



**lmetb**  
 Bord Oideachais agus  
 Oiliúna Lí agus na Mí  
 Louth and Meath Education  
 and Training Board



# INAUGURAL REVIEW OF QUALITY ASSURANCE:

# LOUTH MEATH EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

# SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

December 2021



Rialtas na hÉireann  
 Government of Ireland



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QQI AWARD

# FOREWORD

Louth Meath Education and Training Board's Mission Statement and the value and goals developed as part of its Strategy Statement clearly reinforce the organisation's commitment to providing high-quality, learner-centred education and training, and this approach underpins every aspect of Further Education and Training (FET) provision in LMETB.

The Director of FET and I are pleased to present and endorse LMETB's Self-Evaluation Report (SER), compiled for submission to QQI, as an accurate and fair reflection of the Quality Assurance (QA) procedures underpinning LMETB FET programme delivery. This report represents a key component of QQI's Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance processes in LMETB.

LMETB welcomes the opportunity the self-evaluation process has presented to reflect on the effectiveness of the organisation's FET QA systems. In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of the advances LMETB has made in this area since its establishment, the process has also allowed us to identify gaps in the internal QA processes and to detail the required measures to address and resolve them. We have included a set of ambitious actions that we believe will further improve the FET service we provide going forward.

The report is the culmination of a comprehensive, open consultative process involving learners, FET staff, community partners and employers. Despite the challenging circumstances associated with delivery of FET over the past two years, we would like to acknowledge how fully engaged learners, staff and stakeholders were with the process and thank all for their contributions. We are particularly grateful to the staff of AONTAS for their facilitation of the virtual LMETB FET Learner Forum and survey in May 2021.

We would like to warmly thank the FET staff involved in managing the self-evaluation process, in particular our Quality Assurance Officer, Professional Learning and Development/ Communications Officer, and Technology Enhanced Learning Officer for their dedication and expertise in coordinating and compiling the LMETB Self-Evaluation Report, and the

Adult Education Officers who contributed to finalising this report. This work was guided and overseen by LMETB's Quality Assurance Governance Management Committee (QAGMC), and by its Inaugural Review Steering Group, which includes representatives from across the organisation.

The LMETB organisation now has an enhanced understanding of QQI Core and Sector Specific QA Guidelines and how vital LMETB's QA policies and procedures are in the delivery of FET programmes. The organisation will continue to learn from this reflection and the learning will be instrumental in shaping the Implementation Plan of our next Strategy Statement and further iterations of our Quality Improvement Plan. LMETB is committed to the concept of continuous improvement associated with QA. This is instrumental in helping us innovate to address the evolving needs of our learners, given the twin challenges of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic to the future world of work.

LMETB FET look forward to the ongoing engagement with QQI and in particular to meeting and welcoming the Review Panel in March 2022 to discuss the report findings and proposed actions for quality improvement within LMETB's FET provision. The engagement, dialogue and feedback from the QQI review team will be invaluable in providing a welcome external perspective and advice on further improving our evolving QA processes, as we work to ensure that LMETB continues to provide the quality education and training our learners expect and deserve.



*Martin G O'Brien, Chief Executive LMETB*



*Sadie Ward McDermott, Director of FET LMETB*

# GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	ESER	Executive Self-Evaluation Report
ACRS	Apprenticeship College Results System	ESF	European Social Fund
ACSS	Apprentice Client Services System	ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
AMTCE	Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence	ETB	Education and Training Board
AEGIS	Adult Education Guidance and Information Service	ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
AEO	Adult Education Officer	FARR	Funding Allocations Requests and Reporting
AHEAD	Association for Higher Education Access & Disability	FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
AIS	Assessment Instrument Specification	FESS	Further Education Support Service
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser	FET	Further Education and Training
ALS	Adult Learning Service	FETCH	Further Education and Training Course Hub
APO	Assistant Principal Officer	FIT	Fasttrack to Information Technology
AONTAS	National Adult Learning Organisation	FOI	Freedom of Information
ART-2	Adult Reading Test	FSD	Fund for Students with Disability
ATSO	Assistant Training Standards Officer	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
BKSB	Basic and Key Skills Builder	H & S	Health and Safety
BOM	Board of Management	HE	Higher Education
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative	HEI	Higher Education Institute
C & G	City and Guilds	HR	Human Resources
CAO	Central Applications Office	HSE	Health Service Executive
CAS	Common Awards System	IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board	ICDL	International Computer Driving Licence
CE	Chief Executive	ICS	Irish Computer Society
CEIP	Centre Evaluation and Improvement Plan	ICT	Information Communications Technology
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
CRM	Client Relationship Management	ILP	Individual Learning Plan
CSO	Central Statistics Office	IMR	Irish Manufacturing Research
CTC	Community Training Centre	IT	Information Technology
CT	Contracted Training	ITEC	International Therapy Examination Council
CTO	Contracted Training Officer	IV	Internal Verification
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Service Committee	JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer
DAST	Dyslexia Adult Screening Test	KPI	Key Performance Indicator
DCEDIY	Department for Children, Disability, Integration and Youth	LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
DCFE	Dunboyne College of Further Education	LCETB	Limerick Clare Education and Training Board
DCU	Dublin City University	LDA	Locally Devised Assessment
DE	Department of Education	LDC	Local Development Company
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	LECD	Local Economic and Community Plan
DIFE	Drogheda Institute of Further Education	LMETB	Louth Meath Education and Training Board
DKIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology	LTI	Local Training Initiative
DSP	Department of Social Protection	MAEDF	Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund
EA	External Authenticator	MFA	Multi Factor Authentication
EQA	External Quality Assurer	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

MS TEAMS	Microsoft Teams	RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency	RSA	Road Safety Authority
NCC	National Course Calendar	RSTC	Regional Skills & Training Centre
NEFHEA	North East Further and Higher Education Alliance	SEC	State Examinations Commission
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications	SENI	Special Educational Needs Initiative
NLN	National Learning Network	SER	Self-Evaluation Report
NPD	National Programme Database	SLA	Service Level Agreement
NUI	National University of Ireland	SLMRU	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway	SME	Subject Matter Expert
OFI	Ó Fiaich Institute of Further Education	SMT	Senior Management Team
OGP	Office of Government Procurement	SOLAS	The Further Education and Training Authority
OSD	Organisation Support & Development	SPA	Strategic Performance Agreement
PDRE	Programme Development, Review and Evaluation	STA	Skills to Advance
PHECC	Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	STC	Skills to Compete
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate	STP	Specialist Training Provision
PLD	Professional Learning and Development	TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System	TOR	Terms of Reference
PR	Public Relations	TLA	Teaching Learning and Assessment
QA	Quality Assurance	TQAS	Transitional Quality Assurance System
QAGMC	Quality Assurance Governance and Management Committee	TSO	Training Standards Officer
QAS	Quality Assurance Services (SOLAS)	TU	Technological University
QBS	QQI Business System	UCD	University College Dublin
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan	UDL	Universal Design for Learning
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland	VEC	Vocational Education Committee
RAP	Results Approval Panel	VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
RCCRS	Results Capture and Certification Request System	VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning		

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# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1 CONTEXT

Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is the largest comprehensive education and training provider in the Louth and Meath region. It provides a range of services from primary to post-primary and Further Education and Training (FET).

It is one of the largest Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the country, employing over 2,400 staff and providing education and training for over 13,000 students at primary and post-primary and approximately 14,000 learners in FET.

### LMETB FET Provision

LMETB's FET Services offer a diverse range of full-time and part-time education and training opportunities for all individuals over the age of sixteen across a variety of LMETB centres and outreach locations across Louth and Meath.

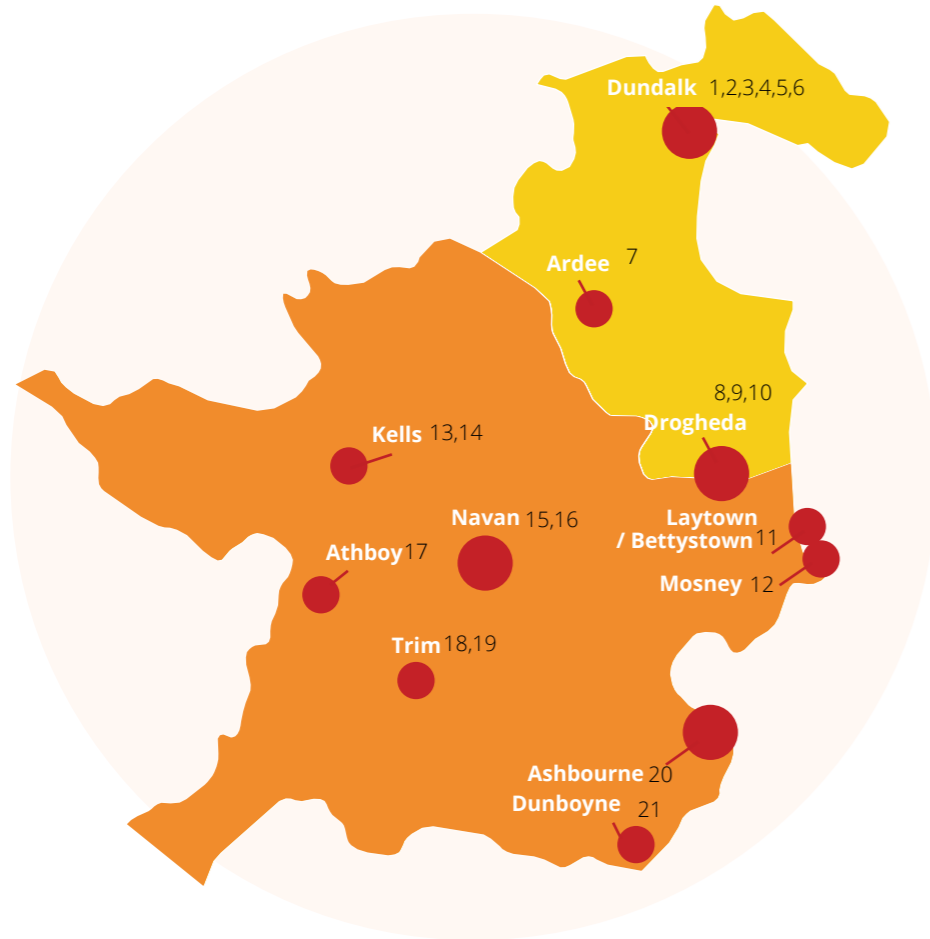
The map below 'Location of FET Centres in LMETB' shows the wide range of facilities and locations through which LMETB FET Services currently operate. These include:

- 3 PLC Colleges (including one shared campus facility with post-primary provision)
- 1 Regional Skills and Training Centre
- 1 Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence
- 1 Community Training Centre
- 8 Youthreach Centres
- 7 Multi-use FET Campuses/centres offering a range of FET programmes and services

LMETB's services are also available in a range of community-based locations across the two counties. (For the purpose of consistency, throughout the Self Evaluation Report, all FET colleges and centres will be referred to as 'FET Centres.')



## Location of FET Centres in LMETB



Key	
1	FET Campus, Chapel St, Dundalk
2	Youthreach Dundalk
3	Regional Skills and Training Centre
4	Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence
5	O Fiaich Institute of Further Education
6	Community Training Centre, Dundalk
7	Youthreach Ardee
8	FET Campus, King Street
9	Drogheda Institute of Further Education
10	Youthreach Drogheda
11	Youthreach Laytown/ Bettystown
12	FET Centre, Mosney Village
13	FET Centre Kells
14	Youthreach Kells
15	Youthreach Navan
16	FET Campus, Railway St, Navan
17	FET Centre Athboy
18	Youthreach Trim
19	FET Centre Trim
20	Youthreach Ashbourne
21	Dunboyne College of Further Education

As part of the self- evaluation process, LMETB's compiled a Provider Profile which gives contextual information to accompany this Self- Evaluation Report. LMETB's Provider Profile is available [here](#) and outlines the following information:

- Background of LMETB
- Mission, Values, Strategic Focus and Key Performance Indicators
- Governance and Management Structures
- Approach to Quality
- Regional Profile

- Provision Profile
- Learner Profile
- Staffing Profile
- Collaborations and Partnership

The data and information presented in the Provider Profile highlight a range of factors which impact on LMETB's strategic direction and Quality Assurance systems. Some examples of these are highlighted in the table below:

Example of key factors impacting LMETB's Strategic Direction and QA systems	Implication for LMETB's strategic direction and QA systems
Demographic factors in the region: High population growth between 2011 and 2016, rapidly growing regional towns and rapidly growing suburban centres in the Dublin commuter belt.	LMETB has recognised the need to expand services to contend with the growing population, particularly in urban areas. Its Post Leaving Certificate provision, for example, has responded to the rising population numbers and from 2017 to date has seen a year-on-year increase in its learner numbers.
Geographical factors in the region: LMETB's close proximity to the border with Northern Ireland, which presents implications and uncertainty, in the current post-Brexit environment.	LMETB continues to collaborate with relevant partners and develop initiatives in response to the Brexit challenges presented. For example, the provision of a Freight Forwarding course (NFQ Level 5) under Skills to Advance Initiative in 2021. This course aims to upskill those working in freight forwarding and logistics to enable them to operate within the national and global trading environments.
Deprivation: Large numbers of designated areas of deprivation, according to the HP Pobal Deprivation Index 2016	The high level of disadvantage in the region continues to reflect in LMETB's provision and collaborations. Some developments in that regard include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LMETB's hosting of the Drogheda Implementation Board and Project Coordinator as part of the Drogheda Implementation plan.</li> <li>• LMETB's recently launched "Wider Opportunities for Women" FET Programme. This aims to support women who may be early school leavers, in a one parent family household or long term unemployed, in their journey to return to learning.</li> </ul>



<p>Employment Profile 2020: High levels of persons engaged in Construction, Wholesale and Retail, Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing</p>	<p>LMETB responds proactively to skills needs and employment trends in the region. As Construction, Wholesale and Retail, Accommodation and Food Services have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 in terms of unemployment/ loss of profits, LMETB has adapted its strategic planning over the last few years to reflect that. Some developments have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roll out of Skills to Compete (STC) courses across LMETB FET provision in 2020. STC is a SOLAS initiative tasked with the reskilling and retraining of those unable to return to their previous employment following the COVID-19 crisis.</li> <li>• Consultation by LMETB's Employer Engagement team with the business community, leading to the provision of courses relevant to the affected sectors, such as Digital Marketing, Leadership and Management, Reception and Front Office Skills, Developing Leaders in Hospitality.</li> </ul> <p>High employment levels in the Manufacturing sector in the region continues to inform the development of new programmes in the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence.</p>
<p>LMETB's Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) 2018-20</p>	<p>As part of the strategic dialogue process for the FET sector initiated in 2018 between SOLAS and ETBs, LMETB's SPA outlined its strategic priorities and how they were to contribute to the achievement of key national targets for the FET sector between 2018 and 2020. The targets set in LMETB's SPA firmly aligned to the SOLAS National FET Strategy covering the period 2018 to 2020.</p> <p>The new iteration of the SPA with SOLAS will also require a similar alignment of strategic goals.</p>
<p>SOLAS National FET strategy 2020-24:</p>	<p>The most recent national FET strategy has prompted LMETB's FET service to commit to an analysis of how closely LMETB FET's strategic direction mirrors the national FET priorities outlined in the SOLAS strategy as well as local priorities (as identified at annual LMETB FET planning workshops)</p>

<p>LMETB's Core Quality Assurance Principles</p>	<p>The application of LMETB's Core QA principles ensures the following in its provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to ensuring excellence in Quality Assurance for all its programmes and services</li> <li>• Alignment with the mission, core principles and goals set out in its Strategy Statement.</li> <li>• Compliance with <a href="#">QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</a> and <a href="#">QQI Sector Specific QA Guidelines for ETBs</a></li> <li>• Placement of the learner at the centre of its activities</li> <li>• Fostering of a culture of quality, continuous improvement and evaluation throughout FET</li> <li>• Development of innovative, inclusive and timely responses to local learner and employer needs</li> <li>• A supportive Quality Assurance Office to assist FET Centres</li> </ul>
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## 1.2 SER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

LMETB's Self-Evaluation process is based on the QQI guideline documentation: [Inaugural Review Handbook of QA in ETBs](#). As per the format guide outlined in Annex C of the Review Handbook, LMETB's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) consists of three further sections, addressing the three objectives identified by QQI for consideration:

- Governance and Management of Quality
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Each objective is broken down into sub-sections as described below:

- Description - An explanation of the QA arrangements, policies and procedures that are aligned to this section, and a brief outline of why they have been adopted.
- Evaluation – An evaluation of the implementation, effectiveness and impact of the QA arrangements. Effectively this section details what practices are working and what needs improving across FET provision and is informed by extensive consultation processes with internal and external stakeholders.

- Conclusion - Identification of actions as to how issues identified in the evaluative process will be addressed as well as potential future enhancements.

A number of key appendices are included in the report as well as weblinks to relevant additional supporting documentation.

The self-evaluation process has been coordinated and overseen by the following structures:

#### A. QQI Inaugural Review Working Group

Kelvin Harvey	Adult Education Officer
Aisling Sheridan	Adult Education Officer
Angela Cahill	Quality Assurance Officer
Claire O'Boyle	TEL Officer
Sinéad Fearon	Professional Learning and Development/Communications Officer

#### B. Self- Evaluation Steering Group

In line with Section 2.2.2 of the Review Handbook, LMETB's QAGMC nominated a broad cross section of staff for membership of the Self-Evaluation Steering Group. [Terms of Reference](#) were sent to the group's members. The inaugural meeting of the Steering Group took place in September 2021. Its membership includes:

Martin O'Brien	Chief Executive
Sadie Ward McDermott	Director of Further Education and Training
Brian Murphy	Director of Organisation Support and Development
Kelvin Harvey	Adult Education Officer
Aisling Sheridan	Adult Education Officer
Imelda Brehony	Assistant Principal Officer: Human Resources
Frank Smith	Assistant Principal Officer: Corporate Services
David McDonnell	Principal, Drogheda Institute of Further Education
Paul Rosbotham	Assistant Training Manager, Regional Skills and Training Centre
Bernie McKeivitt	Assistant Training Manager, Regional Skills and Training Centre
Vivienne Branigan	Youthreach Coordinator, Laytown/Bettystown
Angela Cahill	Quality Assurance Officer

The key phases of the self-evaluation process were as follows:

#### Communication

Communication across LMETB on the Inaugural Review and the Self-Evaluation process was key to promoting awareness and ownership by all stakeholders. A number of strategies were employed including:

- Creation of the staff FET QA MS Team for sharing of information and collaboration
- Development of an Information Sheet on the QQI Inaugural Review for circulation in centres and with staff. (See Appendix 1)
- Inclusion of QQI Inaugural Review as an agenda item for meetings at centre and at FET Leader/PLC Principal level
- Email correspondence from FET Senior Management and QQI Inaugural Review Working Group

#### Planning and Design

Regular meetings of the Inaugural Review working group took place to plan and prepare the drafting of the Provider Profile and Self-Evaluation Report and associated actions. A desk review of QA procedures was carried out by the QQI Inaugural Review Working Group in April 2021.

#### Consultation

Consultation was carried out with all stakeholders, including staff, learners, employers and external stakeholders, via surveys and/or focus groups. The overall consultation process commenced in May 2021. All consultations took place online, due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person meetings.

Five main consultation events were completed to inform the self-evaluation process:

#### FET Virtual Learner Forum Event and Survey

In 2019, LMETB engaged the services of AONTAS in its roll out of the National FET Learner Forum, in order to facilitate consultation aimed at establishing learner feedback from those participating in LMETB programmes or availing of its services. LMETB engaged with AONTAS again in 2021 and the forum event was designed around requirements for this SER. 2 virtual fora took place with a total attendance of 63 learners. An online survey, which also included questions on the impact of COVID-19, was completed by 330 learners. The AONTAS' report on the LMETB FET Learner Forum, including the results of the online survey for learners is available [here](#).

### Individual Staff Survey

All LMETB FET staff members (FET Senior Management, FET leaders\*, learning practitioners and administrators) were invited to participate in the self- evaluation process by completing an Individual Staff Survey that sought feedback and comment on the effectiveness of LMETB's quality improvement/quality assurance systems. A total of 202 staff responded. A summary of the responses to the LMETB FET staff survey is available [here](#).

\*(The term FET Leaders will be used throughout the Self-Evaluation Report to represent the following grouping: FET Coordinators, Assistant Training Managers, PLC Principals and PLC Deputy Principals)

### Centre/College focus groups

All FET Centres with responsibility for overseeing QQI Provision were invited to take part in a Focus Group to gather feedback on a number of topics related to their QA arrangements. 4 separate groups met, representing 23 individual centres. The focus groups were facilitated by the QQI Inaugural Review Working Group to assist the participants in this self-evaluation technique.

### Employer Survey

A survey was circulated to LMETB's network of employers in the region seeking feedback and comment on LMETB's provision. Employers were targeted who linked with LMETB in any of the following ways:

- If their employees availed of upskilling opportunities from LMETB's FET provision
- If the company had provided work placement for LMETB FET learners

10 employers responded. The survey sought to establish how aware employers were of the services provided by LMETB, the engagement in employer-focused programmes, the relevancy of LMETB FET programmes and how LMETB could better engage/collaborate with employers in the future. The template of the employer survey is available [here](#).

### External Stakeholder Survey

A survey was circulated to LMETB's network of stakeholders, including statutory and community partners to ascertain their views on LMETB provision, and to establish if LMETB's current programmes remain relevant to employment needs. 22 submissions were received. Views were also sought in relation to awareness of LMETB services, the perceived quality of programmes and

the level of collaboration in existence between LMETB and these stakeholders. The template of the external stakeholder survey is available [here](#).

Inaugural Review Timeline	
2019	• QQI publishes documentation on Inaugural Review of QA in ETBs
Feb 2021	• LMETB appoints a Quality Assurance Officer • Creation of FET Quality Assurance MS TEAM for staff
April 2021	• QQI Inaugural Review Working Group established • Desk Review of QA processes and procedures begins
May 2021	• Email correspondence to FET leaders and staff regarding Inaugural Review • Consultation with learners and staff begins with: <i>a. LMETB/ AONTAS FET Learner Forum and survey</i> <i>b. LMETB staff survey</i>
June 2021	• Consultation with employers and external stakeholders begins with dissemination of survey
July 2021	• Provider Profile started
Aug 2021	• Data analysis of consultation feedback begins
Sept 2021	• Dissemination of Information Sheet on IR to all centres for attention of staff • Gathering of case studies from centres • Focus groups with FET centres • Inaugural Meeting of Self- Evaluation Steering Group
Oct 2021	• Draft of Self Evaluation Report started
Nov 2021	• QQI Working group develops and reviews SER • Steering Group consultation on SER
Dec 2021	• Approval of SER and Provider Profile by Self- Evaluation Steering Group • Submission of SER and Provider Profile to QQI

# Section 2

## Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality





## 2.1 LMETB'S MISSION AND STRATEGY

### 2.1.1: DESCRIPTION – LMETB'S MISSION AND STRATEGY

#### LMETB'S MISSION STATEMENT:

Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is committed to excellence and innovation in the education of young people and adults through the provision of dynamic services delivered by professional staff.

LMETB serves the communities of counties Louth and Meath, working with its educational partners on contributing to the development and growth of the Louth/Meath region. LMETB aims to be the leading provider of quality education and services for the people in both counties through the management and delivery of a diverse range of accessible, progressive, and responsive programmes. Underpinning LMETB's Mission Statement is a set of core values and principles which were developed in consultation with all stakeholder groups.

## LMETB Core Values and Principles

### EXCELLENCE

All stakeholders are afforded the highest standards of service provision.

### INNOVATION

Staff and learners are encouraged to be progressive, creative, and dynamic in their teaching and learning practices. Staff and learners are encouraged to explore the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

### LEARNER CENTRED

LMETB programmes and services are delivered in response to the needs of the learners in counties Louth and Meath.

### SUPPORTING TRANSITION

Transfer, Transition and Guidance Programmes and supports are provided to all learners to ensure they make the right choices regarding career pathways and choices, and that they transition successfully from one phase of their educational journey to another.

### LEARNING

A lifelong learning perspective is promoted among staff and learners.

### EQUALITY

All learners are provided with access to education and supports that maximise learning opportunities and help them to reach their potential.

### INCLUSION

All learners are enabled to participate effectively in education, particularly those groups who may have experienced exclusion or isolation

**HOLISTIC**

The programmes and services available in LMETB cultivate the moral, emotional, physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the learner

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Staff, learners, and our stakeholders are encouraged to interact with each other in a courteous, respectful, and professional manner where diversity is welcomed and embraced.

**RESPONSIVENESS**

An awareness of national and local requirements forms the basis for provision

**WELLBEING**

The programmes and services available in LMETB strive to develop learners' self -confidence and promote learner wellbeing.

**FAIRNESS**

All policies, procedures, and practices of LMETB are just and reasonable.

**INTEGRITY**

Staff, learners, and stakeholders are encouraged to ensure they act honestly, ethically transparently. Highest standards in confidentiality, where applicable, are promoted.

**PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION**

Programmes and services are developed and delivered in conjunction with key stakeholder groups and organisations.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

The work of LMETB is conducted in an efficient, transparent manner with due regard for public accountability.

**LMETB's Strategy Statement 2017 – 2021**

[LMETB Strategy Statement 2017-2021](#) sets out clearly defined strategic priorities for each of the three pillars within which the wider LMETB organisation operates - Organisation Support and Development, Schools and Further Education and Training (FET).

The development of the LMETB Strategy Statement 2017 -2021 was guided by the instructions set out in Section 27 of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 to develop a strategy which outlined:

- The objectives of the Board
- The priorities of the specified objectives
- The strategies for achieving these objectives

The LMETB Strategy Statement 2017 – 2021 sets out high level strategic objectives and actions for the organisation under seven strategic goals.

The table below outlines a snapshot of how each of these strategic goals align with key actions in LMETB's FET provision and service in recent years.

**Examples of Alignment of LMETB’s Strategic Goals with Key Actions in FET:**

Strategic Goal	Examples of key developments in LMETB
<p>To promote active inclusion and access to high quality teaching, learning and assessment for all students/learners in LMETB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of Professional Learning and Development opportunities to staff in areas such as Universal Design for Learning, Dyslexia Assessment of Needs and supporting learners with Autism in FET</li> <li>• Development of alternative FET assessment procedures during COVID-19 to adapt to remote teaching and learning</li> <li>• Development of revised FET Assessment-Related Procedures in 2021</li> </ul>
<p>To enhance communications across LMETB and to further develop the capacity of LMETB staff to provide responsive, high-quality programmes and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of Professional Learning and Development/Communications Officer specifically for FET in 2020 and development of FET specific social media platforms</li> <li>• Development of two online MS TEAMS for staff as a portal for communication and collaboration: a) FET TEL and Professional Development MS TEAM and b) FET QA MS TEAM</li> <li>• Development of LMETB IT Training Channel in 2020 to assist staff in transition to TEAMS for teaching and learning, communication and collaboration</li> </ul>
<p>To ensure continued provision of high quality and innovative teaching and learning in LMETB Schools &amp; Colleges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of a Technology Enhanced Learning Officer in FET 2020</li> <li>• Administration of ICT Devices Loan Scheme for FET learners in 2020, as per DFHERIS funding and MAEDF funding</li> <li>• Transition from 5 legacy agreements towards 1 core Quality Assurance system within LMETB to ensure all centres are working towards consistent common standards</li> <li>• Development of FET Awards Portal which hosts all LMETB’s QQI validated programme and module descriptors, with access restricted to FET staff only to ensure integrity of awards.</li> </ul>

<p>To support the development and expansion of the Further Education and Training Section of LMETB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of 3 Employer Engagement Officers in FET in 2020/21 to engage with the employer community in relation to skills needs and curriculum development</li> <li>• Approval in 2021 of LMETB to deliver the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship in collaboration with LCETB</li> <li>• Development of programmes to address identified skills needs in the area of Advanced Manufacturing as part of the SOLAS Innovation Through Collaboration Initiative.</li> <li>• Current work in micro-qualifications programme design to develop a special purpose award at Level 6 entitled ‘Utilising Robotics in Advanced Manufacturing’.</li> <li>• Introduction of Domestic Appliance Servicing Special Purpose Award (Level 6)</li> <li>• Enhancement of physical facilities in FET centres supported by SOLAS funding</li> <li>• Supporting national Government priority to increase numbers in Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Recruitment of FET Quality Assurance officer and establishment of QA working groups</li> </ul>
<p>To strengthen and develop LMETB organisation systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration to new Shared Services Platform in Payroll and Finance and procurement of new recruitment software</li> <li>• Recruitment of additional staff in key administrative areas including procurement, Human Resources and Land &amp; Buildings</li> <li>• Preparation of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plans for the Organisation Support and Development Directorate</li> </ul>
<p>To develop LMETB Buildings, Facilities &amp; Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence, LMETB’s newest FET facility.</li> <li>• Additional ICT security measures introduced in remote working period, including two factor authentication on all Office 365 applications, and LMETB Corporate Mobile Phone App Protection Policy</li> <li>• Minor works grants in excess of €1 million received from SOLAS for LMETB centres in 2020 which allowed COVID- 19 related changes to existing facilities.</li> </ul>

Strategic Goal	Examples of key developments in LMETB
To further develop strategic partnerships and to promote the LMETB brand within the communities of Louth and Meath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of Louth Education and Training Network and Meath Education and Training Network</li> <li>• Development of New LMETB website in 2021</li> <li>• Development of “LMETB Further Education and Training” pages on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in 2021</li> <li>• Representation on the following partnerships: Louth and Meath Local Authorities (Local Community Development Committees), Louth and Meath Leader Partnerships, Louth and Meath County Childcare Committees, Mid East and North East Regional Skills Fora, Louth and Meath Economic Fora. Collaborative partnerships with DSP and other agencies/ organisations.</li> </ul>

The implementation of these actions outlined above are overseen by the LMETB Board, LMETB’s Senior Management Team, and School and FET Leaders.

**LMETB’s Strategy Statement 2022-26**

LMETB’s Board approved the newly developed LMETB Strategy Statement 2022-26 on 18th November 2021, which was the culmination of a process of consultation in line with the requirements of section 27 of the Education and Training Boards Act of 2013. Section 2 of LMETB’s Provider Profile outlines the key steps in the consultation and development of LMETB’s new Strategy Statement. Click here to download: [LMETB’s Strategy Statement 2022-26](#)

LMETB’s 5 strategic goals agreed are as follows:



LMETB has, in its new strategy, continued to focus on the themes of quality, inclusion, innovation, partnerships and organisation systems - themes that were reflected in its 2017-21 strategy and continue to be reflected in its FET division. Each goal is underpinned by actions. These goals and actions will enable LMETB to further expand, develop, attract, retain, and support staff of the highest calibre as well as enhance and improve the quality of education and training provided across the counties of Louth and Meath.

Set out below are the strategic actions which will have a direct impact on the implementation of FET over the defined period:

- Supporting our learners in a post COVID-19 world through ensuring continuity of education, training, and assessment.
- Actively support inclusive environments in our schools and education centres to ensure that learners of all backgrounds and additional needs have the confidence and reassurance to reach their full potential.
- Support the participation and progression of learners with special educational needs through the delivery of integrated resources.
- Help learners at risk of educational disadvantage to access appropriate education resources which reflect their diverse needs and support improved outcomes.
- Provide supports and opportunities for learning to all, recognising the needs of vulnerable learners and the most marginalised, and assist people in access to and progression through the provision of education and further education and training.
- Collaborate with educational institutions, employers, and others to identify the talents and skills required and to provide education and training solutions in response to same.

The new strategy also includes keys actions related to sustainability in light of current requirements. LMETB FET section will continue to cater to the skills and training needs of learners, stakeholders, and employers in that regard, and will promote the sustainability focus amongst its staff as per LMETB strategic requirements.



## Corporate Governance

LMETB is governed by a statutory Board comprising twenty-one members. The functions of the Board are set out in the [Education And Training Boards Act 2013](#). The LMETB Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the ETB by directing and controlling the ETB's activities.

To deliver appropriate governance in the ETB, the Board must act in the interest of the ETB at all times, consistent with the requirements of legislation and government policies. Alongside the legislation, ongoing compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of ETBs ([Circular Letter 0002-2019](#)) is required to ensure accountability for the ETB's stewardship of resources and to provide a robust scrutiny of relevant issues. A spreadsheet from LMETB's insurers, Irish Public Bodies (IPB) assists the organisation to measure its compliance with the requirements of this Code. In addition, Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreements between LMETB and The Department of Education were signed in 2021, which define the management and accountability framework between both entities as well as facilitating high levels of governance within the ETB. Overall LMETB has continued to make progress on implementing the requirements of the Code and delivering positively on these framework agreements.

The LMETB Board is supported by Boards of Management in LMETB schools, PLC colleges and Youthreach. The standalone Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Colleges have Boards of Management as defined by the Education Act, 1988, and these Boards are committees of the ETB Board. The Youthreach Board of Management has oversight and management functions for all of the Youthreach Centres in LMETB. This board reports into the overall LMETB Board.

The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring, maintaining, and operating an effective system of internal control. LMETB Senior Management has day-to-day responsibility for implementing this system, which operates on the basis of detailed administrative procedures, segregation of duties, specific authorisation thresholds and regular review by management of reports outlining actual and budgeted results of its various programmes.

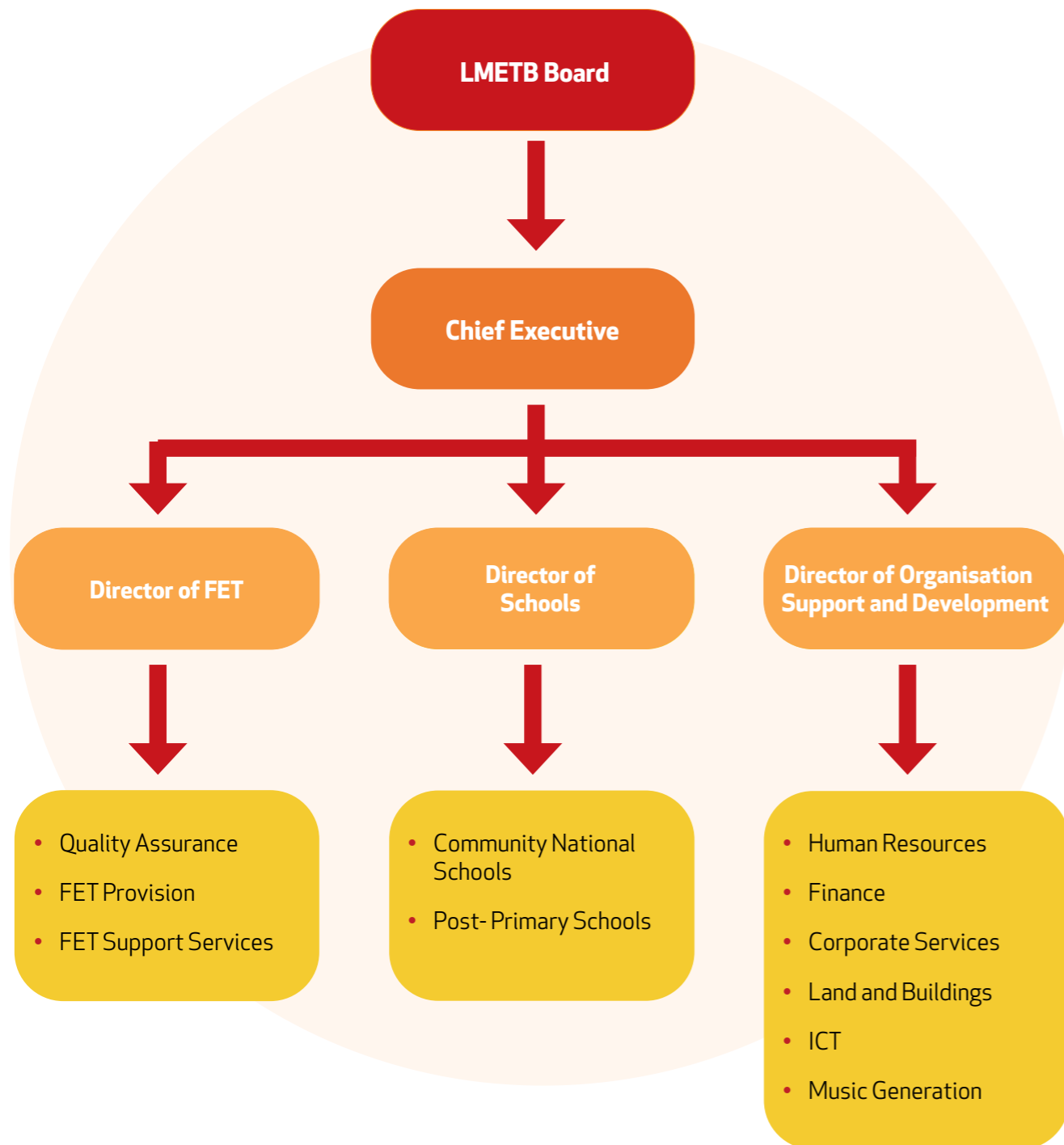
Within LMETB, administrative offices and staff provide support to schools/colleges/centres in a range of areas including Human Resources, ICT, Finance, Land and Buildings and Corporate Services. This network of support at Head Office level supports the work of the LMETB Board in ensuring that all schools/colleges/centres are compliant in the areas of Corporate Governance.

Attesting to this is the CE's report to the Audit and Risk Committee (2021) which assessed the overall level of control and risk within the ETB as satisfactory on foot of an assessment of internal control in respect of key areas. As part of this directorate-wide exercise Internal Audit instruments were used by LMETB to survey schools and FET centres and these covered a wide range of areas including compliance with requirements in respect of: management of finance; procurement and assets; teaching and learning; reporting of student numbers; child safeguarding; bullying; school tours; volunteers; Garda vetting; use of facilities; and boards of management.

## LMETB's Management Structure

The work of LMETB is structured across three pillars: Organisation Support and Development, Schools and Further Education and Training. Each pillar has a Director, who reports to the Chief Executive. The specific responsibilities assigned to each pillar are highlighted in the figure below.

# LMETB Management Structure



## FET Management and Reporting Structures:

# FET Management Structure



## 2.1.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- Awareness of LMETB's vision, mission and values is high among LMETB staff. Overall, 77% of LMETB FET staff agreed with the statement, 'I am aware of the LMETB Strategy Statement 2017-2021'.
- The Board of LMETB is committed to carrying out its management function in line with best practice and strives to continuously improve operations. As an example of good practice, LMETB consult with the Board on its role and what supports are required. Induction for new members is provided and all relevant materials are available on a dedicated SharePoint site for board members. LMETB facilitates both external and internal briefings as needed on specific topics for example, a legal briefing on Reserved versus Executive functions, and an internal briefing on Brexit related implications.
- There are robust governance structures in place, with clear lines of communication and transparent reporting between the different levels of governance. LMETB's executive Senior Management Team (SMT) works collaboratively, to deliver on the LMETB Strategy Statement and to lead and guide the organisation to continue to provide innovative and high-quality education and training services. This is achieved through fortnightly meetings of the SMT, as a management group comprising of the Chief Executive, Directors of OSD, FET and Schools. Assistant Principal Officers (APOs) from Finance, Land & Buildings, HR and Corporate Services may also be part of this group as needed.
- The division of responsibilities and workload sharing within the FET management structure enables a focused approach to both strategic and programme areas. To date, this approach has been very successful. It has enabled senior FET leadership to develop high performance cross-functional teams to support the achievement of strategic goals. The management structures in place across FET ensure consistency of focus that supports communications and opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice across centres, for example, via Forum meetings for the FET Forum, Youthreach Forum and PLC Management Forum.

The FET section in LMETB is committed to developing its revised quality assurance policies and procedures which are aligned to QQI's Core and Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and to LMETB's strategic goals and priorities as outlined in LMETB's Strategy Statement 2017-21, and its recently developed Statement of Strategy for 2022-2026. In turn,

annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) have been developed, in line with LMETB's strategic goals, and progress has been made since 2018, in achieving specific related actions and quality improvements. (see table on P.29 of [LMETB Provider Profile](#) for more detail.)

- Furthermore, the learner experience in LMETB is consistent with LMETB's mission of commitment to 'excellence and innovation in the education of young people and adults through the provision of dynamic services delivered by professional staff'. Comments compiled from the FET Learner Forum report in 2021 include the following:

*'device access was quickly and efficiently organised by Louth and Meath Education and Training Board at the beginning of their courses or at the beginning of remote learning'*

*'Consistently across levels, tutors were praised for being available, attentive, and responsive to learners' needs.'*

- The learner experience is also consistent with many of LMETB's core values and principles. This was also highlighted in the FET Learner Forum report.

LMETB Core Value and Principle	Relevant Example from Text of FET Learner Forum Report
Holistic	Learners at levels 1-3 felt that taking their course had wider transformative benefits to their lives.
Wellbeing	Learners taking level 4 courses felt supported with their mental health and wellbeing while learning remotely.
Learner-Centred	Level 4 learners appreciated the one-to-one support they received from tutors and Education and Training Board Staff.

### What Needs Improving

- It is important to increase awareness of LMETB's new Strategy Statement 2022-26 amongst all levels of staff. Whilst the staff survey showed that 77% of all FET staff surveyed (FET Leaders, FET teaching staff, FET non-teaching staff) were aware of LMETB's Strategy Statement 2017-21, when these figures are broken down, it shows that although FET leaders had 100% awareness of LMETB's strategic direction and goals, only 71% of teaching staff felt that they had an awareness.
- In line with LMETB's Strategic Goal 6 which aims to develop LMETB Buildings, Facilities & Infrastructure, it is recognised that some FET buildings in LMETB are of older stock and not

entirely fit for purpose. For example, Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE), which is the largest provider of FET courses in the Meath area, is currently housed in non-permanent buildings. DCFE is awaiting development of a dedicated, purpose-built infrastructure that will enhance its ability to provide the widest range and depth of courses to meet learner progression and career needs.

### 2.1.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

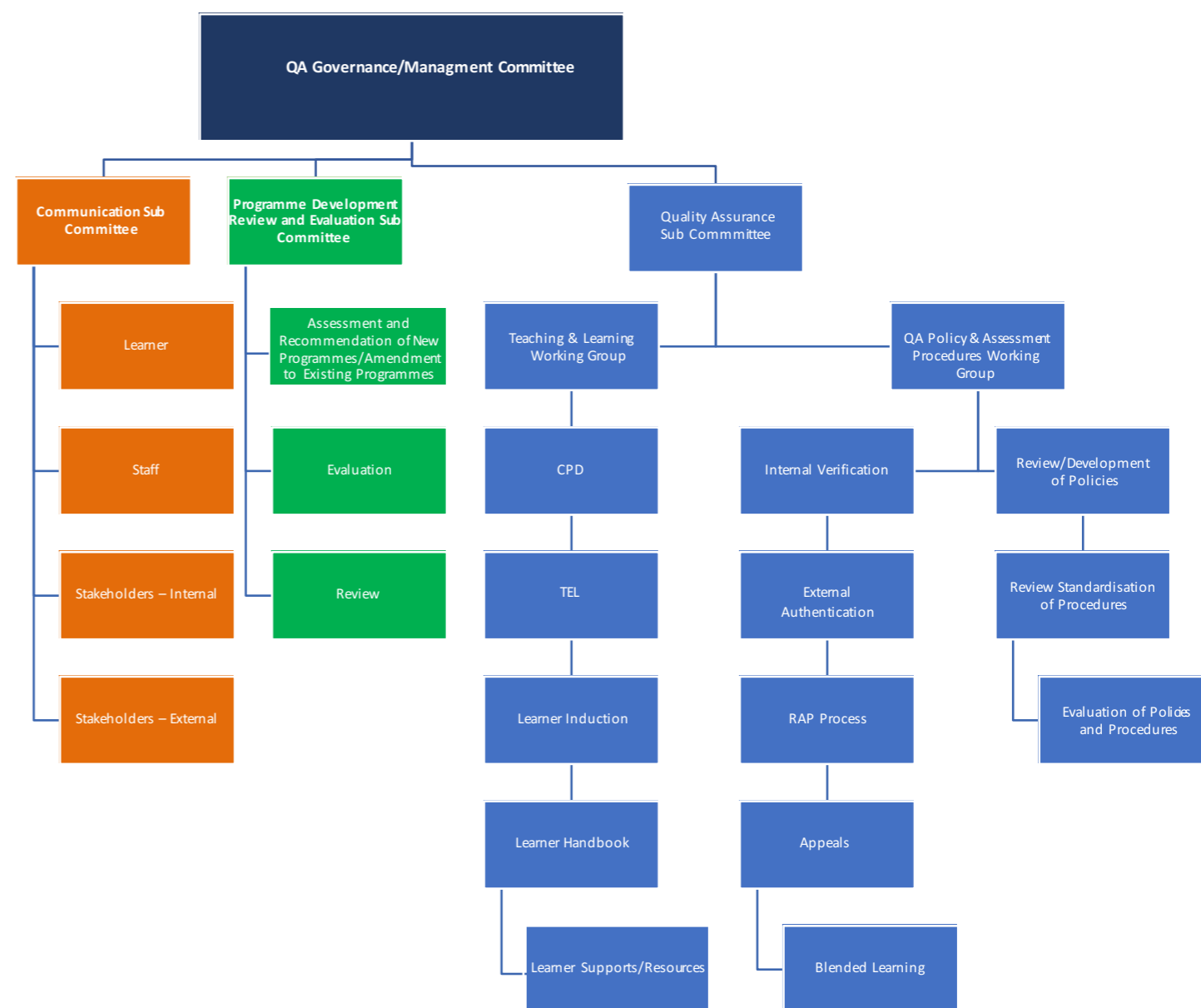
- Promotion and awareness-building campaign amongst FET staff of the LMETB Strategy Statement 2022-26 with a focus on LMETB’s mission, guiding values and strategic goals.
- Development of an LMETB FET Strategy. This process will be informed by the consultation and reflective processes undertaken in the preparation of this SER, with the ongoing engagements with stakeholders and will align with national priorities and local priorities and with the LMETB Strategy Statement 2022-26.
- Participate in the development and implementation of LMETB’s next Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS.

## 2.2 STRUCTURES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

### 2.2.1: DESCRIPTION - OVERVIEW OF QA GOVERNANCE

Since its re-engagement with QQI in June 2018, LMETB has been working towards the development of an integrated quality assurance governance system, highlighting its commitment to ensuring the consistent and ongoing maintenance of quality across all its FET-related services and activities. LMETB’s QA governance architecture began to take shape with the establishment, in late 2018, of the Quality Assurance Governance Management Committee (QAGMC) as the main oversight body responsible for quality assurance in LMETB. The QAGMC oversees all quality assurance aspects related to the design, development, approval, implementation, monitoring and review of the Further Education and Training provision offered by LMETB. Terms of Reference for the QAGMC are found [HERE](#).

LMETB’s governance structure for its FET provision is outlined in the chart below:





There are three sub-committees who inform and report to the QAGMC:

- Communications sub-committee
- Programme Development, Review and Evaluation sub-committee
- Quality Assurance sub-committee. The Quality Assurance Group has a review remit in the following areas:
  - QA policy and assessment procedures related matters
  - Teaching and learning issues

Membership of these QA governance sub-committees is inclusive of staff across the various FET centres and support services in order to facilitate communication across FET provision and to ensure that QA remains visible and prioritised at centre level.

LMETB’s FET QA governance structure reflects the requirements detailed in the [QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) and [QQI Sector Specific QA Guidelines for ETBs](#) with LMETB’s aim being to ensure that any learner participating in a programme of FET in LMETB receives a quality assured experience that is transparent, documented and accessible to all stakeholders.

