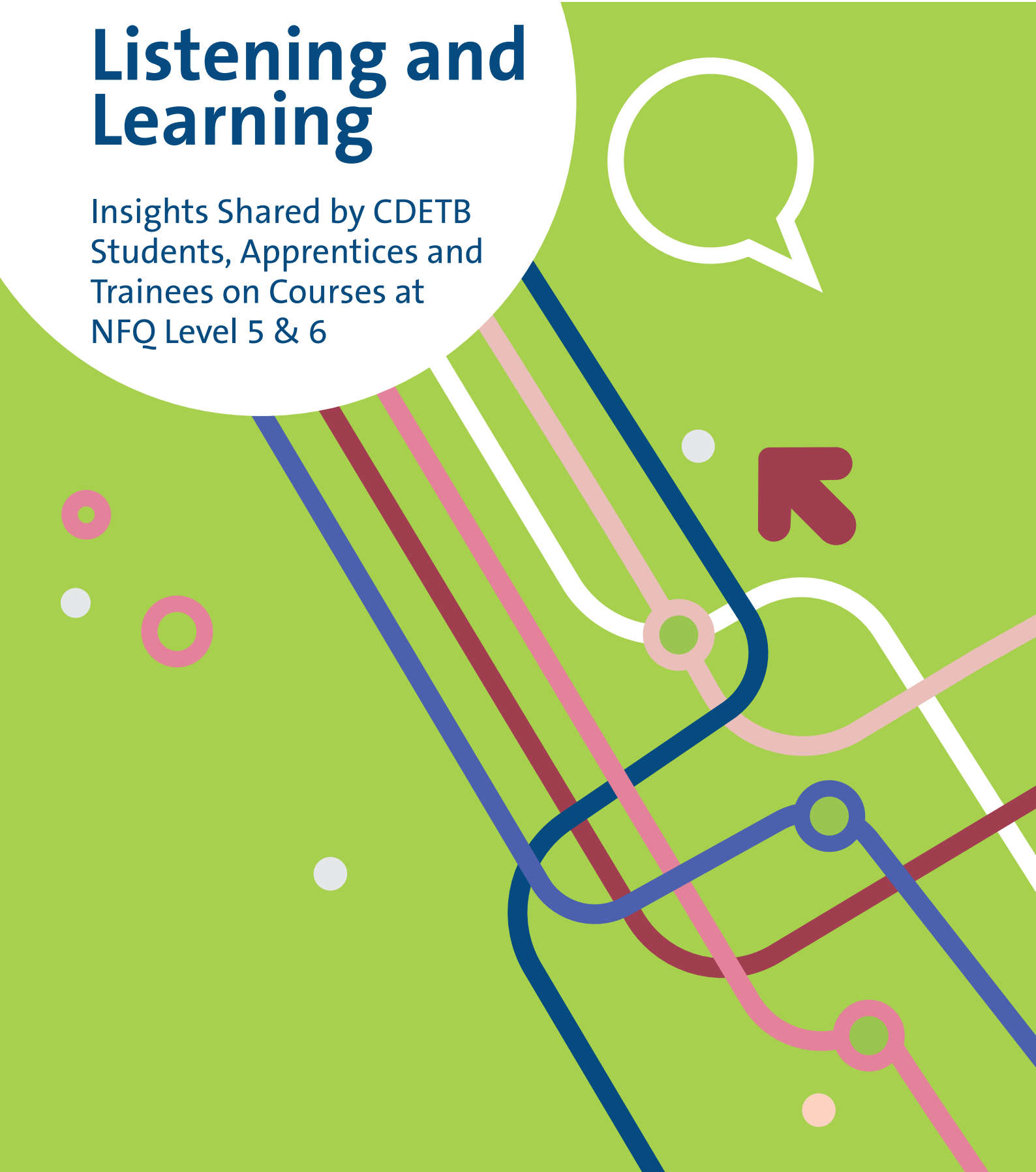


# Listening and Learning

Insights Shared by CDETB  
Students, Apprentices and  
Trainees on Courses at  
NFQ Level 5 & 6



# Acknowledgements

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# Contents

Acronyms	4
Glossary	5
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	9
About the event	11
How findings from this event were developed	16
Findings and insights from the event	18
Key opportunities for future policy and practice	32
Conclusion	34
List of Appendices	35

# Acronyms

AES	Adult Education Services
CAO	Central Applications Office
CDETБ	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
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
TC	Training Centre
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WE/WP	Work experience/work placement

# Glossary

**Blended learning:** where technology is fused with the traditional form of face-to-face learning to enhance or complement the learning experience. This fusion can take place in the classroom setting or can combine face-to-face teaching with remote or online teaching/resources to deliver the curriculum.

**Blended programme delivery:** term used in CDETБ for courses that have been given official permission to change their mode of delivery from face to face to blended. This is where a proportion of their face to face provision is replaced with remote or online teaching/resources to deliver the curriculum

**Centres:** used in this report to refer to any delivery site where courses were being offered to CDETБ learners. This includes Colleges of Further Education (CFE), Training Centres (TC) and Adult Education Centres (AE)

**COVID-19:** is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus and ‘D’ for disease.

Learners: used in this report to encompass all students, apprentices and trainees engaging with in educational opportunities provided by CDETБ

**Quality assurance (QA):** a term generally used to describe the processes that seek to ensure that the learning environment (including teaching and research) reaches an acceptable threshold of quality. QA is also used to describe the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by learners.

**Remote or distance learning:** when learners do not physically attend centres, instead receiving instruction to study and learn at home, with the aid of printed, video or online resources and supported by online face to face teaching, group texts or by phone.

**Semesterisation:** is the division of the academic year into a number of periods called semesters. A learner usually completes a number of modules in one semester before starting the next.

**Virtual Learning Platform:** an integrated set of interactive online services that provide trainers, learners, and others involved in education with information, tools and resources to support and enhance education delivery and management. Examples include Moodle, G-Suite, Microsoft 365 and Blackboard.

## Executive Summary



On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 78 students, trainees and apprentices from 14 different Colleges of Further Education, two Training Centres and an Adult Education Service (AES) Centre from all across the city of Dublin attended a stakeholder engagement event to share their journeys into and through City of Dublin Education and Training Board's (CDETb's) Further Education and Training (FET) courses.

### Journeys of the learners who participated in the 'Have Your Say' event

Speaking to the **diversity of colleges and courses that learners came from, the participants shared their different journeys that led them to CDETb courses.** Four of those learners volunteered to share their learner journeys for inclusion in this report. Each of their stories speak to the unique personal and career goals and life situations that can lead a learner to engaging in and experiencing a FET course through CDETb.

Many learners felt the courses they were on, the way that these courses were delivered, and the commitment of the teaching staff had built **and strengthened their skills and competence** for taking up a job or further study. They also found these courses to have built their self-belief and self-confidence. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 to their training and learning, learners liked the **small class sizes, the commitment of teaching staff, the supports** provided by CDETb and the chance to try new things.

When participants were asked **what should be remembered by CDETb** when reviewing and planning courses, they thought that:

- The courses could be easier to find and get on to;
- FET opportunities and options should be better promoted by CDETb;
- Connections between centres should be promoted to help the sharing of resources
- Courses should continue to cater to the diversity of learners, based on their needs and goals.

### Learner's reflection on teaching and learning during COVID-19

Both during and after the event, **learners shared their experiences of what it was like to be a learner this past year**, focusing on what went well and what did not. Among the reflections shared by learners were insights relating to:

- The benefits and challenges of remote teaching and learning;
- The vital role of effective IT access and the ability of the staff and learners to utilise technology to enhance learning during COVID-19;



- What worked and did not when it came to supporting learners remotely;
- The organisation, delivery and quality of provision;
- Missing the on-campus college experiences; and
- Challenges and successes with work placements and work experience.

Learners also discussed **what changes introduced because of COVID-19 should be kept** after the emergency phase of the pandemic passes to inform future FET policy and provision.

Changes that learners felt could assist future learners included:

- The role of blended programme delivery in which learners could benefit from a mix of remote and in-person learning as well as continued access to digital materials;
- Diversity in how learner progress and performance are assessed;
- Ensuring access to the required hardware and software required to successfully engage with and learn from a course;
- Changes to how work placement/work placement should work depending on the course.

## Learners' evaluations of the 'Have Your Say' event

In organising this event, CDETБ wanted learners to feel empowered, engaged with and listened to as they participated. The feedback received by CDETБ from **learners who participated in the evaluation of the event was very positive**. On all questions asked as part of the post-event evaluation, the average scores indicated high or very high levels of satisfaction with the event. Learners said that they:

- Were grateful for the space and time to share their thoughts on their training and learning, particularly during COVID-19;
- Valued the opportunity to be listened to and to contribute to future improvements for other learners;
- Enjoyed hearing the journeys, experiences and opinions of their fellow learners;
- Appreciated how the event was carefully planned and facilitated by CDETБ to ensure inclusive, open and respectful sharing of thoughts; and
- Enjoyed getting to meet and chat with other learners.

## Introduction

The mission statement of the CDETБ 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 ETБ is to 'plan, provide, coordinate and review the provision of education and training...in its functional area' and thus, CDETБ is responsible for the provision of Further Education and Training (FET). CDETБ's 13 Colleges of Further Education (CFEs) are converted second-level schools. FET courses normally include a high level of practical skills development modules.

During 2021, CDETБ is conducting inaugural statutory review of its quality systems. This review, which will be prepared by CDETБ 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 (ETБs) in 2018, the [inaugural review of quality assurance of ETБs](#) began in 2021.

A key focus for the quality systems review relates to how CDETБ understands and assures quality in the objective of 'teaching, learning and assessment'. As part of the statutory review, CDETБ 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;
- How the progress of learners is assessed;
- How support is offered for learners and the consistency of such supports; and
- How the ETБ self-evaluates, monitors and reviews the quality of its learning services.

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

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

In May 2021, CDETБ organised a ‘Have Your Say’ consultation meeting with 78 learners who were, at that time, enrolled in National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 5+ education courses provided by the CDETБ. These learners were drawn from 15 CFEs and two training centres managed by CDETБ. There were just over 7,000 full-time learners enrolled in CDETБ Level 5 + courses from September to December 2020.

This event had the dual purpose of collecting invaluable perspectives on what has been learned and experience during the COVID 19 restrictions to inform both CDETБ’s self-evaluation for inaugural statutory review and its future educational provision in light of COVID-19.

This report summarises key insights and learning collected from learners based on their experiences of undertaking NFQ level 5 & 6 FET course provided by CDETБ, particularly during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> [Appendix 9](#) gives a brief context for the have your say event and report

## About the event

### Purpose of the event

On 13th May 2021, an online consultation event entitled ‘Have Your Say- CDETБ self-evaluation of our quality systems’ was organised and facilitated by CDETБ. CDETБ uses the ‘learner journey’ as a lens for reviewing its quality systems. With so much change happening over a short period of time, the overarching purpose of this ‘Have Your Say’ consultation event was for CDETБ to strengthen its understanding of the learner journey over the past year through the eyes of the learners.

In consulting with learners through this engagement event and learning from their experiences, CDETБ had the following goals:

- For learners to contribute to the self-evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment in Level 5+ provision;
- To improve the quality and range of professional education delivery that responds to the learners needs by better understanding the learner journey; and
- To gather the learners’ experiences of the last year so that it can be shared and applied by CDETБ to future policy and practice as part of its COVID-19 review.

