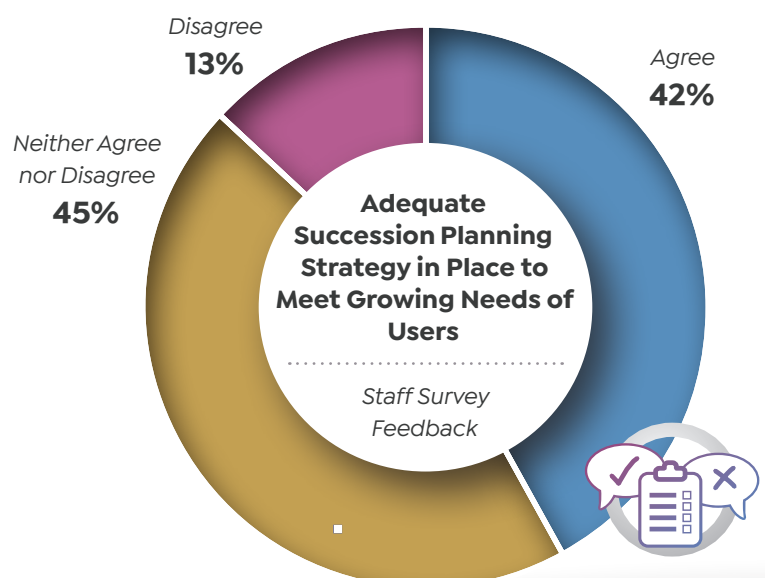


## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Communities of Practice (CoP) are underway to establish connection with staff across centres and regions. This platform will enable staff to cohesively work with and share expertise within their fields of learning to encourage the sharing of assessment resources and best practice processes. The CoPs will create a shared space to develop and enhance programme development and teaching and learning resources, assessments while renewing module descriptors
- The FETQS Team in conjunction with human resource and finance departments are establishing an External Authentication (EA) panel for LWETB. The EA panel will consist of Subject Matter Experts (SME) ranging across varying fields of learning to cater to programme provision. This panel will receive LWETB specific training and support to develop and enhance assessment standardisation in meeting national standards and address the specific needs within Longford and Westmeath
- The FETQS Team are currently working on a Learner Handbook and a Learner Induction Process to support, guide and assist learners throughout LWETB regardless of programme or provision. This handbook will have direct links to supporting material and documentation for applications such as appeals, complaints and extenuating circumstances. Accompanying this learner handbook will be a learner induction procedure, process and presentation which can be customised to each centre, programme and provision
- The FETQS Team is implementing a new Modular Management System (MMS). This will be a single portal where FET provisions will be able to review and download common policies and procedures, submit new/modify programme and module proposals, submit certification plans etc. This will mean that centres will have direct access to resources, training material, course management processes and request to deliver programmes through the programme management application system

## FUTURE GOALS

The establishment and work of the FETQS Team, QOG, PGG and QGG has produced fruitful results. It would be envisaged for their work to continue to ultimately retire legacy systems and processes and replace them with fit-for-purpose policies, procedures and systems that work across all FET provision. From this strategic plan has commenced the Quality System Index (QSI) which tracks through the 11 core guidelines for transparency of documentation. The Quality System Index coincides with a strategic review system for continuous improvement.







## CHALLENGES

- Standardisation of new policies and procedures that meets the needs of each provision, the various demographic of learners and their ability, where there are differing programme requirements spread across geographical areas is difficult
- Getting agreements on common policy across provisions is slow and time consuming during the consultative process
- Some provisions see themselves as a standalone unit as opposed to being part of the LWETB umbrella and a narrative thought process of “we are a relatively new ETB” needs amending. The ‘#WeAreLWETB’ campaign needs internal promotion as a message of unity
- Community of Practice: CoPs are a new concept in team working and collaborative effort. These processes will need to be planned carefully with training provided to support fields of learning

## DOCUMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

LWETB documents its policies and procedures via the SharePoint Portal for staff and the LWETB website for learners. This includes:

- QA Policies and Procedures
- QA Forms and Templates
- QA Groups (work of the QOG, PGG and QGG)
- Quality Unit (Approved, Support and Working Documents)
- Programme Information
- For Consultation (documents out for consultation with various stakeholders)
- QA News

LWETB is currently updating content in each of these sections that will be maintained going forward.

Many corporate level policies and procedures (Data Protection, HR, Financial and ICT Policies) are publicly available at [www.lwetb.ie/policies](http://www.lwetb.ie/policies).

LWETB recognises deficiencies in this area, with the level of detail of policies and procedures varying between provisions and ease of access also differing (some online, some hardcopy upon request). Frequency of legacy policy review across provisions is also irregular.

## EFFECTIVE

- The FETQS Team have greatly advanced a portal solution for QA arrangements. This has shown many benefits, including ease of access, along with commonality in appearance and schedule of reviews in place



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- The FETQS Team have greatly advanced portal solutions for the distribution of QA arrangements. These strong communication channels with staff throughout LWETB through MS Teams groups will continue to enhance a quality culture at site and centre level. This gives autonomy and empowerment to staff to easily access QA supports, documentation and resources
- The FETQS Team have established many training sessions and briefings for PD purposes. This includes holding Open Clinics through Teams where all are welcome to question, query or update knowledge on QA issues
- The FETQS Team has expanded, allowing for faster creation/revision of new policies and procedures. At present there are a number of new and updated procedures and processes in draft format, currently undergoing FET consultation prior to implementation
- Close communication between the FETQS Team and the TEL PL&D Co-ordinator has allowed for skill deficiencies to be targeted for upskilling

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- With legacy QA arrangements still in place, not all centre QA arrangements are available on the SharePoint Portal. These are stored locally within centres
- The Modular Management System (MMS) to address this access to all FET QA documentation as this will allow for central storage of QA arrangements across the whole organisation in a single location
- Ease of access to supports and resources within the MMS System when operational and in the interim staff and stakeholders will continue to access documentation stored on staff MS Teams
- The MMS system will allow centres to apply for and track Programme Management Applications (PMA) through Line Management and Governance Tracker
- Improvements to the learner induction process is currently in development that includes QA documentation locations

## FUTURE GOALS

- The Modular Management System (MMS) will be the only central location for all QA policies and procedures but also house global templates, programme information, request programme/module validation, QA news and developments and more. Future enhancements of MMS will see increased functionality
- Further expansion of the FETQS Team to allow for legacy QA arrangements to be retired more rapidly
- The FETQS Team will make more policy documents publicly available on the LWETB website (along with the learner portal)

## CHALLENGES

The ease of access to documentation and depth of detail varies across provisions. Embracing a central common approach with a new MMS system will be a challenge as legacy QA arrangements have been in place for many years.



## STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The staff recruitment and selection ethos is fair, transparent and offers equal opportunities to all, hiring the best talent available to fill vacant roles.

Once job description, role and responsibilities are defined, vacant positions can be advertised internally (to all ETB staff in Ireland and Institutes of Technologies) or externally through a variety of mediums (LWETB affiliated websites, LinkedIn, Print Media, etc.). A shortlisting of candidates based on pre-defined criteria, followed by interview(s) and final selection of a suitable candidate by a selected panel of trained interviewers and subject matter experts.

Focusing on Educator staff, they must hold either a pedagogical qualification and/or have sufficient expertise to carry out the role, thereby enhancing the teaching and learning environment. Pedagogical standards are maintained and enhanced through PL&D initiatives throughout the career of the Educator.

National agreements and pay grades define the remuneration bands and terms and conditions of employment offered. Once a position has been sanctioned by SOLAS, the staff recruitment process begins, following a linear path. A business case is made to both SOLAS and DFHERIS for every role and only certain roles are sanctioned.

The HR department principally use CoreHR and HireLab. CoreHR is an online portal allowing staff view pay, pension, annual leave and travel entitlements. HireLab offers online recruitment services. Both of these systems are relatively new, replacing older systems, welcoming increased efficiency and ease of access to information by all staff.

Daily management of staff is carried out by relevant line management – this is always the first port of call. If a staff member wishes to raise a concern with HR, a nationally agreed grievance policy is in place. For those who are members of a trade union, they may discuss issues with their trade union representative.

## CONTRACTED AND SECOND PROVIDER RECRUITMENT

Contracted Training is a very flexible option for provision of FET Programmes. LWETB currently works under the Contracted Training Framework under SOLAS. This framework nominates preferred training providers across 12 different domains of expertise. These external providers have proven through a lengthy tendering process that they have the technical ability, experience and appropriate supports in place to deliver quality training on behalf of LWETB. External provision has allowed LWETB provide training in areas that it lacks the expertise in, training in regional locations where it doesn't have suitable facilities or where suitably qualified in-house staff are not available.

A new Contracted Training Framework will be launched in early 2022. This provides the opportunity of existing and new training providers to provide training services to LWETB from 2022-2026 once the outcome of the national tendering process has been completed.





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Contract training companies are contractually obliged to:

- Provide courses requested by LWETB and propose new course provision based on quantifiable local need
- Implement and follow TQAS QA arrangements
- Provide clear communication, monitoring and reporting arrangements

The recruitment of educators is the responsibility of the training provider and the contractors' responsibility to ensure appropriate and sufficient staff at all times.

Managed by Athlone Training Centre, LWETB has a positive relationship with second providers, allowing it to provide flexible course offerings to learners, community and industry.

Local Training Initiatives (LTIs) also provide external training. Quality is maintained by comprehensive Operating Procedures Guidelines<sup>16</sup> and they manage their own recruitment with support from LWETB. LTIs have a close and collaborative relationship with LWETB, managed by Athlone Training Centre and follow TQAS QA arrangements. Similarly, Department of Justice Workshops (DoJW) also fall within this second provider category, and function in the same fashion as LTIs. DoJW courses cater for individuals who have involvement with the justice system who wish to reintegrate themselves back into society and employment by upskilling or reskilling.

## LWETB External Provision

### Effective Feedback

- Robust governance structure - multi-layer managerial support
- Comprehensive operating guidelines, policies and procedures
- Professional learning environment provided - high standard of room and resource provision
- Qualified educators in pedagogy, qualifications and experience
- Assessment procedures are continuously reviewed to uphold the integrity of the assessment process

### Future Focus

- Many of the Assessment Instrument Specifications (AISs) need updating
- Exceptionally high pedagogical and experience requirements for educators make entrance for new educators extremely difficult and at times unattainable
- The transitional process in the migration from TQAS to the FETQS to align to LWETB FET



<sup>16</sup> <http://www.athlonetrainingcentre.ie/Community/Transition%20Quality%20Assurance%20System%20TQAS%20Forms/8c%20LTI/Documents/TQAS-Operating-Guidelines-for-Local-Training-Initiatives-V1..pdf>



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (PL&D)

The FET Professional Learning and Development: Statement of Strategy 2020-2024<sup>17</sup> published by SOLAS stresses the continual need for Professional Learning and Development (PL&D). Its mission is to create a culture of excellence in PL&D to ensure FET Practitioners are equipped to deliver a world class FET service. To advance this mission in LWETB, the PL&D Co-ordinator annually develops a demand-led action plan, supported by the FET Director and quarterly business planning support reviews. The contents of the action plan are formulated following a needs analysis by senior management and centre Co-ordinators in conjunction with staff across all provisions.

For each of the 5 Strategy Goals of LWETB, there are PL&D action plans and associated timeline:

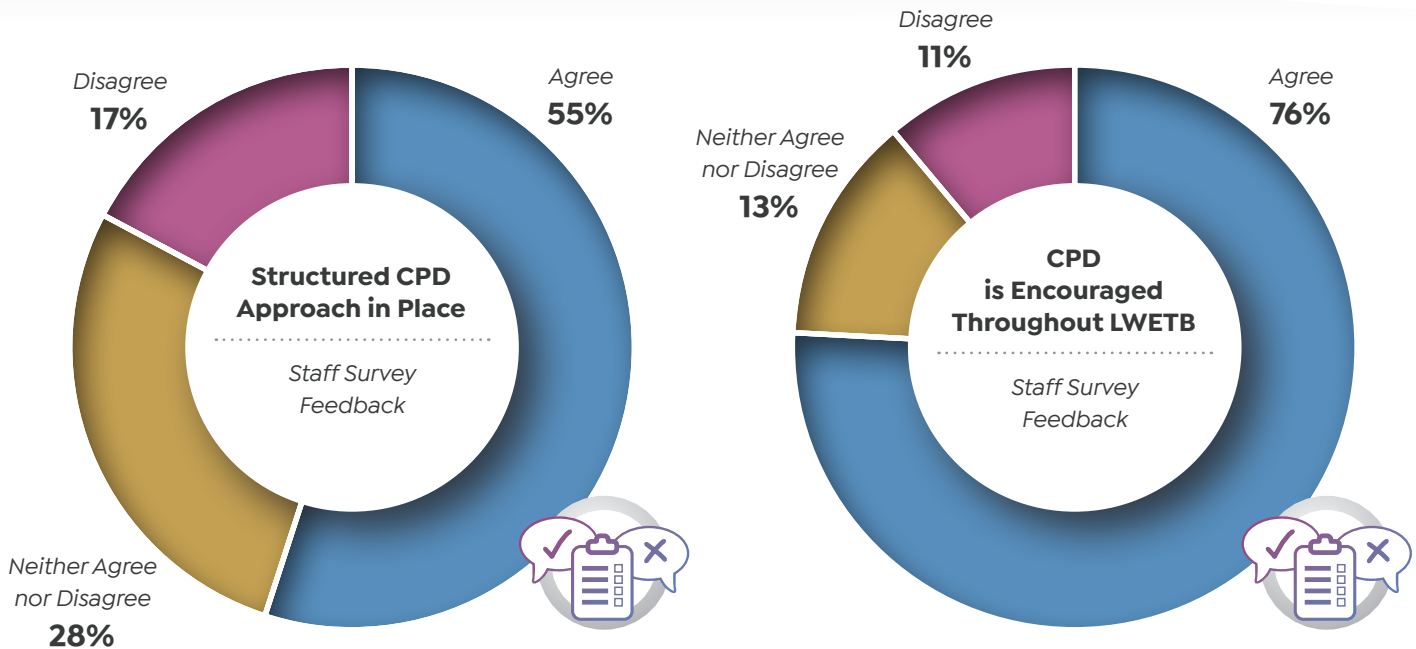
Strategic Goals	PL&D Action Plan 2021 ( <i>abridged</i> )
1. Deliver professional, high quality, learner-centred education and training services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide workshops on Pedagogies that support blended learning</li><li>• Provide workshops on Educational Technologies</li></ul>
2. Enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner with Ahead and engage with staff to complete UDL training</li><li>• Develop skillsets in content creation</li><li>• Provide workshops in Office 365 accessibility features</li></ul>
3. Foster effective communication, collaboration and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to engage at a national level with relevant agencies, such as ILTA and CESI</li><li>• Network with Peers using Twitter as a platform</li><li>• PL&amp;D Calendar and Mailshots used</li><li>• Formalise the TEL link person in centres mentoring role and organised PL&amp;D for them initially in the area of content development</li></ul>
4. Progress the development of effective organisational structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold a workshop for managers outlining how to process applications for PL&amp;D</li><li>• Develop guidelines in conjunction with the FETQS Unit and staff working group on presenting ePortfolios for assessment</li></ul>
5. Support a culture of continuous development with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Combine the staff quarterly newsletter that includes both TEL and PL&amp;D with the QA Newsletter</li><li>• Create an accessible PL&amp;D calendar of courses and events for staff</li><li>• Formally evaluate PL&amp;D events</li></ul>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1e2e117467/solas-professional-dev-strategy.pdf>



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The PL&D Co-ordinator manages and provides information on various initiatives via the PL&D Calendar. Throughout 2020 and 2021, a sample of workshops carried out included;

- Online Pedagogy
- Padlet
- OneNote
- GDPR
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft Teams
- EdPuzzle
- Dyslexia Assessment of Need Course
- Nearpod
- Creating a Virtual Classroom
- Mindfulness
- Inclusion

Participation rates and enthusiasm in PL&D initiatives has been very positive, boosted during 2020 lockdown restrictions. Initiatives involving remote learning, saw in excess of 60% of all Educator staff voluntarily attending.

Training is also provided by FESS (Further Education Support Services). FESS provides customised training to LWETB and also a CPD calendar is available to all on a wide range of TEL and other CPD courses.

A formal process exists for staff who seek a PL&D course that is not provided by LWETB. A request is made to the PL&D Co-ordinator who will sanction the budget on approval from the Approvals Committee, comprised of Senior Management and the provided training will have a direct positive impact on the staff's current role.





Staff who wish to undertake more scholarly activities such as undergraduate or postgraduate studies, may apply to other funding sources e.g. Teacher Refund Scheme, where funding may be provided towards full or partial cost of course and exam fee upon successful completion. If this is not available to a member of staff the application will be processed by the PL&D Approvals Committee taking into account relevant department circulars.

A line manager, in cooperation with their teaching staff may request specific skills training courses provided by external parties. Such training is arranged and paid for by the PL&D Co-ordinator, upon senior management approval. These courses must be deemed to be essential to the operation of a particular programme. This is approved by senior management who have responsibility for that programme.

Staff may request 3 day's study leave per year over 4 years to support them when undertaking more substantial courses such as undergraduate or postgraduate studies.

## TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING (TEL)

The PL&D initiatives are closely linked to the TEL Policy. Over the past 2 years (and into the future), a key focus will be on the upskilling of staff in providing a professional remote learning environment. In 2022, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will continue to be a key initiative. LWETB will work with its Educator staff to expand on the variety of teaching methods used in order to lower barriers to learning and give all learners equal opportunities to succeed – we are building the flexibility that addresses learner strengths and weaknesses. UDL promotes our organisational mission of inclusiveness and aligns to LWETB strategic goals.

## INPUT AND COMMUNICATION

Communication of organisation developments take many forms:

- Departmental Meetings
- Webinars
- Presentations
- LWETB Staff Portal
- SharePoint sites
- MS Teams Folders
- Newsletters
- Staff noticeboards
- Emails Distribution

Staff are encouraged to volunteer for membership of various advisory/steering groups and professional networks appropriate to their area of expertise both at the local ETB level and nationally. LWETB advisory and steering groups allow a staff member to be a representative for their expertise or department, allowing their opinions and ideas be heard to guide LWETB forward. SOLAS/ETBI advisory group member allows inter-ETB communication on national initiatives. Various ETB professional networks allow for the sharing of ideas, resources and opinions with colleagues in other ETB's.



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## FETQS TRAINING

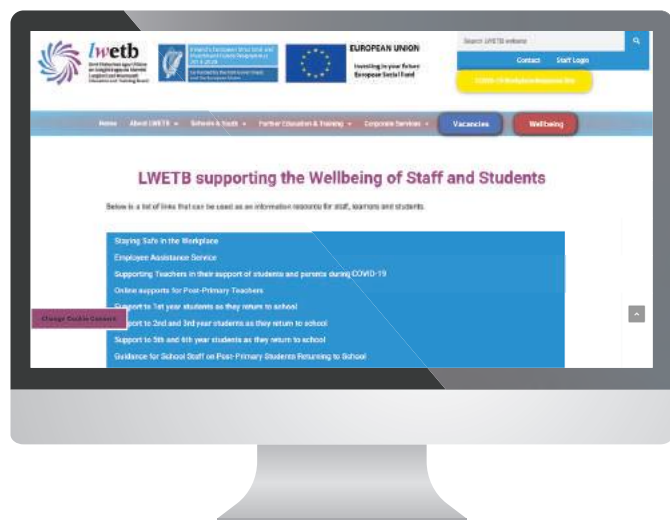
A FETQS calendar details QA training during the year. The FETQS Team typically create and deliver their own QA training resources, keep training records and ensure that staff involved in QA procedures are sufficiently trained to correctly carry out their role. The FETQS Team advises when refresher training is required. As a method of continual improvement, the FETQS Team reviews Results Approval Process (RAP) reports and highlight areas where additional training may be necessary, whether that training be person-centred, provision-centred or more general in nature. The FETQS Team will conduct a course monitoring visit to ensure the Educator is following correct procedures and paperwork, taking corrective action if necessary.

