

# HAVE YOUR SAY

CDETb self-evaluation of our quality systems  
student, learner, consultation 17 June 2021



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Research

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## **Acronyms**

CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
CFE	College of Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality assurance
QBS	QQI Business System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
TC	Training Centre
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

## Section 1: Introduction

### About this report

This report details the findings of a consultation event run by City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) with NFQ Level 1 -4 learners.

### Background

The mission statement of the CDETb is to 'provide professional high quality education and training services for people in Dublin city that contribute to both the personal development of the individual as well as to the overall social, economic and cultural development of the city'.<sup>1</sup> Under [Section 10 of The Education and Training Boards Act 2013](#), a key function of an ETB is to 'plan, provide, coordinate and review the provision of education and training...in its functional area' and thus, CDETb is responsible for the provision of Further Education and Training (FET). CDETb's 15 Colleges of Further Education (CFEs) are converted second-level schools. FET courses normally include a high level of practical skills development modules.

During 2021, CDETb is conducting an in the inaugural statutory review of its quality systems. This review, which will be prepared by CDETb in the form of a self-evaluation, is being prepared for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). [QQI is an independent State agency](#) responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. It has responsibility for regularly reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of an education provider's quality assurance procedures. Following the approval by QQI of the quality assurance procedures of education and training boards (ETBs) in 2018, the [inaugural review of quality assurance of ETBs](#) began in 2021.

A key focus for the quality systems review relates to how CDETb understands and assures quality in the objective of 'teaching, learning and assessment'. As part of the statutory review, CDETb must evidence how it provides, supports, monitors and evaluates quality for learners enrolled in the education and learning opportunities it provides. Areas of interest under this objective include:

- The learning environment;

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<sup>1</sup> From CDETb's [Statement of Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)

- How the progress of learners is assessed;
- How support is offered for learners and the consistency of such supports; and
- How the ETB self-evaluates, monitors and reviews the quality of its learning services.

The inaugural statutory review is taking place in a time in which CDETB and learners have had to innovate and adapt in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. CDETB is also eager to [assess its responses to the challenges for learners posed by the pandemic](#) to inform future educational provision.

### **About the event**

On the 17th of June 2021, 63 learners from Adult Education programmes, Community Training Workshops, specialists training programmes and Youthreaches in Dublin city came together to share their experiences of training and learning over the last few years. The learners who participated in the event were from 27 FET centres and had participated in 36 different courses. A total of 32 facilitators took part in the event.

### **Purpose of the event**

The purpose of the event was to ensure learners had an opportunity to contribute to the CDETB self-evaluation of their quality systems as part of the inaugural strategy review with a particular focus on objective 2 and impact of COVID 19 on teaching, learning and assessment in CDETB.

### **Objectives and rationale:**

- To contribute to the self-evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment in level 1-4 provision;
- To improve the quality and range of professional education delivery that responds to the learners needs by better understanding the learner journey;
- To gather the learner experience of the last year so that it can be shared and applied to CDETB future policy and practice (COVID 19 review).

### **Experiential aim for learners**

The experiential aim for learners was a positive empowering event where they leave feeling what they say is treated as important and that it will be listened to and used by CDETB to improve their services

### **Experiential aim for facilitators**

The experiential aim for facilitators was to see the learner journey and the last year through the learner's eyes.

### **About the facilitators**

A total of 32 CDETB staff facilitated and actively listened at the online sessions with learners. The facilitators were trained in facilitation skills using the focused conversation methodology. The roles of the facilitator for this event were to make sure that learners felt at ease, that they could speak openly and contribute, that they adhered to the ground rules set for the session; and that they left the event feeling positive and empowered. The facilitators worked in pairs so that they could support the learner to participate and to listen in order to gain and strengthen their understanding of the learners journey into and through CDETB programmes.

### **Guiding approaches and principles for the event**

Guided by its mission statement, CDETB adopted a number of inclusive and empowering engagement methodologies to engage with and include the voices of learners. CDETB is dedicated to embedding a culture and infrastructure for the learner voice to be heard, amplified and utilised within the organisation. To this end, a '[transformative dialogue](#)' approach was chosen by CDETB, a form of dialogue that 'may bring conflicting communities into more viable forms of coordination' as the underpinning approach to how the event would run. In encouraging open, affirmative, assumption-free and reflective conversation, CDETB aimed to truly learn more about the learner journeys and their



real experiences in education during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of identifying priority areas of focus for policy and practice enhancements in the future (See Figure 1).



Figure 1: Overview of the steps entailed in 'transformative dialogue' drawn from the [NCCA learner voice research study 2017](#)

The approach adopted by CDETb for this event was also influenced by:

- Principles from [The Lundy Model of Participation](#), leading to approaches that: allow for learners to have a space to express their views; that their voices are enabled; that they have an audience for their views; and their views will have influence.
- Recognising the need to meet the learner, employer and other stakeholders 'where they are at' and developing and delivering educational programmes that meets stakeholders where they are currently and provides educational opportunities to supports them to get to where they want to, or need to, be.

### Event structure

The event took place over Zoom between 11am and 1pm. Learners were divided into 16 groups of between 3 – 5 learners. An organisation named IMS provided technical support to coordinate the use of 'breakout rooms' to allow each small group of learners to join together for the event over Zoom. As digital literacy and access to technology was an issue for many of the learners at this event a

number of centres provided hubs for learners to attend the session via a computer in their local centre with local staff available to provide tech support. two facilitators/active listeners from CDETb were assigned to each of the learner groups. See appendices for full event structure.

## **Section 2: Journeys of the learners who participated in CDETb courses**

### **Student A: Anne\***

#### **About Anne:**

Anne is currently attending a Community Training College (CTC) and is in the second year of a Childcare course. She found some of the theory part of the course “boring” and thought there was a lot of writing. In terms of supports, Anne wanted to get some support around her learning before going to college. She felt doing this course would “open the door” to other courses for her. She is planning to go to college in September to do Social Studies. She is nervous about going to college. She found doing presentations as part of her Childcare course very helpful, giving her the confidence to speak in front of people.

#### **What does the CDETb need to remember?**

Anne thinks CDETb needs to remember that everyone learns differently. For example, some learners like whiteboards, computers, etc. She suggested that tutors should find out how the person learns. She felt this could make the difference between a student finishing assignments or not finishing them.

Anne found the process for applying for BTEA for her course difficult. She felt managers needed to know how to apply for this payment so they could help the student with applications rather than leaving the process solely up to the student.

#### **What went well?**

According to Anne, what went well was the amount of supports available to students. For example, even if students were struggling with art, supports could lead to group discussion or class debates. She also felt she could also ask other students in their class for support. This also helped students to get to know each other better.

Anne liked the variety of online First Aid courses available i.e., the Guardian Safety Course. These included short videos followed by questions and answers. She was able to link the learning from the First Aid course to her Childcare course, and as a result, she felt confident to administer First Aid skills in daily life if required.

