

CDETB

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
City of Dublin Education and Training Board

Self Evaluation Report



Foreword

It is with great pleasure we introduce this report. This self-evaluation report emanates from an extensive process of reflection and appraisal involving all stakeholders. CDETБ's largest ever scheme-wide self-reflection and internal review has been incredibly positive experience for staff as we have heard so many constructive messages from our learners from across CDETБ's FET provision, the largest and most diverse provision in Ireland. An inaugural review steering group and a research ethics group have steered the collective through a constructive, engaging, and thought-provoking journey that will provide us with a blueprint for our future actions. Learners are at the heart of CDETБ provision and decision-making and the self-evaluation has highlighted our learner-centred approach. CDETБ believes that, in order to deliver on its learner-centred approach, it must be inclusive, respectful, responsive, and enabling while providing quality assured programmes of education. CDETБ quality assurance systems have been built on the learning and experiences of all the staff who have gone before us. A special thanks to Treasa Brannick O'Cillín, David Treacy, John Farrelly, Louise Fitzpatrick, Barbara Galvin, Finola Butler and Lorraine Downey for shaping our thinking and this document.

The self-evaluation process has provided CDETБ with a welcome chance to reflect on our delivery, practice, and processes as well as the many successes and triumphs from across the scheme. Learners and staff have given their time freely as they have engaged wholeheartedly in the review process, which we hugely appreciate. Their engagement demonstrated genuine passion for the education delivered by CDETБ, which is very reaffirming for all our stakeholders. Staff from diverse aspects of provision have connected as part of the review processes from parts of our provision that might not normally have engaged with each other. While CDETБ has been good at reviewing programmes at local centre level, this exercise has reinforced a stronger scheme wide review culture. For a quality assurance system to be robust and responsive, it needs to continually review, evaluate, report and adapt.

CDETБ has been engaged in unprecedented change in recent years. From the moment CDETБ was established, the pace of organisational and governance change has been rapid. The national picture has altered significantly with the establishment of Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Science, and Innovation with a strong government agenda of Public Service reform. FET as a sector has been reshaping and reforming, with SOLAS and QQI both recently launching their new national strategies, which will further shape the sector. FET has had an increased focus on Apprenticeship and Traineeships. Internally, we have moved from twenty-two quality assurance agreements to four, covering our spheres of delivery. To support our Quality Assurance function, CDETБ developed new quality assurance governance structures in 2019 which were heavily tested during the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been significant staff changes during this period.

This self-evaluation will become a key process that will help inform and guide the practices of CDETb over the coming years. The recommendations from the review will improve our collective understanding of quality assurance and feed into and guide our Strategic Performance agreement with SOLAS and help us deliver on our Statement of Strategy. CDETb owes a large debt of gratitude to our FET team who have guided us through the self-evaluation while dealing with the quality assurance challenges that Covid-19 presented. We are also incredibly grateful to all stakeholders who supported us in this ongoing process. We are committed to hearing what they had to say and actioning their suggestions to further improve our education delivery. CDETb learners and staff are looking forward to meeting the review panel team and discussing our education delivery and discuss how we might shape it in the future.



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Thank you to the members of the Steering Committee, the FET Research Team, the Research Ethics and Methodology Advisory Group and all CDETБ learners, staff, and community, industry and sectoral partners that have engaged so enthusiastically with this review and for all your hard work and dedication during one of the most challenging periods in education and training.

Inaugural Review Steering Committee Membership

- Review Coordinator - Treasa Brannick O’Cillín – Manager Quality Assurance and Curriculum Development Unit (left October 2021)
- Blake Hodkinson (Chair) – Director of FET, Senior Leadership Team
- Carly Williams – CDETБ graduate
- Celia Rafferty – Adult Education Officer, Area 1, Adult Education Service (left Dec 2021)
- Donnchadh Clancy – Principal of Inchicore College of Further Education
- Gwen Redmond – Adult Education Officer, Dublin 6W/8/10/12, Adult Education Service (joined Jan 2022)
- Finola Butler – Regional Officer, Further Education Support Service (FESS)
- Ger Whelan – Teacher, Killester College of Further Education
- John Moriarty – Director of FET (joined Jan 2022)
- Lionel Duffy – Youthreach Co-ordinator, Ballymun Youthreach
- Lisa Doherty – Administrative Officer, HR Department
- Máirín Kenny – Adult Education Officer, north inner city, Adult Education Service (joined Jan 2022)
- Patricia O’Keeffe – Principal, Pearse College of Further Education (Joined Jan 2021)
- Martina Stewart – Instructor, Finglas Training Centre
- Maria Ward – Head Teacher, Education Service to Prisons
- Mary Hickey – Principal, Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education
- Mary Maher – Director, Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC)
- Dr Michael Hallissy – Industry/Innovation Expert
- Paul Fennelly – Area Manager, Ballyfermot Training Centre



Photograph taken in September 2021 at ministerial launch of interim reports associated with the self-evaluation process

1.

Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

1. Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

AEO	Adult Education Officer
AES	Adult Education Service
ATP	Access Transfer and Progression
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency
CAS	Common Awards System
CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
CDYSB	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
CFE	College of Further Education
CID	Contract of Indefinite Duration
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CTC	Community Training Centre
CT	Contracted Training
DALC	Dublin Adult Learning Centre
DCC	Dublin City Council
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DoJW	Department of Justice Workshops
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EA	External Authentication
ELC	Early Learning and Care
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ERTLA	Emergency Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
ESP	Education Services to Prisons
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FARR	Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting System
FE	Further Education
FESS	Further Education Support Service

FET	Further Education and Training
GDC	General Dental Council
HACE	Henrietta Adult and Community Education Centre
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLS	Higher Links Scheme
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDC	Irish Dental Council
IT	Information Technology
IV	Internal Verification
LO	Learning Outcomes
LTI	Local Training Initiative
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCC	National Course Calendar
NEIC	North East Inner City
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NIC	North Inner City
NICT	North Inner City Team
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NPD	National Programme Database
NRP	National Reference Point
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
P1	Profile (Pillar 1 of the statement of strategy 2021–2025)
P2	People (Pillar 2 of the statement of strategy 2021–2025)
P3	Pedagogy (Pillar 3 of the statement of strategy 2021–2025)
P4	Processes (Pillar 4 of the statement of strategy 2021–2025)
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certification Programme
PLD	Professional Learning and Development
PLN	Professional Learning Networks
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
PMDC	Programme Management Development Committee
QA	Quality Assurance
QADG	Quality Assurance Development Group
QAS	Quality Assurance System

QASPC	Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council
QBS	QQI Business System
QI	Quality Improvement
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RAP	Results Approval Panel
REMAG	Research Ethics and Methodology Advisory Group
RFT	Request for Tenders
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SCC	Sports and Cultural Council
SE	Self-Evaluation
SG	Strategic Goals
SLA	Service Level Agreement
STA	Senior Training Advisor
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SPDG	Strategic Performance Development Group
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
STP	Specialist Training Providers
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
TC	Training centre
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
TELMS	Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Support
TLA	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
ToR	Terms of Reference
TQMF	Total Quality Management Framework
TUD	Technological University Dublin
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VLP	Virtual Learning Platform
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WE/WP	Work Experience/Work Placement
YES	Youth and Education Service for Refugees and Migrants

Hyperlinks

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2.

Context

2. Context

2.1 Dublin City

CDETБ serves the geographic and administrative area covered by the local government authority Dublin City Council, which is one of four local authorities responsible for Dublin. This area stretches from Finglas and Coolock (north and north-east of the city) to Ringsend and Ballyfermot (south and south-west of the city). It includes the city centre, which houses the financial district and is home to a number of multinational, financial and technological corporations.

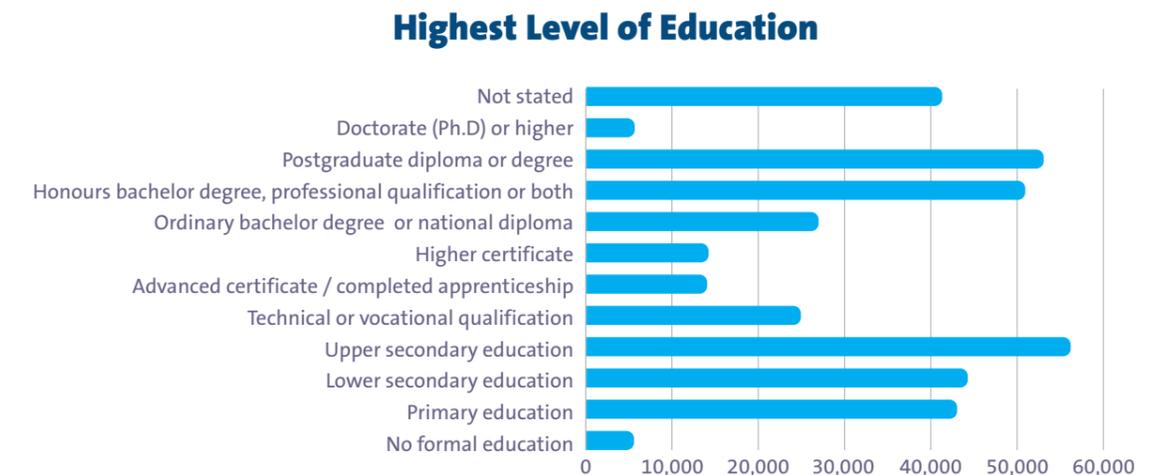
Footfall in Dublin city centre has been severely affected by COVID-19 and changes in work patterns. The move of the Technological University of Dublin (TUD) from the city centre to the Grangegorman campus has also reduced footfall in the city centre. The City Development Plan 2022 to 2028 includes plans for revitalising the city centre. The Bus Connects corridors that are currently being developed may result in a greater flow of people from the greater Dublin area into the city centre, where there are currently only two colleges of further education. These potential developments are outlined in Dublin City Council's pre-plan background paper and the Transport Authority of Ireland Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022–2042. Developing CDETБ provision in line with the social and economic developments in the city will be key to achieving CDETБ's mission and vision and will inform any plans around 'colleges of the future' in the CDETБ area.

Educational Attainment

According to the 2016 census, 36% of the population of Dublin City who are over 15 years of age and have completed their education have an ordinary degree or higher and 40% of the same group reported upper secondary or below, with 13% stating no formal education or primary education only.

The education attainment rates are reflected in the socio-economic groups and employment rates in the city. According to the 2016 census, over a third (36%) of Dublin City residents were classified as employers, managers or professionals, one-fifth (20%) were non-manual, and 'own account workers' and the 'unskilled' made up 4% each and were the lowest proportion of all persons. But the CSO data also identified seven unemployment blackspots within Dublin City with unemployment rates of over 30%, putting the city in third place as regards the number of unemployment black spots nationally. CDETБ has a strong commitment to social justice and providing mechanisms for under-represented groups to avail of education and achieve their full potential. Continuing to develop and provide targeted interventions to respond to the specific needs of Dublin residents, particularly under-represented groups remains a focus of provision offered across CDETБ centres and service spheres.

Figure 1: Highest level of education - Dublin City Census 2016



Labour Force

The total Dublin City labour force of 304,870 and their employment sectors as recorded in Census 2016 are outlined in the Provider Profile (Appendix 27). Prominent employment sectors include human health and social work activities; wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, professional, scientific and technical activities, information and communication, education and financial and insurance activities. Significantly, manufacturing is in the mid-range of the number of people employed in the sector. Industry and manufacturing were the largest growth area in 2020, up 22.1%, according to the CSO income and expenditure report.

Given the educational profile and the changing employment practices in the city, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, including upskilling staff currently working in roles that are increasingly being replaced by technology, is an ongoing priority for CDETБ and underpins the diversity of provision offered across its centres and service spheres.

Economic Activity, Taxation and Employment

In 2019, County Dublin, which includes Dublin City, generated 40.76% (€135,683m) of the state's total Gross Value Added (GVA) income, 52% (10,077.37m) of the state's personal tax income and 61% (6,694.55m) of corporate tax (CSO, 2019). Much of this comes from foreign direct investment. For example, Dublin is home to:

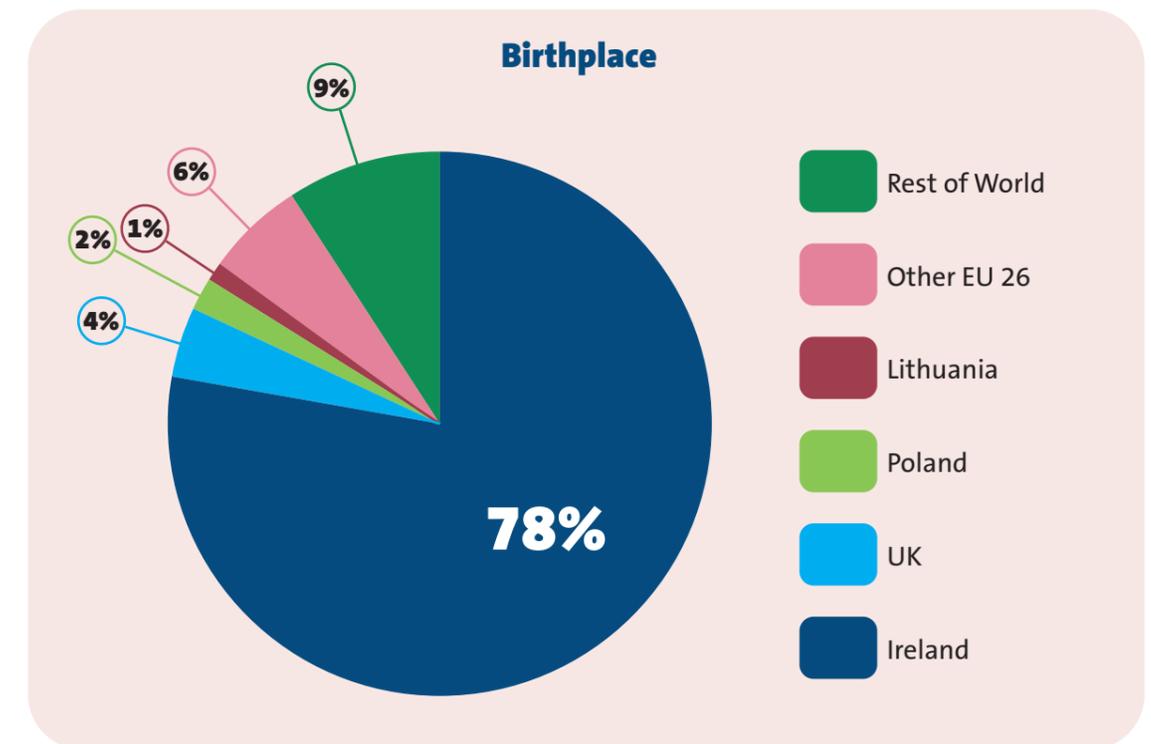
- The top five global software companies
- Nine of the world's top 10 pharmaceutical companies
- Half of the world's top 50 banks
- 250 global financial institutions
- 12 of the world's top 20 insurance companies
- 18 of the world's top 25 med tech companies
- The top four global aviation lessors

In Q4 2020, at least 50% of persons employed in the ICT and financial sectors were located in Dublin (Dublin Chamber of Commerce). CDETБ has an Employer Engagement Unit who are responsible for engaging with employers, the development and oversight of new apprenticeships, Skills to Advance and Skills to Compete programmes

Place of Birth

According to the 2016 census, 78% of Dublin City residents were born in Ireland and in 2020, 65% of CDETБ learners were born in Ireland, indicating that there is a greater proportion of the city's non-Irish-born residents enrolled in CDETБ provision. Many of the learners coming from countries where English is not the first language begin their learning journey by enrolling in part-time provision including English as a Second Language (ESOL). CDETБ's FET provision has an extraordinarily varied learner population, with more than 3,200 learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds representing 134 nationalities enrolled on our FET programmes in 2019/2020. While the AES was generally the largest internal provider of programmes and supports to this target group, mostly through its basic English language programmes (from levels pre-A1 to B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds are now just as likely to be enrolled on mainstream FET programmes.