The quality assurance sub-committees have their own Terms of Reference (TOR) which detail the objectives, roles, and responsibilities for each group. The terms of reference documents are published on the dedicated site for Quality Assurance in FET on LMETB’s public facing website ( [www.lmetb.ie](http://www.lmetb.ie) ) and is also uploaded to the FET QA MS Teams site and QA SharePoint site for internal FET staff to view. See TOR documentation for the QA sub-committees below:

[LMETB Communication Sub-Committee TOR](#)

[LMETB Programme Development Review and Evaluation Sub-committee TOR](#)

[LMETB Quality Assurance Sub-Committee TOR](#)

Name	Quality Assurance Governance Management Committee (QAGMC)	Quality Assurance Sub-Committee	Programme Development, Review and Evaluation (PDRE) Sub-Committee	Communications Sub-Committee
Function	Strategic direction, governance, and oversight of all aspects of FET provision across LMETB.	Overview of quality assurance and teaching and learning processes. Reports directly to the QAGMC	Overview of new programme development and review of existing programmes Reports directly to the QAGMC	Overview of dissemination of information to learners and public. Input into the development of a clear communication strategy for FET in LMETB. Reports directly to the QAGMC.
Role	Oversight of compliance with quality assurance procedures. Approval of new and revised policies and procedures. Approval of new programmes for submission to relevant awarding bodies. Approval of reports and recommendations received from its sub-committees and make recommendations based on same to the SMT/CE. Review and monitor learner throughput and assessment statistics. Approval of QA reports prior to publication.	Development, review, planning, coordination, and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures, documentation and processes, resources, and supports. Development and enhancement of teaching and learning strategy in LMETB. Recommendations sent to the QAGMC in respect of the foregoing. The QA sub-committee may choose to form working groups for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA policy and assessment procedures related matters</li> <li>• Teaching and learning matters</li> </ul> The sub-committee has the option of co-opting additional members from staff members/ learners / external bodies to these working groups if required.	Review and evaluate requests for new and existing programmes according to LMETB’s internal quality assurance requirements and make appropriate recommendations to the QAGMC, the overarching body for the establishment of new programmes. Review and monitor existing provision and to oversee self-evaluation of programmes.	Recommend on procedures for the dissemination information to learners and public. Recommend on the necessary safeguards and procedures for managing public information. Review and recommend for approval, policies (and revisions) relating to learner and public information to the QAGMC. Develop guidelines/ branding protocols for all communication and marketing materials.

QQI state that ‘given the distributed, diverse and evolving nature of ETBs, it is important that a multi-layered system be in place so that quality and its assurance is monitored in a consistent and appropriate way within and across the various constituent divisions or institutions of an ETB.....The quality assurance procedures established by ETBs should strike a balance between the corporate responsibility of an ETB and one which respects the significant roles and accountabilities of the various centres, divisions and institutions on the frontline of education and training provision’<sup>1</sup>. In order to ensure compliance with these guidelines, management of QA occurs across the various layers and levels of LMETB’s FET provision, as detailed below:

### LMETB Board Level

The Director of FET prepares a report on FET activities, including any items relating to QA, for each LMETB Board meeting. Any new or revised FET-related policies are considered and reviewed by the recently established QA sub-committee who will then recommend to the QAGMC for approval. All FET policies are sent to the LMETB Board for final approval.

### FET Senior Management

The Director of FET has overall responsibility for Quality Assurance, FET Provision and FET Support Services. The FET Senior Management Team (SMT) includes: 1 Director of FET, 2 Adult Education Officers, 1 Area Training Manager, 3 PLC Principals and 1 Director of AMTCE. Within the SMT, each of the AEOs and the Area Training Manager has responsibility for a number of programmes/ services within FET (See section 2.1 for more details). All FET centre managers, coordinators and Assistant Training Managers report to a member of the FET SMT and PLC Principals report directly to the Director of FET. All FET Leaders are supported in their QA responsibilities by the QA Office.

<sup>1</sup> QQI Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, p.5

The table below show the Cross-Provision Management of Quality Assurance in FET:

## Responsibility

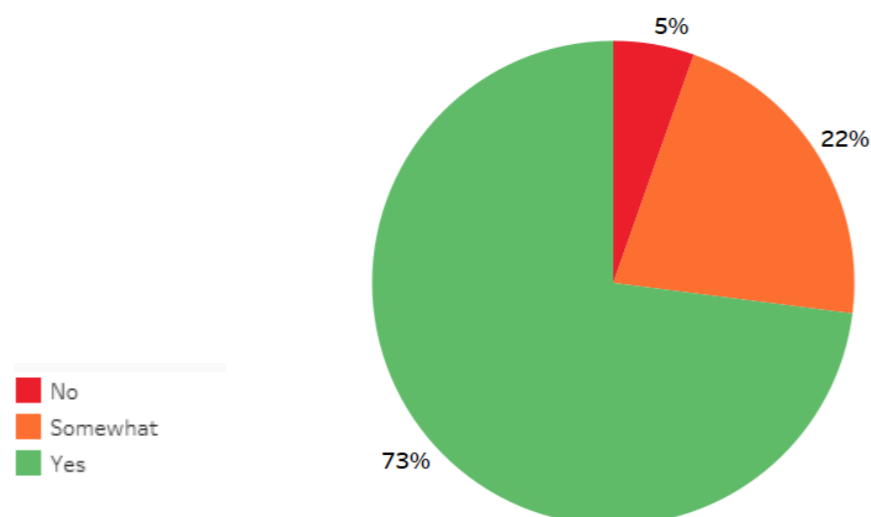
FET Centres	Regional Skills and Training Centre (RSTC)	Teacher/Tutor/ Instructor level	Quality Assurance Office	Learners
<p>FET Programme Coordinators and PLC Principals/ Deputy Principals have day-to-day responsibility for course provision, which is delivered by teachers/ tutors who are subject matter experts.</p> <p>All FET centres delivering QQI assessments operate Internal Verification/ External Authentication (IV/EA) processes and have Results Approval Panels (RAPs), which review the results of the IV/ EA processes, and address any quality assurance issues which may have arisen during the assessment process.</p> <p>Centre QA staff or a designated member of centre staff are responsible for receiving assessed learner evidence from assessors, managing data entry to QQI database (QBS), managing the IV and EA processes, organising RAP meetings, distributing learner results and appeals information, circulating certification, and overseeing appeals. Ultimately, centre-level responsibility for quality resides with the Principal/ Programme Coordinator.</p>	<p>The RSTC is overseen and managed by the Area Training Manager, supported by Assistant Training Managers. Day-to-day responsibility for assessments and monitoring lies with the Training Standards Officer (TSO), supported by an Assistant Training Standards Officer (ATSO). The TSO reports directly to the Area Training Manager.</p> <p>The RSTC and supported provision deliver courses leading to QQI certification, as well as courses certified by other certification providers. Courses are delivered by instructors who are subject matter experts.</p> <p>All contracted trainers who deliver courses for the training centres are monitored by the Contracted Training Officers (CTOs), regarding operational matters, and the TSO, in terms of QA arrangements.</p> <p>The majority of QQI certification requests are channelled directly to QQI through the RSTC, following processes of EA/RAP; with the limited exception of select awards being sought through contracted providers under their direct QQI-approved provider status.</p>	<p>Teaching staff are central to ensuring that learners receive a quality assured learning experience in LMETB as they are the main point of contact and communication for learners.</p> <p>Teachers have primary responsibility for teaching, assessment, marking and submission processes.</p> <p>Teachers are also expected to implement FET centre policies and procedures.</p>	<p>The QA Office supports all FET provision in the development, management, monitoring and review of QA policies, procedures, and processes to enhance the overall quality of FET provision.</p> <p>FET management and teaching staff are supported by the QA Office through regular communication, QA methodologies and associated training opportunities.</p> <p>The QA Office coordinates and monitors the RAP processes across all centres and makes recommendations for development and improvement as the need arises.</p>	<p>FET learners attend courses, submit coursework and assessment work, receive feedback on this work, submit for certification and receive their results.</p>

## 2.2.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- There appears to be a good understanding of the QA Governance structures in FET. Overall, 73% of FET staff are aware of these structures, the breakdown is as follows: 61% of non-teaching staff; 68% of teachers and 95% of FET Leaders are aware. It should be noted that, while the QAGMC has been established since late 2018 as the main oversight body, establishment of the other QA sub-committees are recent developments and so it would be expected that this level of awareness will increase as the work of these sub-committees becomes more visible and impactful.

**Staff Responses to: 'I am aware of the Quality Assurance Governance Architectural/Organisation Structure of LMETB (e.g., Quality Assurance Governance Management Committee (QAGMC) and its sub-committees).'**



- The robustness of QA governance processes and FET centres' role therein was demonstrated during the COVID-19 mitigation measures and the switch to remote learning in 2020. The pivot to remote learning resulted in considerable disruption for learners and necessitated significant changes to assessment processes which had to be implemented following comprehensive consideration and oversight from the QAGMC. During the initial lockdown in March 2020, FET Centres responded effectively in a timely and coordinated manner to provide alternative assessments that could be conducted remotely. Authentication processes were facilitated to move online, and the integrity of assessment processes was maintained. The QAGMC provided a backbone of due diligence to ensure standards were upheld and in

this period, reviewed and approved guidelines on alternative assessments, work placement contingency guidelines and revised procedures for IV and EA procedures. See the following documents:

[Overarching Contingency Arrangements adopted by LMETB](#)

[IV and EA LMETB Guidelines and Procedures for Covid 19](#)

[LMETB Guidelines for Alternative Assessment](#)

- During the subsequent COVID-19 restrictions in early 2021, the QAGMC approved sectorally agreed QQI guidelines for temporary modifications to QQI awards, allowing for Work Experience alternatives where work placements were not possible. See [LMETB Work Placement Contingency Guidelines](#). In exceptional circumstances, every effort was made to ensure that learners were not disadvantaged and were able to achieve accreditation. Overall, the pandemic-related 'stress testing' of LMETB's QA governance and oversight structures saw quality and academic integrity maintained with the timely roll out across FET provision of a coordinated set of effective responses, including the modification of QA processes within the guidance approved by QQI. See links to LMETB's report [An overview of the Impact of the Covid 19 Modifications to Teaching Learning and Assessment](#) within LMETB FET services, as well as the [FET Learner Forum Report](#) which gives an overview of learners' perspectives on the COVID-19 mitigation measures in early 2021.
- The PLC colleges have separate Boards of Management (BOMs) who report to the LMETB Board thus providing an additional information conduit. There is representation from industry, learners and Higher Education Institutions on the PLC BOMs providing a further degree of externality to these structures.
- Staff induction processes take place in some FET centres, providing an efficient means of making governance processes visible and transparent to new FET staff. A recent development has been the central organisation of online induction for new FET administration and leadership staff by the PLD/Communications Officer, along with the initiation of a project around the development of a standardised induction pack for all FET staff.
- The dedicated FET QA MS Teams site, developed in early 2021, includes a separate channel for QA Governance and Organisation which gives an overview of the governance architecture and terms of reference for the various QA committees. A separate MS Team has been set up

for each sub-committee to act as a point of contact, communication and as a repository of resources.

- The appointment, earlier this year of a dedicated QA Officer has increased awareness of QA processes within FET. *‘There is now a channel of communication which wasn't really there before.... Now we have someone to communicate with regarding how policies actually are/aren't working on the ground’* (PLC Deputy Principal)

### What Needs Improving

- While the appointment of a QA Officer in 2021 is to be welcomed, there is a need to develop the QA Office in line with sectoral norms as seen in other ETBs. The importance of QA and the maintenance of a quality culture within FET would be further supported by establishing a QA Office in LMETB that has a dedicated AEO with sole responsibility for quality assurance as well as a minimum of two dedicated QA Officers supported by administrative assistance.
- Recognition and understanding of QA governance structures needs to improve among non-teaching and teaching staff who were, respectively, 61% and 68% aware of governance structures, when surveyed.
- While 51% of learners are satisfied with the opportunities for learner representation in their centres, an increase in this figure would be desirable to improve learners' recognition of oversight processes in FET and accentuate the opportunity to strengthen their own engagement. This would result in increased benefits for all learners, teaching staff and the FET centres themselves and reinforces the concept that LMETB is a learning organisation that values continuous feedback and improvement.

*‘If we can communicate to learners that their concerns and issues will be taken seriously and be acted upon, this is the best way to show our intent’.* (PLC Deputy Principal)

- A common approach to FET staff induction needs to be developed and rolled out throughout all FET provision for new staff. While progress has been made on this in 2020-21, with a new online induction process initiated for FET Leaders and administrative staff, along with PLC teaching staff induction, this process needs to be further developed to ensure consistency of approach amongst all FET staff.

The terminology associated with QA can be confusing and off-putting. One staff member commented that the over-reliance on acronyms *‘can hamper understanding of QA process .... use of plain English and UDL – our policies and procedures need to be like that – clear and concise’.*

### 2.2.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified actions

- Increase the number of dedicated QA staff in LMETB's QA Office, subject to receiving sanction and funding for recruitment of such posts from DFHERIS.
- While there may be a dedicated input on quality assuring the assessment process in some FET centres, this is not consistent across all FET provision. There is a need for all new teaching staff to access this input as part of the initial induction process.
- While there are learners on PLC Boards of Management and Student Councils, there is less learner representation from other FET programmes. Going forward, the aim will be to ensure learner representation on QA governance committees.
- Increase external participation in QA governance committees. Consideration to be given to inviting external representatives from industry, Higher Education and External Authenticators.
- A Learner Handbook template, common to all FET provision, is being developed to support learners to understand how assessment is quality assured and governed.
- Aim to reduce 'QA jargon' in communications, policies and procedures emanating from the QA Office by adhering to UDL principles regarding communications.



## 2.3 THE DOCUMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### 2.3.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF QA DOCUMENTATION PROCESSES

LMETB documents its corporate policies and procedures which apply to all staff and these are publicly available on [www.lmetb.ie](http://www.lmetb.ie). Policies and procedures relating to FET may be viewed on the dedicated quality assurance section on the LMETB website which is available to staff, learners, and other interested stakeholders. All locally devised LMETB Module and Programme Descriptors are available to FET staff on a dedicated FET Awards Portal on the LMETB website. Access to this portal is controlled by the QA Office. All AIS assessment instruments used in the Training Services and its associated provision are hosted in ETBI on a dedicated site available [here](#) and are accessible to the Training Standards Officer (TSO).

All QA policies, procedures, guidelines, and templates are also available for FET staff on the FET QA MS Team and the QA SharePoint sites. The MS Team site also provides a space for teachers to share resources as well as providing a communicative tool for sharing of effective practice. The aim of establishing this MS Team site (in 2021) was for it to act both as a repository for relevant QA documentation, and also to provide an informal Community of Practice site for all FET staff to share experiences and expertise from across the variety of FET provision in LMETB.

The establishment of LMETB in 2013 brought with it the legacy of five existing QA related policies and procedures, with FET centres working to their own policies, processes, and procedures. The re-engagement process with QQI in 2018 focused attention on the need to harmonise processes and to work towards a common, integrated QA framework encompassing QA policies and appropriate QA procedures across all FET provision- the important distinction being that LMETB is recognised as the provider by QQI and not the five separate legacy centres. A development process for new and revised policies and procedures in FET began in 2019, and these documents are available to view [here](#) within the QA Policies and Procedures section of LMETB's website.

The COVID-19 situation precipitated the need to develop a number of procedures so as to ensure proper oversight and to provide sufficient guidance to FET centres at this unprecedented time, see link to COVID-19 Contingency Arrangements [here](#).

With the appointment of a QA Officer in 2021, priority in policy development has been given to areas of greatest need, as identified from practice, and areas where there was some pre-existing commonality across provision. The area of assessment and related activities was prioritised after consultation with various FET centres. The original LMETB Assessment Procedures Handbook, developed from work carried out by ETBI's National Assessment Working Group in 2019, has been updated to ensure fitness for purpose and, as a result, each of the six assessment procedures have been separated into individual documents to ensure ease of access and to highlight their function.

The Results Approval Panel Policy and Procedures was developed in conjunction with the Training Standards Office in the RSTC and has comprehended processes from both the 'FE' and 'T' side of FET provision. It is the first of LMETB's FET policies and procedures to be fully integrated across the entire FET provision.

#### **Policies and Procedures Developed or Revised in 2021**

[LMETB Assessment Appeals Procedure: Process or Results](#)

[LMETB Assessment Deadlines Procedure](#)

[LMETB Assessment Malpractice Procedure](#)

[LMETB Examinations Procedure](#)

[LMETB Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure](#)

[LMETB Secure Storage Procedure](#)

[LMETB Assessment Repeats Policy](#)

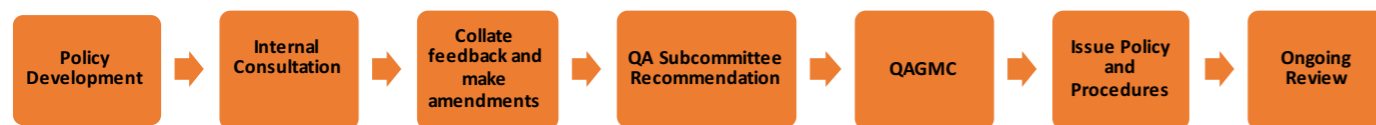
[LMETB Work Experience Policy April 2021](#)

[LMETB Results Approval Panel Policy and Procedures](#)



The intention is to next review and develop procedures for Internal Verification (IV) and External Authentication (EA) processes. Work is ongoing with the RSTC, as part of this process, with the aim of integrating the IV and EA guidelines and procedures from Training Services with those of the FET centres. Work is also advanced on the development of a Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedure, which is a priority area for FET in LMETB. The current policy around learner feedback will also be reviewed to ensure its fitness for purpose. See [LMETB Learner Feedback Participation Policy June 2019](#).

The above policies and procedures were developed in consultation with FET centres in the case of the assessment related procedures, with advisement from the PLC colleges. The imperative being that the FET colleges have the largest learner cohort so if the practicalities of assessment procedures work in that context, they should be fit for purpose in smaller FET centres. As the Quality Assurance sub-committee was not established during this development work, each procedure was discussed between the QA Office and Deputy Principals, with responsibility for QA, from the PLC colleges. Drafts were prepared and worked upon. Finalised drafts were sent to the QAGMC for detailed consideration and approval. Going forward, with the establishment of the QA sub-committee in Autumn 2021, it is envisioned that this forum will have a clear role in advising on areas of policy development as well as having the remit to form a QA Policy and Assessment Procedures Working Group, with the option of co-opting additional members from staff/learners/external bodies to this working group if required.



### 2.3.2: EVALUATION

The self-evaluation process involved in the compilation of this report has been beneficial in establishing the varied approaches to the development and implementation of policies and procedures existing in FET centres, and in establishing that reviews are periodic and taking place on an ad hoc basis. It is envisioned that the policy development process used in the revision of the assessment procedures as outlined above provides a best practice approach, where the expertise of staff working on the ground is harnessed in the internal consultation step to ensure consistency across all provision.

*'Key is taking best practice and formalising it into a policy' (PLC Deputy Principal)*

#### What Is Working

- The staff survey that took place in May 2021 found that there is a strong awareness among staff across all FET provision of the QA policies and procedures that exist in FET. 79% of the 202 staff surveyed were aware of where to access policies and procedures relating to QA. Encouragingly, 100% of FET Leaders knew where to access the documents with 75% of teaching staff able to access policies and procedures. See Appendix 2a for a Case Study from the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) outlining its approach to setting up its quality procedures, building on the existing QA systems in FET.

Selection of Comments from FET Teachers When Asked About the Effectiveness of LMETB FET's Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures:

*'LMETB FET's Quality Assurance Policy & Procedures are up-to-date and easy to follow and facilitates tutors to give feedback on all areas'*

*'Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures are very clear and concise'*

*'LMETB always stresses the need for quality assurance and meeting the learners' expectations'*

*'This is my first full academic year working for LMETB. I have been learning about QA throughout the year and have access to all relevant policies & procedures. So far I have found all procedures to be effective'*

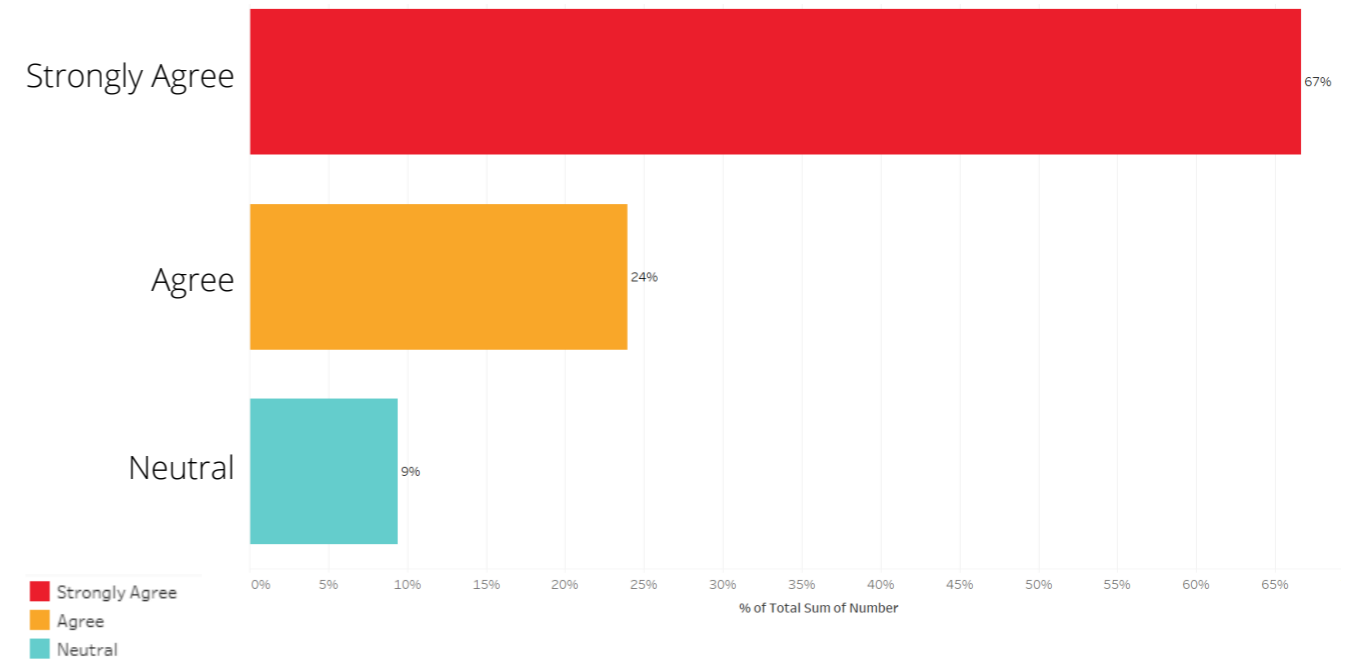
*'Quality and standards are very strong in my Centre and this is throughout the entire college from processes to people'*

- The messaging around the need to streamline policies and procedures across FET provision appears to be working. The FET centre focus group session, held as part of the SER process, demonstrated an awareness among FET Leaders of the benefits to centralising policies and procedures, as it will reduce the onus on FET centres to develop documents in isolation while also ensuring consistency of experience for learners. *'LMETB do a good job of keeping us informed and up to date'* (FET Leader)
- Among the PLC colleges and most FET centres, there are mechanisms in place to review policies and procedures to ensure their continued relevance and applicability. Teaching staff are updated on procedure changes that may impact on their teaching.
- QA matters are highlighted at general staff meetings and, in the case of the PLC colleges, at department meetings. When surveyed, 63% of FET Leaders and teaching staff agreed with the statement "Quality Assurance is regularly discussed at my centre meetings". 95% of FET Leaders surveyed agreed with the statement that 'Quality Assurance is a standing item on the staff meeting agenda'.
- The experience of revising and updating policies and procedures necessitated by the COVID-19 contingency measures demonstrated LMETB's capacity to develop fit for purpose procedures in a short timeframe. These procedures were communicated in a timely manner to FET Leaders for rollout at FET centre level. The charts and comments below detail the views of both FET Leaders and FET teaching staff with respect to the completion of assessments during 2020-21 under COVID-19 contingency measures.

*'Having central QA leads in LMETB definitely made it more straightforward to solve issues'* (FET Leader).

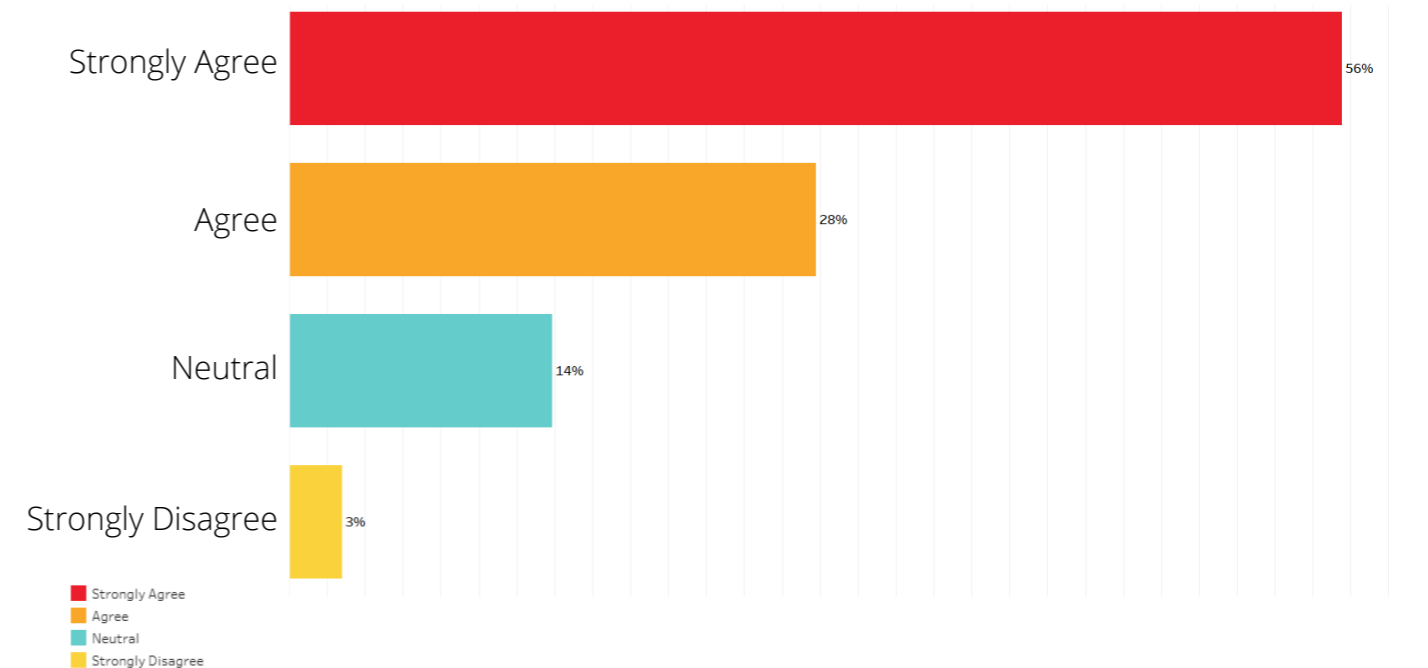
*'LMETB FET Quality Assurance team have been a great source of information and support in the areas of Work Experience alternatives, alternative assessments, the new childcare award and with ensuring programmes and modules are validated. Emails are always promptly answered with clear instructions and solutions'* (FET Leader)

**Teachers: I prepared my learners to complete assessments/exams in line with principles of academic integrity.**



*FET teaching staff's views on assessments during COVID-19 Contingency Measures*

**FET Leaders: I prepared my staff/learners to complete assessments/exams in line with principles of academic integrity.**



*FET Leaders' views on assessments during COVID-19 Contingency Measures*

### What Needs Improving

- Communication around new and revised policies and procedures could be improved. While the use of the FET QA MS Team site as a repository for revised policies and procedures appears to be an effective new development in 2021, staff have commented in their survey that the SharePoint site is not user friendly and not all staff have access. A similar concern about the SharePoint site was voiced in the FET Leaders' Focus Group.
- The importance of a QA focus during induction for new staff was highlighted, so that all teaching staff know where to access policies and procedures. A mechanism to effectively communicate the most important aspects of new and revised policies and procedures was suggested during the FET Centre Focus groups. For example, employing screen casting tools to produce short, concise videos that can be added to the FET QA MS Team site as a means of dissemination of the salient points. One FET Teacher commented, *'sending out 30 and 40-page documents and saying make yourself familiar with this is not the way to operate'* highlighting the need for effective means of communicating new and revised QA procedures.
- While review dates are built into policies, a cross FET provision formal review cycle for existing policies and procedures has not been developed. It is imperative that policies and procedures remain relevant and fit for purpose, although it is important to note that this may prove challenging in an evolving FET context. There may also be disparity among FET provision in the capacity of individual centres to allocate staff to review the potential impact of new or reviewed policies and ensure that they are working in practice, and this may be particularly relevant where there is predominantly part-time staff employed in a centre.
- There are concerns from some teaching staff around the level of paperwork required for QQI submissions:

*'The QA process for QQI is excessive. Compared to other awarding bodies such as ITEC, and C&G it seems to have evolved year on year, growing in terms of workload and complications all the time. A first principals review should be considered to ensure the integrity of the programme but also the workload of those involved in delivering it.'* (FET Teacher)

*'Far too much paperwork'* (FET Teacher)

### 2.3.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- Develop a monitoring and review plan to provide coherence to new policy development and to the review of existing policies and procedures. Ensure that a strict version control mechanism is in place and adhered to.
- Include QA input into staff induction processes to build awareness of policies and procedures, particularly around the assessment process.
- As a common QA framework is developed, a QA section in the Staff Handbook, which is in development, will comprehend all policies and procedures and act as guide to all quality assurance matters in LMETB.
- While individual FET centres may have Learner Handbooks in place, the introduction in 2022 of the LMETB FET Learner Handbook, which is currently under development, will act as a common template to clearly and concisely keep learners informed of relevant policies and procedures, particularly those around assessment.

## 2. 4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

### 2.4.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

LMETB aims to ‘enhance communications across LMETB and to further develop the capacity of LMETB staff to provide responsive, high-quality programmes and services’ (Strategic Goal 2 – LMETB’s Strategy Statement 2017-2021) and to ‘ensure continued provision of high quality and innovative teaching and learning in LMETB schools and colleges’ (Strategic Goal 3 - LMETB’s Strategy Statement 2017-2021). To align with these goals, LMETB implements cohesive recruitment policies, management structures and mechanisms to enable staff to enhance skills, update competencies, promote modern teaching methods and collaborate with colleagues.

#### Staff Recruitment:

LMETB is committed to fairness, equality, and transparency in respect of all recruitment processes. The process is aligned to best practice and meets all legislative requirements (Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and Disability Act 2005), including Garda vetting.

The step-by-step process for recruitment and selection is as follows:

Vacancy	Arising from a new post, a vacant existing post or substitute/cover/temporary post
Job Description	Describes the purpose, scope, key activities, expected outputs and standards for the job
Person Specification/ Selection Criteria	Drawn up on the basis of job description outlining the qualifications, skills, experiences and competencies required for successful performance of the role
Advertising the post	LMETB advertises in the national and local press, social media and on <a href="http://www.etbjobs.ie">www.etbjobs.ie</a>
Application Pack	Includes application form, job advertisement, job description, person specification and selection criteria
Shortlisting	A shortlisting board will assess all applicants against agreed selection criteria based on information provided in application documentation, and will identify candidates for interview
Selection Board	Established for each post in order to assess the merit of each applicant and make recommendations for appointment of an applicant

Interview	Selection Board will ask all applicants the same core questions to ensure fair and consistent approach. Supplementary questions may be asked if required.
Recommendation	Selection Board reviews marks of all applicants and completes a Selection Board Report
Referee Reports	2 written referees are required from the recommended candidate post-interview
Offering Appointment	Made only by the HR Department on a provisional basis subject to a number of conditions being satisfied

Upon appointment, The HR department takes responsibility for the collection of relevant documentation directly from the candidate including Garda Vetting Form, Birth Certificate and Evidence of Qualifications.

#### Staff Induction

Across the FET section, arrangements for staff induction vary. Induction for FET staff at all levels (management, teaching and administrative) has not traditionally been arranged at organisational level. Since 2020, however, a Staff Induction workshop has been arranged by the Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Coordinator in FET for new administrative and leadership staff. At the start of the academic year there is a workshop held for new PLC teachers where the AEOs input on a range of issues including quality matters. In most cases, the responsibility remains at centre level for arranging induction for teaching staff. In some centres, particularly those which follow the academic year in terms of staff timetabling, this induction may be formalised and a particular member of the staff team may have a set role in arranging/delivering Induction. In other centres, however, particularly those where classes start at different stages in the year, this induction may not be as formalised. There is no staff handbook at organisational or FET level for new staff available at this point. Documentation provided to staff at induction stage is arranged at local level. LMETB FET is committed to improving all of the above arrangements.

## Professional Learning and Development (PLD)

LMETB is dedicated to the development of all staff in line with its strategic commitment to quality provision across all services. At present a CPD policy exists for administrative and clerical staff in LMETB, and a Professional Learning and Development Strategy is to be developed for FET staff in 2022. Staff are encouraged and facilitated to avail of LMETB-led and funded professional development opportunities. The recruitment of a PLD Officer in 2020 in the FET Section has enhanced arrangements within FET for the organisation and coordination of FET training events and upskilling opportunities. The recruitment of a TEL Officer, also in 2020, who works closely with the PLD officer, has greatly developed the provision of TEL related PLD to LMETB FET staff. A joined-up approach to planning is extremely beneficial in maximising the use of resources. Below are some developments in the areas of PLD in 2021. These initiatives have served to increase the visibility of PLD, further promoting a culture of continuous professional learning and improving internal staff communications and collaboration.

- Development of a FET TEL and Professional Development MS TEAM for FET staff to act as a hub for information and effective dissemination of FET PLD and TEL opportunities and news. There are currently 162 members of the FET Professional Development Team.
- Development of an online PLD Calendar in Autumn 2021 which provides a central information portal for internal and external PLD opportunities for FET staff.

The cascading of the learning derived from participation in PLD events to other FET staff is actively encouraged by the SMT.

LMETB's Professional Development provision is aligned to the [SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-19](#), which outlines seven strategic areas for staff development. LMETB's PLD provision reflects and emphasises each of these areas and actively promotes all related SOLAS and ETBI-led initiatives. LMETB will continue to offer its PLD in line with future developments from SOLAS and its recently developed SOLAS Professional Development Strategy 2020-24 and sectorally through ETBI.

A comprehensive schedule of PLD programmes was rolled out in the period September- December 2021. All locally arranged interventions, in the period, are outlined in the table below:

## Locally arranged PLD: September- Dec 2021:

<b>Technology Enhanced Learning</b>
TEL Mentoring Programme with Teach Nimble (H2 Learning)
Wriggle Connect online learning for using technology in the classroom.
<b>Quality Assurance</b>
FESS: Introduction to Local Assessment Workshop
FESS: Assessment Brief Writing Workshop
FESS Assessment Workshop: Giving Feedback to Learners
<b>Working with and supporting Adult Learners</b>
Integrating Literacy into Teaching and Learning Workshop (NALA)
Assessment of Needs course (Dyslexia Ireland)
Supporting Learners with Autism in FET courses (Autism Journeys)
Irish Refugee Council Information Workshop
Intercultural Awareness and Anti-racism training (Immigrant Council of Ireland)
Autism Awareness Workshop (Aslam)
Dyslexia Awareness Workshop (Dyslexia Ireland)
Managing Challenging Behaviour Workshop (Dermot Rafter)

## Nationally Arranged PLD Sept- December 2021:

Staff are also facilitated to attend nationally provided Professional Learning Development opportunities which LMETB recognises as aligning to its strategic priorities in Professional Learning and Development. In these instances, Expressions of Interest are invited from FET staff and a number of staff are facilitated to attend, subject to resource considerations.

Course	Provider
Certificate in Learning and Technology Level 6	National College of Ireland
Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning Level 7	National College of Ireland
Diploma in Technology Enhanced Learning Level 8	NUI Galway
Diploma in Change Management Level 8	NUI Galway
Professional Certificate in Creativity and Innovation in Education	UCD Innovation Academy
Postgraduate Certificate in Programme Design and Validation for Further Education and Training Level 9	Maynooth University
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing for Educators	Letterkenny Institute of Technology



A range of PLD opportunities were also made available by national organisations during the Autumn term. Staff were encouraged and facilitated to attend this also across LMETB FET centres:

- ETBI's UDL For FET Practitioners Webinar Series
- AHEAD's Digital Badge in UDL
- FESS Autumn CPD calendar.

An important development in the area of support for staff is the inclusion of a page called [Information for Staff](#) in the ICT section of LMETB's recently launched website, which outlines key information on the use of Office 365 package, as well as having a Computer Security and Safety advice page.

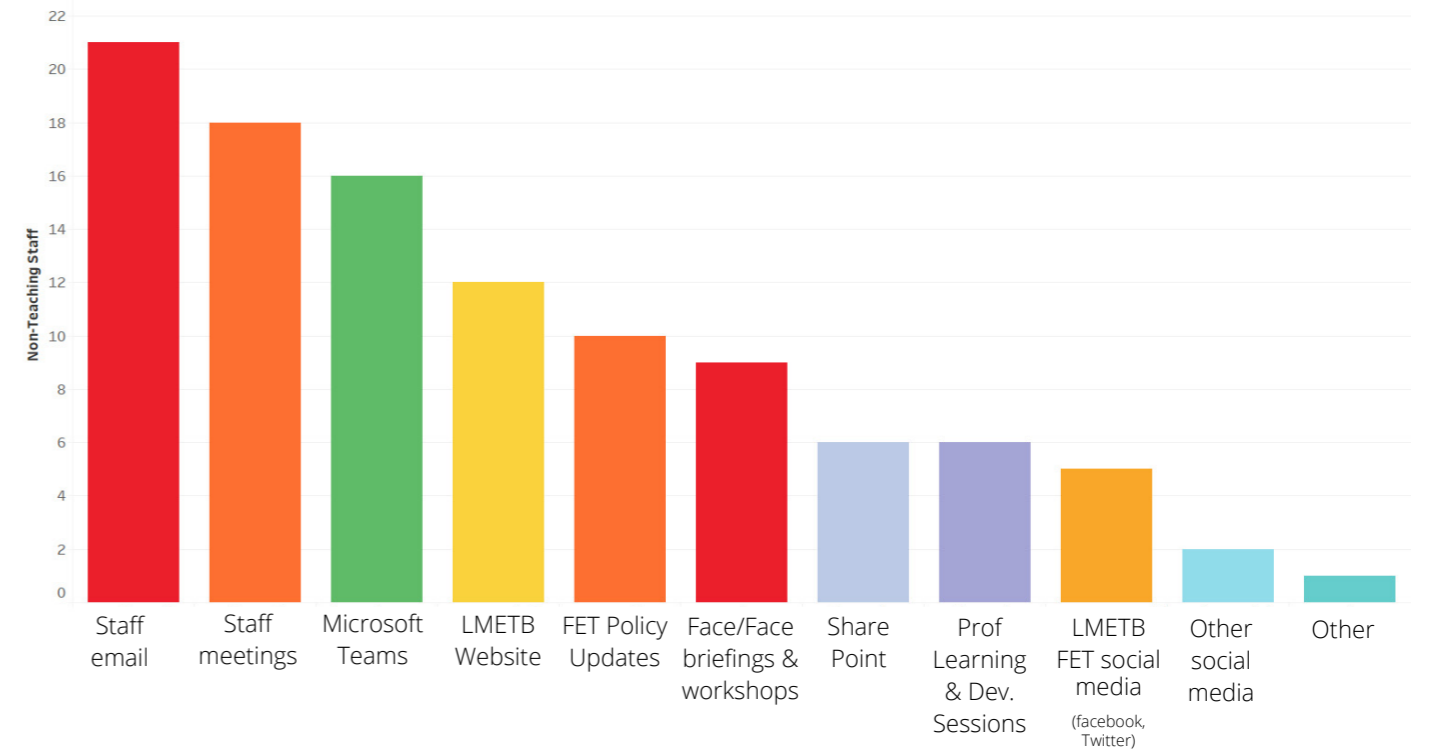
**Mechanisms by which staff are kept informed of developments impacting the organisation and can input on decision making**

- Staff Virtual MS Teams including the FET QA MS Team, the PLSS Users MS Team and the FET TEL and Professional Development MS Team
- Regular updates from Organisation Support and Development on the LMETB SharePoint sites with information on procurement, policies etc.
- Email updates from Senior and Line Management
- Face to face meetings: Department meetings, committee meetings and staff meetings, for example

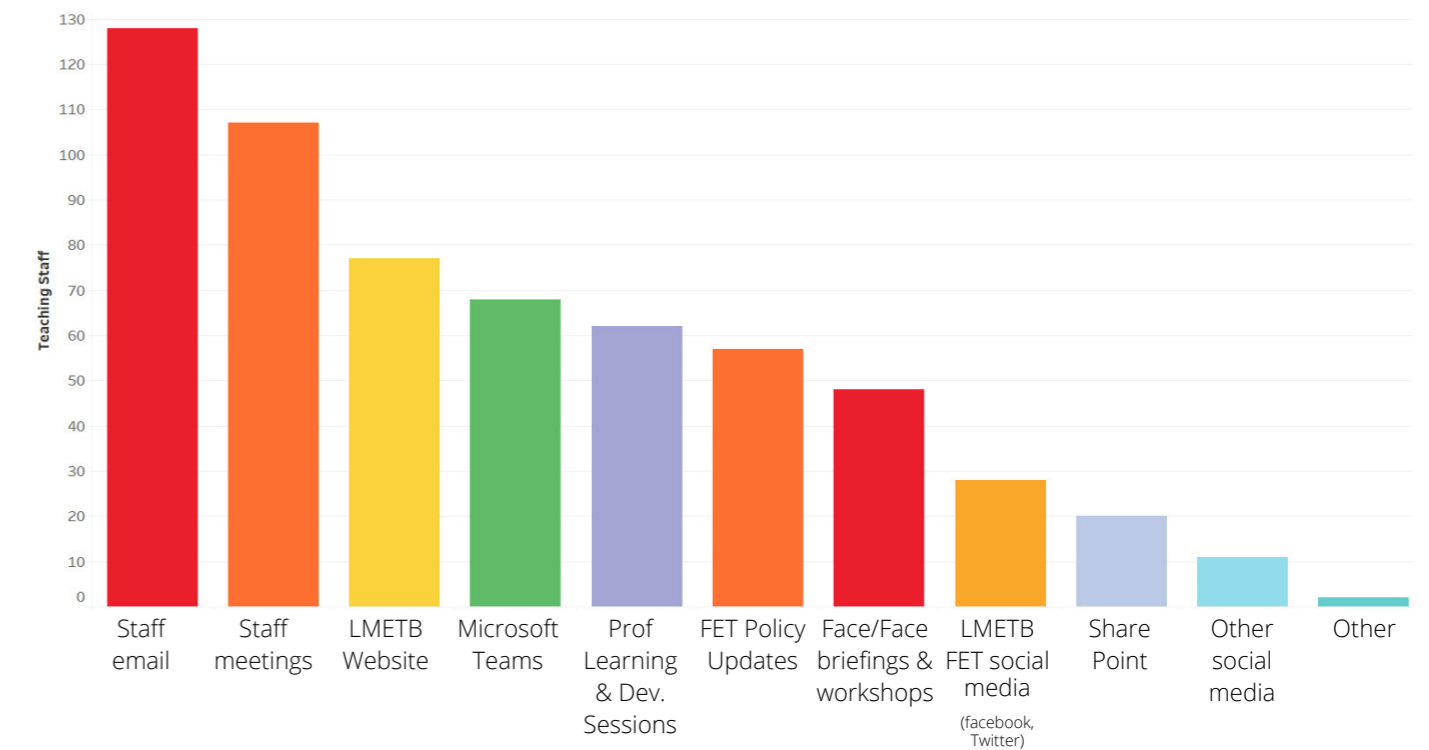
In terms of how staff can input into decision making, staff are also invited to be part of working groups and committees where they have an opportunity to directly have an impact on strategic planning and developments in FET. There are staff forums which meet at set times annually, such as the FET Forum Group and the Youthreach Forum. FET planning days, which are held annually, also draw on expert advice from external bodies such as SOLAS' Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, DSP, Regional Skills Fora, Enterprise Ireland and IBEC to provide an overview of emerging trends in skills, labour market changes and innovation so as to inform integrated FET planning. LMETB's Quality Assurance sub-committees also facilitate cross-service staff input into decision making.

In a staff survey, FET staff were asked to select options related to the following statement: I use the following methods to keep informed about the FET sector and the LMETB FET Division developments. Responses were as follows

FET Non-teaching staff: I use the following methods to keep informed about the FET sector and LMETB FET Division developments.

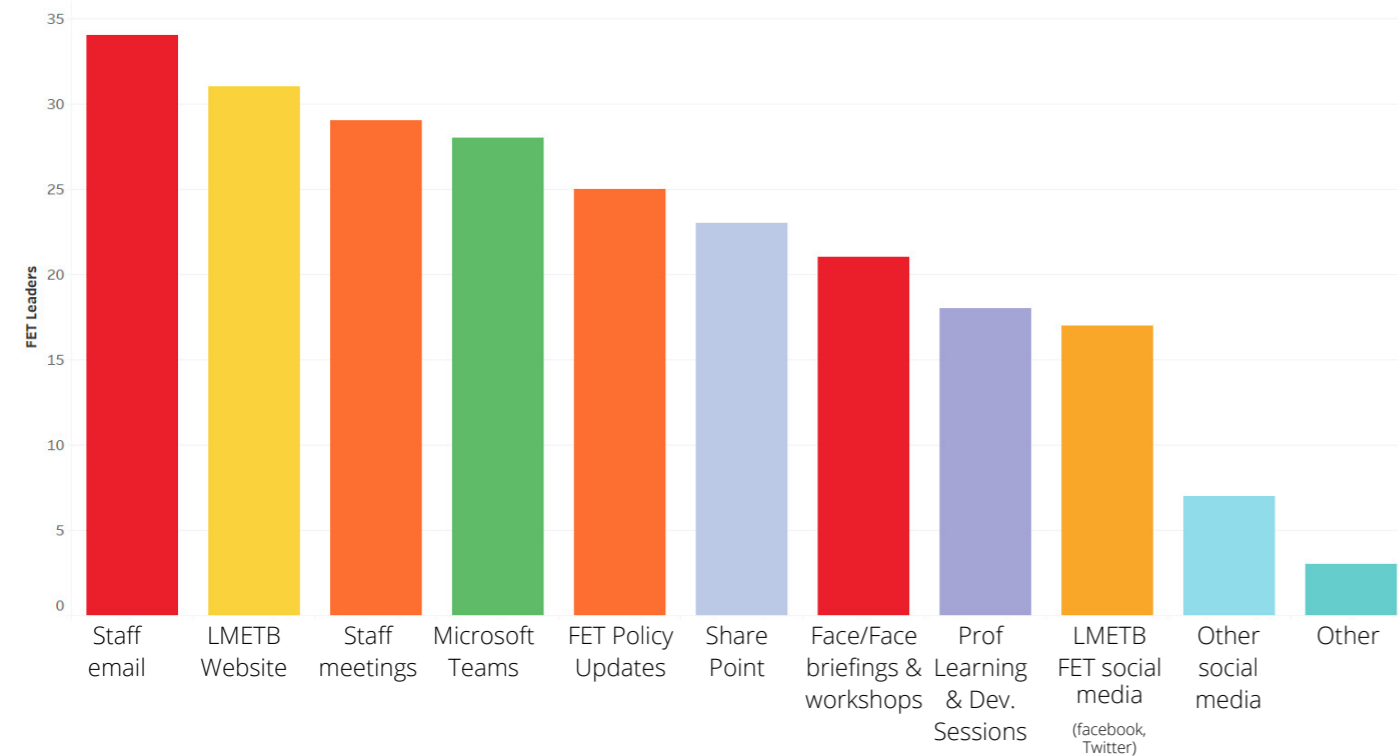


FET Teaching staff: I use the following methods to keep informed about the FET sector and LMETB FET Division developments.