#### **What didn't go well and what can we learn from that?**

Anne felt everything went "mostly well" during Covid. However, she expressed difficulty with the online Core Portal payment system. She would prefer going forward, to be given her payslip in her center or have it posted to her during Covid.

Anne engaged with online classes on her phone or through email. She found it "difficult" and "confusing" not having printed handouts of the lesson. She explained, for example, she would read questions on an email and answer the questions when she was in her center.

#### **What should CDETB keep?**

Anne would like to see CDETB keep "smaller numbers in groups". She felt there was less scope for "distraction" with smaller numbers.

\*The student's name has been changed for the report.

### **Student B: Barbara\***

#### **About Barbara:**

Barbara attended Career Preparation and a Europass Course. She completed her Career Preparation work experience in a restaurant in the city center prior to Covid. She found the Career Preparation course “a bit hard”.

#### **What went well?**

Barbara felt she received very good supports from all her tutors. She said they prepared her well for some of the jobs she would have to do during her work experience such as, cleaning tables, keeping the milk jugs full and preparing sandwiches for lunchtime.

#### **What didn't and what can we learn from that?**

Barbara felt her online classes went well but she “didn't really like them”. She would prefer to be in her class with other students. She was not keen to continue with online classes except where necessary, but would do them regardless if they became part of the course.

#### **What should CDETB keep?**

According to Barbara, CDETB should keep all the great supports from her tutors.

\*The student's name has been changed for the report.

### Section 3: Findings and Insights from the Event

#### What CDETБ needs to remember about learners

The consultation asked participants what CDETБ needs to remember about learners.

According to learners consulted in the event, CDETБ needs to remember that **learners come from diverse backgrounds and have different learner journeys**. Some learners might have had negative past experiences of education, for example early school leavers, and might be apprehensive about reengaging with education again.

It is important for CDETБ to remember that **learners have different learning needs**. This includes learners having different learning styles, e.g., visual learning, and learning at different paces. Some learners suggested more assignments rather than exam-based learning and assessment. It was suggested that learners should be given personalised learning plans to accommodate their different learning needs and tutors should work with learners at their own pace. This includes some learners learning at a slower as well as a faster pace than others. Listening to learners and involving them in the learning process was also considered to be important.

- *“Accommodate the different learning styles. I am more visual, it’s better than writing.”*
- *“Don’t forget that not all learners are struggling academically.... it’s demotivating when in classes with tutors and teachers always pitching to the learners who are struggling and everything is being repeated constantly to get learners up to a certain level.”*

Similarly, CDETB needs to remember that **learners have different support needs**. Some learners may require additional supports, for example:

- Stress and anxiety among some learners were mentioned. Therefore, it was suggested that CDETB should include programmes related to stress management and well-being for learners as part of courses throughout the academic year.
- Supports to develop learner's self-confidence and self-esteem were highlighted e.g., constant encouragement and non-judgmental approach from tutors.
- Continued career guidance, information and support was recommended.
- Continued IT supports were also discussed, including support with setting up devices.

Respondents felt CDETB should know that **learners have different progression pathways**. For example, not all learners want to progress to further education and training or employment. The main reasons for some learners to participate in classes may be social reasons, older people keeping their minds active etc. One learner said the main reason they engaged in classes was to stave off dementia. In addition, progression is not always linear for learners e.g., they can change direction depending on their personal circumstances, educational goals etc.

- *"A man in my group said for him it was about keeping engaged, keeping his mind stimulated and staving off dementia."*

Participants felt it was important for CDETB to know that **learners want to be treated as individuals and with respect**. This includes tutors having a teaching approach that treats learners in a mature manner, respected learners as individuals and ensuring there is a sense of equality between tutors and learners. As one learner stated, the community learners are joining should be "inclusive, welcoming and friendly"

- *"Continue to recognise that learners are individuals and should be treated as such."*

**Learners value the sense of belonging and community** that being part of a class and interacting with other learners and tutors brings. Learners spoke about the importance of interaction between them

and tutors, e.g., phone calls, text, Zoom. Some participants also spoke about **peer learning** e.g., learners helping each other in the learning process.

- *“I like people in my classes - where we can all help each other.”*

According to learners, it is important for **CDETB to advertise and promote courses**. This included CDETB:

- Making more people aware of the courses that are available.
  - Advertising and promoting courses as well as Training Centres and Community Training Centres to second level students.
  - Advertising and promoting apprenticeships more widely, e.g., to students in secondary schools through posters, leaflets etc.;
  - A gender equality approach when advertising apprenticeships e.g., advertising and promoting apprenticeships to females;
  - Ensuring centres where CDETB courses are run are better known in the communities they are located in.
- 
- *“People from CDETB should get in touch with secondary schools to explain what Training centres, CTC and CDETB has to offer.”*
- 
- *“Students think that apprenticeships are just for boys – some of the girls would like to learn plumbing etc. They actually try that and love it.”*

Learners felt CDETB should know **the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on many learners in a negative way**. The pandemic impacted negatively on learners in terms of:

- online learning was not a positive experience for many learners;
- lack of access to technology, devices and broadband e.g., attending classes via mobile phones;
- lack of digital skills among some learners;
- difficulties learning online e.g., practical classes;
- shorter classes;
- feeling left behind;

- missed the social aspect of learning with peers;
  - distractions at home.
- 
- *“Learners are joining a community which should be inclusive, welcoming and friendly.”*
  - *“Online classes for some learners were daunting, some were logging into class on phones, which wasn't a good experience.”*

However, respondents also wanted CDETB to know there were **positive outcomes related to the Covid-19 pandemic**. The key positive outcome was supportive tutors. This included tutors developing diverse and creative way of producing assignments, communicating with and supporting learners. Many learners talked about tutors ringing, texting and video calling them during the pandemic.

- *“Covid has forced many tutors to look at diverse and creative ways of producing assignments and this has had a huge impact on learners for the better.”*



## **Learner experience – focus on the personal journey**

### **What led learners to choosing to study with CDETБ?**

Learners had various reasons for choosing to study with CDETБ including:

- Some learners wanted to progress further in education.
  - Some learners found mainstream school difficult and were advised by teacher/guidance counsellors to apply for courses in CTCs etc.
  - Some learners who were older and hadn't engage in education in the past and now wanted to reengage in education.
  - Learners generally had an interest in the subjects they were studying in CDETБ or the jobs they might get in those areas e.g., cooking, childcare, beauty therapy.
  - Some learners were participating in courses as they were sent by their local Intreo office.
  - Some learners chose the centre they were studying in as a primary reason e.g., it was located in the area they lived, and the course as a secondary reason.
  - Some learners chose the centres because of the specialist supports they provided.
- *"I came from a generation that didn't do education – (I) wasn't interested in education because I got no encouragement."*
- *"Found school hard. Interested in cooking/catering. Guidance Counsellor and Teachers advised that the CTC would suit her."*

**Learners heard about courses** from different sources including word of mouth, guidance counsellors in schools, parents, family members, friends, neighbours, advertising and social welfare offices.