Figure 2: Birthplace of residents - Dublin City Census 2016



CDETБ's commitment to social inclusion, the diversity of the city's residents, city development plans, the changing nature of the world of work and the corporate population of the city have a direct impact on the current and future educational and training needs in the various areas of the city and require a variety of education and training opportunities to continue to be provided and enhanced by CDETБ and its centres¹.

More information is available in the CDETБ [Provider Profile](#).

2.2 FET Sector and Statutory Context

CDETБ is established under statute and is multi-service and multi-centre further education and training (FET) provider with geographical remit for Dublin City and is therefore one of the largest ETBs in Ireland.

Even at European level, the Irish FET sector is characterised by a high degree of diversity in the type of programme, level, and learner. Programmes can be broadly summarised as follows:

- Further education and training programmes can be general, vocational, or mixed

¹ CDETБ Statement of Strategy 2021-25 Pillar 3, Strategic Goal 6

- They lead to awards across several levels on the EQF (levels 1-5 on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), or levels 1-6 on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ))
- Target groups include young people who have recently completed upper secondary education, adult learners, early school leavers, the employed, the unemployed, asylum seekers, learners with special needs
- Post leaving certificate (PLC) programmes are aimed primarily at those completing upper secondary education but are also open to older learners; programmes are often general in nature, but also include VET programmes such as motor technology
- Second chance learning opportunities within the further education and training sector².

FET has a dual-purpose within the Irish context of providing access to employment and as an alternative route into higher education. This second purpose reflects a cultural preference for higher education and one of the challenges within the Irish context is to improve the standing and attractiveness of FET as a first choice by learners.

Access to FET courses through providers such as CDET B can represent the first opportunity to pursue a FET programme for many learners more suited to vocationally orientated programmes. Furthermore, CDET B provides access to basic education through adult literacy services as Ireland is not unique to other European states in facing the challenge of participation in lifelong learning.

The diversity of FET is reflected within CDET B, which meets the needs of learners within Dublin city through seven distinct services spheres, five of which are involved in direct delivery to learners:

- [Colleges of Further Education](#)
- Training Centres³ - [Finglas Ballyfermot](#)
- [The Adult Education Service](#) ⁴
- [The Education Service to Prisons](#)
- [Youthreach](#)

The other two are the corporate-level service spheres:

- Corporate Service Sphere – HR, Finance, Procurement, Building and Maintenance services, Data Analytics, the International Desk

² CEDEFOP –European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Vocational and Educational Training in Europe, Ireland available at [Ireland \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ Includes CDET B-funded collaborative provision in the form of second providers based in the community, community training centres (CTCs), Local Training initiatives (LTIs) and Specialist Training Providers (STPs)

⁴ Includes CDET B projects such as Foundations Project, the Youth and Education Service to Migrants and Refugees and CDET B funded collaborative provision in the form of grant aided FET providers based in the community

- FET Services Sphere – The Curriculum Development Unit (takes in the operational aspect of the centralised QA function through the FET Development Unit), The Employer Engagement Unit, The TEL Co-ordinator and Team, CDET B Psychological Service⁵

The latter services tend to work with both corporate and centre-level services primarily in FET. CDET B has compiled short videos of the above services available here⁶

CDET B as a provider differs to other education and training providers in the breadth of its services, the dispersed nature of its centres and the diversity of its learners and their needs. To cater for the diverse needs which arise within large regions especially with the population density of Dublin city, a collaborative approach with other providers, and with regional and community organisations is required and provided under CDET B's founding legislation. As a result, CDET B is firmly knitted into Dublin city through these collaborative arrangements and networks, which it utilises to extend reach and impact to meet the needs of learners in Dublin City.

A quality assurance system must be appropriate for the context of the provider; therefore, it is important that CDET B's context is understood and appropriately defined to evaluate effectiveness accurately. What is appropriate within a large, mainly homogenous provider, based in one location with a limited number of collaborative arrangements, will not be appropriate for CDET B. The need to maintain diversity, collaboration, flexibility, and responsiveness is key to the success of CDET B in line with its statutory functions, mission, values, and strategic objectives.

2.3 CDET B – FET Provider Profile

In 2020, 39,115 learners attended FET courses in CDET B, a reduction from 52,024 in 2019 attributable to online delivery because of restrictions aimed at protecting public health. This represented a reduction of 2,837 of learners on full-time courses and reduction of 10,072 of learners on part-time courses. This latter reduction was most keenly felt in the Adult Education Service and the Education Service to Prisons. CDET B's more vulnerable learners struggled the most in accessing services during 2020/21, due to the online nature of services and the inherent barriers such as access to technology, skill levels and associated support needs.

The significant diversity of CDET B provision is clear from the [provider profile](#), which is aimed at meeting a diverse range of learner needs. CDET B offers a range of courses from basic language and literacy courses to degree-level programmes. While some types of courses are associated predominantly with one service sphere to respond to the diversity of learner needs within Dublin City, this is not the case for all types of courses.

⁵ The Provider Profile provides a more detailed account of support services, those listed above are some key support services as part of FET delivery.

⁶ [Videos](#) were compiled for a 'marketplace' feature of our CDET B staff event for FET and FET support services as part of our institutional review to raise awareness amongst staff of the different aspects of CDET B's work.

Provider Profile

2020 in numbers



Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
City of Dublin Education and Training Board

Learners

39,115*

Registered Learners

2,421

Courses

13,356**

QQI Awards

CDETБ has one of the most diverse learner populations in the country

*based on PLSS figures 2020

Learners by Age*



Country of Origin*

65% of learners born in Ireland

Gender*



**3,347 Major & 10,009 Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose Awards

922 (WTE) FET Staff

- 553** Colleges of Further Education
454 Educators & 99 admin, maintenance & support staff
- 141** Training Centres
71 Educators & 70 admin, maintenance & support staff
- 47** Adult Education Services*** (AES)
34 Educators & 13 admin, maintenance & support staff
- 91** Youthreach
79 Educators & 12 admin, maintenance & support staff
- 90** Education Service to Prisons
89 Educators & 1 admin, maintenance & support staff

FET Centres

- 17** College Based Locations
14,567 Learners
- 2** Training Centres (TC)
2,093 TC & 1,252 Community Provider Learners
- 5** AES Areas***
9,324 AES & 3,380 Community Provider Learners
- 9** Youthreach
752 Learners
- 7** Locations
7,747 Learners

*** up to 200 PT sessional AES tutors also employed in 2020

Regional Context

1.42 million
Population Dublin Region

8.2%
Unemployment Rate Q3

Employment

Top Employment Sectors in Region

Health	89,800
Wholesale & Retail	89,700
ICT	66,300
Financial services	61,900
Education	57,400

Strategic Pillars

- Profile
- People
- Processes
- Pedagogy

Values

- Inclusive
- Enabling
- Responsive
- Respectful

The significance of the skills agenda as part of national FET strategies is reflected in labour-market activation programmes including apprenticeship, traineeships, and re-training programmes such as Skills to Advance. Details on the delivery of these programmes can be found in the Provider Profile briefing document.

It is also important to note the significance of post leaving certification programme (PLC) provision in Colleges of Further Education (CFE) in terms of numbers and the outcomes for learners. PLC programmes can be targeted towards either industry or progression to further or higher education. The recording of this distinction began in 2018.

Moreover, adult literacy and community education including English as a second language (ESOL) is also a key area of provision through Adult Education Service (AES), the Education Service to Prisons and community partners, supported and managed by the AES and Training Centres. While these services tend to offer programmes at the lower levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), level 5 and 6 courses can be offered through the AES and ESP to meet the needs of learners, who require part-time courses. CFEs also offer adult and community education programmes such as those funded through the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI).

The Adult Education Service also targets those in work through work-based education programmes. Services such as Youthreach and some of the CDETБ-funded community partners such as Community Training Centres (CTCs), target young people to keep them engaged in education as an alternative to traditional secondary school programmes. Although these are essential services, learner numbers have decreased as school retention has increased, which reflects government policy in the area. Finally, degree programmes are also offered through Colleges of Further Education⁷ and through the ESP.

Despite the restrictions in 2020, CDETБ provided:

- 1,232 QQI accredited courses
- 200 courses accredited by 22 other awarding bodies and
- 989 uncertified courses. These uncertified courses were delivered primarily in the Adult Education Service (AES) and Education to Prisons (EP) provision.

These courses are delivered as part of full-time provision (43%) and part-time provision (57%). All programmes offer progression paths to further/higher education and or industry.

⁷ BCEE

QQI certification accounts for 86% of certified programmes in CDETБ. The top 10 Major awards⁸ certified by QQI for 2020 for CDETБ totalling 2,949 learners including the number of learners certified for each are outlined in the box below.

Table 1: Top 10 QQI certified major awards for CDETБ learners in 2020

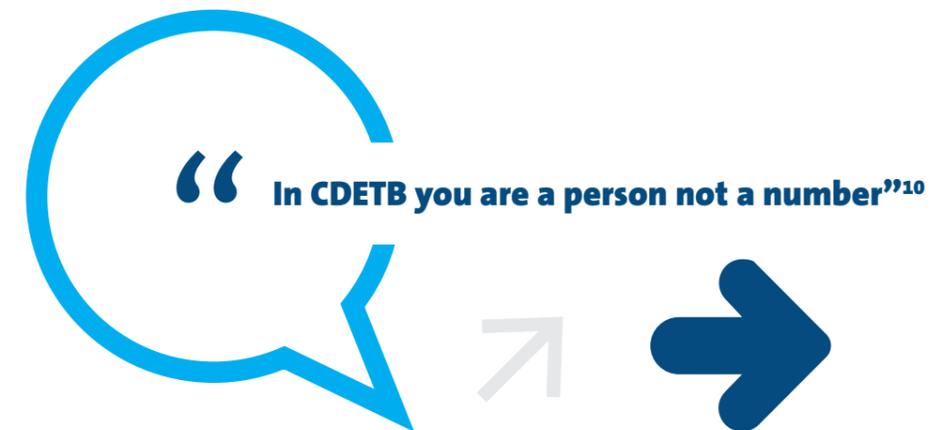
• 5M2102 Business Studies learners	608
• 5M4468 Community Health Services	434
• 5M4349 Nursing Studies	397
• 5M2009 Early Childhood Care and Education	374
• 5M1985 Art	211
• 5M1997 Office Administration	198
• 6M2007 Early Childhood Care and Education	192
• 5M4339 Healthcare Support	190
• 5M3807 Laboratory Techniques	178
• 5M3114 General Studies	167

The certification data in the table above represents 89% of all CDETБ learners who received QQI major awards. However, it does not reflect the full diversity of offering by CDETБ, including the 4,503 CDETБ learners who received component awards (7 or fewer), or the more specific nature of the courses completed, as there are many permutations of courses leading to QQI awards. However, the data broadly reflects the top five employment sectors in Dublin City and region for quarter 3 of 2020, which include the following in order of largest sectoral share:

- Health services
- Wholesale and Retail
- ICT
- Financial Services
- Education
- Education Services to Prisons

While the numbers for CDETБ are impressive, what is more impressive is the diversity of learners' backgrounds and learning journeys. This was evident from in the CDETБ learner survey and through the learner consultation events. It is a key part of the culture of CDETБ to embrace and celebrate diversity. As one of our learners put it:

⁸ This data reflects learners who completed at least 8 relevant modules up to and including in 2020 leading to QQI component awards which warranted the conferring of a relevant QQI Major award. These statistics will in the main reflect learners that completed a full-time programme in one year or completed the final aspect of programme making them eligible for a full award. It does not reflect programmes where the certification is for component awards only.



At a learner consultation event with Level 5 and 6 learners, learners shared their learning journeys with CDETБ. Some learners had come straight from Leaving Certificate in secondary school with a career plan in mind, like **Ciara** who completed legal studies and wants to be a solicitor. Others, like **Vanessa**, were retraining after coming to work in Ireland but needing relevant qualifications to secure employment. Some learners, like **Paul** are in professions such as visual communications where technology and skill demands are fast paced and need to complete shorter, more targeted courses. While other learners such as recent retiree **Denis** avail of opportunities to pursue passions they did not have a chance to previously, in this case furniture making.

2.4 Quality Assurance Development within CDETБ

While CDETБ and its centres have a long history, CDETБ as a corporate entity is 8 years old. It is necessary to have due regard to this as part of an institutional review, and when recognising the developmental journey of CDETБ as an institution. This journey has been impacted by several significant changes within the FET sector, and within CDETБ as an organisation within a relatively short period of time. These changes include:

- The enhanced role for QQI as the external quality assurance agency (2012)
- The dissolution of FÁS and the new role for SOLAS as the national planning and funding body for FET (2014)
- The merging of the former CDVEC legacy providers and the former FÁS training centres within Dublin City under the organisational umbrella of CDETБ (2014)
- The enhanced corporate QA responsibilities taken on by CDETБ along with other ETBs in 2014, by way of bilateral agreement with QQI, which is now reflected in updated legislation under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (Amendment) Act 2019
- The new statutory quality assurance guidelines, particularly in the area of corporate governance and institutional self-evaluation – 2016 (Core)/2017 (ETBs)/2018(Blended)

⁹ feedback from Learner 5-6 Consultation event

- New QQI Programme Validation Policy and Criteria – (2017, implemented 2018)
- The development of a more performance-related funding model between SOLAS and the ETBs with connected development of funding request, data collection and reporting systems and strategic agreements between which include targets (2015-ongoing).