FET Leaders: *I use the following methods to keep informed about the FET sector and LMETB FET*

*Division developments*



**2.4.2: EVALUATION:**

**What Is Working**

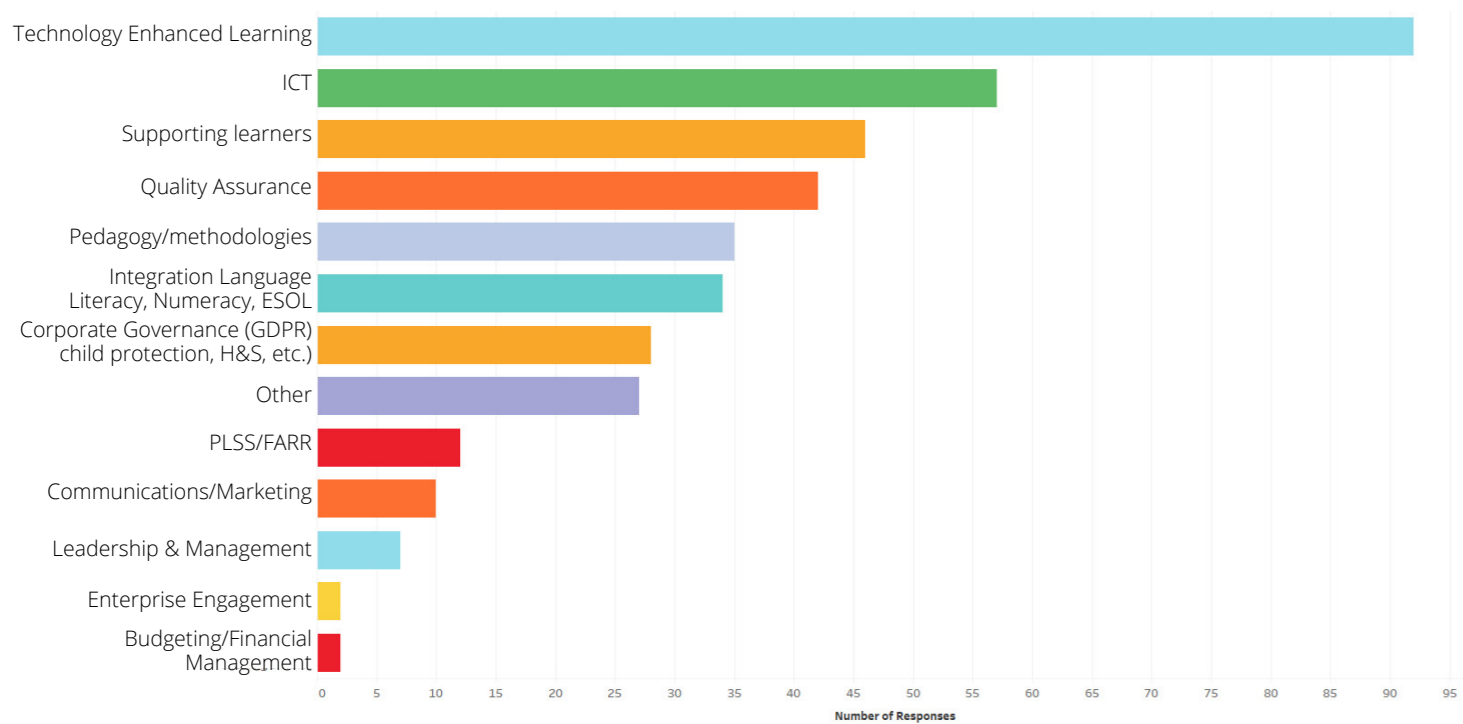
- Staff are kept informed of any job vacancies within LMETB via emails to all staff from LMETB's Recruitment Section.
- Recruitment Processes have adapted well to the virtual environment, necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, via the MS Teams platform, providing clear guidelines for interviewers/interviewees on processes and procedures with the use of the Adobe Sign Function for documentation.
- Qualitative Feedback from the staff survey in response to the question *'If you availed of PLD this year, how did it impact on you in your role?'* reinforces how beneficial the provision of ICT and TEL-related PLD by LMETB was to staff and learners in the transition to emergency remote and blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaboration between PLD and TEL has ensured that there is a coordinated approach to training.

**Staff Observations on ICT and TEL-Related PLD During COVID-19 Restrictions:**

<i>I did MS Teams training and a certificate in digital tools - most helpful.</i>	<i>ICT CPD helped with online teaching</i>
<i>I engaged in IT based CPD this year. I found it empowering.</i>	<i>It made me more confident.</i>
<i>I completed CPD for Zoom, Moodle, and Teams, all which were very relevant to teaching during Covid 19.</i>	<i>Quality Assurance was great to participate in. It gave me more confidence with the assessment criteria.</i>
<i>Availing of professional learning and development helped me cope with moving to using so many digital platforms in such a short space of time.</i>	<i>It enhanced my methods of assessment ensuring more differentiation catering for the individual needs of learners.</i>
<i>Excellent, if a little overwhelming at the beginning. You can only fit so many extra CPD courses in, but it was great to have the Teams TEL group for support.</i>	<i>Not long after COVID started, in my management role, I decided to introduce TEAMS as the main delivery mode. Neither teaching staff, learners nor I had any experience in that area, but I was able to avail of the supports on the LMETB IT Training Channel related to TEAMS and assist staff and learners in upskilling. Without the PLD supports, the transition to TEAMS would not have been as easy and staff and learners would have been impacted.</i>

- 69% of staff agreed with the statement *'I am supported by the ETB to maintain and enhance my professional standards through Professional Learning and Development'*, indicating an awareness and appreciation of PLD opportunities.
- There is good engagement by FET teaching staff with PLD opportunities across a variety of topics, as may be seen in the figure below:

*In the last few years, I attended Professional Learning and Development in:*



- The alignment of LMETB's PLD provision to the national SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-19 ensures a systematic approach to professional development.
- When surveyed, 70% of admin staff said that they had input into improvements at work by agreeing with the following statements: *I have opportunities to give feedback or make suggestions for improvements in my place of work.*
- Staff feedback on how they are kept informed of FET developments cited email and staff meetings as most popular. MS Teams also showed a high support rate, highlighting the benefit of this new technology in staff collaboration and communication.

### What Needs Improving

- Several FET Leaders indicated that aspects of the recruitment process for teaching staff were having a negative impact on their ability to respond to course requests and to provide delivery:

*'Posts have not been advertised promptly with no temporary staff being appointed in the interim. This has affected our quality of delivering to our students' (Youthreach Coordinator)*

It was highlighted, at the FET Centre focus sessions, that improvement was needed on the following:

- Improved and more timely communication between FET Leaders and HR from the time of the recruitment request through to the selection of candidate.
- Accelerate the time lapse from recruitment request to job advertisement and then from job application deadline to actual interviews taking place.
- Coordinators and PLC management need to be able to access teaching staff at short notice and, in these situations, it would be beneficial to have the ability to recruit teaching staff, with the required expertise who are working in other parts of the organisation and available for work, in a seamless fashion.

### 2.4.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions:

- Accelerated development of FET Induction Programme and Staff Handbook for staff at all levels within FET.
- Development of an LMETB FET Professional Learning and Development Strategy.
- Liaison with HR Section to review recruitment processes for FET teachers.

## 2.5 PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND SUBMISSION FOR VALIDATION

### 2.5.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

#### Programme Approval Process

LMETB's Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedure is currently in draft format for consideration by the Programme Development, Review and Evaluation (PDRE) sub-committee and final approval by the QAGMC. It is intended to have this policy approved and in place for early 2022.

The PDRE sub-committee forms part of LMETB's quality assurance structures, required under LMETB's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in response to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The existence of the PDRE sub-committee allows for a clear separation between those who engage in programme modification/development and those who approve proposals.

Requests from LMETB's various FET provision to develop new programmes and amend or review existing programmes will be reviewed and evaluated by the PDRE before being sent to the QAGMC for recommendation for approval, if deemed appropriate. The work of the PDRE will ensure compliance with QQI Sector Specific Guidelines, which state that *'An ETB is responsible for the design, development, approval, monitoring, and review of all programmes, including programmes leading to QQI awards.'* (p.6, 2016).

The PDRE will endeavour to provide timely decision making for FET centres, ensuring that the centres can respond effectively to labour market demands. Once LMETB's Programme Development and Approval Policy and associated procedures are in place, each centre will, in the circumstances outlined below, have to submit a Programme Approval Request (PR1) form. The PR1 will be required if a centre wishes to:

- Access and deliver existing LMETB validated major awards for the first time in their centre
- Access and deliver existing LMETB validated major programmes if that programme has not been delivered in-centre for the past five years
- Add additional minor modules to LMETB validated major awards under QQI's 20% rule (i.e. no more than 20% of the previously validated major award structure can be changed by the

addition of extra minor modules)

- Request to develop programmes shared from other ETBs.
- Develop new programmes/modules for validation

Each PR1 request submitted will include a needs identification/rationale that outlines the particular reasoning behind applying for approval. For example, the FET centre may consider how the course will meet learner needs as well as national/local skill needs, the relationship to national policy on active inclusion/activation etc., as well as stakeholder engagement or employer demand. The PDRE will consider each programme request and make recommendation for approval or not to LMETB's quality council, the QAGMC.

#### Partnership Approach

LMETB works collaboratively with stakeholders including other ETBs, ETBI, the Further Education Support Service (FESS), SOLAS, QQI, employers, industry and professional bodies in developing and updating programmes.

Over the last year, LMETB has been involved in the following initiatives:

- Application to QQI for differential validation of the Early Learning & Childcare awards at levels 5 and 6 (DDLETB Lead Provider).
- Application to QQI for LMETB to be recorded as validated to offer a special purpose award in Domestic Appliance Servicing (6S5830). LMETB worked with an external stakeholder, FastTrack To IT (FIT), to evaluate this former FÁS programme to ensure its fitness for purpose and relevance.
- Ongoing micro-qualifications programme design, in conjunction with a local robotics company and LMETB's Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE), in developing a special purpose award at Level 6 entitled 'Utilising Robotics in Advanced Manufacturing'.
- Level 5 Sustainability in the Workplace course. LMETB are part of the programme development group for this proposed award, along with partner ETBs, and are also represented on the promotions sub-group.
- National Hairdressing Apprenticeship - LCETB is the coordinating provider for this apprenticeship and LMETB is a collaborating provider with training being provided via the contracted training route.



## 2.5.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- LMETB FET SMT strongly support the design and delivery of professional, innovative, high quality and learner centred programmes for education and training.
- LMETB is building capacity for programme development and validation through staff availing of professional development opportunities offered in the last two years. Several FET staff members have completed or are participating in a Postgraduate Certificate in Programme Design and Validation for Further Education and Training (Level 9) with Maynooth University.
- While a formal process for programme approval has not been in place to date, FET Leaders are familiar with the need to liaise with their AEOs in relation to suggesting programme change. As part of the annual Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting (FARR) process at the end of the calendar year, FET centres apply to the FET SMT if they wish to offer a new LMETB validated QQI major award. This application requires FET Leaders to make a 'business case' similar to the rationale outlined above for the proposed Programme Development and Approval procedure. 76% of FET Leaders stated when surveyed, that they understand the requirement to request permission to deliver new courses.

Example of Programme Development Process in Dunboyne College of Further Education:

*Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE), as the largest provider of Further Education and Training courses in this region, works to ensure that their annual intake of 1000 students have the widest range and depth of courses to meet their progression and career needs. This is carefully considered by a team within the college which includes a dedicated committee, our guidance service and department heads and the wider staff after consulting with guidance counsellors in our feeder schools, labour market reports, DE reports, DSP data, SOLAS strategic agreements, Mid East, and North East Skills Forums, and our LMETB strategic objectives.*

*In terms of procedure for developing and accessing new programmes we have to do a labour market justification for each course we run in DCFE, which would include costings, who else is offering this course, and the labour market needs that have given rise to it. This business case would also include reference to and include identified gaps, skills needs/research, relevant local and national statistical data, stakeholder engagement (employers, DSP etc.), as well as proposed outcomes for learners/employers and LMETB.*

*We would access data through annual meetings with the SOLAS strategic team, the DSP, Enterprise Ireland etc. to see what the upcoming trends are. We would examine any of our own courses that are no longer fit for purpose, are not attracting learners or are not as relevant as in previous years. These are then replaced by new offerings to meet a rapidly changing economy and society. We do find the processes involved in programme development robust, transparent, and objective. In filling out the FARR planning document each year, we take into account the needs of the region, the SOLAS and LMETB strategies, and the local training needs of the Dunboyne area and beyond.*

- DCFE Principal

- FET Leaders are aware of the need to check, with the QA Office, the validation status of any new courses they might propose. During the focus group sessions with FET Leaders, this point was highlighted. *'At the start of term full details of awards offered both major and minor are submitted to the QA Officer to ensure our centre is validated to deliver all QQI awards offered' (Youthreach Coordinator).* The importance of communicating to teaching staff that LMETB validated programmes and module descriptors may only be downloaded from LMETB's FET Awards Portal, was commented upon during the FET centre focus group session.
- FET Leaders recognise the importance of gathering intelligence from the Adult Guidance Service as to the course requests and information sought by potential learners. *'I liaise with Guidance on new course queries as they come in' (BTEI Coordinator)*
- Where appropriate, LMETB endeavours to include employers when deciding on programme development. *'The development of programmes often come from a request from industry personnel through our Work Experience programmes' (PLC Deputy Principal)*
- The addition to the FET Support Service of Employment Engagement Officers has greatly aided in providing capacity for consultation of employers on programme and course need and in providing 'on the ground' intelligence. 30% of employers surveyed indicated that they had collaborated with LMETB in curriculum/course development, while 70% of employers surveyed agreed that 'Employers can influence the curriculum and content of programmes delivered by LMETB to make them more relevant for the workplace'.



### Summary of Comments from Employers - Programme Development and Collaboration:

Employers were asked: Are there skills gaps in your company now (or in the next 3-5 years) which LMETB Further Education and Training could assist with?

#### Responses included:

*It would be great to see any soft skills courses.*

*Resilience Training, Health and Wellbeing*

*Yes, we have developed a plan for provision through both their full-time courses, part-time courses at night and through Skills to Advance. Our engagement with the Deputy Principal in Dunboyne College has been very effective.*

*Yes - Reception, Sales and Marketing, Food Beverage, Hospitality in general*

Employers were asked: What works well for you in any collaboration you have with LMETB?

#### Responses included:

*The level of collaboration and cooperation and the attention to bespoke design to meet our needs has been excellent.*

*Very personalised and tailored and suitable to the age profile of the employee.*

*The wide variety of courses available from leadership and management to bookkeeping to managing people- covers many departments.*

*We have an excellent working relationship with our contact at LMETB, very helpful and effective.*

*The level of attention and flexibility offered by the college and the quality of its trainer.*

### What Needs Improving

- From a quality assurance perspective, there is currently no formalised process in place for programme development and approval. LMETB's draft Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedures needs to be finalised and sent forward for approval as a matter of urgency. Clear guidance should then be issued to all FET centres around the programme approval process.
- The emergency teaching, learning and assessment response to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to develop a Blended Learning Policy to quality assure blended and/or online delivery for future programme development and potential revalidation requirements.
- While the composition of the PDRE represents a broad reach of FET provision, encompassing members from PLC, Guidance, RSTC and Youthreach centres, there is no representation from

FET provision such as BTEI, VTOS, ALS or Community Education. Cross FET representation will inform wider-ranging discussion and debate on programme development. This process may also benefit from the addition of external representation to the PDRE.

- LMETB currently does not have a systematic process in place for module reviews at a local level. A process needs to be developed so that content and assessment activities may be updated in modules where teachers have identified errors or have concerns that content has become outdated or irrelevant. The QA Office will have a role in updating and recirculating revised module descriptors once a module review process is formalised. There is a recognition from QQI that the CAS awards used by the FET sector are due for a considered review, and many will require updating to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and relevant. A sectoral response from ETBs may result in LMETB taking part in a national initiative on the review of the most frequently used QQI awards.

*'Perhaps it might be an idea to set up a programme proposal committee to address/respond to new and emerging trends in the Labour market for example ...and to advise on new programme development' (Youthreach Coordinator)*

*'A timely review of the QQI components and major awards used in the Adult Learning Service would be very welcome. We are still waiting on new ESOL Level 1 and 2 components from QQI and this would be very beneficial to our service and learners. (Adult Literacy Organiser)*

*'I feel that module descriptors are unnecessarily heavy on language and lack guidance because of this' (FET Teacher)*

### 2.5.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- Approval and ratification of LMETB’s Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedures. Dissemination of approved procedure to all FET centres.
- Appointment of dedicated staff in the area of programme development and validation. At the moment all programme development work, such as that related to the Advanced Certificate in ELC differential validation and the Domestic Appliance Servicing award, is facilitated by the QA Office. However, as LMETB enters into a period of increased programme development demands, due to revalidation of CAS awards and innovative programme development in response to strategic direction, dedicated staff with programme validation experience will add great value to LMETB’s FET Support Service.
- Continued promotion and support for professional learning development for FET staff in the area of programme development and validation.
- Further development of the draft LMETB Blended Learning Policy and subsequent development of an Online Learning Policy to aid future programme development of blended options and fully online courses.
- Develop opportunities to expand current apprenticeship provision aligned to the Government’s Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2021-2025. AMTCE is currently at the development stage of an Advanced Manufacturing Systems Technician apprenticeship programme and it is hoped that this application will be ready to progress in 2022.

## 2.6 ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

### 2.6.1 DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION OPTIONS

LMETB is committed to a fair and transparent approach to the enrolment of learners onto its FET programmes and inclusiveness and equality are central to LMETB’s strategic goals. It is LMETB’s aim to support potential learners with comprehensive, up-to-date access transfer and progression information on its portfolio of FET programmes, which have course offerings ranging from unaccredited hobby and leisure courses up to QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificates.

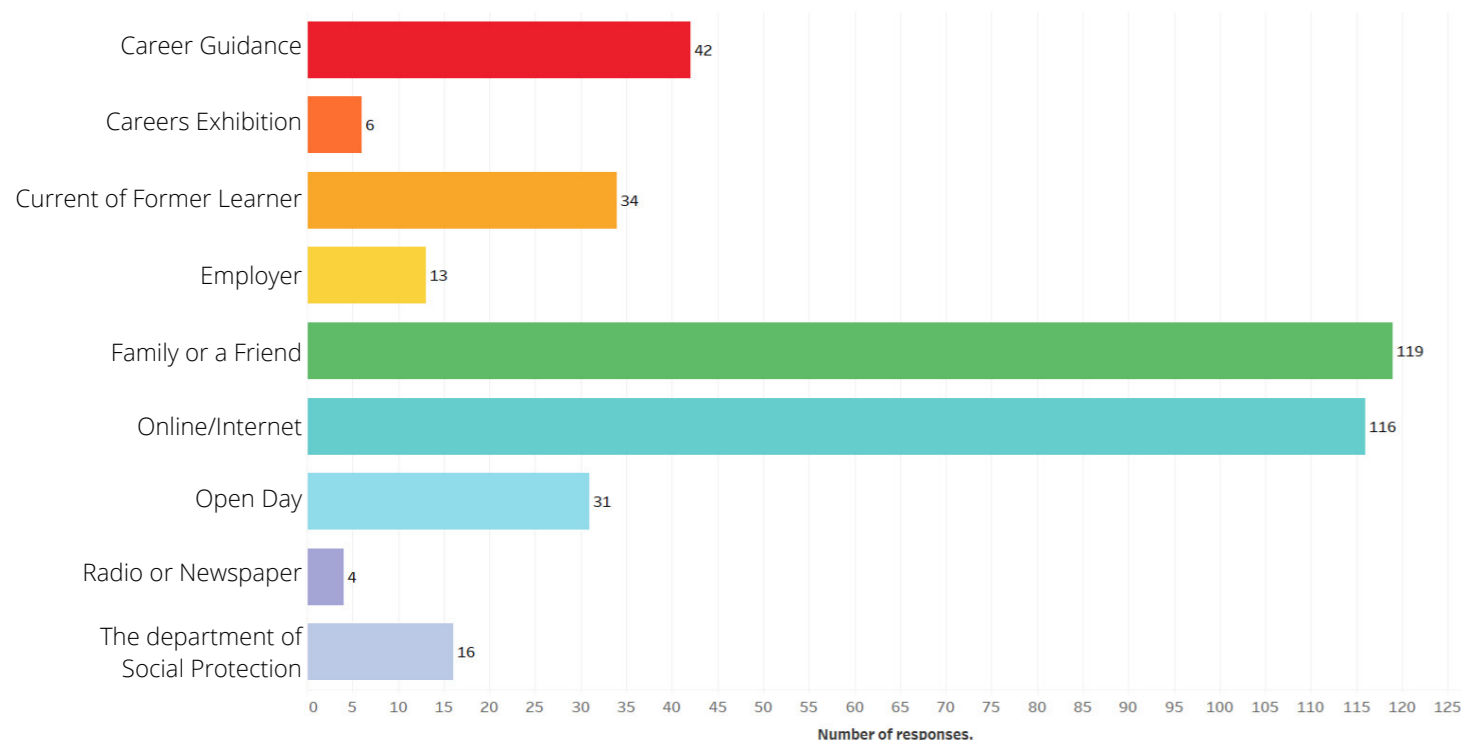
#### Access

Accessing any programme with LMETB begins with programme/course promotion and awareness. FET Programmes and courses are promoted by LMETB in a number of ways:

LMETB Official Websites	LMETB FET social media pages (at organisational and centre level)	LMETB Corporate Social Media pages	The National Further Education and Training Course Hub (FETCH website)
Programme promotional material e.g., leaflets, flyers, posters etc.	Louth Meath Adult Educational Guidance Service	Occasional media opportunities e.g., radio, local print media, T.V. etc.	Local INTREO offices

The FET Learner Forum Report in May 2021 indicated that most learners had heard about their course from ‘family or a friend’, followed by ‘online / internet’ and ‘career guidance’ also featuring as outlined in the figure below.

Where did you hear about this course?



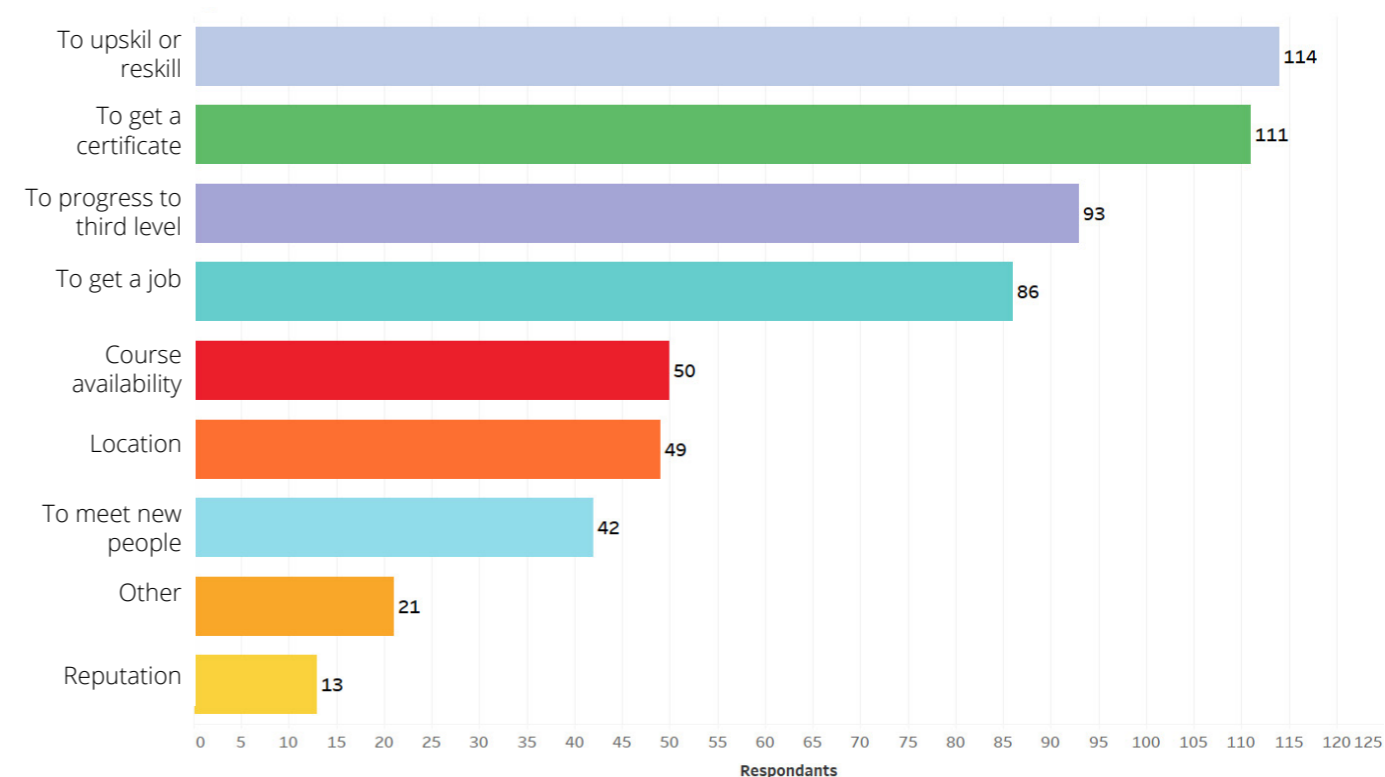
Learners can register for courses through:

- FETCH website
- CAO FET Portal
- PLC Admissions portal via MIT eNROL.
- Direct application to a centre using a paper- based application form.
- Apprentices and their employers register on the Apprentice Client Services System (ACSS) through a Senior Training Advisor

The new CAO FET Portal allows CAO applicants to view FET courses and HE courses at the same time. Thirty LMETB PLC courses for 2022 can now be accessed through the CAO website. Management of the learner application process remains at centre level.

Learners choose to do FET courses for a variety of reasons. The main reason given by part-time respondents to the learner survey was to reskill or upskill, whilst full-time learners were more interested in gaining certification.

Reasons for Taking Courses



### Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

LMETB recognizes prior certified learning where appropriate. Some centres may advise on RPL opportunities, based on certified learning, during their induction processes. This includes details on how to apply for exemptions where a learner has already achieved a programme related QQI module. Currently, LMETB does not have a process in place whereby certification can be achieved through an RPL or a Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) process.

### Transfer

There is continuous communication with learners regarding desired pathways. Teaching staff may carry out a variety of reviews through, for example, Monthly Progression Forms, Learner Progression Forms, and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) to assist in supporting the learner to identify and develop their learning pathway. Louth Meath Adult Educational Guidance Service also plays a central role in ensuring learners are supported on their journey. This service is open to learners across all provision and to adults wishing to assess their educational options. It is an important element in identifying opportunities suitable for individual learners when planning progression.

### Progression

Progression pathways both internally from one programme to another within FET provision, and

externally to other institutions, is clearly communicated to learners throughout their learning. LMETB is committed to providing learners with opportunities to progress to Higher Education. Learners who have successfully achieved a QQI award at Levels 5 and 6 can apply to the CAO through the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) for a place at Higher Education. At present, approximately 40 HEIs offer progression routes into a broad range of Level 6 Higher Certificate, Level 7 Ordinary Degree and Level 8 Honours Degree programmes.

The progression agreements that exist with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), such as DKIT and Maynooth University, strengthen progression opportunities and create clearer pathways for learners. LMETB FET learners progress to DKIT, DCU, Maynooth, TU Dublin and other HEIs. LMETB's 3 PLC colleges, along with Cavan and Monaghan Institute and Dundalk Institute of Technology, are members of the North East Further and Higher Education Alliance (NEFHEA). NEFHEA is a regional higher and further education initiative working to promote greater take-up of further and higher education opportunities among learners in the North East region. It works to ensure the provision is tailored to the specific needs of the region and the participating institutions collaborate on the development of relevant and responsive programmes. A key priority of the alliance is to increase progression rates from FET to Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT).

Guidance services, whether delivered in PLC colleges or through the support of the Adult Educational Guidance Service, provide significant supports around progression options for learners. Learners receive scheduled visits from Guidance staff informing of progression options / CAO applications / employment opportunities and the range of supports which are available throughout their learning. They may also make individual appointments with a Guidance Counsellor.

### Progression Tracking

PLSS is the principal source of centralised progression and destination data once a learner has completed or exited a programme. Data captured and stored, in this regard, is returned to SOLAS as part of LMETB's reporting obligations. Progression and destination are tracked at centre level by local management through various means, for example, graduate questionnaires and correspondence with Course Coordinators.

## 2.6.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- LMETB learners present across a wide age range, enrolling for courses for a variety of reasons. For example, within part time learning, flexible learning options are extremely important in providing access to learners. Learners have the option of starting with just one or two modules before progressing onwards. Another example of good practice is the facilitation of learners to combine qualification levels in their learning, for example, a learner might study both Level 3 in Word Processing and Level 4 in Communications in the one term. This provides more flexibility and responds to learners' skillsets in various subject areas. See Appendix 2b and 2c for two case studies detailing the use of innovative approaches to provide access points into FET provision in LMETB. The incorporation of numeracy into a craft activity has proven successful in encouraging learners to try a numeracy class in the Adult Learning Service in Meath (2b) and the establishment of a new Local Training Initiative in Drogheda is using football as a means of encouraging young people to return to learning (2c).
- One of the best testaments to the quality of the learning experience at LMETB is the feedback in the learner forum report which indicated that, when learners were asked, about where they heard about their course, even in a time of online learning, the greatest number of respondents answered they heard about their course from a family member or friend. This fact emphasises the positive experience of past learners who are then recommending family or friends to participate and return to learning with LMETB.
- LMETB's [Access Transfer and Progression Policy](#) and [FET Admissions Policy](#) are available on the LMETB website. Admission criteria and programme information is publicly accessible on [www.fetchcourses.ie](http://www.fetchcourses.ie), [www.lmetb.ie](http://www.lmetb.ie) and all LMETB FET centre websites. As part of the evolving situation around the inclusion of FET courses through a single CAO portal, and its implications on Access, Transfer and Progression, LMETB is examining the development of an overarching common admissions procedure, which will assist in ensuring consistent FET admission procedures across the region.
- Applicants have reported a high satisfaction level with their overall induction and registration. 90% of respondents in the learner forum report said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the process.

- 95% of respondents in the learner forum report were satisfied with the level of customer service at the initial contact with their centre.
- There is a move towards more centres encouraging and supporting learners to apply online through the FETCH courses hub. Where this is not possible, applicants can still apply and register through paper 'Expression of Interest' and 'Learner Detail' forms. This is particularly relevant for learners at Levels 1 to 3. PLC applications are made through MIT eNROL.
- For PLCs, progression is centred around the Career and Guidance departments, and all learners are able to access services and guidance around progression opportunities to both employment and Higher Education. Prospective learners are also informed of potential progression options in college literature, website and, as relevant, during school visits prior to the learner joining their college course. Learner progression is tracked through PLC Alumni systems, including graduate questionnaires and correspondence with course coordinators as part of the FARR process.
- Youthreach centres and contracted community provision such as LTIs/CTC have benefitted from study visits to the RSTC where they have received informative talks on apprenticeship options from Senior Training Advisors.

### What Needs Improving

- Application process: As part of the FET Learner forum, learners were asked, "What could your centre do to improve its registration and induction policies?". Some learners recommended improving the ease and user-friendliness of the application process, both on FETCH and on the paper PLSS Learner Details Forms, and feedback in the report indicated that the requirement to complete an application for each individual course (for part-time learners) was seen as laborious. Furthermore, in the FET Centre Focus groups, some FET leaders stated that their centres guided learners through the necessary steps to complete their application on FETCH, but this is not consistent throughout FET. FET Leaders in several centres have also requested that a digital version of the PLSS Learner Detail form be accepted as equivalent to the paper version. To facilitate ease of use by learners in the online application process, ETBI & SOLAS are collaboratively developing an AI-based chatbot for FETCH, which will have LMETB representation in dealing with queries.

- Communication with learners throughout the application process: Whilst some centres reported, in the FET Centre focus groups, that a process was in place whereby they corresponded with applicants at each stage of the application process (inform of application received, in progress, accepted, etc.), some learners, in the FET Learner Forum report, indicated that communication could be improved, in that they would like to receive this application update information by email, text or letter.
- Interview process: Whilst most respondents who answered the learner survey (89% of the overall amount surveyed) in respect to the interview process were satisfied with the process, both the number of responses in this area, and the rate of satisfaction, were lower than with other aspects of the recruitment, registration, and induction process.
- Better information before the course starts: A number of respondents mentioned that they would have benefited from a better awareness of the duration, learning outcomes and the amount of work entailed before their course started.
- Update website: The website was described as 'clunky' and in need of an update. Since the learners' survey was taken, the website has been completely updated and redesigned.

### 2.6.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- LMETB recognises the increasing demand for RPL/RPEL by its learners and is committed to working towards a formal process, through sectoral engagement at a national level, in order to develop an LMETB RPL /RPEL policy. There is an opportunity to review the application of exemptions across FET provision to ensure its consistent implementation for learners.
- Aim to formalise the arrangement of guidance visits to all FET Centres, to ensure consistency of approach, especially around the CAO process, for Level 5 and 6 learners.
- Consideration be given to the need to review the existing range of support services for FET provision within the organisation to more accurately address and service the information and recruitment needs of potential entrants, manage the learners support needs of existing students and promote access routes and mechanisms, particularly for those traditionally who experience barriers to participation due to social exclusion.



## 2.7 INTEGRITY AND APPROVAL OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### 2.7.1 DESCRIPTION - OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

LMETB is committed to the fair and consistent assessment of learners. Robust assessment procedures are in place in all FET centres and LMETB is working to establish a fit for purpose common assessment framework encompassing all FET provision. Protocols are in place to ensure the integrity of the assessment process in line with statutory QQI guidelines and award standards.

LMETB provides guidelines to its centres in the following areas:

- The preparation of assessment briefs and instruments
- The provision of assessment related information to learners
- The conduct and consistency of assessment, assessment appeals and record keeping.

Recently revised assessment related procedures are available [here](#).

Centres are supported, on an ongoing basis, by the LMETB QA Office on all assessment related quality assurance matters that may arise. All documentation related to assessment is available on the FET QA MS Team and QA SharePoint sites.

LMETB's verification process(es) includes both internal and external authentication procedures and the convening of a results approval panel (RAP), a three-step process that is focused on assuring the integrity and approval of assessment results. This process commences once all learner assessment evidence has been collated, graded, and submitted by centre assessors. The verification process is an LMETB standardized approach for both the FE centres and Training Services, although there are slight procedural differences.

#### Internal Verification (IV) Process

The internal verification (IV) process is managed at centre level. Internal Verifiers are appointed to confirm the completeness and accuracy of the assessment process in line with existing QQI Guidelines. Appointees may be from within the centre/college or external to the centre, but independent of the target programme. Internal Verification (IV) checks that a number of procedures have been carried out in accordance with QA guidelines, such as the correct use of assessment instruments, input of learner results into QQI's certification system and totalling

of marks correctly for a sample of learners. This process is completed in preparation for the external authentication process and is documented in an IV Report.

#### External Authentication (EA) Process

External Authenticators (EA) are appointed to provide independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners, and to ensure assessment processes have been valid and reliable. EAs are subject matter experts and are selected from a list of trained personnel, via the National ETBI EA Panel, based on their area of expertise at the appropriate NFQ level. The role of the EA includes reviewing the IV report to ensure assessment has been carried out in a quality assured manner and to ensure that grades are given in line with national standards for that level. In order to ensure consistency of approach, LMETB plans to develop a centralized directory of EAs, recruited from the ETBI EA Directory, who will provide external authentication services to LMETB for a defined period. The EA provides a report on observations and recommendations for each centre visited.

#### Results Approval Panel (RAP) Process

LMETB Results Approval Panel (RAP) meetings confirm the fairness and consistency of the assessment process and ensures the validity of assessment results. RAP meetings confirm that the assessment of learner evidence and authentication of assessment results have been carried out in line with LMETB's commitment to quality assured processes.

RAP meetings are convened prior to each request to QQI for certification and represent clusters of programmes. Attendance at the RAP meeting must include a minimum of four of the following.

- Adult Education Officer
- Internal Verifier
- Assistant Training Services Manager
- PLC Principal or Deputy Principal
- FET Centre Manager/Coordinator
- Chief Executive
- Programme Manager

- PLC Department Head
- Area Training Manager
- Senior Training Advisor
- Director of FET
- QA Officer
- TSO & Assistant TSO
- Subject matter expert
- Designated observer

The RAP considers the IV and EA reports. The RAP has a responsibility to recommend provisional results for approval, request certification from QQI and propose an agenda for development and improvement, as the need arises. Corrective and preventative measures that emerge are actioned by the relevant FET Leader to mitigate risk in the future, in line with the centre's commitment to continuous development and improvement.

A consolidated RAP report, consisting of findings from RAP meetings for each QQI submission period, is submitted to the Quality Assurance sub-committee for consideration. This report outlines the agreed areas of good practice, areas for improvement and aids in the identification of long-term trends in order to inform and progress the LMETB's quality improvement agenda. Recommendations for professional development events (in-service, information and feedback sessions, workshops) to build capacity in LMETB may be recommended by the QA sub-committee. Periodically, an overview of the consolidated RAP Reports may be sent to the QAGMC to aid in the oversight of authentication processes and to identify long term trends with respect to certification data.

### Non-QQI Assessment Processes

QQI certifies the largest proportion of FET programmes in LMETB. A number of other programmes are certified by awarding bodies such as City and Guilds, Microsoft, ITEC, and ICS Skills, particularly in the PLC colleges and Training Services. LMETB has quality assurance arrangements and agreements in place with these awarding bodies. Based on QQI Quality Assurance guidelines, LMETB incorporates these arrangements, as well as unaccredited provision, in the development

of new quality assurance policies and procedures. Oversight of all assessment processes, regardless of the awarding body, is managed by the QA Office.

It is the intention of FET SMT that a single overarching set of policies, procedures and practices should operate across LMETB provision, thus quality assuring all programme and services at provider level. All QA arrangements with other awarding bodies will need to be incorporated within this set of policies, procedures, and practices.

## 2.7.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- LMETB is committed to developing a single integrated set of assessment-related policies and procedures. Significant development has been completed in harmonising elements of the legacy QA systems inherited by LMETB, especially in the areas of assessment related procedures and Results Approval Panel policy and procedures. Such development is evidenced in the recent approval of the revision of assessment related procedures, the development of an integrated RAP Policy in conjunction with the RSTC, as well as ongoing revision and drafting of revised IV and EA guidelines.
- Analysis and reporting procedures to the various QA governance groups are in place. For example, the first consolidated RAP report for the October 2021 submission period was presented to the QA sub-committee for consideration and then added to the FET QA MS Teams site for FET staff to view.
- The centralised role of the QA Office in organising and attending the RAP meetings, ensures a consistent approach to the application of standards across FET provision. This role is carried out by the TSO in the Training Centre.
- FET centres are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring management and the multi-level oversight arrangements for QA processes in centre; from authentication (IV and EA) to the RAP process to the reporting to governance committees. Evaluative feedback gathered from FET centre focus group sessions included FET Leaders commenting on the benefit of having dedicated staff and procedures in place in centre for the IV process. Where this is not possible, some FET centres spoke of the value of having IV personnel from a separate centre who are therefore external to the teachers in their own centre and who provide an

impartial perspective, *'many centres have a QQI person<sup>2</sup> and an IV team with the Coordinator offering oversight also'*. Conversely, peer IV is used in the PLC colleges which helps, according to PLC Deputy Principals, to promote the sense of everyone being involved in quality and the maintenance of a quality culture. See table below for comments collected at the PLC Focus Group session in answer to specific questions around assessment processes:

<b>What are the checks and balances that you have in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?</b>
<i>Reflection and action plans developed based on EA recommendations</i>
<i>Workshops for new teachers and mentors appointed for new staff</i>
<i>QA reviews - reviews of assessment briefs to ensure fitness of purpose</i>
<i>Regular consultation with staff on assessment processes throughout the year</i>
<i>Regular professional development opportunities provided by our QA staff</i>
<i>Feedback from learners</i>
<i>Course self-evaluations and improvement plans</i>
<b>Do you have courses certified by other awarding bodies and if so, how do you ensure the above?</b>
<i>Appointed a coordinator for each awarding body with industry knowledge/ experience with this certifying body. Ensures alignment with the QA processes of this body.</i>
<i>We offer a number of alternative certifying bodies; teachers must follow the relevant college policies and procedures in place for QA.</i>
<b>Is the internal verification process in your centre reliable in confirming the accuracy of results?</b>
<i>Yes, online system has been developed which is working extremely well.</i>
<i>Yes, we conduct 100% peer review with a small sample crosschecked/ moderated for accuracy.</i>
<i>Yes, in general we use a robust peer review with a detailed report completed for all areas identifying any errors, with any issues rectified ahead of EA.</i>

<sup>2</sup>QQI refers here to the person in the FET Centre with responsibility for QA in that centre including the upload of results to the QBS system.

### Are learners well informed in relation to assessment appeals procedures?

*Yes, we have a learner review prior to appeals to ensure learners are aware of how their marks were achieved. This transparency is essential.*

*Feedback and review with teachers throughout the year assist in ensuring learners know about the appeals procedures with regards grade and process appeals.*

The following table shows results from the Staff Survey regarding assessment processes:

**55% of FET teaching staff agreed with the statement *'I have the opportunity to regularly discuss feedback from external authenticators with my Centre Coordinator/ Manager'***

**57% of FET Leaders agree that they always discuss feedback from EAs with their teaching staff and 32% of FET Leaders stated that they sometimes discuss this feedback.**

**77% of FET Leaders agree with the statement *'I feel my awareness of quality assurance has improved over the last few years'* with only 6% of FET teaching staff disagreeing with this statement.**

### What Needs Improving

- While EAs are drawn from the national ETBI directory, detailed LMETB HR requirements around setting up EAs for payment over the past number of years, has resulted in only a limited number of new authenticators being available in FET. To ensure an unbiased and transparent authentication process it is good practice to broaden the range of EAs available to the FET provision. The paperwork associated with the EA payment process is currently being revised, in conjunction with HR, and a more streamlined system is being introduced. Following on from this initiative, it is hoped to set up an external EA panel, recruited from the ETBI directory across relevant subject areas, on a three-year cycle using the revised payment system.
- Differences remain in the assessment documentation used in different FET centres. The standardisation of documentation and harmonisation of assessment processes across FET provision, while allowing for slight differences where appropriate, is a priority area for the QA Office.

- Currently, only submissions for QQI awards are reviewed and approved at RAP meetings. In the planned, integrated QA framework for LMETB, it is envisioned that the results from other awarding bodies will be incorporated into the RAP process.
- Training on assessment matters such as assessment brief writing, developing marking schemes and giving feedback to learners needs to be introduced on an annual basis to build capacity within centres and to ensure that new teaching staff are enabled to competently complete their duties as assessors.

### 2.7.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- Recruitment and appointment of an external EA panel to authenticate for LMETB across all FET provision over a three-year cycle.
- Management of EA bookings for FET centres will be centralised through the QA Office to ensure consistency of approach, a more focused use of resources and the recycling of EA expertise across provision.
- Harmonization of assessment processes across FET provision is a priority area for the QA Office.
- Further work required on capturing data on certification outcomes from results submission periods.

## 2.8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

### 2.8.1 DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

LMETB recognises the importance of data in facilitating decision-making and planning for quality assured services and provision. Data and statistics play an integral role in the funding and reporting processes associated with FET and have a key part to play in the high-level review and evaluation of programmes.

#### Management Information Systems

The FET service uses a number of data management systems for data capture and information processing that support timely and effective decision-making. Some are hosted centrally, others, such as Salespulse, operate locally at centre level. These systems are used to capture data and information, which are processed in a timely manner, and also to monitor learner attendance, results, and progression. All systems have restricted access to specific individuals and are only shared with authorised entities and with the express consent of learners. All are securely accessed on a needs-only basis.

#### Programme Learning Support System (PLSS)

Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) is the principal centralised on-line system that supports LMETB's FET provision. This system, hosted centrally by SOLAS, retains a comprehensive set of data on learners, FET programmes and service provision nationally. It is a key component of LMETB's management information system and is used to store and process course information, learner records, performance, and reports.

PLSS provides a secure platform for the collection, processing and sharing of data through the following portals:

1	National Programme Database (NPD) repository of FET programmes being delivered nationally.
2	National Course Calendar (NCC) : Schedule of programmes. Data in the NCC is transferred to the Further Education Training Course Hub (FETCH) website ( <a href="http://www.fetchcourses.ie">www.fetchcourses.ie</a> ). This allows the public to search, view and apply for courses online.
3	Learner Database: Data from FETCH online applications is transferred into a learner database. Further data entered at ETB level for enrolled learners creates a secure learner record.
4	Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting System (FARR): The PLSS system also enables centres to plan courses annually through FARR. Data from both the NCC and Learner Database is transferred to FARR.

PLSS also provides real-time oversight of current and planned FET provision, and enables a reduction or elimination of ad-hoc management information systems at centre level. Data captured on PLSS is available for producing tailored reports that facilitate ongoing review of programmes and services to learners, and for the monitoring of a centre's strategic plans, registration, retention rates, certification rates, etc. Since 2018, all LMETB programmes are scheduled on the NCC except for apprenticeships and self-financing courses.

### Certification Data Systems

At centre level, on-line systems supporting FET certification data include QQI's certification system - QBS, the RCCRS for the Training Centre, ACSS and ACRS for apprenticeship programmes, The Walled Garden system for City and Guilds and the Wa'Daq system for ITEC accreditation.

### QQI Business System (QBS)

QQI certification accounts for approximately 90% of LMETB's certified FET provision. Learner registration and certification with QQI is facilitated by providing each centre access to QBS using Multi Factor Authentication (MFA). QBS functionality provides centres with a variety of reports on individual learner achievement and overall centre performance that supports data validation, quality assurance, monitoring, review, as well as continuous development and improvement of centre provision. Work is ongoing to streamline data transfer from PLSS directly to QBS.

### The Walled Garden

Registration, assessment and certification with City and Guilds is facilitated by providing each approved centre with secure access to the Walled Garden. As with QBS, functionality within the system provides centres with a variety of reports to support data validation, quality assurance, monitoring, review, as well as continuous development and improvement in centre provision.

### Apprenticeship Client Services System (ACSS) and Apprenticeship College Results System

These systems record apprenticeship details and results.

### Results Capture and Certification Request System (RCCRS)

The RCCRS is a web-based system used in the Regional Skills and Training Centre and its associated provision to manage certification requests. The RCCRS requests for QQI certification are uploaded to QBS with the assistance of SOLAS. It is also used to capture results from other providers, e.g., City & Guilds.

### Wa'Daq

The ITEC system for arranging booking for testing and certification is Wa'Daq.

### Legislative Compliance

- LMETB has a statutory obligation to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to the processing of their personal data. LMETB has a Data Protection Officer and additional nominated staff are available to assist and provide guidance to centres as the need arises. All LMETB staff have been informed of the requirement to complete online GDPR Training, hosted by ETBI. To date, 156 FET staff have received this training.
- The monitoring of compliance, process review and the development of LMETB's commitments and obligations relating to GDPR is ongoing and is the primary responsibility of LMETB's Data Protection Officer. GDPR compliance is achieved through policy development and implementation, ongoing data protection awareness training, performing internal audits and checklists, and implementing appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure the security of the personal data held by LMETB.



- All learners are advised of their GDPR rights as data subjects and of LMETB's related responsibilities as a data controller, via the PLSS Learner Details form, when they register for a programme at any of LMETB's centres. The range of GDPR-related policies and procedures developed by LMETB are also published on the LMETB website.

## 2.8.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- Staff awareness relating to GDPR responsibilities is high, with 94% of staff stating that they understand their professional obligations in relation to GDPR.
- Centres across LMETB have robust methods for securing files, ranging from utilising secure online platforms such as MS Office or Moodle, to ensuring all paper-based work is locked away in secure presses, with restricted access, and shredded securely as required. A revised Secure Storage procedure was recently approved by the QAGMC and uploaded to the QA section of LMETB's website and to the FET QA MS Teams site for all FET staff to view. Microsoft Office 365 is available to staff and learners across the LMETB network, thus giving access to secure personal accounts. 99% of teachers surveyed in the staff survey are aware that they must use their LMETB email address for work purposes.
- LMETB has a Data Protection SharePoint section available to all staff, which provides guidance ongoing updates and policies related to GDPR. The GDPR information developed internally by LMETB continues as a reference and guide for all staff.
- LMETB is represented on the national PLSS advisory group. The update and enhancement of PLSS and its various portals is a priority for SOLAS and is significantly influenced by feedback from stakeholders nationally.
- Microsoft Office 365 is available to staff and learners across the LMETB network. Access to personal account information is restricted by secure personal account login. Shared information is determined by class or group structure. The MS Office 365 platform is a global market leader and is renowned for its reliability and resilience. In 2020 LMETB enabled Multi-Factor Authentication on all staff member accounts increasing the level of security across the ICT structure.

- Responses from FET Centre Focus Groups indicate the merit of using Management Information Systems to inform decision making. PLC progression to HE and employment is tracked by teachers and the Guidance department in May and September of every year. Figures are compiled, shared with staff, and compared to previous years.
- Access to MIS end of month files and Tableau (data visualization) workbooks from SOLAS will greatly facilitate analysis of data to inform decision making going forward. LMETB's TEL Officer is on the national Tableau Working Group which will aid LMETB in being to the forefront of developments in the use of this data visualization tool to aid data driven decision-making and learnings from evidence-based practice.