- *“(One learner) was on the ‘dole’ – she was looking for a job. She was interested in reception skills and there was a job advertised in the Gateway project.”*

### **What was the experience of studying with CDETБ like from learner’s perspectives?**

Learners were asked to discuss their experiences of studying with CDETБ from their own perspectives.

**Learners generally reported very positive experiences** of engaging with CDETБ courses.

#### **Positive experiences reported by Youthreach** included:

- An enjoyable experience for students.
  - A more positive learning environment than mainstream school.
  - Friendly, supportive, caring teachers.
  - A welcoming, accepting, homely and non-pressurised environment for students.
  - No bullying.
  - Work experience for students.
  - Progression pathways for students through guidance counselling supports.
- *“In Youthreach the teacher would do it from me. She was very motherly. She didn’t put pressure on me. I felt at home there than when I was in school.”*
  - *“Youthreach, it was alright, everyone was welcoming, still enjoying it at the moment. I am moving forward in childcare from L4 to L5. I am getting more experience.”*

**Adult education learner’s perspectives on CDETБ courses were also very positive.** Some of the positive aspects of participation in courses for adult education learners included:

- One learner described participation in adult education as “an unbelievable experience”.

- One learner spoke about the benefits of participation in adult education in relation to keeping their mind active and deterring dementia.
- *“(I) Started moving a pen around and brushes and it took off for me - I have four paintings on the go now. I am trying to keep dementia at the door by being active.”*

Some learners made suggestions as to how their learning experience could be improved. Suggestions included:

- Allowances for learners under 25 years of age to support them.
- Career guidance for learners when they are leaving their courses.
- More supports for learners to help them find jobs when they are finished their courses.
- More supports for learners applying for BTEI payments.
- *“Lack of Guidance when leaving courses- no support in helping learners get a job or know what they need to do next. (Learners) felt it was very much that if the student or the tutor had a direct link to an employer that works but not everyone does so it is unfair.”*

### **Did studying with CDETБ have a positive impact on learner’s lives?**

Overall, learners agreed **engaging in CDETБ courses had a positive impact on their lives.**

**Youthreach learners** shared the positive impact of the course on their lives which included:

- Being treated with respect by teachers and as an equal had a very positive impact on Youthreach learners e.g., calling teacher by their first name.
- Youthreach learners talked about building connections with teachers and feeling listened to.
- Many learners compared Youthreach to mainstream school and felt the way they learned and were taught by teachers in Youthreach was more positive and effective.
- Some learners talked about being brought out of their “comfort zone” in terms of education and learning.
- *“Youthreach - Calling teaching by their first name - You are looked at as equal.”*

Other learners spoke about positive impacts of learning on their lives including:

- The benefits of education in terms of improved mental health.
  - Increased self-confidence and self-esteem.
  - Learning new skills and trying new things.
  - Changed mindset in relation to learning and other aspects of life.
- *“A lot more confidence in own abilities, (to) jump into the deep end, constantly learning new skills/treatments, not afraid.”*

### **Where are learner’s planning to move on to?**

Learners were asked what are they planning to move on to after they have completed their courses. While some learners were unsure about what they planned to do next or if it would be possible to gain employment due to the impact of the pandemic, other learners outlined their plans which included:

- Progressing to other courses to gain more experience.
  - Getting a job i.e., in office work/administration, on a cruise ship
  - Working abroad/travel
  - Applying for Job Seekers benefit while looking for employment
- *“Next steps: might travel, work on a cruise ship (6/9-month contract), look up jobs abroad.”*

### **Did the course help get them ready for their future plans?**

Learners were asked if they thought their course had helped get them ready for these future plans. Overall, **learners felt their courses had helped them prepare for their future plans**. This included gaining qualifications to apply for jobs and progressing to further third level education. Some learners were still unsure as to what their future plans were, however, they were enjoying the learning experience and felt their courses had given them the confidence and experience to progress further with their education journey.

- *“My course gave me enough qualifications.”*
- *“I would like to law or business. I am learning what I want to do. Still thinking, still young.”*

### **Examples of Learner Journeys**

#### **Sarah – Youthreach Transition Centre – Youth and Community Development**

Sarah left school after transition year as she felt school was not for her. She started in Youthreach Transition Centre and is due to finish this year. Sarah found that the Youthreach method of teaching was more relaxed than school and she thrived in this environment. She has a place on a Criminology and Social Studies course in Ballsbridge CFE and is hoping to get a place on the Trinity Access Programme the following year.

#### **Tara – Gateway Projects – Childcare and Healthcare**

Tara had been previously studied with another provider. However, she felt that they were only interested in getting her on a course which may not be what she wanted. She was recommended Gateways by a family member and is now studying Healthcare. She has another year on her course and would like to work as a home help or in a nursing home.

#### **Renee – Henrietta Street – Hair and Beauty**

Renee was recommended by a family member to enrol on this course. She has another year left and is then hoping to open her own beauty parlour. She said that she was very anxious starting the course but has made great friends with other people on the course. The course has reached all her expectations. She struggled with Zoom but felt she has done really over the year.

#### **Jenny – Tolka Valley CTC -Beauty Course**

A friend recommended Tolka Valley CTC to Jenny. She has an interest in beauty and is working part-time in a beauty salon. She has also done part-time beauty courses She is due to finish in 2022 and is looking to work in the beauty industry.

**Jacqui – KLEAR Kilbarrack – Computers/Mobile Phone.**

Jacqui has been with KLEAR for a number of years. The reason she went back to education was that she wanted to learn something new. She has just finished a computers course and part of that was learning how to use Zoom. She has found this very helpful especially in the situation we are in at present.

**Summarising experiences of studying this year**

Learners were asked to pick a word or image to summarise their experiences of studying with CDETB this year. Facilitators outlined the question areas and gave participants a few minutes to think about their learner experiences. Learners were then asked to draw it (map), write it, search for images online to represent it or use pictures provided to learners.

The following descriptions were given by learners in relation to the pictures:

- The dog picture: *"I like being quiet - I will rather be in the building than at home."*
- Cliff to cliff picture: *"Investing in yourself picture - tech is becoming more important."*
- Zoom picture: *"Keeping in contact."*
- Boulder being pushed up the hill picture: Learner stated that she felt lost not being able to come up to the centre.
- Sun breaking through the trees picture: How a learner felt now that she was back learning. Her son also bought her a laptop and she is looking forward to attending computer classes in September to learn how to use it.

## Lessons for CDETB from the learner Journey

Respondents at the event were asked what do they think CDETB needs to remember about learners when they are evaluating their service and programmes or when deciding what to do next.

### What worked well?

Learners were asked what worked well in the last year in terms of their learner experience. Many of the themes raised by learners related to learning online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to learners, **tutor supports during the Covid-19 pandemic** worked very well. Learners felt supported by CDETB tutors during the pandemic through Zoom calls, phone calls, texts and the option of more one-to-one time with tutors. The communication skills of tutors in terms of organising classes were also commended by learners. In general, learners felt tutors were supportive, approachable, consistent, understanding, patient etc. Tutors were also judged to treat learners like adults and with respect.