Prior to 2014, there were 21 CDETБ (formerly CDVEC) providers¹⁰ with direct quality assurance (QA) agreements with the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC). More detail is outlined in the [Provider Profile](#) (pp.12-15). Against this backdrop, CDETБ established committees in 2015 to examine, consider and develop organisational responses within the areas of quality assurance and FET planning and funding nationally. These committees were always very active and submitted responses to the various consultations that were occurring. They informed CDETБ's position through representation on national fora. These governance units also developed and recommended for approval new quality assurance policy and procedures, which applied at both corporate and centre level. While Corporate Services had always provided support in the areas of finance, human resources, I.T. and buildings and maintenance, a new FET Development Unit was established to support CDETБ to respond to the new demands being placed on corporate services in the area of quality assurance. The Employer Engagement Unit followed shortly after and more recently, in 2020, the new PLD Co-ordinator and TEL Co-ordinator have been welcome additions to the FET services sphere within CDETБ. However, it is important to note that staffing structures and terms and conditions at centre/ service level have remained relatively unchanged.

In 2018, CDETБ engaged in an Executive Self-Evaluation at corporate level as part of re-engagement processes with QQI and this was reflected in a Self-Evaluation Report and a Quality Improvement Plan. Progress reports about the QIP were completed in 2019¹¹ and 2020¹². CDETБ moved from 22 sets of quality assurance procedures to 4 reflecting 5 services spheres as follows:

- Colleges of Further Education
- Training Centres
- Adult Education Service and the Education Service to Prisons
- Youthreach

The quality assurance policies and procedures of CDETБ were approved by QQI and published by CDETБ on their website. QQI '*recognises those policies and procedures are reflective of the evolving and developmental nature of quality assurance within the ETБ sector as it continues to integrate the legacy body processes*'¹³ and CDETБ would concur with this description, while also recognising the additional and continuing requirement to integrate and streamline processes arising from evolving quality assurance and FET planning and funding regulation.

¹⁰ Registered with FETAC as providers.

¹¹ [CDETБ-QIP-Progress-Report-Final-2019.pdf](#)

¹² [CDETБ - Quality Improvement Plan 2020 \(etb.ie\)](#)

¹³ [QQI, Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards, October 2019](#)

It is essential that the way development has been and is occurring is clear, as quality assurance often examines where certain functions within the QA systems are devolved and the degree of oversight of these functions. However, for CDETБ it may be more accurate to examine progress from the perspective of functions which have 'evolved' to corporate level versus those that remain 'devolved' to centre level and subject to oversight. It is also important to note that many of former legacy providers within CDETБ are larger than some regional FET providers that are also now subject to institutional reviews under the 2012 Act as amended.

It is important to consider the level of responsibility and extent of the provision of some of these CDETБ centres and services when determining where the appropriate balance is to be struck between centre autonomy and corporate oversight within CDETБ. What is appropriate in the context of one ETБ may not be appropriate within another. It is also essential that the level of demands which have been placed on CDETБ along with other ETБs within a short time period is recognised in the context of an institutional review, and the level of change which has been achieved within this period. CDETБ has met all of the considerable and evolving requirements within FET to date, including our institutional response to the Covid-19 crisis, with the assistance of its governance units and their members, leadership teams, quality teams, staff, learners and industry, community and statutory partners. The institutional review provides a valuable and timely opportunity for CDETБ to reflect on who CDETБ is as an organisation, where it has come from, where it wants to go, how it will get there and most importantly, 'why'.

2.5 Institutional Review Context

The self-evaluation process has been undertaken in line with:

- Section 28 (4) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012-2020 as part of CDETБ's obligation to evaluate and review the implementation of their quality assurance procedures
- Section 34 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012-2020 to assist QQI's external review of the effectiveness of CDETБ's quality assurance procedures which is required at least every 7 years.

While the institutional review is being conducted to meet the requirements set out above, CDETБ has placed a strong focus on stakeholder consultation and engagement regarding the statutory functions, mission, vision and strategic goals of the organisation. CDETБ considers this to be aligned with and fulfilling its statutory obligation under Section 10(2) of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013.

While the self-evaluation process required under the 2012 Act only refers to the review of 'quality assurance procedures', both QQI and CDETБ recognise that this is too limited a focus for review. QQI have reflected this in the guidelines and CDETБ have conducted a holistic and systematic review of quality assurance, taking in quality assurance policies, procedures and processes.

The definition of quality assurance used currently within CDETБ is the wider definition, which encompasses how we approach our work and how we engage in self-evaluation and improvement processes.

Quality assurance is reflected in CDETБ's policy on quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance¹⁴. This policy recognises that: there is quality within the system already which should be protected, the importance of embedding quality improvement cycles and being able to provide assurance of the quality of programmes, related services, and the integrity of academic standards.

This is in contrast with previous concepts of quality assurance within FET, which had a far greater focus on the quality assurance of academic standards and therefore had a significant emphasis on the quality assurance of assessment. The newer and wider concept of quality assurance is within CDETБ and increased awareness of this was clear from research conducted with staff¹⁵. It is also recognised that our stakeholders are both key contributors and beneficiaries of the CDETБ's QA system.

This review is an inaugural statutory institutional review for CDETБ and differs considerably from the Executive Self-Evaluation which did not involve extensive stakeholder engagement. An Inaugural Review Steering Committee was established as a sub-committee of CDETБ's Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC) to oversee the review process, including the conducting of research and the compiling of the relevant reports from conducting the review. Although it was in the Terms of Reference of the Quality Assurance Development Group to oversee an institutional review, to create more critical distance for the review it was agreed that a new committee would be established for this purpose and would include corporate services, external parties, teacher and instructor representatives and at least one CDETБ graduate representative.

The Inaugural Review Steering Committee was supported by the CDETБ Research Team, made up of members of the FET support services. The Research Team was in turn supported by a Research Ethics and Methodology working group with representation from different service spheres. The next chapter addresses the approach to the self-evaluation report including the methodology applied.

¹⁴ [CDETБ Policy on Quality Maintenance, Enhancement and Assurance](#)

¹⁵ [CDETБ Service Level Review collated feedback](#)

3.

Approach to the Self-Evaluation Report

3. Approach to the Self-Evaluation Report

The self-evaluation process is the first year of a seven-year **statutory review** cycle with QQI. It was approached as a whole organisational review in order to provide a snapshot of the implementation and effectiveness of CDETБ's quality systems for FET under the following three objective areas:

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

To support the self-evaluation process and ensure the findings were valid and could inform the local and corporate quality improvement plans for the next six years, a Research and Ethics Methodology Advisory Group was established with expertise from across the scheme. To inform the organisational self-evaluation process, they undertook a literature review, helped shape a logic model (Figure 3) that outlined the theory of change underpinning the approach and produced a **research methodology and ethical considerations report**. This report details the approach taken and the rationale for data-gathering methods chosen.

Inaugural Review Steering Committee (see p.6)

Research Ethics and Methodology Advisory Group

- Dr Anne Costello – Mountjoy Prison Head Teacher, Education Service to Prisons
- Dr Denis Murray – Deputy Principal, Ballyfermot College of Further Education
- Dr Eva Hornung – CDETБ Curriculum Development Unit Librarian
- Louise Fitzpatrick (Research Lead) – Manager of Quality Assurance and the Curriculum Development Unit (Jan 2022 onwards)
- Dr Rory O'Sullivan – Principal, Killester and Marino Colleges of Further Education, QASPC
- Dr Stephen O'Neill – Chief Psychologist

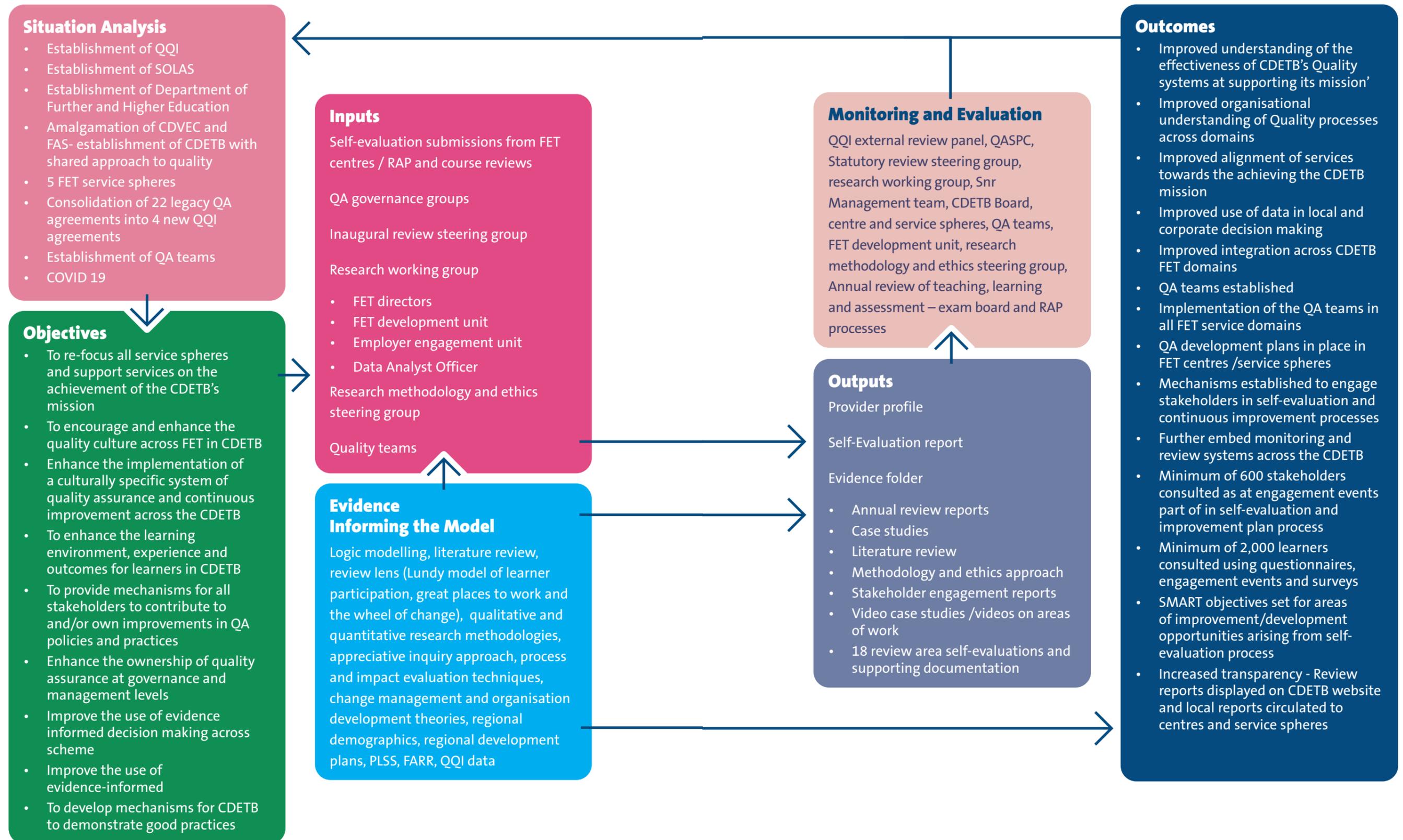


Research Team

- Ann Gilton – Director of FET
- Barbara Galvin – FET Development Unit
- Blake Hodgkinson – Director of FET
- Brenda O'Mara – Employer Engagement Unit
- Brian Gallagher – Data Analyst
- Carrie Archer – PD Co-ordinator
- Dr Eva Hornung – CDETБ Curriculum Development Unit Librarian
- John Farrelly – FET Development Unit
- John Keegan – FET Development Unit
- Lorraine Downey – ESOL Development Officer
- Louise Fitzpatrick- Research lead
- Margaret Corbett – Employer Engagement Unit
- Paulina Adamczak – FET Development Unit
- Stephen Gallagher – Technology Enhanced Learning Co-ordinator

Figure 3: Logic model for inaugural review process

How effective are CDETБ's quality systems at supporting its mission? In line with statutory obligations