### About the participant learners

CDETБ invited learners, six from each of its CFE and TC offering Level 5+ courses, to take part in the consultation.<sup>3</sup> On the day, 78 learners took part from 14 CFEs, two training centres and one adult education services centre. The learners were all on courses at NFQ Level 5 or 6 at the time of the event and came from 59 different full- or part time-courses offered by the 17 centres. A full list of the courses they were enrolled in can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

### About the facilitators

Sessions with the learners were facilitated by 11 CDETБ staff. There were also five ‘listeners’ present who were CDETБ staff with various roles in the organisation, including the FET Director responsible for quality, teachers from across the provision and head office staff in finance and corporate services.

<sup>3</sup> See [Appendix 1](#) for the learners’ invite to the event

They attended to strengthen their understanding of the learners’ journeys and to collect learner insights.<sup>4</sup> 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.

CDETБ is committed to embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation. Gathering and analysing feedback from stakeholders is a key part of this process for CDETБ. To support this process, a decision was taken by CDETБ to train and upskill FET development staff (Quality Assurance, Continuous Professional Development, Technology Enhanced Learning, Employer Engagement) in facilitation skills using the focused conversation methodology. In the lead up to this event, initial training was supported with practice sessions, training in active listening in the virtual environment, refresher sessions in facilitation skills and specific training in the use of Zoom for consultation events.

### Guiding approaches and principles for the event

Guided by its mission statement, CDETБ adopted a number of inclusive and empowering engagement methodologies to engage with and include the voices of learners. CDETБ 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 CDETБ, 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, CDETБ 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 CDETБ for this event was also influenced by:
- Principles from [The Lundy Model of Child 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.

<sup>4</sup> See [Appendix 3](#) for the summary facilitator infographic

- 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 that 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.<sup>5</sup> participating learners were divided into 11 groups, each with between five and seven 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. A facilitator from CDETБ was assigned to each of the learner groups.

The event began with a welcome and thanks from each of the facilitators in each of the breakout rooms, reminding the participants of the purpose of the event.<sup>6</sup> Facilitators then outlined the sessions and discussed ground rules to guide the planned group conversations. The majority of the event was then two sessions where the learners discussed and shared their learning:

#### Session 1: ‘Your learning journey’ (40 minutes)

CDETБ uses the learner journey as a guide for reviewing its courses, programmes and delivery modes.<sup>7</sup> As part of the inaugural review CDETБ wanted to enhance its understanding of the learner journey into and through CDETБ courses and colleges from the perspective of the learners themselves.

CDETБ also wanted to find out if the learners experienced its mission in their learning experience and so asked learners during the first session of the event about the impact of the course on their personal development. The focused conversation questions used as prompts to gather that information are outlined below in Table 2.

What does CDETБ need to remember about its learners? (20 minutes)

They were then asked to discuss what they think CDETБ needs to remember about its learners when it is evaluating the quality of programmes and courses.

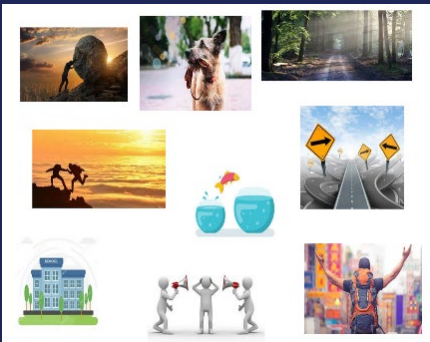
<sup>5</sup> See [Appendix 4](#) for the learners’ agenda and [Appendix 3](#) for facilitators’ agenda

<sup>6</sup> See [Appendix 6](#) for detailed facilitators notes

<sup>7</sup> See [Appendix 7](#) for learner journey QA materials

**Table 2:** Focused conversation questions from Session 1 of the event

# Opening



‘Which picture best represents what led you to choose to study?’

## Focused conversation questions

- What led you to choose the course/college you did?
- Did you come straight from school?
- Was this your first choice?
- Are you retraining – have you been working for a while already?
- Are you coming back from a break in paid work / study – were you raising kids?
- What prompted you to choose to come here?
- What course did you pick and why?
- Was the course what you expected?
- What was the year/2 years like? (covered in more detail in Session 2)
- What impact did it have on you?
- Did you change this year? – because of the experience
- Did your relationships with family and change because of doing the course/apprenticeship?
- Did your circumstances change (get a job, start or end a relationship)?
- Do you feel different about your life /future after doing the course?
- Where are you going to next /planning to go to next?
- Did the course help get you ready for that?

## Session 2: Reflecting on learner experiences to inform future CDETБ practice and policy (40 minutes)

Having shared their learning journeys, learners were asked to reflect on the experience as a whole.<sup>8</sup> They were then asked to discuss what went well during their experiences, what did not go well and can be learnt from, and what should be continued in the future of education provision.

There was a ten-minute comfort break between the sessions. The event ended with all the participants joining together to share their insights and reflections for the future delivery of FET for CDETБ. The session ended with thanks and clarity around the next steps with the information collected during the event.

<sup>8</sup> See [Appendix 7](#) for learner journey reflection materials



# How findings from this event were developed

The analyses of the data collected during and after the event were used to generate the key findings from the consultation and the opportunities arising from this feedback from learners for CDETБ to consider in its future FET policy and provision.

## How data were collected

During the course of and after the event, CDETБ organised the collection of feedback and insights from learners. Over the course of the event, learners shared experiences, feedback and suggestions which were captured by CDETБ through the following means:

- The learners and most facilitators used a feedback collection tool called **Padlet to document feedback** that learners shared during the breakout sessions. **Padlet** is an online software that enables people to add comments or notes to a shared online notice board. Facilitators who were less familiar with Padlet were also given the option by CDETБ to document and submit feedback documented in a Microsoft Word document. Learners and facilitators were given the opportunity to document their feedback during the breakout sessions as well as for some limited time after the event.
- **Recordings of the breakout sessions** with learners conducted through Zoom, where permission was explicitly granted by the learners for recording to take place. Ten recordings were created from these breakout sessions capturing the conversations that took place. Permission was not granted to record in one of the breakout rooms. In this case a note-taker recorded the conversation and participants were encouraged to use Padlet to ensure their points were captured.
- As the learner journeys of the 78 participants could not be included in this report, **case studies** were prepared in parallel with the event. Participants at the event were invited to have their journeys included in the report. Four learners volunteered to be interviewed to share their experiences of being enrolled and participating in a CDETБ Level 5+ course. To prepare the case study they were interviewed by one the authors using the same prompt questions from Session 1 (See Table 2 above). The learners who agreed to take part and include their learner journeys were:

- Ciara Casey - PLC student on a Legal Studies 5M3789 course in Rathmines College of Further Education
- Denis Murphy – PLC student of Advanced Woodwork with Furniture Making & Design- QQI 6M2230 in Pearse College of Further Education
- Paul Duffy - trainee on a Graphic Design 5M1995 course in Finglas Training Centre
- Vanessa Da Silva - Medical Administration trainee- QQI 5M1997 in Ballyfermot Training Centre
- The learners were invited to complete **event evaluation forms** online after the event had completed.<sup>9</sup> This form contained 19 questions, informed by The Lundy Model of Child Participation and a group evaluation sheet developed by Hub na nÓg. In total, thirty learners completed the evaluation forms, rating their experiences during the event relating to, for example, rating their understanding around the purpose of the event, why they were asked to participate, the amount of time they had to talk, their understanding of what would happen with the information that they shared.

The feedback and experience collection approaches put in place by CDETБ to capture the data from the event yielded rich qualitative data and some quantitative data from the event.

<sup>9</sup> See [Appendix 8](#) for the evaluation forms

## Findings and insights from the event

This section of the report summarises the <sup>10</sup>key findings and insights shared by learners and captured by the facilitators and note-takers during and after the ‘Have Your Say’ consultation event. In line with the structure of the event itself, the findings are organised into two sections:

- The learner journeys of participants and future considerations when planning and reviewing courses provided; and
- What it was like to be a learner during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each set of findings will be discussed in turn and the section ends with feedback from the learners on the event itself.

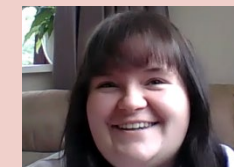
### Learner journeys for those participating in CDETБ courses

All 78 learners shared their journeys into and through CDETБ courses this year. Some learners had come straight from Leaving Cert with a career plan in mind, like Ciara who wants to be a solicitor. Others, like Vanessa, are retraining after coming to work in Ireland and finding their qualifications and experience did not translate to the Irish market. Some learners were in professions where the technology and role updated constantly. So rather than doing a four-year course at the start, some learners re-train every few years to keep their skills current, like Paul. Other learners also choose courses in areas that they are passionate about but never had the chance to develop, like new retiree Denis.

The learner stories and motivation for studying were as diverse as the learners themselves. CDETБ made an invitation to all the participants to have their journeys included and four learners volunteered. The interviewees also shared what they thought CDETБ needed to remember about its learners when reviewing its courses and programmes.

<sup>10</sup> See [Appendix 10](#) for outline of how findings were developed

**Ciara Casey**  
**PLC student – Legal Studies 5M3789**  
**Rathmines College of Further Education (CFE)**



[Click](#) to hear Ciara’s Learner Journey

Ciara is a determined young woman with a very clear vision of what she would like to do. Her dream is to study law but has struggled to gain the Leaving Certificate points she needs to secure a place on a third level course. Ciara was one of the unfortunate young people who was self-tutoring for the Leaving Certificate in 2020 so when it was cancelled she couldn’t avail of the predicted grades. Ciara did not want to spend another year out of structured education, so on the advice of a local TD in Athlone she applied for a number of legal study PLC courses around the country.

The reason Ciara choose to move to Dublin and enrolled in the Level 5 course in [Legal studies in Rathmines College FE](#) was because the teacher in charge of the Rathmines course rang her to assess her motivation and suitability. Being able to chat to a person rather than just fill in a form online helped to dispel her fears about the course and encouraged her to choose to do a PLC rather than sit the Leaving Cert exam in November and wait until the following year to apply for a third level place. Despite the challenges experienced because of COVID-19 Ciara was very positive about her experience of doing a PLC course. Not getting the Leaving Certificate grades she needed for her chosen college course combined with the struggles of self-study had dented her confidence. Doing the course dispelled the fears that Ciara had about both her ability to undertake a third level course and her ability to work in the legal field. It also helped her build the study, academic writing and practice IT and word processing skills required to undertake a third level course. *‘the Leaving Cert is a big exam that doesn’t prepare you for what it would be like in college, my only regret is that I didn’t do a PLC course earlier’*

Ciara found the supports she received from the teaching staff invaluable especially because of the challenges remote learning caused. She also believes that some of the changes brought about because of COVID19 worked to her advantage for example when she was experiencing problems with her internet the maths teacher recorded the class and sent her a link to it. She was able to re watch the class later at her own time and pace. This included rewinding and re-listening to some of the more challenging inputs.

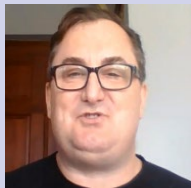
Before doing the course, Ciara was very focused on legal study programmes. The course in Rathmines is combined with business and Ciara found she really enjoyed the economics module offered and as a result changed the courses she is applying for to include both a law and business focus. Something she believes she will be much happier and more successful in. Ciara found the experience so positive that she is encouraging all her family and neighbours to do a PLC course this year, this includes her retired 'CSI' loving father who has enrolled in a course in criminology and psychology in a local college next September.