- *“Teachers (were) brilliant, they kept everything and everyone going in what was a very stressful time for some learners.”*
- *“One learner commented on the fact that their tutors were extremely patient and understanding and that it took a lot of support each week just to get some learners on to Zoom but they persevered.”*

Some learners received **digital supports** during the Covid-19 pandemic which they found very useful. This included laptop loan schemes which were available to some students.

- *“One student availed of the laptop loan scheme but it was not available to all in the group.”*

**Positive aspects of online learning** were highlighted by some learners. Some learners felt online learning worked well as they learned new digital skills, liked working from home, working their own pace, found online learning more engaging etc. Some learners felt online classes worked very well in relation to developing practical interview skills, video calls, using different online platforms and CV preparation. One learner completed 3 months of a hairdressing course via Zoom. She felt this was a good experience as she had experienced anxiety about attending a centre and meeting new people. Zoom allowed the learner to get to know other learners and “break the ice” before meeting them face-to-face.

- *“They (learners) learned new skills which they may not have learned in other years. One student was using GSuite. She was very impressed with this as she could access her assignment were stored, she could share her work with the tutors and her email was all in the one programme.”*
- 
- *“(I was) spurred on to work more at home - Love the class- I like to work at home.”*

**Smaller class sizes** were considered to work well by many learners. Learners felt classes worked better now that they were smaller in size due to the pandemic e.g., four to six students. Benefits of smaller class sizes included being more focused and receiving more attention from tutors. Some learners said ‘pods’ worked well as they were working with a small group of learners and one tutor, it was consistent and it worked well for practical classes and exams.

- *“Small class sizes are good for people. Can separate people into fast and slow workers.”*

**Peer-to peer learning and support** was mentioned by some learners as working well. Some learners spoke about learners coming together to support each other during the pandemic.



Many learners talked about personal benefits and outcomes, in particular **increased self-confidence and self-esteem**, through participation in courses and support from tutors. The importance of tutors treating learners as equals was highlighted in terms of increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Learners also felt more confident to go on to further education and training or employment after completing courses. Attending ESOL classes really helped one learner with many aspects of her life including self-confidence, ability, sense of belonging, being able to talk to her children in English.

- *“Learners felt that because of the course they found they have grown-up and become more confident.”*
- *“Almost all of the learners mentioned how their experience through their course, increased their confidence and this empowered them to continue and set in motion learning goals.”*

Many learners felt their courses worked well as they had a different and **more positive approach to learning compared with school** e.g., learners chose to attend courses rather than being forced to attend school, less pressurised than school, no fear of being ‘put out’. The positive relationship between learners and teachers/tutors in CDETB courses compared to mainstream schools was also discussed.

- *“Learners stated that they wished they had always been able to learn like this instead of the experience of secondary school which they had.”*

**Flexibility for learners with different learning needs** were considered to work well by learners. For example, flexibility to complete assignments in different ways such as via voice notes, interviews with students etc. This helped learners who might find one large assignment difficult to complete.

- *“A support worker who accompanied one of the learners said that the programme was brilliant because it allowed learners the flexibility to submit assignments in different ways e.g. over voice notes or interviews with students. This took the fear away from learners around one big assignment as it made it accessible to all and everyone was encouraged to do the assignment in different ways.”*

**Improved education benefits and outcomes** e.g., improved literacy, grammar, comprehension, were mentioned by many learners as working well. This included changing learner's attitudes and mindsets towards education and learning.

- *"Changed their attitude to learning and education."*

The **social benefits and outcomes** for learners e.g., making new friends, were highlighted by many participants.

- *"Attending the course help them (learners) develop and grow, make new friends."*

Overall, learners enjoyed their courses and had a **sense of pride and achievement** in completing courses. One learner talked about having a "huge sense of achievement" in completing their Junior Certificate.

**CDETb initiatives** such as 'Student of the Month' and 'Attendance Awards' were considered by learners to work well and to motivate them to learn and engage with education.

- *"Student of the Month which motivated students to work harder and Attendance Awards."*

### **What didn't work well and what can be learned from this?**

Learners were also asked what didn't work well in the last year and what can be learned from this experience. The main issues raised by learners in terms of what didn't work well related to **learning online due to the Covid-19 pandemic**.

**Challenges and frustrations related to online learning and technology** were the most common issues raised by participants. Many learners talked about a lack of access to technology, devices, computers, using mobile phones to access classes and having poor broadband. Many learners said they would not

continue to study in the future if courses were online. What would help was access to technology, laptops etc. for learners. More training for tutors on teaching online was also suggested by learners.

- *“One of the students had no computer and was using her phone which is not ideal for studying and completing assignments.”*
- *“Screen time was high as some of them were on screens for 13 hours per day through studying and personal use.”*

**Challenges associated with completing practical classes online** e.g., lack of appropriate facilities, was also highlighted by participants. What would help is returning to the classroom environment.

- *“Zoom was a no go for us. We, as beauty therapists, need to be in class at all times to take in what’s going on and work practically. Zoom was very distracting and we didn’t engage properly.”*
- *“Two learners who had been on a programme in a CTC during Covid-19 restrictions had really struggled with learning over Zoom, especially as training to be beauticians involves having to do so much practical work. They didn’t have access to Laptops and were doing everything over their phones. The example of having to learn all the systems of the body as part of their anatomy and physiology module incredibly challenging and to do assessments like that also.”*

**Challenges associated with online learning at home** was discussed by participants. Learners found it difficult to work online at home due to distractions, lack of motivation, screen time, fatigue, burnout, lack of space and privacy etc. Some learners said they felt more organised and focused when they were in the classroom and harder to take notes online at home. Other learners struggled with time management and lack of structure when learning online due to distractions.

- *“I felt like giving up a few times – (being) stuck at home.”*

- *“Motivation at home was difficult.....too many distractions.”*
- *“One Youthreach learner who worked part time in McDonalds went full time as his home environment didn’t suit to work from home.”*

**Scheduling/timetabling for online classes** was not judged to have worked well by many learners. Online classes clashing with each other was frustrating for some learners. What would work better would be an advanced timetable for learners to schedule other commitments, work etc. and spacing out classes more.

- *“Schedule is badly organised, Zoom/in person. Last minute, only night before; living day by day. Likes routine/schedule. Not knowing if you are supposed to be in. Timetable would be handy – for the week/month. Some people have part-time jobs, other commitments; we are adults. 9.30-4 or similar would help.”*

Some learners felt **digital documents** did not work well in relation to learning from home. What would have worked better was access to printed documents.

- *“Would have preferred printed documents but only received digital documents.”*

**Learners missed the face-to-face social interaction** with other learners due to learning online and reported feeling isolated. One learner said they felt like giving up at once stage due to being stuck at home learning online. Another learner felt they missed out on physically meeting classmates and having trips because of the pandemic. What would help was getting back to face-to-face interactions in the classroom. Some learners felt apprehensive about returning to the classroom after learning online. What helped was support from tutors.

- *“Missed not having trips out to physically meet your class group.”*

Learners who were in the classroom also found it harder to get to know other learners due to Covid-19 social distance protocols and mask wearing. What would help is being back in the classroom.