Because the FETQS Team are continually creating and updating organisational wide policies, procedures and forms, QA training is a key component as LWETB goes through its 'transitional phase' as it retires older QA agreements. This transitional phase is expected to be completed by 2023.

## STAFF WELLBEING AND SUPPORT

There are a number of staff wellbeing initiatives in place. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS), provides professional advice to staff (including video support) on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, mediation etc. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

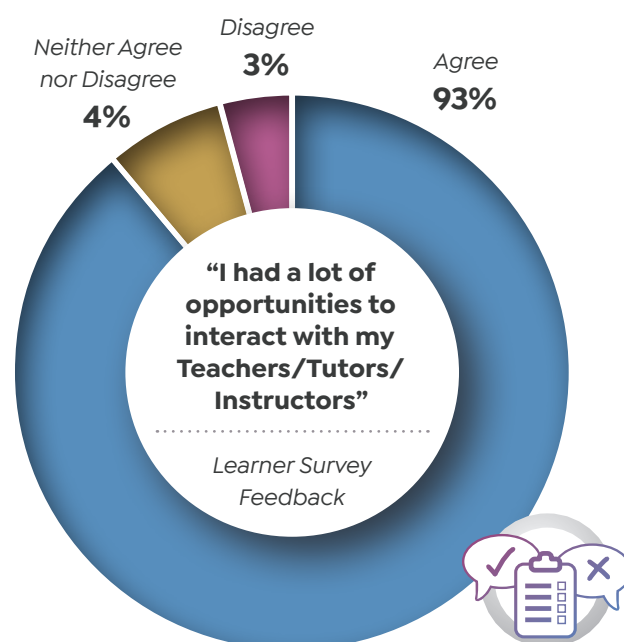
The LWETB webpage, [www.lwetb.ie/wellbeing](http://www.lwetb.ie/wellbeing) provides many workshops, video series and links to help staff with mental health, general wellbeing, health lifestyle tips and other useful information.





## EFFECTIVE

- The PL&D Co-ordinator attends centre staff meetings and is informed of priority areas for training appropriate to staff roles
- The PL&D Co-ordinator meets with staff on a one to one basis to ascertain individual requirements where identified or required
- Programme Co-ordinators submit an annual request on PL&D requirements and collate this data with centre staff from feedback sessions, surveys and authentication reports
- PL&D training calendars are displayed in staff rooms to remind staff of training opportunities available
- A link to the PL&D calendar is available on the signature of all emails sent from this department for all staff to access
- Online calendar highlighting diverse PL&D events, with active engagement by staff over a range of areas
- A PL&D Co-ordinator who is driving ambitious PL&D initiatives, supported by senior management
- A professional, fair and transparent recruitment process is in operation, sourcing the best available talent to fill vacant positions
- Redesigned recruitment process has allowed for online interviews and Adobe Sign for digitally signing contracts is in place. Post COVID-19 a hybrid of online and face-to-face interviews will be adopted
- Good record keeping of staff participation on various programmes and workshops, with auditing of skills needs analysis completed and gaps identified
- Multi-level managerial support for the FET Professional Learning and Strategy 2020-2024<sup>18</sup> with improving infrastructure, capability and enhancing systems
- The development of a Professional Development Applications Framework is now in place offering a formalised procedure for staff to apply for professional development, funding and support
- The Director of Further Education and Training has returned for a second tenure as a member of the SOLAS National Steering Group for CPD of FET staff, contributing to the National Professional Development Plan for FET



<sup>18</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1e2e117467/solas-professional-dev-strategy.pdf>





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## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Continue the development and expansion of our UDL commitment with the first staff receiving training in late 2021
- Integrating literacy into programmes in association with NALA. The aim is to develop a Community of Practice (CoP) followed by the development of plans and resources to support an integrated approach to literacy development across all provisions
- Continue promotion of workshops in pedagogies in remote teaching and learning
- LWETB is part of an advisory group for the proposed establishment of a new National FET Guidance and Recruitment Service. This is currently under review by ETBI
- Provision of workshops on providing effective feedback to staff

## FUTURE GOALS

- For more integration of TEL/UDL into each centre, a TEL Link Person will be identified. They will be trained over the academic year 2021-2022 and who can provide day-to-day advice and TEL mentoring
- Development of a formal procedure for staff feedback on the impact of PL&D initiatives. At present this is informal
- Learners being taught by second providers may not always know the extent to which they can avail of support services within LWETB, such as the availability of a FET guidance service or literacy services. A Learner Induction process that is FET wide and consistent needs to be improved to include this

## CHALLENGES

- Some Educator staff have weak digital skills and need additional focus. These same educators are hesitantly engaging in TEL/UDL and PL&D initiatives
- Integrating digital skills into QQI Level's 1 to 3 courses has been challenging because of the large mind-set change needed by some staff, since their experience pre-COVID times was on personal, hands-on learning environments. Extra provision and attention will be focused on these staff
- Certain vacancies are very difficult to source suitable candidates for e.g. specialist educators, or it could be that private industry can offer more attractive pay and benefits. This is foreseen as an ongoing challenge
- Some subject specific Education staff can be difficult to source. Many specialist Educators do not meet the 'unique' requirements of LWETB e.g. registered with the teaching council. Pay rates offered are often lower than current market trends for these specialist educators
- Short term Educator cover is difficult to source e.g. cover for annual leave, illness etc. as pay rates are low and work is ad-hoc

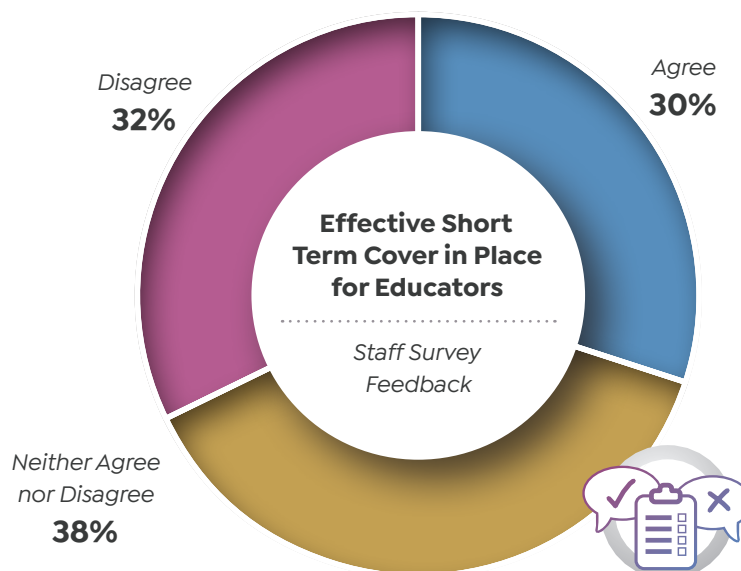


## NOTEWORTHY

- The PL&D Co-ordinator initiated 'Edtech Bytesize Support' PL&D sessions which have proven to be the very popular. Staff engagement and feedback is very positive. The manageability of a small number of learning outcomes per session is very attractive, and something to continue in the future with PL&D course design
- There has been a significant reduction in the length of time required to fill vacant positions within LWETB. This was a previous area of improvement that is now been addressed



OSD (Organisation Support and Development) Wellbeing Team launched with Declan Coyle's "The Green Platform" that encourages personal empowerment and promotes positivity in everyday thinking. The OSD Wellbeing Team plan events and activities throughout 2021 to promote social, mental and physical wellbeing among staff.





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## PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND SUBMISSION FOR VALIDATION

We strive to ensure that programmes build skills, foster inclusion and facilitate pathways to learning. Programme approval is granted by Adult Education Officers (AEOs) and Area Training Manager typically upon request from staff or provision Co-ordinators.

## NEW PROGRAMMES AND MODULES ADDED TO THE LWETB SERVICE IN THE LAST 3 YEARS

### QQI, Other Awarding Body Certification and Non-Accredited Programmes

Provision Department	New Programmes Added/Updated <sup>19</sup>
Adult Literacy Service – Mullingar	Craft – Level 1
	Blended Learning Art project – Non Accredited
Adult Literacy Service – Athlone BTEI Service – Mullingar	Intercultural Awareness – Level 3 and Non Accredited
BTEI Service – Mullingar	Art and Design – Level 3
	Drawing – Level 3
Adult Literacy Service – Athlone	RPL – level 3 and 4
	Horticulture – Level 4 and 4
	Career Planning – Level 2 and 3
	Support to Apprentices – Non Accredited
	Using Smartphone Apps – Non Accredited
	Preparation in the Workplace for Waiting Staff – Level 2
	Wellbeing and Self Care – Level 2
	Teach Drawing and 3D Modelling – Level 2
	Natural World, Life Science – level 2
	Music Appreciation – Level 3
BTEI – Athlone	Graphic Design – Level 4
	Digital Presentations – Level 5
	Painting and Drawing – Level 4
	Care of the Older Person – Level 5
	Reception and Frontline Staff – Level 5
	Information and Communication Skills – Level 5

Continued

<sup>19</sup> This excludes emergency modifications as a result of the pandemic.





Provision Department	New Programmes Added/Updated
BTEI – Athlone and Longford	Hairdressing – VTCT Level 1 ICDL
BTEI – Longford	Barista Skills – Level 2 Word Processing – Level 5 Information and Administration – Level 5 Spreadsheet Methods – Level 5 Database Methods – Level 5 Manual and Computerised Bookkeeping Accounts – Level 5 Manual and Computerised Payroll – Level 5 Special Needs Assisting – Level 6 Intellectual Disability Studies – Level 5 Human Growth and Development – Level 5 Pre-Start Your Own Business – Level 3 Cambridge PET B1 Nutrition and Health Options – Level 3 Barbering – VTCT Level 2 Healthcare Support – Level 5 Audio Transcription – Level 5 Tourism Visitor Care – Level 4 Medical Terminology – level 5
Community Education Service	Radio Editing Skills – Non Accredited SafePass Training Fork Life Driving Animation – Non Accredited Arts/Crafts for the Visually Impaired – Non Accredited Boat Repairs Skills – Non Accredited Bog Oak Carving – Non Accredited Bicycle Repair Skills – Non Accredited Pottery – Non Accredited Beauty Therapy – Non Accredited Nail Art Skills – Non Accredited Willow Weaving – Non Accredited Creative Dance – Non Accredited
Youthreach (YR) Kilbeggan	Education and Training – level 5
YR Ballymahon, Delvin and Kilbeggan	General Studies – Level 5



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## Training

Provision Department	New Programmes Added/Updated <sup>20</sup>
City & Guilds	Barista Skills – Foundation and Intermediate Level
	Certificate in Mechanical Engineering – Level 2
	Diploma in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering
EN Certified	Welding Traineeship
ILM	Effective management of Remote Teams
	Online Learning with LWETB
ITEC	Beauty Therapy and Spa Treatment Traineeship
VTCT	Diploma in Hairdressing Studies AH30506
QQI	Online Learning with LWETB
	Winter Horticulture – Level 4
Sage	Bookkeeping for Small Business – Skills to Compete
VTCT	Diploma in Barbering – level 3

LWETB is cognisant that any programme developed services the needs of the learners and the economy, referring to such reports as:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (ESES)
- Longford and Westmeath Development Plans 2015-2021
- Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017
- Relevant publications by the SOLAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU)
- Evaluative reporting and strategic planning reports commissioned by SOLAS
- Relevant EU published reports, such as ‘Future Employment and Skills in the Irish Midlands’

Systematic engagement with employers, social groups, cultural groups and educational institutes provide prospective destinations for completed learners.

<sup>20</sup> This excludes emergency modifications as a result of the pandemic.



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## COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

LWETB work collaboratively with other bodies:

- **External Provision:** Second providers allow LWETB develop new programmes where they have expert knowledge or have a relationship with other accreditation bodies
- **Enterprise Engagement:** The Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator offers new, existing and modified programmes to meet an employer(s) or industry need
- **FIT (Fastrack into IT):** LWETB and FIT in conjunction with external stakeholders develop Technology Apprenticeships with particular focus on professional qualifications
- **Local Amenities:** LWETB works with local amenities to expand programme offerings e.g. expansion of the horticulture programme in conjunction with Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar
- **Other ETB's:** Development of joint training initiatives with local ETB's initiatives to service industry need

### *In the Spotlight*

#### **ETB Collaboration**

*LWETB collaborated with Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) and Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) up-skilling staff in Bord na Móna. Through joint skills needs analysis and training, a wide range of courses such as Project Management, Heavy Goods Vehicle Driving, Adult Learning and ICT Skills were provided.*

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Naturally Driven



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## FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS (FLPs)

Athlone Training Centre has successfully created Digital Training Hubs providing flexible learning pathways for LWETB's diverse learners who can undertake individual QQI and non-QQI modules to fill deficits in their knowledge. This flexibility has allowed those employed and unemployed gain qualifications at times suiting to their own personal circumstances. Many learners who completed substantial programmes of study with LWETB have voluntarily returned to complete additional modules to continue their lifelong learning journey. Learners undertake remote learning, augmented by a subject matter expert (in person or online). Learners may complete many modules to gain larger certification if they so choose.

## INDUSTRY/PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Depending on the industry or profession, certification may be suitable and the right option for learners to achieve individual goals. Certification may also be regulatory, such as First Aid. LWETB will ensure that certification is highly regarded with employers, suitable for the learner and not prohibitively expensive where possible.

Typically, industry/professional certification is updated annually, offering the learner the most up-to-date certification available. There are many awarding bodies that can cater to the needs of the learner and that of the industry. Our goal is to ensure that delivery aligns with the National Framework of Qualifications to ensure that certificates have currency and value. Certification is to aid currency to the learner for them towards pathways of employment, education or future effort within community.

Industry/Professional certification awarding bodies include:

Course Type	Industry/Professional Accreditation
Beauty Therapy	VTCT (Vocational Training Charitable Trust)
Leadership and Management	ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management)
Accounting	CPA Ireland (Certified Public Accountant)
CAD (Computer Aided Design)	SOLIDWORKS
First Aid	PHECC (Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council)
Microsoft Office	Microsoft MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist)

Athlone Training Centre is a Pearson VUE Testing Centre, allowing many industry and professional assessments to be undertaken at the centre.



LWETB is committed to the wider process of programme reform across the FET sector and responding to the findings<sup>21</sup> and recommendations arising from programme reviews, evaluations and subsequent SOLAS responses and guidelines including:

Provision	Key Area	Task
PLC	Developing courses to cater for both skills formation (and hence employment access) and for progression to HE <sup>22</sup>	Continual Process
Youthreach/CTC	Developing personal and social skills alongside certification <sup>23</sup>	Continual Process
VTOS	Focus on employer linkages, develop language skills modules, Review programme design, content and delivery	Review of VTOS Provision
SST	This provision is consistent with the National Skills Strategy and Pathways to Work with strong benefits to learners who participated in SST <sup>24</sup>	Continuation expansion of SST provision
BTEI	Increasing in Major QQI Awards, rather than minors	Completed
Traineeships	Structured work based learning <sup>25</sup>	Future Focus Initiative

## VALIDATION

Validation is the regulatory process that determines if an ETB meets a specific criteria to offer and deliver a programme on behalf of QQI. A robust and transparent LWETB governance structure is essential to this process and a programme proposal is reviewed to ensure that it meets QQI policies and procedures. Current policies and criteria are presented through the QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes.<sup>26</sup>

LWETB regulate and oversee validation of programmes through our Programme Governance Group (PGG). The PGG reviews all documentation, ensuring modules and certification are within the awarding authority guidelines and programme resources are in place (physical, human and material). Once the PGG is satisfied and clarifications received, the programme is brought before the QOG (Quality Oversight Group) for approval. The QOG may request additional information if they wish and either approve or deny delivery.

<sup>21</sup> SOLAS Strategic Performance Agreement 2018 – 2020

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.esri.ie/article/view/1254>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS82\\_1.pdf](https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS82_1.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/9aa70231b7/sst-independent-evaluation-\\_2020\\_indecon.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/9aa70231b7/sst-independent-evaluation-_2020_indecon.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/8948bab28/developing-best-practice-in-work-based-learning-an-evaluation-of-the-career-traineeship-pilot.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Initial\\_Validation\\_policy\\_7\\_10\\_13.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Initial_Validation_policy_7_10_13.pdf)



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## EFFECTIVE

- Collaborative methods of programme development with other bodies have been successful and offers opportunities to enhance industry-led offerings
- Programme development has shifted from being reactive to proactive. Co-ordinators plan for future workplace and learner demand and implement programme changes in anticipation of this, using government issued reports and local industry knowledge
- Programme development follows a multi-faceted approach. The PGG and QOG's strong knowledge of economic data, national policy and research publications direct Co-ordinators on programme development and re-design. Likewise, a Co-ordinator can request new programme(s) based on their local expertise and industry needs of their respective community. This ensures that LWETB produces learners with the required local or national skills required for employment or skills to progress to higher levels of education
- In line with economic data (especially for Longford) and the Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-2020, more attention has been given to courses in entrepreneurship. This will continue to receive focus

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- To address current shortcomings, a Programme Delivery, Development and Validation Policy is currently in development. Previously a more informal empirical approach was adopted. Future programme review cycles will also adopt this policy
- Strengthening communication structures of quarterly meetings with PLC Principals and Director of FET on direction, monitoring and future of PLC provision
- Continued support and development of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS)<sup>27</sup> for Youth Work Sector
- Continuing the expansion of professional and vendor specific certification in response to regional demand
- LWETB is seeking ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) accreditation at present, potentially removing its reliance on second providers for delivery
- LWETB is currently archiving programmes that are validated with QQI but no longer running

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b10560-national-quality-standards-framework-nqs/>





## CHALLENGES

- Previous strategic objectives stated a need for new apprenticeship programme development. This has not materialised because while proposals were considered, the financial cost of development and resourcing is too large for untested learner outcomes. Expansion of existing apprenticeships has been achieved
- Programme development of pre-2016 apprenticeship programme is managed at a national level and often fails to keep pace with industry changes
- A need for greater targeted incentives for employers at national level for some apprenticeships where skills are in short supply e.g. plasterers / block layers, where membership of a professional body is not necessary for employment. More attention to these would provide an adequate supply of a required skill to the construction sector
- New programme or programme modifications can be stifled by lack of delivery by Subject Matter Experts. LWETB must work within guided Educator rates, but for some specialist programmes, the Educator rates fall below the current market rate, causing difficulty in sourcing the best talent
- Where LWETB does not have in-house expertise, training and up-skilling for current staff to meet the needs of new programme development is needed and this can be challenging to address

### *In the Spotlight*

#### Industry Collaboration

*Centre Parcs opened in 2019 in Longford, providing accommodation, leisure facilities and a range of activities in a woodland environment. This provided a much needed boost with 700+ jobs and a €300m investment into the Longford economy. LWETB engaged in interview and CV skills course to complement their needs and has future training initiatives in 2022 for staff upskilling.*





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## ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

### Enrolment

Learners are referred onto services through a variety of measures:

- FET Recruitment Service
- Word of Mouth
- FET Adult Guidance Service
- Referrals from DSP
- FETCH Courses
- Attending a past LWETB Course
- From one Service or Provision to another
- Social Media Campaigns
- Garda Youth Division Projects
- Youth Services
- Parents/Guardians Information Sessions at DSP Offices
- School Guidance Services
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social Workers
- Probation Officers
- Information Sessions in Schools
- Self-Referrals
- Centre Open Days

LWETB has strong cooperative links between provisions, so where it's felt a learner would be more suited to another provision this is recommended – but the final decision will be the learners assuming eligibility criteria are met.