#### **What do CDETБ need to remember about its learners when reviewing its courses and programmes?**

The thing Ciara thinks CDETБ needs to remember about its PLC students is that they all come to the courses with different levels of external responsibilities. She believes that CDETБ should build on the off campus / remote or blended model of delivery to encourage and support more learners including those working and those with family responsibilities to be able to avail of courses and the opportunities education brings.

#### **Denis Murphy**

**PLC student of Advanced Woodwork with Furniture Making & Design- QQI 6M2230  
Pearse College of Further Education (CFE)**



[Click](#) to hear Denis's Learner Journey

Denis is a retired civil servant with a strong belief in lifelong learning, who in 2019 decided to return to study to do a course in something he loves. As a son of a carpenter, with a love of wood, Denis was drawn to a Level 5 course in **furniture making** in his local CFE college **Pearse College of Further Education** (CFE) Crumlin. As an early retiree he wanted to do something 'to keep his brain ticking over' and was attracted to a course delivered locally that only had a one academic year commitment. He joined for one year, enjoyed it so much that he signed up for the second year – a Level 6 course in **advanced woodwork with furniture making and design**.

Denis had an extremely positive experience of studying in Pearse CFE, commending the professionalism and flexibility of the teachers and management at the centre. Denis highlighting that staff all went the extra mile to ensure they could complete their courses and remain engaged in learning during the difficult COVID-19 period. Denis assumed the role of class rep for his group. As his year didn't get as much access to specialist equipment as they had hoped, he engaged with college management who have arranged for his class group to return next September to get additional access to the resources and specialist equipment. He and his fellow students are very pleased that the college listened to, and responded to their requests.

Denis believes the course was extremely good for his mental health giving him an opportunity to further his education, participate in college life and meet new people. His class was very diverse for example the youngest person on the course was 22 and the oldest 84 years of age. Yet despite the age and experience gap they all got on and worked very well as a group. Denis began his studies in September 2019 so had experience of Pearse College beginning before the COVID 19 emergency. Denis personally preferred being in centre as opposed to remote learning, especially for meeting and interacting with classmates as well as the practical aspects of the course. While he didn't enjoy the remote learning as much as the classroom based work, he believes a blend of both would probably suit most people.

#### **What do CDETБ need to remember about its learners when reviewing its courses and programmes?**

The thing Denis thinks CDETБ needs to remember about its PLC students is the level of stress experienced by learners when a large volume of assessments is due in at the same time. Denis thinks that as a PLC Level 5 and 6 learner that he was expected to submit a lot of assessments. He believes that reducing this assessment expectation to something more manageable, with a more even distribution of due dates throughout the year, is something that CDETБ should take on board.

As a strong component of lifelong learning Denis also thinks CDETБ should continue to provide a variety of courses and provide opportunities for as many people as possible.

#### **Paul Duffy**

**Graphic Design 5M1995  
Finglas Training Centre**



[Click](#) to hear Paul's Life Long Learning Journey

Paul Duffy has spent all his working life as a digital printer, he began his career using his self-taught Photoshop skills to colour Marvel comics. As digital printing progressed and Paul wanted to progress in his career, he took a course in desk top publishing in Cabra Training Centre and afterwards secured jobs in a number of digital printing companies. In 2019 as his contract with a print company came to an end, Paul recognised that in order to give himself more employment options he would need to develop his skills in the full range of digital graphics software. After looking around at courses and getting guidance at a local employment service (LES) he signed up for a one-year course in Graphic Design in Finglas Training Centre.

One of the motivating factors for choosing this course was the main instructor teaching it. Paul had completed his course in desktop publishing with the same lead instructor and knew he could learn what he needed to progress his career by studying with this instructor again. Paul began the course in October 2019 and was really enjoying studying in Finglas Training Centre, mixing with the other students, developing team-work skills along with the hands-on practical skills he needed for the graphic design industry. When COVID-19 forced the closure of the centre in March 2020 that all changed.

Finglas Training Centre converted the course to emergency remote delivery and when the full lock down was removed in August 2020, they began to bring learners into the centre part time to complete the practical hand on aspects of the award. Paul found completing the award remotely very challenging. He credits the fact that he stayed on the course and completed the award to the support and encouragement he and his fellow students received from the instructing staff, including phone calls to make sure he was ok, the conversion of the course and assignments for online and remote delivery and supporting his class with the team work aspects of the award in a remote learning environment.

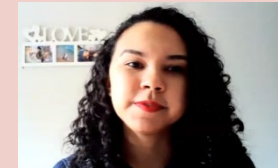
Despite the difficulty involved in studying remotely and the many challenges that COVID-19 brings, Paul believes doing the course was worth it. Completing the award and developing skills for working remotely has helped him prepare for the next stage in his career. Paul has recently started a new job which involves working from home as a graphic designer. He thinks doing some of his course remotely helped him prepare for remote working but was still finding it very challenging. Click to hear Paul's insights on remote working at the end of his first week in the new job.

#### **What do CDETБ need to remember about learners when reviewing its courses and programmes?**

The thing Paul thinks CDETБ needs to remember is that as more remote delivery of courses takes place that the role of the teacher / instructor needs to adapt to facilitate the needs of the remote learner. He voiced concerns about how CDETБ teaching and instructing staff will be supported to ensure that they can continue to give support the learner in the remote learning environment as they prepare for a career that will include remote working. Click to hear Paul's insights about staff supports based on his experience of being a Trainee during COVID 19 emergency remote teaching and learning.

#### **Vanessa Da Silva**

#### **Medical Administration Trainee- QQI 5M1997 Ballyfermot Training Centre**



[Click](#) to hear Vanessa's Learner Journey

In 2017 Vanessa Da Silva, a Brazilian interior design graduate, moved to Ireland with her new Polish husband to start a new life together. When she arrived, she discovered that her qualification and experience were not a good fit for the Irish market and she could not find a job in the area she had qualified in. Vanessa took a number of jobs in hotel hospitality, manufacturing and retail. While she enjoyed the people, she did not feel any of the jobs were right for her and at times were eroding her belief in her own abilities. In October 2019 as her contract in a manufacturing job was coming to an end a friend suggested that she might retrain rather than seek another job she did not enjoy and recommended looking for a course on the [FETCH website](#). On that site Vanessa discovered a traineeship in [Medical Administration](#) offered in [Ballyfermot](#) Training Centre. She applied for that programme and despite the challenges of studying during both the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns, she thinks the skills and confidence she gained from the course was worth it.

Vanessa believes that the course has had a huge impact on her knowledge, skills and her personal confidence. It gave her a sense of self belief and a belief that she could take up a job in a professional environment. She thinks this belief came firstly from the fact that her instructor believed in her and her fellow students constantly gave her feedback on how well she was doing, what she was learning and how that would apply in an office environment. She also thinks the very practical nature of the course was really helpful in building her confidence. Over the 14 months she was on the course (the course extended because of COVID-19) it focused on all the tasks she might be asked to do in an office environment. This was really important to Vanessa, as she had limited experience of administration work so learning how to use office equipment like printers, photocopiers and phone systems, produce professional documents, send emails, manage appointments, do accounts etc. put her at her ease and built up the belief in her that she could do well in an administration role.

Vanessa also noticed a big improvement in her English language skills because of the course. While she had good English language skills before beginning the Traineeship, she thinks it improved because of the daily use combined with the assignments and class discussions.

Vanessa completed her course in February 2021. Ballyfermot Training Centre send her and her fellow graduates notices of jobs she would be suitable for. In March 2021, she was sent an advertisement for a job that looked interesting, she applied and was successful. She is loving her new administration role and hopes to continue to work in the area for years to come.



### What do CDETB need to remember about its learners when reviewing its courses and programmes?

The thing Vanessa thinks CDETB needs to remember about its trainees is that they have mixed ability, levels of motivation and confidence and are on courses for different reasons – some because they want to and some because they have to. Some suggestions she has were that as people are applying for courses they are assessed and shorter taster or specialist support courses are offered first before they undertake a full year of study. She also suggests that some extra tasks or challenges could be added for learners with more ability to push those learners to develop even more.

### What CDETB should remember when reviewing and planning courses

When reflecting upon their learner journeys, the event participants were asked to share their thoughts around what CDETB should remember about learners in the future when planning and reviewing FET courses. Based on their experiences, learners shared a number of key insights for consideration by CDETB in the future.

Firstly, participants felt that they were part of a **diverse group of learners**, each with different:

- Motivations and reasons for enrolling and attending the courses;
- Levels of experience in education. For some learners, enrolling in a FET course can entail a big life change where support from CDETB would be helpful;
- Levels of responsibilities outside of the learning spaces with regards to family and/or professional commitments.
- Preferences around semesterisation. More structured timetables work for some learners whereas flexibility is useful for others;
- Preferred styles of and abilities for learning. For example, some like the blended approach of classroom and home learning, others preferred learning in person within a centre and others preferred solely being taught and learning from home. Some learners think that work experience is crucial for knowledge and skills developing in some courses;
- Levels of ability and baseline levels of knowledge and skills, including IT skills to participate in a course; and
- Ambitions and ideas of success.

**“With the right help and support, we are capable of reaching our goals”**

Furthermore, **participants want to know more about what further education opportunities** are available to them and which will best support their desired goals. Some learners do not have access to career guidance before or/and after enrolling in an FET course. In some cases where learners coming from secondary school did have access to career guidance, they still weren't told about FET options.

Learners were often not aware of all the further education options available to them and would appreciate it if options were ‘advertised’ more widely through more avenues. This should also include all staff within the education centres knowing about what is available in that particular centre and more widely across the rest of the centres managed by CDETB.

Learners who engaged directly with CDETB staff in centres reported that they were guided through the practicalities of the access process for that centre even where they had been given conflicting information from other sources. This supportive contact was provided reassurance to the learners about their ability to engage successfully and the welcome they would receive. This positive interaction and clear communication was particularly important to learners who were making important decisions about their future life and career path.

**‘I wish I did go to the [course] open days. I think that those need to be brought up a lot more in secondary schools...I really didn't know a lot about PLCs until later in the year but I think they should be brought up earlier in the [school] year’**

Related to the above feedback was the fact that some **learners were not clear that they were enrolled in courses run by CDETB and the role of CDETB played in their education**. They noted that there could be more branding and events such as the ‘Have Your Say’ event to connect learners across the CDETB centres not only to learn more about CDETB but also to learn more from one another about other further education opportunities available to them.

Learners also appreciated when there was **consistency** in how:

- Teaching staff delivered in-person and online classes and work experience;
- Assignments were submitted and graded; and
- IT was used to deliver or run elements of a course.

Some learners expressed how difficult and confusing it was for them when different teachers on their course used different virtual learning platforms, for example going from a Zoom class with one teacher to a Microsoft Teams class with another. This put a lot of pressure on them to learn different technologies and remember different preferences to engage in the same course.

**'The education centre was very good at facilitating the sending out of working laptops to anyone who didn't have them'**

Participants wanted CDETБ to be aware of how **important good and supportive teaching staff are in the delivery of a course**. Learners were really appreciative of the support and guidance they received from teaching staff in the centres, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners thought that teaching staff needed to be continued to be supported by CDETБ, especially during times of change or disruption such as the pandemic.