- *"It was harder to get to get to know other learners due to COVID 19 social distance protocols and mask wearing, therefore, the social aspect of attendance on the course suffered."*

**Challenges related to doing a work placement during Covid-19** and work placements not linked to courses was raised by some learners as not working well. What would help is if work placement was linked to courses.

- *"Work placement during COVID, was difficult. Did placement, but was not even applicable to the course in the end."*

Learners also felt it can be **difficult to get a job after completing courses**. Linking learners to temping agencies, providing connections and more support from centres could work well to help learners gain employment after completing courses.

- *"What happens after the course? Nothing after that. If you don't know anybody, hard to get a job. Connections are vital...why not link to temp agencies?"*

**Front of house staff not welcoming** was raised as an issue by one learner. The learner felt the front of house person is very important in terms of making learners feel welcome and should be adequately trained.

- *"Front of house is very important. The first person you meet should be welcoming - some staff may need a refresher course."*

### **What new ways of learning should be kept?**

As a result of COVID 19, CDETB had to adapt their model of learning e.g., online learning, work experience. The event asked respondents what aspects of this new model should be maintained into the future.

Suggestions made by learners as what new ways of learning should be kept included:

- Smaller class sizes for learners.
  - Ensuring all learners have access to technology, devices, computers, broadband etc.
  - Development of courses with a blend of online and face-to-face learning.
  - Use of technology for online learning, supports, communication e.g., Zoom meetings, emails.
  - Further development of learner's digital literacy skills.
  - Ensure all online provisions is based on respectful engagement between learners and teachers, tutors, instructors etc.
  - All information being available to learners in one place e.g., on laptop/online.
  - Make class notes and recorded classes available online after class is over.
  - Emails to learners informing them of classes, assignments etc.
  - Screensharing and interacting with other learners.
  - Development of a range of social activities and events online to promote interaction between learners and tutors e.g., quizzes
  - Programmes that promote positive mental health, wellness and stress relief for learners.
  - Being able to learn online/from home was positive for some learners e.g., no travel, motivated some learners to learn and work on their own, provided some learners with more time to spend with family, positive experience for learners with anxiety.
- *"Keep using technology, online assessments."*
- *"Keep the small groups, bring us back in, if we are doing Zoom, we need to be supplied with some sort of iPad/laptop as some of us have phones that burn up & our batteries do be drained."*

- *“Managing stress and wellness/mental health programmes should be kept.”*
- *“Art over zoom - Spur to work more at home. Love the class, I like to work at home.”*
- *“I love PC and phones. Maybe it was a bit tricky getting used to it but I loved it - I had connections with teachers/ it was like texting a friend it was that simple. I got to spend a lot of time with my family. If I don't have a class I could play with my dog. I sometimes have anxiety and my dog helps with that.”*

## **Section 4: Learners' evaluations of the 'Have Your Say' event**

### **Introduction**

A total of seven participants completed the evaluation form after the event. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with a number of statements (voting '1' for 'strongly disagree', up to '5' denoting 'strongly agree').

The statements and average scores are set out below:

- I have been listened to from the start – average score of 5.0
- I felt comfortable giving my opinions – average score of 5.0
- I felt safe giving my opinions – average score of 5.0
- A lot of different voices were included – average score of 5.0
- I got a chance to give my opinions – average score of 5.0
- I got enough information to help me give my opinion – average score of 5.0
- I got support to have my voice heard – average score of 5.0
- I understood what was being discussed – average score of 5.0
- I could give my opinion in different ways – average score of 4.86
- I had enough time to talk – average score of 4.71
- I know who wants to hear our opinions – average score of 5.0
- I know why they want the opinions of students, trainees, and apprentices – average score of 5.0
- They were honest about what they would try to do with our opinions and ideas – average score of 5.0
- I know where our opinions are going next – average score of 5.0
- I know how we will be told about what happens to our opinions – average score of 4.86
- I think what we said today will be taken seriously – average score of 5.0

### **What were the best things about today?**

Participants were asked what they thought were the best things about the day. The most common responses were:

- Everything.



- Talking about their own learning experiences, giving their opinions and feeling. listened to by organisers.
  - Listening to other people's learning experiences and opinions.
  - Everyone getting a chance to speak.
  - It was clear what the organisers were looking for from respondents.
  - It was well organised.
- *"I thought the best thing about today was everything to be honest I really enjoyed it!"*
- *"Feeling like my voice mattered and that the people running the service really cared about making it the best it could be."*
- *"It was great to hear other student's opinions on their courses and their opinions on how they would learn e.g., combined learning."*
- *"I am a past student of Crumlin Youthreach and I loved talking about my experience there, It really is a topic I could talk about for hours upon hours and really enjoy doing so, therefore, that was the best part for me talking about something I love, miss and care for so much. I've now not been part of the course for almost a year and still keep in touch with coordinator regularly. This centre became my family and always will have a special place in my heart :)"*

### **What would you change about today?**

Participants were also asked what they would change about the day. The majority of participants said there was nothing they would change about the event. The main suggestions made by participants were:

- More time to talk.
  - Conducting the consultation in person so participants and facilitators can interact with each other.
  - Technical difficulties.
- *"I wouldn't change anything. I thought it went really well and wouldn't mind doing it again!"*

- *"It probably would have helped to have a bit more time, we were a bit rushed at the end."*
- *"Next time an assembly in the college so the panel could interact with the students in person. Groups from various courses could be organised into small groups with one person to give the feedback to the panel."*

## Section 4: Conclusion

This report details the findings of consultations with Level 1-4 learners in CDETB. Overall, learners had a very positive learning experience with CDETB.

What learners think is most important for CDETB to remember is learners are a diverse group that come from different backgrounds, have different journeys, different progression paths, different learning needs and require different learner supports. Learners also felt it was important for CDETB to remember that learners want to be treated as individuals and with respect. Being part of a community and having a sense of belonging was highlighted by learners as being important too.

Learners generally had very positive experiences of learning with CDETB and felt the courses they participated in had a positive impact on their lives. This was particularly the case for Youthreach learners and adult education learners.

Aspects of the learner experience that worked well included supports offered by tutors during the Covid-19 pandemic, digital supports, positive aspects of online learning, smaller classes and peer-to-peer learning support. Many learners spoke about personal benefits and outcomes such as increased self-confidence and self-esteem due to engagement in CDETB courses as well educational and social benefits and outcomes. Other aspects of the learner experience that worked well was the positive unique approach compared with mainstream education and flexibility for learners in terms of their learning needs.

According to learners, what didn't work well was mainly challenges related to learning online due to the Covid-19 pandemic such as access to technology, digital skills, screen time, completing practical classes online and learning from home.