The knowledge, skill and competence needed for course entry is provided through a variety of means:

- FET Recruitment Service
- FET Adult Guidance Service
- Information sessions with potential learners
- Practical tests with potential learners
- Interviews with learners
- Various LWETB websites
- Various LWETB social media channels
- FETCH courses ([www.fetchcourses.ie](http://www.fetchcourses.ie))
- Information leaflets, brochures, prospectuses, etc.
- Radio and print media

We strive to provide information to learners in an accurate, easy to comprehend and accessible format.

### Skills to Advance (STA)

A dedicated Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator is responsible for engaging in local industry to provide courses under Skills To Advance (STA) initiatives. This collaboration with local employers provides information on accessing FET provision (typically remote, blended and evening training). Many employers including 3M and Hodson Bay Hotel<sup>28</sup> have benefited from this training. Key activities includes involvement with Regional Skills Forum, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices among others. This has also substantially increased brand awareness among industry of LWETB in the counties of Longford and Westmeath.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.hodsonbayhotel.com/>



## Skills to Work

LWETB delivers training courses for full-time and part-time employees within its region. The Skills to Work programme is particularly targeted at low skilled workers who, without the opportunity to participate in this training, may not have the confidence to embrace change in the workplace. This national programme is aimed at providing training opportunities to help employees within Longford and Westmeath deal with the basic skills demands of the workplace.

## Services to Business (STB)

LWETB supports local enterprise through a variety of measures. We provide supports by running bespoke programmes to meet industry demands, providing learners suitable for work placements etc. Guest lecture opportunities are included in this service and occasionally guests are invited to speak to PLC and other programme learners, career traineeships etc. and apprenticeships are also regularly provided to industry.

## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is accommodated via:

- Recognised Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)
  - For QQI where appropriate, Accredited Prior Learning (APL) is granted
  - For industry qualifications – where a learner has previously passed assessment or where the certification body has their own RPCL policy
- Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) – where a learner proves that through working, they meet the prerequisites for a course
- Non-certified learning e.g. life or work experiences – where a learner proves through life or work experiences that they meet the prerequisites for a course

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) form part of the RPL process.

LWETB participated in the RPL TOBAR project. 'TOBAR' is the Irish for well i.e. the well of knowledge that people have acquired throughout their lives. This pilot project between 10 ETBs and the Irish Defence Forces was to assist learners formally recognise prior learning including experiential learning. It was the duty of each ETB to map individual skills sets, experience and look at the transferable skills of individuals to integrate this into Irish life and industry outside of the defence force life. LWETB also provided career, vocational and work guidance to participants.



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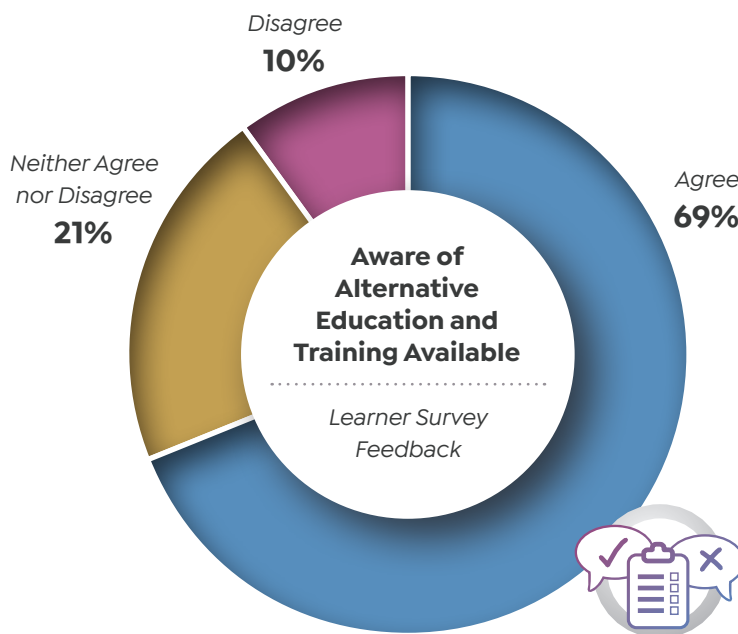
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## Transfer and Progression

Learners can progress in multiple ways through their learning journey:

- Within and between ETBs: We openly welcome learners who have gained previous certification through LWETB, another ETB or awarding body and wish to continue learning on more advanced courses. All courses list eligibility criteria and progression destinations on successful completion
- Within the programme: There is no formal process for a learner who wishes to transfer from one programme to another. The recruitment department and adult guidance department play a central role in this on a case by case basis
- Progression to Higher Education (HE): Learners who meet the eligibility criteria for HE study may wish to undertake NFQ Level 6+ programmes either through direct application with the HE provider or through the CAO system. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with TUS (formally Athlone IT) are in place
- Progression to Employment: Many programmes afford learners the appropriate skills to directly enter the labour market for example VTOS, Traineeship, SST, PLC, LTIs and STPs
- Learners can avail of impartial information, advice and guidance provided by the FET Adult Guidance Service before, during and after a course to assist the learner to make the right career decision for them



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making headlines





## EFFECTIVE

- An updated AP&L and Admissions Appeal Policy has formalised many previously informal arrangements, including a new learner induction process across FET within LWETB
- Strong cohesion between provisions allows for best provision placement of a learner given their particular circumstance or ability
- The wide range of referral options caters for all learner demographics. LWETB has a very positive working relationship with other agencies to cater for learner needs
- The provision of a dedicated Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator has raised the profile of LWETB within local industry with increased interest in Skills To Advance (STA) initiatives
- Monthly recruitment meetings chaired by the FET Recruitment Officer are held and attended by Co-ordinators of all FET services within LWETB
- FET Adult Guidance Service provides quality information, guidance and counselling to FET learners. This service also distributes a weekly newsletter with subscribers including placing a focus on wellbeing and taking care of one's own mental health

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Some of the shortcomings of fetchcourses.ie include the lack of a check for course eligibility upon expression of interest. This is currently being addressed.

## FUTURE GOALS

- Increasing the number of Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) with both industry and HE partners to facilitate learners entering directly into employment or HE
- Ensuring sufficient practical components that showcase modern skills on courses where progression typically leads to employment. This makes employment desirable to employers in the region, along with increased respect for the qualifications attained
- There are no subject exemptions for learners with Level 6 or professional qualifications in any year 1 programme at HE level. These options need to be further explored
- A consolidation of the promotion and recruitment of FET programmes is needed
- The presence of a selection of FET courses on the CAO (Central Applications Office) applications system is the beginning of a more cohesive message that FET courses are an equally valid option post-Leaving Certificate



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## CHALLENGES

- Different referral pathways used by different provisions are complex and need simplification
- All course information is not central. It is cumbersome for a learner to browse all LWETB's course offerings to discover courses of interest
- Course information can be inaccurate especially on the FETCH Courses website, a site that is also difficult to navigate and search. This is a particularly issue on courses where course content changes regularly
- Course information is not displayed in a consistent format and style across LWETB – this makes it difficult for learners to compare course options
- County Longford is the lowest HE qualified county in Ireland. Encouraging HE progression is difficult due to socio-economic reasons and lack of HE provision in the county
- HELS (Higher Education Links Scheme) programmes are in place where FET learners can directly assess HE provision upon successful course completion, for example VTOS Arts learners can directly access Arts programmes in TUS. The issue is that these schemes are often based on personal connections and local agreements. National agreements needs development to aid a smoother transition for learners from FET to HE

### *In the Spotlight*

#### **Athlone Community Training Centre Hairdressing**

*Having successfully completed her hairdressing course at the Athlone Community Training Centre, Jenny has gone from strength to strength.*

*Jenny is a finalist in the prestigious Wella Professionals TrendVision Awards 2021 UK and Ireland.*





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## INTEGRITY AND APPROVAL OF LEARNER RESULTS

Assessments are the cornerstone of all accredited courses offered by LWETB. We maintain the highest ethical, professional, moral and legal standards. We aim to provide assessments that are fair, unbiased, clear and in line with national standards. Integrity of learner results rests with every staff member involved in the process.

The integrity of learner results is uncompromised.

The Training Standards Office (TSO) oversees the approval of learner results both for first and second provider assessments (who all follow the same process). All assessments are securely stored (some of these in a newly developed Assessment Management System (AMS) and distributed as appropriately by the TSO office.

Integrity is maintained by:

- **Learner** – They are provided and briefed with the assessment handbook. Learners are responsible for demonstrating their own learning achievement and signing authorship declaration upon assessment submission
- **Assessor/Educator** – Receives support on standards, briefs, marking schemes, feedback and procedures
- **Assessments** – Common assessment packs and locally devised assessments are developed by Subject Matter Experts and contain structured marking sheets
- **Internal Verification (IV) of Process** – Regular checks by briefed individuals ensuring assessment procedures are followed during assessment events
- **Internal Verification (IV) of Results** – A sample of corrected assessments is reviewed to ensure process was followed and corrected in line with rubric provided
- **Peer Review** – Ensures consistency of assessment judgements by assessors across learners' performances. Peer review is the professional development process, the aim of which is to achieve consistent interpretation and application of assessment points in regard to learner performance. This is necessary to ensure fairness and consistency in the assessment process
- **External Verification (EV) of Results** – An external authenticator (EA) is appointed to review assessment material and document findings
- **Results Approval Panel (RAP)** – The panel reviews all authentication reports, EA recommendations and approves learner grades
- **Learner Appeals Policy** – A learner may appeal their grade following a formal review process
- **Training Standards Office (TSO)** – The office are custodians of assessments and oversee the implementation of QA requirements for various awarding bodies specific to training. They provide oversight, take corrective action and ensure all processes are in line with QA policies
- **FETQS Team** – This team reviews and updates policies at organisational level, ensuring they are fit-for-purpose and provide commonality between FET provisions



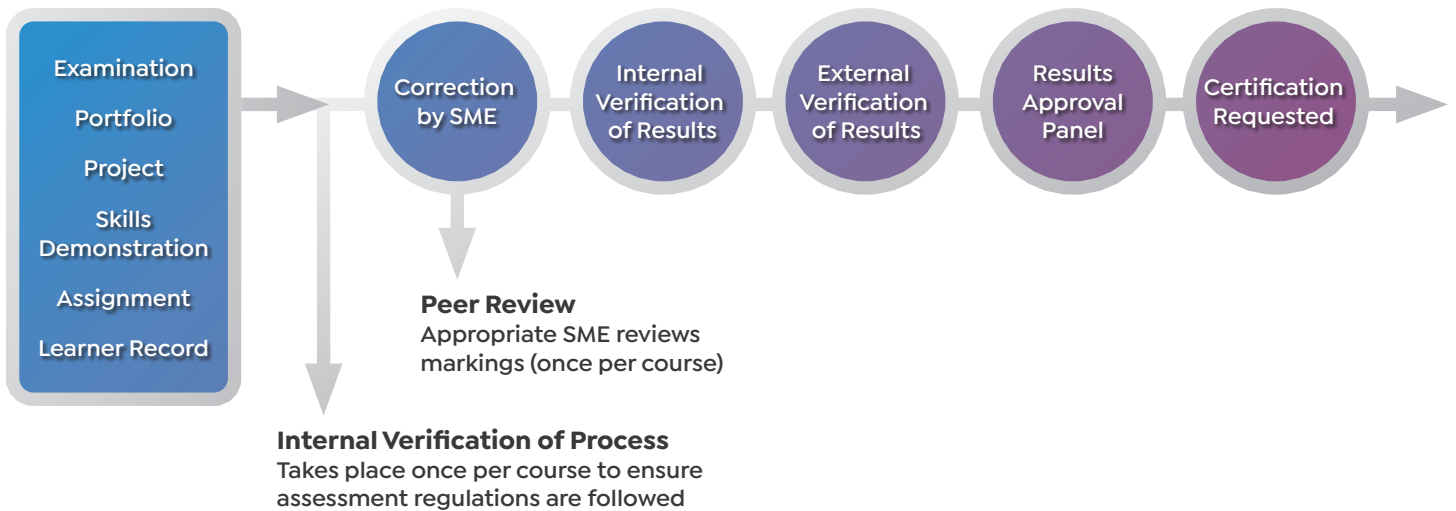


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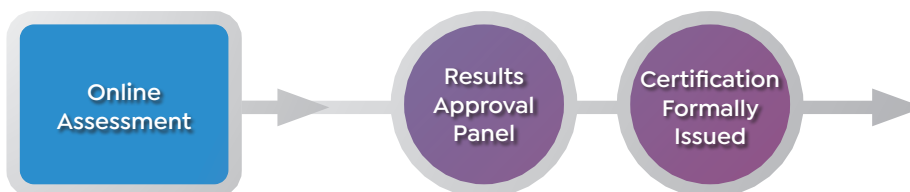
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### Offline Assessment Process:



### Online Assessments Process:



For online assessments, correcting, peer reviewing and external verification of results may not be necessary as learner grades are vendor generated. These grades still go through the Results Approval Panel but certification requests are not required as they are made available by the awarding body upon exam completion.

To ensure learner results are fair a Reasonable Accommodation Policy is available for those who are entitled to additional assessments supports once appropriate evidence is provided. Such supports may include a scribe, additional time, rest breaks, etc. In extenuating circumstances e.g. electricity outage, extra time or other action may be considered. Advance approval from the TSO Department is required in all instances. TSO management, backed by policies and procedures ensures consistent decision-making and standards across provisions.





## EA REPORT FINDINGS

The findings of EA reports feed into the continuous improvement cycle for each provision by:

- Identifying if an individual or group who may need additional training
- Highlighting any corrective action (if needed)
- Assisting the FETQS Team for any documentation that needs revision or development
- Allowing for areas of excellence and areas for improvement to be presented to educators and Co-ordinators as a whole

## EFFECTIVE

- The process is robust and fair with the process highlighting any errors to ensure that learners receive correct grades
- Central management by the TSO Department and central storage of assessments via the AMS system has streamlined both locally and nationally developed assessment with increased control
- Monitor of Internal Verification of Process of second providers can occur at any time, unannounced. Certification audits also form part of TQAS

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Updating of existing AIS briefs is currently under review. Attention will also be paid to ensuring assessment questions are asked in plain English. Where external Subject Matter Experts (SME) need to be recruited for AIS updates, their suitability (experience and qualifications) will be rigorously considered before work commencement. The AIS briefs will also go through a formal QA process (e.g. peer review), prior to implementation
- Implementing Turnitin software to detect plagiarism
- LWETB is currently developing an LWETB EA Panel in compiling a list of QQI External Authenticators (EA) for each field of learning. The FETQS Team will rigorously evaluate the experience, qualifications and EA training received to ensure suitability for this position. Monitoring of the EA's work will be conducted by the FETQS Team



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## FUTURE FOCUS

- Continual briefings to ensure that SMEs devise appropriate assessments in strict adherence to the standards required at each level of the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ)
- How assessments promote and support effective learning and teaching needs continual training
- A new Contracted Training Framework began in January 2022. Training sessions on QA will need to be provided to the new second providers immediately upon the winning tenders being announced to ensure comprehension and compliance
- For courses where certification is not an aim, little recognition of the subjective positive outcomes of a course are captured e.g. improved self-confidence. This is particularly an issue in provisions such as community education and adult literacy where many learners do not wish to undertake programmes on the NFQ framework

## CHALLENGES

- Keeping assessments relevant can be challenging where course content changes regularly
- Apprenticeship learners found the language used in assessments difficult to understand and sometimes misleading. LWETB will forward these suggestions to SOLAS, as these assessments are managed at a national level
- External authenticator reports can contain conflicting recommendations between reports and are based on the EA's personal preferences (typically around the presentation of work)



LWETB Work Placement  
DPD Employers and Learners



Co-ordinator Bridget  
Geagan with visiting  
past learner  
Delvin YouthReach





## INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The inputting, processing, generation and storage of information is fundamental to all activities undertaken by LWETB. LWETB holds sensitive data on staff, learners and other stakeholders and take this responsibility seriously. We strive on a daily basis to ensure that all data is only provided to individuals who need it, only stored for as long as is reasonable, required and is secure from unauthorised access.

At present LWETB has numerous data information systems that carry out a range of tasks and provide information, reports and statistical information when required. Below are some of the salient systems:

### Funding and Certification Systems (Externally managed by SOLAS or ETBI)

ACSS (Craft Apprenticeships Database)  
PLSS (Learner and Programme Database)  
RCCRS (Results Capture and Certification Request)  
QBS (Certification Services)  
FARR (Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting)



### Learning and Productivity Systems

Moodle  
SharePoint (Data Storage)  
Office 365 (Cloud Applications)  
Microsoft Teams

### Learning Payments

A&L (Apprentice and Learner Payment System)

Many other secure cloud based information systems support the organisation:

- CoreHR (Staff Pay, Pensions and Leave Entitlements)
- The Hire Lab (Staff Recruitment)
- P2P (Ordering System)
- Peppol (eInvoicing System)
- SAP (Accounts Payable)
- Sun Systems (Invoice Payment)

Funding and Certification Systems are externally managed by SOLAS or ETBI and lack interoperability between systems. Change requests are slow and unfriendly user interfaces are a common theme. A national level initiative is needed to address these issues as this is a large scale project.

Moodle, SharePoint, Office365 (including Microsoft Teams) use secure cloud technologies. These cloud technologies provide the latest security provisions.

All data stored is within EU boundaries (and excluding the UK).

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## Data Legislation Compliance

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), together with the Data Protection Act 2018, are the laws that govern how we manage, use and control data in the organisation. Compliance (and reporting any data breaches) is overseen by a Data Protection Officer who also keeps abreast of developments made by the Data Protection Commissioner. Important updates are incorporated into training programmes, guidance documents and policies or are highlighted to senior management as an area warranting attention. All staff receive GDPR training, along with regular refresher training.

## EFFECTIVE

- The Quality Unit has developed a MMS (Modular Management System) that acts as a central repository for organisational wide policies, procedures and documentation. This one-stop system allows for easy access and updating of organisational wide QA arrangements. Legacy QA agreements are being superseded by the Quality Unit's work
- Many of the systems have been updated or modernised to make processes smoother, improved online access and improved security features
- In the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2019 a number of ICT/IS goals were set out in this area. These have all been implemented:

Key Task / Activity	How Achieved
ICT Strategy and Action Plan to enhance communications and information sharing	Annual Action Plan followed
Invest in ICT infrastructure	Annual budget set aside with many ICT infrastructure put in place, especially in support of TEL
Development of TEL	Co-ordinator appointed, TEL policy and annual action plan implemented
System to provide statistical outcomes on FET Learners	MIS Co-ordinator in place to provide required information.
Use of ICT in Learning	TEL/UDL policy and action plan implemented
Rollout SharePoint and Moodle	SharePoint, Moodle and Office365 in place for all



## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- A Management Information Systems (MIS) role has allowed for enhanced learner statistics. This allows for informed decision making. Monthly named reports provide managers the information for improved self-monitoring and planning purposes. They are also used for benchmarking and KPI indicators. This MIS role is evolving to meet informational needs
- An Assessment Management System (AMS) has been designed and currently being rolled out. This central repository allows for secure and electronic distribution of assessment materials (centrally controlled by the TSO Department). The system also facilitates updating of assessment materials
- Streamlining the enrolment process to make it less cumbersome for the recruitment department and learner
- LWETB are currently part of an advisory ETBI Data Protection and FOI Officers Network for the updating of the Records Retention Schedule and GDPR Policies that ETBI are undertaking. Once completed, these will be rolled out nationally across all ETB's
- There is strong awareness and compliance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act with physical audits carried out on various provisions to test compliance e.g. checking for unattended unlocked PC's, documents left unattended etc.
- Retention dates of learner details, storage of data and assessment material have all been reviewed and updated in line with GDPR policy
- For Systems Reuse policy, a reporting approach using the P2P, Property Register, SUN and PPOD will be conducted.

