

**City of Dublin Education and Training Board
(CDETb)**

**Dialogue Meeting with
Adult & Community Education Providers**

Monday 9th September 2019

CDETb Adult Education Service

Ballymun Road

Dublin 11

CDETb

1. Context of the Dialogue Meeting

CDETБ called the meeting so as to engage in a dialogue with Adult and Community Education providers across the city of Dublin, specifically those providers who are involved in the re-engagement process with QQI. A total of 11 providers were invited to the meeting with representatives from 7 attending. The list of attendees at the meeting is appended to this report.

2. Welcome and Purpose - Blake Hodgkinson (CDETБ)

The meeting commenced with Blake Hodgkinson FET Director, welcoming all attendees. This was followed by each attendee introducing themselves and briefly outlining their role in their respective organisations. In his introductory remarks Blake set the context and purpose of the meeting noting the following:

- The QQI re-engagement process and the new programme validation presents challenges to all providers including CDETБ
- Due to the range of provision which CDETБ funds and supports, (from Colleges of Further Education and Training Centres to Adult and Community Education) the challenges arising can be quite diverse
- It is important therefore to share experiences of the QQI re-engagement process so that any hurdles presented can be explored, discussed and overcome

In follow on comments a number of attendees make reference to their recent experience with programme development and validation. One provider had recently submitted a programme for validation to QQI which had taken a substantial amount of time and effort and a number of challenges were encountered during the process.

3. Experience of Re-engagement - Lia Clarkson (Warrenmount)

In order to ground the re-engagement process in a practical way, Lia Clarkson from Warrenmount was asked to outline their experience of the process to date. In her contribution to the meeting Lia noted:

- Quarter 3 of 2019 had been set as the date for Warrenmount's re-engagement process to commence. This date has been put back however and the new date in 2020 will be notified to the Centre in December 2019

- Warrenmount have engaged in a lot of work in preparation for re-engagement and the Centre has had to review its policies and legacy agreements
- The Centre set up a Policy Sub-Committee, comprising two members of the Board of Directors, Centre Manager and Programme Coordinator to review its' policies and procedures on an ongoing basis
- Substantial amendments to their existing QA documentation have been made in order to make them live reference documents
- The experience of moving from the NCVA to FETAC was beneficial in informing the QQI process
- A Quality Assurance Team comprising Lia and two other staff members has been established. This team also functions as the Programme Review and Planning Team
- Since 2015 a lot of internal meetings in relation to re-engagement have been held within Warrenmount and attended by Centre staff
- In 2019 Warrenmount was asked to join Aontas's Re-Engagement Community of Practice (which is an offshoot of the Aontas Community Education Network). On occasion a representative of QQI attends the Community of Practice which has been useful for getting clarifications
- The most difficult part and the greatest challenge of the process for Warrenmount was documenting everything that they do. And this was in a context where the requirements of QQI changed a number of times. Fortunately, this has settled down and guidance material and supporting forms for the relevant processes are for the most part in place
- The Gap Analysis Tool was useful in assisting with the preparation for re-engagement. Equally the QQI QA Guidelines with its 11 sections and its emphasis on organisational and QA governance was also very useful
- Through the preparation process to date, Warrenmount as an adult and community education provider continues to have ownership of what it provides and delivers and the process encourages a whole centre approach to quality assurance
- In effect Warrenmount has been involved in a preparation phase rather than commencing the actual re-engagement process which had been due to take place in Q3 2019

3.1 Follow-on Discussion

In the discussion following Lia's contribution a wide range of responses and comments were made by attendees at the meeting:

- One provider noted that the move from FETAC to QQI is not as prescriptive as the move from NCVA to FETAC. It was also noted that the guidelines from QQI are not as detailed as those issued by FETAC. However, the challenge for adult and community providers is that staffing resources can be limited and a range of different duties can fall to the one staff member or a small number of staff
- Another provider commenced the preparation phase in June, working through their procedures and identifying the gaps. On the last day of every month there is a review with each tutor. A Quality Committee is now in place and they are working towards developing a QA Manual
- The importance of Adult and Community Education was referred to by one provider who felt it is not delivering on a level playing field as compared to other sectors and providers
- The importance of scale was referred to by a number of attendees. There was general agreement that a governance structure/system should be appropriate to the context and size of individual providers
- One provider holds meetings in relation to QA prior to their Board meeting, and then brings any matters of note to the attention of the Board. They have appointed a Quality Assurance Officer who works on QA two hours per week and they have scheduled QA meetings involving the senior staff member and the Programme Co-ordinator
- In another provider the senior staff member acts as the de-facto QA Officer and is also responsible for the day to day running of the centre. She instanced this as an issue whereby the same people may "have to do everything". A key challenge she felt was finding the appropriate and relevant expertise that is required. Time spent on QA matters can sacrifice or reduce time available for circulating leaflets and recruiting learners
- Reference was also made to the movement from informal to more formal processes and structures for the delivery of Adult and Community Education
- The issue of sharing of programmes between providers was raised and this is an area that needs to be looked at in greater detail

