



Inaugural Review of CDET B's Quality Systems

In May and June 2021 learners and staff from all across the CDET B FET centres and support services were invited to give feedback on their experience of working and learning this year, including how they adapted practices to maintain the delivery of quality education in response to the COVID 19 emergency measures.

In 2020 CDET B provided educational opportunities for over 39,117 learners across its 5 service spheres of [Adult Education\(AES\)](#), [Colleges of Further Education\(CFE\)](#), [Education to Prisons \(EP\)](#), [Training Centres \(TC\)](#) including [community training](#) and [Youthreach \(YR\)](#). Many of the 53 awarding centres in these areas incorporated staff and learner feedback opportunities as part of the annual review of courses or at examboards and RAP processes. Others held centre or service sphere consultation sessions to allow staff to feed into CDET B's self-evaluation of quality systems as part of its [inaugural review](#) process with QQI.

The inaugural review looks at how effective CDET B's quality systems are at supporting the achievement of its organisational mission and the CDET B [statement of strategy 2021 to 2025](#).

The CDET B statement of strategy has 4 pillars these are;

1. **Profile** - identity and communication
2. **People** - Staff, Students, Learners
3. **Pedagogy** – teaching, learning, assessment (TLA) and student support to include andragogy
4. **Processes** - administration, organisation and support systems

With commitments under each of the headings.

The QQI inaugural review has 3 objective areas, all of which relate to the CDET B mission and strategy. These are:-

1. governance and management of quality
2. teaching learning and assessment
3. self-evaluation, monitoring and review

In addition to the centre and service sphere level feedback opportunities a FET wide, teacher, tutor and instructor survey was issued to gathered feedback on staff's experience of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA). This year there was a specific focus on commitments made in the CDET B statement of strategy that were relevant to the inaugural review process.

585 educators from across the service spheres responded to this survey, Adult Education – 77 Colleges of Further Education – 332 (71% response rate) Education to Prisons -90 (100% response rate) Training Centres -37 (52% response rate) and Youthreach -49 (62% response rate). This newsletter summarises the input received across the 5 service spheres.

Our mission is to provide professional high quality education and training services for people in Dublin city that contributes both to the personal development of the individual as well as to the overall social, economic and cultural development of the city

helping you learn,
helping you grow,
helping you develop

Surveys were returned by 585 educators working in Adult Education, Colleges of Further Education, Prison Education, Training Centres & Youthreach centres across Dublin City



585 Educators



5 Service Spheres



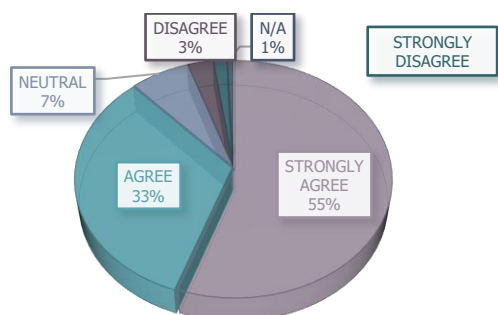
39,117 Learners



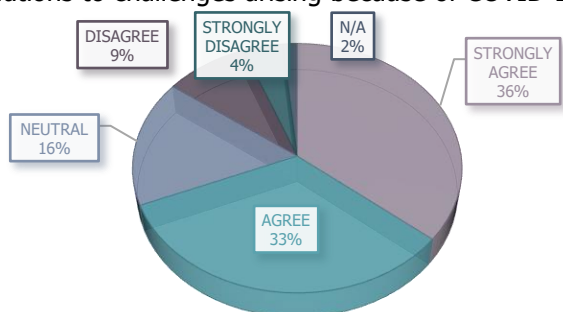
What CDETБ educators had to say

In its [statement of strategy 2021 – 2025](#) CDETБ stated its commitment to developing effective consultation and communication processes with staff, learners and stakeholders. ‘*Effective communication*’ was named under **Pillar 1 Profile** of that strategy and ‘*harnessing and embracing the voice of staff in the strategic direction and leadership of CDETБ*’ named in **Pillar 2 People**.

As part of the review process a number of questions were included in the staff survey that related to **communication, collaboration and harnessing the voice of staff** with the following emerging;-



88% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they were **kept informed** of COVID 19 related changes taking place at centre in a timely manner with **69% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing** that they were **given an opportunity to input** into solutions to challenges arising because of COVID 19.