Finally, learners agreed certain new ways of learning could be maintained into the future by CDETB including smaller class sizes, development of blended online and face-to-face courses as an option for learners and further development of learner's digital skills to build on the work already done

## **List of Appendices**

1. Invite issued by City of Dublin Education and Training Board to learners to take part in the 'Have Your Say' learner consultation event
2. Summary infographic facilitators guide developed by CDET B
3. Summary infographic for learners participating in the 'Have Your Say' learner consultation event
4. Detailed facilitators guidance notes for the 'Have Your Say' learner consultation event
5. list of courses and services the participants came from

## Appendix 1: Invite issued to learners

### HAVE YOUR SAY



Click [here](#) to accept the invitation



We would like you to share your experience of being a student or learner on a CDETБ programme



We want to get better at what we do and how we do it



We have invited 90 students and learners from centres across the city to meet with us from **10.45-1pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021** (zoom room opens at 10.30am)



You will be in a group with 6-8 other learners to share your experience and ideas with us



We will use what you tell us to shape Further Education and Training in Dublin City

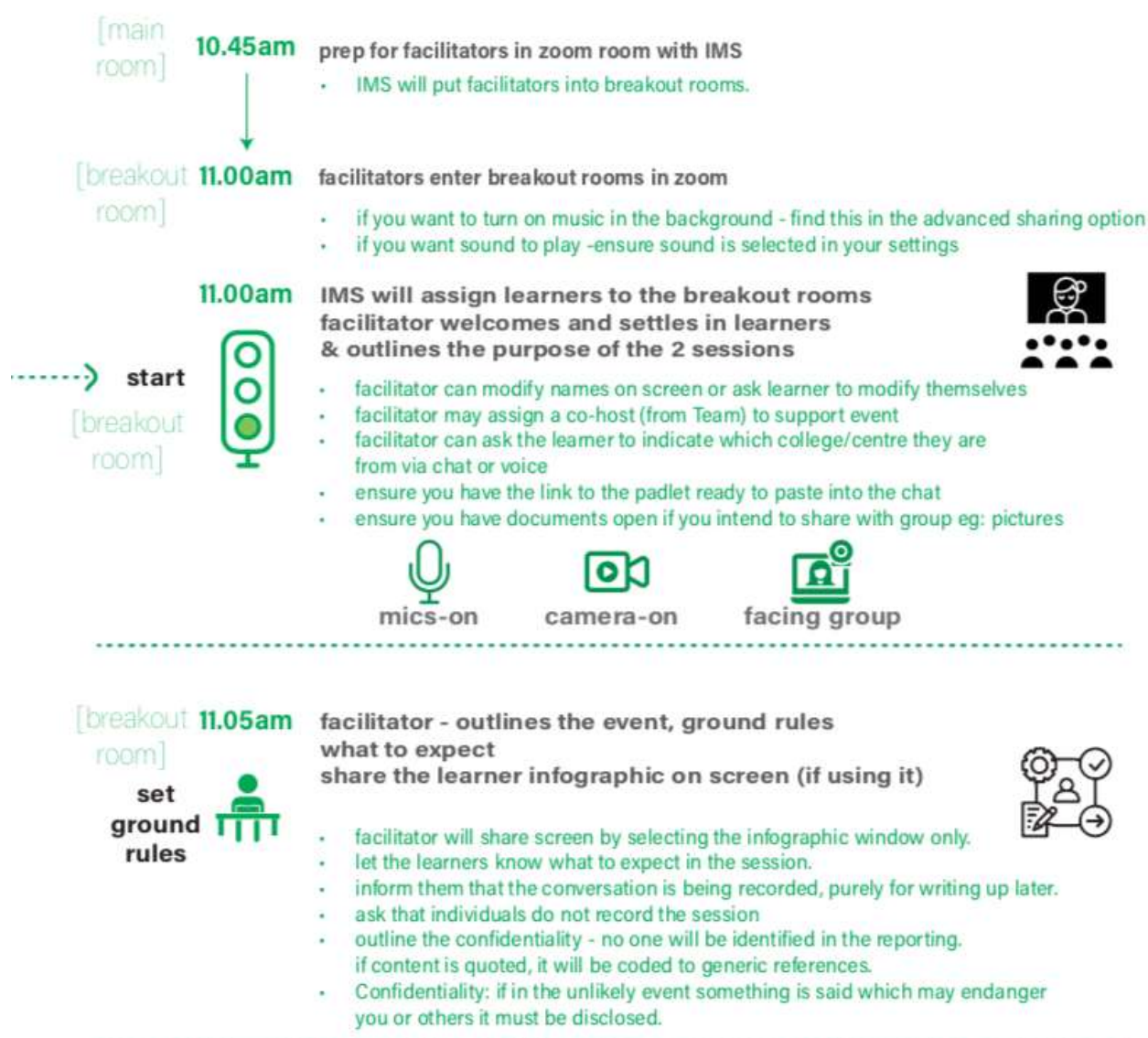


## Facilitators notes for learner event 13th May

# HAVE YOUR SAY

## CDETB self-evaluation of our quality systems

student, learner, consultation 17 June, 2021



**11.10am** "learner experience"  
cast the questions on screen to prompt conversation  
or put them into the chat

engage  
group



- what led them to choosing their course? why CDETb?
- what was it like, from their experience?
- did it have a positive impact on their life?
- where are they planning to move on to?
- did the course help in getting them ready for that?



[breakout  
room]

**cast questions** **listen** **reflect**

- what was the year like for you?
- did you change in any way or did your life change as a result of this course?
- do you feel differently about your life/future as a result of doing this course?
- have you plans to progress to something else after the course?
- did the course help you to get there or make this decision?

**11.35pm** lessons for CDETb from learners

[breakout  
room]

- what can CDETb learn from the learners feedback?
- what is working well and what isn't working well?
- ask everyone to input- go around the room
- ask if there is an image or a song that might capture the learners experience of the course this year?

**11.45am** **10mins-comfort break**

[main  
room]

**11.55am** Enter Main room

- learners will be brought into the main room for demo on how to use a padlet.
- paste the link to the padlet into the chat in the breakout room

[back to  
breakout  
room]

- returns to breakout room
- if you use a whiteboard cast it and ensure you save whiteboard.
- if you're using the the chat function, save it before leaving the session.
- if you're using the padlet link it into the chat and direct learners to use padlet to input observations.
- if using images, cast them and ask learners to reflect on them.