## FUTURE FOCUS

- Continued participation on ETBI/SOLAS-led advisory groups to voice information systems enhancement requests. Urgent security concerns include RCCRS being designed to work in Internet Explorer with Microsoft discontinuing support for this browser in 2022
- Scrutinising of security features and conducting user access audits of existing information systems within our control to maintain secure learner (and staff) records. Appointing external experts to aid this if necessary
- Bi-annual holistic review of informational reports to determine if any additional insights can be gleaned
- Keeping abreast with changes in Data Protection Commissioner Directives along with continued compliance by all staff

## CHALLENGES

- Unless a national initiative is undertaken, many of the interoperability and legacy issues between systems (ACSS, PLSS, FARR etc.) will continue to exist for many years to come
- All staff need continuous refresher training in GDPR to ensure they remain mindful of their responsibilities to LWETB in its role as a Data Controller when dealing with others' personal data



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## PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The goal for communication is to be:

*“Open, appropriate to the audience, clear, concise, constructive, informative and timely”<sup>29</sup>*

Providing information to the learners, the wider community and industry is paramount to LWETB activities. It advertises our services, fulfils our duties as a public body and informs of developments in the local FET sector.

### Public Awareness

Public awareness can be categorised into 2 areas:

1. Routine Information
2. Non-Routine Information

Routine information relates to the normal running of LWETB. Such information includes upcoming courses, information on various initiatives, publication of organisational reports, publication of policies, job vacancies, news stories etc.

All courses advertised contain programme and award information such as accreditation (if any), name of awarding body, NFQ Level (if applicable), duration, times, content etc.

A number of distribution channels are utilised:

- LWETB Websites (includes all published reports and QA procedures and processes)
- Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram
- Local Media – Radio, Print Media
- FETCH Courses ([www.fetchcourses.ie](http://www.fetchcourses.ie))
- Open Days
- Roadshows
- Exhibitions

Non-Routine information is more organisational in nature e.g. media query or discussion on report findings. As defined by our Communications Policy currently in development, the Chief Executive (CE) or designated person such as senior managers deal with such issues.

Routine information is approved by the appropriate line manager with formal reports ratified by a Director, Board or CE prior to publication.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LWETB-Communications-Policy.pdf>



## NEWSLETTERS

The LWETB bi-annual Newsletter<sup>30</sup> provides a range of highlights, news articles, achievements and developments within LWETB in the preceding 6 months. This newsletter includes submissions from all LWETB provisions, providing an informative summary for learners, parents, staff, wider community and industry. It is distributed in hard and soft copy. The newsletter allows LWETB to celebrate successes and individual achievements by staff and learners, highlight innovative initiatives by LWETB's schools and FET provision and provide an important feeling of community within LWETB.

LWETB FETQS Team produce a quarterly newsletter, which is distributed to all staff and stakeholders and can be digitally accessed for ease of access. The newsletter allows staff to keep up to date with training, FETQS updates, etc.

Some provisions, such as FET Adult Guidance Services also produce their own email subscription newsletter<sup>31</sup> with more focused attention on the services they offer, upcoming courses, regional initiatives and informational articles on public awareness campaigns. These newsletters have a more targeted approach, providing useful information and promotional awareness of local initiatives to local people.



<sup>30</sup> Archive available at [www.lwetb.ie/newsletters/](http://www.lwetb.ie/newsletters/)

<sup>31</sup> Archive available at <https://us20.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=f2c4478d42d0f585cc5ec95fd&id=b9b81e1695>





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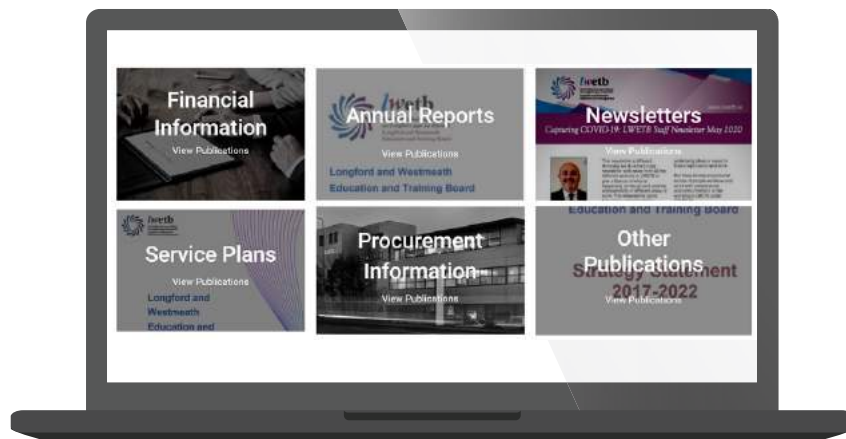
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## DATA PROTECTION ACT 2014

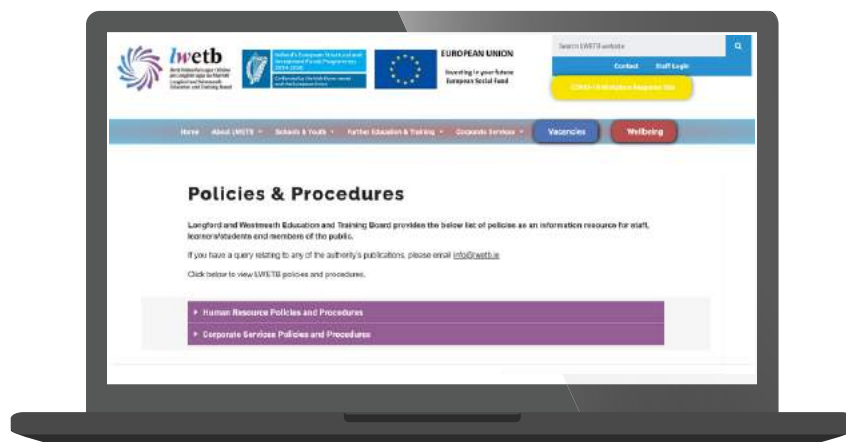
In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2014 Section 8, LWETB publishes as much information as possible in an open and accessible format on a routinely basis.

We strive to present all information in an easily accessible format and location (typically online), making available as soon as possible. All formal reports contain key findings, quality evaluations results and summaries. Key reports are downloadable in Irish.



## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies and Procedures are downloadable from LWETB's website and reviewed periodically at [www.lwetb.ie/policies](http://www.lwetb.ie/policies).



## EQUAL ACCESS

For those who have a hearing and visual impairment, LWETB can provide communications in an accessible format (as far as practical). We strive to ensure that all information provided electronically is compatible with adaptive technology. Published information relevant to persons with an intellectual disability can be made available in easy to read formats. This is mandated for public bodies under Section 29 of the Disability Act 2005.

Bríomhar / Ilchineálach / Nuálach  
Dynamic / Diverse / Innovative



Stationery, Signage and Recorded Oral Announcements are provided in Irish or bilingually, with correspondence received in Irish, responded to in Irish, as mandated for public bodies by the Official Languages Act 2003.

Communication materials strive to adhere to Plain English Guidelines recommended by the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA).

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Internal communication within LWETB uses a range of technologies. Microsoft Office 365 incorporating, Microsoft Outlook and Teams is deployed through the organisation. The functionality allowing for online meetings, chat, team collaborations has greatly improved internal communication, a vital component during the COVID-19 crisis. Microsoft's SharePoint has allowed for online portals for the distribution of internal communication. Third party software, such as CoreHR, allows for efficient information regarding pay, pension or other entitlements.

## COVID-19 TASK TEAM

The COVID-19 Task Team was established in 2020 to strategically plan and consider the safe navigation of LWETB through the COVID-19 pandemic. They continually monitor national public health advice and provide support and guidance for the continued remote working and the safe reopening of schools and centres. The Task Team comprises representatives of all provisions and services within LWETB who meet on a regular basis to discuss developments and ensure everyone is as safe as possible in these challenging times. The Task Team distribute all necessary communications to staff through the COVID-19 email which is sent to all staff and stakeholders within LWETB.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The LWETB Health and Safety Committee has representation from across FET centres, schools and administration. The committee provides a forum for staff and management to work together to address all Health and Safety developments across the organisation.

The committee are currently in the planning phase of the project identifying areas for review such as training, storage of shared information, review and creation of policies and protocols. In addition, the committee shall support each centre manager and principal with the implementation of Health and Safety protocols within their centre and school thus safeguarding staff, learners and workplaces with the best business practices and policies.





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## EFFECTIVE

- The information provided online is effective as learners are applying for many of the course provisions on offer. Learners are responding to new remote learning courses and interacting with LWETB more online
- All LWETB reports are published in a timely fashion online, professionally presented and accessible to all
- Local media and print embrace LWETB's activities by allowing staff representatives discuss new initiatives on radio and featured articles in local newspapers
- The pandemic has focused all staff to improve their communication skills while working from home. Facilitated by training by the PL&D Co-ordinator, IT skills in the use of Microsoft Office 365 including Teams has greatly improved
- A series of engaging video content on LWETB course or provision offerings has enhanced its online presence and deepened the demographic reach using our services
- SOLAS and local LWETB joint FET marketing campaigns e.g. during Leaving Certification results, provides a unified visual informational message about general FET provision.

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Since information is provided to the public by various individual services/centres it has an inconsistent approach and lack of uniformity in presentation. A set of LWETB Brand Guidelines and a House Style Manual is currently under development and will provide guidance for more consistent external communication.

## FUTURE FOCUS

- Many of the service/centre provision maintain their own websites/social media. There is a lack of uniformity between these sites and inconsistent brand representation online. This may cause learner confusion and a more consolidated approach is needed
- Social media presence, most notably, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is ad-hoc with many service/centre provisions maintaining their own social media presence. A more consolidated approach is being considered
- LWETB's current profile on LinkedIn is weak. LinkedIn will allow past learners in employment to engage with LWETB into the future, assist with employer/industry engagement and attract human resource talent for vacant positions.
- LWETB needs to engage in newer social media platforms used by the young adult demographic e.g. Tik Tok
- Information across LWETB's website can sometimes be outdated, and needs to be reviewed on a more regular basis by designated personnel
- The possibility of creating a new Communication and Promotion Officer role with significant online promotion experience would provide more cohesive (and effective) marketing campaigns to advertise services
- In general there can be a lack of general awareness of the range of courses and services that LWETB provides. Name recognition is not as forefront in people's minds as LWETB would like. Marketing campaigns will be developed to try and rectify this



## CHALLENGES

Website and social media presence takes continual postings and considerable resourcing to stay relevant. It would require much oversight by management to ensure that all posts were appropriate, relevant and conform to required policy. A professional online presence is essential and will remain to be an essential task into the future.

## CONCLUSION

LWETB have an effective Governance and Management of Quality. The mission and strategy are defined, understood and suitable to contribute and shape a modern FET sector for Longford and Westmeath. Regional and national reports, along with economic data are taken into consideration when deciding on areas to focus on, expand on and that need redevelopment.

LWETB is on a journey, evolving as an organisation to meet an ever-changing FET sector. Focus will be given to:

- Organisational restructuring to improve efficiencies and provide better service to all
- Developing one comprehensive QA system for LWETB and retiring all legacy QA systems
- Improving documentation of policies and procedures
- Continuing to invest in its staff through upskilling
- Continuing to invest in its programme offerings to meet market needs, including modification and updating of existing programmes
- Ensuring that appropriate ICT infrastructure is in place to support the organisation
- Continuing to support and implement SOLAS/ETBI initiatives, including participation in advisory groups and networks, along with collaborating with our peers in FET and HE
- Continuing to support local industry that creates employment whilst promoting LWETB as a quality place of study for not just unemployed learners
- Continuing to hire the best talent available to assist LWETB reach its goals
- Continuing to support the learner as much as possible
- Continually acting on feedback received from all stakeholders including internal and external reports

LWETB is proud that the governance and management of quality portrays an overarching goal to service the educational needs of the local population and how this is always paramount. This shapes everything we do.



# 4. OBJECTIVE 2: TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

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## THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

*Learners can expect to be supported academically, vocationally and personally as they progress in their learning journey.*

The learning environment is important for learners to achieve their best while undertaking their learning journey with LWETB. Learners can expect a clean, modern environment with qualified educators, suitably resourced with course materials and ICT infrastructure appropriate to the provision and course requirements. This is supported by professional administration and other support services to assist learners achieve their goals.

A Buildings and Capital Development Officer and Senior Management prioritise building projects.

### Physical Infrastructure

Continual investment in physical infrastructure is managed by annual maintenance plans. The physical infrastructure is a multi-pronged approach:

- General Maintenance (painting, keeping of the grounds and other minor building improvements)
- Construction (building or expansion of new and existing buildings)
- ICT (purchase of ICT and TEL technologies to support staff and learners)

General Maintenance is managed at the local level either by existing maintenance staff or external contractors. Construction projects are approved at a board level – these include expansion, renovation and new building projects. ICT is managed at local and regional levels – local managers ensuring the appropriate ICT infrastructure is in place. Regional initiatives allow for ICT upgrades and installations across many centres such as upgrading Wi-Fi provision. The pandemic and TEL initiatives have consumed much of the ICT budget (e.g. purchasing of conferencing equipment) – but serve to ensure we meet the requirements of the current and post-pandemic FET sector.

External training provision also provide training facilities. Classroom/ICT and equipment requirements are specified through operating guidelines and course requirements. Learners can expect the same professional classroom and equipment provision as those provided by LWETB. External training provision is monitored by a LWETB staff member to ensure compliance. LWETB's infrastructure adds to community vibrancy by providing services in local communities. Partnerships with Westmeath and Longford County Council have allowed for cohabitation with other services, such as public library facilities – forming part of various regeneration projects. This has a positive impact not only on LWETB immediate learners but also on the community at large in making education more accessible to all.

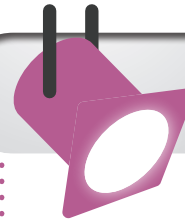
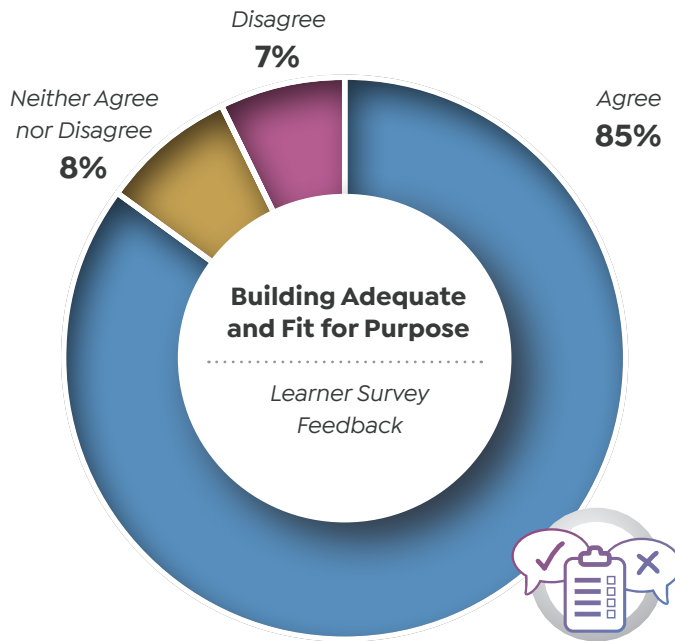


*Expansion of the Carpentry and Joinery  
Apprenticeship facilities; two classrooms,  
office spaces, stores and large multi-use area.  
This will cater for an additional 104 apprentices.  
Athlone Training Centre, 2020*



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### **In the Spotlight**

#### **Selection of LWETB Infrastructure Projects (2022-23)**

- Kinnegad** - New FET Centre (Co-located with Westmeath County Council)
- Mullingar** - Renovations for new FET and Administration Centre
- Longford** - New Digital Learning Hub
- Mullingar** - Additional Classroom for Horticulture Programme
- Athlone Training Centre** - Additional teaching spaces, upgrading of classroom equipment, installation of electric car charging stations

## **Pedagogy**

All educators (first and second tier providers) hold practical experience, appropriate Subject Matter Expertise (SME) and appropriate qualifications, with PL&D initiatives allowing additional skills to be mastered. This ensures the learning environment benefits from modern pedagogical practices.

## **Structured Placement**

The learning environment also extends to on-the-job and work experience/practice. Structured learning is achieved by:

- Ensuring suitability and relevancy of work experience/ placement
- Learner completing formative, summative and reflective reports before, during and after work experience/ placement
- Employers agreeing to invest in the learner (by agreeing a range of tasks to complete, providing a supportive environment, giving commitment to teaching new skills, demonstrating and explaining tasks and advancing the skills of the learner)
- Continuous monitoring of learners and employers to ensure commitment to learning by both parties

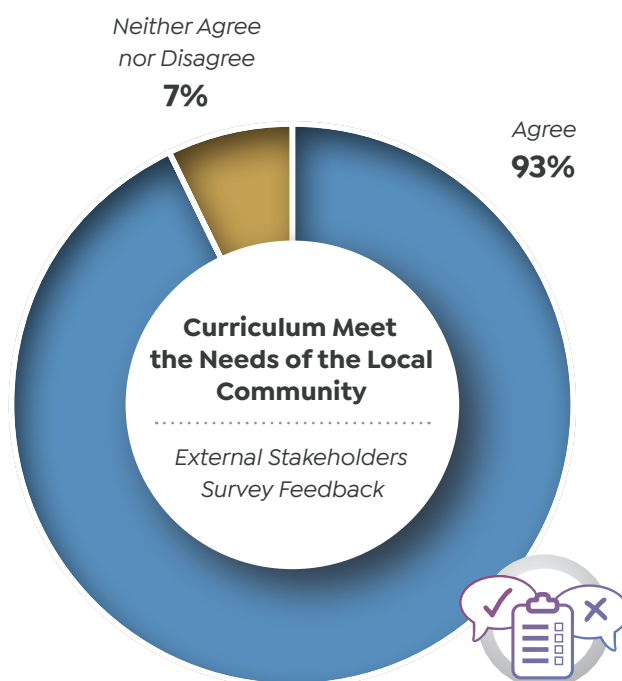
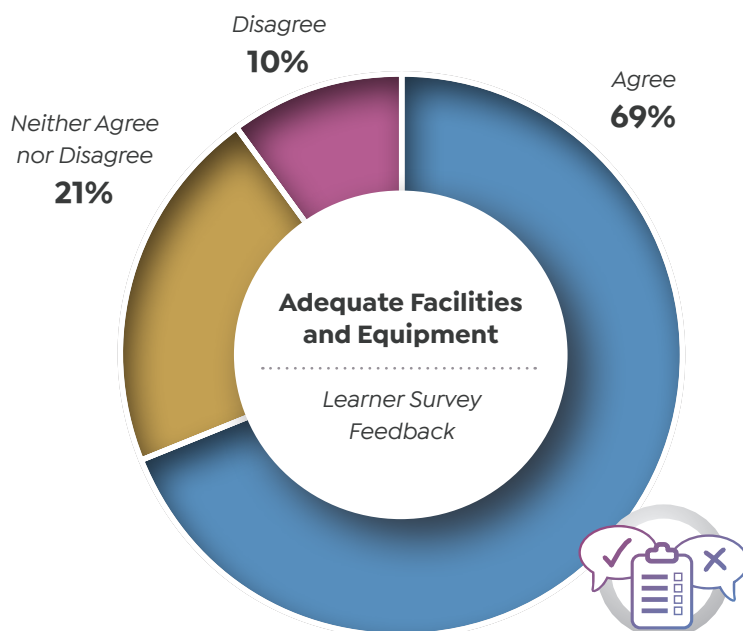


## Modes of Delivery and Qualifications

In line with LWETB's Strategic Performance Agreements, a flexible range of full-time, part-time and remote offerings are provided. This offers a more flexible learning pathway for employed and unemployed learners. The foundation of a modular approach to learning is also being adopted - allowing individual modules to be achieved that can ultimately culminate into larger awards if desired. To ensure relevancy in certification, LWETB has expanded its range of certifications on offer to include industry certification as appropriate.