Finally, gaining the skills and knowledge offered by FET training is important for learners but they also wanted

CDETБ to be aware of the key role that training and learning can play in the learner's **mental health and well-being**. For many learners, taking part in a FET course has a significant impact on their wider lives and if provision is well organised and well thought through with an engaged group of learners, these positive experiences can be beneficial for a learner's well-being inside and outside of the learning experiences.

## Experiences of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

As outlined, during the second half of the stakeholder event, learners were asked to reflect on their experiences of taking part in a CDETБ course during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the main Zoom room where all learners were present, Blake Hodgkinson, Director of Further Education in CDETБ asked the participants to share their thoughts on the positives of being a learner on a course during this period, as well as the challenges they encountered in their learning journey. He also sought their advice on which of the changes that had taken place because of COVID-19 to keep doing even after the pandemic passes.

### Benefits and challenges of remote teaching and learning

As perhaps expected, positives and challenges relating to the theme of **remote teaching and learning** were most frequently shared by the learners. There were mixed views across the learners around the benefits of learning nearly exclusively 'from home' as opposed to in-class and more traditional learning. Positive experiences relayed by learners related to:

**'The online learning was good because everything these days is online so it prepares us for the work field'**

- The suitability of more theoretic modules to be taught online;
- More flexibility in attending classes from home and working with teaching staff and peers to select teaching times and assignment deadlines;
- Reduced travel costs and times;
- Opportunities to follow-up online with teachers and tutors with questions after a class.

- Some learners reported that the benefits of remote teaching and learning were facilitated and made possible by very committed, organised and supportive teaching staff.

However, remote teaching and learning also posed challenges for learners. The associated issues varied but most frequently included:

- Lack of familiarity or experience among learners in different types of online learning platforms. For example, one learner explained that they were "unsure of chatroom instructions" in Zoom and could not contribute to online discussions during classes.
- Practical modules or courses were not suited to remote teaching and learning e.g., woodwork.
- Unreliable learner or teacher internet connection which interfered with attendance and learning during the classes, as well as the delivery by the teaching staff;
- Lack of consistency across teaching staff in the use of online teaching platforms, communication tools and assignment submission approaches (e.g. different platforms being used by teachers on the same course)
- Some learners felt that they would be more inclined to ask more questions during class time if they were attending in-person.
- Reduced teamwork and opportunities for learners to learn from and support one another.
- Confusion for learners when one teacher was teaching multiple modules on one course.
- Lack of an online library to access required readings and materials for assignments and learning.
- Reduced motivation due to the remote nature of the course.

### The vital role of effective IT access and TEL ability during COVID-19

The learners reported that the advantages and disadvantages of remote teaching and learning were often linked to **IT access and TEL ability**. A few learners spoke about the understanding of the teaching staff and CDETБ around individual learners' difficulties in taking part in remote

**'Teachers were enthusiastic to get over hurdles. Great environment for learning and staff did their best.'**

learning from home. These learners explained that CDETБ helped them to access devices so that they stay enrolled and learn from home, support which they greatly appreciated. They also noted that teaching staff were understanding of learners' sometimes limited access to an adequate quality internet connection or their less proficient IT skills and that they made accommodations. Others mentioned the use of online platforms and tools that facilitated their learning and interaction with the course and fellow learners. For example, one learner commented on the use of Dropbox as a very useful method for sharing files online. Another learner shared

that they felt that COVID-19 and remote learning accelerated them in their learning of IT skills and knowledge which they found very beneficial when thinking about working in the future.

Despite the opportunities provided by IT and TEL, learners did report facing some challenges in using IT to learn and engage with their course during the pandemic. Such issues most commonly shared included:

**‘There were a few months lost when AutoCAD set up was delayed’**

- The downloading of the software or email addresses required to participate online was not seamless for learners, sometimes leaving them without it while the course was happening.
- Lack of consistency in what IT tools and platforms the teaching staff were using across a course or in what an individual teaching staff member may use throughout one module. A few learners shared their experiences of teachers requesting that learners use Moodle to submit one assignment, Google Drive for another or to email another. This lack of consistency sometimes confused the learners.
- Issues with Zoom meetings not being ready in time to run a class online. One learner explained that sometimes “tutors didn’t send advance notice of Zoom meetings, instead [the learners] had to watch for an email to come in [with the Zoom meeting] invite up to 20 minutes late”.
- IT access was affected by internet connectivity issues for some learners, particularly for those in more rural areas. While the teaching staff were accommodating around this issue, there was little that could be done to resolve such issues.

### Supporting learners remotely

The **support offered by the teaching and administrative staff** in CDETb throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was greatly appreciated and cited by most learners as a factor of the learning that worked well. While this experience was not wholly uniform across all the learners who participated in the ‘Have Your Say’ event, the majority of learners used words and phrases such as “enthusiastic”, “supportive”, “fantastic”, “approachable”, “willing to go the extra mile”, “flexible”, “concerned” and “did well to work around the difficulties” to describe the teaching and support staff involved in their courses. Learners acknowledged that the CDETb staff themselves were trying to deal with an unprecedented situation to provide a quality learning experience but that they mostly persevered to ensure that the learning continued. It was felt by the learners that maintaining their safety and wellbeing was the most important thing to CDETb and that they would not be asked to get in a situation that could harm their health.

Learners had both positive and less positive experiences in how teaching staff adjusted to teach remotely but overall, the **support offered and accommodations made by teaching staff were appreciated by most learners**. They acknowledged the support teaching staff offered and the changes they made such as discussing class dates to ensure that they suited all the learners, providing extra Zoom classes, sharing recordings of classes, and making themselves available after classes to answer learner questions.

**‘Under the extenuating circumstance, all teachers went the extra mile. The principal / management board had excellent protocols in place to protect students and staff from contracting COVID-19’**

A few learners also mentioned that tutors from different modules also coordinated so as to ensure that the deadlines for assessments or assignments were not overlapping. Some learners did not experience this support as described by other learners during the event, explaining that some teaching staff were less understanding of or concerned for learners in comparison to other teaching staff members.

### Learners’ thoughts on the organisation, delivery and quality of provision

Most learners thought that **CDETb had reacted as well as it could** to the disruptions

and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They outlined the support and accommodations offered by the management and administrative staff, in addition to the teaching staff, to ensure their safety and continued learning. One learner thought that it was interesting that one college was “willing to extend term time” to compensate for the disruptions and challenges caused by the pandemic.

The learners did highlight some of the **organisation, delivery and quality issues** they encountered as they undertook their course during the pandemic over the past year:

- Slow communications from CDETb at the start of the year due to uncertainty about public health protocols and course delivery for the upcoming academic year;
- Variance in the quality of online lessons and communication methods across the teaching staff;
- Teaching staff shortages leading to a lack of continuity in learning or work experience not taking place as planned;
- Poor planning to ensure that Zoom sessions were set up in place of in-person classes;
- Lack of consistency in teaching tools and assignment submission approaches across teaching staff; and
- Lack of oversight and coordination around the timing and number of work and assignments for learners which caused them stress when assignments were due at the same time, particularly at year-end.
- learners also expressed concerns for learners that did not complete the course highlighting that additional supports may have been required by those learners to succeed.

### Missing the 'college experience'

'Group support was not the same over Zoom'

**The lack of peer-to-peer contact with remote learning was an issue** for some learners, particularly younger learners. Some of these learners reported feeling that they were "missing out" on the social aspects, peer support and friendship opportunities that they would expect to accompany on-campus learning. Alongside the lack of in-person socialising due to COVID-19, learners also mentioned the lost opportunities for study groups, in-person work on group assignments, and the exchange of study tips and knowledge.

### Challenges and successes with work placements and experience

'Because my course was a very practical course, there was very little that you could do online'

**Learners often missed the expected benefits of being able to partake in work placements and experiences.** Some learners expressed the disappointment they felt in not being able to take part in these elements of the courses as originally planned before COVID-19 and felt that the alternatives put in place did not provide them with the learning opportunities and skills development expected. They also felt that the lack of work experience may have impacted on their employment prospects. However, learners appreciated efforts made by CDETБ to simulate the work opportunities made impossible by COVID-19.

For example, one participant spoke of a healthcare setting being replicated which allowed them to learn how to use equipment, while another learner explained that "simulated work experiences" worked well for their woodwork classes.

### Perspectives on learner retention during the pandemic

For some learners, the **flexibility** allowed for by remote learning resulting from COVID-19 was really helpful in **allowing them to continue to engage in their course**. They explained that offering remote learning would encourage less dropout, particularly at certain times of the year, such as after Christmas, when attrition rates can be higher. The lack of travel and "early mornings", as well as flexibility around class dates, were also cited by a few learners as positives in keeping them enrolled on their course. Conversely, others felt that online learning only was contributing to lowered motivation to stay the course and complete the learning, which leads to higher attrition rates.

### The length of the academic year and assignment deadlines

A limited number of learners felt that the way assignments are scheduled and their format was not ideal. Some felt that in their courses, the number of assignments requested in a written format was "not sustainable", particularly with the personal challenges and upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Others felt that assignments, irrespective of their format, "got bunched up at the end" of a semester and that they unnecessarily overlapped with one another in terms of due date or when they needed to be worked on. A small number of learners also raised questions around the length of an academic year and asked if it could be lengthened to avoid the "cramming" of modules and assignments.

## Learners' evaluations of the 'Have Your Say' event

As outlined above, the principles that guided CDETБ in the organisation of this event aimed to ensure that learners felt empowered, engaged with and listened to as they participated in the event. Once the event had finished, participants were invited by CDETБ to evaluate the event considering these principles. A survey with 19 questions was shared with learners, asking respondents to rate the degree to which they agreed with statements (voting '1' for 'strongly disagree', up to '5' denoting 'strongly agree'. With 30 participants completing it, the responses received were overwhelmingly positive, Respondents largely agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements presented in the survey, such as:

- 'I have been listened to from the start' - average score of 4.9 out of 5;
- 'A lot of different voices were included' - average score of 4.9 out of 5;
- 'I think what we said today will be taken seriously' - average score of 4.6 out of 5; and
- 'I know why they want the opinions of students, trainees, and apprentices' - average score of 4.9 out of 5.

Average scores for all questions asked can be found in Appendix 9.

The feedback received by CDETБ from learners who participated in the evaluation of the event was very positive when asked to consider how the event was organised, why and what would happen with the information that they shared. Learners said that they:

- Were grateful for the space and time to share their thoughts on their training and learning, particularly during COVID-19;
- Valued the opportunity to be heard and to contribute to future improvements for other learners;
- Enjoyed hearing the journeys, experiences and opinions of their fellow learner;
- Appreciated how the event was carefully planned and facilitated by CDETБ to ensure inclusive, open and respectful sharing of thoughts;
- Would appreciate more time to get in to more depth around the topics and issues discussed; and
- Enjoyed getting to meet and chat with other learners.



## Key opportunities for future policy and practice

The final element of the 'Have Your Say' learner event involved the collection of feedback from the learners by the facilitators around what changes in provision they experienced, if any, they would like to see continued by CDETБ into future FET practice and policy. Much of what they recommended arose from the things that they thought went well during the year.

### Blended learning and blended programme delivery

**'If we were to do online going forward, I think it's good having the diversity of both [class based and remote learning]'**

While very few of the learners enjoyed being fully remote, many of them expressed an interest continuing some elements of blended learning and remote delivery. Examples of such elements included having access to recorded classes or videos that can be watched in their own time at their own pace. This was particularly true for modules that learners struggled with. One learner spoke about her ongoing struggles with passing math. She believed she benefited from being about to watch, slow down and re-watch maths classes and because of this was confident that she would pass maths for the first time which would allow her to progress to third level.