### What Needs Improving

- 156 FET staff have received GDPR training with via ETBI website. However, when surveyed, only 61% of FET staff reported that they have completed GDPR induction.
- 73% of FET Leaders indicated in the staff survey that are confident in the use of information databases such as PLSS and FARR. However, 24% are not so confident which suggests that in-house PLD opportunities might focus in this area to build capacity and expertise.
- During the current COVID-19 arrangements, visitors to centres are asked in advance to fill in an online "On-site Access Request Form for visitors or contractors". It was suggested in FET Centre focus groups that more clarity is needed on how long data collected on visitor forms should be retained. For example, learners who visit Louth Meath Adult Educational Guidance Service are asked to complete a form on Microsoft Forms prior to attending.

## 2.8.3: CONCLUSION

### Identified Actions

- Recruitment of a PLSS Coordinator/Data Analyst to liaise between LMETB, ETBI, SOLAS and ESF for all PLSS issues and to provide support to staff on the PLSS, FARR and e-cohesion systems.
- Continuation of in-house refresher training on the use of information databases (PLSS, FARR etc.), so that the data can be used to support a strategic approach to planning provision and

to assist LMETB in meeting national targets.

- Development of a Client Relationship Management (CRM) database to capture queries from potential learners and employers on an ongoing basis. An ability to analyse data collected through the new platform will provide insightful information about learner demographics, employer needs, upcoming trends and optimum communication channels, amongst others. The reports which could be provided from the CRM relating to business needs, the volumes and frequency of training required etc., will be of significant benefit to the employer and engagement brief of LMETB and to future planning.
- Ensure that GDPR training is included as part of an induction checklist for all new staff.

## 2.9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### 2.9.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION IN LMETB

In line with the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, LMETB is required to publish a five-year strategic plan, an annual service plan and an annual report. Furthermore, in line with section 9 of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), it is required to make available key information with reference to programme delivery and QA policies, procedures, and governance. The LMETB website is the main repository for this public information for all sections of the organisation. All QA policies, procedures, and governance requirements as well as publications such as LMETB Board minutes are published on the LMETB website. LMETB aims to ensure that public information is easily accessible to all stakeholders; learners, prospective learners, staff, interested parties and the public at large. It engages a variety of channels to communicate its public information message, including social media, websites, newsletters, brochures and marketing material, open days, public events, and school visits.

#### Public Profile

In 2021, LMETB focused on improving its public profile, particularly in the digital space. The recruitment of a Communications Officer specific to the FET section in 2020 has accelerated FET-related publicity, branding and marketing initiatives.

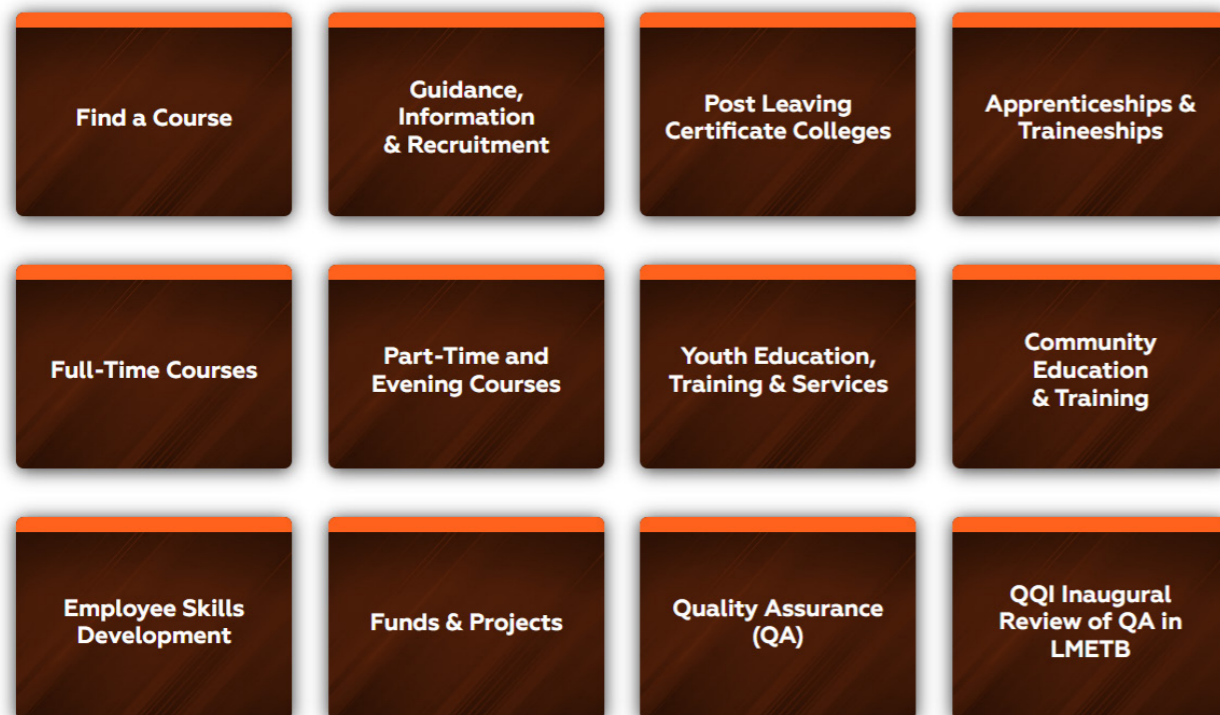
Some key developments in 2021 have included:

- Development of a new LMETB website, [www.lmetb.ie](http://www.lmetb.ie), launching in December 2021
- Establishment of LMETB Further Education and Training social media pages on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)
- Development of [LMETB FET Brochure 2020/21](#)
- Recruitment of PR and Communications Officer for the Organisation Support and Development section of LMETB.
- Increased visibility of the LMETB corporate social media pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

LMETB’s website is the principal means through which it maintains its public profile and communicates its public information. The newly developed site provides a range of clear, relevant and accessible public information on LMETB activities under the FOI Publication Scheme. In addition, the FET section of the website provides links to the social media pages of LMETB centres, and the relevant contact details.

In terms of the branding of FET in both the FET brochure 2020/21 and the new website, efforts have been made to make the content easier to navigate for the public relative to the previous website, particularly, for someone who may not already be familiar with LMETB services, or who wants to do a course but is unsure of their options. A screenshot below shows the options available on the newly developed FET Homepage.

### FET Services at LMETB



Some key techniques used to enhance ease of use and navigation are:

- The listing of Guidance, Information and Recruitment Services as the first option available in the FET provision listing, reinforcing the service’s important role as a first point of contact for many potential learners.
- Provision of “How to use” video presentations for the FETCH website in the ‘Find a course’ section, as well as a reference here to Guidance, Information and Recruitment Services as a point of contact if help is needed.
- The grouping of individual services into overall categories, where appropriate, in order to help the public in making choices and navigating all the information e.g., if you click on Youth Education and Training Services, therein you get information on Youthreach, Community Training Centre, Local Training Initiatives and Youth Services.
- The presence of individual service information in more than one category e.g., Skills to Advance is found in both ‘Employee Skills Development’ and ‘Part-time courses’ category, to ensure anyone seeking information can get a wide a view as possible of services available.

At FET centre level also, there is a wealth of communications and marketing activities taking place. Some centres have websites and the majority have a presence on at least one social media platform. Responsibility for updating local social media, developing brochures, prospectus and student information is held at centre level. In February 2021, Digital Marketing Training was made available to 22 staff members across FET services by the company Public Sector Marketing Pro.

Furthermore, in the PLC sector, there are structured arrangements for PR, which may include

- Staff Committee with oversight of Public Relations
- A designated member of staff with overall responsibility for Public Relations
- Course Coordinators who take responsibility for reviewing print and electronic media related to their courses

Some examples of recent successful marketing and public relations (PR) campaigns by centres include:

- Development of a monthly Skills to Advance Newsletter in 2020
- Development of a joint weekly newsletter by Louth Meath Adult Educational Guidance Services in 2021
- Skills to Advance radio campaigns on local radio in Summer 2021
- Production of promotional videos for Adult Learning Service Dundalk and FET Campus, Railway St., Navan in 2020
- Development of new website and social media channels to assist AMTCE in its promotion as a new facility in 2020
- DCFE feature on RTE News and RTE One regarding increased demand for PLC places in 2021

The addition of PLC and Apprenticeship Provision to the CAO portal has enabled LMETB to further publicise its FET courses. A national working group was set up with LMETB staff representation to implement this initiative.

### LMETB FET Communications Sub-Committee

The FET Communications sub-committee forms part of LMETB QA Governance Structures. Its inaugural meeting took place in December 2021. The function of the sub-group is to

- oversee procedures for the provision of information to learners
- ensure the necessary safeguards and procedures for managing public information (e.g., reports and results of reviews) are in place
- ensure that the information presented to the public is accurate and up-to-date.

### Learner Specific Information

Across the FET section, arrangements for learner specific information vary. There is no Learner Handbook available at organisational level for new FET learners. In some centres, particularly those which follow the academic year for course timetabling, an established Learner Handbook

may be in place which details the terms and conditions, policies and procedures related to participation in a chosen programme. Learners are briefed on the handbook's details during induction on programme commencement. In other centres, however, particularly those in which classes start at different stages in the year, this Learner Handbook and induction may not be as formalised. In this case, documentation provided to learners at induction stage is arranged at local level. LMETB FET is committed to improving the above arrangements. (See Conclusion below)

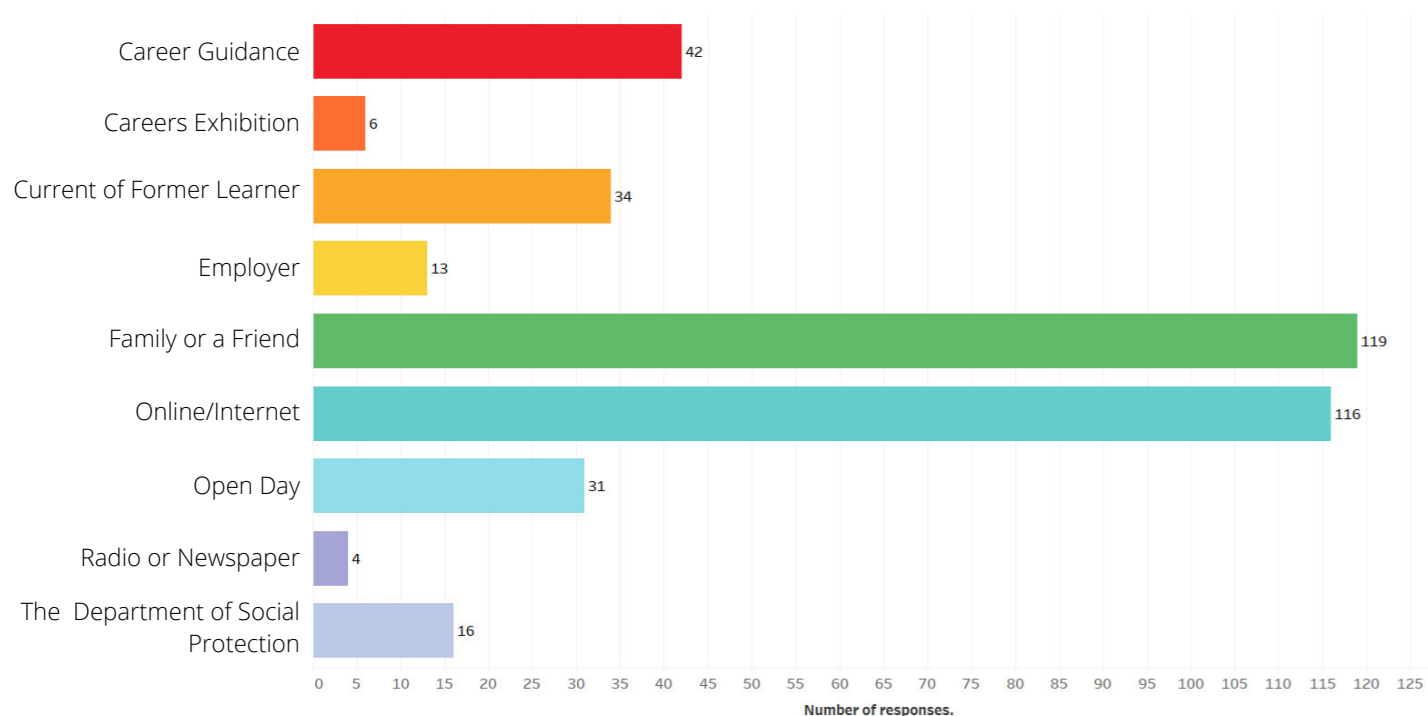
Information relating to many FET programmes offered by LMETB is also available through the national FET Course Hub (FETCH) and via FET and centre brochures and prospectuses.

## 2.9.2: EVALUATION

### What Is Working

- LMETB's new website was launched in December 2021 as a more effective and user-friendly means of communicating information, including QA-related information to the public, staff, and learners. It is managed and updated by the FET Communications Officer in consultation with the centres, which ensures uniformity of message and ensures material is up-to-date.
- A number of internal channels of communication exist that inform staff of LMETB's QA systems. In the staff survey all FET staff indicated that they were confident in using email as a means of communications which is encouraging as the email system is the main communications tool employed by the organisation. 90% of FET staff are confident in use of MS Teams and SharePoint for collaboration and sharing. This is also encouraging as both platforms are used for the purposes of sharing QA information. It does indicate that 10% of staff aren't confident in that regard and some PLD is required in using these platforms.
- A number of FET centres host and manage their own websites or social media, each of which can be accessed through links on the LMETB site.
- The development of the Communications sub-committee will develop and drive the communications and marketing function of LMETB FET section.
- The FET Learner Forum report highlighted the responses below to the question, "Where did you hear about your course?"



*Where did you hear about your course?*

It is encouraging to LMETB as a provider, that the majority of new learners heard about their courses from 'family or a friend' indicating a perception of a high level of confidence in the trust and reliability of the provision amongst the general public. The large number of respondents who said "Online/Internet" indicates also that the digital marketing efforts of LMETB and its centres seems to be paying dividends.

**What Needs Improving**

- Whilst not an LMETB developed resource, feedback from both staff in support roles and from learners at the FET Learner Forum indicates that the FETCH courses website presents a range of problems for learners to navigate and use, especially for those coming into the system at lower levels or for the first time. LMETB will therefore continue to feedback, via its staff representative on the National PLSS Advisory group, regarding challenges at local level in usage of FETCH.
- At the Learner Forum in May 2021 some recommendations from learners included:
  - *Improve the website as it is particularly clunky*
  - *Update the website as many pages show 404 error stating page not found*

In 2021 LMETB's IT Department undertook the re-development of the LMETB website. The FET Communications, TEL and QA Officers worked in partnership with LMETB's IT section to ensure the FET content was up to date and accessible.

- In both the employer and stakeholder survey, the question was posed- "In your opinion, how effective are the following methods used by LMETB to engage with your group/ organisation/ community/ company?" It is notable that the feedback from employers regarding the LMETB website was that 54.6% felt it was effective, and only 27.3% shared this view about LMETB FET social media. Amongst the stakeholders, 59.1% felt the website to be effective and only 36.3% felt the same about LMETB FET social media. These figures, in a time when digital marketing is likely to be the prevalent marketing mechanism for any service provider, are not encouraging. Furthermore, the high percentage of respondents who selected "Unsure" as to how effective they feel social media to be in promotion of LMETB FET services would indicate that LMETB's digital presence needs further development. (63.6% of employers and 31.8% of stakeholders selected unsure)

- Regarding traditional media (radio and newspapers), the feedback from learners, employers and stakeholders would indicate that this is not really an effective means of advertising. A small number of respondents (4) in the learner forum indicated that they had heard of their course via "radio or newspaper", and only 36.4% of employers and 50% of stakeholders felt that "Local media advertising services e.g., papers/radio" were effective in promotion of LMETB FET services.

- As communications/marketing demands grow in FET, there is a need to provide a more streamlined, focused, professional, and coordinated approach to all future social media, public relations and marketing activities and information.



### 2.9.3: CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions:

Invest in the development of an LMETB FET Marketing Strategy and take specific actions in the following areas:

- **Brand Strategy & Design:**
  - Develop an integrated brand strategy which enhances and reinforces LMETB's strategic direction.
  - Development of an overall Social Media Policy for use in LMETB FET
  
- **Marketing/Communications Plan:**
  - Devise an integrated marketing communications plan, including a range of targeted marketing campaigns with specific outcomes
  - Design bespoke marketing assets and content, including visual design, printed and published material, video, audio, motion graphics and animation.
  - Analyse marketing activity and results for feedback into future campaigns. Create a unique digital marketing strategy for LMETB FET.
  - Development of a QA Newsletter to promote the sense of FET-wide ownership of a quality culture within LMETB and to provide QA updates on recent QA initiatives and modifications.
  - Consideration should be given to the separation of the roles of the current PLD/ Communications Officer and recruitment of a dedicated FET Communications Officer.

# Section 3

## Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment



## OBJECTIVE 2: TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

### 3.1 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.1.1 DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

LMETB's FET Services offer a diverse range of full-time and part-time education and training locations across Louth and Meath.

An overview of the range of this provision is provided in Section 1, or in further detail in LMETB's [Provider Profile](#). The learning environment in all of LMETB's centres is subject to ongoing review, development and improvement to ensure the optimum environment for programme participants.

#### Physical Learning Environment

Strategic Goal 6 of LMETB's Strategy Statement 2017-2021 is to "develop LMETB Buildings, Facilities & Infrastructure." Guided by its Land and Buildings Section, LMETB is committed to ensuring all buildings are kept and maintained to the highest standards possible, and learners and staff have invested significant time and resources in ensuring this aim is met.

LMETB is committed to ensuring all works comply with the most recent energy targets set out by government and have an energy team in place and work closely with the SEAI and the Energy in Education programme.

Some examples of recent capital and building upgrade projects in LMETB include:



Establishment of Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence, LMETB's newest FET facility in 2020



RSTC Dundalk received funding and sanction for a boiler replacement in Summer 2021. In addition, classroom accommodation was repurposed into workshop space to accommodate requirements of enlargement of apprenticeship provision.



Addition of new modular accommodation at O' Faich Institute of Further Education, Dundalk, and Drogheda Institute of Further Education respectively.



FET Centre, King Street Drogheda: New boiler and associated heating system replacement project, as well as the installation of a full electrical rewire of the building in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Furthermore, a Minor Works Grants in excess of €1 million was received from SOLAS for LMETB centres in 2020, which allowed COVID-19 related upgrades /repairs and maintenance to existing FET facilities.

LMETB is committed to the ongoing development and improvement of its entire building infrastructure. Some examples of upcoming developments either in the planning/ progression stage are as follows:

- Mechanical works at Trim Youthreach to include a boiler replacement
- Modifications to the building at the AMTCE to facilitate refurbishment /repurposing of facilities into workshop space which will facilitate delivery of courses at the site
- Upgrade of Life Safety Systems at Regional Skills & Training Centre, Dundalk



## Digital Learning Environment

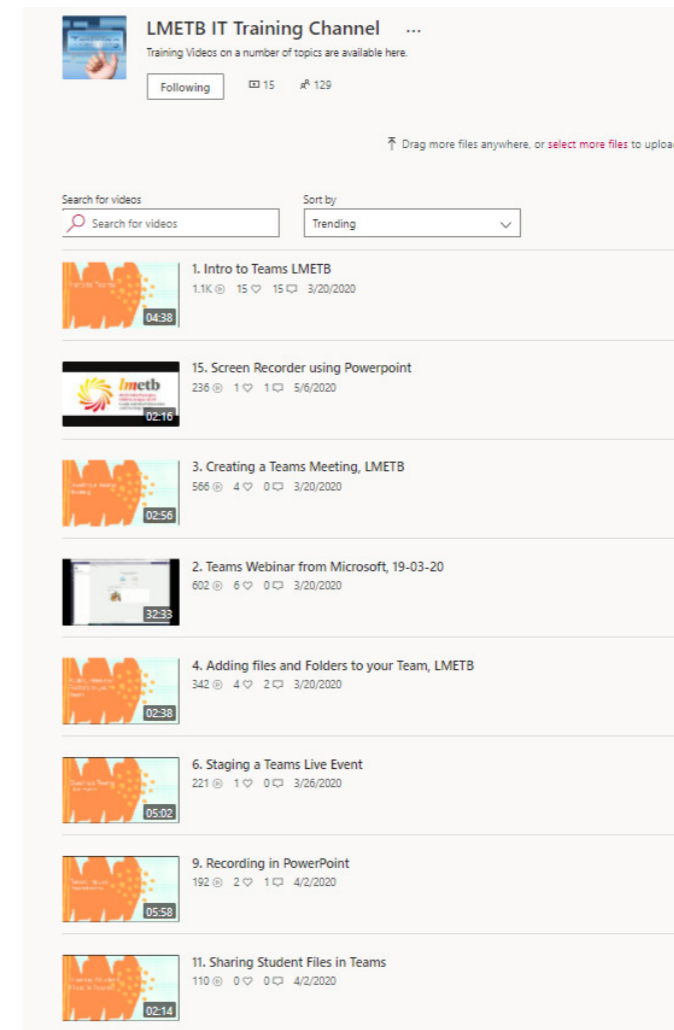
Strategic Goal 3 of LMETB's Strategy Statement 2017-2021 is to *"ensure continued provision of high quality and innovative teaching and learning in LMETB Schools & Colleges."* The Integration of ICT into the teaching and learning process has been a key aspect of FET LMETB's implementation of this goal. The organisation is committed to using technology to enhance teaching and learning and to actively embed digital technology within programmes to offer more engaging and flexible learning opportunities for learners. A key goal is to enable learners to become skilled and confident in using technology as part of their work, study, and home life.

Furthermore, LMETB's Strategy Statement 2022-26 Strategic Goal 1 refers to the aim of providing a *"High- quality Learner experience"*, with an associated action identified of *"Supporting our learners in a post COVID-19 world through ensuring continuity of education, training and assessment."*

LMETB has established and supports a number of core digital platforms which are made available free of charge to all learners and staff in LMETB FET, including Office 365, Moodle, and Microsoft Teams, and the organisation harnesses the benefits of these mainstream tools to create innovative assessment practices, provide feedback to learners and share learning materials. The Office 365 suite offers learners a wealth of accessibility features giving further control over their learning experience. A key milestone in LMETB's TEL infrastructure in 2020 was the expansion of access to the LMETB Office 365 platform for learners across provision in some of our part-time services, including BTEI and Adult Learning Services.

### TEL responses during COVID -19

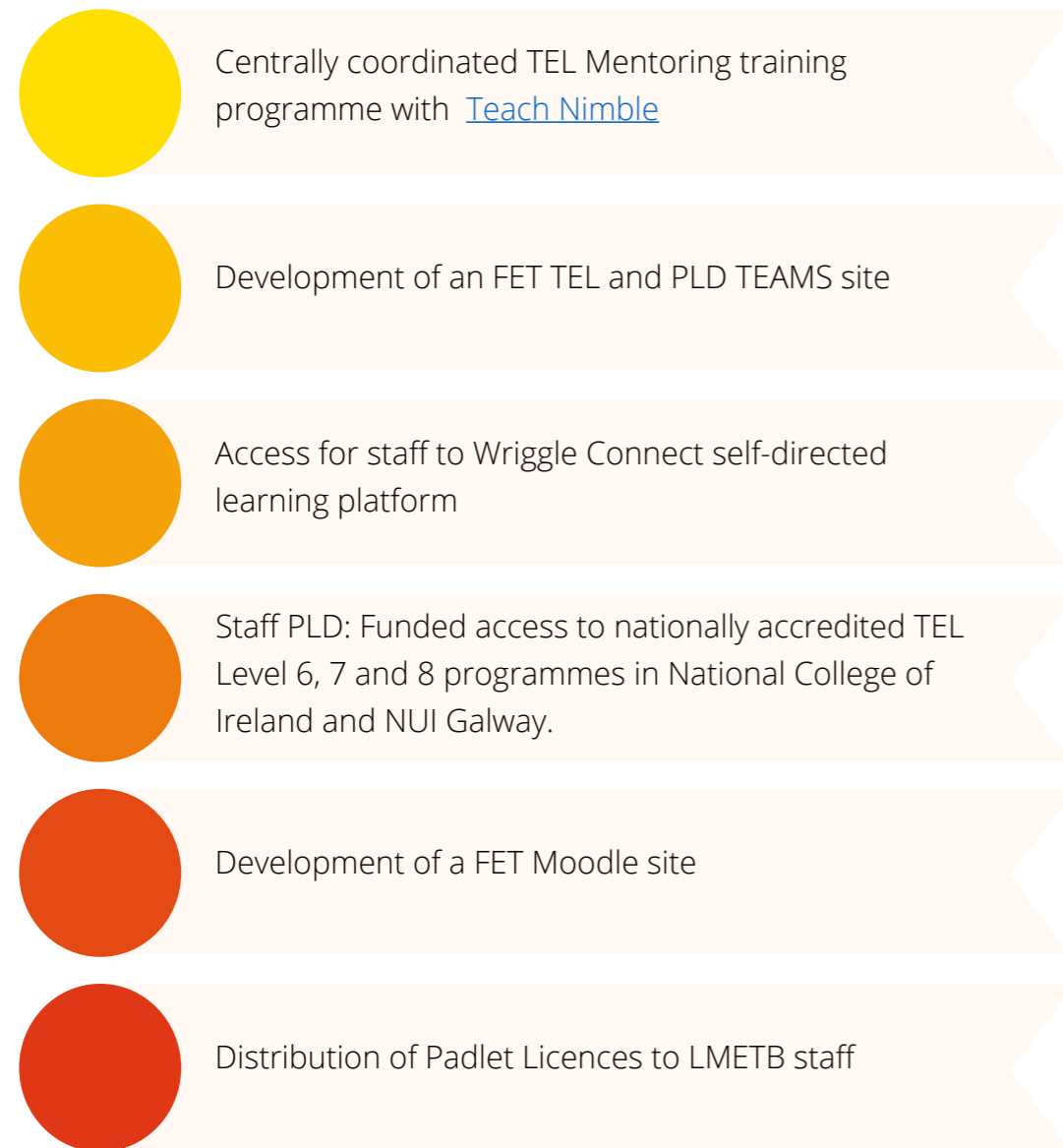
When the COVID-19 pandemic initiated remote teaching and learning for LMETB staff and learners, LMETB's ICT Department immediately responded with the provision of TEL related PLD, including the development of the LMETB IT Training Channel, which is available to staff on Microsoft Stream, as part of the Office 365 platform. See image below:



The appointment of a TEL Officer and a Professional Learning and Development/Communications Officer later in 2020 built on the supports already in place. These appointments have greatly enhanced LMETB's ability to respond to the needs of staff and learners in the area of technology enhanced learning throughout the return to blended/onsite learning.

LMETB has directed significant investment to facilitate the integration of ICT into its FET programmes. Through a range of funding mechanisms in 2020, it was able to provide learners with digital devices to assist in the remote/blended learning environment during COVID-19.

Some examples below of TEL-related supports for staff and learners developed since COVID-19 began include:



### Monitoring and Evaluating the Learner Experience

The quality of the learning experience is monitored by various means as outlined below:

- Learner Evaluations after courses/programmes
- Tutor Evaluations
- External stakeholder/employer evaluations
- Ongoing feedback from learners, including formal or informal feedback
- Supervisor feedback on Work Experience
- Testimonials
- IV and EA Feedback

Course reviews and evaluations administered by FET Leaders and teaching staff at centre level provide an important opportunity to review assessment loads, assessment methodologies, and other aspects of course delivery, and provide opportunities to make necessary amendments based on learner and staff feedback.

In 2021, LMETB issued a template [End of Course Evaluation Form](#) and [Mid-Course Evaluation Form](#) (for NFQ levels 3-6) to all FET Centres. It was outlined that, starting from September 2021, it was now a key requirement of the LMETB QA system to offer learners the opportunity to fill out mid-course and end-of-course evaluations, in order to feedback on key aspects of the learning experience including course content and supports offered. The templates can be amended at centre level and the links to the forms can then be sent to learners as a text message or via email on PLSS. Whilst recognising that centres had already been, as a common practice, undertaking evaluations with learners, this action of issuing a template form was taken to facilitate LMETB FET's intention to collate learner feedback in a consistent format across all FET provision. LMETB proposes implementing a feedback mechanism where consolidated findings from learner evaluations can be captured and fed onwards to the QA Office in FET, with the aim of capturing the impact of current provision and informing future provision. Currently, the feedback received in learner evaluation forms is reviewed at centre level by management and teaching staff.

Informal feedback also takes place through class discussions, comments at the end of sessions, discussions at tea break etc. It is a very important facet of feedback mechanisms to enable learners involved in all programmes, especially Adult Literacy programmes, to articulate comments which can be organised in a collective format by staff. Feedback may also be elicited from teaching staff in the form of end of course evaluations arranged at centre level. The existence of student councils in the PLC colleges further reinforces the learner input into the quality of the learning environment. Feedback garnered from all these sources is distilled by the co-coordinators and is used to modify the delivery of course content and to ensure learner needs are being met.

Staff meetings focusing on the data garnered from IV, EA and other sources, such as evaluations and informal information, are held to review the feedback and identify approaches to improve the learner experience and the quality of the service provided. Generally, across centres the practice is that, while general IV and EA feedback may be given at a staff meeting, individual



feedback will also go back to the teacher on a 1:1 basis. The EA reports are also reviewed at combined RAP meetings and in this way, centres can learn from the EA findings from other centres. The development in 2021 of a consolidated RAP report by LMETB has greatly assisted this process.

Some unique examples of practices in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across centres include:

- In some Youthreach centres, 'Assessment Plan meetings' take place. This is where teachers share their lesson plans etc. with the Coordinator, affording them an opportunity to feed back to the management in relation to their teaching and learning plans.
- In one centre, when people signed up for a course but didn't in the end attend it, the centre surveyed the learner asking for their feedback. The feedback was then used to review delivery methods, e.g., reviewing start time of classes to suit parents of school-going children.
- The Centre Evaluation and Improvement Plan (CEIP) Process which takes place annually in all Youthreach Centres is another important methodology for monitoring and evaluating the learning experience. In this process, facilitated by an external consultant, the centre evaluates its provision and sets out related plans for improvement. It is a consultative process which involves seeking feedback from students, parents/guardians, employers, staff, and agencies as to the centre's operation. This information is further shared with senior management and colleagues so cascading of best practice across FET services can occur.

Furthermore, at an organisational level, the learner voice has always been central in LMETB FET provision as a means of evaluating the learning experience. The participation of LMETB FET Learners in Learner Fora in both 2019 and 2021, facilitated by AONTAS, has provided feedback to assist in planning for a quality learning experience for learners. LMETB also has young learner representatives on its Youth work committee, which is a subcommittee of LMETB board.

### Enhancements in Teaching and Learning

LMETB strives to consistently enhance the quality of teaching and learning across all FET provision. This is evidenced in the range of PLD opportunities available to FET staff which focus on teaching, learning and assessment. The full range of PLD programmes made available in Autumn 2021 is outlined in Section 2.4.1. LMETB FET Staff are facilitated to attend PLD in two main ways:

- 1- PLD is arranged locally, either by FET Leaders at centre level to respond to a centre-specific need, or by the PLD Officer, to respond to an organisational need, whereby staff in multiple centres can avail of this centrally-organised PLD.
- 2- LMETB facilitates staff to attend national programmes which align with strategic priority areas from [SOLAS Professional Development Strategy 2017-19](#). These programmes are identified by the PLD Officer, and expressions of interest from staff who wish to attend are invited. LMETB then sponsors the course fees of staff members to attend.

### 3.1.2 EVALUATION

#### What is Working/What needs Improving

As part of the QA review, the feedback from the consultation process with staff, learners, stakeholders, and employers was extremely positive in relation to the FET students' learning experience, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment, and the enhancements undertaken to teaching and learning strategies. There was instructive feedback received on what is working and what needs improving, and both aspects are evaluated below.

#### Feedback from staff

Feedback from staff in relation to the learning and working environment was positive. In the staff survey, the responses to the statement: *"My centre provides a safe, stimulating teaching, learning/working environment"* were: 78% of teaching staff and 86% of FET leaders agreed respectively.

Feedback was also positive in relation to LMETB's efforts to improve the physical environment by continually upgrading its facilities, as evidenced from our focus groups with FET leaders:

*"We have been improving a number of general classrooms and have a new electrical and apprenticeship workshop which will enhance the environment significantly"*

*"A lot of investment in specialist classrooms for relevant courses has really helped in this PLC"*

*"The learning experience has been greatly improved due to COVID, with additional budget given to make changes in centre."*

However, it was also acknowledged that LMETB needs to continue to progress the establishment of new buildings where a need has been identified.

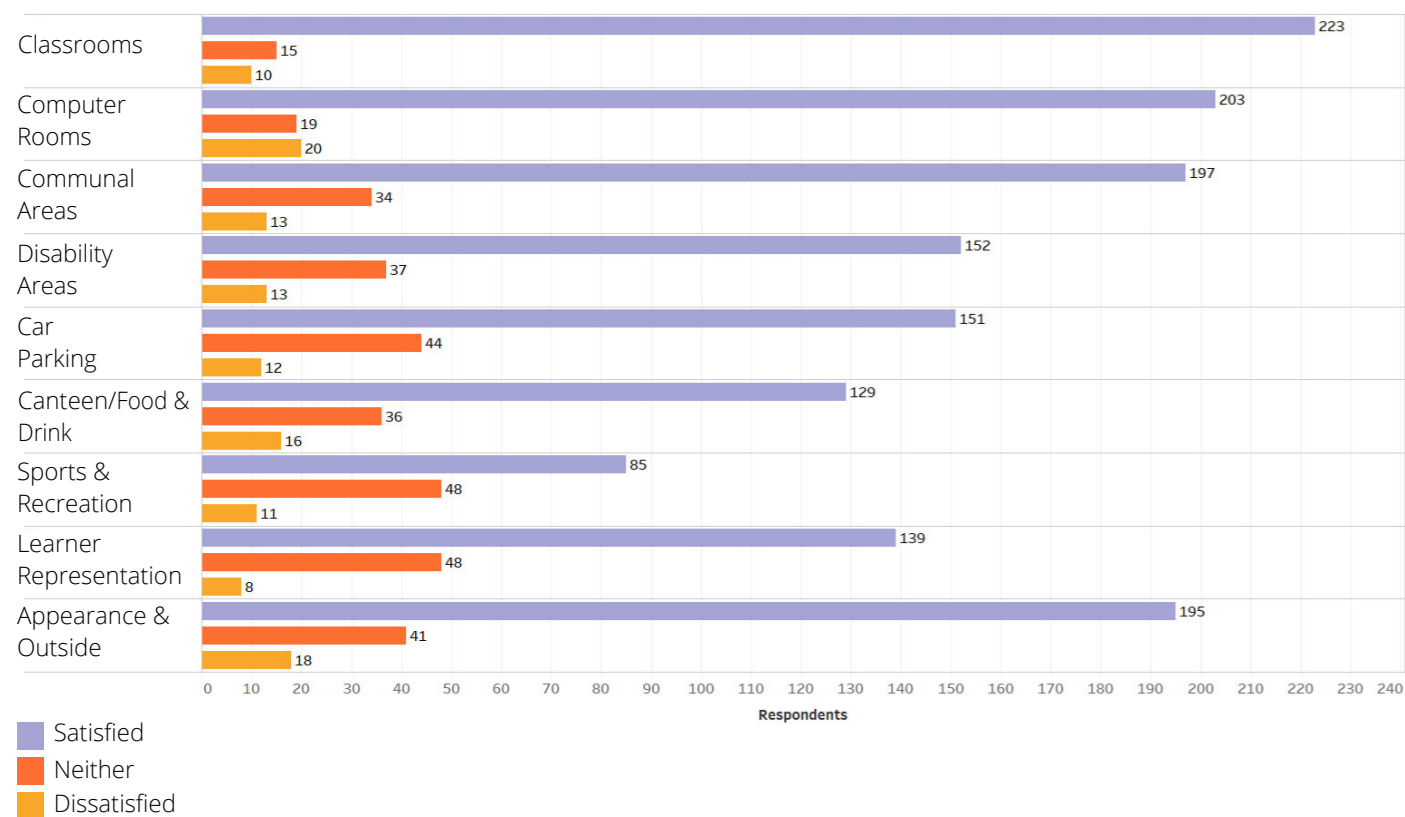
In relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, 75% of teaching staff relayed that they always facilitated learners to give feedback on mid-year and/or end of course evaluations. LMETB FET hopes to improve on this percentage and that the uniform online templates provided in September 2021 will enable more teaching staff to engage more comprehensively with this practice.

An encouraging quote by one learner in the Learner Survey indicates that the concept of consultation and feedback is to the fore in LMETB provision:

*The tutors are very welcoming and grateful for suggestions and feedback. They are interested and encouraging and look for feedback throughout. They would ask 'are we going too fast, or too slow?' They are very open to suggestions."* (FET Learner)

### Feedback from learners

The chart below, taken from the Learner Forum Report 2021, represents learner satisfaction with respect to facilities and services:

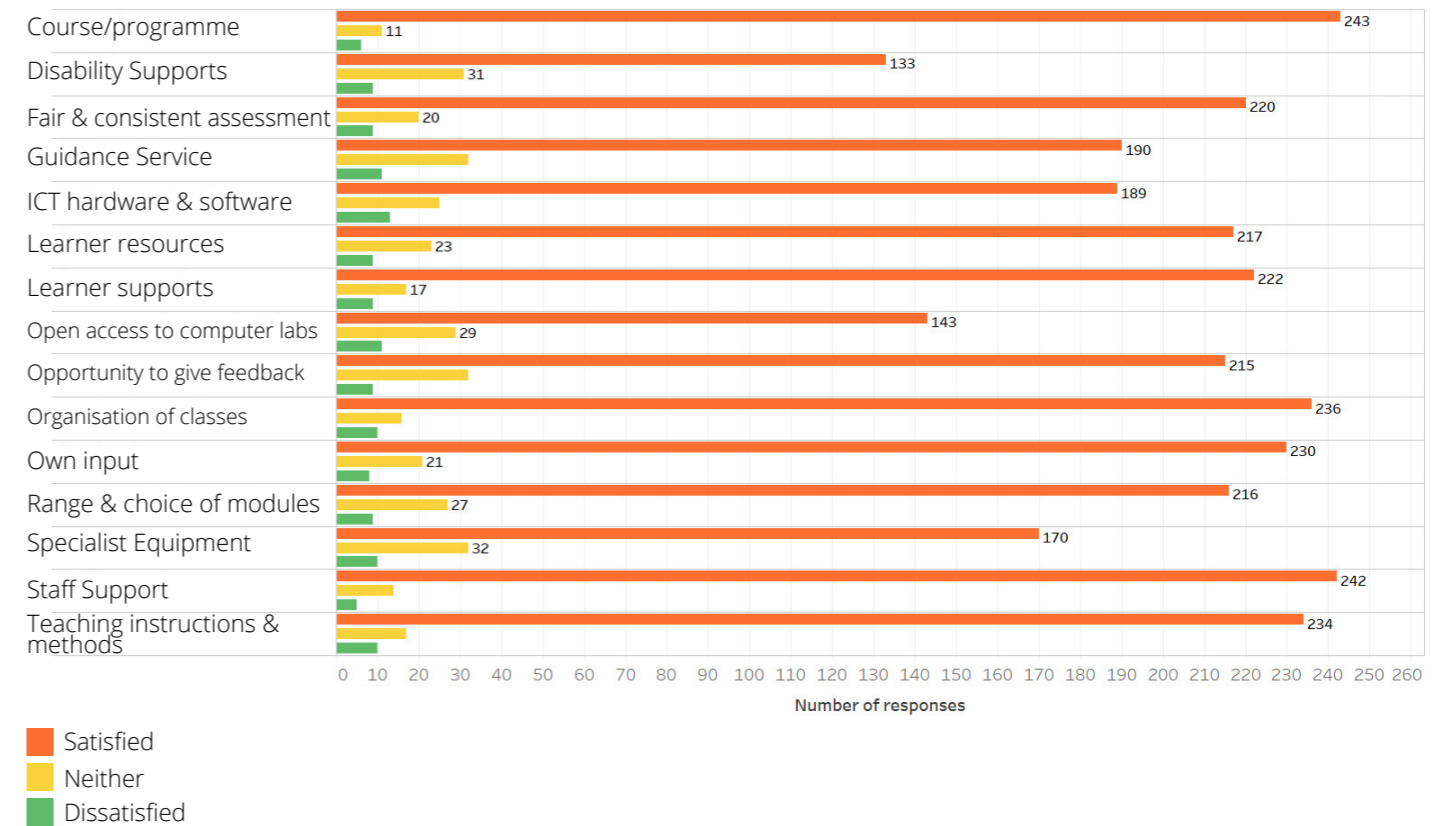


The data above indicates a high level of satisfaction with the learning environment, especially classrooms and computer rooms. However, it also highlighted areas for improvement in LMETB's learning environment, possibly in relation to the wider experience of learning outside of the classroom. The feedback above indicated lower levels of satisfaction amongst learners with the

respect to the following facets of the learning experience:

- Canteen/ Food and Drink
- Sports and Recreation
- Car Parking facilities

The chart below, also taken from the FET Learner Forum Report, represents learner satisfaction with respect to teaching and learning:



The data above highlights high levels of satisfaction with aspects of teaching and learning, including the course/ programme, staff support, organisation of classes and teaching instruction and methods. However, of note here is a lower level of satisfaction expressed with regard to Disability Supports. It must be acknowledged though, that this response rate could be indicative that a majority of respondents to the survey had no cause to avail of these supports and therefore were not well placed to comment informatively on the question. However, it might also indicate that disability supports that currently exist in LMETB FET may need to be more visible. Over 2020/21 dedicated Disability funding has been allocated to each FET Centre to cater for the specific requirements in that area. For more information on learners supports, see Section 3.3. See Appendix 2d for a case study from LMETB's Adult Learning Service regarding their use of

assistive technology in the form of pen readers; C-Pen Reader and Lingo Pen.

The Learner Forum Report also conveyed the experience of learners, showing the benefits of evaluating the impact of programme provision:

- Learners taking levels 1-3 courses shared how their course had resulted in transformative learning, which had a positive impact on their lives. They cited increased confidence, communication skills and improved performance in their jobs as benefits to taking their course.
- Across all levels, learners cited gaining new skills as one of the benefits of learning remotely. These included organisational skills, independent learning skills, and communication skills.

#### Feedback from external stakeholders and employers:

- The feedback from the external stakeholder survey also proved extremely positive in relation to the learning environment in that:
- 82% of those surveyed agreed with the following statement: I am satisfied with LMETB teachers/trainers' skills and experiences.
- 86% of those surveyed agreed that 'Delivery times and methods of course delivery in FET are flexible'.
- Employer feedback was equally encouraging. When asked what was working well, employers commented on *"the level of attention and flexibility offered by the FET centres and the quality of its trainer"* and the *"flexible training schedules to suit busy rosters"*

#### Evaluation of LMETB's responses in teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) during COVID-19 pandemic

As part of a QQI national evaluation of the impact of COVID- 19 modifications to TLA, in June 2020, LMETB consulted with its learners, teaching staff and FET leaders to evaluate its own responses in that regard. An overview of this consultation is found in the LMETB-published document called [An overview of the Impact of the Covid 19 Modifications to Teaching Learning and Assessment](#) .

Almost one year later, as part of the QQI Inaugural review process, LMETB again consulted with a range of stakeholders and the results of this consultation are outlined below:

#### Feedback from staff:

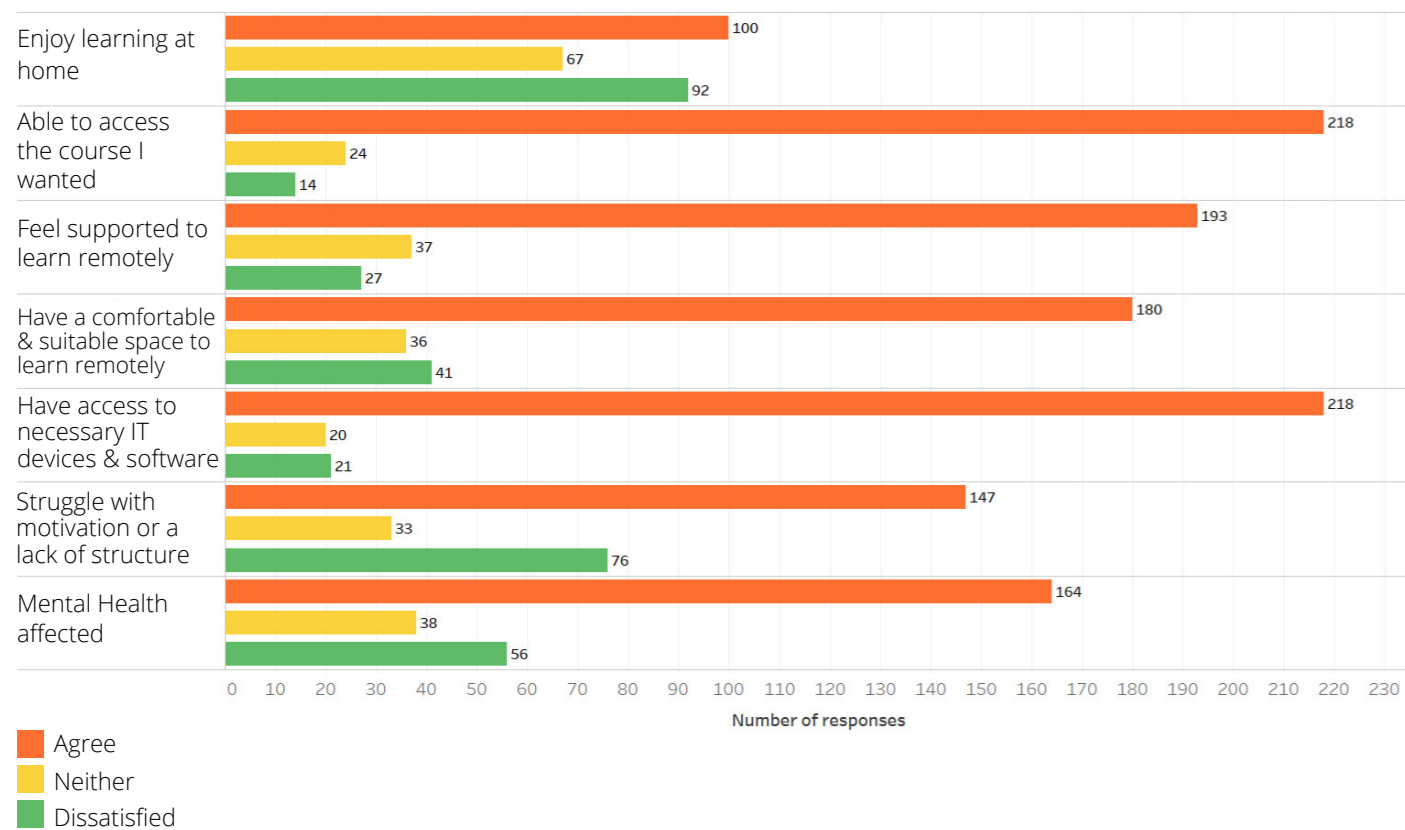
In LMETB's staff survey completed in May 2021, the following reflections were noted as to the quality of the learning experience and the associated delivery and pedagogical methodologies used during remote learning:

What worked well	What would need improving/ didn't work
<i>The online open book exam I think gives all students regardless of their ability an opportunity to work through the exam</i>	<i>I however hope we return to the skills practice in preparation for employment</i>
<i>Online learning suits many older people who do not wish to travel for classes, so very beneficial in those cases</i>	<i>Delivering a practical module via Zoom loses momentum, need face to face delivery for to create a good class atmosphere</i>
<i>The use of Moodle to enable students to submit their assignments online, was extremely effective and should be maintained post Covid. The assignments were assessed online, marks and feedback were then provided online, which enabled each student to keep track of their marks/ assessment as they moved through the academic year.</i>	<i>Learners need extensive training in Teams to gain the 'full' benefits of online learning.</i>

See Appendix 2 (e, f, g, h) for a number of case studies related to LMETB FET centres' responses in teaching, learning and assessment during COVID-19.

### Feedback from learners:

The table below, extracted from the FET Learner Forum Report, represents learner satisfaction with aspects of remote teaching and learning:



It is encouraging to see that there was strong agreement amongst learners on LMETB's response to remote teaching and learning in that:

- 218 agreed that they are able to access the course they want.
- 218 agreed that they have access to necessary IT and software.
- 193 agreed that they feel supported to learn remotely.