Local Training Initiative (LTI), 2021  
Minister for Further and Higher Education  
Simon Harris discussing the huge success  
of the QQI Level 5 in Horticulture run in  
conjunction with the School of Horticulture at  
Belvedere House and Gardens Mullingar

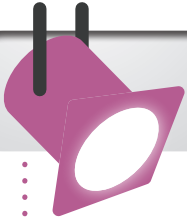






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## In the Spotlight



### FET Digital Learning Hub, Longford

*Supported by the Just Transition Fund, LWETB is in the developmental phase of an FET Digital Learning Hub for Longford.*

*Facilities will include audio/visual conferencing facilities, shared learning spaces, individual study areas, open areas to meet other learners, a canteen and a PearsonVue testing centre.*

*This will provide many additional benefits to the community including fast broadband, encourages modular learning, supports and encourages learning and education, and provides access to the latest technology. This is due to be operational by 2023.*

## The Learner Charter

The Learner Charter<sup>32</sup> was formalised in 2020, documenting what learners can expect from an education and training provider and what LWETB can expect from its staff and learners in line with our partnership approach to teaching and learning. The learner charter is aligned with LWETB's Mission and Vision statements.

## Learner Grievances

The LWETB Complaints Procedure<sup>33</sup> gives learners the opportunity to express a grievance, where relevant and necessary, relating to an LWETB staff member performance or, a work related approved activity. Any complaints received will be dealt with in a responsive, fair, transparent and consistent manner that affords all concerned the full rights in accordance with natural justice.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LWETB-Learner-Charter-2020.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LWETB-Complaint-Procedure-Approved-for-Sectoral-Use-2018-1.pdf>





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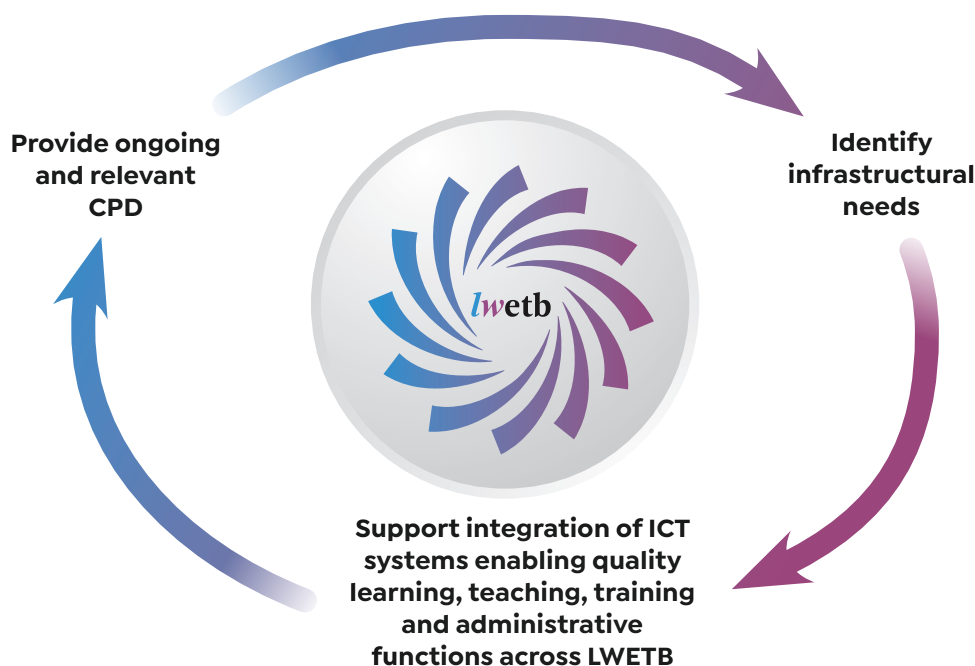
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## Learners With Additional Needs

LWETB welcomes learners with additional needs. Where possible, all classrooms and buildings are wheelchair accessible, including those provided by external provision. Learners with a visual impairment can be accommodated with modified coursework and assessments. Where practical, all coursework and assessments are compatible with JAWS (text to speech software). Where a learner has a disability that cannot be reasonably accommodated for, FET Recruitment and/or the FET Adult Guidance Service will assist in directing the learner to an alternative service. In 2018, LWETB had 469 learners categorised as having a disability<sup>33</sup>. Published LWETB reports can be made available in alternative formats upon request to support a learner with a disability.

## Teaching and Learning Strategy – Information and Technology

A combination of PL&D and TEL policies strives to develop technological integration and skills development for all LWETB staff, learners and stakeholders. To achieve this, the Teaching and Learning Strategy – Information and Technology Policy<sup>34</sup> outlines LWETB's goals:



<sup>34</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/ae0f704449/learners-with-disabilities-2018.pdf> pg. 4. A disability being defined as; a psychological or emotional condition, deafness or a serious hearing impairment, blindness or vision impairment, a difficulty with learning / remembering / concentrating, an intellectual disability, a difficulty with basic physical activities or other disability, including chronic illness.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Teaching-and-Learning-Strategy-Information-and-Technology.pdf>



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For each of the 3 goals, the TEL policy enhances the learner environment:

Goal	Activity	Learner Environment Enhancement
Provide ongoing and relevant CPD	PL&D Co-ordinator offers a wide range of PL&D initiatives as a result of an Annual Action Plan. Ambitious implementation of UDL and TEL policy is been undertaken.	Offers a professional remote and classroom based learning environment using the latest pedagogical methods and course creation techniques (a continual process of learning and implementation).
Identify Infrastructural Needs	Annual investment in IT infrastructure such as WIFI upgrades, investment in elearning/VLE environments, provision of mobile devices for teaching staff, move to cloud-based technology.	Learners are exposed to the latest teaching aids, professional VLE's and cloud-based technology offering secure remote learning.
Support integration of ICT system	Deployment of newer secure technology, such as Office 365, Moodle and Microsoft Teams across the organisation.	Seamless integration of technology for learners, supporting the learner through instructional or self-study topics – creating an atmosphere of professionalism, community and support with LWETB staff and class peers online. Transition from classroom to remote/blended studies is smooth.

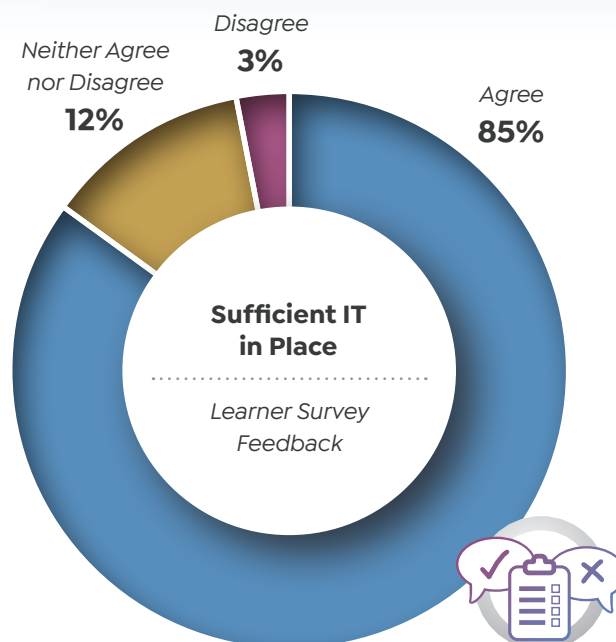
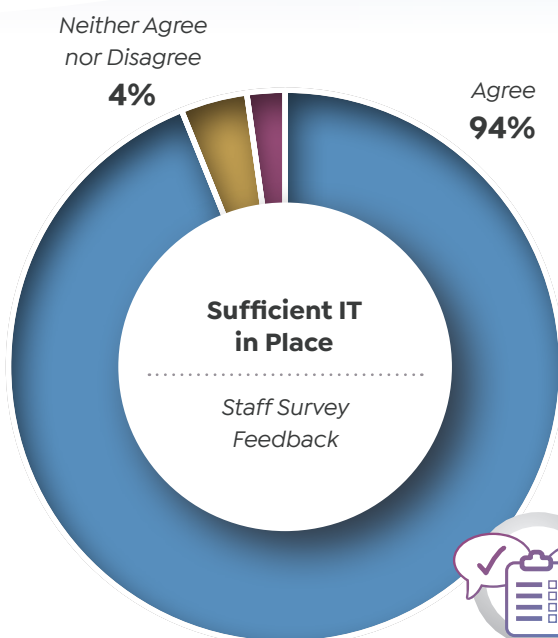
Purchasing of TEL equipment falls under the remit of the TEL/PL&D Co-ordinator and Centre Co-ordinators, with approval from the senior management. All purchase, installation and ongoing maintenance of TEL equipment follows tendering procedures as outlined in OGP procedures.



Athlone VTOS – TEL Investment 2020  
PC and Clevertouch Interactive  
Touchscreen



Athlone Community Training Centre, 2020  
Achieved 100% progression rate into  
further education or employment for  
learners completing QQI Level 4 Awards



### *In the Spotlight*



### **Community Training Centre (CTC) Mullingar 2021**

*Congratulations to the fantastic  
teamwork of CTC instructors who  
successfully completed a QQI Level 7  
Award in Technology Enhanced learning  
(TEL) during government-imposed  
restrictions of 2020.*





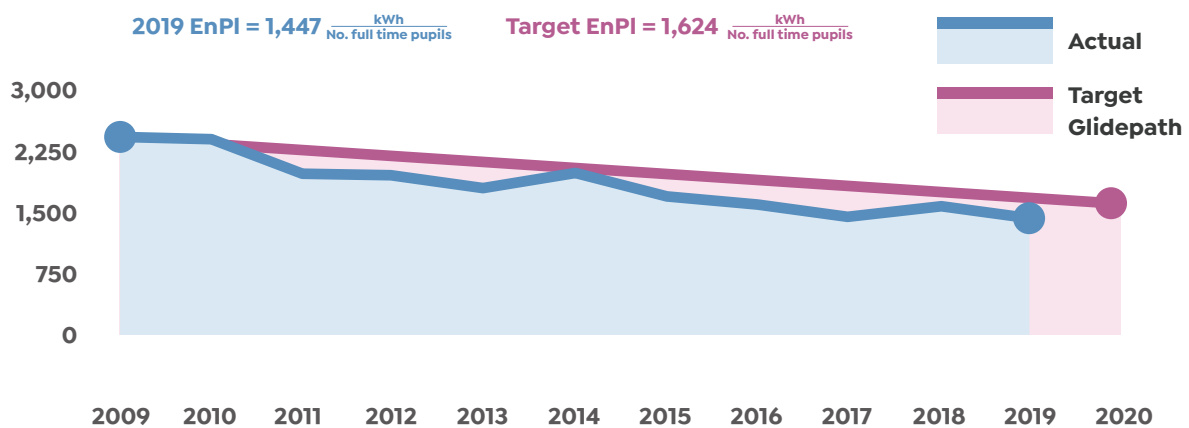
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## Climate Action Approach

LWETB takes its impact on the environment seriously. Recycling docks are located throughout all LWETB provisions, along with a more digital approach to working (reducing the need for printing). Energy efficiency gains have continued through structured energy management, building and facility upgrades, improved energy procurement and through behavioural change within the organisation:



8% better than 2018

40.3% better than baseline

10.9% better than 2020 target

14.7% better than target 'glidepath'

### Level 2 Energy Performance Indicators (2019)

Electricity = 903  $\frac{\text{kWh}}{\text{No. full time pupils}}$

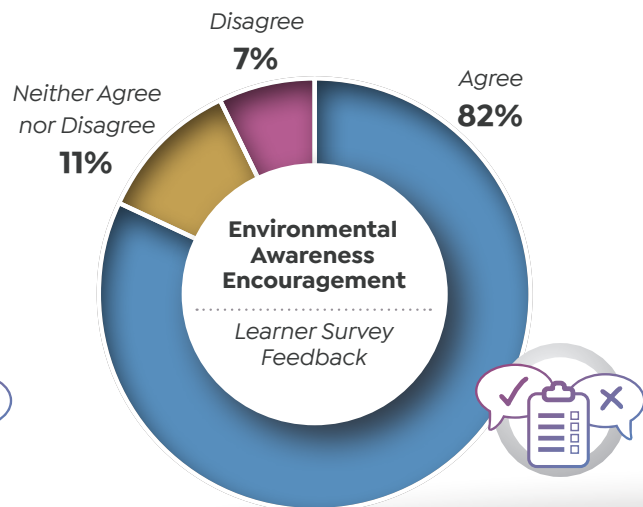
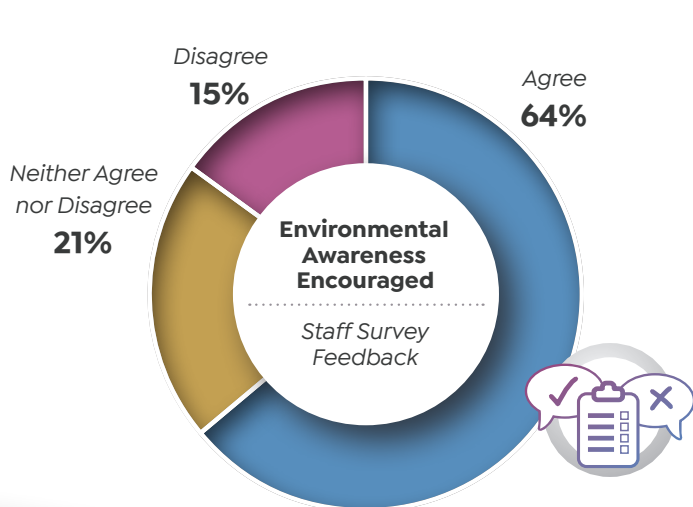
6.8% better than 2018

Thermal = 544  $\frac{\text{kWh}}{\text{No. full time pupils}}$

11.4% better than 2018

Transport = 0  $\frac{\text{kWh}}{\text{No. full time pupils}}$

0.0% worse than 2018





## The Learner Voice

LWETB participated in the National AONTAS FET Learner Forum in February 2021, with focus groups and surveys completed with 130 learners across all LWETB FET programmes and levels (NFQ Level 1 to 6).

These findings formed part of the AONTAS Annual Synthesis Report 2020-2021<sup>36</sup>. Our learner voices are important to us and, where possible, are recorded and taken into consideration in many differing formats so as to capture as many opinions and perspectives as possible. How we gather the learners voice has changed over the years and ways in which we do this include:



**Survey  
Responses**



**Classroom  
Feedback**



**MS  
Forms**



**Focus  
Groups**



**Face-to-Face  
Sessions**



**Virtual  
Events**

*"It's good, but if we were in school it would be better. I prefer when I go to school."*

*"I love my class! The tutor devises quizzes for us and we share answers and it's entertaining and fun."*

*"If we don't understand online, they send us a worksheet to our home. It's good."*

*"I am learning to use new applications such as Teams. I can do or complete assignments at my own pace and within a set deadline."*

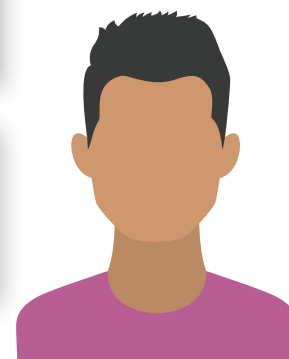
*"[Remote learning] was relaxing. I don't have to spend money on transport or walk out during the cold. I enjoyed the online course because I was home and warm."*

*"The assessment sheets could use a bit of work. They are often left up to interpretation, which can make it difficult for first time learners or teachers of the module when needing to start and complete assignments."*

*"In the classroom the discussion, it would be different. You can't talk to three people online; it will be too confusing."*

*"It's ok online, but I miss going to class. It's really difficult practicing my language with others during COVID, as I don't meet other people."*

*"[The decision to take my course was] as much for social interaction as it was for learning and moving online hindered that."*



<sup>36</sup> [https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/Annual\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_2020-2021.pdf](https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/Annual_Synthesis_Report_2020-2021.pdf)



#### AONTAS Synthesis Report findings:

##### Areas Working Well (NFQ Levels 1-6)

Communications	Learners are happy with the diverse communication methods used by LWETB.
Tutors	Learners feel well supported by educators and staff.
Access to Devices	93% of application survey responses from learners agreed they have access to the necessary IT devices and software to complete their learning.
Digital Skills	Learners feel that remote learning has helped to improve their digital skills.

##### Areas Working Well (NFQ Levels 1-4)

Transition to Remote Learning	Felt supported by LWETB staff in their transition to remote learning.
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##### Areas Working Well (NFQ Levels 5-6)

Flexibility of Remote Learning	Some learners appreciated the flexibility afforded by remote learning and would like to see it retained in the future.
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##### Areas for Improvement (NFQ Levels 1-6)

Assessment	Learners would like assignments to be evenly spaced out. Learners would like more support and guidance interpreting assessment briefs.
IT Support	Learners would like more ongoing support and/or courses on platforms used in remote teaching and learning.
Peer Contact	Learners would like more opportunities to connect socially with their peers as part of their learning.
Face-to-Face Learning	Many learners would like to return to face-to-face learning as soon as possible.
Learning Environment	Learners find the home learning environment challenging. Learning from home is particularly difficult for learners with childcare responsibilities.

##### Areas for Improvement (NFQ Levels 1-4)

Learning Engagement	Learners at Levels 1-3 report that overall learner engagement has decreased as a result of COVID-19, particularly among ESOL learners.
Learners with Disabilities	Would like more options for “creative” and “fun” learning opportunities.
Isolation	Some learners feel isolated and disconnected from their peers.

##### Areas for Improvement (NFQ Levels 5-6)

Practical Learning	Learners would like to see practical learning prioritised in a return to face-to-face learning.
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## LWETB – The Learning Environment and the Pandemic

With Government imposed restrictions, the pandemic had a dramatic impact on teaching, learning and assessments for both learners and staff. A survey completed by LWETB in March 2021 with 287 current and past learners will influence future policy and provides insight into how learners and staff feel about remote learning and use of technology:

<b>Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some found it difficult studying from home (especially since other family members were at home also)</li> <li>• Internet access was an issue for some learners (data usage limits, broadband access in rural areas etc.)</li> <li>• Laptops were provided to learners who needed it</li> <li>• Work Experience/Placement modules were impacted (this important module did impact programmes and were unavoidable in some circumstances). Alternative modules were substituted e.g. personal and professional development where applicable</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Microsoft Teams as a teaching tool and as a staff meeting tool became central to carrying out their job function</li> <li>• Staff were heavily supported by the FETQS Team in seeking conversion modules and assessments as part of emergency response contingency measures. LWETB Guidance documents on Contingency measures were provided for all staff and regularly updated</li> <li>• Provisions backed up by TEL and PL&amp;D Training initiatives facilitated the sudden need for remote teaching and assessments</li> <li>• Online courses were not suitable for some learners especially at lower NFQ levels</li> <li>• Learner assessments was submitted using a number of different methods (such as the assignment feature in Microsoft Teams). Some photographed their work for online submission</li> <li>• Educators had to change teaching style, redesign course notes and redevelop presentations to suit a remote learning environment</li> </ul>

While LWETB provided laptops to learners who needed them and engaged in many different ways with learners who were not in their traditional setting, learners in community education were impacted most by the pandemic. Examples of this included learners finding difficulty in engaging with the services remotely for a host of reasons (technical savviness, social issues, broadband speed). Similar findings were also bore out in the AONTAS report “Community Education in a Time of COVID-19”<sup>37</sup>.