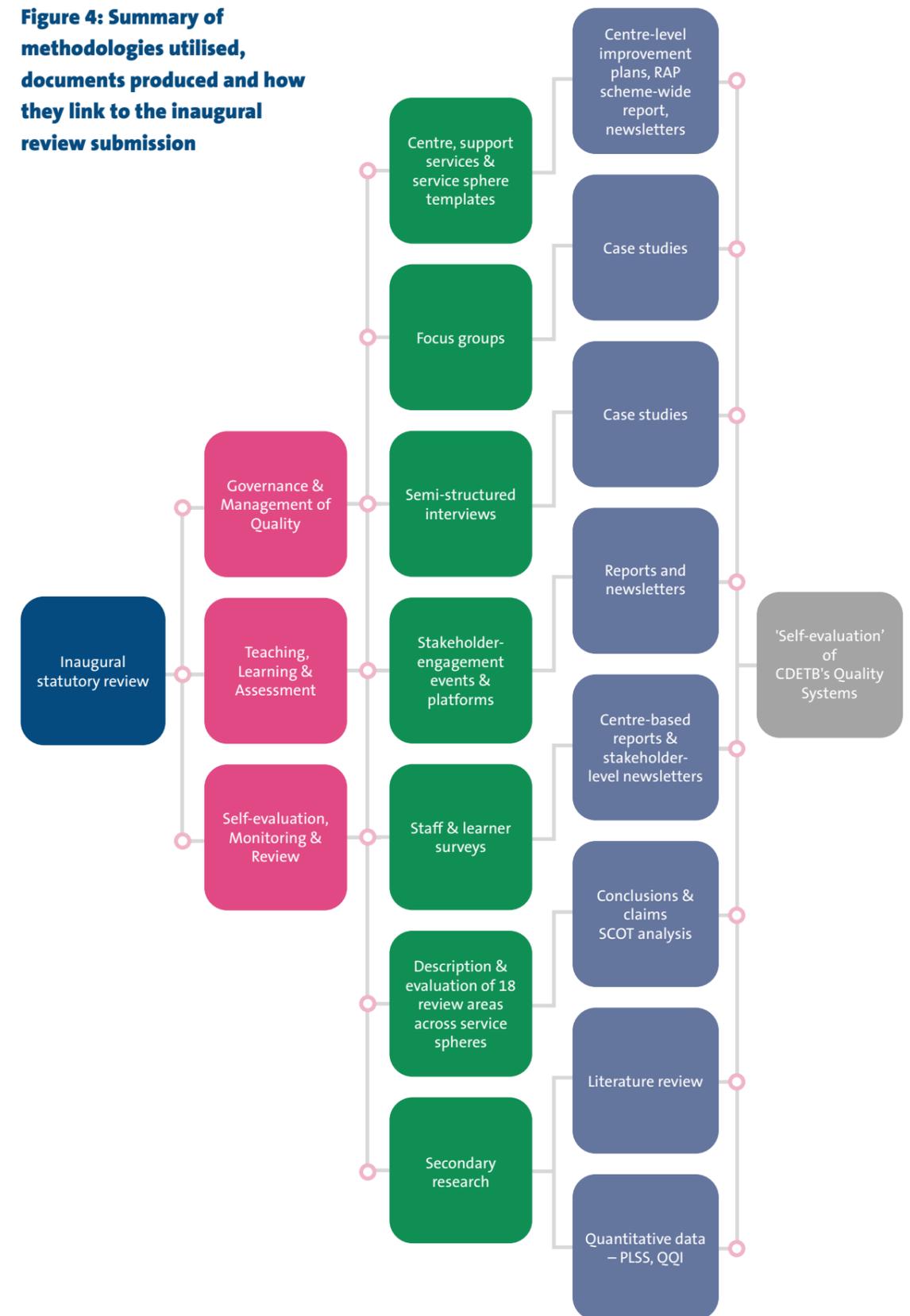


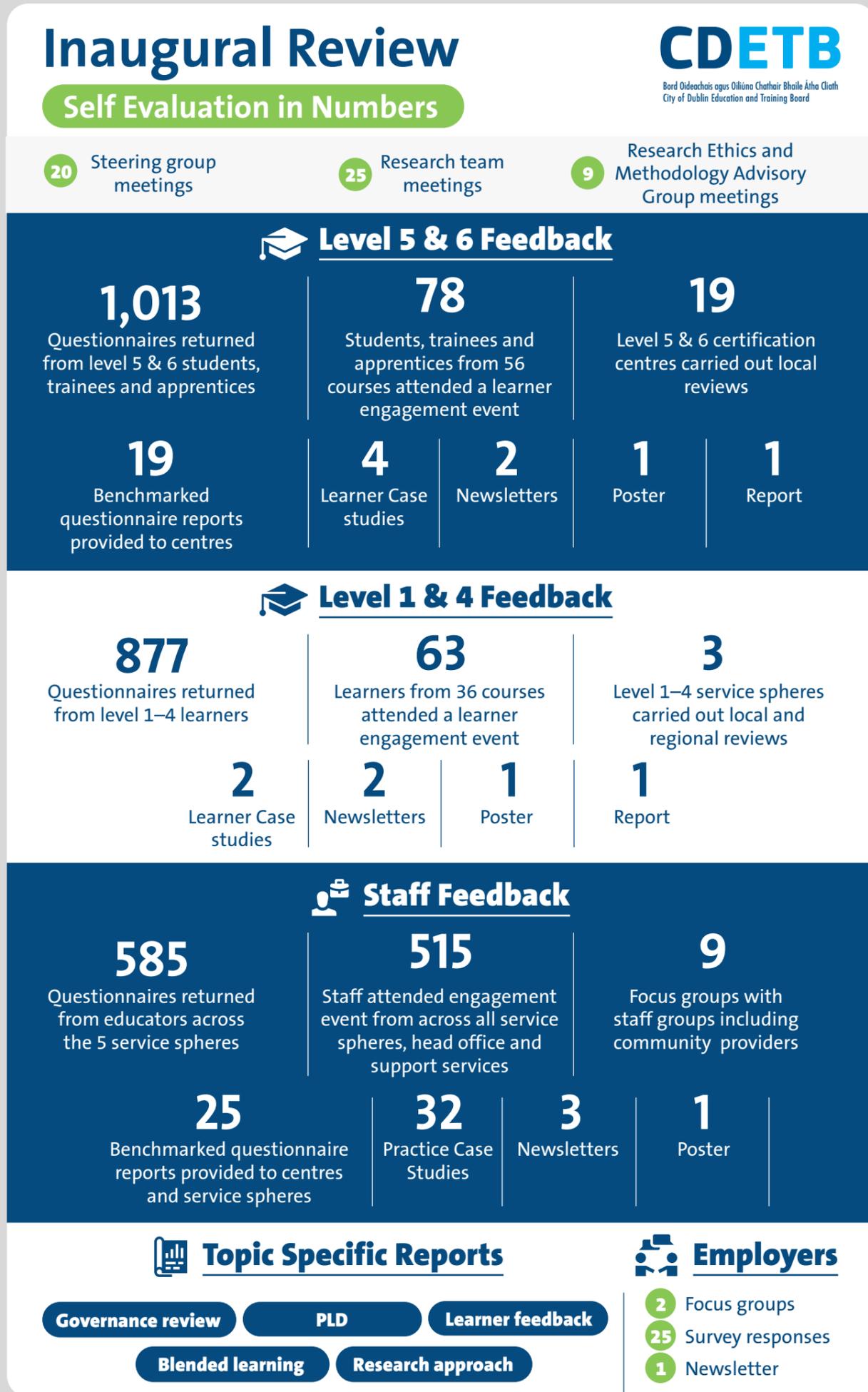
Due to the size, diversity and complexity of CDETБ provision, the approach taken was to continue to embed a culture of reflection and continuous improvement in the CDETБ by supporting every centre, support service and service sphere to carry out their own evaluation using three standardised templates that were informed by a review of literature and aligned with the objective areas. These local self-evaluations were supported by a member of the research team, research guidebooks and the centrally managed learner, staff, community provider and employer surveys and consultation events. These provided data at a centre/ service-sphere level as well as aggregated data for across the scheme.

This cascade approach to self-evaluation was chosen to ensure every learner, staff member, centre and service sphere in the CDETБ FET provision area had an opportunity to contribute to the CDETБ inaugural review process and to influence quality improvement plans in the centres/service spheres they are connected with. This involved providing a series of opportunities for staff and learners to contribute to the CDETБ’s self-evaluation processes between April and December 2021. Figure 4 outlines the objective areas of the inaugural review (pink section), methods utilised to gather the input of stakeholders (green section), the documentation produced to communicate the data gathered (blue section), and how that links to the production of the inaugural review self-evaluation and report submission to QQI (grey section).

To ensure the evaluation process aligned with existing QA self-evaluation processes operating in CDETБ, the 2020/2021 annual review processes were used to inform the CDETБ inaugural institutional review of quality systems with particular focus on Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment. It took place between April and June 2021 with findings published to inform policy and practice in the CDETБ. The research and consultation with stakeholders for Objectives 1 and 3 took place alongside the annual review processes and engaged stakeholders between April and September 2021. The following infographic summarises the various stakeholder inputs into the review process.

Figure 4: Summary of methodologies utilised, documents produced and how they link to the inaugural review submission

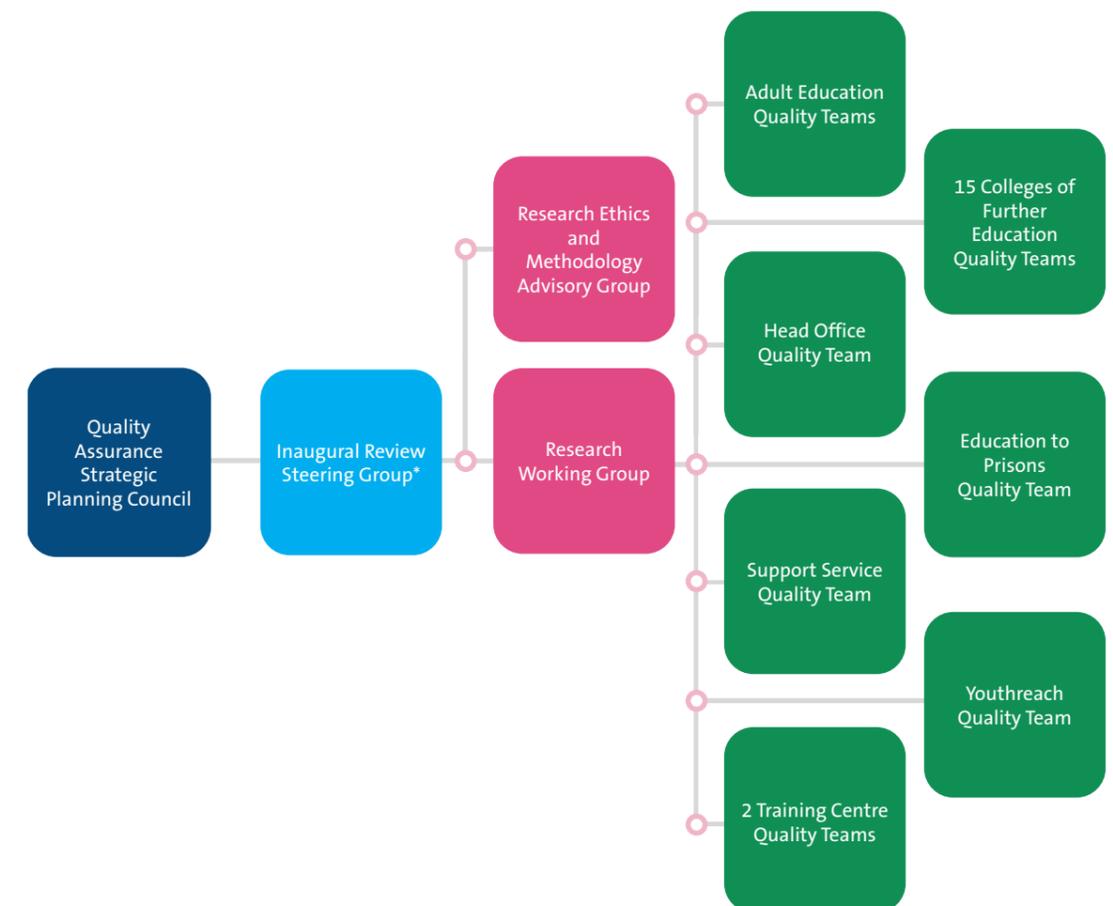




Governance and Management of the Inaugural Review Processes

The inaugural review is led by the Inaugural Review Steering Committee, which is a subcommittee of the **CDETb Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council**¹⁶ (QASPC), with the support and guidance of the **Research Ethics and Methodology Advisory Group (REMAG)**¹⁷ with the research working group¹⁸ carrying out the data-gathering and stakeholder-engagement processes. The centre- and service-sphere level self-evaluations were led by the centre/service spheres' **quality assurance teams**. Figure 6 outlines the governance and implementation structure for the inaugural review processes.

Figure 6: Governance structure for the review process



¹⁶ ToR QASPC

¹⁷ ToR REMAG

¹⁸ ToR Research working group

4.

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

4. Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

This chapter addresses Objective 1 of the self-evaluation

4.1 CDETБ Mission and Strategy

Description

CDETБ's Mission is:

To provide professional high-quality education and training services for people in Dublin city that contribute both to the personal development of the individual as well as to the overall social, economic and cultural development of the city.

Our mission is supported by a **Statement of Strategy** for the period 2021 – 2025 which was developed following consultation and engagement with CDETБ's board, senior leadership, centre management, staff, learners and external stakeholders. It reflects the concept of CDETБ as a Learning Community, which emerged from the process, and is focused on facilitating and enabling learners to learn, grow and develop while simultaneously being attuned to ongoing organisational review, reflection and learning.

The strategy statement for 2021-2025 articulated a vision for CDETБ relevant to FET as:

- Leading on the development and delivery of education provision in Dublin city
- Actively providing inclusive, professional, high-quality education and training in Dublin city
- Responding to the developing and emerging need for education provision in Dublin city
- Delivering programmes that provide suitable qualifications for, and progression routes into more advanced education courses, training programmes and employment.

Both the mission and vision statements are reinforced and underlined by CDETБ's **core belief** which states that:

Every person has a right to access education and training opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential.

There are **four key pillars** for the CDETБ strategy for the period 2021 – 2025 namely:

1. **Profile** to include Identity, organisational vision and communication
2. **People** to include organisational culture, staff, learners, staff and student voice and staff development
3. **Pedagogy** to include andragogy, teaching, learning, assessment and student supports
4. **Processes** to include administration, organisation and support systems, quality assurance and governance

Under each of the pillars, there are connected strategic goals.

Table 2: CDETБ Strategic Goals - Profile and People

Profile	People
Strategic Goal 1 Promote the organisational vision and identity of CDETБ as the provider of choice for the delivery of high-quality education and training services and facilitator of youth services, in the City of Dublin	Strategic Goal 1 Invest in staff development in order to build professional capacity and foster a positive organisational culture in CDETБ
Strategic Goal 2 Raise the profile of CDETБ locally, regionally and nationally and contribute to shaping and delivering national education and training policy	Strategic Goal 2 Harness and embrace the student/learner voice and the voice of staff in the strategic direction and leadership of CDETБ
Strategic Goal 3 Develop and enhance the core values of CDETБ and embed these values into daily routines and practices so as to deliver highly effective service and supports for all students, learners and stakeholders	Strategic Goal 3 Promote and facilitate, through staff collaboration, professional development including new ways of working and delivery

Profile	People
Strategic Goal 4 Foster highly effective communication and collaboration within and without the organisation	Strategic Goal 4 Foster a culture of innovation and creativity that promotes and supports personal growth and wellbeing and raises the aspirations of all staff, students and learners
Strategic Goal 5 Promote active and responsive strategic networks and partnerships with key stakeholders in the context of a changing economy and society	Strategic Goal 5 Develop leadership capacity within the organisation and build strong and capable leadership teams

Table 3: CDETБ Strategic Goals - Pedagogy and Processes

Pedagogy	Processes
Strategic Goal 1 Deliver high-quality education and training based on best practice in pedagogy and andragogy	Strategic Goal 1 Create, develop and maintain high-quality assured learning environments and infrastructure so as to enhance the learner experience in CDETБ
Strategic Goal 2 Foster cultural awareness and promote the Irish language	Strategic Goal 2 Pursue the modernisation and improvement of systems, processes and structures to support schools, colleges and centres in their delivery of education and training

Pedagogy	Processes
Strategic Goal 3 Promote creativity, innovation and diversity of approach in learning, teaching and training, for example using digital tools	Strategic Goal 3 Pursue the modernisation and improvement of systems, processes and structures to support SUSI in the processing of student grants
Strategic Goal 4 Develop and support international partnerships in learning, teaching and training	Strategic Goal 4 Foster and support a culture of creativity and innovation which embraces adaptation and change to new circumstances and contexts
Strategic Goal 5 Further develop highly effective, practical and impactful student support services at local and national levels	Strategic Goal 5 Deliver on the effective and efficient governance and deployment of resources (human and physical) to enhance the delivery of education, training and support services
Strategic Goal 6 Promote and avail of opportunities to expand and enhance the provision of education and training services in the city of Dublin	Strategic Goal 6 Create and develop CDETБ area-based structures and staff teams so as to facilitate greater integration and cohesion in the provision and delivery of education, training and support services
Strategic Goal 7 Pursue and support excellence in teaching, learning and assessment practices that are learner-centred and evidence-based	

The CDETБ strategic objectives are supported by a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which arose from the Executive Self-Evaluation conducted in 2017¹⁹. Progress reports about the QIP were completed in 2019²⁰ and 2020²¹. The existing QIPs will be updated following this Self-Evaluation process and report. A key aim of CDETБ's QIP is to develop our self-evaluation and reflective practice within the organisation at all levels, including using metrics for measuring success within CDETБ and to increase learner, staff and partner voice in these processes. The output from these processes is brought to the attention of the relevant governance structures, who can then formulate appropriate responses and inform priorities while also ensuring that our decision making is in furtherance of our mission, strategic objectives, taking account of external obligations.