The FET Learner Forum Report highlighted many positives attributes associated with LMETB's input into and support of remote teaching and learning, for example:

- Learners taking level 5 courses highlighted the flexibility that online learning afforded them, sharing how they were saving time and money while learning at home.
- Some learners were provided with recordings of their classes, which allowed them to both catch up on those they were not able to attend in real time, and this also benefitted the learners by enabling them to re-watch lessons which helped with courses and assignments.

On the other hand, the following negatives were highlighted in the FET Learner Forum report, and should be considered in LMETB's planning for future remote learning periods:

- Learners taking practical courses, or with practical modules as a part of their course, felt particularly disadvantaged while learning remotely.
- Despite best efforts to support them, learners felt they were not getting the same experience learning remotely as they would have obtained within the classroom, as an important aspect of engaging in FET is physically stepping out of the home environment to gain new experiences.
- Learners at levels 1-3 found online learning challenging due to class hours and scheduling. They felt fatigued as a result of learning online, and found long hours doing online classes draining.
- Learners at level 4 struggled to find the motivation necessary to learn remotely. Learning without a tutor present made it harder for learners to apply themselves and maintain focus on their coursework.
- Unsuitable learning environments posed a significant challenge for some learners. Some level 4 learners did not have a comfortable or suitable space to learn remotely. Those in shared rented accommodation were particularly impacted, as normal community-based facilities such as libraries were also closed.
- Learners missed face-to-face interaction and engaging socially with their peers.
- Some learners indicated they would like to be provided with paper or printed learning materials on request, as they found it easier to learn from paper materials than off a device screen.
- Learners requested that tutors use participatory online learning pedagogy to improve their virtual classroom experience e.g., create a space for peer collaboration on coursework, encourage group participation and contribution of all learners in online classes.
- Post-pandemic, LMETB must examine, in detail, the learning gained from experiences in online delivery to identify the elements of blended methodologies that can be adopted for future delivery. In doing so, LMETB should be mindful of the pros and cons associated with it, and take on board feedback gained in the consultation process as part of the QQI Inaugural



Review, as reiterated in the quotation below from the staff survey:

*Whilst there are cases where remote teaching and learning did not work for a particular target group, there are definite examples from other services where remote learning suited people better. I think each service knows its learners needs and should be able to respond to that accordingly. (FET Leader)*

Cognisance must be taken of the fact that many FET courses have a highly vocational element to them and require face-to-face engagement. The need for a holistic approach to the learner experience also requires that face-to-face contact with learners is protected. Experience gained during Covid-19 in online teaching, learning and assessment has heightened the need to develop a blended learning policy in order to develop, manage and monitor quality- assured blended delivery in the future.

### 3.1.3 CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions:

- Continued investment in TEL infrastructure and resources to provide an optimum teaching and learning environment for learners
- Revise and update the LMETB TEL Strategy 2017-19 with a view to capturing best practice, recording progress and planning for future enhancement activities.
- Development and implementation of a feedback mechanism where consolidated findings from learner evaluations can be captured
- Further develop the establishment of Communities of Practice across FET provision to provide teaching staff with opportunities to share ideas, work collectively on resolving issues relating to practice, enhance skills, and learn from each other's experiences
- Copperfasten the TEL mentoring model for staff within FET provision
- Development of a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Development of a Blended Learning Policy and an Online Learning Policy which address QQI validation requirements

## 3.2: ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

### 3.2.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

#### Integrity, Consistency, and Security of Assessment

LMETB is committed to the fair and consistent assessment of its FET learners, focusing on transparent assessment activities, which are a valid and accurate reflection of learner effort congruent with national standards and award specifications. Following on from consideration of the integrity and approval of results, as detailed in Section 2.7 of this report, LMETB is concentrating on ensuring its assessment procedures are fit for purpose, relevant and crucially, that they are consistently applied across all FET provision. While the intention is to work towards an integrated QA framework encompassing both the education and training provision in FET, at the moment, LMETB utilises both a locally devised assessment model and a separate system for the Training Services and associated providers (namely Assessment Instrument Specifications). Locally devised assessments (LDAs) are used in the FE side of provision and involve internal assessors (FET teaching staff) designing and delivering assessments aligned to the relevant QQI component and programme specifications. The flexible nature of LDAs is particularly suited to FET learners and allow for a holistic and tailored delivery of modules. It is important that comprehensive assessment briefs are issued to learners guiding them through assessment activities and that these briefs are reflective of the learning outcomes stipulated in the component specifications as well as the assessment guidelines and marking criteria.

In the Training Services, Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) are used both by the centre itself and by external providers. The AIS format of centrally devised assessments is a legacy from the former national training agency FÁS, and they are shared by all ETBs nationally. They are password protected and access is removed once the provider has completed the programme of learning. As outlined in section 2.7, both the LDA and AIS systems include external authentication of assessment to ensure that the systems are aligned with award standards.



While QQI is the major awarding body for FET provision, LMETB offers a range of non-QQI awards, such as City and Guilds, ITEC, ICDL, etc. (see [LMETB Provider Profile](#) for details of QQI and other awarding bodies' award data for the last few years in LMETB). Assessments with these other awarding bodies are generally developed by the awarding body itself and FET centres must comply with associated assessment guidelines.

Assessment is managed at FET centre level, through internal and external authentication processes. Requests for reasonable accommodation and assessment deadline extensions are informed by the recently revised LMETB procedures ( [LMETB Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment](#) and [LMETB Assessment Deadlines Procedure](#), see also Section 2.3 ). The [LMETB Assessment Malpractice Procedure](#) provides guidance assessment, particularly in examinations. Examinations are held securely until required and examination guidelines followed as per the [LMETB Examinations Procedure](#) . All assessment material is stored securely in line with the [LMETB Secure Storage Procedure](#). Learner appeals are processed as per [LMETB Assessment Appeals Procedure Appeal of Process or Results](#).

### Communication of Assessment to Learners

Assessment information and regulations are communicated to learners during induction processes, which vary between FET centres. PLCs in LMETB also incorporate information on assessment in their specific Learner Handbooks. It is LMETB's intention to develop a template for a FET Learner Handbook, for use by all centres, in 2022 (see section 2.9). Currently, at the beginning of course delivery, teaching staff communicate to individual classes on the following:

- course content
- assessment criteria and relevant assessment procedures
- mandatory and elective modules within awards
- expectations for learners around assessment conduct
- the grading system, and expectations for the standards of Pass, Merit or Distinction for learners participating in courses at NFQ Levels 4-6.

This assessment information is reiterated at various intervals during course delivery.

Guidelines for individual assessment tasks are issued via assessment briefs and are distributed to learners prior to the actual assessment activity. The assessment brief is the key mechanism used to inform the learner of the criteria for successful completion of the assessment task.

Feedback to learners is an essential component of the assessment process and mechanisms for ensuring timely, relevant and action focused feedback are important. Both formative and summative feedback to learners is encouraged at all levels of provision. Formal, summative feedback on completion of assessment activities is a requirement for all teaching staff across FET provision. In addition, teachers are encouraged to provide informal, formative assessment throughout the course delivery. LMETB has a policy on feedback to learners: [Learner Feedback Participation Policy](#). Update and revision of this policy to ensure fitness for purpose is scheduled for early 2022.

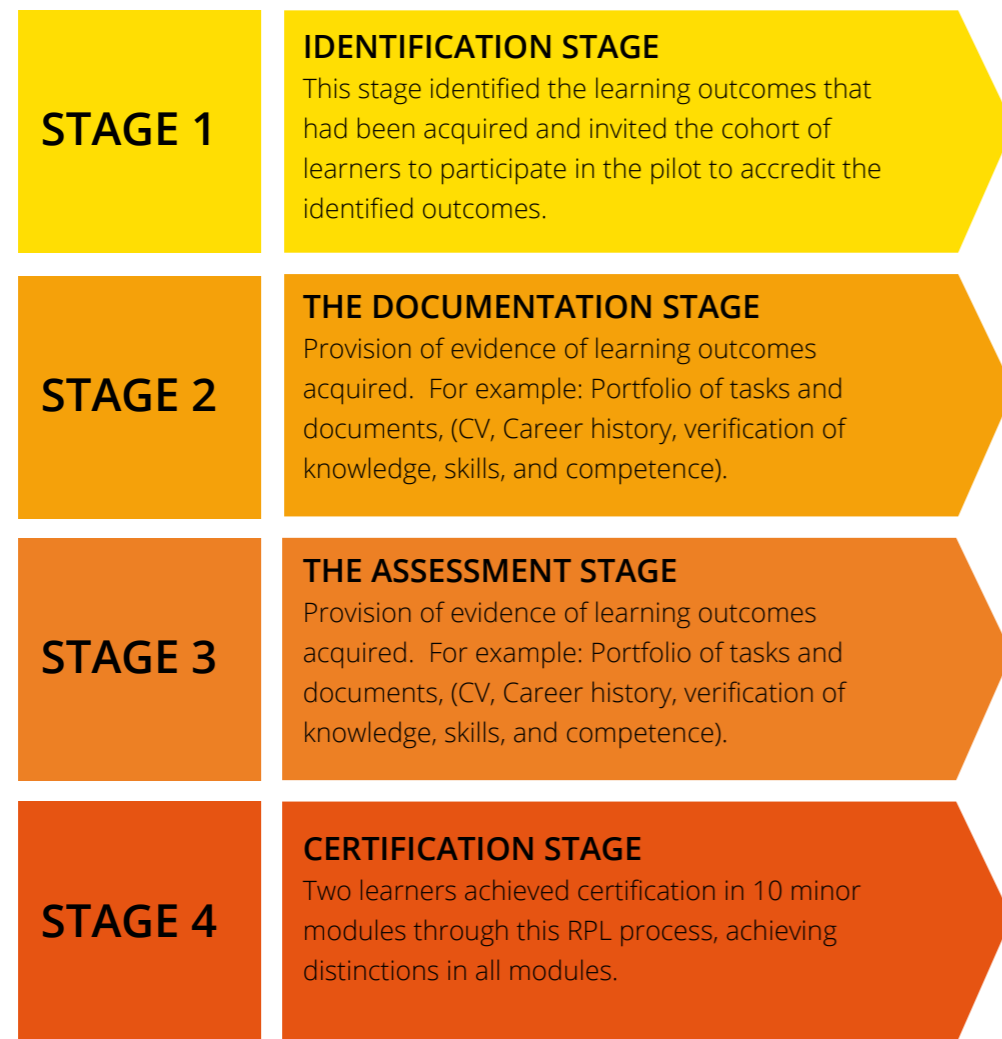
### Recognition of Prior Learning

LMETB does not have a process in place whereby certification can be achieved through an RPL process based on experiential learning and has not yet developed an RPL policy. LMETB does recognise prior certified learning where appropriate, for example, a learner may be exempted from a QQI module on a course leading to a QQI major award if they have already completed this module prior to joining their current programme. The development of an LMETB RPL Policy and Procedure that will encompass the recognition of previous formal, non-formal and informal learning will be a priority area for policy development in 2022. It will be informed by sectoral collaboration in this area such as the experienced garnered in the Tobar Project.

### TOBAR Project

The TOBAR project was a national project that involved collaboration between the Defence Forces, QQI and ten ETBs, including LMETB. The project between the Adult Learning Service in LMETB and Aiken Barracks, Dundalk, commenced in 2018 with eight participants from Aiken Barracks. The aim of the TOBAR project was to deliver and evaluate a programme of learning that provided certification for skills, knowledge, and competences through recognition of prior learning, with standards aligned to the NFQ.

The project involved a 4-stage process:



## Work Placement

Work-based learning is an integral part of much of LMETB's FET provision, with the Work Experience or Work Practice modules a mandatory requirement to achieving a major award, particularly for learners on courses at levels 4 to 6. The vocational nature of many FET programmes is also reinforced through focused and relevant work placements where learners can enact their theoretical learning in an applied setting. FET centres offering work placements have assigned staff to support learners while they are on placement. In the PLC settings, there may be post holders appointed with responsibility for oversight of work placements. In smaller FET centres, the Work Experience teacher, with support from the centre coordinator, is the point of reference for learners. In the RSTC, Senior Training Advisors (role also known as SOLAS Authorised Officer) link into employers and apprentices during the work-based phases of courses. Work placement settings are reviewed regarding their suitability by most FET centres ahead of placement.

The quality of work placements is supported through:

### PLACEMENT VISITS

This stage identified the learning outcomes that had been acquired and invited the cohort of learners to participate in the pilot to accredit the identified outcomes.

### EMPLOYER AND LEARNER INFORMATION PACKS

Learners receive a pack before the placement outlining their role, responsibilities, and the requirement to keep a daily log to enable reflection on the learning in the placement. Employers receive a pack with information on their role and responsibilities in taking on a learner, the requirements of the supervisor's report as well as insurance and contact details for LMETB.

### SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

At Levels 4-6 the supervisor's report forms part of the assessment criteria. Marks are awarded to the learner based on their performance on the placement. The mark awarded is taken as a valid and true assessment of the learner's performance.

### LEARNER PLACEMENT LOG/DIARY

Learners keep a daily reflective account of their placement which is part of the graded assessment requirement for the module. Teaching staff often receive invaluable understanding of the work placement and the benefit or not to the learner through these logs. Class discussion also aids the teacher in deciding that the placement was instructional and meaningful to the learner as well as evaluating the suitability of the employer for future placements.

LMETB has a [LMETB Work Experience Policy](#) in place to aid in ensuring the appropriateness, integrity, and safety of work placements. A review of processes around the monitoring and management of work placements is an identified area of action for the QA Office to ensure there is consistency of approach across all FET provision. It is recognised that workplace assessments are carried out independently of the FET centre, thus there is an inherent QA risk attached to this process. The monitoring measures mentioned above go some way to alleviating this risk but ensuring a FET-wide, consistent approach to these measures would add further weight to the integrity of the process. Regular feedback and communication are key to the monitoring and it is important that all FET centres are cognisant of keeping the communication links open with the employer, both during placement and afterwards, so as to encourage the establishment of a positive and fruitful relationship. Most FET centres report linking with employers who regularly provide a quality learning experience for LMETB learners.

Employers engaged in apprenticeship training are approved SOLAS Authorised Officers to carry out on-the-job training and assessment to ensure that these employers meet the minimum requirements to train apprentices. They also provide ongoing support to the Apprentice mentors. A similar approach to workplace assessment is maintained in the traineeship model where learners must complete tasks which are assigned and approved by their workplace supervisor. Where feasible, assessments processes may be monitored by the Training Standards Office.

During consultation for the SER, employers were surveyed on their experiences of interacting with services in LMETB, for example, opportunities around staff development and training, curriculum development and future skills gaps. While 36% of employers surveyed confirmed that they offered work placements, an opportunity to explore their experiences of taking LMETB FET learners on placements was missed in the consultation process. In addition, the response to the employer survey was very low, given the number of FET learners in LMETB who normally take part in work placements. However, most learners have not been on placements during 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic so this may account for the low employer response rate. It would be of value to consider surveying work placement employers in 2022, if COVID restrictions allow, to elucidate if employers feel sufficiently supported by LMETB during placements. An encouraging finding from the employers' survey that might provide a benchmark for employers' views of FET learners on placement, is that 73% of employers agreed with this statement *'It is evident, from the calibre of FET graduates that their programmes have been quality assured'*.

### 3.2.2: EVALUATION

#### What Is Working

##### Integrity, Consistency and Security of Assessment

- External authentication reports provide an excellent gauge of the fairness and consistency of assessment across the spectrum of FET provision. Monitoring of the EA reports by the QA Office and via the RAP process gives the opportunity for oversight of assessment processes across FET centres. Generally, EA reports, in 2021, have been favourable, highlighting instances of best practice and recognising the high standard

of work completed by learners across the board. The EA process also allows the QA Office to identify areas of recommendation and to instigate interventions of support and training for staff. The table below encompasses a selection of comments from 2021 EA Reports comprehending PLC, Youthreach and general FET provision. An integrated approach to assessment is commented upon by an EA below and this is an area of recommended practice that the QA Office is hoping to encourage more FET centres to incorporate into their centres going forward. A Youthreach centre that is experienced in offering integrated assessment commented that *'Meeting staff on a one-to-one basis as a QA person in this situation allows you to see where they might be cross curricular links with other teachers.'*

#### Selection of Feedback from EA Reports in 2021:

*'Again, the work is of a very high standard especially considering the challenges of having to submit everything online.'*

*'Integrated mode of assessment for three modules is to be commended in this difficult time and the extent of the assessment required for this module using digital skills is a great achievement. High standard of student work evident.'*

*'Good evidence of feedback given to learners and work in line with marks awarded.'*

*'Excellent standard of student work evident.'*

*'Good evidence of feedback given to learners.'*

*'Excellent use of digital skills by teachers and learners well done!'*

*'Work was very well presented and easy to access. Students achieved a wide range of relevant learning and it is evidenced clearly and very thoroughly. Every learning outcome is clearly identified and assessed.'*

*'Clear and correctly detailed assignment briefs provided to learners.'*

*'Fair and accurate grading presented across all modules and learners.'*

- Peer review of assessment briefs has been introduced in most FET centres to ensure both clarity of instruction to learners as well as the maintenance of the award standard across their teaching staff, *'all briefs are peer reviewed by experienced members of staff'* (PLC Deputy Principal). At the FET Forum and at QA training, held in Autumn 2021, the QA Office recommended peer review of briefs as an example of best practice and requested that all FET centres initiate such a review, if not already doing so.
- Regular meetings with teaching staff around assessment practice was highlighted by some FET centres as integral to maintaining the integrity of the assessment process. Included in

- this would be elements of training around QA processes for new teaching staff to ensure that they are confident in writing assessment brief, marking schemes, etc. One of the PLC colleges has established a Teaching and Learning committee to promote new methodologies and to provide a platform to share good practice. As was mentioned as an identified action in section 2.3.3, it is the QA Office's intention to incorporate QA training related to assessment and relevant policies and procedures into a FET induction process for new teaching staff.
- To bolster academic integrity efforts, the PLC colleges all use Moodle as their VLE platform which has URKUND anti-plagiarism software incorporated to monitor assessment evidence for disproportionate similarities. LMETB is intending to purchase similar software (Turnitin) that can be added to the MS Teams platform for use by other FET centres.
  - The findings from the Focus Group sessions held with FET centres indicates strong awareness of the necessity for secure storage of assessment evidence:

*'All assessments are stored in secured locations in the centre, locked rooms and cabinets.... with restricted access'* (Youthreach Coordinator).

*'Moodle and OneDrive are password protected.... digital submission through Moodle'* (PLC Deputy Principal).

*'Examinations are modified on an annual basis and stored centrally by the QQI Coordinator until dissemination. Alternate examinations are available in case of an issue arising with the original exam paper'* (PLC Deputy Principal).

### Communication of Assessment to Learners

- FET centres report that they offer clear guidance to learners as to the expectations around assessment. Some centres have their own Learner Handbook with assessment material included which incorporates an outline of course content, assessment requirements and assessment calendar. As mentioned previously in this report, it is LMETB's intention to develop a Learner Handbook template for use in all FET centres in 2022.

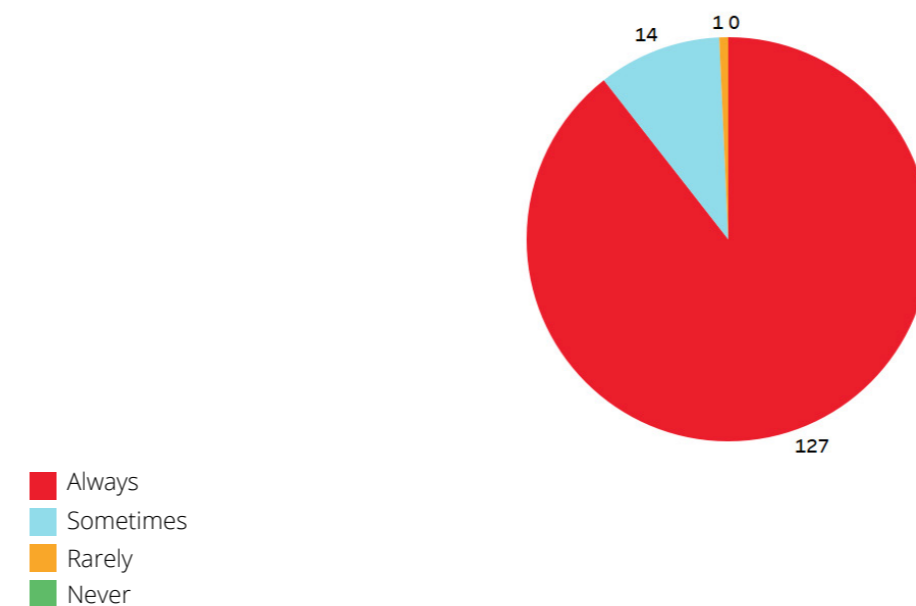
*'Apprenticeship assessments are clearly laid out from the start of the course. The Apprenticeship Assessment Handbook is available.... a schedule of assessments at the outset of the course is given so they will know the amount of assessments and approximate dates for completion.'* (Assistant Training Centre Manager).

*'Tutor has the role of explaining assessment to learners.... not done immediately at the start of the course for literacy learners'* (Adult Literacy Organiser).

*'2nd day of induction for new learners covers QQI assessments so that learners know the processes'* (BTEI Coordinator).

- Feedback is integral to the assessment process. FET centres communicated that they had effective practices around giving feedback to learners. This is corroborated by FET teaching staff, with only 1% of teachers saying they rarely give regular feedback:

*I give my learners regular feedback on their progress in my subject area:*



Feedback is given to learners in a variety of ways with verbal feedback in the classroom (or virtual learning environment) augmented with written feedback, screencasts, voice notes and other means. The aim of this feedback is to reinforce to learners where they are doing well and where the areas for improvement lie.

*'More evidence needed than just verbal feedback, e.g., voice notes'* (BTEI Coordinator)

*'Comments on Moodle, comments on assessment itself.....some staff record feedback on Screencast'* (PLC Deputy Principal).

See Appendix 2(i) for a case study related to a structured approach in giving summative feedback to learners in a Youthreach Centre.



An area of recommended good practice used in some FET centres is to ask learners to acknowledge their feedback so as to encourage ownership of the advice given, *'The learner can see their progress..... the learner also signs to say they have received the feedback at the end of each assignment'* (Youthreach Coordinator).

An interesting observation is seen here in this comment from one of the PLC colleges linking the consistent use of feedback to learners with a reduction in assessment appeals *'there is a direct link between lots of feedback to learners and less learner appeals.....learners know where they stand by the time they come to exams'*, (PLC Deputy Principal).

In the Learner survey, learners commented on the general accessibility of teaching staff across the levels, with tutors being praised for *'being available, attentive and responsive to learners' needs.'* One learner commented, specifically in relation to assessment, *'they (tutors) provide step by step guidance to complete the task.'*

### Work Placement

- During the Focus Group sessions, FET centres confirmed that employers and learners are supported in work placements as per the processes described in section 3.2.1, albeit with some variation across centres. The need to ensure the quality of the learning experience during work placement is recognised by FET centres with one FET Leader commenting *'we send a pack to the employers with guidelines around work experience as we want supervisor's reports to come back efficiently and authentically'*. In Youthreach settings, some centres have an 'expectations' section in both the employer and learner packs to communicate the two-way nature of work placements and the importance of buy-in from both sides.
- It was also noted that the links established during work placements may lead to employment opportunities for learners when they finish their courses. *'Our Healthcare Team have a very focused approach with regular meetings/contact before and during placement. We have a system in place for employers to follow up with job offers'* (PLC Deputy Principal).

### What Needs Improving

#### Integrity, Consistency, and Security of Assessment

While EA reports in 2021 have been, in the main, complimentary of assessment practices in FET centres, it has been noted by some EAs that there is an inconsistency around the issuing of summative feedback to learners. *'In some cases, feedback is excellent and directive but across some modules there is no or very short feedback focusing on soft skills not learner's work. Feedback is a requirement and could be expanded to assist future learning. A standard feedback form could help'* (EA Report 2021). Follow up by the QA Office and relevant coordinators revealed that there are some centres issuing very little feedback or feedback that is summative only, given when learners are near the end of the course. Directive feedback is required to help learners identify areas for improvement. In response to this issue, the QA Office organised a series of assessment related training workshops delivered by FESS in Autumn 2021. The third of these workshops was specifically related to giving effective feedback to learners and was well attended by FET teaching staff.

- While some FET centres incorporate QA training for new teachers, some smaller centres find it difficult to allocate time for this kind of intervention. Feedback from 2021 EA reports for some centres recommended a re-design of assessment briefs to ensure that they are clear for the learner and provide a transparent means of producing evidence to show the achievement of learning outcomes. *'modules could greatly benefit from a re-design of their marking schemes and briefs for clarity and transparency'* (EA Report). FESS training held in Autumn 2021 provided an overview of assessment and included an assessment writing clinic, particularly aimed at new teachers and existing teachers who had been advised to re-visit their assessment briefs. As mentioned previously, it is hoped that the introduction of a QA focus during induction for FET teachers across all centres, as well the expansion of the peer review system for assessment briefs to all FET centres will help to alleviate issues with assessment briefs and marking schemes going forward. At present, QA focused induction only exists in some FET Centres e.g., PLC.

## Communication of Assessment to Learners

- While FET centres report effective means of communicating assessment information, course expectations and requirements, the feedback from learners suggest that this is an area that needs improvement. See table below with learner comments indicating that communication of assessment schedules/duration of courses, the need to avoid assessment deadline clashes and the need to link guidance with course delivery are all areas that should be examined and improved upon.

### Learner Comments on Assessment:

*Advertise better the learning outcomes of the course*

*More detail to be given about the amount of work that the course entails. It would be good to be given career advice before picking the course. Teachers are brilliant*

*To create a concrete awareness of the duration of the course, instead of telling students after the course has fully commenced*

*Have an assignment calendar available for all students at the beginning of the year so they know how many assignments they have for each module.*

*I think just trying to spread assignment due dates over a longer period of time because I felt throughout the year, we had a lot of assignments due in the same day and days one after another*

*Possibly having a due date for graded work so that students have a rough idea of when to expect their grades*

*Make sure the learner has a clear understanding from the start of the Commitment required so they are not overwhelmed by the workload.*

## Work Placement

Some FET centres highlighted the challenge associated with overseeing work placements and site visits.

*Time for teachers to link into employer needs to be looked at. Also, hard to implement if learners are on placement one day a week and the Work Experience teacher is timetabled at that time elsewhere.... block placement does not work well in all areas for either learner or employer' (PLC Deputy Principal).*

Communication with employers during placements differs across centres and a more consistent approach needs to be examined.

- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in early 2021, there was uncertainty across the FET sector as to the feasibility of on-site work placements. A sectoral approach to viable alternatives was

initiated with QQI, however it was early Spring before alternatives for all modules and awards were agreed. The ensuing uncertainty caused concern for learners:

*'We were not given enough notice for placement on our courses. Placement news was very slow, we found out only a few weeks ago, and should have known earlier. We can't be just left not knowing what is going to happen' (FET Learner).*

*'Placement was never going to happen, so they should have made a decision earlier. Finally, they're allowing us to do a different module' (FET Learner).*

The alternatives agreed with QQI are in place until December 2022 and, informed by the comments above, it is hoped that alternative arrangements, if necessitated, will be communicated in a timely manner.

## 3.2.3: CONCLUSION

### Identified Actions

- Ensure that all new FET teachers receive QA and assessment related information as part of their induction, regardless of FET centre type. Ensure that training workshops in assessment processes are offered each Autumn to assist new and existing teachers in the development of fair, reliable, valid, and consistent assessment activities. Encourage peer review of assessment briefs as best practice across all FET provision.
- Ensure that communication around assessment expectations is consistent throughout all FET provision. The Learner Handbook template will assist in this endeavour.
- Develop, in line with sectoral knowledge, an RPL policy to allow accreditation for experiential learning.
- Ensure fitness for purpose of the current policy on learner feedback and revise if necessary.
- Review the monitoring of work placement to examine consistency of site visits and employer communication across the various FET centres.
- Move towards an integrated assessment framework across all FET provision. This will involve transitioning from the AISs used in the Training Services and its associated provision to the use of locally devised assessment (LDA).
- A longer-term project, to be overseen by the QA Office, is to examine the standardisation of LDAs (and practice) within and across FET centres. A FET-wide approach will be encouraged in the co-operative setting up of an assessment bank to house:
  - Peer-developed and reviewed briefs
  - Exemplar assessment instruments
  - Exams (minimum of three versions; practical demonstrations, and complementary resources).

## 3.3 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

### 3.3.1 DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF LEARNER SUPPORTS

LMETB provides a range of supports to all learners in its education, training, and youth services.

Through these supports there is a pathway for every learner to become an autonomous, confident, and effective learner and to successfully meet their learning goals. In line with

Strategic Goal 1 in its Strategy Statement 2017 – 2021, LMETB FET provision aims to:

*‘Promote active inclusion and access to high quality teaching, learning and assessment for all students/learners in LMETB.’*

There is a range of supports available to learners across all LMETB programmes. These supports can differ by provision and some are unique to each. Learners are encouraged, upon application for admission, to disclose any special needs or disabilities they may have, in order that relevant supports or reasonable accommodations may be put in place. Where such a disclosure is made, an appropriate staff member will meet the learner to discuss the nature of the supports required. Ongoing supports are actively promoted and made available to learners on a day-to-day basis via programme managers, coordinators, principals, resource, and teaching staff. FET learners are encouraged to approach relevant staff within their provision for any programme related concerns that may arise, and guidance and teaching staff play a crucial role as a first point of contact and in highlighting support needs.

#### Active Inclusion

The LMETB Strategic Performance Agreement 2018 – 2020 highlights active inclusion as a key priority. FET programmes support active inclusion in multiple ways:

- Integrating literacy and numeracy into all FET programmes, thereby ensuring that relevant literacy and numeracy skills are developed as part of the subject-specific learning
- Providing ESOL courses to migrants, and ongoing guidance, in order to raise awareness of other services to support progression to FET programmes. The Adult Learning Service works with the Refugee Resettlement Programmes in Mosney Village, the Joint Louth Meath Migrant Forum, and the Co. Meath Resettlement Inter Agency Working Group to facilitate integration and ensure progression for learners as they resettle in counties Louth and Meath.
- Introducing new targeted programmes, such as the Adult Learning Service’s pilot programme

for learners with intellectual disability and Community Education’s *‘Introduction to the Practice of Mindfulness’* for people living with Multiple Sclerosis, which was highlighted as an example of good practice in ETBI’s recent report entitled *Study of the Role, Contribution and Impact of Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training Provision and Support Services in Community Education in Ireland*. See [here](#) to view the report.

#### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

LMETB is committed to promoting inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices to support the learning needs and preferences of learners. In line with this commitment, staff from across the FET programmes and support services were enabled to take part in AHEAD’s UDL Digital Badge and ETBI’s Autumn 2021 Webinar Series on UDL and encouraged to apply the learning to their practice.

The following publications from ETBI, SOLAS and AHEAD have raised awareness amongst LMETB educators in relation to Universal Design for Learning:

[A Conceptual Framework of UDL for the Irish FET sector](#)  
[Guidance for Implementing UDL in Irish FET](#)

#### Supports Available

The range of supports available to learners include:

- Reasonable Accommodations
- Disability Supports
- Literacy and Numeracy Support
- Financial Support
- Adult Educational Guidance Service
- ICT Devices
- Supported Study
- Wellbeing Supports
- Counselling Services (funded for some programmes)

## Reasonable Accommodation

LMETB makes every effort to accommodate learners with disabilities or specific needs and has just ratified a revised [Reasonable Accommodations Procedure](#). A range of reasonable accommodations are available to ensure a fair and consistent assessment process for all its learners, in order to allow a learner to demonstrate his/her level of actual attainment and to further enable the learner to reach their full potential.

Reasonable accommodation requests can be made on the following grounds:

- Learning difficulty
- Deaf or having a hearing impairment
- Blind or visually impaired
- Physical difficulty (including mental health and/or behavioural difficulties along with physical difficulties)
- Any grounds covered by current legislation.

## Disability Supports

LMETB welcomes applications from all prospective FET learners, and has a legislative requirement to support learners with disabilities and/or additional educational needs, based on:

- The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- Equal Status Act 2000 & 2004

Supports for learners within LMETB go far beyond that of reasonable accommodation. LMETB Centres have access to government funding (Funding for Students with Disabilities – FSD) that is administered by SOLAS to provide supports for learners with disabilities. All learners presenting with disabilities can make an application for such funding, and if deemed eligible they are provided with the necessary supports to fully participate in and complete their chosen course of learning.

Supports which are covered under this funding include:

- Assistive Technology equipment and software
- Non-medical helpers (e.g., personal assistants, notetakers)

- Academic/learning support
- Deaf supports (sign language interpreters, Speedtext)
- Transport support

All other centres requiring resources to support learners can apply through their line manager for funding or, in some instances, will acquire resources from their centre budget.

Special Educational Needs Initiative (SENI) funding, available in some Youthreach centres, helps these centres to respond flexibly and practically to the unique situation of each individual learner, including the development of Individual Learning Plans.

See Appendix 2(j) for a case study regarding the inclusion of learners with an intellectual disability in classes delivered by LMETB's Adult Learning Service.

## Literacy and Numeracy Supports

Learners across LMETB FET programmes including Apprenticeships, PLC and VTOS can access in-house Literacy and Numeracy supports managed through LMETB's Adult Literacy Organisers and tutors. Regional Skills and Training Centre, for example, has a dedicated Learner Support Hub that, in conjunction with the Adult Literacy Service, offers specific supports to trainees either on a one-to-one basis or in a small group setting.

Furthermore, LMETB's [Integrating Literacy Policy](#) has been supported by the delivery of staff PLD opportunities in this area. Three adult literacy practitioners were nominated by LMETB in June 2021 to attend 'An approach to Building Literacy Awareness across FET', run by CDET and FESS, and aimed at supporting FET staff in becoming literacy-aware across all types of provision.

LMETB programmes employ two main tools (BKSB and Edexcel) to assist in identifying any Literacy, Numeracy or ICT supports required.

See Appendix 2(k) for a case study related to literacy integration in one of LMETB's Youthreach centres.



## Financial Support

Financial supports are available to some FET learners, depending on the type of programme they are pursuing and their personal circumstances. Some examples include: Accommodation Allowance for Apprenticeships, Meal and Travel allowances. Learners in certain training programmes may be eligible for low-cost childcare under the National Childcare Scheme, operated by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## Adult Educational Guidance Service

The Adult Educational Guidance Counsellors in LMETB are professionally qualified and provide guidance, counselling, and information services to individuals and to groups. They also provide referral services to other agencies as appropriate, including counselling, psychotherapy, and other mental health services. The FET Adult Educational Guidance counsellors have participated in 2021 in the Dyslexia Ireland Assessment of Learning Needs Course to enable them to provide assessments as needed for FET learners.

## Learner Resources

Every LMETB learner is provided access to an MS Office 365 account. This includes an LMETB email address and access to a number of applications that will assist with their programme of study. The [ICT Information for Students](#) page on the LMETB website provides information and guidance on the IT services available.

FET Leaders and teaching/ instructing staff inform learners of the academic resources available to them, which include:

[Referencing Handbook for the Further Education and Training Sector.](#)

[Academic Writing Handbook for Learners in the Further Education Sector.](#)

[Maths for Trades Workbooks](#)

On many FET programmes, course materials and textbooks are provided free of charge to learners. In addition to resources supplied by class teachers/tutors/instructors (e.g., class notes, handouts, extra reading, etc.), many centres keep a bank of textbooks relating to modules which are available to learners on a loan scheme. FET Centres have access to the [ETBI-developed](#)

[Digital Library](#) that provides access to digital resources to support teaching and learning practices and will enhance the educational experience for learners.

## ICT Devices Support Schemes

LMETB FET learners have greatly benefited from the ICT Devices Loan Scheme, a government funded scheme with the aim of ensuring access to ICT devices for learners during remote/blended learning due to COVID-19 restrictions. 430 devices or laptops were distributed to FET learners through this scheme.

LMETB administered the Mitigating against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) in 2020 and 2021. The programme was aimed at addressing educational disadvantage which may be experienced by adult learners. In 2020, across Louth and Meath, 43 community groups and 203 individual learners received funding to reduce barriers to participation in FET by facilitating wider access to digital technologies, equipment, materials and other supports. The MAEDF fund was again administered in 2021 with 47 community groups and 797 individual learners receiving funding across the two counties. The success of these supports is reflected by the 84% of Learner Survey respondents who said that they had access to the necessary IT devices and software to complete their learning.

In 2020, Facebook donated €809,000 to Meath County Council Library Service for a 'Laptop for Loan' Initiative to address the digital divide compounded by the COVID-19 outbreak, which caused disproportionate hardship on those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. In Phase 1 nearly 750 laptops were distributed to students in post-primary schools in Meath. In Phase 2 the Laptops for Loan scheme was rolled out to organisations who work with those who are educationally, socially, or economically disadvantaged and to those who are socially excluded. In December 2020, LMETB were delighted to receive 100 laptops to loan to learners across its FET provision in Meath.



Professional Learning and Development has played an important role in 2021 in supporting staff so that they are enabled to support learners in their wellbeing. Some examples include:

- 4 FET Leaders were nominated by LMETB to attend the ETBI/ Mental Health Ireland “Five Ways to Wellbeing” workshops in May 2021. These workshops were aimed at informing centre managers and coordinators about the programme, and how they could engage with MHI to have it delivered in their centres.
- Staff were informed of ETBI’s ‘Tackling Anxiety and Building Resilience for Educators’ seminar, aimed at gaining strategies to support ourselves as staff and our learners
- HSE/ LivingWorks Suicide Prevention Training was offered as an eLearning option to staff.

Resources for teachers to share with learners include the Wellbeing Wall (below), a Padlet on the FET TEL & PD Team, which has links to a range of support services and wellbeing resources.

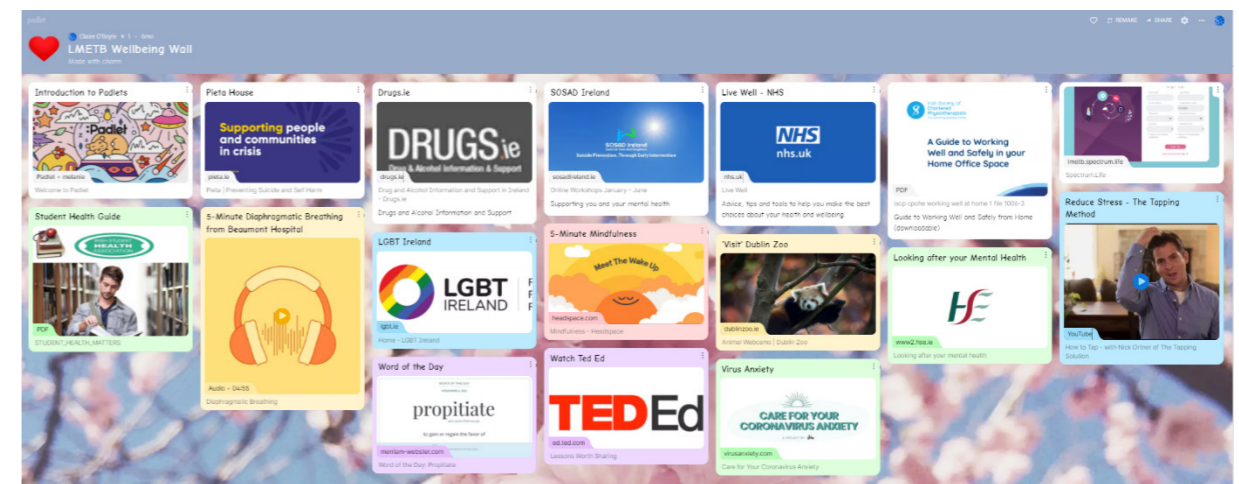
### Supported Study

Many FET centres/colleges offer Study Hubs or supported study options where learners can avail of a quiet space for study with resources and supports available to them. For example, the PLC colleges have a Learning Hub, overseen by Guidance, which includes support from Personal Assistants as well as some teachers with subject expertise as required. See Appendix 2(l) for a case study regarding the provision of a Sensory Room for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in one of LMETB’s PLC colleges.

### Wellbeing Supports

The [SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024](#) notes that an increasingly prevalent characteristic in FET is the high proportion of learners citing mental health issues. LMETB is working to ensure there are sufficient support mechanisms in place to assist these learners. 64% of learners surveyed in the FET learner forum report said their mental health had been affected by the current Covid-19 crisis.

LMETB is also a keyword partner with ETBI/HSE in the Text about it 50808 Wellness initiative, a free 24/7 anonymous text support service which provides immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis. This initiative was promoted at both organisational and centre level via social media, and poster displays in centre.



### Counselling and Psychological Services

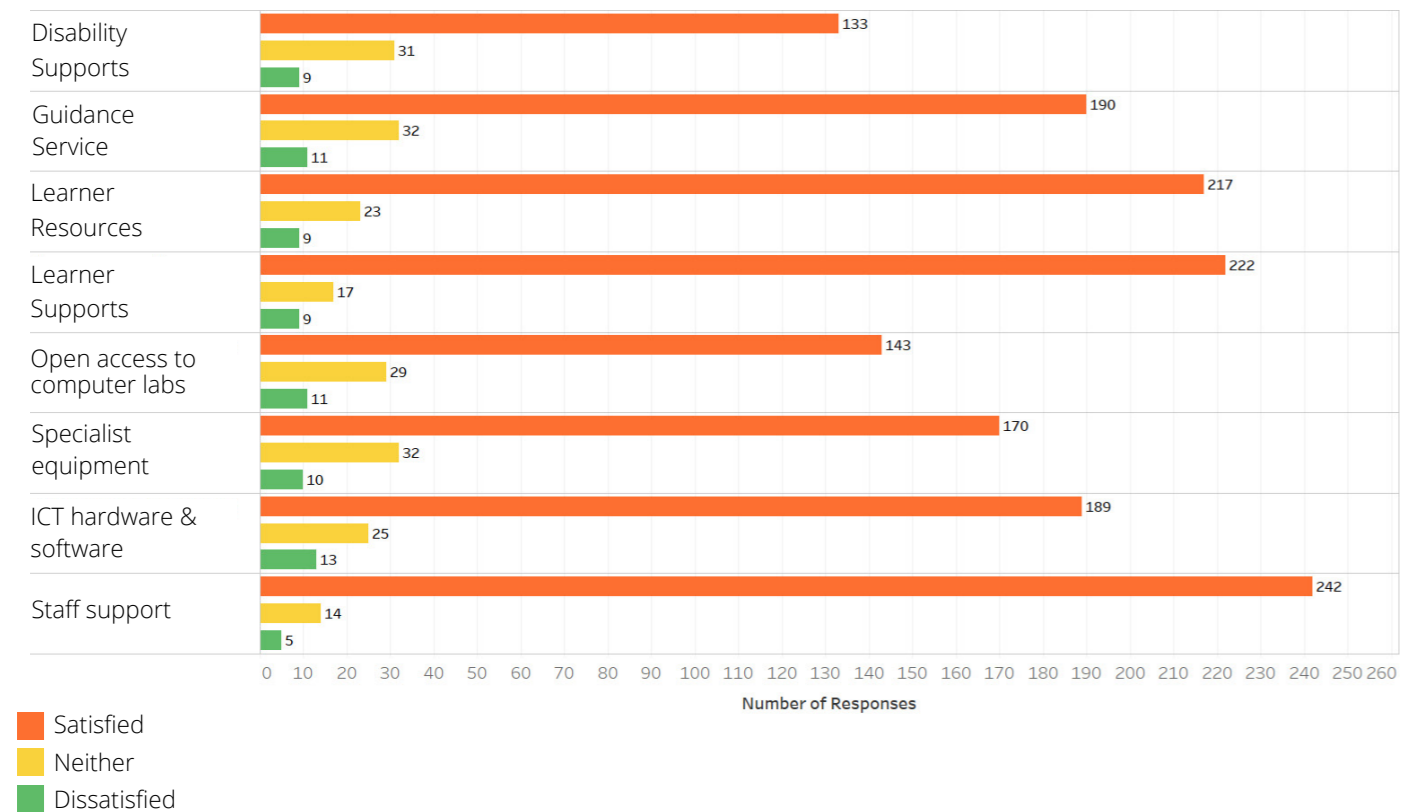
FET Learners have access to inhouse counselling and psychological supports if the need is identified at centre/college level.

See Appendix 2 (m) for an example from a Youthreach centre of the supports in place for their learners.



### 3.3.2 EVALUATION

The chart below, taken from the FET Learner Forum Report 2021, represents learner satisfaction with respect to learner supports, disability supports and learner resources:



#### What Is Working

- Supports for adult learners include learner-friendly timetables, evening provision and the opportunity to complete courses over two years instead of one. Flexibility and understanding around attendance and assignments on the part of tutors was highlighted in the learner survey, with one learner commenting, *"If people need to leave early, or may not be able to attend due to child-caring or something like that, you are given time to complete assignments."*
- Adult Educational Guidance Service is a very visible and central support for all LMETB FET learners, with 93% of learners satisfied with the guidance support and advice at initial contact.
- Targeted programmes have supported active inclusion. Examples of successful targeted programmes include:
  - Pilot programme including learners with intellectual disability as well as one-to-one learners who needed the confidence to join a group. As a result of this 5-week programme delivered by Adult Learning Service Dundalk, a number of learners have moved to accredited provision and one is now progressing to a Level 3 programme. (See Appendix 2j)

- 'Introduction to Mindfulness' course for people living with Multiple Sclerosis, created and delivered by Community Education Louth in partnership with the Louth Meath branch of MS Ireland. This link between Multiple Sclerosis Ireland and LMETB facilitated participants to engage in a positive learning experience and to gain practical skills, which in some cases led to progression into other areas of FET.

- The availability of assistive technology tools built into Office 365 such as Immersive Reader, Dictate and Closed Captions means that all learners can benefit from increased learning options. In line with UDL principles, inclusive learning is reflected in the fact that all learners, regardless of their disability status, have access to the same tools.
- The support provided during the COVID 19 remote learning periods was crucial to learners' successful adaptation to an online learning environment. Consistently across levels, tutors were praised for being available, attentive, and responsive to learners' needs during the periods of remote learning. Frequent and varied communication during this period was acknowledged by learners. Both tutors and staff stayed in touch with learners through WhatsApp, emails, phone calls, and (when restrictions allowed) socially distanced house calls. One learner remarked: *"I found they were in constant contact - the course coordinator would check in with us personally every Monday morning and asked us would anything make it easier for us. That led to a better environment!"*
- Learners surveyed shared how LMETB prioritised and supported their mental health and wellbeing during remote learning. They reported that staff and tutors were mindful of the stress and challenges of learning remotely and provided a space for learners to discuss these challenges if needed. One learner explained, *"if we have had a tough day, we can tell the coordinator, talk to them about life in general."* Other learners had a dedicated member of staff who they could talk to about their mental health and wellbeing, with one learner stating, *"we have a course counsellor. I talk to her once a week."* COVID 19 remote learning arrangements presented an immense challenge in supporting learners with disabilities and learners with additional learning needs. This required careful planning to ensure that no learner that needed support was left behind. See Appendix 2(np) for a case study related to supports offered to learners during COVID-19 in one of LMETB's PLC colleges, where the Guidance and Support Team met on a weekly basis to discuss learner progress and to set a plan for the following week with learners. This proved invaluable to supporting learners with disabilities and learners with additional learning needs. Additional weekly check-in support was planned,

documented, and discussed. This resulted in improved learner retention, engagement, and wellbeing.

- LMETB has encouraged both formal and informal expression of learner voice over the years, some examples of which are outlined below:
  - Learners have been facilitated to provide testimonials at the end of courses as may be seen on PLC college websites.
  - Formal inspections such as those carried out by the DE in Youthreach centres specifically look to talk to learners in these centres;
  - Various FET centres produce Learner Booklets where the writings of learners are collated and published, e.g. Adult Learning Service Dundalk
  - LMETB learners have participated in various national learner fora events facilitated by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and AONTAS, which gave LMETB learners the opportunity to articulate their views and to be listened to at a national level. In addition, as well as these formal mechanisms which also include course feedback and evaluation processes (see section 4.1 for more information), informal learner opinion is also sought from learners in classrooms, at social events and in the tea/coffee breaks where the informality often lends itself to learners offering opinions on their learning experience with LMETB.
- The PLD offered to FET staff by the PLD Officer in the Autumn term of 2021 had a specific focus on working with adult learners, in recognition of the different teaching and training strategies and techniques required for adult learners, as highlighted in the SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-19.
- Recruitment of academic support staff (PLD, QA and TEL Officers) has facilitated real time support for teachers. This has had a direct impact on the quality of the learning experience in the classroom. For example, through the FET TEL and Professional Development MS Team site, teachers have a forum to ask TEL-related questions and will receive specific and targeted advice from the TEL Officer.