*Athlone Community Training Centre, 2019  
Culinary Demonstration with Learners*

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/AONTAS\\_CEN\\_Census\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/AONTAS_CEN_Census_REPORT_FINAL.pdf)





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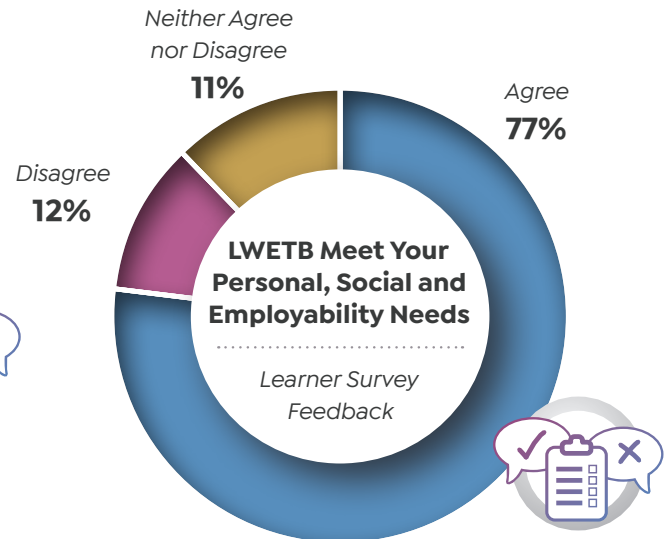
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#### Remote Learning and Craft Apprenticeships in Athlone Training Centre:<sup>38</sup>

The pandemic caused a portion of the craft apprenticeship programmes to be remote. Being kinaesthetic learners, over 80% had reservations about future blended/remote learning for craft apprenticeship programmes as they felt it didn't suit their learning style, interaction with instructors was more difficult and they felt they lacked focus in a home setting.

**Face-to-Face Focus Group**  
**Craft Apprenticeship Learners, August 2021**



#### FET Learner Feedback Survey and One to One Sessions – Teaching Learning and Assessment and the Impact of COVID-19.

Question 20 asked: “My Teachers/Tutors/Instructors’ online teaching skills improved over the year”.

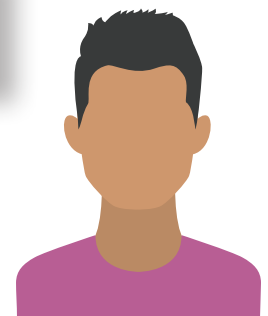
“Excellent teacher... always goes above and beyond. Lack of internet co-operation was definitely a problem but despite this [the teacher] ploughed on and we completed all our assignments as a team. We all had to get used to doing things a different way and [the teacher] guided us through brilliantly.”

“My Tutor was very good at teaching us. As well as that, she also touches on every element of the course. She was very good at answering my questions as well as accommodating when needed. Finally, I have no doubt in my mind that her online teaching skills improved and she knows her subject very well.”

“Yes very much so, I had the best tutors and was very happy with the help I got throughout the course.”

“Most definitely and my shortcomings were taken into account to work around a solution that benefitted me.”

“As time went on the tutor was more comfortable with online as oppose to being present in class setting.”



<sup>38</sup> Sample size of 18 learners across plumbing, carpet and joinery and motor mechanic apprenticeships.



## EFFECTIVE

- The Teaching and Learning policy is comprehensively backed up by strategic goals of the organisation, PL&D, FET Co-ordinator initiatives and senior management
- TEL Co-ordinator is driving the TEL policy with ambitious plans, fostering a professional learning environment with educators learning modern pedagogical skills to meet the needs of a modern FET sector
- The introduction of Digital Training and Learning Hubs has allowed the modular approach to learning flourish, providing flexible learning hours and allowing learners to focus on specific skills that require improvements
- The learner views in the FET Learner Forum highlighted how educators and staff supported learners during the pandemic and how learners' digital skills have improved
- HSE guidelines regarding COVID-19 continue to be followed (supported by the LWETB COVID-19 Task Team)
- The physical learning environment is located in the middle of communities with a proactive approach to future infrastructural needs. A myriad of new building projects are in development to meet future FET needs and also to add vibrancy and regeneration to communities within Longford and Westmeath
- Strong cohesion with other government bodies on cohabitation projects, particularly county councils using the Ireland 2040 Fund<sup>39</sup> and the National Just Transition Fund<sup>40</sup>. These facilitate innovative projects that contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the wider midlands region

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Ensuring that TEL provision is equal across all FET provisions. Implementation of TEL policy in provisions offering NFQ Levels 1 to 3 is weak and an area for attention
- The FETQS Team are in development of new FET Assessment Packs and the updating of the Learner Handbook will provide improved support and guidance for learners interpreting assessment briefs including navigating and accessing appropriate supports and resources
- Remote learning has many benefits (flexibility, ownership of learning etc.) but is not suitable for everyone
- Secondary benefits of classroom learning, such as making new friends, building confidence and having a structure daily routine is difficult remotely
- A combination of classroom, blended and remote options will be future strategy. To support this, PL&D has initiated the introduction of UDL and Educator engagement. This will allow some appropriate courses or individual learning outcomes to develop into a new delivery option while still providing the secondary benefits
- Completely remote learning courses are suited to some learners where acquiring new skills/qualifications is their sole objective. Programme redesign needs to reflect these new FET sector delivery methods to learner demand

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ed10d-just-transition-fund/>



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## FUTURE FOCUS

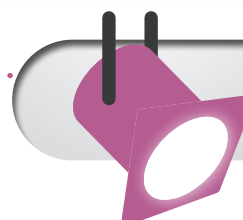
- Purchasing of TEL equipment would be ideally placed within the expertise of a dedicated IT department. LWETB does not have a dedicated IT Manager at this time.
- For blended and online programmes, more information must be provided on the technology the learner is expected to have at home, broadband speed required and platforms supported.
- For blended and online programmes, LWETB must endeavour to ensure that it is not unintentionally discriminating against learners who don't have fast Internet speeds, have limited access to technology at home or where any expense needed to join a programme prohibits participation – equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to all
- Ensuring seamless transition from classroom to remote learning for blended programmes (and vice versa)
- Ensuring the learning experiences of remote learning is similar to those studying in a classroom style of delivery
- The need to take a very considered approach to blended, online and remote learning post-COVID-19. Certain learning outcomes (particularly at NFQ Levels 5 and 6) are suitable to an online environment. It is essential that learners have well developed remote learning skills upon course completion. LWETB is mindful not to unintentionally create barriers to education for learners who progress to higher NFQ levels where remote learning is an intrinsic part of course delivery.
- There is no formal mechanism for learners to make representations to LWETB about matters of immediate concern to the learner body, such as a learner council or learner representatives. Formal and informal feedback and questionnaires currently completed are post-event activities. Courses offered by LWETB tend to be of short duration resulting in learners being transitional in nature. Alternative mechanisms to learner councils needs to be considered

## CHALLENGES

- The pandemic has undoubtedly changed the FET landscape forever. Learners that might not have traditionally embraced remote learning were forced to do so (it is pertinent to note strong positives in feedback of more flexible study, no commute, still achieving course success etc). As an organisation we have to embrace this change and offer a suite of remote or blended courses to accommodate this need in a post-pandemic FET sector
- Remote and blended courses pose increased competition from other ETBs as learners may choose a course in an ETB outside their county if they do not have to commute to class on a daily basis
- The strain of learning from home, isolation and the impact on mental health has become prevalent. In response to this, LWETB created a wellbeing page ([www.lwetb.ie/wellbeing](http://www.lwetb.ie/wellbeing)) with various initiatives such as commissioning a series of videos on everyday coping techniques. Other workshop and links are also provided. In addition to this, the FET Guidance Service provides monthly workshops for learners on a different wellbeing topic each month and a wellbeing section in their weekly newsletter provides much support to learners. Wellbeing will continue to be an issue as learners (and staff) learn to cope with COVID-19 at least in the medium term



- Provisions who work with hard-to-reach learners (including Roma, Traveller and Direct Provision learners), or who offer unaccredited life skills training were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Learners struggled to engage with remote learning where continued support and encouragement are needed
- Support for FET provisions is not always as forthcoming from secondary schools as LWETB would like. There are some learners that are not prospering in secondary school and success in a FET provision would be more likely. A FET provision can often provide more individual attention and supports in a less formal setting, while catering to learner interests. Some school principals do not see qualifications from a FET provision as a more suitable alternative to the traditional Leaving Certificate for some learners



### **In the Spotlight**



**NUI Galway**  
**OÉ Gaillimh**

Community Education are partnered with National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) for 2021-2022 in supporting learners from the Travelling Community, who are interested or already employed in community work to undertake third level training in Community Development. Community Education supports include academic skills, literacy, and mentoring and assignment supports.

## **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS**

During course induction, learners are provided with an overview of the assessments necessary to successfully complete their chosen programme. Learners are told how and why they will be assessed, the grading system and the type of assessments that are to take place.

At the start of each module, the Educator provides a detailed breakdown on the nature of the assessment, the grading system, the type (assignment, examination, skills demonstration, project etc.) and percentage weighting of each. A set of learner instructions is provided to the learners for each assessment. This details the assessment, when and how to submit their work. The assessments are verbally explained to ensure learners understand what is being asked of them.

An AIS (Assessment Instrument Specification) or locally devised assessments are available for all validated QQI modules. This details the assessments requirements, along with suggested sample answers for the assessor, learner and supervisor instructions, learner declarations, marking rubrics and summary marking sheets. Non QQI modules do not require an AIS, but instead rely on the documentation (and assessments, if applicable) provided by the awarding body.

For QQI module, QA58 and QA39 are available to Educators and learners for each programme. These detail the learning outcomes, the assessment events and their corresponding percentage weighting. Non-QQI modules rely on documentation provided by the awarding body that typically provides the same information in an alternative format.

Where applicable, learners are provided with information on referencing, plagiarism and the importance of self-declaring their own work as authentic.





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Policies relating to assessments, such as plagiarism, referencing, assessment misconduct, academic integrity, etc. are explained to learners upon course commencement and prior to each assessment event, along with where to access these policy documents.

A newly designed Assessment Management System is currently in development for secure distribution of assessments by the TSO department.

All offline assessments are overseen and corrected by a Subject Matter Expert (SME), typically the Educator. Online assessments have computer generated grades. Learners are provided with timely feedback after each assessment event.

Given the various provision (and legacy QA systems), the route from learner assessment to certification can vary.

## INTEGRITY OF ASSESSMENT

Academic integrity is critical to LWETB, our programmes, assessment and reputation of FET. QQI define academic integrity as *'compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship'*<sup>41</sup>. Through consultation and listening to staff and stakeholders we have developed stronger technological supports to combat this and developed PD sessions to support staff also. Learners are supported at centre level with recorded sessions, presentation briefings and induction sessions in this area.

## AUTHENTICATION PROCESS

LWETB is heavily committed to the fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with both legacy and FETQS agreements. Robust assessment procedures are in place in all FET centres. Procedures and processes are in place to ensure the integrity of the assessment process in line with the awarding standards. Structures that are both in development and have been developed by the FETQS Team include; provision of assessment related information to learners, the conduct of assessment (including temporary contingency measures), consistency in assessment, marking and grading of assessment, assessment appeals and record security and retention.

**Internal Verification** is conducted across FET to monitor operational assessment procedures on a sample basis to ensure a quality assured assessment experience for learners whereby they are awarded correctly computed results and grades.

**External Authentication** is whereby an external authenticator is appointed via the LWETB EA Panel. This dedicated panel have moved through the LWETB recruitment process and receive briefings and training sessions from the FETQS Team. External Authenticators are appointed to ensure fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and of the outcome of assessments for learner results across each major, minor, special purpose or supplemental award in line with the national standards of that award and level. The LWETB Panel of EAs will inform our governance structures not only of the national standards within fields of learning but it will allow us to seek out centre recommendations for improvement and enhance opportunities by working

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Final\\_AcademicIntegrityLex\\_pagesv3.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Final_AcademicIntegrityLex_pagesv3.pdf) apprenticeships.

with the panel. Centrally appointing EAs will further support LWETB's commitment to working with a dedicated EA panel in providing niche support in assuring standards across all its FET provision. This initiative will inform FETQS and QA governance structures of the consistency of standards across the region and on areas for development and improvement.

**Results Approval Panel (RAP)** is the process whereby a panel ensures that appropriate decisions are and have been taken throughout assessment, verification and authentication processes in programmes. RAP members have the responsibility of approving provisional results, requesting certification and proposing, if applicable, an agenda for development and improvement. A Centre RAP Report is submitted and presented by centres. This report outlines the areas identified of good practice, areas for improvement or areas of risk to LWETB. This report also outlines the centres commitment, with RAP panel input, to continuous development and improvement where applicable (for personnel, supports and resources, etc.).

## Non-QQI Awards

LWETB complies with awarding bodies policy and procedures and adheres to assessment and authentication requirements. For some Non-QQI modules, assessments are either provided by the awarding body or learners take the exam online under controlled conditions. These awarding bodies typically generate certificates at an earlier stage.

## EFFECTIVE

- Integrity, consistency and security of assessments is maintained by documented processes and procedures
- Areas of improvement are incorporated into PL&D initiatives as appropriate
- A review of IV and EA reports indicates a high level of conformity to policy
- Strengthened, updated and enhanced assessment briefs aligned to module descriptor and LO's have been developed (this is a continual improvement process)
- Process is robust, fair and equitable. Any human errors are discovered and rectified as they go through the process. This applies to both first and second providers
- Strong oversight and governance of contingency measures and CAS modifications are carried out by the FETQS Team
- Replacement of CAMS with AMS (Assessment Management System), allowing for secure central repository and electronic distribution mechanism of assessments. AMS also facilitates updating of assessments easily
- All QQI assessments for training provision have been centralised since the introduction of the Training Standards System (TSS) which then became the TQAS (used in Athlone Training Centre and by second providers)
- Feedback of IV and EA reports is provided to staff. Areas of excellence and areas for improvement are highlighted at FETQS meetings within FE and with the TSO within Training
- Apprenticeship assessments are stored and managed by SOLAS on a CASCADE system with SOLAS responsible for development of all apprenticeship assessments



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*90% of learners expressed satisfaction on receiving assessment feedback within two weeks of an assessment event.*

**Face-to-Face Focus Group  
All Learners, August 2021**



## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Submission of learner assessments via ePortfolios (including development of policy on presenting ePortfolios for assessment)
- Electronic presentation of assessment work for external authentication (where practical) as a standard
- Digitally correcting assessments using electronic pens and other technology, supported by PL&D training initiatives for assessors
- Reporting tool for tracking of attendance, retention and attainment of learner achievements
- Use of TurnItIn (on Microsoft Teams) and Urkund (on Moodle) software to safeguard against plagiarism

*For NFQ Level 6 (or equivalent) IT programmes, learners not only require a high-end laptop but also dual monitors, which have been provided. This ensures that learners have access to the same IT equipment as they would in a classroom setting.*

*All high-level IT courses require this level of equipment support to ensure the learners have not been disadvantaged by completing study at home.*

**Online Focus Group  
NFQ Level 6 IT Learners**



## FUTURE FOCUS

- Continual training at all stages in the process, to ensure all provisions adhere to all aspects of the assessment processes and NFQ standards are maintained at all times



- Resulting from RAP Recommendations:
  - More attention to the correct use of referencing on learner assessments
  - Implementation of FETQS Assessment Templates
  - Reduction on the over-reliance on written assessment work especially at Level 4 upwards
  - Improved recording of skills demonstrations
  - Improved identification and transparency of how marks are awarded or deducted including detailed marking schemes.
  - Improved provision of documented summative and formative feedback to learners
  - Staggering IV process throughout programme duration
- LWETB wish to be involved in the National Academic Integrity Network<sup>42</sup> once it becomes available to FET providers. This will provide useful guidelines on upholding academic integrity including the prevention, detection and handling of academic misconduct

## CHALLENGES

For some programmes, learners are required to complete examinations and assessments online and are required to create their own account. Upon completion they are immediately awarded their grade and certification by the software used. These results are needed for reporting purposes but at times it proves problematic to get a copy of this certification from a learner. Currently there is no other way for LWETB to access this information. This is particularly an issue when a learner completes their online assessment either at home or in another centre. Some results go unrecorded as a result.

### Selection of IV Feedback – Good Practice and Recommendations

*“All OneNote Class Notebooks should be presented in a standard design.”*

*“Use Excel summary results sheet to avoid rounding errors.”*

*“Try to make it across the board that specific detail on where learners lost marks is clear and try and ensure when giving marks and feedback that they are consistent in their locations and not scattered between briefs, marking sheets, etc.”*



*“All learner evidence presented in alphabetical order. Evidence in portfolios well presented in logical order. Evidence of Skills Demonstrations for learners clearly labeled and available.”*

*“All learner material whether returned online or hardcopy needs to be corrected and initialled by educators.”*

*“Feedback provided to learners across modules was detailed and clearly indicated loss of marks.”*

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Academic%20Integrity%20Guidelines.pdf>





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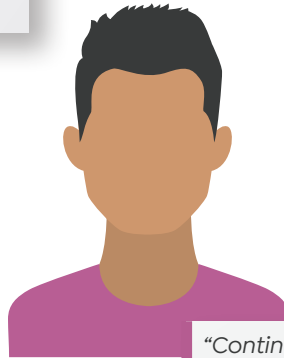


## Selection of EA Reports – Areas of Recommendation

*“The instructors’ great efforts with the students are reflected in the overall good grades.”*

*“It would be a good idea to have a uniform template for briefs, mapping LOs, etc. for all staff to use.”*

*“There was good rationale given by the assessor as to why marks were lost, this is good practice as it gives good feedback to the learner.”*



*“Referencing... Please encourage improvement in this area going forward.”*

*“Please ensure all assessors complete each of the assessment brief templates, marking sheets and learner record feedback templates accurately.”*

*“I presume marking sheets are not signed due to COVID. But always make sure marking sheets and feedback are signed.”*

*“Continue to work on full electronic submission with all staff starting to use OneNote.”*

## SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

A wide range of supports are available to learners across all programmes. 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 by Co-ordinators, Principals, Educators and Resource Workers etc. Identification of supports required by the learner is typically made during course registration/induction where possible. Such supports include:

### Learners with Additional Needs

Learners are welcomed who have an additional need or medical condition. For PLC learners, funding through the FSD (Fund for Students with Disabilities)<sup>43</sup> can be sought if needed. Supports include assistive technology equipment, non-medical helper, transport support etc.

### International Learners<sup>44</sup>

Eligible international learners are welcome to avail of all our service offerings. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses, including Cambridge English Preparatory Courses are available. Specific international learner groups such as Refugee Resettlement and Direct Provision learners include customised modules such as Irish culture and customs, along with other skills for living in Ireland as part of their programme.

<sup>43</sup> <https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/>

<sup>44</sup> Taking guidance from QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners (<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>)



## Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills Supports

Adult Literacy and Special Training Providers (National Learning Network) specialise in providing these supports – either through informal education or courses at NFQ Level's 1 to 3. Strong inter-provisional team working within LWETB ensures learners are placed on suitable courses.

## Bus Service

Public transport links are an issue for course access. Athlone Training Centre operates various bus services, collecting and returning learners from more rural parts of Longford and Westmeath as well as surrounding counties to attend class in Athlone on a daily basis.

## IT Loan Scheme

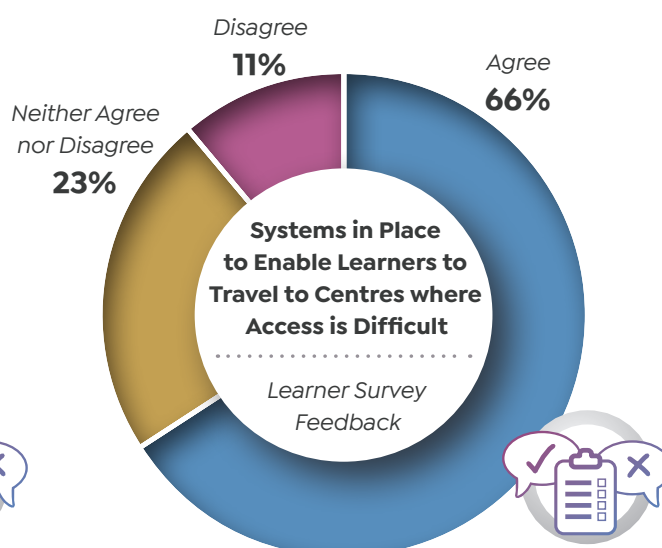
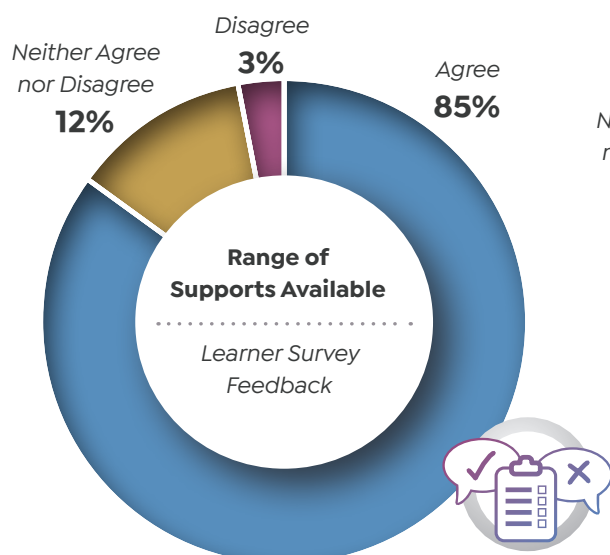
For learners who do not have the required IT equipment for home learning, a Laptop Loan Scheme is in place to facilitate remote learning following funding by SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

## Career Guidance

A comprehensive FET Guidance Service is available, staffed with trained guidance counsellors who offer impartial academic advice and career options to learners. Learners may also be helped overcome personal issues (or referred to other professional support agencies where specialist knowledge is required). Learners may access these services before, during or after course completion.