Programme development is closely linked to quality assurance, maintenance and enhancement. This area is critical, as the quality of CDETБ programmes and related services will impact on the quality of the offering to learners as well as the outcomes for learning including progression to industry and/or further and higher education as stated in the CDETБ mission and statement of strategy. While the curriculum and learning outcomes are both essential parts of programmes of education and training quality, the mode in which a programme is delivered also impacts on quality, including access and related services such as learner support. Programme modification and development are dealt with in more detail later in this document.

Further Education Training Strategy and FET Funding - (SOLAS)

The national FET strategy reflects key quality indicators in improving and promoting the standing of FET, and the quality of FET provision through appropriate resourcing. Both objectives also improve access to FET through improving parity of esteem for FET, and addressing other barriers to inclusion e.g. information to learners about their learning options within FET. The quality of FET programmes, including the relevance of knowledge, skills and competences, ties into the progression and placement prospects of learners including their ability to utilise relevant skills in industry.

CDETБ entered a Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS in 2018, which involved the setting out of national targets by SOLAS for ETBs including CDETБ. The systems are designed to capture performance-related data. It is anticipated that a new strategic performance agreement will be agreed in 2022.

¹⁹ [CDETБ Executive Self-Evaluation](#)

²⁰ [Quality Assurance Improvement Plan 2019](#)

²¹ [Quality Assurance Improvement Plan 2020](#)

Quality Metrics connected to Mission/Values/Strategic Objectives and Agreements

The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) Reference Framework Indicators, which were developed to inform a culture of quality in FET/VET providers, were used to guide the evaluation of the selection of CDETb's QA arrangements that are aligned to its mission and strategy. For CDETb, assessing performance and measuring success is not just about quantitative metrics. Qualitative metrics are equally important to the learner, staff and partner experience and to the degree to which CDETb provides support. The following section evaluates the quantitative and qualitative indicators of quality relevant to FET and CDETb to measure the achievement of its mission, strategic objectives and values and in measuring the effectiveness of its quality assurance system to support the achievement of same.

Evaluation

CDETb's mission is learner-focused, human-centred and reflects its key role in contributing positively to societal enhancement and cohesion within Dublin City and the communities within it. This mission is reflected in CDETb's Statement of Strategy. In this regard, CDETb's mission also accords with a key indicator of the success of a quality assurance system of an education and training provider, which is the experience of our learners, staff and partners who are both contributors to and beneficiaries of our quality assurance system.

The service-level reviews identified numerous ways in CDETb FET centres contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of their local communities in Dublin:

- Learner participation in shows/plays/exhibitions organised in the centre or in cultural venues
- Learner participation in the events organised by the Sports and Cultural Committee with other students from across the organisation
- Use of the centre, including sports facilities by local community groups
- SMEs benefit from the business brought into the area by learners who travel into the area, rent and/or shop in the area.

Collaboration with Partners in Education

CDETb engages in collaborative practice with other ETBs through national structures including within ETBI (e.g. QA Network, FET Directors' Forum, CE Forum, ESOL Programme Development Working Group, PLSS Working Group). Many new CDETb policy and procedure areas were developed through or were informed by these processes. An example of this is the development of CDETb assessment procedures using the assessment reference framework developed nationally by ETBs and supported by ETBI.

Participation in International Projects

CDETb also participates in and leads [international projects](#) to develop practice and policy. For example, CDETb's quality assurance policy and procedures for blended learning were informed by its participation in EU projects such as [Blend4VET](#) and in initiatives to support capacity building in this area through projects such as [TELMS](#)²². CDETb developed these procedures which were then approved by QQI prior to the global pandemic. CDETb was therefore well placed to respond quickly to the rapidly changing education landscape. While CDETb was the first ETB to develop policy and procedures in blended learning, it used the collaborative platforms to share its learning with ETB partners commencing the process. This collaborative practice and leading of innovation, and shaping and delivering national FET policy speaks to several of the strategic objectives under Pillar 1 (Profile).

Annual Enrolment Data (linked to EQAVET indicator of participation in VET)

In 2020, 39,115 learners attended FET courses in CDETb. The figure for 2020 demonstrates significant reach and impact within Dublin City. The decrease from 2019 to 2020 can be explained in part by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is clear that CDETb's FET provision is delivering on its mission and its strategic objectives in expanding and enhancing the provision of FET in Dublin city.

Prevalence of Vulnerable Groups

Assessing the prevalence of vulnerable groups within FET would require the application of a nationally agreed definition in the first instance. Currently, the agreed learner enrolment forms require social security numbers (PPS), social welfare history, and educational attainment as mandatory fields. Data which is most relevant to the diversity of FET learners and whether vulnerable groups are being successfully targeted is held by SOLAS and not readily available within CDETb but can be accessed on request.

CDETb provides many targeted programmes for vulnerable learners, particularly through the Adult Education Service (AES), the Education Service to Prisons (ESP), and Youthreach (YR) while the general programme offering in those services typically enrolls learners who may be deemed vulnerable. The statistics for 2020 demonstrate that vulnerable learners were impacted the most as a result of a move to online delivery, as the greatest reduction was seen in the AES and ESP which cater for some of the most vulnerable learners in CDETb (e.g. learners who are accessing drug addiction, homeless and mental health services, those in receipt of unemployment benefit and long-term illness benefit).

²² Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Programme

An examination of the figures will be required to assess if participation rates in AES and ESP learners' numbers show an increase following ease of COVID restrictions. If not, further interventions to increase participation may be required to support the delivery of these services in line with CDET B's mission and strategic objectives.

Level and Diversity of FET Provision and Flexible Pathways

CDET B's Provider Profile sets out the breadth of services and the diversity of courses and flexible pathways to learners from NFQ Levels 1-8 through the use of multiple access points and of rolling intake models as appropriate to service spheres and programme type.

Furthermore, CDET B engages in significant course-provision development work as demonstrated through the level of applications and approvals for new courses provision under the FET process and an increase in centres applying for approval for blended delivery modes to increase learner access. These applications are assessed against defined criteria in the interests of learners; however, the policy and procedure area still require strengthening and are dealt with in more detail further on in the report.

The diversity of FET provision and the availability of flexible pathways is a core strength of CDET B's FET provision in line with its strategic objective to expand and enhance the provision of FET services in Dublin city. (P3, SG6)

See variety of [learner life-cycles](#) mapped by service spheres.

Staff to Student Ratio

The staff-to-student ratios provided in Table 25 of the [Provider Profile](#) demonstrate smaller class sizes for courses at lower levels of the NFQ, including provision for one-to-one delivery where needed and increasing to 1 to 19 in Colleges of Further Education where courses are delivered at higher levels on the NFQ. However, for CFEs actual class sizes can be higher ranging from 20-30 learners depending on facilities and resource access and informed by trade union directives. From a quality perspective, the ratios are both level and need-appropriate and clearly demonstrate a learner-centred ethos within CDET B. Learner feedback from consultation events was clear that their preference is for smaller classes, which are a feature of FET provision in CDET B. Smaller class sizes support the personal development for some target learner groups. Similarly, some learners need more individualised support in their learning journeys. This clearly demonstrates that CDET B is fulfilling its mission to contribute to the personal development of the individual and to actively provide inclusive education and training.

Net Cost to Student

CDET B is a statutory provider and therefore does not rely on a commercial business funding model. Course costs are set on a course-by-course basis at local level and some courses result in a payment to students to participate including courses in Youthreach, CTCs, LTIs, Traineeships and Apprenticeships. Many courses targeting vulnerable groups are offered free of charge, while others have associated fees to cover certification fees and any course materials needed, thereby removing some barriers to access and participation.

There are government levies which apply to certain programmes; however, learners can qualify for exemptions because of their own or their family's low income levels. However, the cost can increase due to the cost of course materials that may need to be included, such as uniforms/personal equipment. Some programmes are delivered as part of evening provision under self-financing arrangements and not publicly funded. Course fees are charged to cover teaching hours and certification fees.

Moreover, learners can apply for grants through Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) to assist with the costs of education. As a result of low costs and supports available, it is clear that CDET B FET programmes offer significant value for money for learners. However, learners did report that costs of courses should be advertised more clearly as part of feedback given at the [Level 1-4 Learner consultation](#) event.

CDET B performs strongly in the area of access schemes and the promotion of access to FET when one considers the staff to student ratios and the level of course diversity from Level 1-8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

In this respect, CDET B is fulfilling its objective to actively provide inclusive, professional, high-quality education and training.

Completion/Retention and Certification Rates

Retention and completion are recorded as early leavers, partial and full completers, while certification is recorded as none, partial or full. Knowledge in relation to start and completion dates of individual courses is essential to ensure the correct parameters are used as any error in this will render the data inaccurate. For example, when setting the commencement dates and completion dates for the data, to see the correct data you must ensure that where a course crosses two calendar years, you include a completion date within the first year as well as the second year to capture learners who were early finishers in the previous year.

For conducting analysis, the most straightforward approach was to analyse programmes that collectively have the same annual start and end dates. This applies mainly to PLC provision with defined start and end dates that apply to all PLC programmes. To capture the full cohort of learners who started in September 2019 and were due to complete in May 2020, start and finish dates for both 2019 and 2020 had to be used to ensure no early finishers were lost.

This provided a total of 7,017 of enrolled learners and of this figure for 2020 PLC graduates:

- 76% were full completers
- 17% were partial completers
- 7% were early finishers (less than 25% of the course)

It would be difficult to compile this data for the other service spheres in a comparative manner at institutional level due to the different start and finish dates of courses throughout the year. For example, some learners on programmes where rolling intake operates enrol on the same programme as other learners but at different times. Therefore, start and end dates are specific to the individual learner.

To add to the complexity, where courses are more than one year in duration, individual years are recorded as individual courses. The implication of this is that for certification data there must be discounting of learners who completed their first year, but who are not to be put forward for certification until the end of their final year. For example, if the statistics were taken based on full certification, partial certification and no certification for PLC without doing this, the PLSS system would show that only 51% of the 7,017 PLC graduates for 2020 achieved full certification. However, this fails to consider that 2,273 full completers were not due to be put forward for certification in 2020. Learners enrolled on traineeships will also be missing for CFEs as they are recorded in the Training Centres (See Objective 1h, Information and Data Management for more details). When analysing the data, it is very easy to skew it inadvertently by using incorrect parameters.

Of the 7,017 enrolled learners in PLC that were put forward for certification in 2020:

- 75% achieved a QQI major award/and another non-QQI award
- 24% achieved a QQI component award/with or without another non- QQI award
- 1% achieved a QQI supplemental/special purpose award

Full-time provision accounts for 37% of CDET B provision, of which 74% in 2020 were PLC programmes. The figures represent the percentage of learners of this learner cohort due to be put forward for certification in 2020. When full and part-time provision are combined the figures are indicative for learners who were due to be put forward for certification for a learner cohort which accounts for 31.54% of CDET B learners for 2020. Of all CDET B courses delivered in 2020, 43% were unaccredited.

The challenges of mining the data on learner enrolment and for comparative analysis of such data are addressed under [Section 4.8 Information and Data Management](#).

The indicative completion/retention and certification rates for a large cohort of learners examined demonstrate quality and clearly illustrate that CDET B is delivering on its mission to deliver high quality education to learners in Dublin.

Grade Distribution

Grade distribution data which is collated to institutional level and can be examined readily applies in the main to programmes leading to QQI awards. In this regard, QQI provides useful benchmarking to national averages. It is important to note, that for QQI awards, grading is criterion-referenced, based on learning outcomes and not by reference to the performance of other learners. In this regard, CDET B as a provider compares favourably to national averages for ETBs.

Table 4: Grade distribution data for 2020

NFQ Level	Distinction		Merit		Pass		Unsuccessful	
	CDET B	Nationally	CDET B	Nationally	CDET B	Nationally	CDET B	Nationally
Level 4	54.7%	Almost 60%	23.8%	24.9%	13.4%	14.8%	6.8%	1.8%
Level 5	49.5%	57.4%	20.2%	21.2%	15.3%	13.8%	14.9%	10.3%
Level 6	49.9%	54.4%	23.9%	24.4%	17.5%	14.6%	8.7%	6.6%

In general, CDET B is lower than the national average in awarding Distinctions and Merits and higher in awarding a Pass or deeming a learner unsuccessful. The trend is mirrored for the figures from 2019 and 2021 and is most pronounced for 2020 at Level 5, with a significant difference of 4.6% between those learners deemed unsuccessful on average nationally versus in CDET B. This data is useful for informing evaluations of teaching, learning and assessment and quality improvement planning in centres, particularly in conjunction with learners and industry partners.

Learner Outcomes / Progression Rates

Learner outcomes are more difficult to capture, as the PLSS system is designed to record outcomes which occur within 4 weeks of completion of the FET programme. For some service spheres, this would be more straightforward where learners are on traineeships and apprenticeships. To collect this type of data more effectively SOLAS have placed staff within the Central Statistics Office to ascertain learner outcomes. However, data has not yet been produced and furnished to CDET B from this initiative.