Online classes one to two days per week for some courses and modules was also identified as something that CDETБ should consider keeping. Learners felt this would help them better prepare them for the world of work as well as provide immediate benefits such as reduced travel times and more flexibility allowing them to study around family and job commitments. However, not all learners enjoyed remote learning and cautioned that it can lead to reduced motivation, less teamwork and greater isolation.

### A greater mix of assessment techniques

Learners advocated the continued use of the broader mix of assessment techniques, many of which were underpinned by digital technology, applied this year in place of end-of-term exams. Some believed that it had led to deeper learning and built skills that they would benefit from in future life. However, some learners felt that assignments and assessments came all bunched together towards the end of term. While they advocated the use of a broader mix of techniques, learners also asked that these be well coordinated between teaching staff on the same course to reduced unnecessary pressure on learners.

## Access to technology

Learners were very positive about the laptop and dongle lending scheme and would like to see it continue regardless of whether courses are delivered remotely. They noted that this would improve their technology skills and that such skills will be expected by most employers into the future.

Learners thought that their IT skills improved during the year. They wanted to see that continue into the future and recommended that IT skills needed to learn remotely be developed as part of the induction process in case lockdowns take place again.

**'I think role plays exams helped me to be less shy and interacted better with class mates and tutors. I feel it was a good way to get to know one another'**

## Not having compulsory work experience/work placement for every learner and every course

While many learners were looking forward to work experience, especially those coming from school or looking for a taste of work in a particular area, a number of learners were happy not to have work compulsory experience this year. They thought that the alternative module of personal and professional development was more suitable for them. This was particularly true of the more mature learners and the younger learners who were using their course to access a third level college place.

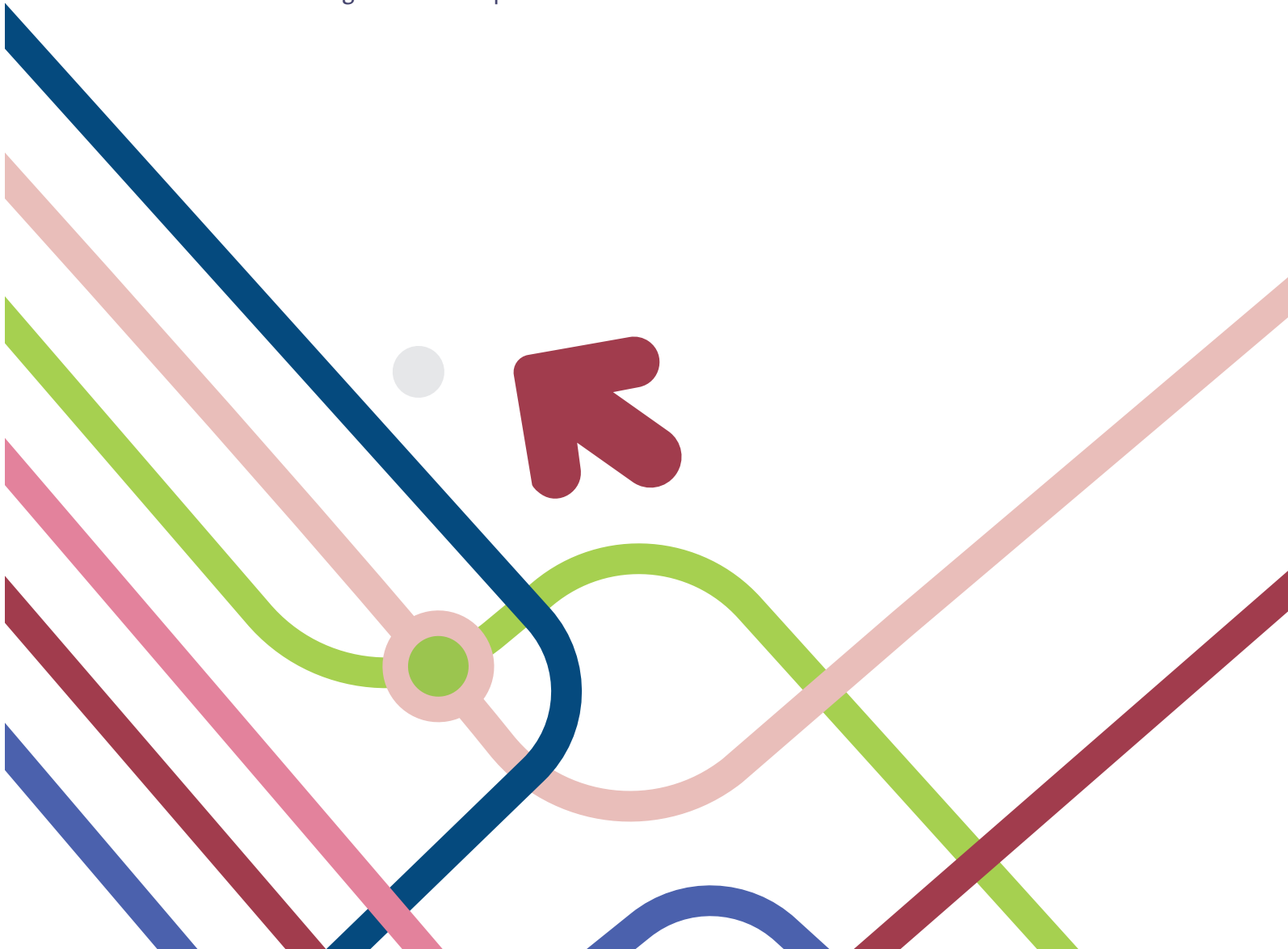
# Conclusion

In inviting learners to take part in the ‘Have Your Say’ event, CDETБ aimed to achieve a number of goals to inform its future FET policy and provision. Adopting an approach to the event which put the learners at the helm to share their experiences and thoughts in an empowering and inclusive way generated a wealth of rich and meaningful insights. Due to the generosity of learners who shared their stories and views of the past year being a learner, CDETБ has been enriched with timely and impactful insights for consideration in improving the quality and range of professional education delivery that responds to the learners needs by better understanding the learner journey.

To ensure that insights shared by learners shape future provision in CDETБ and the wider FET sector the findings from this report should contribute to the CDETБ’s self-evaluation and inaugural review process with the insights shared reflected in the areas for future development both in centre/service sphere development plans and the CDETБ quality improvement plans. This includes circulating the report to CDETБ’s governance groups responsible for quality assurance of FET provision in CDETБ.

# 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. List of courses and centres attended by learners who participated in the ‘Have Your Say’ learner consultation event
3. Summary infographic facilitators guide developed by CDETБ
4. Summary infographic for learners participating in the ‘Have Your Say’ learner consultation event
5. Detailed facilitators guidance notes for the ‘Have Your Say’ learner consultation event
6. Learner journey reflection materials – pictures
7. Event evaluation form and average response scores
8. QA learner journeys for Colleges of Further Education
9. Context of the ‘**have your say**’ event and report
10. How findings were developed



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 apprentice in a CDETБ college



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



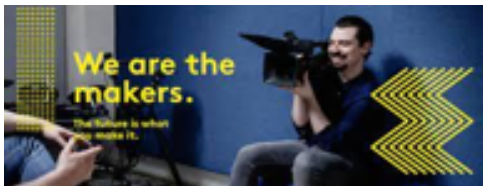
We have invited 120 students and apprentices from across the city to meet with us on at 11am on the 13th May 2021



You will be in a group with 8-10 other students to share your experience and ideas with us



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



Appendix 2: List of centres and courses attended by learners who participated (as listed by participants)

College Name	Course Title
Liberties College	Youth Studies & Community Development
Ballyfermot College of Further Education	Advance Social Care
Plunket College of Further	Introduction to Psychology & Counselling
Finglas training centre	Plumbing phase 2
Pearse College	Care Of The Older Person
Cabra Community College	Healthcare & SNA
Plunket College	Carpentry & Joinery
Marino College of Further Education	Creative Advertising and Digital Marketing
Liberties College, Dublin.	Youth Studies and Community Development
Ballsbridge College of Further Education	Community Development
Whitehall College of Further Education	Education and Training
Finglas Training Centre	ICT Associate Apprenticeship in Networking
Killester College of Further Education KCFE	Computer Networks and Cybersecurity
Killester College	5M2102
Pearse College	University Access Course
Colaiste Dhúlaigh	Graphic Design
Ballyfermot Partnership	Childcare Level 5
Finglas CDETБ	Graphic Design
Pearse College	Photography Year One
Ballyfermot	Level 5 Major Award in Office Administration Medical
Rathmines College	Business Administration L6
Pearse College	Advanced Woodwork with Furniture Making and Design
Professional cookery level five	Professional cookery level five
Crumlin	ACA
Ballyfermot CDETБ	Vehicle Body Repair
Finglas	Software Development
Coláiste Dhúlaigh	Pre nursing
Plunket college	Carpentry & Joiner pre-apprenticeship
Pearse college	Soccer coaching & gym instruction
Cabra Community College	Horticulture
BBCFE5531	Applied Psychology
Inchicore College of Further Education	Psychology
Finglas Training Centre	Software Development Apprenticeship
Marino College of further education Dublin	travel and tourism
Cabra Community College	VTOS QQI level 5 Business and Administration
Marino College of Further Education	Photography

Ballsbridge College of Further Education	Criminology and Social studies
Inchicore College of Further Education	Applied Psychology
Plunket College	Advanced Psychology
Colaiste Dhúlaigh	Social Care Level 6
	Health care
Pearse College	Woodworking and Furniture Making
Whitehall College	BUSINESS AND APPLIED LANGUAGES
Ballyfermot ETB	Carpentry and joinery
Ballsbridge College of Further Education	Criminology and Social Studies
Coláiste Dhúlaigh CDCFE	Engineering Technology
Ballyfermot Partnership	Child Health & Wellbeing
Inchicore College of Further Education	Creative Writing 6
Rathmines	News and media in the digital age
Cabra community collage	healthcare assistant
Colaiste Ide College of Further Education	Portfolio Preparation in Art and Design
Rathmines college of further education	Pre university law
Whitehall College	Whitehall College
Ballyfermot Training Centre	Office Administration (Medical)
Coláiste Ide	Health care level 5
Ballyfermot Partnership	Child Health & Wellbeing
Plunket College	introduction to counselling and psychology
Ballyfermot Partnership	Child Health % Wellbeing
Rathmines	QQI level 6 office administration
Finglas Training Centre	Plumbing
Ballyfermot Training Centre	Office administration (medical/legal/business)
Inchicore College of Further Education	Nursing studies
Colaiste Dhúlaigh	Computer Science
Coláiste Íde	Pre University Physiotherapy
Colaiste Dhúlaigh	Pre - Nursing Studies
Inchicore College of Further Education	Computer Applications & Mobile Technologies - Level 5
Ballsbridge College of Further Education	Business Studies
NCI	Child development
ICFE	Tourism
Colaiste Ide	Accounting Technician
Ballyfermot CDETБ	Vehicle body repair
Ballsbridge College of further education	Web Design & Multimedia
Whitehall College	Human nutrition and dietetics
Rathmines College	Advanced Computer Software Development
Plunket college	motor vehicle maintenance