Feedback from teaching, tutoring and instructing staff across 5 service spheres

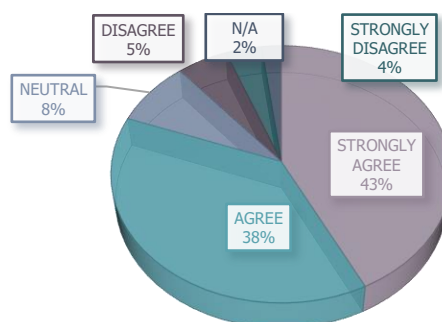
Responding to staff insights

In March 2020 in response to the first COVID 19 lockdown CDETБ moved overnight into emergency remote teaching and learning with over 29,000 learners in 78 delivery centres affected. In the May 2020 review of the impact of COVID 19 on teaching, learning and assessment (the ‘[informing the future](#)’ report) CDETБ staff and centres identified ‘**access to technology for staff and learners**’, ‘**IT knowhow**’ and ‘**understanding of how to teach remotely / pedagogy**’ as key areas to be addressed.

Throughout 2020/2021 staff and management in CDETБ worked to respond to the challenges and uncertainty that COVID 19 brought including addressing the development areas identified by staff.

For example in relation to ‘**access to technology**’ CDETБ used the SOLAS grant scheme to procure **1,295 laptops/laptops and dongles for disadvantaged learners** alongside local donations of laptops, tablets, phones and devices for loan to learners across the scheme.

To ensure that **staff had access to devices** for teaching remotely centre devices were lent to staff with some additional laptops, Wi-Fi dongles and phones purchased to ensure that staff could work remotely. Staff members in the in the service spheres were also allocated CDETБ head office email addresses to ensure access to Moodle and MS 365 resources.



81% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they **had access to the technology** they **needed to deliver** their **course remotely** with 9% of all respondents actively disagreeing with that statement. Staff delivering on courses that required access to specialist technology were more likely to respond negatively to this question.

‘The crisis shook up how we do things and some gems dropped out. Let’s mindfully hang on to these better practices as we, hopefully, return to the option of more in-person delivery.’ – CFE



What CDETB educators had to say

Pillar 3 Pedagogy of the CDETB statement of strategy gives a commitment to '*promoting creativity, innovation and diversity of approach in learning, teaching and training, for example using digital tools*'; with **Pillar 2 People** committing to '*investing in staff development in order to build professional capacity and foster a positive organisational culture in CDETB*'.

Improving '**IT knowhow**' and '**understanding of how to teach remotely / pedagogy**' were priority development areas identified by staff in the CDETB 2019/2020 review of teaching and learning. From April – July 2020 CDETB had over **3,800 staff participants** attend **23 online CDU held Professional Learning and Development (PLD)** sessions focused on upskilling in the use of TEL for teaching and learning. With each of these sessions also uploaded for staff to access in their own time (1,402 site users in 2020/21).

This was built on throughout the 2020/2021 academic year with **1,218 participants** attending **86 PLD sessions** offered by the CDU with others accessing the recorded sessions in their own time. 85 staff were **supported to undertake nationally developed FET programmes**, 35 staff were supported on **accredited courses**, 74 staff completing the **UDL Badge** with AHEAD and UCD, and there are now 46 **Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Support (TELMS)** across the services spheres. This is in addition to the role and centre/service sphere specific upskilling opportunities provided throughout the year.

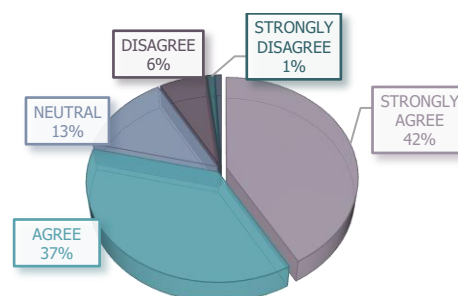
Other PLD opportunities established this year included the development of **11 new communities of practice (COP)** in subject (Faculty) specific areas for example childcare, business and work experience. These were developed in response to requests from staff for additional support in converting courses for online delivery, designing alternative assessments and alternatives to external work experience.

Staff who attended PLD sessions were given an opportunity to evaluate the sessions they attended and suggest other areas for support and development. As part of the end of year survey educators were surveyed about their access to appropriate PLD opportunities.

[Professional Learning and Development]

'Like Moses, they led us out of the technical wilderness that was 2020-2021. An excellent job.' – Education to Prisons

79% of CDETB educators agreed or strongly agreed that appropriate professional learning and development opportunities were provided to support them with online delivery.



This feedback was supported by learners across the services spheres who highlighted that they saw an **improvement** in both the **use of technology** and the **online delivery capabilities** of most teachers/instructors. With many learners complementing the dedication and commitment of staff.

However some learners reported that the standard of on line delivery of some teaching staff dropped towards the end of the year or remained at a low level throughout the year.

Education staff were also given an opportunity to comment on the **impact of PLD on their role** with the majority of respondents reporting a positive and transformative impact on their teaching.