Investment in the Training of Teachers and Trainers

The provision of PLD is managed by the CDETБ's PLD Co-ordinator and was either directly delivered by the PLD Co-ordinator, or through internal expertise or externally through third parties. In 2021 CDETБ spent over €300,000 on PLD for its staff. The diversity and extent of provision is considerable and evidenced through the annual [CDETБ PLD calendar](#). Participation rates in the last 18 months have been very high, which were impacted by the need for staff to upskill in a short period of time. This is dealt with in more detail under [Section 4.4 Recruitment, Selection and Development of Staff](#).

CDETБ's commitment to and investment in the professional learning and development of its staff is long established and is key to the achievement of its mission to deliver high quality education and its strategic objectives in promoting creativity and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment.

Qualitative Indicators

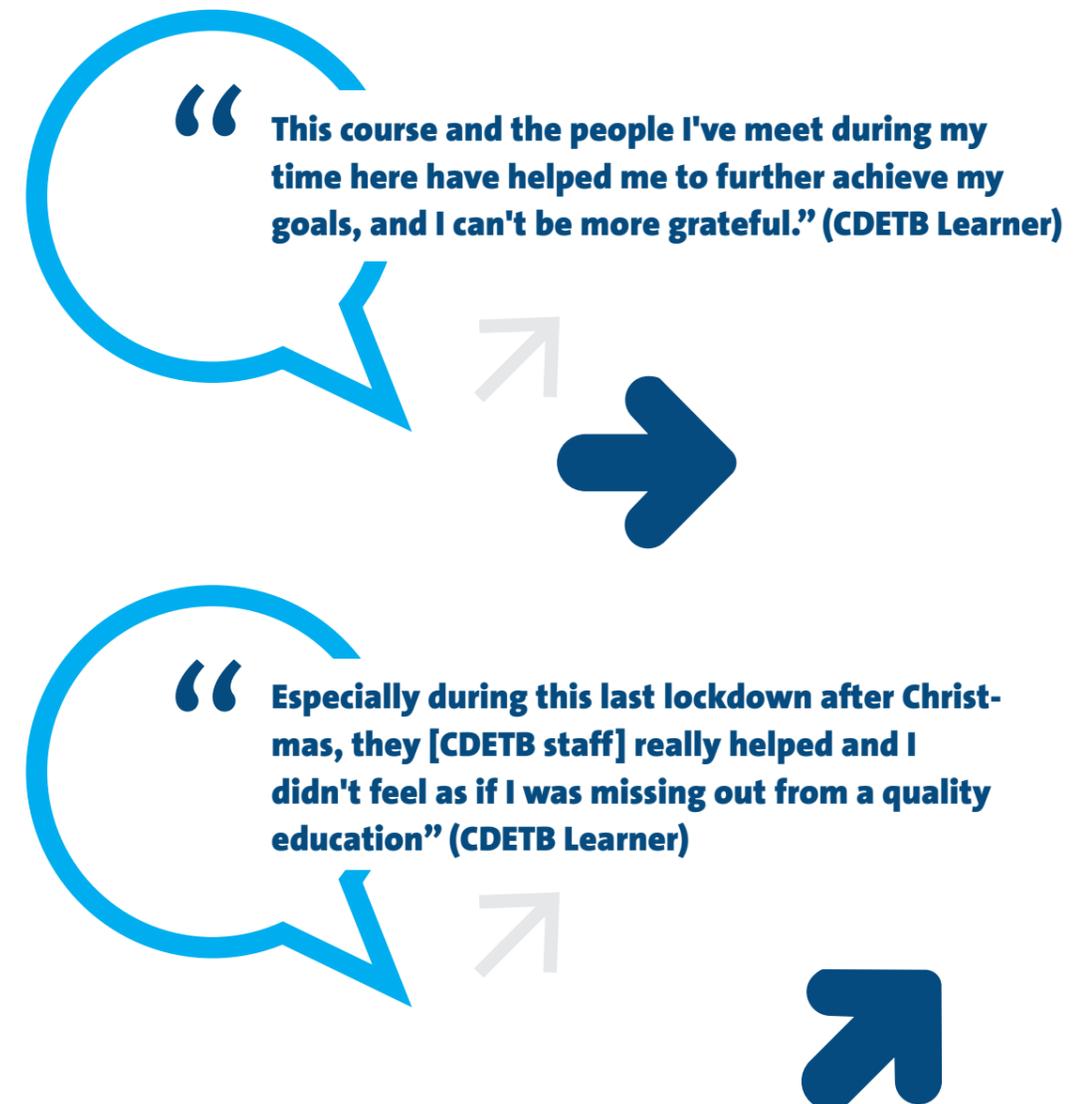
The qualitative indicators addressed as part of the institutional review research focused on learner and staff satisfaction levels connected to CDETБ's mission, values and strategic objectives.

The research evidenced that the mission and values of CDETБ are experienced and promoted by staff and learners and the experience of learners was about more than just learning outcomes on programmes.

Learner Feedback

Learners reported the degree of self-efficacy and interaction with staff, industry partners as part of work experience/work placement and their peers in this regard.

They emphasised the importance of their relationships with staff and fellow learners, and the support and encouragement they received to their personal development and to their overall experience of a quality education experience.



The feedback from learners, especially younger learners, was that what they missed most was 'college life' and access to their peers. This indicates that programme evaluation should not disregard the wider learning experience.

In its statement of strategy, CDETБ identified strategic objectives of developing effective consultation and communication processes with staff, learners and stakeholders and 'harnessing and embracing the voice of learners in the strategic direction and leadership of CDETБ'. 2020/21 was a very challenging year, with staff having to adapt rapidly to changes. Level 5 & 6 learners in particular reported the following:

- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like their opinion mattered, and they were listened to by their teachers with 10% actively disagreeing with the statement.
- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they were kept informed about changes that were happening in their course with only 7% of learners disagreeing with that statement.
- 79% agreed or strongly agreed that they were consulted about changes that were happening to their course with 7% of respondents actively disagreeing with the statement.
- 74% agreed or strongly agreed that their personal needs and circumstances were taken into consideration when changes were happening to their courses with 10% of learners disagreeing with the statement.

These findings demonstrate a strong ethos of consultation with and listening and responding to the needs of learners, as espoused in CDETb's mission and values.

However, learners reported the following areas for improvement:

- access to resources in a timely manner
- lack of online library facilities
- too many different online platforms being used

Despite the difficulties experienced around accessing the information they needed via published material, many learners reported that once they contacted a centre, they received the information they needed to make an informed decision (e.g. cost implications, funding available) and received encouragement that they could be successful in the course. It was clear in the feedback, that this made a real and positive impact on them.

Staff Feedback

At the staff event organised as part of the institutional review, staff were asked to reflect on the strategic objectives of CDETb in relation to communication and collaboration. Much of the staff feedback correlates with areas of strength identified by learners and issues identified including raising profile, streamlining access, transfer and progression routes within CDETb, the importance of collaboration, mechanisms for reflective practice to share resources and practice and the positive impact of PLD on teaching and learning. Their feedback is dealt with in more detail under Objective 2.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- High participation, completion and retention rates in FET
- FET programmes and supports cater for diverse learner groups including vulnerable learners
- Small class sizes
- Low/no costs
- Learning environments are learner and human-centred
- Communication from centres to learners is effective during their course
- Significant investment in staff PLD linked to improving the outcomes and learning experiences of learners

Challenges

- Limitations of PLSS system creates challenges in using data effectively
- Limited personnel resourcing in Data Analytics
- Difficult for learner to make informed decisions based solely on publicity materials (website, course prospectus etc)
- Lack of online library facilities for learners
- Too many online platforms in use

Suggested Areas for Improvement

- Further develop the use of metrics and data that accurately reflect CDETb's mission and strategic objectives
- Use metrics more closely linked to our mission to inform the presentation and decision making within CDETb governance units.
- Analyse quantitative data from PLSS at course level, collated to centre/service level and reported at CDETb level as part of self-evaluation processes
- Use the outputs from these self-evaluations to inform areas selected for review for new policy, procedure, programme, resource and professional learning and development to determine where supports and resources are directed
- Build on what has been achieved as part of the institutional review by further strengthening staff, learner, partner voice and externality

Conclusion

It is clearly evidenced that CDET B is providing a high-quality, diverse, innovative and learner-driven education and training service, which is agile and responsive. The learner and staff experiences as evidenced are consistent with CDET B's mission and values. CDET B performs well in relation to the quantitative and qualitative indicators. The quality assurance system is tailored to take account of the diversity of provision and can be deemed effective as it enables CDET B to deliver on its mission, values and strategic objectives and is 'context-sensitive and takes into account different organisational and disciplinary cultures'²⁴. However, this can be strengthened. Some aspects of the quantitative data are difficult to fully ascertain at institutional level without strengthening the use of such metrics at centre/service level evaluations. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot be used considering the diversity of the recruitment and delivery models of the different service spheres.

Developing its own metrics to measure success based on the quantitative and qualitative indicators reflecting its mission and strategy will increase CDET B's capacity evaluate its own performance effectively and accurately and ensure that it is meaningful for learners, staff and collaborative partners. What is considered success needs to be appropriately contextualised based on the cohort of learners, their needs and the aims of the course upon which they have enrolled. However, the use of relevant indicators must not be "punitive, but developmental"²⁵ and reflect 'the autonomy and self-confidence of the provider and its commitment to staff and learners'²⁶. This process will take time to articulate accurately, build into systems and refine appropriately to support teaching and learning, maintain progression and avoid a regressive move to a 'tick box' culture in this respect, often referred to in academic literature as the dangers of 'performativity'.²⁷

4.2 Structures & Terms of Reference for Governance & Management of Quality Assurance

Description

Governance is how decisions are made within City of Dublin Education and Training Board. The core governance structure of CDET B is the management teams of the five service spheres: Colleges of FE, Training Centres, Adult Education Service, Education to Prisons and Youthreach, and their staff and corporate and FET support services with reporting lines to members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). These structures are complemented with governance structures that have a focus on quality and academic standards at centre- and service-sphere level and at corporate level.

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

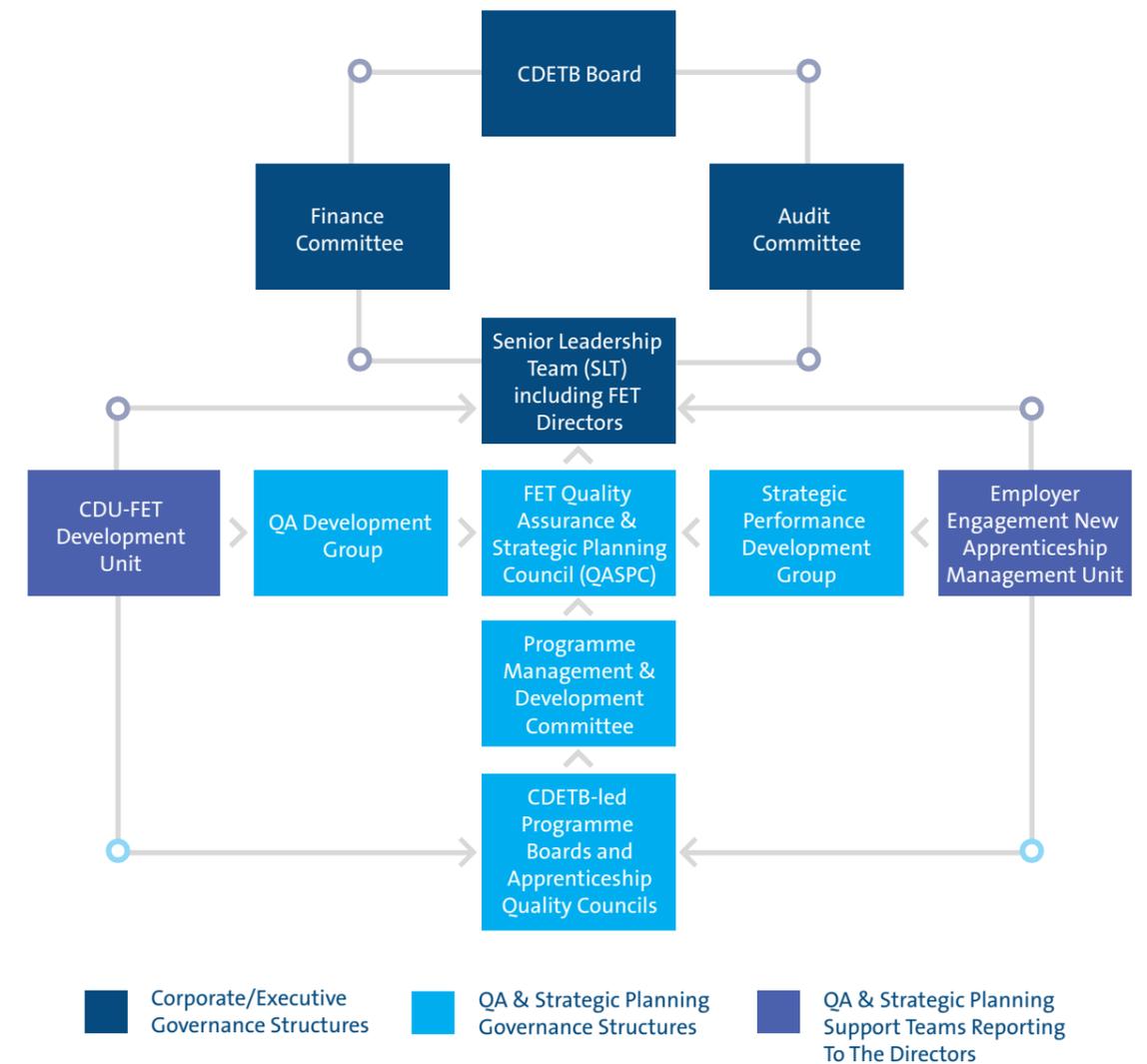
²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Ball, S. 2003, The Teacher's Soul and the terrors of performativity, Journal of Educational Policy, 18:2, 215-228 available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>

They also uphold, enhance and assure that appropriate standards and quality are achieved in the interests of learners. Governance also includes how we 'allocate roles and responsibilities, determine priorities and designs, and carry out education policies and programmes'²⁸ to ensure this occurs.