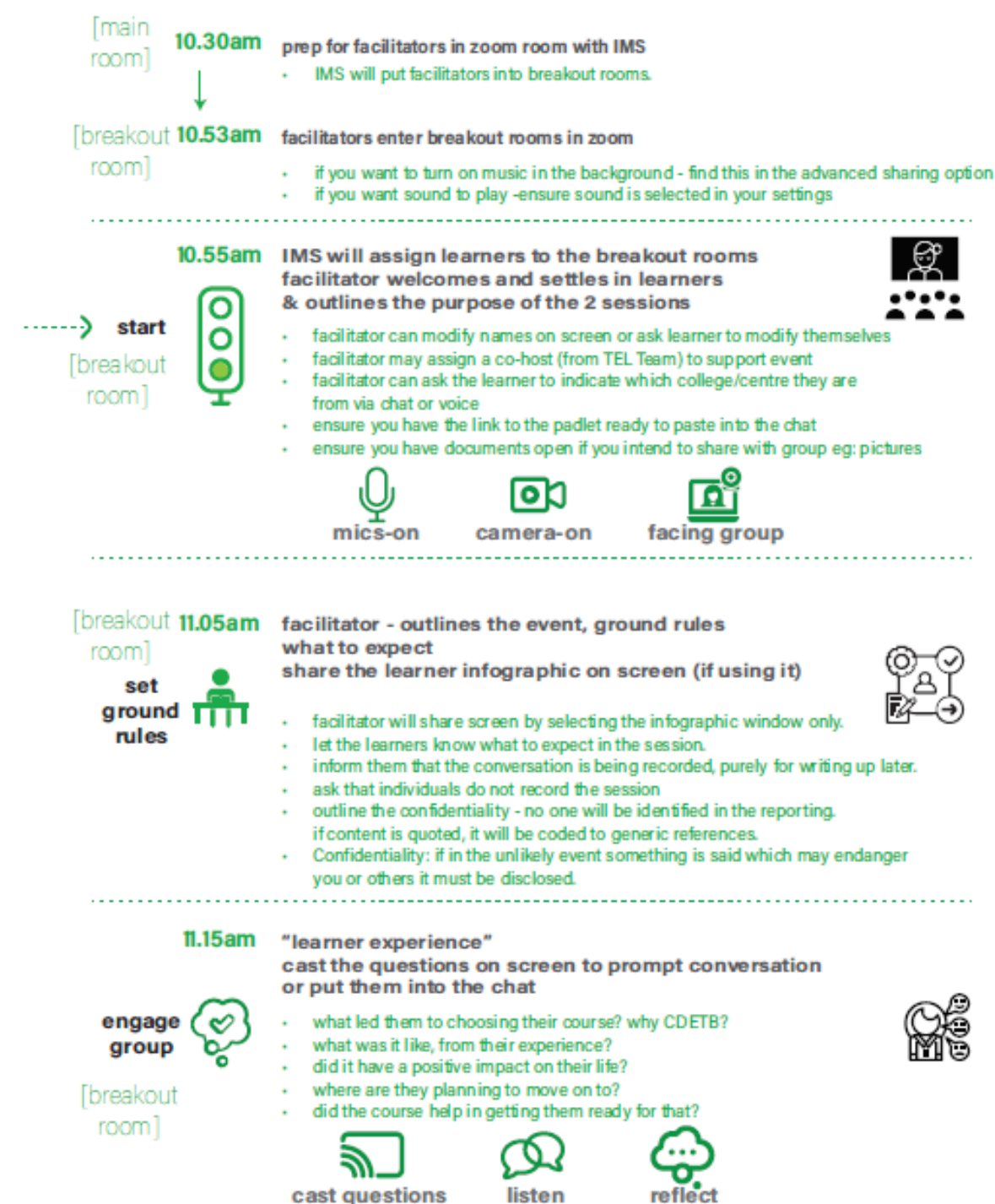
## Appendix 3: Summary infographic facilitators guide developed by CDETБ

### Facilitators notes for learner event 13th May

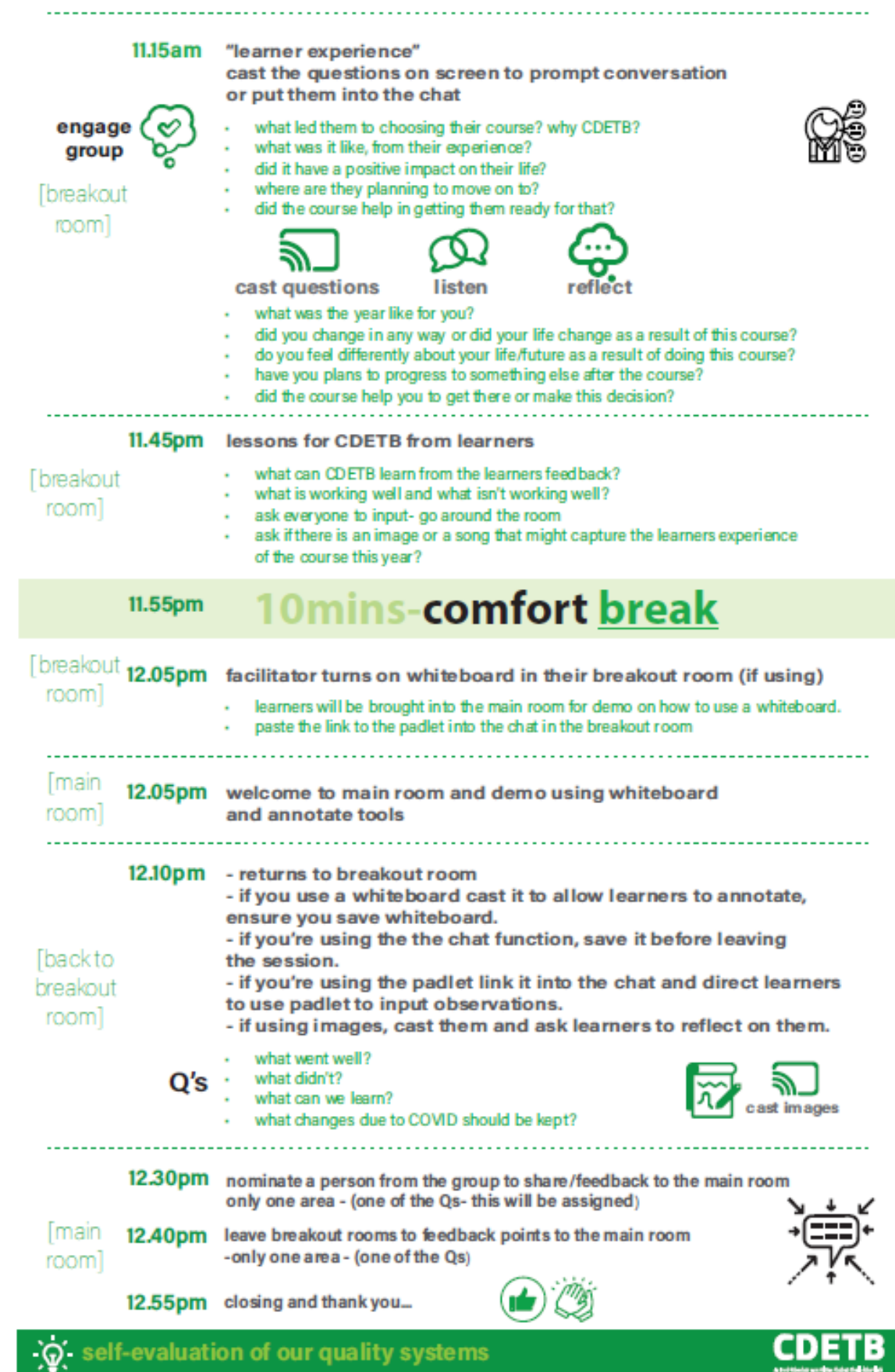
# HAVE YOUR SAY

## CDETБ self-evaluation of our quality systems

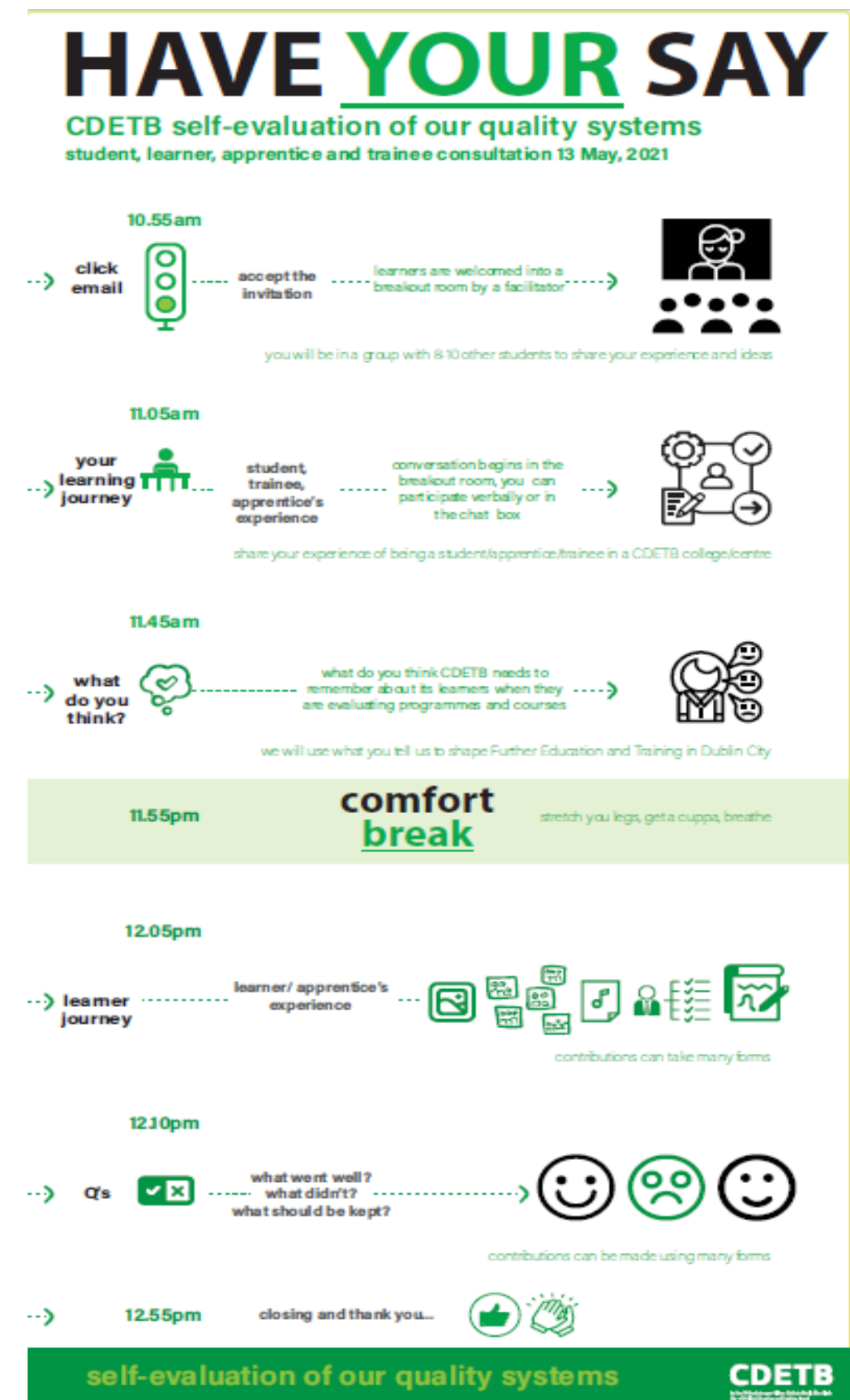
student, learner, apprentice and trainee consultation 13 May, 2021







## Appendix 4: Summary infographic for learners participating in the 'Have Your Say' learner consultation event



Appendix 5: Detailed facilitators guidance notes for the ‘Have Your Say’ learner consultation event

Learners level 5+ 11am – 1pm on 13th May 2021

**Purpose:** To ensure learners have an opportunity to contribute to the CDETБ 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 CDETБ.