Key themes emerging included;

- Provided vital skills and tools needed to deliver courses remotely
- Provided opportunities to feel part of a team/meet colleagues from across the ETB
- Enhanced their teaching practice

Huge impact on my role, so many TEL resources incorporated into my work, not just from a classroom perspective but also from a working perspective with other colleagues. (TC)

With the scale of unexpected change occurring, a number of staff also reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume and variety of Professional Learning and Development (PLD) offered to support emergency remote delivery, assessment and quality assurance. This was particularly true for staff in centres using multiple platforms to communicate with and gather assignments from learners, and staff with low digital literacy skills.



Challenges and supports

Staff across the service spheres identified the **key challenges** they experienced, for example in adult education services **recruitment and retention of learners** was identified with staff highlighting the lower numbers of learners able to engage in programmes due to the challenges of remote delivery. With some staff expressing concerns for the learners lost during the lockdown periods and the learners with low literacy /digital literacy who struggled to get or remain engaged, despite the efforts made.

This was similar for prison education where **no face to face remote delivery** could take place during lockdown so staff had to develop material to be delivered to learners in their cells during the COVID 19 lockdown periods. A number of education to prison staff also expressed frustration with prison lockdown arrangements and wished that more could have been done to support learners during these periods.

Difficulty engaging learners remotely was also identified across the other service spheres with a number of staff, especially those working with younger learners, highlighting the **'blank screen'** of learners logging on to classes but keeping their cameras and mics off. Some educators found in-class discussions and peer to peer learning more challenging online than in classroom based teaching.

Staff across the service spheres identified **IT/WIFI access** and **IT knowhow** (their own and learners) as a challenge to overcome requiring them to put in significant additional effort to deliver their courses this year.

Across the service spheres staff highlighted the **personal challenges** they experienced in carrying out their roles this year. This included **access to childcare, social isolation, challenges in converting courses** and **access to peer support**. Access to peers/colleagues was particularly prominent in feedback from staff in CFEs and TCs who traditionally have more daily contact with peers than those in other service spheres.

Education staff were asked about the support they relied on to support them in their role. 518 staff answered the question with **colleagues** named most frequently by respondents as the **support** they relied on in their role this year. This included staff in structured roles, for example TELMS mentors, peers on PLNs, and structured TEL supports such as the [TEL tea in Killester CFE](#).

Technology - Laptop support documentation
old laptop time work support of colleagues
close colleagues use free laptop
Zoom CDU - excellent
laptop riser issues management laptop WiFi spec of the laptops
informative colleagues colleagues who had expertise

Staff also identified

- **Access to technology and tech support staff** including TELMS mentors, IT support, laptops, and platforms,
- **Professional Learning and Development** offered through the CDU as well as local training with specific staff members frequently mentioned
- **Management supports** with department heads, ALO, head teachers, coordinators, deputy principals and principals all named
- **Family and friends** also featured particularly where they provided practical supports including childminding and IT support

'Seemed that there was no off switch. Remote working does not mean a person is available 24 hrs a day 7 days a week. Boundary guidelines need to be revisited within the current change of work situations.' (AES Tutor)

'It was a challenging time. We all had to adapt and learn and change - learners, tutors and management. But we got there' (CFE)

The theme of **'timely support or support/people being available when it was most needed'** was also identified. Some staff also highlighted the need to access wellbeing and mental health support to cope with the demands of the year. Addressing **lack of informal access to colleagues** was highlighted as an area for improvement if home working were to be continued into next year. Staff also identifying **wellbeing and staff welfare** as important to support them in their roles.

Most challenging aspect on teaching this year: -

'Managing students anxiety and personal stressors and how they affect online engagement.' -
Youthreach



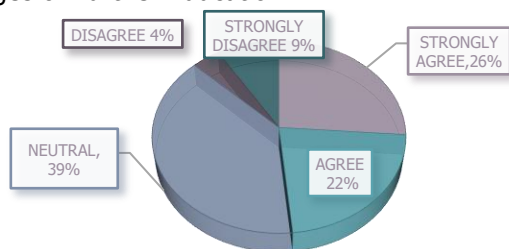
What CDETB educators had to say

COVID 19 public health restrictions in Dublin city turned out to be even **more stringent than expected**, with many learners restricted from entering centres from the start of term. From September to December 2020, **FET centres were limited to a maximum of 20% of their enrolled learners attending at any one time**, forcing most courses into some level of remote delivery.

In January 2021 this became even more restricted with centres operating fully remotely from January to late March 2021 and only returning to **20% capacity** after Easter. These restrictions impacted on the assessment periods and quality assurance measures as well as teaching and learning.

51% of the 2,421 courses offered in CDETB in 2020 resulted in a QQI award (1,232 courses leading to 13,356 awards). To protect the integrity of these a number of measures were introduced. These included **governance arrangements** for the development of alternative assessments and alternatives to external work placement on QQI awards and the introduction of online IV and EA processes.