### What Needs Improving

- Dedicated IT support for learners across FET. Support varies between different provisions and as more programmes move towards some form of blended learning, there is more of a need for formalised support in this area.

- The success and impact for learners of the Laptop Loan Scheme provides the opportunity to consider extending this, or a similar scheme, post COVID-19.
- Guidance visits to outreach centres are a valuable way of notifying learners and staff to supports available. A more formal approach to these visits throughout LMETB FET will ensure that all learners have the same access to supports.
- Improve learner representation on LMETB QA Governance structures. Although PLC learners are represented on their respective Boards of Management, there is no learner representation as yet from other FET provision on QA committees.

### 3.3.3 CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- Embed ETBI's Adult Safeguarding in FET framework, which promotes the welfare of adult learners, including those who are at risk of abuse, and supports the provision of learning environments that are safe and free from harm. It reflects LMETB's commitment to supporting the human rights, health, and wellbeing of all their learners. Actions include designating Safeguarding Officers in each college and centre. To view LMETB's FET Adult Safeguarding Policy, click [here](#).
- Creation of an induction pack for all FET learners with information on all the learner supports available. While PLC colleges currently provide this information, it is LMETB's intention to include this information within the proposed Learner Handbook in 2022 for all FET learners.
- Ensure learner representation on LMETB QA governance structures. LMETB FET has committed to engage with AONTAS to provide 'Learners as Leaders' training for nominated learner representatives in order to build their learner voice capacity.
- Ensure consistent implementation of the revised Reasonable Accommodations Procedure throughout FET so that all learners can avail of the same supports in this regard. Sixteen learning practitioners from across FET recently attended the Dyslexia Assessment of Needs course, which included training on administering the Adult Reading Test (ART-2) and the Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST) to adult learners. The revised Reasonable Accommodation Procedure accepts results from the ART-2 and the DAST as relevant evidence in reasonable accommodation applications.
- Review the disability services and supports available across the organisation and identify areas for improvement.



# Section 4

## Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review



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

### 4.1: SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

#### 4.1.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Strategic Goal 3 of [LMETB Strategy Statement 2017- 21](#) states that LMETB will ‘ensure continued provision of high quality and innovative teaching and learning in LMETB schools and colleges.’ This goal demonstrates LMETB’s commitment to monitoring, review and self-evaluation processes to ensure a high-quality learning experience for all its learners. It aligns to the QQI requirement, seen as a fundamental element of a provider’s quality assurance system, for ‘review and self-evaluation of quality including review of programmes of education and training, research and related services’<sup>1</sup>. QQI advise that both self-evaluation reviews, with a broad systemic focus, as well as on-going, internal self-monitoring processes, should be integral aspects of an ETB’s quality assurance system.

#### Self-Evaluation Processes

As part of its re-engagement process with QQI in 2017, LMETB undertook a self-evaluation process which involved a review of QA policies and procedures across FET provision, this culminated in the production of the [LMETB Executive Self Evaluation Report 2017](#). The key findings from the Executive Self Evaluation Report (ESER) are highlighted in [LMETB’s Provider Profile](#), and these recommendations helped to set out the road map for developing quality assurance as a key support for FET provision in LMETB. Based on the outcomes from the ESER, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for LMETB FET programmes and services was developed and approved in June 2018. LMETB’s Quality Improvement Plan 2018 is available to view [here](#). The initiation of work on specific policies and procedures in the QIP demonstrated LMETB’s intention to enhance and monitor quality on an ongoing basis from that point forward, as demonstrated in both the [LMETB Quality Improvement Plan 2019](#) and the [LMETB Quality Improvement Plan 2020](#). The QAGMC discuss and approve each QIP, with the QIP forming the basis of the Annual Dialogue meeting with QQI.

<sup>1</sup> p21, [QQI Core Statutory Guidelines](#)

In addition to the specific QA-related evaluative processes, LMETB, in partnership with its funders, SOLAS, develops agreed Strategic Performance Agreements (SPA) on a three-year basis. The agreements set out the context, strategic priorities and LMETB’s contribution to achievement of key national FET sector targets. See [Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-20](#). Performance indicators are monitored via PLSS and FARR data. Targets arising from both the SPA and the QIP are communicated by the FET SMT to all FET Leaders and senior LMETB personnel.

A summary of LMETB’s planning and evaluative reports is given here:

[LMETB Strategy Statement 2017-2021](#): outlines the objectives of the LMETB Board, the priorities of these objectives and the proposed strategies for achieving them over a five-year period. LMETB has recently developed its Strategy Statement for 2022-2026.

[LMETB Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-20](#): documents the agreement between LMETB and SOLAS for this period. A new SPA is currently being agreed nationally between ETBs and SOLAS with a view to its introduction in 2022.

[LMETB Service Plan 2021](#): sets out LMETB’s operational plan for 2021 as well as forming the basis for discussions on performance. Service plans are published to LMETB’s website annually.

**LMETB Risk Register**: a dynamic document where risks are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis with the frequency of review dependent on the category of risk

**Director of FET Reports to LMETB Board** : At each board meeting, the Director of FET reports to the LMETB Board to inform on the various activities in FET.

[LMETB Annual Report 2020](#) : provides an opportunity to highlight the comprehensive range of activities undertaken by LMETB schools and FET centres as well as related financial and corporate governance aspects of LMETB’s work.

[LMETB FET TEL Strategy 2017-19](#): Outlines the TEL strategy for LMETB and is informed by the SOLAS Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in FET 2016-2019.

Updated TEL actions, plans and expenditure are currently reported to the SOLAS Enterprise, Employees and Skills unit under the following headings.

- i) ICT Infrastructure
- ii) Ongoing professional development
- iii) Learning content and programme design
- iv) Organisation structure

## Inaugural Review – Self-Evaluation Process

A key area of focus for quality improvement activity in 2021 has been initiated by the consultation processes and reflective engagement with learners, staff, employers, and stakeholders for the gathering of data for the Self-Evaluation Report. The key findings and emerging themes will help to focus QA priorities for 2022.

## Monitoring

LMETB has a number of mechanisms in place to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of QA procedures. These include:

<b>Internal verification</b>	Reviews assessment outcomes and identifies any issues arising from the process or assessment techniques.
<b>External Authentication</b>	Provides independent, authoritative confirmation of the fair and consistent assessment of learners. The EA composes a report advising on good practice and recommendations arising from the authentication process. The report is communicated to FET centres and is discussed at the Results Approval Panel meeting.
<b>External Quality Assurance</b>	Programmes certified by City and Guilds are subject to a visit from an external quality assurer (EQA) appointed by the body. Appointees are generally Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the areas to which they are assigned. The role of the EQA is varied and includes assessing and managing risk, checking compliance and alignment with learning outcomes, ensuring accuracy and consistency, identifying quality issues and trends, and supporting and developing centre staff. LMETB has successfully completed numerous EQA audits both in person and more recently online. LMETB acknowledges the City & Guilds EQA process as a collaborative one, where a two-way channel of communication and information is maintained between both parties.
<b>Results Approval Panel (RAP) Meetings</b>	Provides an opportunity to monitor and review learner achievement data and IV/EA reports from each FET centre. A consolidated RAP report for each QQI submission period is prepared by the QA Office, outlining the agreed areas of good practice and areas for improvement. The consolidated report is made available to FET staff via the FET QA MS Teams site.

<b>FET Centre Focus Groups</b>	As part of the self-evaluation process for this report, a series of focus group sessions were held with FET centres to discuss their views around QA matters and issues arising.
<b>Youthreach Centres</b>	The annual Centre Evaluation and Improvement Planning (CEIP) process is facilitated by an external facilitator and consultation involves Youthreach staff, learners, and other relevant stakeholders. A series of actions are identified in the CEIP report.
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	LMETB, as the second provider for SOLAS with respect to Craft Apprenticeships, has overall responsibility for the integrity and operations of the assessment process which is overseen by the designated Area Training Manager. Apprenticeship assessments are coordinated and administered in accordance with the assessment procedures for apprenticeship programmes. This role is undertaken by the TSO and the Assistant Training Standards Officer (ATSO). The Training Standards Office is responsible for ensuring the assessors/invigilators are informed of their duties and responsibilities. Assessment supervision ensures that the conduct and integrity of assessment complies with the Awards Council and SOLAS' quality assurance requirements.  <a href="#">Craft Apprenticeship Assessment Rules</a> <a href="#">Craft Apprenticeship Policy on Assessment Development Marking and Grading</a> <a href="#">Craft Apprenticeship Managing Assessment System Malpractice</a>

In addition to the processes mentioned above, LMETB monitors provision via:

**Learner Feedback:** This mechanism is used by every FET centre as part of their own quality processes to inform course provision. Mid-course and end of course evaluation templates ([Mid-Course Evaluation Form](#) and [End of Course Evaluation Form](#)) have been recently reviewed and updated to provide a uniform and consistent mechanism to aid this process and to standardise the documentation of this feedback across all FET provision. In addition, the PLCs encourage learners to participate in their Student Councils so as to capture the learners' input on their learning experience.

**Learner Forum:** LMETB FET learners took part in the LMETB FET Learner Forum in 2019 and in 2021 (online). It is intended that LMETB learners will take part in annual FET Learner Forum

event as a mechanism to provide them with an opportunity, in a neutral context as these events are facilitated by Aontas, to explore both the positivity and impact of their learning experience. Learners will also be able to identify areas where renewed attention may be required to bring about an improved learning experience in LMETB provision.

**Staff Consultation:** Staff are consulted regularly on QA matters via formal mechanisms such as centre staff meetings and staff surveys/evaluations on aspects of provision.

**External Stakeholders:** LMETB staff are members of various external fora representing a wide range of stakeholder interests. Membership allows strong relationships to be forged to inform FET practice and ensure relevance of provision. Examples of partnership /collaborative work with external fora are referenced in Appendix 3.

LMETB aims to provide a quality learning experience for every learner and more information on how LMETB ensures a quality culture is detailed in Section 3.1 of this report.

#### 4.1.2: EVALUATION

##### What is Working

- **Awareness of quality culture** - The provision of a quality learning environment is central to LMETB's strategic goals and results from the staff survey indicate that the promotion of a quality culture is recognised as important by FET staff. 77% of staff (both FET Leaders and teaching staff) agreed with the statement that *'there is a culture of quality within my centre'*: *'The systems in place ensure that the culture of quality is tangible'* (PLC Deputy Principal). This level of awareness is important in promoting the message that QA is the responsibility of every member of staff and not just the QA Office in LMETB.
  - The visibility of QA in centres is demonstrated via the incorporation of robust feedback mechanisms. *'Feedback from tutors highlights if something is not working well'* (BTEI Coordinator). *'Having a strong learner voice via the Student Council is a great indication as to whether courses are working'* (PLC Deputy Principal).
  - The CEIP process in Youthreach centres is recognised as being central to QA processes and is valued by staff as a mechanism to allow all stakeholders to actively participate in the review of centre provision. *'subject evaluations are conducted in CEIP quite comprehensively by learner, teacher and at centre level'*; *'The CEIP facilitated*

*process provides an excellent opportunity to highlight good practice and to correct any issues that need attention'* (Youthreach Coordinators)

The FET Leader, within the various FET centres, is central to the visibility of QA and the implementation, on the ground, of QA processes. Encouragingly, 77% of FET Leaders feel that their awareness of QA has improved over the last few years. In addition, 81% of FET Leaders state that they regularly seek feedback from both learners and staff on quality issues. 82% of teaching staff and 95% of FET Leaders agreed with the statement that quality assurance is a standing item on centre staff meeting agendas.

86% of respondents to LMETB's external stakeholder survey agreed with the statement, 'it is evident, from the content of FET courses, that programmes have been quality assured'.

Most importantly, 93% (243 out of 260 responses) of learners surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with their course.

- **Benefits of undergoing the self-evaluation process** – The actual consultation process itself embarked upon with all FET centres with a view to gathering data for this self-evaluation review of QA processes, has been welcomed by centres. One Youthreach Coordinator commented that he would like to *'continue as we have done with activities like this focus group, opportunities to share practice.'* A consistent approach to centre self-evaluation, monitoring and review using, perhaps, annual focus group sessions such as the ones held for this review, should be encouraged going forward in order to continue fostering a quality culture within FET.
- **Robustness of authentication processes** – Follow up action from authentication processes is in place in FET centres as demonstrated by the selection of comments from FET Leaders during focus group sessions. *'All recommendations from the IV and EA reports are discussed at RAP meetings, and comments and improvements are fed back to the teaching staff'* (BTEI Coordinator); *'EA feedback is distributed to all teaching staff and actions agreed at course meetings to address relevant issues'* (PLC Deputy Principal). Areas identified at RAP meetings are taken on board and measures put in place to address the issues. For



example, issues around clear and directed learner feedback and clarity of assessment briefs were identified during a RAP meeting in 2021. As a consequence, a series of three assessment related workshops for teaching staff, facilitated by FESS, have taken place in Autumn 2021.

### What Needs Improving

- While 73% of teaching staff agreed that there is a 'culture of quality' in their centre, there is room for improvement in this figure. Interestingly, only 58% of teachers agreed with the statement that their awareness of QA has improved over the last few years. It is hoped that increased staffing capacity within the QA Office, improved communication of QA through the FET QA MS Teams site and the increasing visibility of QA matters in FET provision, particularly through the Inaugural Review of QA, will all help to both foster understanding of the multi-faceted layers of QA in Centres, and also improve teacher awareness of their role in QA.
- Further develop opportunities for FET staff to meet with each other to share practice and expertise, collaborate and reflect on what is or is not working in different aspects of their provision. While there are forums held for different areas of FET over the academic year, there are few occasions for cross-provision FET meetings. The inability to meet in person in large groups has been an inhibitor to progressing this in recent months. However online forums may encourage Communities of Practice to progress opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice.
- Authentication processes are fundamental to the QA processes within LMETB's FET provision. It is concerning that only 55% of teaching staff agreed with the statement 'I have the opportunity to regularly discuss feedback from external authenticators with my Centre Coordinator/Manager'. 57% of FET Leaders agree that they always discuss feedback from EAs with their teaching staff and 32% of FET Leaders stated that they sometimes discuss this feedback. Perhaps, FET Leaders are only communicating the recommendations/areas for improvement from EA reports rather than the positive aspects? However, both sets of figures, particularly the teaching staff percentage, should be much higher. It is hoped that changes made to the RAP Centre Report format in 2021, whereby the relevant FET Leader or a designated person is required to confirm that they have communicated comments

to individual teachers, will improve the communication process. The revised RAP Centre Report (see extract below) also looks for confirmation that quality issues arising from RAP processes will be discussed at FET centre staff meetings:

Action	Yes or No	Date of Action	Person Responsible
Confirmation that comments from the EA Report will be communicated to each teacher:			
Confirmation that quality issues arising from authentication processes (IV or EA) will be itemised on the agenda and then discussed at the next FET Centre staff meeting.			

- While aspects of FET provision regularly seek feedback from external stakeholders, for example, the interaction between Employer Engagement Officers and local employers, the practice is not widespread within FET provision. It would be worthwhile to build on the experience of the self-evaluation process by exploring the relationships between LMETB and various community and employer stakeholders so as to gauge impact and collaborative potential.

### 4.1.3: CONCLUSIONS

#### Identified Actions

- Establish a formal process for annual centre-led self-evaluation, supported by the QA Office. The process will review relevant data, identify good practice and areas for improvement across FET provision. The process will help to inform and contribute to the annual quality improvement plan (QIP) and will contribute to the evolving sense of a quality culture in FET in LMETB.
- Ensure that recommendations from centre authentication processes are disseminated to teaching staff.
- Establish a formal process to capture employers/external stakeholder feedback on LMETB's FET programmes.
- Continue the promotion of QA and ensure that QA is visible to all levels of staff and learners within FET. Ensure that the ownership of QA is promoted and maintained at centre level as much as at organisational level by the Quality Assurance Office.

## 4.2: PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

### 4.2.1: DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines advise that *'programme delivery is monitored in a way which allows for the identification of needs and the modification and adjustment of the programme and the delivery method as appropriate'* (p.11). With an aim to incorporating a culture of continuous improvement across FET provision, programme monitoring, and review may be separated into two distinct areas as follow:

- FET wide review of programmes and modules
- Centre-based monitoring and review of programmes

#### FET Wide Review of Programmes and Modules

All LMETB validated programme and module descriptors are available to FET teaching staff on the [FET Awards Portal](#), hosted on the LMETB website. Access to the portal is password protected and is managed by the QA Office. In 2021, the QA Office initiated a review of FET centre course offerings, with a view to ensuring alignment of centre validation requirements. Liaison with QQI to enable resolving of any issues which may be identified will be effected having been considered by LMETB's QA governance Structures.

There is a recognition from QQI that the Common Awards System (CAS) awards used by the FET sector is due for a considered review and modules/awards will require updating to ensure that they remain relevant and fit for purpose. A sectoral response from ETBs may result in LMETB's participation in a national initiative for a provider-led collaborative review of the most frequently used QQI awards. If re-validation of awards is necessary, consultation with FET practitioners, external stakeholders, such as industry experts or sectoral employers, and learners will be a necessary part of the process. It is envisioned that programme review will become an integral part of LMETB's quality improvement planning, and it will be necessary to have additional and significant numbers of FET staff trained in programme development and validation. A good starting point for formal review processes will be the annual review of the new Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care (Level 6) necessitated under LMETB's differential validation status with QQI.

### Centre-based Monitoring and Review of Programmes

FET Leaders are responsible for the ongoing monitoring, regular review, and periodic evaluation of the provision in their centre in order to ensure that both the centre programmes and delivery methods remain appropriate and engender a supportive and effective learning environment.

The centre review process is informed by data gathered from:

- Authentication processes (EA reports, RAP meetings)
- Learner data around retention, certification, outcomes etc.
- Regular meetings with teaching staff
- Course reviews and feedback from learners during and at the end of programme delivery.

Currently, while FET centres may report to FET SMT on the outcomes from their centre reviews, there is no documented process in place to capture this information on a consistent basis for all FET provision and to ensure its communication to the QA Office or QA governance structures. FET Leaders are familiar with the need to liaise with their direct line manager in the FET SMT in relation to suggesting programme change. As part of the annual Funding Allocation Request (FAR) process, which is used to provide SOLAS with a detailed overview of current and planned activities in priority areas at the end of the calendar year, FET centres apply to FET SMT if they wish to offer a new LMETB validated QQI major award. Once LMETB's FET Programme Review Procedures are in place, if there is a consequence for overall QA policy or programme structure which arises in centre reviews, centres shall be obliged to report back via the process outlined in the Programme Review Procedures. It is LMETB's intention to build on the good practices established during the self-evaluation process to develop a consistent approach to centre-based reviews. Such a process will refer to QQI's guidance around programme monitoring and review in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guideline and will incorporate a checklist tool, similar to the draft plan detailed below, to ascertain the following:

*Programme Review Checklist - Draft:*

Programme achieves the objectives set for it and responds to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learner workload has been reviewed, particularly, in relation to assessment scheduling and possibilities for assessment integration?	<input type="checkbox"/>
The effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners has been reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have learner retention, progression and completion rates been consulted?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the following been reviewed for the programme?	
· Delivery modes	<input type="checkbox"/>
· Teaching and learning methods	<input type="checkbox"/>
· Learning supports and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
· Information provided to learners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have third party, industry, or other stakeholders relevant to the programme been consulted in relation to the relevancy of programme content?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have relevant quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme been reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4.2.2: EVALUATION****What is Working**

- Programme Review – there appears to be good awareness among FET staff around participating in centre-based course reviews. 87% of FET teaching staff and 92% of FET Leaders agreed with the statement that ‘Course Review and Planning’ was a standing item on staff meeting agendas. One PLC Deputy Principal commented *‘programmes are reviewed at department meetings and decisions made on modifying programmes in consultation with the principal.....informed by QA surveys, EA reports, industry requirements, etc’*. A Youthreach Coordinator commented, *‘learner feedback is assessed during the two-day CEIP process..... programmes/supports are modified in accordance with action plan’*. An example of good practice in making programme review a visible process from one of LMETB’s PLC colleges is detailed in the next table:

*Outline of Programme Review Process in LMETB PLC College:*

1	Course coordinators evaluate their courses in May every year and this involves student feedback and a review of outcomes. Teachers conduct a similar review of module delivery which also involves student feedback and review of outcomes.
2	The college also conducts an overall programme evaluation with coordinators and teachers every year. All courses are evaluated on a five-year rotating basis. Programme reviews are very in-depth and are based on previous reviews by teachers and coordinators, EA reports, student feedback, outcomes and outputs, and input from industry in the form of a programme evaluator which is external to the college.
3	Course review by coordinators, module reviews by teachers, and overall programme reviews are shared with staff and improvement plans drawn up. These plans are acted upon by teachers, coordinators, and senior management. Meetings would also be scheduled to facilitate all of the above.
4	Programmes change in light of new skills requirements and skills gaps requirements in the labour market, or if new progression routes to Further Education /Higher Education arise. Sometimes programmes do not meet the same objectives of employment or progression that has existed in the past. Modification or retirement of obsolete programmes is necessary. Improvement plans that have been drawn up and are evidence-based form the basis of modification of a programme where necessary.
5	Programme reviews also inform planning for new courses in the following year.

- Consultation on programme review – Overall, results from the staff surveys and FET centre focus group sessions have indicated that centres endeavour to involve various stakeholders in programme and course reviews. The table below highlights some key comments made in the focus groups and the type of stakeholder engagement these comments refer to:

Comment from FET Leaders in FET Centre Focus Groups	Type of Stakeholder Engagement Referred to:
'modifications identified can be introduced to the next upcoming course.....staff would link in with employers from the relevant sector, e.g., introducing new modules to existing courses to allow the learner to become more employable'	Teaching Staff
'we recommend getting feedback from learners as to why they didn't turn up for a course, we developed a survey using Microsoft Forms and texted or emailed them through FETCH, we looked at, for example, varying the times the classes take place, as some people said current times offered didn't suit them.'	Learners
'we take a lot of feedback from graduates – we use the information for case studies and media interviews. Also, the Graduate Association in the college informs practice, provision, and PR of courses. Linking in to HEIs and Access Officers.... informs course provision.... HEI views are always taken into consideration e.g., replace modules that are no longer relevant'	Past Learners External Stakeholders
'our Healthcare Support course was modified in response to needs in Nursing Homes during COVID, some modules were added on as per advice received from employers in this sector'	Employers

- Use of data to inform programme review – Several centres refer to the use of data to inform programme review. *'Looking at data also works – how many conversions you get with awards, how many dropouts, we track retention rates....at the end of the year we analyse, how many full awards, minor awards or no awards, this process does inform planning for the following year'* (PLC Deputy Principal). Some centres use 'exit forms' when a learner leaves a course to help the centre understand why the learner left, if the centre could have done anything differently or if the course was not meeting expectations.

### What Needs Improving

- Moving forward, it is the intention of LMETB to put in place a formal process to:
  - o Amend module descriptors: LMETB currently does not have a systematic process in place for module reviews. A process needs to be developed so that content and assessment activities may be updated in modules where teachers have identified

errors or have concerns that content has become out-dated or irrelevant. The need for a formalised approach for module update was commented upon by several respondents in the FET centre focus group sessions. *'some modules are so out of date', 'some employers are feeding back that modules are out of date'*. The QA Office will have a role in updating and re-circulating revised module descriptors once a module review process is formalised. Requests for updates are currently communicated at centre level, through RAP meetings or directly to the QA Officer. A consistent process involving an application (via a standardised form) to the QA Office followed by consideration by the Programme Development, Review and Evaluation sub-committee will be implemented. Amendments, if approved, will be communicated to all FET provision via the FET QA MS Teams site and module descriptors on the FET Awards portal will be updated. Currently, where issues are identified in individual AISs, it is communicated to the Training Standards Officer (TSO). The request is reviewed and where necessary the document is updated. The process entails the engagement of a Subject Matter Expert (SME) and a peer review of the finalised draft. Recently, very few changes have been made to AIS' as it is LMETB's intention to transition to locally devised assessments (LDAs) over the next few years, as part of a move to a single, integrated QA system across FET provision.

- o Approve programme changes: FET centres may wish, in response to centre-based programme review, to:
  - Change the structure of a validated programme by adding a module
  - Access a validated programme for which they are not currently approved.

After approval by the QAGMC of LMETB's proposed Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedures, the application process for centres to make programme changes will be through the Programme Approval Request (PR1) form. Section 2.5 gives more information on this proposed process.

- While FET centres have local programme review processes in place and the majority of FET staff recognise that course review and planning is discussed at staff meetings, it is disappointing that only 57% of FET teaching staff, when surveyed, reported that they have the opportunity to input into centre operations, course review and planning. It is hoped that when the planned formalised approach to centre-based reviews is in place and consistently implemented, FET teachers will have a formal mechanism with which to input into centre



review processes.

- The issue of internal competition in course delivery between different FET centres was raised. One quote summed up the issue succinctly, *'we are in competition with each other when advertising courses.... maybe we need to look more at how not to duplicate courses in some geographical areas and how we can improve our offerings to the public....to create a more coordinated offering. Working together as a FET service as opposed to looking at the individual services'* (FET Leader). While the FAR process each year means that FET SMT receive an overview of FET courses across all provision, it is hoped that the more formal process and associated governance around the proposed Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedures will help to alleviate overlap in course offerings in similar locations.

#### 4.2.3: CONCLUSIONS

##### Identified actions

- Establish a formal process for the review of module descriptors to allow content to be updated and kept relevant.
- Develop and implement an LMETB FET Programme Review Procedure so as to ensure a documented and formalised approach to centre-based programme review. This may involve annual focus group sessions led by the QA Office and the use of programme review tools such as the Programme Review Checklist mentioned in section 4.2.2.
- Encourage FET staff to take part in up-skilling opportunities in programme development and validation in order to ensure a critical mass of staff are sufficiently competent in this area once regular, national programme validation becomes a feature in FET provision across the sector. In addition, it is envisioned that staff will be recruited in the area of programme development and validation in 2022.

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

### 4.3.1 DESCRIPTION – OVERVIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL THIRD PARTIES

One of LMETB's strategic priorities is to work in partnership with key stakeholders in the Louth and Meath region and at national level. The FET Service has formed solid working relationships with many statutory and non-statutory stakeholders, and with a variety of employers and community and voluntary groups to deliver various community-based programmes.

LMETB is committed to exercising due diligence in initiating partnerships with third parties to support or enhance delivery of its FET programmes across the region. Every effort is made to minimise any potential associated risk to the reputation of LMETB and to the integrity and quality of its programmes, services, and standards.

LMETB engages with external third parties in the delivery and accreditation of training in the following ways:

#### A) Awarding Bodies

LMETB engages and maintains close links with both National and International awarding bodies and institutions including:

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Road Safety Authority (RSA)
State Examinations Commission (SEC)	Cambridge English Language Assessment
International Therapy Examination Council (ITEC)	Life Insurance Association of Ireland
International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)	Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)
Microsoft	Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC)
City & Guilds	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

#### B) Contracted Training Provision

Contracted training, on behalf of LMETB, is delivered through a formal Framework Agreement (see further details in Appendix 4a). These second providers are integral to the ability of LMETB FET provision to respond to identified training needs as the companies engaged for contracted

training provide a range of flexible and responsive training programmes in instances where LMETB does not have the staffing allocation or expertise to deliver from within its existing staffing structures. Contracted training providers are engaged by LMETB to deliver FET-funded courses in external locations throughout Co. Louth and Co. Meath and in the RSTC itself. The role of LMETB's Contracted Training team involves contracting with, monitoring and evaluating the contracted training company's effectiveness in respect of the operation of the contract. These contracts or agreements are not currently published.

### C) Community-Based Provision

LMETB collaborates with a wide range of community and voluntary organisations by identifying the social, economic, and educational needs of local communities, and delivering community-based provision in response. LMETB's provision of training and related services allows learners in these communities, typically characterised by social/geographical/economic disadvantage, to access accredited certification and personal development opportunities. Such interventions may create access pathways through FET into the labour market or educational progression opportunities. Examples of community-based provision in LMETB include: Local Training Initiatives (LTIs); the Community Training Centre (CTC) *Ógra Dún Dealgan*; and Specialist Training Provision (STP), *the National Learning Network*. A list of LMETB's community-based provision is found at Appendix 4(b). In seeking funding from LMETB for provision in their areas, Community Training Partners are required to provide a labour market analysis to support the provision of the training need.

Governance arrangements for community-based provision, such as LTIs, CTCs and STPs, are outlined in the respective National Operating Standards documentation which is unique to each programme. (See Appendix 4(c) for more details on these arrangements).

### Monitoring Quality between the second providers and LMETB/ RSTC

LMETB maintains a documented approach to QA which formalises the following relationships.

- Acting as a second provider for SOLAS (Craft Apprenticeships)
- Managing its relationships with second providers
- Acting as a Collaborating Provider for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship.

LMETB's collaborative provision with second providers is governed by the operating guidelines and procedures from the legacy Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS). Furthermore, in the case of the LTIs, LMETB has '*agreements to collaborate*' in place with each LTI, which set out the terms and conditions for the operation of these agreements. All documents/procedures formalise the transparency and accountability of these relationships and these are regularly reviewed as required by both the second provider and LMETB. LMETB maintains good governance of these relationships by ensuring the reduction of potential risks associated with the use of second providers. See Appendix 4(d) for an outline of the screening questioning used by the Community Services team to manage the risks associated with engaging a second provider. See Appendix 4(e) for more details on the application/review process used by the Community Services team to evaluate an application to become or remain a community/voluntary-based second provider.

### QA Arrangements

In working with second providers, the responsibility for QA and for the programme remains with LMETB as the first provider. The learners are registered as LMETB learners, even if the programme is delivered and assessed by the second provider. The allocation of QA responsibilities between the first and second provider is defined in the contractual arrangements. These collaborations are subject to monitoring and review to ensure compliance with programme specifications, quality assurance and certification standards.

Contracted trainers, when delivering training on behalf of LMETB, do so under the TQAS's legacy quality assurance policies and procedures. The internal verification process is undertaken by the contracted trainer. The Training Standard Office (TSO) appoints an EA from the National EA Directory. Results are uploaded to QQI by the TSO via the RCCRS. For community-based provision, internal verification is undertaken by the provider, all results are reviewed by the RAP and all resultant certificates are requested by the TSO. As noted here, FET provision by second providers continues to operate to some degree to the requirements set out under the TQAS legacy quality assurance policies and procedures. However, these arrangements are gradually being replaced as LMETB moves towards an integrated QA framework in which uniform FET wide QA policies and procedures will be applied.

The Community Training Centre and the National Learning Network (NLN) are second providers with devolved QA responsibility who work with LMETB in delivering a range of FET programmes at various NFQ levels. A central aspect of the QA role performed by the TSO within the RSTC is the undertaking of monitoring visits/certification audits of assessment results in courses provided by these organisations. Risks, if identified, relating to the assessment process are brought to the attention of the RSTC management who deal with the specific issue in conjunction with the TSO and second provider management, devising an action plan to address the risk. An overview of the arrangements for monitoring and review with external parties is given in Appendix 4f.

LMETB, through Training Services, has an MOU with SOLAS for the governance and management of quality-assured craft apprenticeship provision in the region, for whom it acts as a second provider. In this regard, the SOLAS Apprenticeship Guidelines define LMETB's support activities for employers and apprentices participating on an apprenticeship programme. The provision of craft apprenticeship programmes is subject to annual independent monitoring by LMETB Senior Training Advisors (SOLAS Authorised Officers), and by the SOLAS-based Quality Assurance Services (QAS) unit. Quality assurance arrangements for post-2016 Apprenticeships are agreed with the coordinating provider for the particular apprenticeship, for example, for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship the agreement is with LCETB.

### Impact of LMETB FET Provision Within the Louth Meath Region

From a Contracted Training point of view, the RSTC maintains ongoing communications with both DSP and with employers through the Employer Engagement Team in order to obtain necessary feedback which will influence the planning of provision. Feedback is also provided by LMETB Senior Training Advisors, which assists management in establishing the training and skills needs in the region and addressing areas whether there are gaps in provision.

For the Community Training Section of the RSTC, the following processes inform the evaluation of the impact of this section within the region:

- Implementation of a mid-year and end-of-year review and evaluation of certification results, placement outcomes and progression of learners.
- Recording of Certification and Placement outcomes on PLSS, which informs the review process with community partners and other stakeholders.
- Review and application of feedback from LMETB Management Strategy Information Sessions

and from learners and other stakeholders (Regional Skills Fora/ DSP/HSE/Garda Siochana/ JLO's/Probation Service/Addiction Treatment Centres).

- Collaboration with community-based services and boards of management.

### Other External Relationships

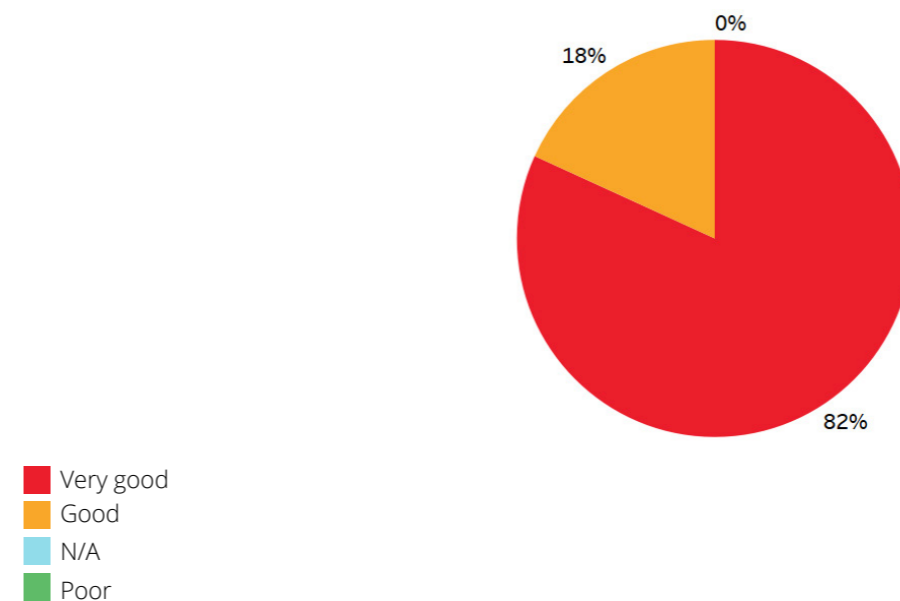
LMETB FET Service has formed solid working relationships with many statutory and non-statutory agencies, stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, and with a variety of employers, voluntary providers and community groups. A full description of these collaborations and partnerships is available at Appendix 3.

## 4.3.2 EVALUATION

### What is Working

- Community-Based Provision - Feedback from external stakeholders in relation to LMETB's community-based provision was very positive, with 100% of external stakeholders surveyed strongly agreeing (82%) or agreeing (18%) with the statement: *"I would recommend LMETB to another group/organisation in my community."* 82% of respondents rated LMETB's FET provision and services as very good.

How would you rate your experience of LMETB's FET provision and services?



The comments below from community-based stakeholders highlight the value of the support given by LMETB, in enabling community-based access to learning, as well as highlighting the excellence of FET staff and services in collaborative partnerships which benefit these organisations:

*"LMETB have always been very accommodating to the Traveller culture and has adapted many courses to allow participation from the Traveller community."*

*"We have built up a great relationship with LMETB over the years, they have been very supportive to our organisation here at local level giving us the opportunity to run courses we would never be able to run without their support and guidance."*

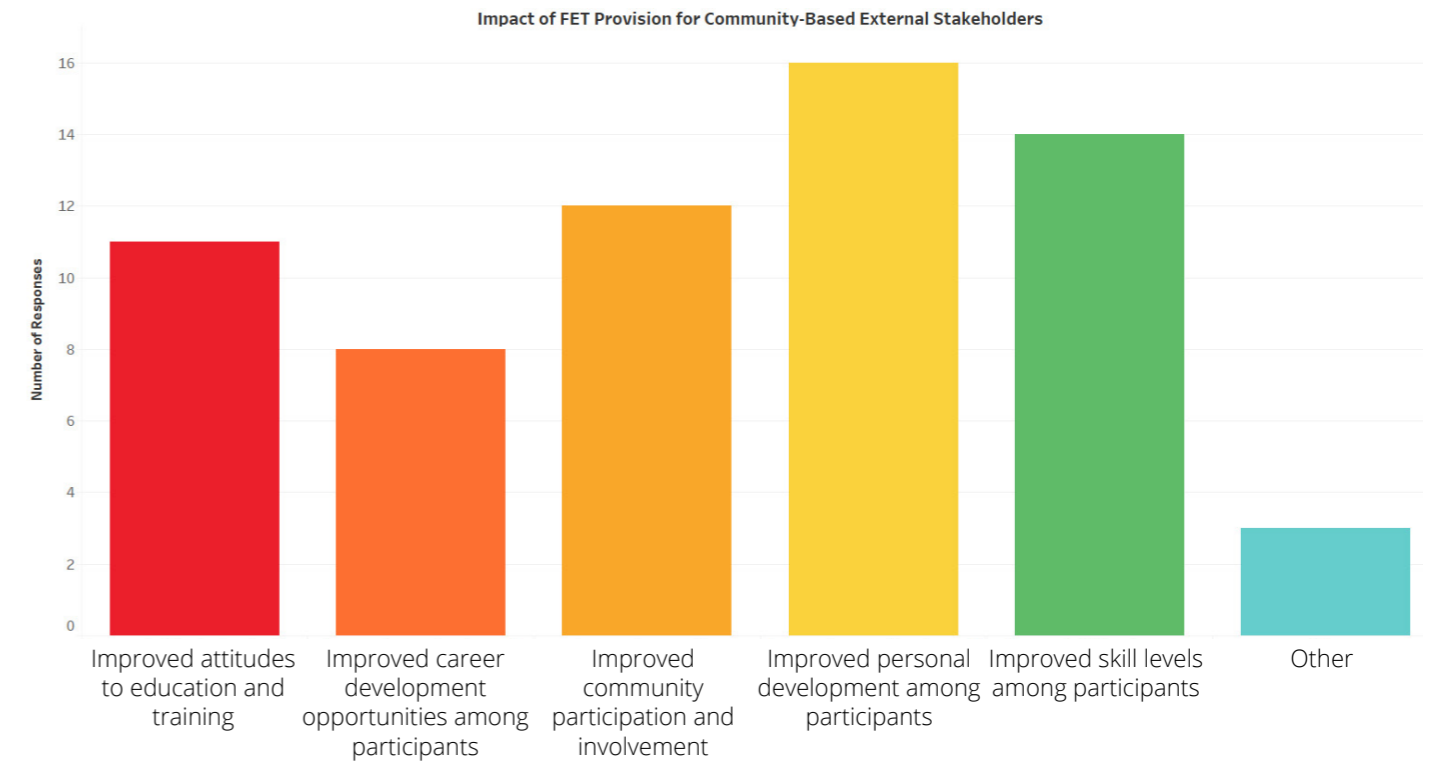
*'Malta Services has been allocated tutors through LMETB FET Co-Operation hours for many years, which has been a great resource to our service, it allows our learners to learn at a slower pace, and many have achieved certification through their dedication and that of the tutors.'*

*"I appreciate the staff working with LMETB who are always willing to go the extra step to support my clients and help me to gain a better understanding of the courses and supports so I can continue to make appropriate referrals and signpost clients."*

*'We hope to continue with the positive relationships that have been established with Navan and Trim Youthreach services'*

*'Levels of communication between LMETB and other state agencies has been a huge help to DSP in directing clients, in need of wide-ranging support, to begin to access an educational journey, which will stand to them in future employment' (DSP Case Officer)*

The figure below shows the impact of FET provision for community-based external stakeholders:



- Impact of LMETB FET in local communities - When LMETB's FET provision was transferred online during emergency remote learning imposed by COVID-19, participation in FET courses ensured social contact for many learners during this time. Feedback from the FET Learner Forum report and the external stakeholders' survey highlighted that online learning helped combat feelings of isolation within communities during this time.

*"I would have had little interaction or have spoken to anyone over the last five months if I had not had online classes – online courses are great for people's wellbeing."*

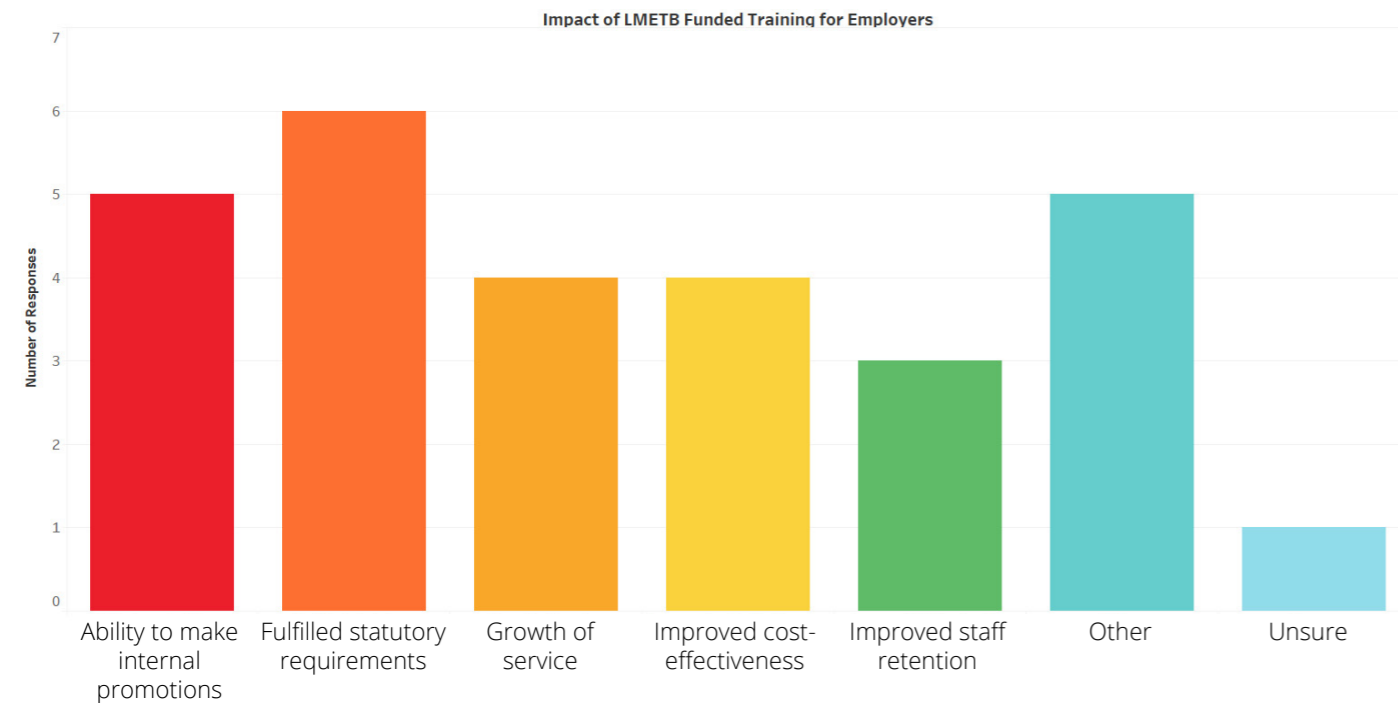
*'I introduced Zoom to my local Irish Countrywomen's Association, it's great for keeping in touch especially with older people, and we have been keeping in touch that way for the last 12 months. Me doing these courses has been really positive in our group.'*

*'LMETB is a lifeline for our group, and we have availed of numerous courses over the years. We are mostly an elderly group and especially during Covid restrictions the online aspect was hugely helpful.'*

- Employer Engagement - 100% of respondents to the Employer Survey strongly agreed that *"In my interactions with LMETB representatives, I have found them to be professional, knowledgeable."* *'LMETB delivers quality education and training programmes that are relevant and current for my group/ org etc. '*



- In terms of the impact of LMETB FET provision in the business community, 73% of employers in the LMETB survey agreed with the statement ‘Employees that have completed skills training with LMETB have found the training beneficial to their role’. The chart below clearly highlights some of the impacts that LMETB funded training has had across the employers who responded to the survey.



- When surveyed, the employers were also asked a number of questions around their opinion of various aspects of their interaction with LMETB. The table below summarises the very positive responses received.

Employer Response	Employer Agreement with the response
<i>LMETB delivers quality education and training programmes which are relevant and current for my employees' needs.</i>	82%
<i>The content of training delivered is up to date</i>	100%
<i>As an employer, I have found engagements with LMETB staff to discuss or implement employee development initiatives as being beneficial to my company.</i>	82%
<i>LMETB shows flexibility to meet my needs</i>	82%
<i>I am satisfied with LMETB teachers/trainers' skills and experience of my industry.</i>	82%
<i>In my interactions with LMETB representatives, I have found them to be professional, knowledgeable</i>	100%

- LMETB maintains systematic partnerships with appropriate stakeholder groups and agencies with a view to the development of FET provision. See Appendix 2(o) detailing a case study of the establishment of Education and Training Networks in Louth and Meath by LMETB's Adult Educational Guidance Service. The case study includes comments from external stakeholders on the value of the Education and Training Networks for their organisations and their clients.
- LMETB has established an Audit and Risk Committee to maintain organisation-wide risk registers to safeguard against the failure of control measures or the emergence of risk, particularly where the use of financial resources is at stake.

### What Needs Improving

- When asked in the stakeholders' survey "What recommendations would you suggest, to improve collaboration between external stakeholders/your organisation and LMETB in the future?", some interesting feedback was received which indicates that LMETB should improve some aspects of its provision of public information and its collaboration with community-based organisations.
  - 'The collaboration could be better. Sometimes it seems like the LMETB are "just always telling what to do."*
  - 'We would like regular newsletters with course updates or posters to put in our waiting rooms.'*
- Some challenges exist in regard to the oversight, monitoring, and review of relationships with external/ third parties, as outlined below:
  - COVID-19 restrictions and limited staff resources have meant that ongoing monitoring and reporting through onsite visits/audits of second providers and collaborating providers has proven challenging.
  - The effective development of FET provision requires collaboration with other organisations, agencies and groups operating within the sector. Managing such collaborations is problematic given the limited staffing capacity associated within LMETB for programme development and in the QA Office.
  - Contracted Training Services is dependent on a limited number of contractors and this represents a significant issue to LMETB in terms of its responsiveness to developing/delivering programmes where a skills deficit exists, as the expertise may not be available under the current framework. Managing employer expectations of LMETB and aligning these expectations to LMETB's ability to

respond can be problematic within the resource framework available to the organisation

- A single set of policies, procedures and practices should operate across LMETB, quality assuring all programme and services at provider level. All QA arrangements with other awarding bodies need to be incorporated within this single over-arching set of policies, procedures, and practices. Furthermore, LMETB FET should explore the possibility of setting up super-centre type arrangements with specific certification bodies e.g. City and Guilds. Within LMETB FET there are various FET centres providing the same certification which means there are a number of quality assurance agreements/approvals required for the same certification, resulting in higher fees and duplication of administration work in seeking approval and managing separate verification processes.
- Given the important requirement to respond to employer needs in a timely manner, the length of time it can take to secure approval to deliver programmes from other certification providers can be time consuming and as such is a threat to LMETB's perceived responsiveness to employer needs.

### 4.3.3 CONCLUSION

#### Identified Actions

- LMETB's needs to further refine its draft LMETB Quality Assurance Guidelines for engaging with External Training providers. [Draft LMETB Guidelines for engaging with an External Training Provider](#) set out, in draft format, the provisions for due diligence regarding: Legal status; reputation/standing; compliance/governance; structural requirements; and Resource/financial sustainability of all parties. A more formal ETB-wide procedural approach will enhance control measures within these relationships. Oversight of these external quality assurance arrangement should sit within the remit of the LMETB QA Office and with the LMETB QA governance arrangements.
- A formal schedule of programme evaluation review needs to be implemented with second providers which will incorporate a review of curriculum employed across each programme.
- Review and update current referral protocol/process between LMETB and DSP.
- Investment in additional staff in the areas of QA and programme development in LMETB.