**Q's**

- what went well?
- what didn't?
- what can we learn?
- what changes due to COVID should be kept?



cast images

**12.30pm** nominate a person from the group to share/feedback to the main room  
only one area - (one of the Qs- this will be assigned)

[main  
room]

**12.40pm** leave breakout rooms to feedback points to the main room  
-only one area - (one of the Qs)



**12.55pm** closing and thank you...   well done...

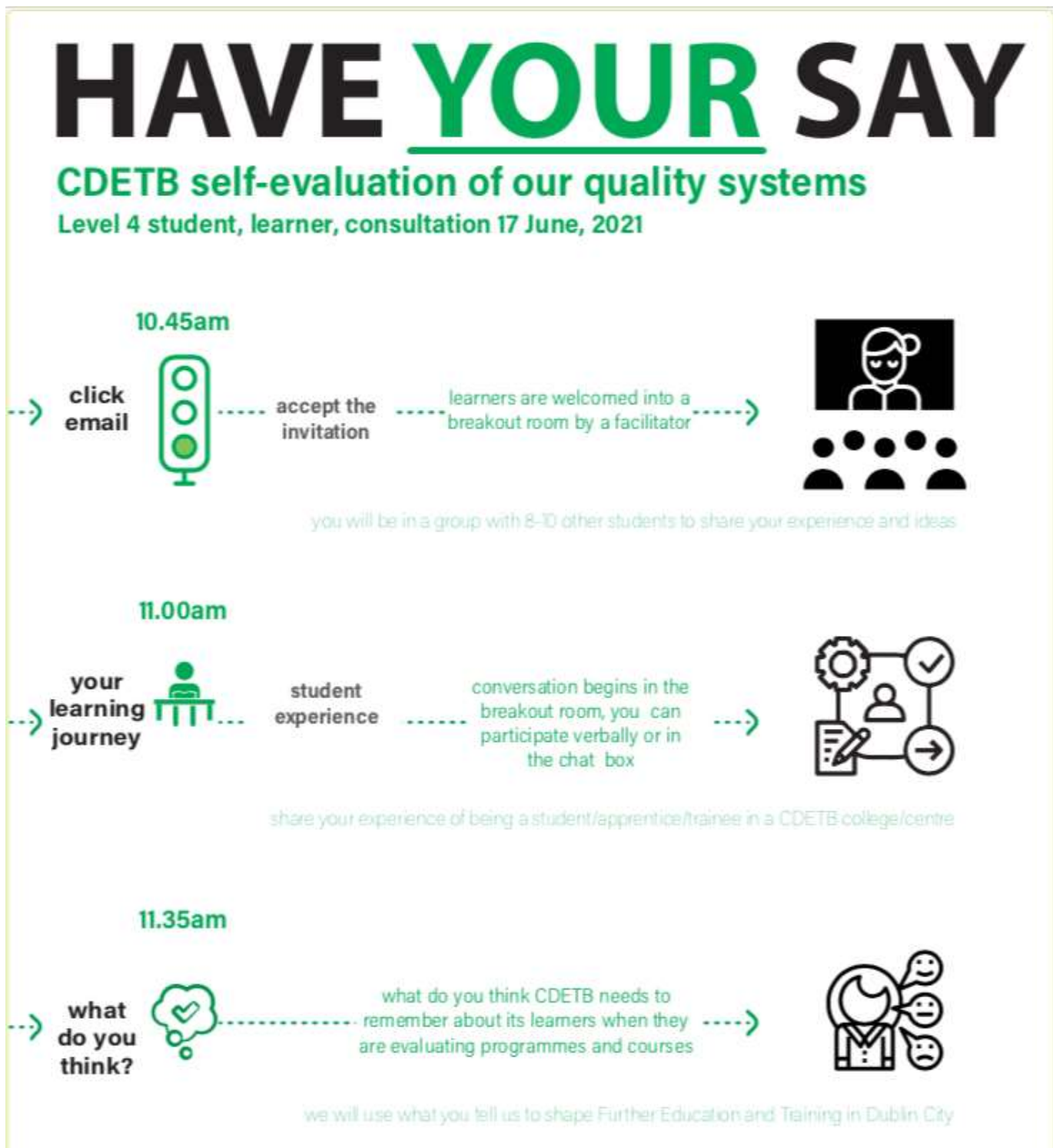
 **self-evaluation of our quality systems**

**CDETb**

Centre for Digital Education and Training  
The City School, London, UK



## Appendix 3: Summary infographic for learners participating in the 'Have Your Say' event







## Appendix 4: Detailed facilitators guidance notes for the 'Have Your Say' learner consultation event

### Learners level 1-4 11am – 1pm on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**Purpose:** To ensure learners have an opportunity to contribute to the CDETB self-evaluation of our quality systems as part of the [inaugural statutory](#) review with a particular focus on objective 2 and impact of COVID 19 on teaching, learning and assessment in CDETB.

**Experiential aim for learners:** A positive empowering event where they leave feeling what they say is treated as important and that it will be listened to and used by CDETB to improve our services

**Experiential aim for facilitators:** to see the learner journey and the last year through the learner's eyes

#### Objective Rationale:


- to contribute to the self-evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment in level 1-4 provision
- to improve the quality and range of professional education delivery that responds to the learners needs by better understanding the learner journey,
- To gather the learner experience of the last year so that it can be shared and applied to CDETB future policy and practice (COVID 19 review)

[link](#) to padlet [link](#) to video on how to use padlet

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
10.00am  Main room	<b>Prep in the zoom room</b>  All facilitators attend prep meeting for last minute prep and clarification	Close all applications on your computer that you don't need for this session. Open all the applications needed.	Let facilitators into main room for final prep
10.30am  Breakout room	<b>Facilitators enter breakout rooms</b>  <a href="#">Link</a> to padlet <a href="#">Link to video about using this padlet</a>	Open all the applications needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Infographic</li><li>• Pictures</li><li>• Padlet</li></ul>	Main room has backdrop cast /welcome to the 'have your say'  Set up break out rooms based on facilitators first name  Put facilitator into their breakout room Put <a href="#">link</a> to Padlet in chat in each room
10.45am  Opening	<b>Open 'doors' to event – let participants enter</b>  As the learners enter, the job of the facilitator is to put them at	Get learners to put their name /what they want to be called as	As learners enter, (mikes on, cameras on) they are randomly put into breakout rooms – 1 per room for first 10 rooms.

	<p>their ease, get them relaxed and talking. (Check if the name on screen in their name/what they want to be called) Just make them welcome and get them chatting, make sure everyone is introduced to each other. The topic of the chat doesn't matter the first 8 – 10 mins is about settling them in and getting everyone speaking)</p>	<p>the name showing on their screen. (right click on the participant and click rename)</p>	<p>The next 5 rooms open when there are 6 people in each of the first rooms</p>
11.05am	<p><b>What CDETB needs to remember about learners</b></p> <p><b>Outline of the event, ground rules for the event, prepping group for learner experience session (personal journey)</b></p> <p>Facilitator to let the learners know what to expect. (See infographic) and take them through the commitments from CDETB to the group.</p> <p><b>Commitments from CDETB to group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ask people not to record the session</li> <li>RECORD session – if anyone does not want to be recorded they can come back to the main room and will be put into a group with note taker</li> <li>REPORT/TAKING NOTE let them know that we will be doing a report of the event so that you might need to take notes. So if you look away or are writing it is just so you can remember afterwards</li> <li>PADLET let them know that there is a padlet link in the chat. The first question is <b>'what do we need to remember about learners'</b> as the discussion is going on if they what to type anonymously onto the first</li> </ul>	<p>Cast infographic</p> <p>Have infographic open on your computer</p>	<p>Send prompts to breakout rooms - 11.05am – what CDETB needs to remember about learners</p>