The diagram below shows the CDET B Organisational and Reporting Structures

Figure 7: CDET B Organisational and Reporting Structures



²⁸ OECD, Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential, Chapter 4. Education governance: Policy priorities and trends, 2008-19 available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b8ad56e-en>

Each Council/Committee/Group is classed as a governance unit and has tasks and associated responsibilities within the governance system, which are set out clearly as Terms of Reference (TOR). Councils and Committees tend to be more enduring structures and can establish working groups under the TORs to consider a particular issue or connected issues and report their findings.

During 2019, building on existing processes and procedures, CDETБ refined, enhanced and further developed its QA governance structures. The new structures built on the previous ones while considering the need for a more unified governance system, which would combine the requirements for QA oversight and enhancement with strategic planning for FET and are outlined in the diagram above. For a more detailed description and Terms of Reference for the following structures please see <http://cdetbdu.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDETБ-QA-Governance-Structures-ToR-November-2019.docx>

FET Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC)

The QASPC considers variously quality/academic standards and strategic planning and associated actions/initiatives. It advises and makes recommendations to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on the strategic planning and the quality of the Further Education and Training provision in CDETБ, with a focus on issues, trends, and analysis of data from all governance units, including certification data, self-evaluation reports, external authenticator reports, centre quality team reports and strategic performance agreements. Open consultation occurs with representation from across all services in CDETБ. The QASPC forms subgroups/committees report into it as required. The QASPC currently has the following sub-committees which address more detailed aspects of work for sending on to the QASPC for final consideration and recommendation:

- **Quality Assurance Development Group (QADG):** responsible for the development of the new QA policies and procedures and the enhancement of existing QA policies and procedures
- **Strategic Performance Development Group (SPDG):** responsible for monitoring and supporting the achievement of agreed CDETБ-SOLAS FET targets
- **The Programme Management and Development Committee (PMDC):** manages the existing CDETБ programmes validated by QQI including modifications and reviews new programme proposals, oversees the development of programmes, and makes recommendations on submissions for validation to QQI. This enables quality-assured programme development and facilitates the strategic re-validation of existing programmes
- **CDETБ-led Programme Boards:** report to the PMDC on the quality and delivery of newly validated programmes including those for which CDETБ is the lead/ co-ordinating provider, e.g. the Auctioneering and Property Management Apprenticeship
- **FET Consultation Working Group:** considers applications from centres to deliver new courses or to make changes to courses (e.g. change titles to existing courses/move to blended modes of delivery) and makes recommendations to the Senior Management Team

- **Inaugural Review Steering Committee:** has responsibility for overseeing the Inaugural Statutory Review of CDETБ (institutional level review) and liaising with the external review team appointed by QQI.

CDETБ priority areas for quality improvement are captured in Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) which have been the product of self-evaluations. The findings of our institutional review will inform quality improvement plans going forward.

Quality Teams

The structures outlined above have been supplemented at centre- and service-sphere level with dedicated Quality Teams (QTs). The establishment of QTs began in 2019 and now takes in the following:

Figure 8: CDETБ Quality Teams



All QTs have terms of reference and a record of their membership. As part of the institutional review, QTs for the corporate and FET-services spheres were also formed as a practical application of the principle of involving the wider staff body at provision/centre level in the oversight of the quality assurance function²⁹, as part of local governance units. Many staff within QTs have responsibility for aspects of quality assurance and the creation of QTs makes this more coherent and improves lines of communication.

To date, up to 28 quality teams have been established covering every centre and service area with the purpose and remit to:

- Promote, enhance, develop, coordinate and support quality assurance in a specific college, centre or service sphere
- Foster and embed a culture of quality improvement in the provision and delivery in the college, centre or service sphere
- Act as conduits for the dissemination and embedding of new QA policies and procedures
- Provide a link between provider level and the QA governance units

CDETБ FET Support Services

CDETБ has several support services which have a remit within our FET provision:

- [FET Development Unit](#)
- [Employer Engagement Unit](#)
- [Psychological Service](#)
- [Disability Support Service](#)
- [English Speakers of Other Languages](#)
- [Professional Learning and Development](#)
- [Technology Enhanced Learning](#)

More detailed information on each of these is available in the Provider Profile.

CDETБ Level Decision Making / Devolved Decision Making / Oversight and Co-ordination

CDETБ provides corporate services which include but are not limited to:

- Human Resources – including recruitment, selection and appointment of staff
- Finance
- Procurement/Purchasing
- I.T
- Communications

²⁹ [CDETБ Quality Assurance Governance and Strategic Planning | City of Dublin Education & Training Board](#)

- Data Protection
- Buildings and Maintenance

As outlined previously, decision-making remains devolved in all areas of quality under the remit of Quality Teams and Leadership Teams. However, the following areas come under the remit of CDETБ-level governance units which make formal recommendations to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

CDETБ-level Oversight

Actioning of agreed priorities for CDETБ level Quality Improvement plans under their remit, which include the following areas.

- Development of new policies and procedures in the areas of quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance by selecting agreed areas for review and development
- Review and updating of existing policies and procedures
- Modification and updating of existing programmes leading to QQI awards
- Development of new programmes leading to QQI awards
- New course offering to learners including advertising and progression routes
- National Programme Boards for Apprenticeship programmes where CDETБ is the co-ordinating provider
- External Appeals Service
- External Authenticator (EA) Panels. CDETБ maintains a panel in conjunction with a national ETBI panel
- CDETБ-level strategies and improvement planning in quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance
- CDETБ-level agreements/responses/submissions to external parties/stakeholders
- Co-ordination of Employer Engagement
- Co-ordination of Data Analytics
- Co-ordination of Professional Learning and Development
- Co-ordination of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL).

Apart from the functions of programme development and external appeals, which were centralised to corporate level from 2009, all other areas have been ‘evolved’ to CDETБ level post 2014, or did not exist previously e.g., Data Analytics. These functions are carried out with a focus on developing our quality system from the ground up, using a collaborative approach from across service spheres. Co-ordination in the areas of Employer Engagement, PLD, TEL and ESOL occur in partnership with staff in Leadership/Quality /TEL Teams at centre and service level who have operational responsibility in these areas.

CDETБ maintains oversight, co-ordination and clarity in all aspects of delivery as part of the learner journey from access to teaching, learning and progression through:

- Policies and procedures in place in the respective areas
- Leadership Team meetings and meetings with QTs
- Central quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance function for liaising with QTs in relation to project areas and queries. It also supports the work of governance units and acts as a lynchpin between QTs and the governance units, bringing any issues arising to the attention of the relevant governance unit
- Self-evaluation processes in the form of course reviews, centre-level quality reviews under the remit of QTs, to provide for the submission of end-of-cycle quality/results approval reports. The findings from these reporting arrangements are brought to the QASPC to identify emerging trends
- EA reports are submitted centrally for collation and reporting to the QASPC
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with responsibility for FET and members of FET Support Services including the FET Development Team, the TEL Team and Employer Engagement Team attend end-of-year Results Approval Panel meetings, which often also carry out the annual quality review function
- Policy and procedure area reviews in conjunction with working groups from across CDETБ with a view to developing/updating the area
- Communities of Practice (COPs) Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) based on subject areas and roles
- Development and provision of teaching and learning resources made available through the CDU Moodle site.

CDETБ Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures Development Process – QADG

After the signing of the regularisation agreements in 2014, CDETБ agreed to take on provider status and to create a more unified and integrated quality assurance system. To achieve this, it was agreed, under CDETБ's approach to Quality Maintenance, Enhancement and Assurance, that it would be collaborative and inclusive, reflecting the mission and values of CDETБ. The approach would aim to develop this new QA system from the ground up, based on models of best practice from within CDETБ, in addition to utilising external research and examples.

This approach involved identifying priority areas for revision or development CDETБ in consultation with CDETБ colleges, centres and/or services, who could also identify and request assistance in developing CDETБ policy and procedures in certain areas. The QA Policy and Procedure Development and Enhancement Process has been updated to reflect current governance arrangements, including the establishment of Quality Teams as follows:

1. Development of a policy and procedure on a particular issue, area of work, service through focused consultation i.e., working group supported by member of FET Development Unit under oversight of QADG
2. Working Group formally recommends to QADG. QADG may issue for wider consultation, which includes the following as appropriate: other QASPC sub-committees, management team meetings, CDETБ Quality Teams, all centres/staff. Policy and Procedure Papers which have been developed collaboratively through ETBI enter at this stage
3. QADG formally recommends to QASPC. QASPC considers and subject to any proposed amendments recommends to the SLT
4. Issued for implementation. Piloting may occur in one centre, a cluster of centres or all centres
5. Subject to review as part of monitoring, review and self-evaluation procedures, findings are brought back to working group and sub-committee for consideration.

CDETБ Programme Modification/Development and Course Delivery (PMDC and FET Consultation Working Group)

CDETБ has a statutory responsibility to co-ordinate delivery of courses in Dublin city and to ensure programmes are modified, updated, and developed under centrally managed processes as part of agreements with QQI. This also serves to fulfil CDETБ's mission and strategic objectives to deliver high-quality education, informed by best practice and led by innovative practice in a changing economy and society.

To meet these two demands, two processes exist which are overseen by separate governance units. Programmes are too large and subject to too many permutations as part of delivery for the co-ordination across the city to be restricted to programmes. In other words, if a centre were approved for 20 CDETБ programmes, 100 different courses could be devised on the back of this and cause supply and demand issues. Therefore, co-ordination of delivery of courses offered to learners and assessment of a centre's capacity to deliver a particular course is managed under the FET process which decides who delivers what and where. Centres apply to deliver new courses and FET Consultation group are consulted before decisions are made by the SLT with responsibility for FET.

The resource bank of CDETБ programmes is managed under the Programme Management and Development Committee, which handles applications to modify existing programmes and to develop new programmes. Centres apply for modifications to be made and request to develop new programmes/programme modules. This process manages the oversight of the delivery of programmes within CDETБ and aims to ensure the quality of same. The ToRs for the PMDC are outlined in the [Provider Profile](#).

Evaluation

An evaluation of the functions of the governance units was conducted in conjunction with the Inaugural Review Steering Committee with reference to the principles of good governance extracted from the statutory quality assurance guidelines. Six themes emerged from the evaluations as set out below.

Membership

Although units have representation from across service spheres, membership is mainly made

up of management and FET support services personnel. Although the ToRs provide for it, there are no external members or learners represented on governance units. A lack of diversity and representation in governance group membership was noted as a weakness. It was suggested that this may be contributing to a lack of awareness of the work of units with a wider staff cohort. Members representing teachers/instructors/tutors stated that there was still a low level of awareness of the governance groups among practitioners. More diversity in membership and externality would ensure greater protection from undue influence from commercial considerations, including those that relate to funding and financial considerations. Members took the view that the discussion taking place within any governance unit should not be such that it alienates learners and teaching/training staff who are key to quality. However, it was acknowledged that some targeted PLD would be useful.

Members of FET support services were mainly identified as contributors to governance groups rather than as support staff to the units. Some members in management roles acknowledged the challenge of fulfilling their role on the governance unit as a service sphere representative while also being responsible for an individual centre that would be impacted by decisions made. However, their commitment to moving towards being part of an institution and taking a more collaborative approach, was also voiced.

The findings were also considered relevant to the membership of Quality Teams.

Finally, it was acknowledged that the role of FET Directors as Chair(s) of QASPC who bring the recommendations of the Council to the SLT and then also approve them lacks critical distance.



Ways of Working

There was agreement about the importance of valuing the time of those contributing to governance groups and also identifying where they could add the most value. It was clear that the way in which we present information and conduct meetings is fully inclusive of all types of stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and expertise.



It was also identified that decision-making can take too long within the governance units, and this can negatively impact on decision-making at local level. To this end more alignment between groups and sub-groups and the scheduling of their meetings would be considered positive.

Outputs from self-evaluation processes which are relevant to each unit are not systematically brought to that unit's attention, which means that governance units do not always have an opportunity to review how strategies, policies, procedures, programmes and resources developed under its remit are implemented, or whether they must be updated or modified to be made more effective.

Finally, it was established that mechanisms are needed to address how the work of the governance groups is communicated to staff and other stakeholders. There are a number of suggested improvements outlined later in this section.



Alignment with CDETb Mission, Vision and Strategic Objectives

CDETb's mission/values/strategic objectives are not systematically reflected in the way information is presented to governance groups nor in the way we engage when conducting meetings, decision-making nor the way we disseminate information. Teaching and learning are at the heart of CDETb's work. However, the ToRs for the governance groups do not clearly reflect this. Currently, it comes within both the PMDC (curriculum development and assessment) and the QADG (policies and procedures).

The selection of collaborative partners is key to quality and to managing reputational risk appropriately. It is prescribed in the statutory guidelines that the assessment of such arrangements should come within the remit of a governance unit. For CDETb, it could not involve examination of every potential collaboration; however, there should be an agreed process where there is extensive/higher risk e.g. second providers. Therefore, it should be assessed by a governance unit empowered to do so, so appropriate responses to risk can be recommended to the SLT/Risk Audit Committee.

Relationship between Governance Units

Members noted that the relationship between governance units at local and corporate level and between sub-committees requires strengthening. An example of this is the relationship between the CDETb Apprenticeship Council, centre-based programme boards, the FET Consultation Working Group and the PMDC.

As teaching and learning spans both the QADG and the PMDC, there may be increased scope for cross-committee working groups.

The role of the function of the FET Consultation Working Group was highlighted as a group which lacks ToRs. Its role may need to be considered vis-à-vis other governance groups.

It should be clear within the ToRs of the governance units where the responsibility for informing direction and providing oversight lies.

With the new FET Strategy, it would be useful for the Strategic Planning and Development Group to consider this and regional data in advance of renewed engagement with SOLAS for new strategic partnership agreements.

Principle of Subsidiarity

While centre autonomy is important, so too is corporate oversight for a multi-service, multi-centre provider the size of CDETb and a balance needs to be struck between the two. It accords with the principle of subsidiarity, that the quality system is appropriate for the context of CDETb. Quality assurance responsibilities are assigned appropriately on this basis. Linked to this is the role of trust within the system, particularly where there are internal management reporting lines in addition to the quality assurance infrastructure. The importance of the role of Quality Teams was cited again in this vein, as these teams have the potential to play a pivotal role in the governance eco-system between corporate and local structures and in utilising the principles of subsidiarity in a coherent manner. (More detailed evaluation of quality teams is presented later in this section)

The less trust within the system, the greater the need for monitoring and assurance activities which increases administrative burden and was cited as a challenge across all services spheres and membership of governance units. This is a critical point in the current context, as demands on the organisation have significantly increased with an increased regulatory environment which continues apace. Such changes require added reporting systems, although organisational structures and resources have not significantly changed at centre level.