# Section 5

## Conclusion



## CONCLUSION

The extensive process of consultation and reflection undertaken for the compilation of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) has provided LMETB's FET provision with an opportunity to:

Complete a Provider Profile reflecting the broad scope of LMETB's FET activities. The profile, along with the SER, demonstrates the evolving and improving nature of the quality assurance arrangements underpinning LMETB FET.

Evidence the wide-ranging attributes of LMETB'S FET provision. The consultation processes have reflected high levels of satisfaction across all stakeholders, particularly with our learners.

Review the effectiveness, appropriateness and completeness of the processes, procedures and systems that have been developed and implemented for the governance and management of quality assurance within LMETB.

Reflect on how effectively LMETB assures and enhances the quality of teaching and learning.

Evaluate how QA activities support the achievement of LMETB's strategic goals.

Identify key strengths and weaknesses of the overall emerging FET QA integrated system and make key recommendations under each thematic area on improving their implementation and further development.

Make the integration of a single integrated QA system a strategic priority. The requirement to set up and implement new QA governance and management structures, as required by the QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines, has been re-energised by the SER process. It has offered a unique opportunity to both measure the progress of the new FET-wide approach to QA governance and management structures, and, to facilitate the further embedding of an integrated, overarching, single QA system.

The SER process was a significant undertaking for the AEOs, the QA Office and the FET Support Team (TEL Officer and PLD/Communications Officer) and was completed in a very challenging environment with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meeting the requirement to obtain input from a wide range of stakeholders, whilst also ensuring the continuation of supports to FET provision and the implementation of new quality improvements covering policies, process and procedures, entailed significant and sustained efforts from all involved. The findings of the report have been reinforced through the feedback gathered from the consultation processes conducted over the past year. These findings have enabled the organisation to evidence areas of strength, good practice, and innovation. Throughout this report the voices of the learner, staff, centre management and key stakeholders are clearly represented.

The feedback gained in the compilation of this Self-Evaluation Report has provided insights into organisation-wide approaches to quality, and the distance which LMETB FET has travelled and needs to travel in respect of the overall effectiveness of our QA system. It has also provided the opportunity to openly identify areas for improvement, any gaps in our current systems and the actions still required to be undertaken. LMETB's SMT is committed to focusing on and addressing the areas for improvement identified in the review.

### Key findings of the Self-Evaluation process include:

The commitment of FET staff across all provision in ensuring a quality, learner-centred FET experience is high and is demonstrated by the willingness to embrace new programmatic approaches, technologies, pedagogies and learner support methodologies.

Recent significant progress in employer engagement and its strategic approach is paying dividends in terms of employers and their staff increasingly availing of FET learning opportunities.

In a relatively short period of time, management, staff, learners, and other stakeholders are beginning to see the benefits of moving from a centre-based quality assurance system to a provider-based system, which is gradually replacing legacy systems. Having a common approach to the governance and management of quality in terms of structures, policies and procedures is effecting these positive changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought these procedures and governance structures around quality sharply into focus. The flexible ways in which our FET centres, staff and learners were supported to ensure the integrity of the assessment process demonstrates the strengths of our existing governance structures, practices, and staff. The FET service/QA Office's timely response in creating contingency plans, adapting policies and procedures for alternative assessment of learners and quality assuring work experience placements during the pandemic further demonstrates its responsiveness and resilience in the face of ongoing external exigences.



The SER exercise will usefully inform our strategic response and feed directly into the implementation of the LMETB Strategy Statement 2022 to 2026, as well as driving learning and actions associated with the next update of LMETB's Quality Improvement Plan. Feedback to the SER report from the QQI-appointed External Panel and LMETB stakeholders will be considered by the QAGMC and a detailed action plan will be implemented to ensure that the recommendations are acted upon.

### Key recommendations include:

Continued development of the quality culture through further development of policies and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement.

LMETB needs to resource, to a greater degree, a highly visible Quality Assurance Office supporting FET provision. The support available to date from having a dedicated QA Officer, FET Support Team and the Training Standards Office has led to a greater degree of consistency and focus on the continuation of the process to phase out the legacy QA systems and on improving the culture of quality in the organisation.

TEL is now a key strength of LMETB but will benefit from the addition of a dedicated Data Analytics Officer as part of the QA team. The use of data and information to support, plan, monitor, review and inform FET provision is an area that needs to be enhanced.

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, has pointed to a future which will most likely include blended or online learning as a mainstay of provision. This will have implications for LMETB's programme development capacity in terms of the validation of new and existing programmes and the degree to which they are required to be blended. This effectively highlights the need for a strategic, planned and policy-based approach to blended learning by LMETB FET.

Engage an external consultant to review the work of the QA governance sub-committees and their interlinkages with the QAGMC.

Ongoing review of QA procedures vis-à-vis their overall effectiveness through monitoring and review.

Need to devise and implement a regular review cycle encompassing a system of monitoring and evaluation, not just of awards and programmes but also of the QA system itself. Need for further evaluations on an annual basis to systematically capture and review feedback, best practice etc, and enhancements taking place. The methodologies of engagement associated with the SER should continue to be utilised.

The data obtained from the SER will also help inform programme and course review and this data, supported by the qualitative information gained from the wider stakeholder consultation, will allow the FET service to continue to grow strategically in an informed manner.

Improve the level and direction of quality reporting to support evidence-based decisions.

Enhance the learner voice/learner representation.

Supports for the development of teaching, learning and assessment, and programme development, such as the integration of inclusive educational practices such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in supporting the diverse needs of our learners.

Revise and improve policies and procedures, for example, the Public Information Policy in light of an LMETB FET Marketing & Branding Strategy, as well as an RPL Policy, amongst others.

LMETB gratefully acknowledges the work of the members of the Self-Evaluation Steering Group and the QAGMC in guiding and supporting this evaluation. LMETB thanks the learners, staff, and external stakeholders, for their engagement with the process and their constructive and valuable feedback. We look forward to implementing the actions of the SER and meeting with the External Review Panel. Any recommendations received from the External Review Panel will be included in the LMETB FET QA Action Plan.

## LMETB Action Plan Based on Actions Identified from the Review Objectives in the Self-Evaluation Report:

Objective 1 - Governance and Management of Quality	
Short Term Actions (6-9 months)	Medium Term Actions (9-18 months)
Promotion and awareness building of LMETB Strategy Statement 2022-2026	Development and implementation of LMETB's next SPA with SOLAS
Development of an LMETB FET Strategy	Ensure consistent implementation of teacher induction processes across FET including significant input in relation to QA processes and procedures
Increase staff resourcing in FET Quality Assurance Office	Aim to reduce 'QA jargon' in QA communications
Increase learner representation in QA governance structures	Development of a PLD Strategy – include set criteria and application processes for PLD requests
Increase external stakeholder representation in QA governance structures	Review of recruitment processes for FET teachers and development of a part-time tutor panel for FET
Develop a Learner Handbook template, common to all FET provision, to help support learners in their understanding of how assessment is quality assured and governed	Development of a quarterly QA Newsletter.
Develop a Staff Handbook with a dedicated QA section to complement a structured and consistent approach to teacher induction processes.	Invest in the development of a LMETB FET marketing strategy, including brand strategy and design, marketing and communications plan
Development of a coherent plan/timeline for new policy development and revision of existing policies and procedures	Review use of initial assessment tools for learners accessing FET programmes
Approval of Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedures	Development of a Blended Learning Policy and a separate Online Learning Policy

Appointment of Programme Development and Validation staff	Examine opportunities for expanding apprenticeship provision
Development of an RPL policy, in line with sectoral norms in this area	Recruitment and appointment of an external EA panel for use across all FET provision
Harmonisation of assessment processes across all FET provision	Increase staff resourcing in the area of data capture and analysis from PLSS, FARR and e-cohesion systems as well as relevant data from certification outcomes
Separation of the roles of the current PLD/Communications Officer and recruitment of a dedicated FET Communications Officer.	Development of a CRM database to capture information on how LMETB liaises with employers.
Engage an external consultant to review the work of the QA governance sub-committees and their interlinkages with the QAGMC.	

Objective 2 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	
Short Term Actions (6-9 months)	Medium Term Actions (9-18 months)
Revise and update the LMETB TEL Strategy 2017-19.	Continued investment in TEL to provide an optimum teaching and learning environment for learners
Development of a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy	Review disability services and learner supports across FET and identify areas for improvement
Ensure that communication around assessment expectations is consistent throughout FET provision (Learner & Staff Handbooks will aid in this process)	Encourage the further development of Communities of Practice among FET teaching staff

Update and revise the Learner Feedback Policy	Review processes across FET for work placement monitoring to ensure consistency
Embed the Adult Safeguarding in FET framework – a designated Safeguarding Officer to be assigned in each FET centre	Continue the move towards an integrated assessment framework in FET and transition from the use of AISs to LDAs
Ensure consistent implementation of the revised Reasonable Accommodation procedures across all FET provision	Develop an Assessment Bank for use across all FET provision

**Objective 3 – Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review**

Short Term Actions (6-9 months)	Medium Term Actions (9-18 months)
Establish a formal process, building on knowledge gained from the SER process, for annual centre-led self-evaluation.	Establish a consistent approach across FET provision to capture external stakeholder and employer feedback
Development of a Programme Review Procedure	Develop a programme review process for Second Providers
Implementation of a formal process to capture consolidated findings from FET centres' learner evaluation processes	
Continue to promote the embedding of a quality culture in LMETB FET, encouraging ownership of QA at centre level as well as at an organisational level by the QA Office	
Establish a formal process for the review and update of module descriptors to ensure their fitness for purpose	
Refine and approve draft document on QA Guidelines for Engaging with External Training Providers	
Review and update current referral protocol/process between LMETB and DSP.	

# Appendices





# APPENDIX 1: QQI INAUGURAL REVIEW INFORMATION SHEET FOR FET STAFF



## Inaugural Review of **QUALITY ASSURANCE** in LMETB

QQI's Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards commenced in 2021. LMETB is currently engaging in this process.

### AIM

The aim of the inaugural review is to provide an independent external evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the Quality Assurance procedures within LMETB.

### SCOPE

The scope of the Inaugural Review will be LMETB's Quality Assurance procedures within its Further Education and Training (FET) provision and related services.

The review will also include LMETB's engagement with other stakeholders, both locally and nationally, who it works with in the provision of FET programmes and related services.

### FOCUS

This inaugural review will focus on the implementation and effectiveness of Quality Assurance procedures in:

- Governance and management of quality
- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Self-evaluation, monitoring and review.

- Quality Assurance procedures
- identify perceived gaps in LMETB's internal Quality Assurance mechanisms and evaluate the planned measures to address them
- explore LMETB's achievements and innovations in the area of Quality Assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning.

The review will:

- examine the design and planning of LMETB's internal quality processes and their consistency with relevant guidelines for the sector
- evaluate the effectiveness of LMETB's internal

The review will seek to ascertain the extent to which LMETB has established arrangements to assure itself of quality in respect of all of its centres and provision.

### METHODOLOGY

In line with QQI's Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review, the methodology will be as follows:

1. Completion of a self-evaluation report by LMETB in December 2021. This report will comprise a reflective and critical evaluation with input from the members of the LMETB community, including learners, staff at all levels of the organisation and external stakeholders. Data from learner and staff surveys has already been collected in the summer term of 2021. Stakeholder surveys are currently being conducted. The self-evaluation report will outline how LMETB effectively assures and enhances the quality of its teaching, learning and service activities to support the achievement of its strategic goals.
2. Appointment by QQI of an external, independent expert team of peer reviewers who will carry out:
  - a. an external assessment of the self-evaluation report and related material
  - b. Engagement with key staff, learners and external stakeholders to explore and gather evidence about Quality Assurance in LMETB. This will be done via focused meetings and interviews with staff, learners and external stakeholders across all of FET in LMETB. This engagement will take place from 21st-25th March 2022.
3. Production and publication of a report by the review team, outlining findings and recommendations; and a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by LMETB.

### CRITERIA

The criteria against which the Inaugural review findings will be compared are LMETB's own mission and strategy, QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines and other relevant QQI policies and relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and Quality Assurance.

### OUTCOMES

A key intended outcome of the review is the stimulation of discourse on quality within LMETB through critical analysis and meaningful discussion. This will be reflected in the published self-evaluation report and carried through into discussions with the review team and follow-up.

The external review team will provide a draft review report in respect of LMETB to QQI. The report of the review team will set out its findings in relation to each of the objectives of the Quality Assurance review. It will also provide a general statement regarding the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance procedures in LMETB and their implementation. LMETB will be given a formal opportunity within the post-review timeline to check the factual accuracy

of the review report and will be invited to provide a formal response to the review report. The report and response will be approved by QQI and published.

Following publication of the individual report, LMETB will prepare and publish an action plan addressing the recommendations of the review report. The action plan will be followed up on by QQI within one year as part of routine monitoring processes.

In addition to each individual ETB review, a sectoral report team will be established which will provide reflections and observations at a sectoral level on quality assurance developments, challenges and opportunities. This report team will produce a separate sectoral report.

If you require further information on LMETB's participation in the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance, please email [qualityassurance@lmetb.ie](mailto:qualityassurance@lmetb.ie)



## APPENDIX 2(A)

### Case Study: QA requirements for course delivery

#### Introduction

The Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE), located in the Xerox Technology Park, Dundalk, was established by LMETB to address the training needs of the advanced manufacturing industry in Ireland. Manufacturing sectors such as precision engineering, pharma, food and drink and medical devices are undergoing a digital transformation driven by the adoption of industry 4.0 technologies. These changes are creating a need for companies and their employees to upskill to support the adoption of key technologies such as robotics, additive manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity etc. Adoption of new technologies is also generating new opportunities for apprentices and trainees to acquire these technical skills which are increasingly valued by industry.



AMTCE building in Xerox Technology Park, Dundalk

The AMTCE is addressing the needs of industry through the provision of high-quality training via flexible delivery mechanisms which include classroom, blended and online virtual classrooms. The centre will provide access to state-of-art equipment to ensure learners receive high quality hands-on experiential learning and skills training which is highly valued by employers. Reskilling and upskilling training opportunities for companies are supported under funding from SOLAS' Skills to Advance initiative.

From an operational perspective, the AMTCE leveraged, where appropriate, existing LMETB quality assurance processes and procedures. Building from the existing QA foundation, the AMTCE enhanced these processes to meet its operational needs by developing a top-down approach (review existing QA Policies and Procedures, implement as required in the AMTCE QA manual) and bottom-up approach (requirements from a learner perspective)



This case study examines exemplars of the QA materials developed from a learner perspective, using a simple 5W+1H approach to identify the relevant questions:

**Who?** Who is the Learner?

**What?** What information is required?

**When?** When will we contact the learner?

**Where?** Where will the information be sent?

**Why?** Why is this important?  
Is the AMTCE training offering different and if so, why?

**How?** How should the system be configured in order to address the various requirements identified above?

#### Who?

- The *who* refers to the learner and the corresponding priority of delivering a positive experience as they continue their lifelong learning journey. We also needed to identify the internal mechanism for dealing with dynamic training requests, such as “what programme” and “under what funding route.”

## What?

- What information is required to ensure the learner is well informed and able to approach the course in a confident manner (see Figure 2 below).
- What delivery channels must be supported to give learners access to the appropriate information about a course e.g., web, social media, print media etc.

## When?

- When will we contact the learner with all pertinent information regarding the course?

## Where?

- Where will the information be sent?
- Is email the most suitable communications channel for the learner?

## Why?

- Why is this important? Apart from the learner's initial experience of interacting with the AMTCE, we are also cognisant of the relevant quality and legal requirements, e.g. possible GDPR issues via the course orientation and completion of feedback forms.
- Why is the AMTCE different? Differentiation arises due to the temporal variability of courses run under the Skills to Advance initiative, which vary in duration from 0.5 to 5 days. Furthermore, training is conducted by contracted vendors and delivered through a variety of delivery modes such as online, virtual, blended or classroom. Thirdly, face to face locations for training can vary from in-centre, offsite locations such as hotels to company premises. Therefore, the AMTCE required a simple system which guaranteed receipt of learner feedback, which is integral to the AMTCE QA system.

Figure 1 outlines an internal flowchart detailing the process for assessing external training requests.

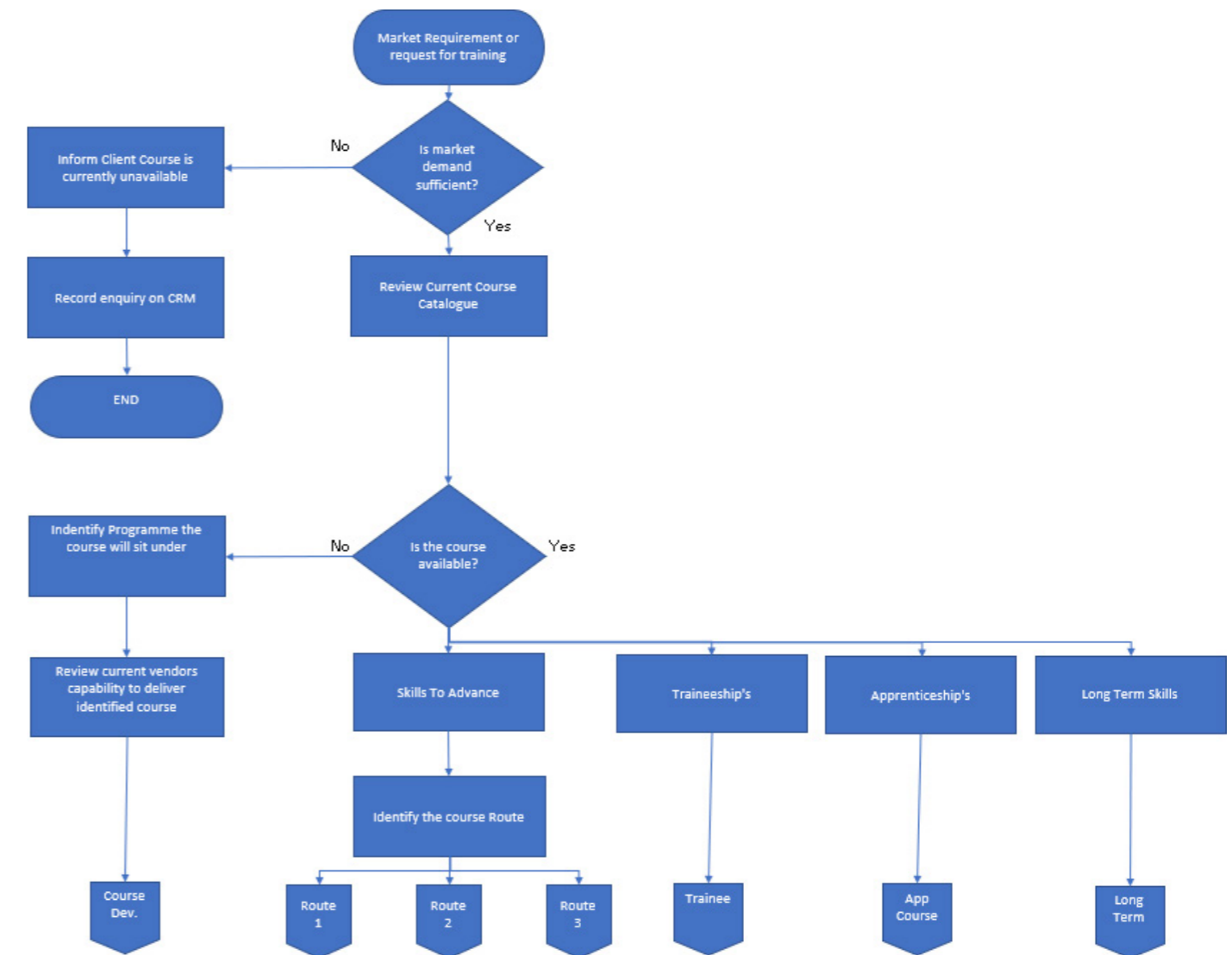


Figure 1

Figure 2 below shows the welcome letters for learners which were developed:

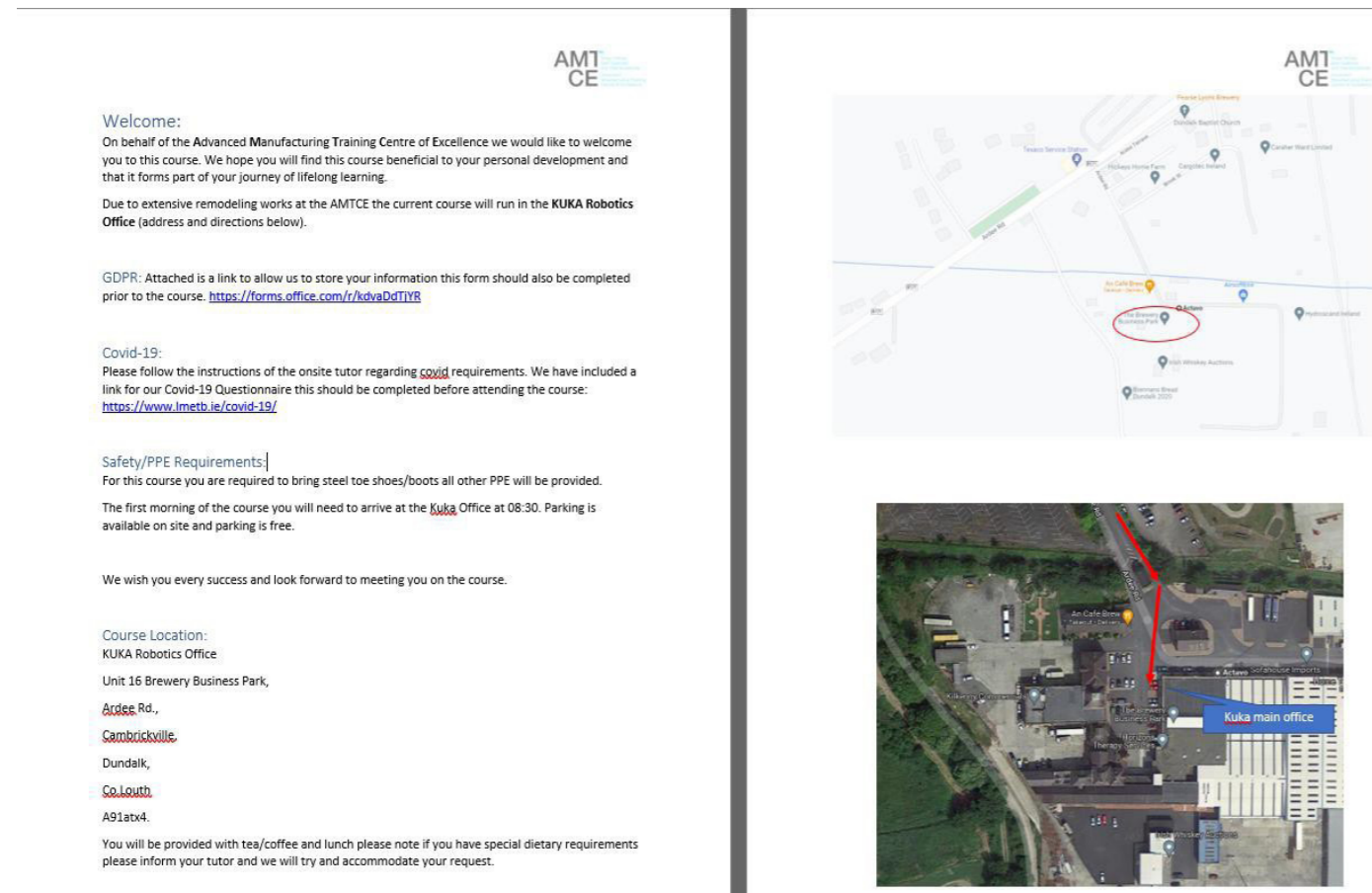


Figure 2

Figure 5 below shows the visualization of course feedback results:

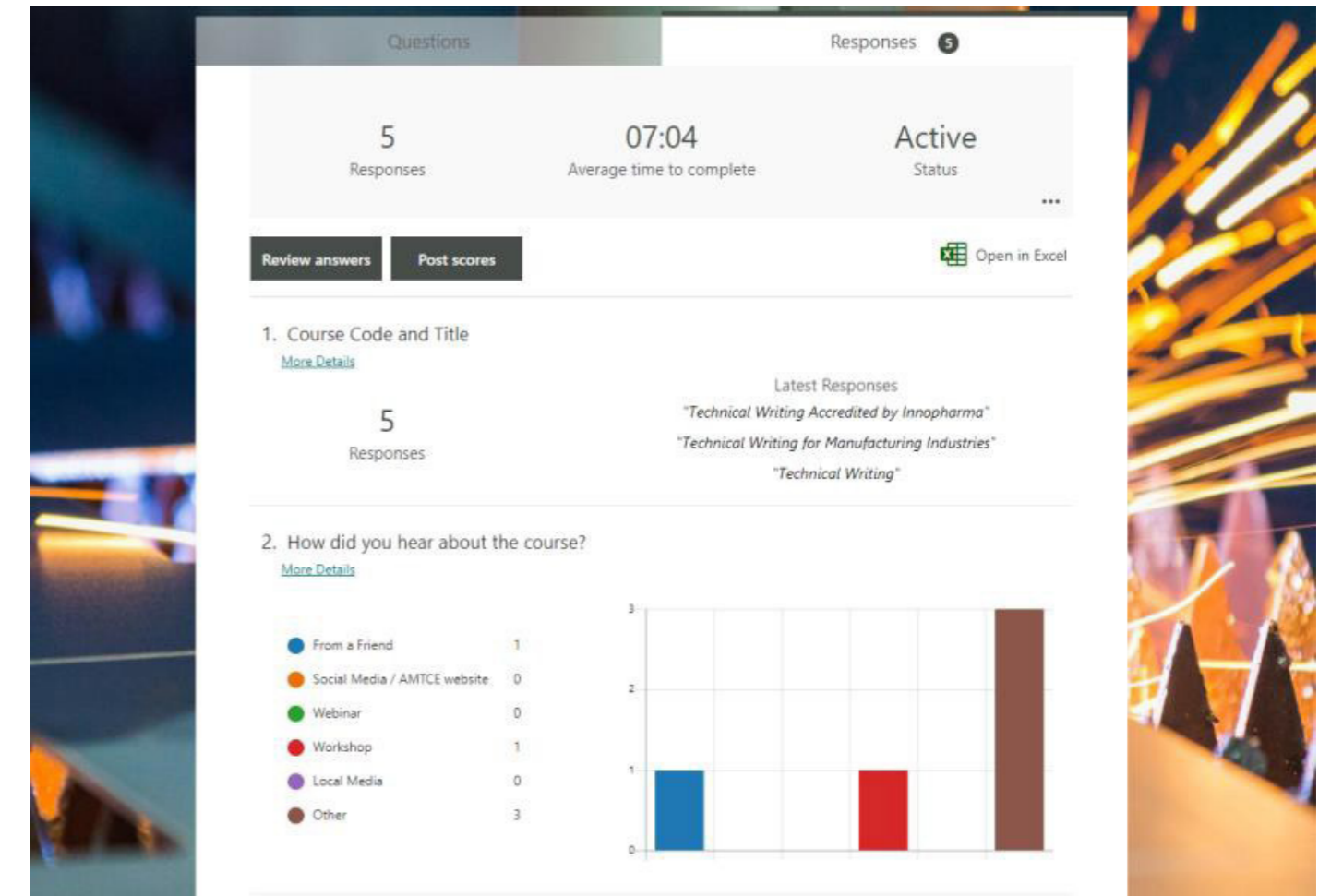


Figure 5

Figures 3 and 4 below shows the feedback forms which were developed for online courses, compatible with PC and mobile device:

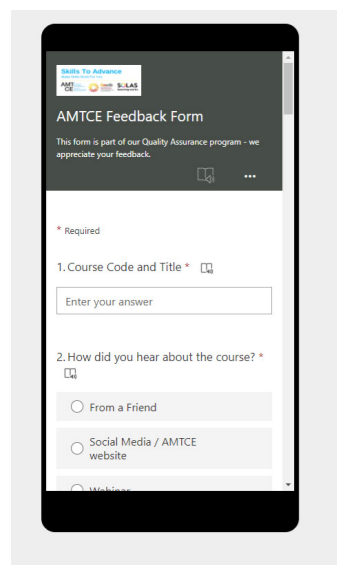


Figure 3

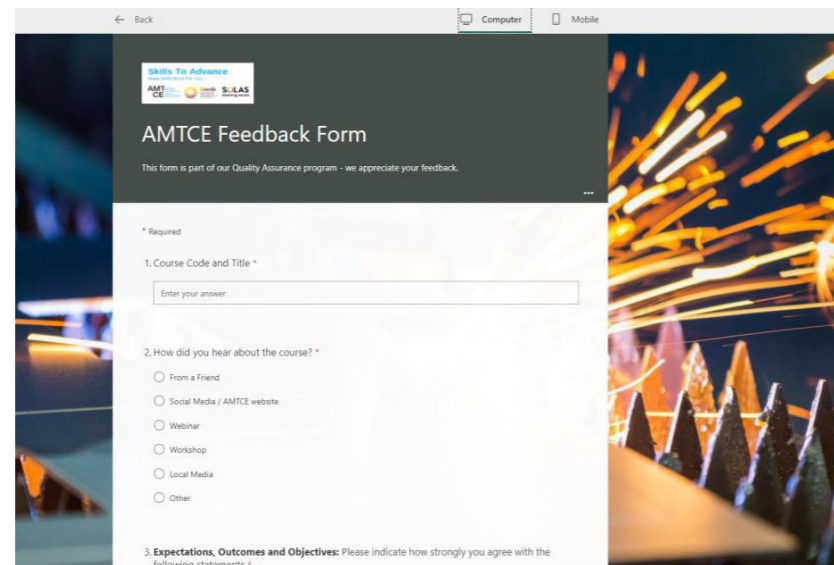


Figure 4



## APPENDIX 2(B)

### Case Study: Integration of Numeracy into Craft course

#### FET Centre:

The Adult Learning Service (ALS) Meath caters for learners with low levels of confidence in their reading and writing ability, who may have left school early. Many will have left school before the Junior Certificate to work or to help at home. As part of the service, we deliver Maths classes, combined with craft and photography, with the aim of integrating numeracy into a hobby class.

<https://www.lmetb.ie/further-education-training/part-time-and-evening-courses/als/>

#### Background:

Craft and Maths: Teaching Maths with a non-academic approach. The most important aspect of overcoming a learner's fear of Maths is to not to focus on the "Maths aspect", but to keep the learner's focus on the production of the craft item. In this way, the learner uses Maths as a means to an end, creating a quilt, rather than Maths being presented in an abstract manner.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

LMETB's Adult Learning Service uses an integrated model of literacy to engage students and introduce numeracy to the most reluctant learners. The Maths tutor and Craft tutor developed a programme that integrated Learning Outcomes from both components. The first programme to integrate Maths into our popular craft provision was *Quilt Making and Maths*. The use of quilt and patchwork skills as a theme to support acquisition of several QQI awards in numeracy created a meaningful learning experience and taught learners how to measure and calculate the correct pieces and dimensions for a bedspread.

The success of this approach led to the development of other thematic provision in 2021, for example, *Recycling Clothes on a Budget*, which combined two minor QQI components in one class at Levels 1 and 2. The most reluctant learners found this a safe environment to work on their Maths skills and it may have helped to overcome any associated school trauma. Numerous studies have shown how school trauma in Numeracy has a lifelong negative effect on adults and therefore we devised a method to overcome this in the classroom at Levels 1 and 2.

Programme participants may not have necessarily identified themselves as potential 'Numeracy' learners. The programme introduces numeracy at the most basic level and can deliver the following three QQI Level 1 modules: Pattern and Relationship, Problem Solving and Quantity and Number. The following components at Level 2 were delivered: Shape and Space, Quantity and Number, Design and Craft.

Programme delivery focused on one project - *Designing and Sewing a Quilt* to correct dimensions. This was also a fantastic opportunity for our non-national learners to showcase their culture through their design and to enable extension of numerical vocabulary acquisition.

#### What was done?

*'As a tutor, I wanted to create a course that assisted and enabled learners to progress in an area many found stressful, a concept that brought up much anxiety for them. Mathematical anxiety is an issue learners may encounter, and it can be a major stumbling block to those who want to progress in their mathematical ability. I wanted this course to be about craft with any Maths hidden behind a veil of creativity.'*

*This creativity came in the form of a quilt. At the end of the course, the learners had created a beautiful quilt made from numerous tangrams, a Chinese geometrical puzzle that uses a square arranged into polygons to create different shapes. The key concept for this course was that, in the process of making this quilt, they also used measurements, rulers, geometry, angles, lines, points, rectangles, squares, circles, triangles and polygons. The learners added, subtracted, divided, multiplied, measured, and used spatial awareness. They calculated area, perimeter and fractions. This list of mathematical tasks would be more suitable for a Maths classroom, not a quilting course. However, these learners achieved all the above and more during this course.'*

(Quotes from ALS Tutor for the Designing and Sewing a Quilt course)



**Results:**

*'What was fascinating about this course was the Maths class that ran in tandem with the quilting class. In the Maths class, another tutor discussed and worked out all the Maths the learners had completed in the quilting class. The learners soon realised that they were accomplishing Maths tasks and activities they were too anxious to try in a traditional classroom. The power of combining the two classes, meant that the learners progressed in their Maths, created a quilt, and most importantly shed their mathematical anxiety, realising they were able to do Maths in a very practical way. A triumph for the learners and a huge success for us as tutors!'*

(Quote from ALS Tutor)

**Benefits to the centre and lessons for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) for the future:**

The learners will receive their first recognised certificate in Maths. Two tutors were able to team teach and share new methodologies in the teaching of Craft, using IT and Maths.

Now that we have a practical example of how to teach numeracy using craft, another tutor will deliver a 'How to Make Clothes' course alongside a 'How to Save Money' course for vulnerable learners, thus combining vocational and numeracy skills in the one course. The tutor will also teach on the theme of making sustainable choices in clothing.

**APPENDIX 2 (C)****Case Study: New LMETB/FAI Local Training Initiative – Providing Access and Progression Options****FET Centre:**

New Local Training Initiative: Drogheda United F.C. Diploma in Business Administration (VTCT Level 2)

LMETB, Drogheda United Football Club and the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) are offering a unique learning opportunity for local young people aged between 18 and 25 years old in the North East. This new Local Training Initiative (LTI) aims to equip learners with an effective combination of knowledge, skills and competences to work in the Sports and Leisure industry, Youthwork or Community Development sectors. It is envisioned that the football element of this innovative course will act as hook and will provide an access point back to education and training for potential participants.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn about all aspects involved in running a sports clubs including operations, events, marketing, finance, Human Resources, football in the community and coaching. Work experience opportunities will be provided by the Drogheda United community engagement programme, which will serve to enhance participants' experience, confidence, self-esteem and readiness to progress into the wider world of work.

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/louth/news/drogs-and-lmetb-unite-for-sports-industry-course-for-young-people-in-town-40849014.html>

**Background:**

The course will introduce participants to the skills and knowledge required to work in the business and administration sectors of the Sports and Leisure industry, offering learners the opportunity to attain a Diploma in Business Administration (Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) Level 2), which is mapped at QQI Level 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Course content is comprised of VTCT modules in the following:

- Understanding Employer Organisations
- Principals of providing administrative services
- Principles of business document production and information management
- Contribute to the organisation of an event
- Presentation software
- Developing and Delivering a presentation
- Principles of Digital Marketing
- Health & Safety in a business environment
- Career Development
- Communication in a business environment
- Develop working relationships with colleagues
- Administer Finance
- Managing Personal Performance & Development

A Soccer Coaching module (QQI level 5) is also being delivered primarily to develop learners' soft skills such as organising, presenting and demonstrating, and this will also contribute to learners developing confidence and essential life skills, people management skills as well as enhancing their self-esteem. Additional certification on offer includes the FAI/VTCT Foundation Business of Football Diploma (FAI Award) and FAI Player Development Programme Levels 1 and 2 Coaching Certificates (FAI award).

To ensure learners have the requisite skills to perform effectively in an administration role, learners will also complete four QQI Level 4 Minor Awards in Sports Surface Maintenance, Teamworking, IT Skills and Career Planning. Additional workshops in areas such as Child Protection, Disability Awareness, Football Clubs and Climate Action/ Sustainability are also being delivered.

### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

The qualifications on offer will provide a solid foundation to progress in the Sports and Leisure industry and may open participants' minds to other progression options such as further education and training opportunities.

The new programme features extensive content from a recently developed FAI pilot programme called 'Run the Club', an education initiative successfully piloted with Transition Year students. It teaches participants about the business basics of running sports clubs and the content of the programme has been adapted and merged with the VTCT Business Diploma course content, ensuring that all VTCT learning outcomes are fully addressed.

### What was done?

The course uses football as the 'hook' to engage young people who may have struggled in mainstream school. The content is designed with the learners in mind and uses a significant amount of football related material intended to ignite and retain their interest whilst making learning outcomes more relatable. It aims to give participants a sound understanding of the business principles associated with the foundation course via the medium of football, something to which participants can readily relate.

### Results:

The programme is based at Drogheda United's Head in the Game Park and at the Barbican Community Centre in Drogheda. The informal environment of the football club will help learners feel at ease in learning the administrative side of running clubs while providing them with opportunities to put learning into practice. A Football Coaching module will also be delivered primarily to develop learners' soft skills such as organising, presenting, and demonstrating, and this will also contribute to learners developing confidence, people management skills and enhancing their self-esteem.

### Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

The overall purpose of this award is to furnish learners with a broad range of employment and personal skills which enhance their employment outlook in a variety of sectors, and may open up

progression to further education and training opportunities.

Potential Progression routes include:

- Further Education and Training – opportunity to progress to QQI Level 5 and 6 Sports or Business-related courses at Drogheda Institute of Further Education
- Pathway opportunity to progress to Sports, Business or Social Studies courses in HE.
- Sports industry, Community Development and Social Work careers.
- Sports administration roles in operations, events, marketing, finance, HR, coaching and club in the community.
- Volunteering and Administration opportunities with local sports clubs or football Coaching opportunities

## APPENDIX 2(D)

### Case Study: Use of Assistive Technology in Adult Learning Service

#### FET Centre:

Adult Learning Service (Learner Supports & TEL):

Adult Learning Service (ALS) Meath provides tuition for adults who wish to return to learning in a supportive environment. Classes are designed to meet the needs of each individual learner. Day and evening part-time classes are available. We cater for a range of needs and the main areas are Literacy, Numeracy, Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE), ESOL, Digital Literacy/Computers, and Skills for Work.

#### Background:

ALS Tutors find integrating literacy into craft themed classes/projects to be an effective and non-threatening enabler of adults re-introducing themselves to education. The learners learn numeracy and literacy through creating patterns for quilts and reading instructions required to complete different items. These types of classes also represent a fantastic means of encouraging learners who may not be able to speak much English but can attend and follow the visual instructions. The use of Technology Enhanced Learning has proven to be an effective means of facilitating literacy and numeracy in these settings. *Lingos pens* were trialled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class, and a *visualiser* was trialled in an ITABE course where participants were undertaking 6 hours of intensive basic adult education per week. Feedback relating to their usage has been very positive.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

An example of good practice is using new technology in the classroom or remotely to aid Level 1 - 3 learners who need the extra support. ALS trialled three different supports.

a) **C Reader Pens** in Level 1 and 2 Reading classes, as well as in a Level 3 Communications class. The C Reader pen scans the page and reads the text back to the learner (headphones provided). It has a built-in dictionary to save learners the additional stress of looking up a word they cannot

spell in a separate dictionary and works for left-handed or right-handed scanning.

b) **Lingo Pens** – These offer translations in 8 languages. Suitable for Levels 1 and 2 Reading, Listening and Speaking classes (using audio recordings and playback), the pen reads aloud the text in English, can be paused, set for slower speeds and works for left-handed or right-handed scanning. The built-in dictionary is excellent for non-national learners to save time and make reading more fun. This is an essential learner support for people who have no English and need to start with the basics.

c) **Visualisers** – Used in Craft/Computer Literacy Level 3 classes, the visualiser can be plugged into a laptop or a whiteboard and it displays the tutor station to a large number of learners who do not need to leave their seats or even homes to get up close to see a demonstration. A tutor films the lesson and can place the visualiser at any angle, useful for example, when delivering a practical course online such as sewing or cookery. It is excellent also for locating keys on a keyboard or trying to zoom in on texts, which therefore makes any lesson accessible. The learning environment is transported to the learner's desk via a clear video link, and for learners with a physical disability this gives them full access to lessons. The zoom-in and focus features create a new type of formative assessment practice where the tutor can double check learning on the screen.

### What was done?

Learners asked to use the C Reader pens to access English texts, to hear the sounds themselves and to work independently in a supportive learning environment. They all thoroughly enjoyed using them and wanted to read more and more complex texts, with the pens providing an extra incentive to read.

The visualisers allowed tutors to deliver quality remote teaching and record lessons. The focus on the visual elements of teaching in literacy classes was encouraged as our learners would generally be very visual in their learning styles. The experience proved to be user-friendly and encouraged feedback and participation in the class.

### Results:

The visualiser intervention led to increased interaction with learners, an ability to watch and replay sections of the class or instructions that were perceived as difficult, and an ability to save drafts of work without having to use Office 365, to which not all part-time learners would have access. It also provided evidence-based recording of the lessons for QQI assessments and the learning outcomes could be worked on with each recording. These tools create audio recordings and video recordings suitable for the range of QQI assessment practices and they facilitate learners to minimise the use of paper-based worksheets, when appropriate.

### Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

Learners benefitted from being enabled to watch classroom demonstrations on a large screen. Often in a demonstration you need to be at the front to get a good enough view of the detail to be able to replicate a task. As well as benefitting the learner the delivery of practical subjects can happen a little faster using this tool.

As a service, the key takeaway is that it is important to buy samples of new technology first and give tutors the tools to try out and test drive them before implementing any new technology across the board, as it will save time and resources. The tutors should be matched to a new technology carefully and given the task to try out the new products and report back to other tutors under the TEL Mentoring programme. If technology is too difficult or complex to use, a learner or tutor will not use it and so the investment is negated.

See pictures below of the various types of Assistive Technology used:



C-pen



Lingo Pen



Visualiser



## APPENDIX 2(E)

### Case Study: Adapting Teaching, Learning and Assessment throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

#### FET Centre:

Meath Opportunities for Training (MOT) is a special purpose Local Training Initiative (LTI) based in Trim, Co. Meath, drawing its learner cohort from the Tabor House rehabilitation treatment centre in Navan, Co. Meath.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

At the start of March 2020, it was recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic would present difficulties for learners to access learning materials in a format which would allow them to make the best use of their time whilst absent from the training centre. The training delivery moved to an online base where the tutors were interacting with learners by means of the Zoom video conferencing platform.

It was recognised that issues might arise from time-to-time with internet access for both the tutors and the learners, and it was important that a learner would be able to continue with a practice or assessment task, once known, regardless of whether or not they could interact synchronously with the Zoom lesson.

#### What was done?

Initially, resources, such as laptops, painting equipment etc., were delivered to the learners at Tabor House, with portfolio work being collected by the MOT LTI Coordinator each week. However, as the learner cohort were part of a single household, they could later attend the training facility once permitted by the government guidelines, enabling them to access the required materials and facilities there. Working with the tutors for each of the four modules delivered at the training centre<sup>1</sup>, a set of sixteen lessons was designed which could be accessed in a digital format.

<sup>1</sup>QQI modules delivered by MOT LTI Tutors: Personal & Interpersonal Development 4N1131, Painting 4N1871, Drawing 4N1878 and International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)

A portal website, accessible to the learners independently of Zoom, was designed and created. This portal was freely accessed directly online at <http://motlti.ie/Portal/>, or via the main training website <http://motlti.ie>.

The portal content is varied to include text, images, videos and downloadable worksheets<sup>2</sup>. This content was created by individual tutors and then uploaded to the Portal by the Coordinator. This portal is free to access without the requirement to log in, and so is actually available to any tutor or learner who may be following the QQI/ICDL modules included there.

Materials included on the Portal can be edited, removed or added to, based on feedback from learners during a lesson and/or on review of suitability of the material by a tutor.

#### Results and Benefits to the centre

- Flexible learning options
- Facilitating the learner to achieve their potential
- Access to learning materials without constraints of time or date
- Continuance of Training based on QQI module descriptors and the LMETB AIS In line with LMETB Quality Assurance procedures.
- Flexible teaching options
- Supported learning
- Focused, targeted and individualised supports
- Innovative thinking

<sup>2</sup>The portal has a facility to upload files from learners. However, as the learners were unable to attend in-centre from August 2020, this facility has not been used and is not live on the portal site at present.

## APPENDIX 2(F)

### Case Study: Teaching and Learning in the RSTC During COVID-19 Restrictions

#### FET Centre:

Regional Skills & Training Centre (RSTC), Coe's Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Please see below link to website:

[www.rstc.ie](http://www.rstc.ie)

#### Background:

Target Groups: Unemployed and employed learners

Courses available under Contracted Training range from:

- Healthcare
- Bus/Rigid & Arctic Driving
- Information Technology: Basic/Intermediate & Advanced
- Software Apprenticeship: QQI L6 Advanced Certificate
- Business/Finance/Administration & Management courses: QQI Level 6 Minor Awards
- Hairdressing & Beauty

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

Due to the challenges of COVID-19, all the Contracted Training courses were set up and delivered via online and Blended Learning.

#### Learning environment

The learning experience was monitored via Zoom by tutor-led tutorials for each lesson of the course. Following each live session, time was set aside for each learner to follow up with their tutor. The facility for learners to give feedback was set up via 'Survey Monkey', and the responses were sent to the Contracted Training Officer to monitor the learner experience and outcomes of the course.

#### Assessment of Learners

In the RSTC, there is a designated person, Training Standards Officer (TSO), who ensures the quality and integrity of the assessment processes via the RSTC quality assurance procedures known as TQAS. The integrity, consistency and security of all assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records during this time were ensured via TQAS, and learners received an assessment briefing as part of these procedures. At the start of every course, the Contracted Training Officer outlined the supports to each learner, and tutors also outlined the learning and technology supports available. The introduction of various learning platforms e.g. Moodle, Learning Assistant, SmartScreen etc., as well as the recorded learning sessions available to be accessed by the learner at any time to revise the subject matter were extremely beneficial.

#### What was done?

Learner needs were addressed through constant communication via the tutor or Contracted Training Officer and the course was monitored regularly by the Contracted Training office.

#### Results:

The outcome of the online & blended Contracted Training has been very positive. The RSTC were able to contribute to meeting the skills needs of the Healthcare sector during the COVID-19 situation e.g. the high demand for training in Infection Prevention & Control.

The RSTC were able to meet the skills needs of the IT sector e.g. the high demand for training in that regard, due to the growth in online activity due to COVID-19.

Furthermore, through contracted training, the RSTC was able to meet the needs of the Business sector e.g. through the provision of e-business, project management, supervisory remote management and financial courses. This increased demand was due to the growth of activity in these services in an online environment.

**Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:**

A key lesson learned for Contracted Training provision was that, through a partnership approach, and by keeping focused on overcoming challenges during COVID-19, successful learning experiences for the learners could be achieved.

Learners, who had never experienced online learning before, learned how to use online tuition to upskill and navigate their way through the various methods of learning and assessment.

**APPENDIX 2(G):****Case study: Integration of Assessment as a Consequence of COVID-19 Restrictions****FET Centre:**

Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE)

The largest PLC provider in Meath with a large catchment area to include Meath, Kildare and North Dublin, DCFE runs a range of courses to include pre-university courses and more practical ones aimed at the job market.

<https://dunboynecollege.ie/>

**Background:**

All students were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions in 2020/2021 in relation to their Work Experience module, due to the reduced work placement opportunities across all sectors. If this mandatory module had been missing from their overall list of completed modules, then students could potentially have not achieved certification in their major award at Level 5, which would have impacted significantly on their career or employment progression opportunities.

**Good Practice/Issue Addressed:**

After gaining approval from QQI in relation to being able to replace Work Experience with the Personal and Professional Development (PPD) module, our teachers worked on developing an integrated approach to the delivery of the Communications, Work Experience and PPD modules. Briefs and marking sheets were integrated in order to give students the best chance to gain a full award through achieving successful marks in either the Work Experience (if they were able to secure a work placement) or the PPD module, while also integrating the valuable skills gained in the Communications module.

**What was done?**

Teachers integrated three modules: Work Experience, Communications and PPD.

**Results:**

All students who completed the modules gained a successful mark in either Work Experience or PPD, thus not giving them a disadvantage because of COVID-19 restrictions and allowing them to achieve a major QQI award.

**Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:**

Valuable lessons were learned about integrating modules and the benefit of having teaching teams collaborate in such an approach.

Development of new assessment briefs and marking sheets for efficient integration and marking.

**APPENDIX 2(H)****Case Study: Online Learning During COVID-19 Restrictions in VTOS Navan****FET Centre:**

VTOS Navan offers the following courses:

- Improve Your English and Get Job Ready Level 4
- Leaving Certificate for Adults (Science or Humanities options)
- eBusiness and Information Technologies Level 5
- Introduction to Coding, Cyber-Security and Web Development Level 5

**Background:**

VTOS programmes are aimed at providing people with education and training opportunities to develop their employability, to gain certification and to prepare them for further educational opportunities. Participants must be over 21 years of age, unemployed and in receipt of certain social welfare payments for at least 6 months before they join the programme.

**Good Practice/Issue Addressed:**

Access to laptops and internet proved a major difficulty for some learners during COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. Even when laptops were provided, the internet connection was so slow in some of the learners' homes/place of study, that online classes were challenging. In some cases, the learner's motivation also diminished as the year went on as some found that they had fallen behind in their work or had too many other issues to deal with. Unfortunately, instead of seeking support from the centre, some chose to stop engaging in the classes.

**What was done?**

The loaning of laptop devices to learners under the ICT Device Loan Scheme (DFHERIS) in late 2020 has had a positive impact on learner capacity to engage in the remote learning environment. We gave a short induction class to each learner who came in to borrow a laptop. This consisted of showing them how to boot up and shut down the laptop correctly, making sure



that they had their login details and helping them to organise their work into folders on Microsoft Teams.

Textbooks and work assignments were posted to some learners who had problems accessing online classes. A stamped addressed envelope was provided for the learners' work to be returned to VTOS, and then the work was scanned in at centre level and uploaded to Teams. Some learners were not available for the online classes, due to childminding arrangements, and to facilitate these learners, online group classes were moved to one-to-one classes.

Motivation was another major issue for learners, and for teachers in trying to maintain the level of learner engagement. This became more and more difficult as time went on. One-to-one classes helped in this area, where time could be spent with each individual learner to address some of the difficulties the learner faced. Each of the learners who stopped engaging in the online classes was phoned, and if a solution could be found to the learner's immediate problem, it would be done. One such example was where a student had two small children at home and their partner was also working from home. She could not engage with her studies as she had the children with her almost all the time. Some one-to-one classes at the weekend were arranged for her, at a time when her partner would be free to look after the children to allow her some time to engage.

#### Results:

- All learners could access online classes.
- Learners could communicate with the coordinator, teachers, and fellow learners.
- Learners could provide their homework in digital format or post it in.

#### Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

No one was disadvantaged through lack of IT hardware. This was important as learners cannot learn online if they do not have access to the correct equipment.

## APPENDIX 2(I)

### Case Study: A Structured Approach to Summative Feedback to Learners

#### FET Centre:

Youthreach Drogheda

<https://www.lmetb.ie/further-education-training/youth-education-training-and-services/youth-reach/>

#### Background:

The learners in Youthreach Drogheda are all early-school leavers aged 16-20 years. The programmes of education they undertake are at NFQ Levels 2-4. This includes QQI major awards at Levels 2 and 3, as well as Leaving Certificate Applied at Level 4.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

This case study outlines the structured manner in which summative feedback is delivered to learners upon completing assessed elements of QQI modules.

#### What was done?

Youthreach Drogheda has adopted the use of a summative feedback template to be included with all assessment briefs undertaken as part of a QQI award at Levels 2 and 3. This feedback template is used by staff to provide constructive and structured feedback to learners on the work completed to fulfil the requirements of each assessment brief.

Focusing on the learning and skills demonstrated by the learner in the relevant learning outcomes of the module, the structured summative feedback provides information to the learner on how the teacher evaluated their overall performance, areas they need to work on further, and areas in which they excelled.

**Results:**

The outcome of this structured and organised approach to providing summative feedback to learners is that the learner gains a greater insight into the teacher's evaluation and examination processes. The learner gains valuable information on how they can further develop their own learning skills and how they can work collaboratively with the teacher to progress through the module.

**Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:**

The centre staff have benefitted from this structured approach to feedback as it gives them a consistent framework to communicate feedback to learners. It also provides a formal channel of communication between teachers and learners.

The use of such a structured and consistent approach has been highlighted regularly as an example of good practice by external authenticators visiting the centre.

**APPENDIX 2(J)****Case Study: Pilot Programme in Adult Learning Service Dundalk (Inclusion of Learners with Intellectual Disability)****FET Centre:**

Adult Learning Service, Chapel Street, Dundalk

The Adult Learning Service (ALS) in Dundalk is one of three adult literacy centres in LMETB. The focus of the service is to provide basic literacy, numeracy, digital skills and ESOL courses to people in Dundalk and the surrounding areas. The service is learner-centred and open to all.

**Background:**

With increasing number of learners with intellectual disabilities interested in accessing the Adult Learning Service, and with the introduction of national policy in the area (*Guidelines on the Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities into Adult Literacy Service, NALA/SOLAS/ETBI 2018*), the decision was made to create a working group to support the process. The membership consisted of an AEO, an ALO, resource staff and representation from services for people with intellectual disabilities. The first meeting of the group took place in April 2019. From then on, the decision was taken in ALS Dundalk to concentrate not only on ensuring access for learners with intellectual disability into the service, but also their inclusion within the service.

At the same time, another issue was identified in ALS Dundalk. Some learners who accessed 1:1 voluntary provision were finding it difficult to progress to a group setting and were remaining in 1:1 provision for extended periods of time. It was postulated that this may have been caused, in the main, by a sense of low self-confidence amongst these learners.

In May 2019 a pilot class group was set up which consisted both of learners who had remained in one-to-one provision for an extended period and learners with an intellectual disability. Learners were offered the option of a group class and all were interested in participating in the pilot programme for 6 weeks. The main aim was to give learners a boost of confidence, in a small group setting, nurtured by a supportive environment. The class was non-accredited with the possibility of further progression when learners were ready. The first group had 6 learners attending the class, of which 2 were referred from RehabCare services and 4 were from ALS' 1:1

provision. The course served as pre-Level 1 group for learners who wished to access the Adult Learning Service, but who needed to firstly build up their confidence and skills to progress.

Due to the success of the pilot group, ALS is now creating a pre-Level 1 group to enable learners with intellectual disabilities to access the service.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

- Supporting inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities.
- Supporting progression of learners (from 1:1 to group accredited tuition)
- Collaboration with local services (e.g. RehabCare, St. John of Gods Community Services, Down Syndrome Ireland)
- Creating pathways for easier progression
- Supporting learners who wish to gain certification

#### What was done?

We tried to cater for the learners' specific needs as much as possible by doing the following:

- Adjusting the Initial Assessment schedule to ensure Learner induction took place first (e.g. to make learners familiar with the centre and classrooms before the initial assessment)
- Keeping the pilot group small, providing additional supports when required. (Resource staff helped out during the classes and organised the induction for learners)
- Keeping in touch with learners and tutors during the programme to identify if any adjustments to the programme were required.
- Keeping the programme short (6 weeks) so that the format could be changed if required.
- Keeping in touch with partner services (RehabCare)

We now recognize that there is a need for this kind of pre-Level 1 group class, which is a perfect entry route for learners progressing from 1:1 classes and for people with intellectual disabilities.

Our approach resulted in the creation of a point of access for those who are not yet ready to join an accredited course and it also provided a progression route for current learners.

#### Results:

Expanded opportunities for learners with Intellectual Disabilities and for those who sit at pre-Level 1 and are moving on from 1:1 literacy tuition.

The results from the first pilot groups were as follows:

- 2 learners from the original class are now taking part in a Level 2 ITABE class.
- 2 learners are now in a Level 1 class.
- 2 learners are now in a Level 3 class.

The introduction of the pilot programme and the collaboration with RehabCare also resulted in a greater number of referrals from other services e.g. St. John of God's, Down Syndrome Ireland, Probation Service, and from the family of an existing learner. It also resulted in the introduction of a new programme, which started in September 2021, which is a collaboration between the Adult Learning Service and Down Syndrome Ireland.

At a centre level, the enthusiasm and the excellent attendance record of the learners with intellectual disabilities impacted positively on the rest of the group. We have also improved our initial assessment process and induction procedures because of the learning gained in this pilot study.

## Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

### Benefits for Learners:

- Provision of a truly accessible group programme for all, regardless of the level.
- Route of entry offered for learners with an intellectual disability.
- Confidence building for learners coming from 1:1 provision.
- Progression pathway for learners from 1:1 provision.

### Key Lessons and Benefits for the Service:

- Encouraging, inclusive atmosphere generated in the centre.
- Creating clear progression routes
- Improvement of initial assessment tools, which benefited the whole centre.
- Better networking with other stakeholders.
- More varied learning resources were sourced, which positively impacts all learners interacting with ALS.
- Training needs identified for tutors in the area of teaching learners with intellectual disabilities.

## APPENDIX 2(K)

### Case Study: Integration of Literacy in the Youthreach Classroom

#### FET Centre:

Youthreach Dundalk:

<https://www.lmetb.ie/further-education-training/youth-education-training-and-services/youth-reach/>

Youthreach is a national programme which was set up to provide education and training to young people between the ages of 16 and 20 years who have left school early and without formal qualifications.

#### Background:

In Dundalk Youthreach, we offer QQI Level 3 Employability Skills and Leaving Certificate Applied Year 1 and Year 2 courses. Our learners range from 16 to 20 years of age. Many of these learners have experienced varying difficulties and challenges in traditional second level post-primary schools. Our programmes offer a holistic, learner-centred, continuous assessment approach to learning and assessment.

Both Literacy and Numeracy have been identified in the National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024, *Future FET: Transforming Learning*, as key areas that continuously need to be addressed as part of the FET system. The Youthreach learner profile typically demonstrates low levels of literacy and numeracy upon entry onto programmes offered.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

On entry onto the programmes, learners are assessed using the BKSB literacy and numeracy assessment tool. This is an integral part of the centre's induction process, and the outcomes help determine the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) for the learner. When the results highlight a learner who is presenting with lower than average levels of literacy and numeracy, then additional support is put in place immediately. Furthermore, tutors in the classroom can often identify learners who they feel need additional supports.

As part of our CEIP process, the centre management team have identified the fundamental



role of integrating literacy and numeracy using a whole-centre approach. As part of our PLD and, in response to the current FET strategy, all current staff have completed certified literacy and numeracy training through the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). Centre staff and management recognise the fundamental role they play in identifying learners' literacy and numeracy needs and removing any barriers to learning.

### What was done?

Following on from the identification of need, the learner is allocated a personal tutor who works intensely on a 1:1 basis with them. In addition to their primary timetable, literacy and numeracy hours are allocated to learners who have been identified as needing support. Learners are regularly assessed to ensure the supports in place are effective and produce successful outcomes for them.

### Results:

Evidence showed a marked improvement in the performance of all learners involved in the 1:1 provision. Not only was there an improvement in the summative assessment results on the BKSB system, with some learners improving by two levels on the BKSB assessment framework over one academic year, a marked increase in learner confidence and application was observed by tutors in other subjects.

### Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

As part of the annual end of year review conducted in the centre, learners reported that as a result of the additional supports provided, they felt valued and optimistic about their future role as a FET learner. They felt a renewed sense of confidence and motivation. This is a practice that will be embedded as part of our centre's operations going forward.

The key lessons:

- Consistent numeracy and literacy assessment held periodically through the year allows an insight into learner development and areas to improve upon.
- Timetabled literacy and numeracy support provides regular interaction with the learners in need and this feeds back into their overall progress.
- These supports empower the learner to build autonomy and trust, equipping them with skills which allow them to become independent learners who can survive the demands of a PLC course as they embark on a lifetime of continuing learning and development.

## APPENDIX 2(L)

### Case Study: Provision of Learning Supports, Including a Sensory Room, in Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE)

#### FET Centre:

Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) is the largest Further Education and Training (FET) provider of courses in the North East Region, providing a wide range of courses to school leavers and adults returning to education. The college was established in 2003 as a dedicated PLC college, now employing over 65 highly dedicated teaching staff.

The college has established itself as one of the leading FE colleges in the country in providing an alternative route to both higher education and employment. Located on the M1 Corridor, the college serves a wide catchment area including Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath and North Dublin, with excellent public and private transport links in place for all learners. All courses are fully accredited, offering excellent pathways to Further and Higher Education and/or employment, while providing students with an opportunity to gain valuable experience in local and national industry sectors. Learners can progress to Higher Education through the Higher Education Links Scheme with places reserved for FET learners in Universities and Institutes of Technology. In addition, DIFE has developed significant direct progression links with HE providers in Ireland, UK and in Europe. Many of our courses are also employment focused for learners who are looking to gain industry recognised qualifications in a short course and progress directly to employment (Childcare, Healthcare, Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Pharmacy, Animal Care, Dental Nursing, Health and Fitness Sectors etc).

As per the college mission statement, the focus is to provide a high quality, comprehensive and inclusive Further Education service to the people in Drogheda and its hinterland in co-operation with existing educational providers and industry, with all students encouraged to achieve their full potential.

#### Background:

DIFE offers a diverse range of full-time courses with 55 courses available at Level 5 and Level 6 on the NFQ across the following departments: Art, Design & Technology, Business Humanities & IT, Sports, Leisure & Tourism, Applied Science and Community & HealthCare.

There are currently 980 full-time learners, with an additional intake of part time learners as part

of our Evening Course provision. Approximately 75% of the college cohort are school leavers with 25% of the student population made up of mature learners.

### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

#### Provision of Supports for all College Students through the Implementation of a Learning Hub and Zen/Sensory Room.

We have invested in significant resources to ensure all learners gain the support required to be successful in their programme. The environment in DIFE combines student support services and flexible social learning areas which maximise the latest technology to support learners with their programme of study in the college. In 2020 we opened a Learning Hub and 'Zen Den' to further support all learners with developing relevant skills to be successful in their studies. Over the last year, the team in the Learning Hub has helped a large proportion of the college population, both in person in the college and online during COVID-19 learning.

The Learning Hub team work closely with academic staff to offer workshops tailored to upcoming assessments and course specific academic skills, as well as offering personalised tutorials.

Having effective academic skills from the start will make for a more enjoyable college experience – you'll find the work easier, save time and get more out of your course and achieve more!

Dedicated staff work alongside learners to establish methods to overcome academic challenges to ensure all learners make progress suitable to their individual requirements.

The Learning Hub team offers support and advice with:

- Academic Skills
- Essay Writing and Academic Language
- Time Management
- Exam Preparation and Revision Strategies
- Effective Notetaking

The Learning Hub team offers students support with specific learning difficulties to ensure all learners can reach their potential.

The Hub also acts as a drop-in service where learners in the college can receive advice and support, informally, if required. A further provision that has been implemented to support learner's wellbeing is the access to a psychologist and counselling service to support student wellbeing. The support provides one-to-one psychological counselling and specialist support on a wide range of personal, academic, family, social, psychological and mental health issues that

may hinder a student's academic performance.

The implementation of the Zen Den or sensory room is to help students who suffer from high levels of anxiety or stress – particularly those on the autistic spectrum – find peace and calm in the college environment.

The pressures of student life can often be overwhelming, and the Zen Den/Sensory Room has provided a unique space/way to lower student stress levels and provide an escape from the hustle and bustle. The room has lots of different sensory aspects to cater for whatever an individual student may need including; Infinity Mirrors, Fibre Optic Bubble Tube Corner, Motion Lamps, Mood Light Cubes, Twidgets and Fidgets, soft furnishings and specialist lighting. It is hoped the new sensory room will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of students, allowing them to recharge away from loud noises and potential stressors that are a natural part of college life.

### Results/ Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

The college is committed to providing the advice, information, and support to assist learners succeed in their studies in the college. The Learning Hub and Sensory Room have provided a central point and resource for all learners in the college with many learners engaging with the staff team in the Hub, both in person and online.

Learners with educational needs including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, specific medical conditions and special needs are prioritised within this service based on the needs assessment they completed on entry into the college. However, over the last year, the service has provided support to over 85% of the student population through 1:1 sessions, workshops and online tutorials, thus supporting retention, attainment, and completion rates in the college.

The benefits to learners were mentioned specifically in End of Year Learner Evaluations. Learners identified that in some cases, without the support of the Learning Hub, they would have not achieved full certification or may have fallen away from their programme of study. Additionally, learners provided valuable feedback in relation to improving the service including the use of group sessions to support assignment development with groups of learners from the same programme.

In turn, the support offered through the Learning Hub benefits the centre with regards retention and attainment, thus ensuring increased certification and outputs. It has also been recognised by local feeder schools as a key strength of the college and often Guidance personnel refer learners to the centre because they are aware of the supports that will be provided and the benefit that DIFE has in relation to their student progression.

## APPENDIX 2(M)

### Case Study: Supporting Youthreach Learners with Additional Needs Through A Gardening Project

#### FET Centre:

Trim Youthreach is a 33-place centre located in Trim. The centre offers QQI Major Awards at Levels 2, 3 and 4 to learners aged 16-20 years of age. The centre also offers additional supports and activities such as sports, work experience, competitions, trips, counselling, career guidance and workshops. The centre has 11 staff, of which 3 are full-time staff members.

#### Background:

The learner group in this case study includes learners undertaking a Level 3 Major Award in Employability Skills. The majority of learners in the group had additional learning needs, which were identified at the initial assessment stage. For example, two learners in the group had significant needs around reading, writing and their social/emotional development. Following the initial assessment of learners in the group, an individual learning plan (ILP) was prepared in consultation with the learners, centre staff and parents/guardians. This plan included details of the additional supports required in order to assist learners with their social and emotional development.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

##### Support for Learners:

The teaching staff decided to integrate a range of supports into certain QQI programme modules so as to best support the learners to engage with the programme. The example highlighted in this case study is related to the Container Gardening module at Level 3. It was felt that that learners could be assessed through a diverse range of assessment modes with particular emphasis on skills demonstration, group work, site visits, some written work and research, aligned with encouraging the learners to engage with others in their group.

#### What was done?

An application was made to Meath County Council to purchase a polytunnel and the Global Schools Project funded the plants, equipment, trips, and workshops associated with the project following a successful grant application process.

Students were encouraged and supported to engage in the following:

- **Group Work** to plant up a raised bed/container plants in the polytunnel and to create a pallet planting project
- **Facilitated Field trips** to Botanic Gardens, Sonairte Eco Centre, SMART Community Garden, Trim, and the Japanese Gardens, Kildare
- **Work Experience** with Trim Tidy Towns (integrated with Work Experience Module)
- **Workshops** on the Global Schools Project
- **Integrated group work** with the Personal Effectiveness Level 3 module to plant and grow basil and use it to make pesto as part of the group cooking project in this module
- **Provide video evidence** of skills demonstrations on their ability to plant bulbs, seeds, roses, herbs and vegetables
- **Provide photographic evidence** of their individual planted hanging baskets
- **Create a compost bin and engage in a composting workshop** and provide photographic evidence for assessment portfolios and develop a centre wide composting initiative to include awareness-raising with all learners and their families
- **Create a recycling campaign** in the centre which became a centre-wide project driven by the learners.
- **Written evidence** (interactive worksheets) and photographic evidence were used for QQI assessment
- **Design and print an A5 leaflet** titled 'Green Teens Trim' (integrated with Computer Applications and Graphic Design modules)



## Results:

This module was presented to the group as a year-long project incorporating various elements with a significant amount of groupwork and input from the learners. Learners were afforded the opportunity to be as creative as possible and to work in various teams on an ongoing basis to achieve the objectives. The course was extremely practical and written work was kept to a minimum. There was a significant level of integration with other modules also such as Computer Literacy, Breakfast Cookery and Graphic Design. Feedback from learners was excellent. They enjoyed the practical aspects of the assessments and particularly benefited from the group work where they were encouraged to communicate with others. The practical aspects of planting appealed to their senses and the learners commented that they particularly enjoyed cooking with the herbs that they had planted. The facilitated field trips provided the learners with the opportunity to prepare for each trip in advance by video clips, worksheets and online research, which was of significant benefit to students on the day of the trip.

## Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

Learners benefited from participating in the programme 'Container Gardening' in the following ways:

- Participating in teamwork with practical projects supported learners to better communicate with others.
- Engaging in planting and gardening supported learners with sensory needs.
- Feedback from learners suggest that they prefer to be assessed through practical demonstrations recorded on video/photographic evidence.
- Learners benefited from having a high degree of choice in their own learning – some learners decided to create 'spin off projects', such as the Recycling project and the Composting project, which resulted in a high degree of autonomy among learners.
- Learners were encouraged to be creative in their own planting schemes and their leaflet design resulting in improved confidence and greater sense of autonomy in their own learning.
- Learners attained a high degree of basic practical planting skill, improving learner confidence and moving them closer to the labour market should they choose a career in horticulture. Some learners benefited from work experience placement, planting with Trim Tidy Towns and

gaining community landscaping skills and experience.

The broad range of practical and written assessment methodologies on offer supported learners with additional learning requirements. Learners felt that their needs were accommodated to a high degree in the assessment of learning. This was reflected in the learners' evaluations of the module.

Youthreach Trim consider the teaching and learning methodologies deployed in the delivery of this module as one of best practice and the learnings from this project were highlighted in the annual CEIP document and associated workshops.





## APPENDIX 2 (N)

### Case Study: Learner Supports in O’Fiaich Institute of Further Education

#### FET Centre:

Ó Fiaich Institute (OFI), Dundalk has established itself as one of the leading further education colleges in the Northeast region in providing an alternative route to both higher education and employment. There are a wide variety of Further Education and Training programmes across many disciplines available to learners. This year OFI will offer over 50 PLC and Pre-University courses which can lead to employment or progression to 3rd level. Course areas include: Business & Accounting, Computing, Engineering & Science, Beauty & Hairdressing, Nursing & Childcare, Sport and Tourism, Art and Photography and a suite of Pre-University programmes.

OFI welcomes applications from all prospective students, from students completing the Leaving Certificate (including LCVP & LCA) or equivalent (A Levels, GCSEs etc.) to mature learners returning to education. We also encourage QQI Level 4 graduates or those currently unemployed to further their career prospects through a programme of study with us.

[www.ofi.ie](http://www.ofi.ie)

#### Background:

FET colleges have a legislative requirement to support learners with disabilities and/ or additional educational needs, as per:

- The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- Equal Status Act 2000 & 2004

Covid-19 presented an immense challenge in supporting learners with disabilities and supporting learners with additional learning needs during FET college closures of March 2020 and in January 2021. It required a massive re-orientation of how support was provided to learners which necessitated careful planning by college guidance, PLC personal assistants, teachers and college management. This was analysed on a weekly basis to ensure no learner that needed support

was left behind. This also extended to supporting the well-being of all learners at OFI.

In 2020/2021, OFI had 111 beneficiaries from the SOLAS fund for students with disabilities.

#### Good Practice/Issue Addressed:

Echoing the above challenge in supporting learners with disabilities and supporting learners with additional learning needs, the immersive participation in FET for learners was replaced by online contact for most of the year. From September 2020, instead of a PLC course being their first taste of freedom and independence, most learners remained cocooned within the nest in remote provision. Restrictions, frustration and a lack of stimulation combined to have a detrimental impact on learners, and this was compounded by the full lockdown between January 2021 and March 2021.

The Guidance and Support department in OFI consists of the deputy principal, guidance counsellor, two experienced teachers and six dedicated PLC Personal Assistants. The department met on a weekly basis to discuss learner progress and to set a course for the following week with learners. This proved invaluable to supporting learners with disabilities and learners with additional learning needs. Additional weekly check-in support was planned, documented, and discussed.

In parallel, a ‘Wellbeing Survey’ distributed to learners in November 2020 delineated specific difficulties being faced by them. This generated a year-long initiative with college-wide wellbeing classes being held online. Classes focused on psycho-education and coping strategies for those challenges identified by learners. A Moodle page with informative resources and helpline numbers was created in January 2021. Teachers and college guidance ensured that contact lines were open, discussion of mental health was encouraged, and support was readily available right into June 2021.

#### What was done?

The following was completed by the learning support team in conjunction with guidance, teachers and senior management at OFI:

- Careful Planning on a weekly basis to plan for and target learners
- Additional online check-in support with vulnerable learners, learner with disabilities and

learners with additional needs

- Development of additional individual education plans to support learners with weekly follow-up. Teachers assisted in addressing well-being of all learners with referral of vulnerable learners.
- A counsellor was deployed to support learners from January to May 2021

### Results:

- The initiative had an extremely positive impact on our FET learners, in terms of retention (80%+), engagement and success in those achieving awards at OFI in June 2021.
- The focus and planning ensured that learners achieved their educational goals in challenging circumstances for all.
- It illustrated the benefits of targeting learners in terms of both additional needs and mental health challenges, which will be a continuing issue locally here in Ó Fiaich Institute.

### Benefits to the centre and lessons for TLA for the future:

The legislative requirement to support all learners combined with the immense challenge of Covid-19 necessitated a different approach to prevent learner dropout and foster success in achieving FET awards. The benefits can be outlined as follows:

- Improved learner retention (80%+ : May 2021, OFI)
- Improved learner engagement (as noted by all teachers, guidance and learning support)
- Increased learner well-being (as noted by learners themselves)
- Modifications to provision of support to learners which will accrue benefits going forward in 2021/ 2022
- Increased use of diverse methodologies to support learners with additional needs

A challenge like Covid-19 presented OFI with an opportunity and one which has changed teachers' perspectives and will amass benefits to future learners in years to come.

## APPENDIX 2 (O)

### Case Study: LMETB Adult Educational Guidance Service and the Establishment of Education and Training Networks in Meath and Louth

#### Background:

LMETB Adult Educational Guidance Service values knowledge and relationships with our stakeholders. We see the benefit in working in collaboration and strive for continuous improvement to our service.

Having seen the benefits of being a member of the 'Case Conferencing' group in Drogheda, Co. Louth, the Guidance service established an Education & Training Network in Dundalk in 2013. The following year, it duplicated this network in Drogheda, following the discontinuation of the Drogheda 'Case Conferencing' group. Over the years many changes have taken place in relation to the location of the meetings, number of people actively attending, organisations contributing etc. When COVID-19 initiated remote working for staff, the meetings took place online through Zoom and we established one Education and Training network for Louth. Feedback from all stakeholders has been positive. In general, they feel one meeting taking place online saves on duplication and travel time.

In line with the overall vision to work consistently as a Guidance Team across both counties, the Meath Education and Training Network was established virtually in March 2021.

#### What it looks like

**Formal Meetings:** Both networks meet on a quarterly basis at peak times (September, January, April and June). Since COVID-19, meetings have taken place virtually and it is envisaged that they will remain in this online format.

**Communication Channels (Microsoft Teams):** When the Meath network was established, a Teams channel was set up to communicate with all stakeholders. It was quickly recognised that not all members were familiar with this way of working, and so we reviewed it and came back with a weekly newsletter that would be sent to all Meath members and published on social media. This process was reviewed again and changed to a fortnightly newsletter. The newsletter is

completed by the Guidance team through Mailchimp and automatically sent to all members of the Meath network and uploaded onto social media. In Louth, minutes are produced and sent to all members of the network.

**Members of the network:** Criteria for joining the network is very broad. It is open to any organisation that supports clients and/or provides a service to clients in the area of education or training. The following organisations are current members:

- INTREO
- SEETEC/Jobpath
- Local Employment Service (LES)
- Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities (IASIO)
- Employability Services
- HSE Community Mental Health
- HSE Occupational Therapy
- HSE TUSLA Aftercare
- HSE TUSLA Prevention
- Partnership and Family Support (PPFS),
- Local Libraries
- Local Partnerships
- Local Resource Centres
- Youth workers
- LMETB FET Leaders and more.

### Objectives:

- To bring together organisations involved in Education & Training for adults in counties Louth & Meath.
- To improve awareness of courses and programmes that are available throughout the two counties and promote lifelong learning and personal development for all.

### Benefits:

- Puts the client at the centre of our work. All stakeholders are kept informed and up to date regarding services, supports and opportunities in the county that they refer their clients to.
- It's a very small time commitment that is required for members (4 x 1 hour meetings per year)
- Members are automatically subscribed to the newsletter that is published on a regular basis
- Stakeholders can take action with a client following a meeting, based on information they have gathered at the meeting.
- Stakeholders can present a case to the group, and others in the group can form an action plan to resolve the need e.g. cross- organisational referrals.
- It promotes social inclusion by discussing gaps or opportunities for particular learners.
- Contributes to stakeholders' continuous professional development, ensuring all are keeping up to date with opportunities available
- Provides a platform for establishing and maintaining professional working relationships which are needed throughout the year on a more informal basis.



## Feedback from Organisations:

*"I have found the Education and Training Network to be an invaluable source of knowledge and support for my clients".*

Heather Roberts, IASIO

*"I find the Group and Newsletter very beneficial because our Tús Team can easily source the range of excellent training opportunities that are available to clients in Meath. Tús is a work placement scheme for people who have been on the Live Register for over 12 months. Meath Tús Scheme has 260 work placements within the Community & Voluntary sector".*

Patricia Lynch, Tús Team leader

*"Very useful for information sharing especially with regards to events that are coming up in the county that clients can engage in."*

Sarah Smyth, SICAP Project Worker Meath Partnership

*"LMETB initiated and kindly facilitate the Meath Education and Training Network to which they invited me to participate. I find both the network, and their regular newsletter, to be important assets to my work in sourcing suitable education and training opportunities for my clients, not only within LMETB's offering, but also from the wide variety and number of other training providers and agencies in the county of Meath."*

Laura Kenny, Linkage Service Training & Employment Officer, IASIO, Probation Service

*"EmployAbility Service Louth joined the Education and Training Network over 8 years ago, the networking meetings are excellent, the meetings give us the opportunity to interact with other services and establish relationships with key people across various education/training and community groups that you can call on if needed. I always take some useful pieces of information back to the team after meetings".*

Helen Grant, EmployAbility Service Louth

*"As an occupational therapist working in an adult community mental health setting, I find the newsletter is a fantastic resource to help me to keep updated with services and opportunities available in the community that may be relevant to my clients. Also being part of the network allows me to build relationships with other organisations and makes it easier for me to pick up the phone to seek more information about projects and services and to support my clients to get involved with them"*

Shannon Brown, Occupational Therapist, Trim Adult Mental Health Team.

## APPENDIX 2 (P)

### LMETB FET: Examples of Achievements and Testimonials 2021

#### Drogheda Institute of Further Education: *Best Further Education Provider in Ireland 2021* (Education Awards)

Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) was awarded *Best Further Education Provider* in Ireland at the 2021 Education Awards for the second consecutive year. This prestigious award, which is open to all providers of further education and training in Ireland recognises excellence in the provision of further education. The judging panel benchmark providers against a set of criteria including innovation, learning outcomes, infrastructure, teaching and research standards, student experience, employment statistics, alumni relations, and development.



#### LMETB: Winner of *Excellence in Providing Adult Services Award 2021* (Public Sector Awards Magazine)

The Public Sector Magazine is a quarterly publication which is distributed to all departments in the public sector, semi-state bodies and civil service. Its annual "Excellence in Business Awards" are awarded to companies who can demonstrate excellence, quality and professionalism in business to the Public Sector, Irish companies, and to the people of Ireland. It also presents awards to key figures that have made an outstanding contribution in Ireland and to the Public Sector. LMETB was the outright winner of its *Excellence in Providing Adult Services Award 2021*.



## LMETB FET: Examples of Achievements and Testimonials 2021

[LMETB FET You Tube Playlists](#) highlight learner achievements, areas of good practice and learner testimonials from across LMETB's FET provision.

The following PLC prospectuses and documentation contain learner testimonials throughout:

[O'Fiaich Institute of FE Prospectus 2022 2023](#)

[DIFE Prospectus 2022 2023](#)

[Dunboyne College Prospectus 2022](#)

[Dunboyne College Graduate Association Book 2003- 2018](#)

## APPENDIX 3: COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

LMETB FET Service has formed solid working relationships with many statutory and non-statutory agencies, stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, as well as a variety of employers, voluntary providers and community groups.

### NATIONAL AGENCIES:

#### Dept of Further and Higher Education (DFHERIS)

DFHERIS is a new government department, officially established in August 2020, with responsibility for policy, funding and governance of Ireland's Further and Higher Education and research sectors, and for the oversight of the work of state agencies and public institutions operating in those areas.

LMETB FET Services now come under this department as part of the restructuring of Further and Higher Education.

#### SOLAS

SOLAS is the state organisation with responsibility for funding, planning and coordinating Further Education and Training. LMETB FET is funded by SOLAS annually and has significant regular engagement with SOLAS.

The relationship is articulated in its [Strategic Performance Agreement](#) (SPA) with LMETB which commenced in 2018.

## ETBI

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is an association established to collectively represent the sixteen Education and Training Boards and promote their interests. LMETB is represented on the following groups in ETBI: Chief Executives Forum, FET Directors Forum, Directors of FET Quality Assurance Strategy Group, the Quality Network, New Apprenticeship Development Network and Active Inclusion Working Group.

## QQI

In 2018, the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) approved LMETB's Quality Assurance Procedures, in line with QQI's 2014 policy "Re-engagement with QQI, Overarching Policy for All Providers." The agreed re-engagement process required LMETB to develop an [Executive Self Evaluation Report](#) addressing [QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#). As a result of this self-evaluation a [Quality Improvement Plan](#) for LMETB was developed. In addition, LMETB engage with QQI on quality assurance policy, programme development and data management matters on an ongoing basis.

## Department of Social Protection (DSP)

DSP's mission statement is *"to promote active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services."* It is the largest payment organisation in the State and directly funds a wide range of employment programmes.

A very close working relationship exists between LMETB and DSP, and LMETB is a key partner in the delivery of training and education supports to DSP recipients.

Collaboration with DSP at local level assists with the identification of priority cohorts, in particular the long-term unemployed, allowing LMETB to deliver the appropriate, targeted responses at a local level.

The collaboration involves:

- Strategic meetings with Senior Management in both bodies
- Delivery by LMETB Guidance Staff of Group Information/Engagement sessions to DSP clients and in the event of local redundancies.
- Referrals and correspondence between the client/ learner management systems of DSP and LMETB i.e. BOMI and PLSS.

## Further Education Support Service (FESS)

The Further Education Support Service (FESS) was established in 1997 as a full-time support and consultancy service for FET operated through the ETBs. FESS provides a range of supports to ETBs in the areas of Quality Assurance, programme development, assessment, teaching and learning resources, and professional learning and development. LMETB staff regularly attend FESS CPD events.

## National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

The National Adult Literacy Agency is an independent charity committed to making sure people with literacy and numeracy difficulties can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs.

LMETB works with NALA in the following ways:

- FET staff attend NALA's PLD opportunities and avail of NALA- developed teaching materials
- NALA promote LMETB's Literacy Services
- LMETB promote NALA's Literacy campaigns

## AONTAS

AONTAS is an Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation. LMETB works with AONTAS in the following ways:

- Promotion of the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival and STAR awards

- Capturing the learner voice: In both 2019 and 2021, LMETB FET Service worked closely with AONTAS to facilitate LMETB learner participation in the National FET Learner Forum. These events allowed learners to give feedback on the quality of their learning experience with LMETB.

## Apprenticeships

LMETB is involved with collaboration with other ETBs and bodies in the area of apprenticeships. For example, a memorandum of understanding is in place with Limerick Clare Education and Training Board for the delivery of the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship.

## Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland is one of the funders for LMETB's newest FET facility, the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence.

## Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

DCEDIY's mission is to enhance the lives of children, young people, adults, families and communities, recognising diversity and promoting equality of opportunity. LMETB is the agent for Youth Services in Louth and Meath, operating in collaboration and consultation with DCEDIY.

## REGIONAL PARTNERS:

LMETB provides staff representation on a range of regional committees/ boards.

The relevant bodies are outlined below, as well as a brief description of their function.

### *North East Regional Skills Forum and Mid East Regional Skills Forum*

Regional Skills Fora provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions.

### *Dundalk Chamber of Commerce*

### *Drogheda Chamber of Commerce*

### *Meath Chamber of Commerce*

Chambers of Commerce consist of local business representatives who join together to promote the economic and social development of their community in order to make it a better place in which to live, work and do business.

### *Louth Local Community Development Committee*

### *Meath Local Community Development Committee*

Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) were established on a county basis to promote wider economic and community development planning through the implementation of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECDs).

### *Louth Economic Forum*

### *Meath Economic Forum*

Economic Forums comprise members from business and state development agencies with the aim of connecting business leaders in order to increase economic activity and job creation.

### *Louth Children and Young People's Service Committee*

### *Meath Children and Young People's Service Committee*

Children and Young People's Service Committees (CYPSCs) were established on a county-basis to facilitate an inter-agency approach to meeting the needs of children and young people aged 0-24 years, focused on the five national outcomes areas identified in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014-2020), (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014).

### *Louth County Childcare Committee*

### *Meath County Childcare Committee*

City/ County Childcare Committees support and assist families, as well as early learning and care and school age childcare providers with childcare matters at local level.

### *Local Development Companies (Louth Leader Partnership and Meath Partnership)*

Local Development Companies (LDCs) are multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver community and rural development, labour market activation, social inclusion, climate action and social enterprise services.

*Louth Meath Connecting for Life Planning Group*

Louth Meath Connecting for Life is a suicide prevention and self-harm action plan for the area. This plan represents local implementation of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide.

*Jigsaw Advisory Group Meath*

Jigsaw Meath provides a free and confidential youth mental health support service for young people aged 12-25.

*Drogheda Implementation Board*

Drogheda Implementation Board is the key co-ordinator of the Drogheda Implementation Plan, which outlines 70 actions to improve community safety and wellbeing in Drogheda through greater co-operation by state agencies and others. LMETB hosts the board and will appoint a Project Co-ordinator as part of the action plan.

*Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)*

DKIT, initially established as a Regional Technical College, first enrolled students in the college in 1971 and it was re-defined as an institute of technology in January 1998. DKIT offers a range of apprenticeships in conjunction with LMETB, including Electrical, Motor Mechanics, Plumbing and Carpentry. LMETB currently has 4 representatives on the governing body of DKIT.

*Other FET/ HE Alliances :*

North Eastern Further and Higher Education Alliance: (NEFHEA) is a regional initiative in the North East comprising Higher and Further Education institutions in the region. Its members work together to enhance progression opportunities for students from Further to Higher Education, to collaborate on course design and development in response to regional needs and to share expertise and resources. LMETB's 3 Post-Leaving Certificate Colleges are represented on this alliance.

Further Education & Higher Education Network (FE-HE Network) is an output from a previous collaboration under the HEA-funded MEND pathways project. This network is a formal grouping based upon a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in July 2015 between Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Maynooth University and 8 ETBs including LMETB. Its overall aim is to create and develop a formal network of Further Education and Higher Education providers within the Leinster Pillar II cluster, specifically for the purpose of collaboration on enhancing access, transfer and progression opportunities across the region.

DCU Connections Initiative is a newly established project which aims to ease the pathway of progression from FET providers in the DCU hinterland into the university. It aims to simplify entry routes, develop advanced entry options into certain programmes and to establish a FET route into DCU's primary education teaching programme. LMETB's Post-Leaving Certificate Colleges are supporting this project.

**OTHER PARTNERSHIPS/NETWORKS**

Through its Youth Service and Community Education Service, LMETB offers educational or developmental opportunities in the local community for young people and adults. Strong links have been developed with a diverse range of partners. The examples below give a snapshot of the range of youth and community partners with whom LMETB is engaged.

- Family Resource Centres in Trim, Drogheda, Laytown and Kells
- Disability Organisations including Prosper Meath, RehabCare Group, St John of God's Services
- ICA Women's groups in Louth Village, Termonfeckin and Athboy
- Home School Community Liaison parent groups in DEIS Schools
- Youth Organisations including Irish Girls Guides, Macra na Feirme and Youth Work Ireland
- Slane Men's Sheds
- Ozanam Day Care Centre, Co. Meath
- Meath Travellers Network
- Traveller Women's Project, Dundalk
- Cultúr Migrant Centre, Navan
- Culture Connect, Drogheda



LMETB was also one of the 10 ETBS who took part in TOBAR, an RPL pilot project delivered in 10 ETBs in partnership with the Defence Forces during 2018 and 2019.

### Co-operation Centres:

Under what is commonly termed the 'Co-operation Hours' scheme, LMETB provide teaching allocations to specific institutions and bodies in Louth and Meath. Educational activity funded under these arrangements varies from supporting learners with Literacy and Numeracy needs to the provision of uncertified programmes within the FET services. LMETB's Co-operation Hours scheme provides a holistic range of skills and competences for its participants, intended to give them improved confidence and self-development for use in work, learning and home life as relevant. The following groups/organisations are supported with teaching hours funded by LMETB's Co-operation Hours Scheme:

- Ogra Dún Dealgan, (Community Training Centre), Dundalk
- Ladywell Centre, Dundalk
- St. Brigid's Hospital/ Drogheda Day Hospital
- Order of Malta, Drogheda
- RehabCare, Dundalk
- St. Brigid's Special School, Dundalk
- St. Ita's Special School, Drogheda
- St. Mary's Special School, Drumcar
- Cox's Demesne Project, Dundalk
- Táin Centre, Ashbourne and Navan, Co. Meath

### Employer Engagement

LMETB works in partnership with enterprise to identify and develop training programmes which are crucial to the upskilling and reskilling of employees and the socio-economic development of the region. This is achieved primarily through the implementation of the Skills to Advance and Skills for Work programmes, in addition to the development of apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Employer Engagement Team works closely with employers and enterprise representative groups, including Chambers Ireland, the Regional Skills Fora (North East and Mid East), Local Enterprise Offices and the DSP. Courses are provided on a part-time basis, both through the

night schools and via day-time provision. The main centres currently involved include DIFE, DCFE, OFI and the RSTC. Classes are delivered both by in-house tutors, teachers and instructors, in addition to Contracted Training. The Contracted Training Services section is central to the delivery of Skills to Advance, as this section provides the opportunity to engage training services across a broad range of suitably identified trainers. Resources have recently been enhanced in the Contracted Training Services section, with the recruitment of an additional staff member, in response to the demand from employers for key upskilling and reskilling of employees. The Senior Training Advisors in the RSTC are also crucial to employer liaison and the development of the key area of apprenticeships and traineeships. Broader FET provision, including PLC colleges, BTEI and Youthreach also work very closely with employers to facilitate work experience for learners and to provide employment progression opportunities on completion.

LMETB has also responded to the need for training in Advanced Manufacturing, through the establishment of the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) in Dundalk. This is a joint collaboration with SOLAS and Enterprise Ireland, to proactively respond to the need for training in Industry 4.0 technologies and to respond to current and future skills needs.

### MOUs and Agreements with Organisations

LMETB also maintains MOUs such as those partnering with the recently established AMTCE and agreements with a range of other organisations. See below for a sample of such arrangements.

See below a sample of such arrangements:

MOUs	Agreements
Portview Trade Centre & AMTCE	Department of Education
Additive Manufacturing Group & AMTCE	SOLAS
Irish Manufacturing Research Limited (IMR) & AMTCE	CDET (regarding Student Universal Support Ireland <i>SUSI</i> )
Catalyst, Portview Trade Centre and Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh (IIP) & AMTCE	Education Shared Business Services (ESBS)

## APPENDIX 4: OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

### A. Formal Framework Agreement for contracted training

The procedures used to ensure the suitability of contracted training companies to deliver training derived originally from a staged tendering process. This process was part of a national system, set up by the National Office of Government Procurement competition for the establishment of a Multi Supplier Framework Agreement for Contracted Training. This was a restricted procedure involving the OGP and ETBI, set to be in place for a specific period of time.

Expression to tender was published by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) on its website. This extensive tendering process included a pre-tendering where the following criteria were required:

- Demonstration of training background
- Quality Assurance
- Management & Administration: The capacity of the training company to track levels of learner engagement, manage tutor contracting (including required level(s) of experience and qualifications).
- Management of Sub-Contractors
- Capacity by the company to provide the required information to the ETB
- Regional Presence
- Innovation

A Multi Framework Agreement was put in place with policies/processes & procedures outlined. The results of the selection of the external contractor were then published when all processes were completed and sent to each ETB.

### B. List of Community Training Provision in LMETB

<b>Local Training Initiatives</b>	<p><b>Drogheda Co. Louth:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Your Future</li> <li>• Education Skills Learning Opportunities programme (ESLO)</li> <li>• Drogheda United F.C. Diploma in Business Administration</li> </ul> <p><b>Dundalk, Co. Louth:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Focus</li> <li>• Muirhevnamor LTI</li> <li>• Football Association of Ireland (FAI) Player Development and Education Programme</li> <li>• Create Project</li> </ul> <p><b>Co. Meath:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meath Opportunities for Training (MOT), Trim</li> <li>• Fast Track to IT: Pre-Tech Apprenticeship, Dunshaughlin</li> </ul>
<b>Community Training Centre</b>	Dundalk Community Training Centre
<b>Specialist Training Providers</b>	<p>National Learning Network, Dundalk</p> <p>National Learning Network, Navan</p>

### C. LMETB adapted versions of National Operating Standards for Local Training Initiatives, Community Training Centres and Specialist Training Provision

LMETB's partnering organisations must meet the following requirements (specific applicability depending on the programme type):

- Form a legally incorporated entity with a non-profit making structure
- Submit a copy of its *Certificate of Incorporation or Certificate of Acknowledgment of Registration* (in the case of Industrial and Provident Societies or Friendly Societies) to the ETB prior to the commencement date.
- Have a board of directors/trustees/authorised officers or members that are broadly representative of the community.
- Appoint a managing committee or an authorised individual with responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of the Community Programmes
- Comply with all the relevant statutory and legal obligations of a Second Provider and employer
- Take on the role of employer in respect of the programme staff, with all the associated statutory responsibilities of an employer.
- Ensure that the learners are trained to the standard in the nationally specified award(s) offered on the programme, and that they are supported to progress to employment or further education and/or training.
- Comply with all relevant legislation in respect of equality, organisation of working time, health and safety, and insurance requirements.
- Keep all necessary records pertaining to the programmes, including obligatory records in relation to the European Social Fund (ESF), the ETB and other bodies, as required.
- Adhere to the Quality Assurance System (QAS) requirements.
- Comply with the terms and conditions laid down in the Agreement to Collaborate (only applicable to LTIs).
- Prepare and present annual income and expenditure statement to LMETB.

### D. Governance Measures to Reduce Potential Risks Associated with Second Providers

LMETB maintains good governance of these relationships through seeking to reduce potential risks associated with the use of second providers by exercising due diligence regarding legal, reputation and compliance requirements, as well as resource, governance, and structural requirements. LMETB also ensures that 3rd parties:

- Are stable and in good financial standing.
- Have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision.
- Have fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision-making structures.
- Have arrangements for providing required information to LMETB.
- Have capacity to deliver education and training as demonstrated through experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes.
- Have sufficient resources, as well as corporate, structural, and internal quality assurance systems in place, to sustainably provide education and training programmes.

### E. Documented Process for Relationship with Community-Based Second Providers

The following summary describes the key attributes of the process:

- Community/Voluntary Partners submit a full detailed application for funding on an annual basis to LMETB.
- An appraisal and recommendation proposal process is carried out on the applications. Yearly Scheduled Financial/Training Monitoring, evaluation and reviews are carried out on all Community Training providers by dedicated Community Training Officers.
- A contract and letter of offer are disseminated to the partners upon successful application/renewal.
- Details of Agreements (to collaborate) are not published

## F. An Overview of The Arrangements for Monitoring and Review with External Parties

### Contracted Training Provision

- Contractors must follow the Framework Agreement and documents/forms.
- As per the agreement, the Supplier Relationship Module (SRM) is encompassed into the framework.
- The SRM process includes meeting with suppliers before training begins to discuss training specifications, resources, and quality assurance etc. These meetings are set quarterly throughout the year.
- The agreement requires monitoring of each training programme and is backed up with monitoring reports.
- Programmes are reviewed throughout delivery and evaluated at the end of the programme.

### Community provision

Monitoring, review and evaluation is still governed to a large degree by the legacy TQA requirements:

- Monthly Desktop Financial audits are carried out on each programme. (Bank reconciliation, Cashbook, and Invoices)
- Onsite full financial audit a minimum of once a year
- Onsite Training Monitoring visit a minimum of once a year
- Full certification audit carried out by Training Standards Office
- Results Approval Process carried out on certification
- Mid-year review of programmes
- End of year review of programmes