## Reasonable Accommodation

A robust Reasonable Accommodation Policy allows for assessments to be adapted for learners where it's believed they would be at a disadvantage because of an impairment / disability. Each centre manager/Co-ordinator carries out this policy and liaises with the FETQS Team / TSO Office if clarification is needed.





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## EFFECTIVE

- A range of professional learner supports is in place to support LWETB's values and mission
- LWETB has an ethos that pastoral care removes or lowers barriers to accessing education and successfully achieving academic success
- FET Guidance Service has been enhanced to offer a service online via Microsoft Teams if a learner wishes. This is a particularly popular option with NFQ Levels 5 and 6 learners

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

FET Adult Guidance have added a booking service to the LWETB website for learners to access guidance services through online portals. This service has proven to be a positive addition and as such there is a development need for a greater presence of online supports and resources dedicated to supporting the needs to the learner.

## FUTURE FOCUS

- Continue to raise awareness and promote the range of supports available to learners, particularly during the induction process
- Ensure that learners taught by first or second providers are provided with the same experience and support services e.g. access to guidance services. At present, in certain instances, second provider learners may not find support services as assessable when a programme is situated in a location which is a distance away from one of the primary LWETB FET Centres
- Further develop learner wellbeing initiatives e.g. wellbeing walks before class or during lunch break
- Increased support and internal advertisement for Government supported wellbeing initiatives e.g. National Wellbeing Day
- Training provisions that deal with the long-term unemployed or hard-to-reach learners often face issues where learners may have physiological issues due to complex social issues that need professional care. This is often the principal reason for dropping out of education or the labour market in the past. LWETB will foster stronger links with professional agencies to develop supports to allow the learner seek professional help quickly

## CHALLENGES

Ensuring that those who need the service avail of it. There is an underrepresentation of Roma, Members of the Travelling Community and hard-to-reach learners utilising all the supports services available.



# 5. OBJECTIVE 3: SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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## SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

LWETB uses a range of reports to plan, monitor and review its operations. LWETB places great value on these reports as they allow management to focus on achieving agreed targets while also informing learners, staff, other government bodies and the wider community on its achievements, the changes being implemented and the direction LWETB is currently pursuing. These reports demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement, how we as LWETB are changing to meet learner and local enterprise demands and how we are fulfilling the statutory requirements bestowed upon us as an ETB.

Reports are compiled for internal operations and to meet statutory requirements. Documents as outlined below inform, involve and communicate information both to internal and external stakeholders. Some reports are developed on a frequent basis and are to report or analyse stand-alone, niche areas requiring evaluation of process, provision or service. Reports have been compiled by both internal and external parties as needs arise. Each offer valuable evaluation, monitoring and review feedback to assist LWETB in its operations. A selection of these reports include;

### Strategy Statement 2017-2022 and Annual Service Plan

The Strategy Statement defines LWETB's Mission, Vision and Values, along with its strategic goals for the period. Each strategic goal is broken down into action points, timescale for completion, the appointed team-lead and the associated outputs to be produced from each action point.

It is a useful reference document, providing high-level action points for managers to focus on ensuring that during the lifespan of the strategy statement, all strategic goals are met.

The Strategy Statement complements the Annual Service Plan.

The Annual Service Plan is a key implementation tool to ensure that the actions identified in the Strategy Statement are rolled out systematically over the 5-year period. The Service Plan also acts as a monitoring mechanism whereby the performance of LWETB in each year is measured against the actions of the related Service Plan and the Strategy Agreement.

### Executive Self-Evaluation Report (ESER) 2017

The Executive Self-Evaluation Report was conducted in line with the QQI Statutory Core Quality Assurance and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for ETB's. The purpose of this process was to evaluate the governance and management of quality assurance and the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures. The Self-Evaluation process was an aid to implement a systematic, reflective and evidence-based process to evaluate QA activities across LWETB and to formulate recommendations for improvements at LWETB policy and process level.

LWETB is currently in the process of consulting and devising the new Strategy Statement 2022 – 2027.



## Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2017–Present

The Executive Self-Evaluation Report contributed to the development of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which supports LWETB in meeting its statutory requirements for the establishment and operation of internal quality assurance procedures, recognising the developmental and transitional contexts. The QIP is reviewed annually, since 2017 by our governance groups, SME and CE.

The QIP commenced outlining 57 key tasks, this can vary year to year based on achievements made and areas outstanding. The QIP looks at the lead personnel in charge, the timeline for completion and associated benchmarks for each task under the following headings:

- QA Governance and Management
- FET Provision and Delivery
- Learner Experience
- Information and Data Management

LWETB acknowledge key tasks that are identified and strive to address each as applicable and in accordance to levels of priority.

## Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) 2018 – 2020

This agreement between SOLAS and LWETB sets out the context, strategic priorities and ETB contribution to the achievement of key national FET sector targets from 2018–2020. The SPA articulates LWETB's commitment to supporting the implementation of a range of national policies and strategies relevant to FET provision. It identifies the key risks and challenges which must be mitigated and addressed in order to ensure successful delivery of this agreement.

The Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) 2022 – 2024 is due for circulation Q1, 2022.

## FET Provision Meetings

Regular meetings take place between FET provision Managers, Co-ordinators and staff who run local provisions on a consistent basis with senior management. These meetings allow for discussion and information exchange on operational and strategic matters. They allow for updates on all the ongoing projects in place, their progress and any challenges they are experiencing. These meetings provide senior managers with an essential monitoring and feedback mechanism as well as providing Co-ordinators with ongoing support, guidance and motivation. Meetings are minuted and distributed to all attendees.

## Risk Management Policy<sup>45</sup>

A Risk Register assesses matters that affect the achievement of the Strategic Statement. Each risk is identified, assessed, managed and monitored to support the demonstration of good governance in compliance with legislation, codes of practice, standards, guidance and relevant department circulars. They are reviewed on a quarterly basis by FET Managers and there is a sub-committee of the LWETB Board with dedicated responsibility in this area.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.lwetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/LWETB-Risk-Management-Policy.pdf>



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## QOG and QGG

The work of the Further Education and Training Quality System (FETQS) Team, along with governance from the QGG (Quality Governance Group) and QOG (Quality Oversight Group) have designed responsibilities for quality assurance, policy creation, monitoring and evaluation for LWETB as a whole.

FET Management meet on a weekly basis to disseminate QOG, QGG, PGG governance updates where applicable but also to discuss strategic developments of FET across LWETB.

## Self-Evaluation Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Teaching, Learning and Assessment

ETBI worked with all 16 ETB's to conduct a teaching, learning and assessment survey and the impact of COVID-19 on FET. This survey was conducted with staff, stakeholders and learners throughout LWETB and all other ETB's. From this ETBI initiative a report was produced that provides an analysis of qualitative feedback from learners, educators and stakeholders on how teaching, learning and assessment has been affected by the pandemic to date. The findings of this report<sup>46</sup> will shape the way that LWETB delivers programmes in the future. It also highlights where LWETB have successfully risen to the challenges posed by the pandemic and areas where training and resource allocation needs investment.

## Activity Reports to Chief Executive

Regular activity reports keep the Chief Executive and Board of Directors informed of developments, milestones, achievements and other relevant activities within LWETB. Contributors to the Activity Reports typically include the Directors of FET, OSD and Schools, Music and Youth. These high-level reports provide oversight to the Chief Executive and Board of Directors on LWETB activities and ensure decisions made at board level are being actioned as agreed.

## Information System Reports

Information Systems such as FARR and PLSS provide essential real time data and reporting statistical information on LWETB learners, certification levels, courses on offer and other statistical information that assist LWETB management in their roles. This information also provides factual information for reporting requirements, such as Annual Reports. Our Information System Reports also allows us to inform ourselves in relation to future provision to add to strategic planning.

The FET Adult Guidance service maintains a comprehensive database on all clients and users of the service that adheres to GDPR requirement. Information and data held includes; referrals from and referrals to, activity of staff and CPD undertaken for the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE). This data indicates trends in the service users and highlights course provision interest.

<sup>46</sup> <https://library.etbi.ie/covid19/responses>



## European Social Funding (ESF) Audits

Education and training courses funded under the ESF is subject to an external audit by the ESF Audit Authority. There are financial and non-financial audits carried out. This is a requirement of the European Commission. The audit involves matching claims from the European Social Fund against certified expenditure.

## Centre Evaluation and Planning (CEIP)

Youthreach provision produces an annual CEIP report that was developed as part of the National Quality Framework (NQSF) Process. This report evaluates Youthreach centre practices, highlights areas for improvement and identifies an action plan to guide the centre over the coming year. This report receives input from staff, learners, parents and management. Youthreach centres must also carry out whole centre evaluations by the Department of Education Inspectorate.

## External Authentication

**QQI:** A sample of all assessment work is reviewed by an appointed QQI External Authenticator (EA). This an external subject matter expert (SME) that reviews submitted and graded learner assessment evidence and ensures that the grades awarded are in line with NFQ standards. Recommendations made by an EA provide valuable feedback and input into continuous improvement plans for learner assessments leading to QQI awards.

The FETQS Team has commenced the process in the development of a dedicated LWETB EA Panel. EA panel members are recruited through a full HR process for a two-year duration and must complete the ETBI EA Directory training. The FETQS Team have produced specific EA briefing sessions to aid and strengthen the EA process within LWETB to make it specific to our centres, service and provision within Longford and Westmeath and our QA processes.

**Other Awarding Bodies:** A sample of work is reviewed by an appointed External Quality Authenticator (EQA)/External Examiner. These visits can be conducted remotely or in-centre and are relevant to a number of awarding bodies including; City and Guilds, VTCT, Metlab, ACS etc.

## Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

The financial statements of LWETB are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and laid before the Oireachtas in accordance with the governing legislation. These ensure that funding received by LWETB from SOLAS are spent in an economic, efficient and effective manner for the provision of FET programmes.





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## LWETB ACHIEVEMENTS

In exploring and analysing LWETB reports we have extracted meaningful insights and achievements that align to our strategic goals:

### Local Goals:

Strategic Goals 2017-2022	Achievements
Deliver professional, high quality, learner-centred education and training services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner Charter operational</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning Policy operational</li> <li>• Significant investment in ICT (remote learning exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic)</li> <li>• Annual Service Plans developed and yearly goals set</li> <li>• Completed Youth Work Plan (2019-2022)<sup>47</sup></li> <li>• FETQS (Further Education and Training Quality System) Team established</li> <li>• Implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) for Youth Work</li> <li>• Enterprise Engagement Team established</li> </ul>
Enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Parent/Learner Feedback</li> <li>• Development of a TEL Action Plan</li> <li>• Enhanced tracking of learner attainment and statistics through better querying and PLSS queries</li> <li>• Physical learning environment investment</li> <li>• Development of staff PL&amp;D plans</li> </ul>
Foster effective communication, collaboration and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategy developed</li> <li>• ICT Framework developed</li> <li>• Collaborative management through Teams/Team Groups, minutes of meetings etc.</li> <li>• Membership of many national, regional and local forums – including links with stakeholders and agencies</li> </ul>
Progress the development of effective organisational structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational structure changes</li> <li>• Leadership training provided</li> <li>• Keeping abreast with national initiatives and fora by forum representation</li> <li>• Enhanced links with local and national bodies, agencies and stakeholders</li> </ul>
Support a culture of continuous development with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, support and framework in place of PL&amp;D for staff</li> <li>• Development of new career traineeship programmes (a feasibility study for the research, development, design and validation of new apprenticeship programmes proved unfavourable)</li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> In the LWETB Strategy Statement, the Youth Work Plan was initially envisaged to be from 2017 to 2022, but while work had commenced in this area, the approval/publication date was 2019, so it was felt that this was a more appropriate start year for the report.



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## National Goals:

- Provided skills for the economy – achieved through learner certifications and improved employer engagement
- Active inclusion – prioritising supports to break the cycle of disadvantage that at times can prevent learners from reaching their full potential and being able to fully participate in society, employment and community
- Quality provision – a quality improvement plan (QIP) was put in place and actioned
- Outcomes based planning and funding – robust data gathering and data quality in PLSS and FARR to support analysis of performance and support planning
- Standing of FET – development of strategies to improve FET as a post-secondary education choice
- Contributing to National FET Targets by improvements in;
  - Learners securing employment from courses where this is the primary objective
  - Learners progressing to other FE/HE courses where this is the primary objective
  - Certification rates on transversal (social mobility) skills development
  - Lifelong learning interventions
  - Learners receiving qualifications in growth sectors
  - Number of traineeship programmes on offer

LWETB's Contribution to the National Skills Strategy 2025<sup>48</sup>:

Objective	Response
<b>1.</b> Providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulting with external stakeholders</li> <li>• Responding to industry and sectoral reports</li> <li>• Careful planning</li> <li>• Expanding course offerings and retiring out of date course/materials</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b> Employer engagement in the development of skills and then use of these skills to improve productivity and competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers consulted on new programme development</li> <li>• Skills to Advance (STA) and Skills to Compete (STC) initiatives</li> <li>• Review of feedback from employers on their needs</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b> Continual enhancement and evaluation of teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive PL&amp;D Strategy</li> <li>• Investment in TEL</li> <li>• Investment in ICT Infrastructure</li> <li>• Pedagogy Investment such as UDL</li> </ul>

*Continued*

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/pub\\_national\\_skills\\_strategy\\_2025.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf)



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Objective	Response
4. Promotion of lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Access, Transfer and Progression (AT&amp;P) Policy</li> <li>Ethos of inclusion for all</li> <li>Wide variety of learning options available, delivered in varying formats</li> </ul>
5. Focus on active inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defined as a core value of LWETB</li> <li>Certain provisions have a particular focus or remit to promote educational interventions to support active inclusion in society</li> </ul>
6. Increase in the supply of skills to the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active in STA and STC initiatives</li> <li>Growth in the number of learners achieving certifications</li> <li>Enhance the range of qualifications offered</li> <li>Offer a wide breath of courses including the offering of different delivery methods</li> </ul>

## EFFECTIVE

- LWETB is incorporating the findings and directives of SOLAS and other industry reports into local strategy and striving to achieve goals set down by SOLAS and the Department of Education
- Monitoring and review activities are well defined, with deadlines, benchmarking and responsibilities assigned to individuals/groups
- Quality is constantly promoted and is a culture that is prevalent throughout the organisation

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- A review of LWETB's strategic goals for 2022-2027 is underway with an advisory group currently compiling an updated report
- Preliminary work has commenced on the Youth Work Plan 2023-2028
- Strategic Performance Agreements are up for review and will be a focus for 2022

## FUTURE FOCUS

- Continue to support SOLAS and the Department of Education directives as appropriate
- Continue an ethos of staff engagement with advisory and working groups to contribute to national policy
- Continue to implement local and national Government policy
- Continue to focus on providing the best service possible to the learners and enterprises of Longford and Westmeath
- Continue an ethos of continual approval

## PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

A programme/module review form application process identifies issues and concerns with individual curriculum or assessments as detailed in the modular descriptor.

Programme reviews are brought to the PGG (Programme Governance Group) by the FETQS team and ratified by the QOG (Quality Oversight Group).

The PGG monitors review requests and manages these changes based on the scale of the review required, engaging external subject matter experts and internal communities of practice as appropriate. Once the PGG is satisfied, it is presented to the QOG for ratification.

National consultation processes allow LWETB to review and evaluate national programmes (VTOS, Youthreach, PLC etc.). National Evaluation Reports and their impact on local provision are discussed on an ongoing basis at FET steering Group level, as well as at the QA governance structures level.

The Programme Governance Group PGG in conjunction with the FETQS Team are tasked with the initial focus areas of:

- LWETB Programmes
- Learner Induction
- Learner Feedback

The PGG works in alignment to the PGG Workplan where areas of priority are identified and a record is then retained of tasks of 'in-progress' and 'completed'.



## EFFECTIVE

The PGG and QOG have a robust process in place for programme monitoring and review.

## UNDER DEVELOPMENT

- Procedure for Management of Programme Descriptors
- QQI Centre Validation: Approved Programmes and Module Listing
- There is a need to modernise assessments, particularly those in Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) for a large number of modules. Preliminary work has started to address this
- Assessment updates are rolled out through the PGG, synchronising local decision making





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## FUTURE FOCUS

- AMS – Assessment Management System – Centralised Assessments
- MMS – Module Management System incorporating Programme Proposals
- Communities of Practice (CoPs)
- Working collaboratively with other ETB's to reduce the workload and cost involved in developing and updating programmes, modules and assessments

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

### External Provision

- LWETB uses Contracted Training, LTIs and STPs for external provision of training
- Contracted Training providers were chosen after a competitive tendering process undertaken by SOLAS and the Office of Public Procurement. The performance of external provision is monitored on a per course basis and accessed on course placements, certification levels and learner feedback. External providers must follow Operating Guidelines at all times to ensure a professional learning environment. Regular management meetings with contracted training companies and an ethos of co-operation ensure a positive relationship exists and is maintained
- LTIs and STPs are very much integrated into the fabric of LWETB. They attend regular meetings with LWETB staff and have involvement in various advisory and steering groups. LTIs and STPs assist LWETB fulfil its remit by providing education and training for learners that require significant supports and typically have limited previous engagement with education and training opportunities

#### LWETB External Provision

##### Contracted Training Companies Feedback

##### Effective Feedback

- Robust governance structure – multi-layer managerial support
- Comprehensive operating guidelines, policies and procedures
- Professional learning environment provided – high standard of room and resource provision
- Qualified educators in pedagogy, qualifications and experience
- Assessment procedures continuously reviewed to uphold the integrity of the assessment process

##### Future Focus

- Many of the Assessment Instrument Specifications (AISs) need updating
- Exceptionally high pedagogical and experience requirements for assessors/educators make entrance of new assessors/educators extremely difficult and at times unattainable





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## Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator

Skills To Business (Skills to Advance and Skills to Compete) initiatives has allowed LWETB reach out and service local enterprise directly for their training and upskilling needs. It has allowed LWETB to achieve increased brand awareness and foster closer links with local employers. The Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator manages this relationship and receives feedback (informally and formally) on training offered under the Skills To Advance and Skills for Work pathways. Open communication with industry has allowed enterprise understand that LWETB offers a myriad of courses across 12 different domains, managed and facilitated by professionals.