	<p>question of that they can. Tell them your name so they write on the right padlet (important to highlight the things we are good at remembering as well so that we don't stop doing those things)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONFIDENTIALITY -Nobody will be identified in the report (nothing said in the session will be tied back to the person speaking- any quotes included will be coded i.e. (participant A, or 'Mary')</li> <li>• LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY – clarify that we are bound by the limits of confidentiality that if someone shares something that may result in harm coming to them or another or is illegal then we would not be able to keep that confidential.</li> <li>• Try to be <b>present</b> for the session esp. when someone is speaking about their personal experiences</li> <li>• CAMERA ON/OFF ok to keep camera off if they want to but if they could try and keep it on when people are sharing their experiences</li> </ul>		
11.05am	<p><b>Learner experience – focus on personal journey</b></p> <p>What we want them to tell us about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What led them to choosing to study with CDET B</li> <li>• What was the experience like from their perspective</li> <li>• Did it have a positive impact on their lives</li> <li>• Where are they planning to move on to</li> <li>• Did the course help get them ready for that</li> </ul>		<p>Send prompts to breakout rooms</p> <p>11.05 – learners personal experience /journey</p>

	<p>Why we want them to tell us</p> <p><b>To understand the learner journey from the learners perspective –</b></p> <p><b>Learner experience /learner journey</b> Facilitator to outline the question areas and give the participant a few minutes to think about their learner experience (as above)– they can draw it (map) write it, search for images online to represent it or use the pictures attached.</p>		
Objective		If using picture – cast picture 1	
Reflective	<p><b>Opening</b></p> <p>‘Which picture best represents what led you to choose to study’?</p>		
Interruptive	<p><b>Focused conversation questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What led you to choose the course/college you did? <input type="radio"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you come straight from school? <input type="radio"/></li> <li>Was this your first choice? <input type="radio"/></li> <li>are you retraining – have you been working for a while already <input type="radio"/></li> <li>Are you coming back from a break in paid work / study – were you raising kids <input type="radio"/></li> </ul> </li> <li>What prompted you to choose to come here? <input type="radio"/></li> <li>What course did you pick and why? <input type="radio"/></li> <li>Was the course what you expected? <input type="radio"/></li> <li>What was the year/2 years like? <input type="radio"/></li> </ul>		 <p>The grid contains 12 small images arranged in three rows of four. The images depict various scenes: a person walking on a path, a person sitting on a bench, a person looking out a window, a person holding a sign, a person working at a desk, a person standing in a field, a person sitting at a table, a person standing in a line, a person working at a desk, a person standing in a field, a person sitting at a table, and a person standing in a line.</p>

	<p>(we will cover the detail of this in session two. session one is about how it impacted on them)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What impact did it have on you?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did you change this year? – because of the experience  </li> <li>• did your relationships with family and change because of doing the course/apprenticeship?  </li> <li>• did your circumstances change (get a job, start or end a relationship )?  </li> <li>• do you feel different about your life /future after doing the course?  </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where are you going to next /planning to go to next? O</li> <li>• Did the course help get you ready for that?  </li> </ul>		
11.35	<p><b>Lessons for CDETB from the learner Journey</b></p> <p><i>What do you think CDETB needs to remember about learners when we are evaluating our service and programmes or when deciding what to do next? D</i></p> <p>(so that we know what is working well so we can do more of it, or what is not going so well and how it could be improved)</p> <p>Everyone gives their input (go around the group 1 at a time) then see if there is an image, or song that sums it up.</p> <p>Thank participants for sharing their experiences and give a 10-minute break. (back at 11.55pm)</p>		<p>Send prompts to breakout rooms -</p> <p>11.35 – what do you think CDETB needs to remember</p> <p>11.50 – 5 minutes left</p> <p>11.53 – 2 minutes left</p> <p>1 min countdown</p>
11.45 Main room	<p><b>10 min comfort break</b></p> <p>Slide showing – see you at 11.55</p>		<p>Cast slide in main room – enjoy your break, see you at 11.55</p>



	<p>Use padlet for 3 questions (heading with a coloured sticker by room – using name of facilitator) – each workshop to start on a different question - Give that question 10 mins then 5 each for the other 2. Learners can be putting their points into any of the 3 padlets while the discussion is going on.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. What went well</b></li> <li><b>2. What didn't and what can we learn from that</b></li> <li><b>3. Because of COVID 19 we had to do some things differently</b> (e.g remote teaching (zoom/teams, phone, videos in advance) online assessments/no exams, virtual open days, replacing work experience) – <b>We want your opinion on what we should keep doing and why?</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Agree the 1 point for feedback to the main group</b></p> <p>Remind learners that Padlets will remain open until 5pm on Friday if they think of something later</p>	<p>John F &amp; Paulina Lorraine &amp; Catherine Barbara &amp; Dave Eoin &amp; Nicola Joan &amp; Paul</p> <p>Q2 John K &amp; Anna Teresa &amp; Carley Mary &amp; Mary Stephen O'N &amp; Denise Grainne &amp; Liz</p> <p>Q3 Carrie &amp; Blake Stephen G &amp; Siobhan Margaret &amp; Audrey Eva, Anne &amp; Madeline Clare &amp; Yvonne</p>	<p>Prompt into breakout rooms</p> <p>12.20 - Begin questions</p> <p>12.30 – 5 mins left pick your main point for feedback if you have not already done so.</p> <p>Give 2 minute warning for returning to group</p>
12.35	<p>Gather feedback to main group – Blake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First 4 groups to feedback what went well</li> <li>• Next 4 feedback what didn't go so well and what we learned from it.</li> <li>• Last 4 to feedback the things to keep</li> </ul>		<p>Close all breakout rooms and turn off mikes. (allow people to unmute themselves)</p> <p>Record session</p> <p>Spotlight Blake</p>
12.55	<p>In main group thank participants, explain what will happen next</p> <p>Spin the wheel for prize for 1 learner attending</p>		<p>Mute all mikes but main speaker – keep Blake spotlighted</p>



Facilitators Padlet for review session: <https://cdebtb.padlet.org/louiseftzpatrick/fwyiklqqazliq8pg>

Link for learner feedback: <https://forms.office.com/r/L8GmutSHN6>

## Appendix 5: courses and centres the learners came from

### *Courses and centres participants came from*

- Youthreach centres (QQI courses at level 4 – General learning)
- Adult Education Areas (non-certified literacy programmes and QQI programmes at level 2, 3 & 4)
- CTCs (QQI courses at level 3&4)
- Local Training Initiatives (QQI courses at level 3&4)
- Specialist training providers (QQI courses at level 3&4)

### Course areas as listed by the learners

*Beauty Therapy Diploma*

*History*

*Owl program*

*General Learning*

*Art*

*Literacy*

*Read Write Spell*

*Health care*

*QQI Level 4 General Learning*

*Catering*

*Early school leaver programme/ QQI level 4*

*horsemanship award*

*Customer service and computer*

*QQI General Learning Youthreach*

*Healthcare*

*VTCT Hair & Beauty & VTCT Barbering*

*Challenging Discrimination*

*Maths*

*Art& creative writing*

*Youth and community studies*

*ESOL*

*childcare*