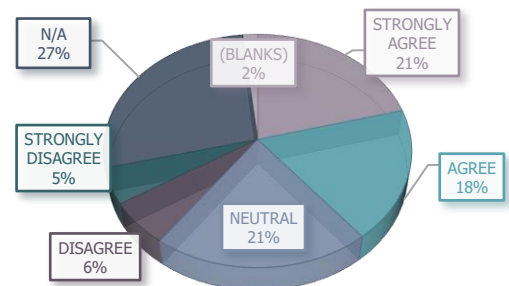
In addition to the governance arrangements, COPs and CPD provided to support the development of alternative assessments and alternatives to full work placements in practice awards, CDETB also trialled early access to the External Authenticator. This was mainly availed of by Colleges of Further Education.



Of the **252 CFE respondents** who availed of that early access **48% agreed or strongly agreed that having early access to the External Authenticator (EA) was useful in preparing alternative assessments with 13% actively disagreeing**.

Because of restricted access to centres the CDETB's Internal Verification (IV) (QQI award) and External Authentication (EA) processes had to take place online for most awards. This required QA policy changes, the development of platforms and procedures as well as significant training and support for staff.

These alternatives were primarily availed of by CFE, TC and Youthreach centres. When asked their opinion on the use of online IV and EA **58% of CFE staff and 39% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the online IV and EA process are better than the paper based version** with 16% of CFE staff 11% of all staff responding negatively to the question.



Staff also highlighted that the positive response to this question needed to be seen in conjunction with the fact that for most courses all assessments were submitted electronically this year. As CDETB returns to classroom based learning this may not continue to be the case and could result in online IV and EA adding an additional administrative burden to teaching staff.

While staff were primarily supportive of QA procedures many staff commented on the heavy administrative burden of QQI course QA procedures in comparison with those of other awarding bodies.

Another concern that was expressed was in relation to the integrity of the alternative assessments and the potential for **plagiarism or other forms of malpractice**. To address this both staff and students were asked questions in this area. **95% of staff with learners undertaking assessments agreed or strongly agreed that they had prepared their students to complete assessments and exams in line with principles of academic integrity** with only 2% disagreeing with the statement. This was confirmed by students with only 5% of 1013 NFQ level 5 & 6 learners surveyed disagreeing that they were prepared by their teacher to complete assessments and exams in line with principles of academic integrity.

[I relied on] *'My fellow colleagues whom were amazing and the IT support team in the college.'*—CFE



Experience of teaching this year

What it was like to be a FET teacher/tutor/instructor during COVID 19

There were 3 open questions included in the surveys to allow staff to give individual feedback into the review process on what went well, what didn't, and what could CDETB learn from that. Staff were also asked their opinion on what changes introduced because of COVID 19 should be kept after the emergency phase of COVID 19 passes. While the different service spheres focused on different areas the following summarises the key themes emerging

WHAT WENT WELL

- upgrading and upskilling of the IT skills of staff and learners
- support from colleagues
- CPD provided through the CDU – including access to courses recordings
- having a [consistent learning platform](#) for whole college – (case study - Rathmines CFE)
- student retention (CFE, TC, YR)
- smaller class sizes – better supports for learners (CFE)
- assignments submitted online
- online IV and EA (CFE, TC, YR)
- staff developed skills that would support a move to blended delivery including identifying what type of modules /subjects or practices are suitable for remote delivery
- learner support through Zoom (CFE)
- [semesterisation](#) for some modules, including the 'frontloading' of certain subjects or skills
- commitment and dedication of staff
- building relationships across centres and service spheres

WHAT DIDN'T

Many staff used this section as a reflective practice space, reviewing their own practice and identifying their own learning and ways to improve their practice next year.

A number of centre wide or scheme wide themes also emerged;

- Internet access and connections (both learner and staff)
- QA guidance/approach to changes required – complicated, resource intensive and large administrative burden
- building relationships between learners
- hybrid classes – different techniques needed for the different modes of delivery (CFE)
- trying to deliver content in remote environment the same way as in the classroom
- switching off – emails coming in from learners late in evening difficult to ignore
- missed the 'staff room' chats and colleague interactions
- semesterisation for modules that require a build-up of skills over time (CFE)
- developing students ability to do exams (CFE)

WHAT COVID 19 CHANGES SHOULD WE KEEP

- online assignment submission, corrections, IV and EA
- online Green register
- some level of remote learning for most students
- using technology as part of the in classes teaching
- use of Moodle
- recording of materials for learners to review in their own time
- online meetings
- [semesterisation](#) for some modules (case study provided by Rathmines CFE)
- online student supports
- Personal and Professional Development module in place of work experience module for some learners and courses (CFE)
- access to online professional learning and development including access to recorded materials
- collaboration across centres and service spheres

'Remote working has clarified for us all the importance of liaising with colleagues and the amazing amount of information that is exchanged informally in offices/staffrooms, as well the support and help we get from working with others'. CFE



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