- One provider noted that they would have a maximum of 30 folders on an annual basis and queried why the current modules would need to change
- It was clarified that legacy providers with their own QA are required to re-engage with QQI if they wish to remain as providers in their own right
- The question arose whether a provider who is delivering a small number of minor awards would wish to continue doing so in light of the new processes and requirements from QQI. It was agreed that this a question which each individual Adult and Community Education provider must answer for themselves
- Some concern was expressed regarding CDETБ's continued support for non-accredited provision. It was stated that CDETБ would continue to support such provision in its own right and as an entry point and progression pathway to accredited provision
- One provider stated that the QQI re-engagement process can be resource intensive and if this is the case, is there extra funding to assist Adult and Community Education providers to complete the process?
- Another provider looked at their QA through their recent experience of a programme validation process. The work involved in programme validation was very significant for staff within the centre. The question was posed whether some collaborative process could be facilitated as part of programme validation?
- The Aontas sponsored Community of Practice group was seen as a positive resource and also the handbook which they have developed which is available on-line. It was agreed that CDETБ would email a copy of the handbook to Adult and Community Education providers
- The concept of a group of providers sharing and learning from one another was viewed as a positive development. However, for such a group to be truly effective, it was agreed, it must go beyond simply sharing, copying and or pasting documents
- It was noted that considerable experience had been gained by some providers in relation to the preparation phase for re-engagement which could be usefully shared between all providers
- From a CDETБ perspective it was stated that many of the issues that were identified by Adult and Community Education providers also impacted the provision of the CDETБ Adult Education Services

Tea/Coffee Break

4. Connection, Re-engagement and Validation - Treasa Brannick O'Cillín (CDETB)

In order to give attendees an overview and perspective on re-engagement and validation processes Treasa gave a Powerpoint presentation (copy appended). In her presentation Treasa made reference to key points and issues as follows:

- Within the new QA guidelines there is reference to thematic areas
- It would be important that providers re-write rather modify their existing QA policies and procedures
- The governance structure of each providers QA is very important as this supports more robust monitoring, review and self-evaluation processes through enhanced accountability and transparency
- It is essential that providers have developed QA procedures in order to address each thematic area
- The focus of re-engagement is to ensure that each provider has a clear and coherent structure/plan for quality assurance enhancement in line with the relevant QA guidelines and a governance structure to ensure implementation
- It may be beneficial, that where providers are commencing re-engagement that they leave programme development until after preparations are complete, as new QA processes will support programme development and delivery
- There is a shift from large programmes with multiple combinations of modules under the Common Awards System (CAS) to more holistic programmes with clearly defined Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs)
- Under the new Validation policy all Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOSs) and MIPLOs must be assessed and demonstrated as being achieved by learners, in order to be put forward for the relevant award. This represents a significant change in the approach taken to assessment in the FET sector
- In developing MIPLOS and MIMLOS providers must develop learning outcomes that are clearly assessable
- It is important to note the distinction between programme development and programme approval and that within a provider there needs to be a separation between both these areas and attached tasks

- The term sharing of curriculum is a more accurate term than sharing of programmes. There is potential for this but providers have to take full ownership of the programme which must be supported by their QA system
- There is also potential for cluster groups of providers to collaborate on the development and writing of programmes

5. Plenary Session - John Farrelly (CDETb)

A final plenary session was facilitated by John which enabled attendees to make any final comments or ask pressing questions. A range of contributions were made as follows:

- A number of attendees stated that they were clearer regarding what was involved in the re-engagement process and that they took comfort from speaking to and hearing of others experience
- Programmes will have to be updated and the MIMLOs and MIPLOS will have to be articulated and outlined
- Concern was expressed regarding the impact of new regulatory requirements from CORU which are giving rise to serious impediments to advanced level entry to higher education social care courses for learners completing a Level 6 programme
- CAS Awards are being reviewed
- Are there opportunities for Adult and Community Education providers to be involved in programme development processes with CDETb?
- Noted that all providers, (irrespective of the sector they deliver in) are on a similar journey of sharing and learning as regards the new QA/QQI requirements
- Noted that the Further Education Support Service (FESS) is working with NUI Maynooth on a Level 9 course on programme development
- Question posed regarding Adult and Community Education providers access to CDU training? Blake as FET Director will consider this request
- Mention was made of a new Level 5 course in Community Development Skills which the CDETb AES service will be providing. The course is under the Skills to Advance initiative and targeted at staff who are currently working in community development projects. Further information regarding this course is available from the CDETb Adult Education Service

6. Conclusion

To conclude the meeting Blake thanked all attendees for their participation and contributions and expressed thanks to Celia and the Adult Education Service in Ballymun for hosting the meeting.

7. List of Attendees

- Blake Hodkinson, FET Director, CDET B
- John Farrelly, FET Development Officer, CDET B
- Treasa Brannick O’Cillín, FET Development Officer, CDET B
- Celia Rafferty, CDET B Adult education Officer (AEO), Area 1
- Mairin Kenny, CDET B Adult Education Officer (AEO), Area 3
- Caoimhe Kerins, CDET B Adult Education Officer (AEO), Area 5
- Mary Walsh, Tutor Manager, CASPR, Dublin 1
- Ann Carroll, Manager, CASPR, Dublin 1
- Catherine Murphy, Team Leader, PETE Programme, Focus Ireland
- Áine Nicholls, Education Support Worker, PETE Programme, Focus Ireland
- Claire MacSimoin, Education Support Worker, PETE Programme, Focus Ireland
- Yvonne McCarthy, Coordinator HACE, Dublin 1
- Sharon Hurely, Project Manager, CMS Learning Centre, Dublin 8
- Mary Maher, Director, Dublin Adult Learning Centre, (DALC), Dublin 1
- Columba O Connor, Assistant Director Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC)
Dublin 1
- Lia Clarkson, Manager, Warrenmount Centre, Dublin 8
- Rachel Morrissey, Manager Community Education Centre, Dublin 8