**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 CDETБ 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 5+ 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 CDETБ 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
10.30am	<b>Prep in the zoom room</b>	Close all applications on your computer that you don’t need for this session.	Let facilitators into main room for final prep
Main room	All facilitators attend prep meeting for last minute prep and clarification	Open all the applications needed.	
10.55am	<b>Facilitators enter breakout rooms</b>		Main room has backdrop cast / welcome to the ‘have your say’
Breakout room	<a href="#">Link to padlet</a>  <b>Link to video about using this padlet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Infographic</li><li>• Pictures</li><li>• Padlet</li></ul>	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

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
10. 56am	<b>Open ‘doors’ to event – let participants enter</b>  As the learners enter, the job of the facilitator is to put them at 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)	Get learners to put their name /what they want to be called as the name showing on their screen. (right click on the participant and click rename)	As learners enter, (mikes on, cameras on) they are randomly put into breakout rooms – 1 per room for first 10 rooms.  The next 5 rooms open when there are 6 people in each of the first rooms
Opening			
11.05am	<b>What CDETБ needs to remember about learners</b>  <b>Outline of the event, ground rules for the event, prepping group for learner experience session (personal journey)</b>  Facilitator to let the learners know what to expect.  (See infographic) and take them through the commitments from CDETБ to the group.  <b>Commitments from CDETБ to group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ask people not to record the session</li><li>• RECORD session – let</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 question of that they can (important to highlight the things we are good at remembering as well so that we don’t stop doing those things)</li></ul>	Cast infographic  Have infographic open on your computer	Send prompts to breakout rooms -  11.05am – what CDETБ needs to remember about learners

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
	<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 discussing</li> </ul>		
11.15am	<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 CDETB</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>Why we want them to tell us</p> <p><b>To understand the learner journey from the learners perspective –</b></p>		<p>Send prompts to breakout rooms</p> <p>11.15 – learners personal experience / journey</p> 

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
	<p><b>Learner experience /learner journey</b></p> <p>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	<p><b>Opening</b></p> <p>‘Which picture best represents what led you to choose to study’?</p>	If using picture – cast picture 1	
Reflective	<p><b>Focused conversation questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What led you to choose the course/ college you did? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">O</span></li> <li>Did you come straight from school? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">O</span></li> <li>Was this your first choice? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">O</span></li> <li>are you retraining – have you been working for a while already <span style="color: #00AEEF;">O</span></li> <li>Are you coming back from a break in paid work / study – were you raising kids <span style="color: #00AEEF;">O</span></li> <li>What prompted you to choose to come here? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">R</span></li> <li>What course did you pick and why? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">R</span></li> <li>Was the course what you expected? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">I</span></li> <li>What was the year/2 years like? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">R</span></li> </ul> <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? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">I</span></li> <li>did you change this year? – because of the experience <span style="color: #00AEEF;">I</span></li> <li>did your relationships with family and change because of doing the course/ apprenticeship? <span style="color: #00AEEF;">I</span></li> </ul>		

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>did your circumstances change (get a job, start or end a relationship )? I</li><li>do you feel different about your life / future after doing the course? I</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? I</li></ul>		
11.30	<b>Lessons for CDETБ from the learner Journey</b>  <i>What do you think CDETБ needs to remember about learners when we are evaluating our service and programmes when deciding what to do next? D</i>  (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)  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.  Thank participants for sharing their experiences and give a 10-minute break. (back at 12.05pm)		Send prompts to breakout rooms -  11.45 – what do you think CDETБ needs to remember  11.50 – 5 minutes left  11.53 – 2 minutes left  1 min countdown
11.45	<b>10 min comfort break</b>  Main room  Slide showing – see you at 12.05  Music playing		Cast slide in main room – enjoy your break, see you at 12.05
11.55	Welcome members back into the main room  Main room  Welcome back and outline of the next session - We want you to tell us your experience of being a student with us this year. – (3 mins )  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>what did we do well?</b></li><li><b>what didn’t go so well and what we can we learn from that?</b></li></ul>	As Carrie is explaining Padlet Facilitators go into breakout rooms and prepare	Put padlet link into chat in main room  Turn off music at 12.05 and Spotlight Blake  Spotlight Carrie

Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>because of COVID 19 we had to do some things differently</b> (e.g remote teaching, online assessments, virtual open days, replacing work experience with the personal and professional development module) – <b>we want your opinion what we should keep doing and why?</b> -Blake</li></ul> Intro into how to use the padlet – Carrie <b>(2 mins)</b>  Let them know that we will keep it open for the day so if they think of things later they can add them.		
12.00pm  Breakout rooms	Welcome everyone back to break out room.  Get nominee for feeding back to main group  Explain that they will only be asked to give the points under one area. Let learners know that we have captured all their points and will be feeding it into the review process.  Pick a word or image to summarise your experience of studying this year  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.  <b>1 What went well</b>  <b>2 What didn’t and what can we learn from that</b>  <b>3 Because of COVID 19 we had to do some things differently</b> (e.g remote teaching (zoom/teams, videos in advance) online assessments/no exams, virtual open days, replacing work experience with the personal and professional development module. semesterisation or doing the full module and assessment in 1 term instead of across the whole year) – We want your opinion on what we should keep doing and why?	Draw learners attention to Padlet link  If using pictures – cast picture  Q1 John F Brenda Marie Barbara Eoin  Q2 John K Treasa Lorraine Mary Orla  Q3 Carrie Stephen Margaret Aideen Louise	  Send learners into same breakout rooms as before  Prompt into breakout rooms  12.20 - Begin questions  12.35 – 5 mins left pick your main point for feedback if you have not already done so.



Time	Agenda / role of the Facilitator	Facilitator IT actions	IT /event management actions
	Remind learners that Padlets will remain open all day if they think of something later		
12.30	Gather feedback to main group – Blake  First 5 groups to feedback what went well  Next 5 of feedback what didn't go so well and what we learned from it.  Last 5 to feedback the things to keep		Close all breakout rooms and turn off mikes. (allow people to unmute themselves)  Record session  Spotlight Blake
12.50	In main group thank participants, explain what will happen next		Mute all mikes but main speaker – keep Blake spotlighted

padlet link <https://cdetb.padlet.org/carriearcher/tl0r40akomo6nmrv>

## Appendix 6: QA learner journeys for Colleges of Further Education

1. Supporting the social, cultural and economic development of the city, creating and responding to demand for education and training,
  - a. Engaging with local organisations and employers to design responses to their needs
  - b. Reviewing data about economic and cultural changes and developing courses to respond
  - c. Designing and securing right to deliver courses that respond to emerging or created needs
  - d. Engaging with centres providing level 1-4 provision and maintaining entry routes
2. Establishing and maintaining processes to support the delivery of high quality education provision
  - a. Securing, managing and reporting on funding
  - b. Governance and QA systems
  - c. Recruitment, selection and support of staff
  - d. Professional development of staff
  - e. Development and maintenance of facilities and equipment
  - f. Procurement of equipment
3. Recruitment of learners
  - a. Advertising /Open Days/Career Guidance Counsellors/Careers Events/ Learner Queries to Centre
4. Selection Process
  - a. Interviews/Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/Offering of Places/Enrolment/Registration/Fee collection/Assessment of learner suitability
5. Admission:
  - a. Timetabling and scheduling of course
  - b. Induction: student handbooks, informing students of what we expect from them and what they should expect from us, team building exercises for new classes
  - c. Identify learners in need of reasonable accommodation

d. Referrals to support services where appropriate

e. RPL where appropriate

## 6. Course Planning

a. Course department preparation and planning

b. Assessment planning and co-ordination across programme

## 7. Course commencement

a. Teaching and Learning begins; - How we deliver our courses and engage learners; Teaching and Learning Resources for teachers and students

b. Monitoring student performance begins; attendance, meeting deadlines, behaviour (academic/non-academic), trips, student progress reports. Dealing with performance issues

c. Teacher self-evaluation; Teacher to teacher; giving and receiving formal feedback, cross moderation, reflective and consultative practices

## 8. Assessments

a. Assessment Plan

b. RPL

c. Assignment Briefs with marking schemes

d. Cross Moderation of assessments

e. Assessment and feedback to learners, scheduling feedback at the right time; Teacher-Learner, Learner-Teacher; oral, formal written and annotated feedback.

## 9. Interim results reviews:

a. In-progress results from across the programme issued to learners

b. Feedback taken from learners on learner performance

## 10. End of Programme

a. Exams devised with marking schemes and moderated

b. Assessments/Exams Collected

c. Scheduling and holding of Exams

d. Supervision of Exams and information to Learners of regulations

e. Issues of Cheating/Plagiarism

f. Repeat Exam/Repeat Assessments identified

## 11. Secure storage of Assessments/work

a. Hold Assessment Material until after appeals

b. Maintain Final Results Indefinitely

## 12. Preparation for External Verification/Authentication

a. Preparation for QQI Internal Verification

b. Preparation for QQI External Authenticators/External Examiners

c. Preparation for: - Centre Course Exam Boards.

## 13. End of Year: – in-put of grades to QQI and other Awarding bodies

a. Preparation for QQI Internal verification of assessments and other awarding bodies

b. Inputting grades to QBS

c. Internal Verification as per: - QQI Internal verification

d. Adjusting grades errors or miscalculations on QBS

e. Print Submission Summary from QBS for college/centre records

f. Internal quality checks as per: – QA agreements with Awarding Bodies (other)

g. Inputting grades to Non QQI Awarding bodies.