*"...within two weeks, a dedicated and exclusive training course was agreed and assembled for Hodson Bay Group staff... we have over 40 members of our teams across the Hodson Bay Hotel, Galway Bay Hotel, Sheraton Athlone Hotel and Hyatt Centric Hotel benefiting from a course in Leadership and Management Skills. The collaboration with LWETB has been a real positive during these times... I hope that in addition to training opportunities, that the direct relationship we now have with LWETB will prove to be a significant channel for recruitment in the future."*

**Services to Business Support, 2021**

**Ex Commercial Director,  
Hodson Bay Group**



*"TMC Fabrications have collaborated with LWETB, Athlone Training Centre for many years. This includes TMC facilitating work experience trainees, employing graduates and TMC staff receiving further training at Athlone Training Centre. We have always found the instructors to be very approachable and experienced in their particular fields, delivering top class training with excellent facilities. Any trainees that have come through their training programmes were very well tutored and always had a positive experience."*

**Services to Business Support, 2021**

**Owner, TMC Fabrications Ltd.**



*"LWETB has been a valuable partner in the skills development and learning journey of our people. The diverse range of courses on offer has enabled us to up-skill our people at various levels across our departments. The level of service and guidance provided to both DPD management and our people has been very professional and to a high standard."*

**Services to Business Support, 2021**

**Training Manager, DPD Ireland**



*"...we always appreciated the flexibility of the training programmes, some of which were designed specifically for our needs. We have been able to get excellent staff, well trained and committed to work through LWETB..."*

**Services to Business Support, 2021**

**Managing Director, TEG Ltd.**





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## EFFECTIVE

- Strong collaborative relationships exist between external provision and LWETB maintained by regular communication
- Detailed operating guidelines for all external provisions provides a strong professional relationship where each party is very clear about roles

## FUTURE FOCUS

- With a new Contracted Training Framework due in 2022, new contracted training companies may be providing the service. A concerted effort will be made by LWETB to ensure these companies provide the professional service that LWETB expects of its contractors and comply at all times to the Operating Guidelines
- Feedback is received from feedback forms and questionnaires the majority of the time. These don't always provide a true reflection on how an employer or learner feels about the service received. A more multi-faceted approach will be adopted where world cafés, focus groups and other feedback approaches will be adopted to provide a more rounded approach
- Contracted training companies are not currently encouraged to participate in Communities of Practice and other quality networks run by LWETB. External contribution by companies who have significant SME and delivery experience would be beneficial. This would also strengthen the relationship between contracted training companies and LWETB

## CHALLENGES

- With remote learning likely to continue post-pandemic, getting feedback from industry and learners is more difficult
- Creating close relationships with industry is difficult when face-to-face meetings are not possible because of the pandemic and with more individuals working from home, in the future this may pose a challenge
- Receiving feedback from learners who are studying at NFQ Levels 1 to 3 can be challenging as literacy and articulation levels can be weak



(Left to Right): Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator; Liz Glennon, featured with MEP Mairéad McGuinness and Adult Guidance Co-ordinator; Caroline Cornally  
Midlands Expo, 2019

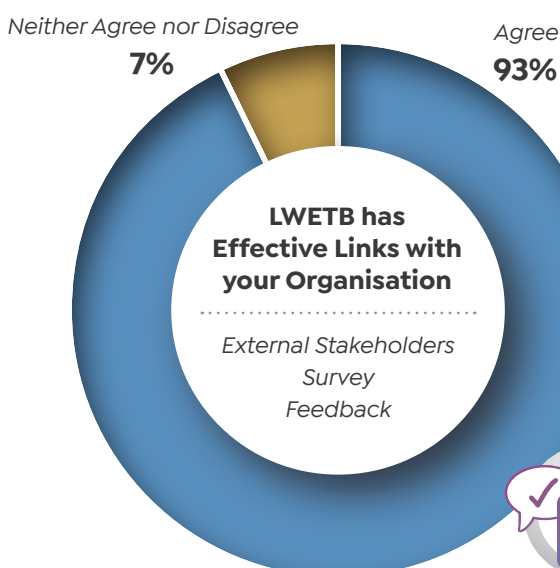
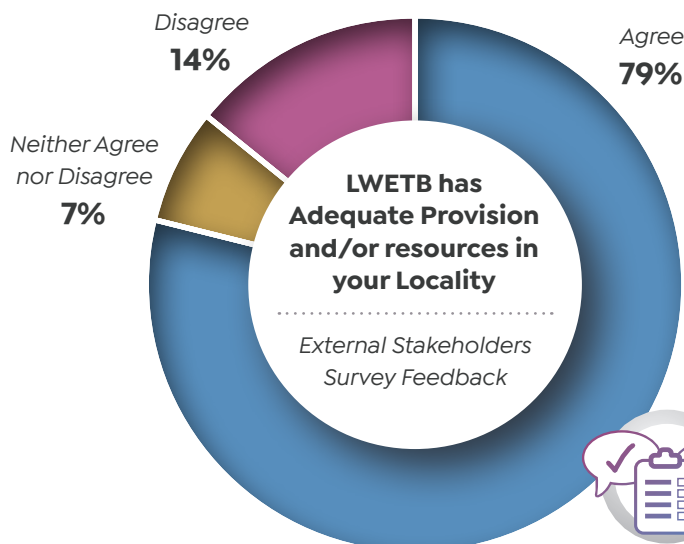




"We needed some bespoke welding training ... we contacted LWETB and they didn't hesitate to create the required training to meet our needs. The tutors and facilities are excellent and we would highly recommend them, and will be using them again in the future."

#### Services to Business Support, 2021

Owner, Colm Quinn BMW Dealerships



Creating positive changes in Kilbeggan YouthReach



## 6. CONCLUSION

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The Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance arrangements within Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board created an opportunity for LWETB as a provider of Further Education and Training Service to review itself as an organisation. It allowed LWETB to fully evaluate individual FET centres, services provided and review the effectiveness of systems that have been developed and implemented for the governance and management of Quality Assurance over the past number of years.

The review process was an ambitious agenda to progress and one that was more challenging, especially through a worldwide health concern.

Our learners, staff and stakeholders have had to transform, change and adapt in terms of digital knowledge, contingency plans and finding new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. We have grown our competencies in how we communicate and engage with one another. Our self-evaluation has evolved from previous strategy statements and plans meant for a different world but still aligned to our core values and mission.

LWETB are moving towards a new phase where real reform and performance improvement can deliver a more strategic and integrated service and provision. As we challenge our scope of provision, we take this as an opportunity to deliver an even more cohesive approach to FET and establish a range of new, fit-for-purpose commitments and future focus contributions over the next few years.

Our approach is and always will be aligned and in sync with our 3 pillars:

1. Further Education and Training
2. Organisation, Support and Development
3. Schools, Youth and Music

These will be underpinned with a strong emphasis on our future focus as identified within the LWETB Self-Evaluation Report:

SER Section	Areas Identified as Future Focus
<b>Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A complete review of work based learning (WBL) for work experience and work practice needs attention at NFQ levels 3-6 to ensure a quality structured learning at all times</li> <li>Collaboration is in place with other ETB's, but needs further development, especially in the area of shared curriculum development</li> <li>Possible expansion of the Erasmus+ programme. This EU programme supports education, training, youth and sport in Europe with a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions and promoting young people participation in democratic life. International FET learners working together would potentially be an excellent opportunity for learning and growth. PLC learners studying beauty therapy did engage in this with great success</li> </ul>



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SER Section	Areas Identified as Future Focus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Using connections made by the Enterprise Engagement Co-ordinator, a host of employers are willing to offer expertise in programme development/modifications and this will be taken full advantage of</li><li>ETB's encourage cooperation especially through peer channels, such as the Quality Network. Cooperation can be limited and needs to be embraced to a greater degree within all ETB's</li><li>Continue to develop flexible learning pathways to cater for the diverse range of learners across the region</li></ul>
<b>Integrity and Approval of Learner Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continual briefings to ensure that SME's devise appropriate assessments in strict adherence to the standards required at each level of the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ)</li><li>How assessments promote and supports effective learning and teaching needs continual training</li><li>A new Contracted Training Framework has been in place since January 2022. Training sessions on QA are continually provided to support new second providers immediately upon winning tenders being announced to ensure comprehension and compliance</li><li>For courses where certification is not an aim, little recognition of the subjective positive outcomes of a course are captured e.g. improved self-confidence. This is particularly an issue in provisions such as community education and adult literacy where many learners do not wish to undertake programmes on the NFQ framework</li></ul>
<b>Information and Data Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continued participation on ETBI/SOLAS-led advisory groups to voice information systems enhancement requests. Urgent security concerns include RCCRS being designed to work in Internet Explorer with Microsoft discontinuing support for this browser in 2022</li><li>Scrutinising of security features and conducting user access audits of existing information systems within our control to maintain secure learner (and staff) records. Appointing external experts to aid this if necessary</li><li>Bi-annual holistic review of informational reports to determine if any additional insights can be gleaned</li><li>Keeping abreast with changes in Data Protection Commissioner Directives along with continued compliance by all staff</li></ul>





SER Section	Areas Identified as Future Focus
<b>Public Information and Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many of the service/centre provision maintain their own websites/social media. There is a lack of uniformity between these sites and inconsistent brand representation online. This may cause learner confusion and a more consolidated approach is needed</li><li>• Social media presence, most notably, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is ad-hoc with many service/centre provisions maintaining their own social media presence. A more consolidated approach is being considered</li><li>• LWETB's current profile on LinkedIn is weak. LinkedIn will allow past learners in employment to engage with LWETB into the future, assist with employer/industry engagement and attract human resource talent for vacant positions</li><li>• LWETB needs to engage in newer social media platforms used by the young adult demographic e.g. TikTok</li><li>• Information across LWETB's website can sometimes be outdated, and needs to be reviewed on a more regular basis by designated personnel to ensure that it is current</li><li>• The possibility of creating a new Communication and Promotion Officer role with significant online promotion experience would provide more cohesive (and effective) marketing campaigns to advertise services</li><li>• At times, there can be a lack of general awareness of the range of courses and services that LWETB provides. Name recognition is not as forefront in people's minds as LWETB would like. Marketing campaigns will be developed to attempt to address and rectify this</li></ul>
<b>The Learning Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purchasing of TEL equipment would be ideally placed within the expertise of a dedicated IT department. LWETB does not have a dedicated IT Manager</li><li>• For blended and online programmes, more information must be provided on the technology the learner is expected to have at home, broadband speed required and platforms supported</li><li>• For blended and online programmes, LWETB must endeavour to ensure that it's not unintentionally discriminating against learners who don't have fast Internet speeds, have limited access to technology at home or where any expense needed to join a programme prohibits participation – equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to all</li><li>• Ensuring seamless transition from classroom to remote learning for blended programmes (and vice versa)</li><li>• Ensuring the learning experiences of remote learning is as similar as those studying in a classroom style of delivery</li></ul>





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## SER Section

## Areas Identified as Future Focus

- The need to take a very considered approach to blended, online and remote learning after the pandemic. Certain learning outcomes (particularly at NFQ Levels 5 and 6) are suitable to an online environment. It is essential that learners have well developed remote learning skills prior to course commencement. LWETB is mindful not to unintentionally create barriers to education for learners who progress to higher NFQ levels where remote learning is an intrinsic part of course delivery
- There is no formal mechanism for learners to make representations to LWETB about matters of immediate concern to the learner body, such as a learner council or learner representatives. Formal and informal feedback and questionnaires are post-event activities. Since courses offered are short in duration alternative mechanisms to learner councils needs to be considered

## Assessment of Learners

- Continual training at all stages in the process, to ensure all provisions adhere to all aspects of the assessment processes and NFQ standards are maintained at all times
- Results from RAP Recommendations:
  - More attention to the correct use of referencing on learner assessments
  - Improved recording of skills demonstrations
  - Implementation of FETQS Assessment Templates
  - Improved provision of summative and formative feedback to learners
  - Reduction on the over-reliance on written assessment work and workbooks especially at Level 4 upwards
  - Staggering IV process throughout programme duration
  - Improved identification of how marks are awarded or deducted
- LWETB wish to be involved in the National Academic Integrity Network<sup>49</sup> once it becomes available to FET providers. This will provide useful guidelines in upholding academic integrity including the prevention, detection and handling of academic misconduct

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Academic%20Integrity%20Guidelines.pdf>



SER Section	Areas Identified as Future Focus
<b>Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support SOLAS and Department of Education directives as appropriate</li> <li>Continue to implement local and national Government policy</li> <li>Continue an ethos of staff engagement with advisory and working groups to contribute to national policy</li> <li>Continue to focus on providing the best service possible to the learners and enterprises of Longford and Westmeath</li> <li>Continue an ethos of continual approval</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Monitoring and Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AMS – Assessment Management System – Centralised Assessments</li> <li>MMS – Module Management System incorporating Programme Proposals through the Programme Management Application (PMA)</li> <li>Communities of Practice (CoPs)</li> <li>Working collaboratively with other ETB's to reduce the workload and cost involved in developing and updating programmes, modules and assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Other parties involved in Education and Training (oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/ third parties)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With a new Contracted Training Framework due in 2022, new contracted training companies may be providing the service. A concerted effort will be made by LWETB to ensure these companies provide the professional service that LWETB expects of its contractors and comply at all times to the Operating Guidelines</li> <li>Feedback is received from feedback forms and questionnaires the majority of the time. These don't always provide a true reflection on how an employer or learner feels about the service received. A more multi-faceted approach will be adopted where world cafés, focus groups and other feedback approaches will be adopted to provide a more rounded approach</li> <li>Contracted training companies are not currently encouraged to participate in Communities of Practice and other quality networks run by LWETB. External contribution by companies who have significant SME and delivery experience would be beneficial. This would also strengthen the relationship between the contracted training companies and LWETB</li> </ul>

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This process has allowed us to highlight areas of good practice and modernisation 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. LWETB placed emphasis on all its learners, its centres and its services. We are aware that the self-evaluation process is a point in time and that quality assurance is a continuous process. Our approach and processes will adapt and change following this review, but there is a new sense of understanding and ownership as a result of our self-evaluation of LWETB.

Instances of such good practice that are hard to capture through surveys/consultation include services and or supports given to learners or programmes that staff and stakeholders provide as a standard practice. Linking into and providing educational opportunity into rural communities. Reaching and supporting learners regardless of age, cultural background or those requiring additional assistance. Guiding, supporting and delivering options for learners to find self-confidence while gaining skills, knowledge and competencies within our programme offerings. Supporting the individual while allowing them to take control and self-autonomy. These are themes that have been heard by steering group members throughout this process and must also be considered and taken into consideration when developing future plans.

A key theme to the analytics of staff both within LWETB and that of second providers is also the vast experience, skills, knowledge and competency in respective fields of learning and the commitment to alternative teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) during COVID-19 and how those challenges were met remotely. In reviewing and reflecting on our processes and procedures during this time, we are satisfied that they have been sufficiently robust to meet the demands placed on the Quality Assurance system. We are conscious that our learners, who are at the centre of everything we do, have been affected in so many ways by the pandemic. Adjustments to programme delivery and assessment were made to meet the needs of learners while still adhering to and meeting national standards. The feedback from our learners has been largely positive during this time. Learning from this review process will assist LWETB in the development of our new Strategic Statement for the period 2022 to 2027.

The way that LWETB engages in the social, economic and educational fabric of our counties has fundamentally changed over the last number of years as technology has advanced and COVID-19 has only accelerated the pace at which we need to mobilise, grow and respond. People are choosing different career path choices, industry is adopting new business models and LWETB must respond with accredited, non-accredited and specific programmes to meet these opportunities.

This review process was a huge undertaking for LWETB staff and the areas identified are the product of extensive analysis coupled with a comprehensive consultation process. Its successful completion required considerable input and collaboration across all our stakeholder groups. We would like to take this opportunity to note our thanks and appreciation to all our learners, educators, co-ordinators, managers, and colleagues who made a huge contribution to the quality of this report. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the commitment, hard work and central role that the Quality Assurance and TQAS Teams have played throughout this process.

**Antonine Healy – FET Director**



# 7. APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX 1

### Self-Evaluating Steering Group

**Antonine Healy**

FET Director, Chairperson

**Karen Moore and Garry Allen**

LWETB Review Co-ordinators

**Tracy Anderson**

TEL PL&D Co-ordinator

**Hugh Connor**

Assistant Manager, Athlone Training Centre

**Mike Connor**

Community Training Centre Manager – Second Provider

**Caroline Cornally**

Guidance Co-ordinator, FET

**Shauna Doherty**

Adult Education Officer

**Nicola Galvin**

Adult Education Officer

**Brian Higgins**

Director of Schools, Youth and Music

**Charlie Mitchell**

Director of OSD

**Karen Moore**

FET Standards Officer

**Ronan Murray**

Area Training Manager

**Jennifer Simpson**

FET Educator

**Grainne Timlin**

Training Standards Officer

**Elizabeth White**

Integrated Services Manager NLN – Second Provider



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## APPENDIX 2

### Centre/Service Profile Template



Centre / Service Profile



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## Centre/Service Self-Evaluation Template





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## APPENDIX 3

### LWETB Documentation

- LWETB-Strategy-Statement-2017-2022
- LWETB Service Plan 2020
- LWETB Strategy Statement 2017-2022
- LWETB Youth Work Plan 2019-2022
- LWETB Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2018
- LWETB Executive Self Evaluation Report 2017
- LWETB Learner Charter 2020
- LWETB Teaching and Learning Strategy Information and Technology
- LWETB Strategic Performance Agreement
- LWETB Executive Report 2021 PPT
- LWETB Annual Report 2020
- LWETB Service Plan 2021
- LWETB Service Plan 2020
- LWETB Service Plan 2019
- LWETB Newsletter Dec 21
- LWETB Teaching and Learning Strategy
- LWETB TEL Plan 2019 LWETB v2
- LWETB TEL Plan 2020
- LWETB TEL Plan 2021
- LWETB Teaching and Learning Online in FET LWETB v1
- LWETB Adult Guidance Newsletters
- LWETB Staff TEL induction July 21
- LWETB Youth Work Plan 2019 – 2022
- LWETB Newsletters
- LWETB Risk Man Policy
- LWETB Protected Disclosure Policy
- LWETB QIP Progress Report March 2020
- LWETB Complaints Procedure
- LWETB Awards
- LWETB COVID-19 Business Response Plan
- LWETB FET PD Application Framework Jan 2021
- LWETB Digital Training Hub Longford
- LWETB FET Provision – KM21





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## Supporting Documentation

- AONTAS
- AONTAS Annual Synthesis Report
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Regional Skills Impact of Covid on Midlands
- Westmeath County Council – Economic Information
- Longford Economic Report
- Regional Skills – Athlone
- Westmeath Economic Information
- Future Employment in the Midlands
- SOLAS Professional Learning and Development Strategy 2020-2024
- Employee Assistance Service – Staff Support Wellbeing
- Code of Practice for International Learners – QQI
- AONTAS Community Education in COVID-19
- TQAS Over Arching Quality Assurance Manual V4.3
- Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) Statement of Strategy 2021-2023
- SOLAS Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantageous Fund 2021
- Universal Design for Learning – Summary Report
- Academic Integrity Guidelines
- Local Training Initiative – Operating Guidelines
- Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – Feedback LWETB Final
- SOLAS Further Education and Training – Professional Development Strategy
- SOLAS Professional Development Strategy 2020-2024
- BTEI Operating Guidelines 2012
- Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – Academic Integrity
- Academic Integrity Guidelines
- Learners with Disabilities 2018
- Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Survey Report 2021
- QQI Governance resource
- TQAS Over Arching Quality Assurance Manual v4.3
- Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) Guidelines for ETBs v1. 2021
- Social Media Posts FET Learner Experience
- LWETB Workshop – Board Members 201110 Annotated
- AONTAS – I’m a FET Learner Aontas
- Future Employment and Skills In The Irish Midlands



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- Specific Skills Training – SST Evaluation
- QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
- QQI Sector specific QA Guidelines for ETBs
- QQI Statutory QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes
- QQI Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) Policy Restatement FINAL 2018
- Apprenticeship Programmes QAG Topic-Specific
- QQI – Validation of Programmes – Initial Validation Policy
- QQI – Inaugural Quality Assurance Review of Education and Training Boards Policy
- SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024
- SOLAS LWETB SPA



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