## 14. External Authenticator / Awarding Body External Examiner Visits

a. Recruitment & selection of External Authenticators

b. Schedule of External Authenticators/External Examiner visits

## 15. End of Year: - Exam - boards

a. Chaired by Principal or Deputy Principal

b. Focus of Exam Board

- c. Individual learner performance across whole programme
- d. Course/Programme performance - self-evaluation

#### 16. Issuing Provisional and/or Final Results to Learners

- a. Progression/completion of awards
- b. Appeals
- c. Repeats

#### 17. End of year: - Results Approval Panel Meeting - sign - off of results

- a. Meeting to Oversee of Centre/College current results, assessments and operations
- b. Final sign off to QBS
- c. CDETБ review of results data on a periodic basis to ensure consistency across centres + between programmes

#### 18. Centre Self-Evaluation:

- a. Data Collection methods
- b. Findings examined with improvement measures Identified
- c. Actions to be taken

#### 19. External Appeals: processing of appeals to meet QQI early July deadline for Central Applications Office (CAO) offers to FE students

- a. June Appeals Process
- b. N10 application forms
- c. Remittance Advice Procedures: Office Administration Staff

#### 20. Programme Development (arising from self-evaluation and review)

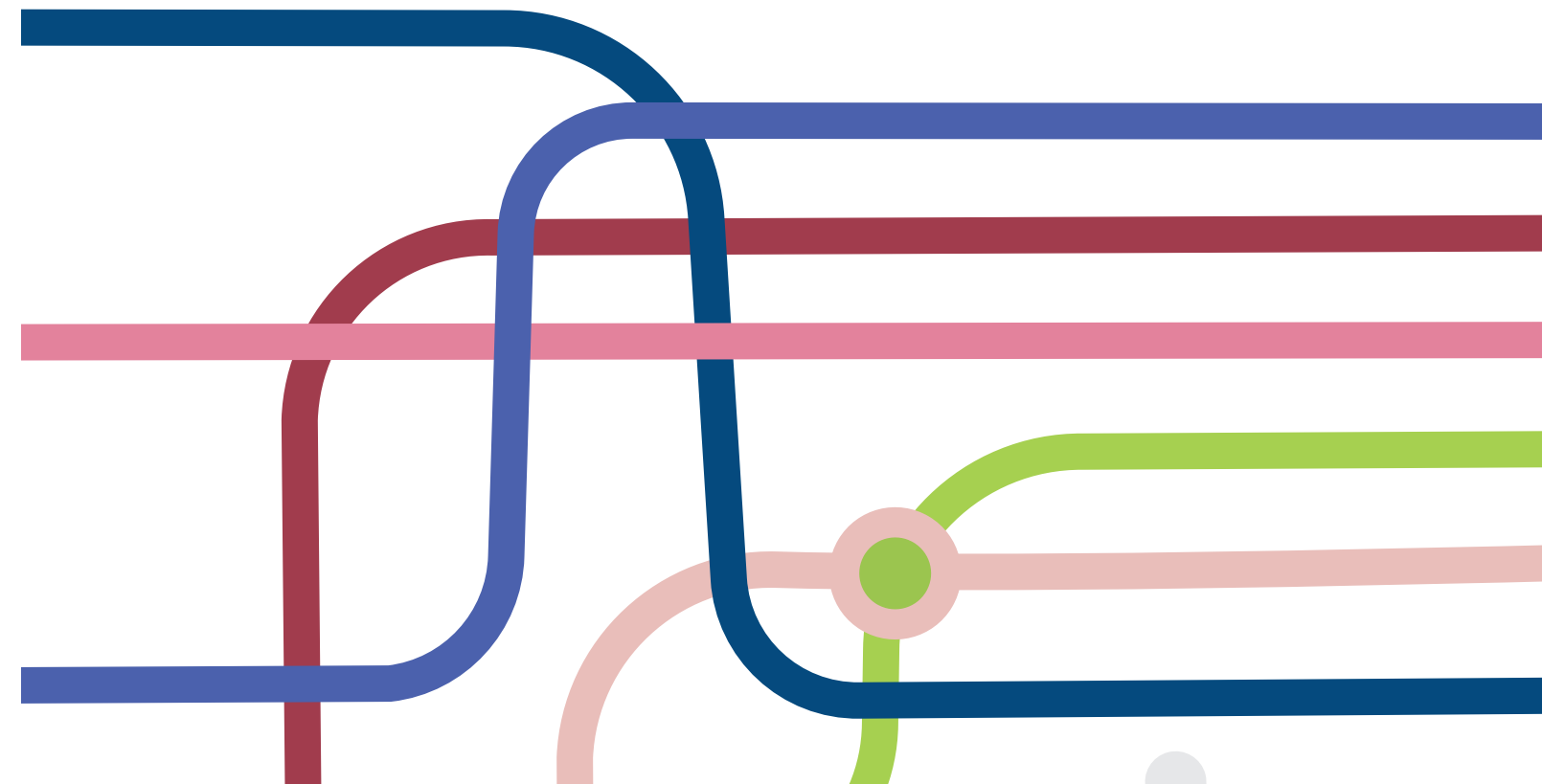
- a. New Course Applications; Changes to Course Title.
- b. Modifying Programmes; New Programme Proposals.
- c. New Award Proposals

#### 21. Learner Queries

- a. Issues with progression; Admin Staff essential for Red Alert Responses to any progression issues e.g. CAO

#### 22. Learner progression

- a. Secure employment
- b. Progress to further or higher education
- c. Apply learning to existing role-professional development of the learner



Appendix 7: Learner journey reflection materials

Picture for session one – ‘Which picture best represents what led you to choose to study?’



Picture for session 2 – ‘what picture or word best summaries your experience of studying this year?’



Appendix 8: Event evaluation form and average response scores

Question	Average response (1= ‘Strongly disagree’, 5= ‘Strongly agree’)
1. I have been listened to from the start	4.93
2. I felt comfortable giving my opinions	4.93
3. I felt safe giving my opinions	4.93
4. A lot of different voices were included	4.97
5. I got a chance to give my opinions	4.90
6. I got enough information to help me give my opinion	4.87
7. I got support to have my voice heard	4.87
8. I understood what was being discussed	4.93
9. I could give my opinion in different ways	4.83
10. I had enough time to talk	4.27
11. I know who wants to hear our opinions	4.77
12. I know why they want the opinions of students, trainees, and apprentices	4.93
13. They were honest about what they would try to do with our opinions and ideas	4.87
14. I know where our opinions are going next	4.70
15. I know how we will be told about what happens to our opinions	4.27
16. I think what we said today will be taken seriously	4.57
17. What were the best things about today?	N/A- open text box
18. What would you change about today?	N/A- open text box
19. Any other comments?	N/A- open text box



## Appendix 9: Context for the ‘Have You Say’ event and this report

As part of the inaugural statutory review of its quality assurance systems, CDETБ is committed to engaging with a variety of stakeholders to evaluate how effective its systems are at achieving its mission and strategic objectives. In May 2021, 1,003 of the over 7,000 full-time learners (938 CFE learners and 74 TC learners) returned questionnaires giving feedback on their experiences of studying with CDETБ this year.

The ‘Have Your Say’ consultation event built on the themes explored in the questionnaires by reflecting more deeply on the experiences of learners and the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning on a CDETБ course.

### Providing high quality educational opportunities during COVID-19

COVID-19 had an enormous impact on the CDETБ’s FET provision in 2020/2021. [FET Level 5+ courses](#) normally include a high level of practical skills development as part of their awards for example apprenticeships, childcare, healthcare, beauty, hairdressing, applied sciences, business awards. CDETБ’s 15 CFEs mainly offer [Post Leaving Certificate](#) (PLC) courses in these areas. These CFEs are primarily converted second-level school buildings resulting in small classrooms and labs where the education and training takes place. The two training centres offering Craft Apprenticeships and Traineeships were purpose built and have larger classroom and practical instruction spaces.

While the provision of smaller classes is normally seen as a strength of PLC FET provision, these smaller spaces negatively affected the recruitment of learners and contributed to a significant reduction in the delivery capacity of centres when it came to planning a safe reopening of centres in September 2020. As public health measures required mask wearing and social distancing between learners in every classroom, this restricted recruitment on PLC and other full-time programmes operating in small classrooms or centres.

The full-time learners enrolled in CDETБ Level 5+ QQI awards courses from September to December 2020 were enrolled as follows:

- 6,427 learners on PLC courses (down 7% on 2019);
- 193 learners on the [Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme](#) (VTOS) (down 19% on 2019);
- 104 learners enrolled in [2016 apprenticeships](#) (down 52% on 2019); and
- 329 learners taking part in [Craft Apprenticeships](#)- phases 2/4/6 (down 54% on 2019).

Public health restrictions in Dublin city were more stringent than expected, with learners restricted from entering the centres at the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

From September to December 2020, FET centres were limited to a maximum of 20% of their enrolled learners attending at any one time. In most CFEs, this resulted in every class attending one day per week, with the rest of the course delivered remotely using virtual learning platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. In the cases of centres with more vulnerable learners or those that offered both very practical and very academic courses, for example business courses and beauty courses, some centres increased the in-centre time for practical courses and the remote learning time for the more academic or theory-based courses.

In line with public health advice, centres had to go fully online from January to late March 2021. For two weeks in March 2021, CDETБ was permitted to bring in no more than 5% of learners to centres. CDETБ chose to prioritise its more vulnerable learners, including those that did not have access to suitable places to study at home and those on courses that needed access to specialist equipment. Post-Easter 2021, the number of learners permitted in centres increased to 20% of all enrolled learners. This 20% attendance allocation was primarily used for learners who needed to access specialist equipment or who had to undertake simulated work experience to complete their awards in time for progression to third level or employment.

As most of the delivery of Level 5+ programmes in centres took place remotely in the academic year 2020/21 CDETБ operated a government funded laptop loan scheme. CDETБ purchased 834 laptops /laptops and internet dongles. These were then distributed to Level NFQ 5+ CDETБ learners who did not have access to an appropriate ICT device and lacked the means to source an appropriate device. Table 1 outlines how these were distributed by learner category and enrolment status.

**Table 1:** Laptop loan scheme – distribution to learners 2020/21

<u>Learner Category</u>	<u>Number of full-time students</u>	<u>Number of part-time students</u>
Apprenticeships	8	0
Traineeships	15	1
PLC courses	645	1
VTOS	164	0
Total Laptops / laptops and internet dongles allocated to Level 5+ learners in 2020/2021	832	2

## Appendix 10: How the findings were developed

The data collected during the event were collated by CDETБ and securely shared with the authors of this report. One of the authors of this report, who is a researcher, then conducted **thematic analysis** to look for patterns or 'themes' in the data. She used an open-source, General Data Protection Regulation-compliant software called Taguette to complete the analysis. The written feedback was read and re-read by the researcher to build her familiarity with it and pieces of text were tagged with labels using Taguette to describe their content.

The tagged or 'coded' sections of text were then organised into themes, where related, connected or similar sections of text were grouped together by the researcher to tell the stories contained in the feedback. This review and creation of themes took place in Microsoft Excel. The researcher looked for particular themes, based on themes of interest identified by CDETБ staff and consultations with principals and heads of centres when they were thinking of areas most important in an annual review of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these themes included:

- IT access and technology enhanced learning (TEL) ability
- Learner recruitment, selection and retention
- Work experience and work placement
- Remote teaching and learning
- Alternative assessment
- Supports to learners
- College life
- Management and administration

The researcher also documented other emerging themes and experiences and feedback which differed from the majority of those more widely reported. The researcher also listened to random sections of the breakout room recordings to triangulate the Padlet notes and to identify useful illustrative quotes to bring the findings to life using the learners' words.

With regards to the case studies, one of the authors wrote up the case studies and edited the recording of the interview for inclusion in the report. Both were returned to the learner to ensure they were an accurate representation of what was said. The learners forwarded any amendments until a final version was signed off for inclusion by the learner. These were sent to the centres named to get permission to use the centre name in this report.

The quantitative data collected as part of the event evaluation was taken from Microsoft Forms, where it had been collected online, analysed by the researcher using Microsoft Excel. Simple descriptive statistics were created to summarise the thoughts of the learners on the event.

## Things to be aware of when reading the findings

When reading the findings from this event, it is worth being aware for the following points:

- Transcripts documenting the contributions of the learners during the breakout rooms were not available. The thematic analysis was completed by the researcher using the notes from the learners as well as the facilitators and note takers. Although there are Padlet entries from learners, some of the feedback was entered by the facilitators and note takers are a first-hand account of what was heard but cannot replace the exact words of the learners. To offset this, the researcher listened to random extracts from each of the Zoom recordings to triangulate the recorded notes against what was said by the learners in their own words.
- Learners who participated in the event were those close to completing their education and training. Thus, it cannot be said that their views and experiences represent those of people who did not complete their courses or training or of those potential learners who did not or could not enrol to take part in a Level 5+ course provided by CDETБ.