The consequence of this, which must be factored into decision-making, is that the greater the administrative burden the more resources that get directed away from teaching and learning and the greater the potential for the negative impact on learners. When one reflects on this, it is crucial that a cost-benefit analysis is conducted in decision making. If we collectively put our energy into systems and processes that are producing little value from a quality perspective including quality of the experience of learners, then this is regressive and not progressive.

CDETБ needs to ensure it is putting its time and resources into activities that maintain and enhance quality and assurance activities do not overly detract from the two other areas to a detrimental degree.

Moving from Competition to Collaboration

The evaluations found that some structures promote competition more than collaboration, in particular the FET application process for new course delivery and the consultation process in the FET Consultation Group. At times, this process can be quite adversarial and can promote a siloed approach. It was suggested that this could be ameliorated through the greater use of complementary CDETБ mechanisms which promote more collaboration that are CDETБ-led. The process does provide for applications for new courses being made through the FET Development Unit and the Employer Engagement Unit, and where centres are then selected for delivery. Examples include Health Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners and more recently, National Skills to Advance³⁰ courses in the Hospitality Sector. The latter example involved for the first time in CDETБ, two CDETБ centres (Colaiste Íde CFE and Crumlin CFE) engaging in co-delivery. Learners completed half of the course in one centre and the second half in the other centre. The example of programme cluster groups which was utilised previously was also cited, this is where centres and their staff engaged in the same programme area come to together to examine the area and future trends, with a view to collaborating and co-ordinating delivery between the centres in a more harmonious manner. These clusters could be used as a mechanism for the submission of new course applications, which are the product of consultation and collaboration across the programme area in CDETБ.

Findings emerging from service-level reviews conducted by the Quality Teams

In addition, to the consultations above, the following findings emerged from service-level reviews in the area of governance and management:

- Significant value placed on/commitment to the QA system by all service spheres, as it promotes public confidence in what we do and provides clarity and comfort in that it informs the approach to challenges at centre level

³⁰ Skills to Advance courses are aimed at those in employment. For further information please see gov.ie - Learn new skills or retrain (www.gov.ie)

- The importance of Quality Teams as local governance units was emphasised. The establishment of these teams was seen as very positive across all service spheres
- The establishment of Quality Teams was considered to aid in QA capacity building by all service spheres, as they widened out responsibility/engagement/decision making on QA with a more a larger and more diverse group within centres/services
- All service spheres cited increased awareness of quality assurance, and a widening of the concept of Quality Assurance outside of assessment procedures was evident. All service spheres also cited a high level of representation and opportunity to contribute to the development of quality assurance
- All service spheres emphasised the feedback/support they received from the FET Unit in the area of QA as being important to aid informed decision making
- QA Governance at CDETБ level was found to have become more visible, structured and coherent
- More representation by wider group of staff from Quality Teams and the introduction of a CoP³¹ for QTs from across CDETБ could also be beneficial.

Based on the CDETБ staff survey which had an average response rate of 60% across all service spheres³², 88% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they were kept informed of COVID 19-related changes taking place at their 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 in the last year of delivery because of restrictions to ensure public health.

These findings demonstrate that staff are highly involved in key decision-making that impacts on quality from the ground up, which is a key strength for CDETБ, as it demonstrates both a model of distributive leadership and ownership of quality at all levels.

The statutory quality assurance guidelines and the principles which underpin them point towards the presence of a strong quality culture:

A positive, quality culture is [promoted and] embedded – the totality of a provider’s teaching and learning community is working in a coherent and cohesive way towards implementing the quality agenda. The provider is committed to the active development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement.

It also accords with the principle of subsidiarity, which is particularly appropriate for a large complex organisation such as CDETБ. The latter principle is promoted on the basis that those who are best placed to decide, because of their proximity to the issue and because of their expertise, should be enabled to do so. This approach harnesses the expertise of staff on the ground and facilitates appropriate levels of responsiveness to staff and learner needs.

³¹ Community of Practice (CoP)

³² 585 FET educators from across the service spheres responded to this survey, Adult Education –77 (27% response rate 34 staff with 250 part-time staff) 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).

Feedback from consultation with members of governance groups and at service-level reviews highlighted the need for more resources centrally in all FET support services and at centre level to ensure the level of engagement needed can occur in these critical areas.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Representation of service spheres on each governance group/sub committee
- Establishment of the Quality Teams for each centre/service sphere
- Feedback from the FET Unit informing decision making
- There is visible and transparent QA governance

Challenges

- Lack of diversity and representation on governance groups and sub-groups
- Increasing representation of staff (incl. teacher/tutor/instructors) on groups requires staff release and resourcing. Staff with operational responsibilities require time and appropriate status for this key area of work
- Lack of awareness of the work of the governance groups among wider staff cohort, including newer members of centre-management teams

Areas for Enhancement

- Appointment of new Chairs for subcommittees, avoiding as far as possible sub-committee members also being members of the QASPC to strengthen separation between those who develop and propose and those who approve
- Increase representation from learners and both internal and external stakeholders on governance groups and subgroups
- Removal of members of FET Support Service from formal membership of Committees where they have a role to support the structure and present proposals on behalf of working groups
- Devising an agreed schedule of governance unit meetings to be communicated to members and Quality Teams and made accessible to all staff
- Annual Calendars for all service spheres on key activities and process timelines to promote transparency and assist information sharing and timely decision making
- The minutes and decisions of governance units should be available to all staff
- Produce guidelines for conducting meetings and member responsibilities/expectations and reflect clear work processes of the groups

- Agreed Schemes of Work for the Year for QASPC and Subcommittees linked to strategic planning/strategic agreements with 3rd parties/output from self-evaluation processes
- Clarify the role and function of the FET Consultation Working Group and its relationship to other groups/committees. Requires more detailed ToRs
- Embedding collaborative practice, particularly around new course and programme development
- Increasing awareness and understanding of QA and Governance for SLT members/QT members/members of Governance Units/FET Support Services through targeted PLD
- Strengthening of decision-making criteria of units to connect more clearly to Mission/Values/Strategic Objectives/External obligations
- Use of cross-committee working groups where relevant.

Conclusion

There is a strong commitment to the CDETБ governance units and their work and recognition that we can achieve more together than on our own. A great deal has been achieved so far and improving how decision making occurs within CDETБ is to the benefit of all stakeholders. The following is probative of effectiveness:

- The number of new policies and procedures developed is extensive
- The development of new programmes
- The response of the PMDC with modifications to CDETБ programmes with process-orientated implementation and oversight mechanisms, particularly in the areas of alternative assessments and alternatives to work experience and work practice
- Governance units working together in relation to the above: the FET processes oversaw updates to programme provision in updated course delivery models, which had to be changed mid-cycle
- The extent of activity of new course development and approval.³³

It is also recognised that there is ownership of the output from CDETБ governance units; however, decision making needs to occur at appropriate levels and in a timely fashion within such a large multi-service and multi-layered organisation, and greater clarity in this regard would be beneficial.

³³ More detailed data in each area is dealt with in the relevant sections further on in the report

4.3 The Documentation of Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures

Description

As set out already, CDETБ is a multi-service, multi-centre regional provider with a QA system that has developed from a series of individual provider legacy procedures that were consolidated to service sphere level in 2018. Therefore, the documented approach takes several forms including:

- Legacy Centre-level Policies and Procedures taking in the following service spheres which reflect the legacy quality-assurance guidelines³⁴ under which they were developed:
 - [College of FE](#)
 - [Training Centres](#)
 - [AES and Education Service to Prisons](#)
 - [Youthreach](#)
- CDETБ corporate-level quality-assurance strategies, plans, policies and procedures which take in how CDETБ [quality assurance governance structures and processes operate](#)
- Newer CDETБ policies, procedures and supporting documentation that apply to CDETБ service spheres
- CDETБ Programmes
- CDETБ Professional Learning and Development/Teaching and Learning resources.

Legacy Centre level Policies and Procedures

QA Legacy procedures for service spheres reflect their time and are being replaced with CDETБ policies and procedures over time, replacements are being produced through the collaborative processes under the CDETБ governance units.

Each of the five service spheres involved in direct delivery comes from different but equally valuable education and training cultures and traditions. This is due to their historical development and the '*raison d'être*' for each, which reflects the needs of the cohort of learners that each was established to meet. The approach to the development of quality assurance and associated documentation reflects this. It is also important to note that the legacy quality assurance procedures do not in general capture all aspects of practice in service spheres apart from training centres, where quality assurance procedures tend to be detailed and supported by a considerable number of operational forms and checklists.

³⁴ Issued by FETAC (now QQI)

All service spheres have overarching legacy QA procedures, with sub-processes, procedures and documentation which have been developed over time and are invariably consistent with the overarching procedures approved by QQI. The key features of the quality assurance arrangements in each service sphere are outlined in what follows.

Colleges of Further Education

The documented quality assurance system for colleges reflects legacy quality assurance agreements with QQI (formerly FETAC).

- **Key features of the quality assurance arrangements which apply to CFEs:** The overarching procedures focus on general policies and principles of good practice in many areas, which allow flexibility in the interpretation to meet local needs, but can lack detail in procedural areas in informing practice. The quality assuring assessment aspect are the most detailed
- College-level sub-processes invariably reflect the overarching procedures within colleges and give more detail on operational practice. They have been developed predominately within each college, which can give rise to some differences between colleges and can also reflect different faculty approaches
- Newer CDETБ policies and procedures, developed under CDETБ collaborative governance structures, are more detailed and apply uniformly to all colleges
- An emphasis on providing access to learners which recognises that particularly Level 5 FET programmes (PLC) offer an alternative route into further and higher education; teachers' qualifications and experience often reflect this
- Applicants to courses are assessed against the entry requirements for the programmes which they have applied for. Teaching staff are predominately qualified teachers who must be registered with the Teaching Council, which now requires specific teaching qualifications. Hiring and retaining industry experts often poses a challenge
- Multiple teachers/tutors deliver modules on a course, which made up of 8 modules+ leading to a full award or 2-year PLC programmes leading to other awards such as BTEC HNDs
- Assessments are locally-devised and subject to very detailed and time-intensive internal verification (IV) and external authentication (EA) at the end of the programme. They are usually not subject to formal peer review prior to being issued to learners, which reflect legacy agreements as part of national consultations which included FETAC (now QQI) and trade unions. Both IV and EA are conducted on a college-by-college basis
- In general, certification is requested in May to facilitate the CAO. Other certification periods can be utilised for non-PLC programmes and repeats.

Recent innovations include more development of industry-related programmes including pre-apprenticeship programmes, apprenticeships and traineeships, blended programmes, delivery of programmes outside of the academic year, increased access points and co-delivery between centres. Early access to External Authenticators was introduced in 2020, allowing teachers to send their assessment instruments to their EAs in advance of issuing to learners. There is a Quality Team in each College of FE with common ToRs for all service spheres. See [Link to short video](#) on this service sphere.

Training Centres

The documented quality assurance system for the Training Centres reflects legacy quality assurance agreements with QQI.

Key features of the quality assurance arrangements which apply to Training Centres:

- Overarching quality-assurance procedures with a focus on very detailed process maps. There is an emphasis on inputs and outputs which reflect a more ISO quality assurance orientation
- Sub-processes and procedures which are highly detailed and inform practice through extensive forms and checklists but can also be quite bureaucratic in nature. These apply uniformly to both Training Centres
- Newer CDETb-devised quality assurance policies and procedures which apply to Training Centres differ to the traditional style of QA procedures used in Training Centres
- An emphasis on providing access to learners who want to take up employment in a particular role and industry, referrals often come via agencies supporting job seekers
- Applicants are assessed against the entry requirements of the programmes for which they apply which are defined in nature e.g., set number of modules/credit value
- Instructors are predominately industry qualified and must have a qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications at least one level higher than the programme they teach onto reach that standard; many instructors have completed the Train the Trainer qualification
- There is one instructor per course, rather than a course team and courses can be short with a small number of modules or be delivered over several years with a significant degree of work-based learning, as is the case with Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeship programmes have more involved quality assurance processes as national programmes and are overseen by Senior Training Advisors

- Programmes were validated to include assessment instruments which had been centrally devised and are centrally held. All assessments devised were subject to peer review and authentication prior to being included in the central bank of assessments. However, the dissolution of the central curriculum development unit in FÁS when Training Centres transitioned meant that most assessment instruments predate 2014 and require updating
- Detailed procedures applied to the requesting of assessment instruments for assessment events including repeats and the overseeing of assessment events
- Training Centres put learners forward for certification at multiple points in the year, using all 6 certification periods
- There are mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating second providers, and these providers operate under the quality assurance system of the Training Centres.

Recent innovations and updates in Training Centres include updates to the quality assurance system to allow for locally-devised assessment instruments to be included in the central bank of assessments, and or dual assessment processes. New assessment instruments will be subject to external evaluation prior to inclusion in the centralised bank of assessments. Some bureaucratic elements of requesting instruments within the Training Centres were removed, but these processes have been maintained for second providers. There has also been a move to more blended course delivery as approved by CDETb. There is a Quality Team in each training centre operating under the ToRs for all service spheres. See [Link to short video](#) on this service sphere.

The Adult Education Service (AES)

The documented quality assurance system for the AES reflects legacy quality assurance agreements with QQI. See [Link to short video](#) on this service sphere here.

Key features of the quality assurance arrangements which apply to the AES:

- The overarching legacy quality assurance procedures are generally broad procedures focused on quality assurance processes and are not geared towards informing operational or day-to-day practice, except for the quality assurance of assessment procedures which is very detailed. The procedures also include detailed tutor packs which inform practice and include forms for evaluation processes to be carried out by tutors, which reflect the modular-based style of delivery
- Assessments are locally-devised and subject to very detailed and time-intensive internal verification (IV) and external authentication (EA) at the end of the programme

- IV and EA processes are often carried out in a centralised manner in each of the five AES regions, so learner evidence will be put together centrally where it will be subject to centralised IV and EA processes. This means that the same module being delivered across different regions by different tutors will often be examined by the same Internal Verifier and External Authenticator, allowing consistency of assessment to be the subject of review
- Newer CDETБ policies and procedures developed under CDETБ collaborative governance structures are more detailed and their application can require adaptation for use within a rolling-intake, part-time, modular-delivery style model
- The applicants' learning needs are assessed and courses are put together based on this assessment
- Courses will often be delivered as a small number of modules or one module at a time. As a result, delivery will not always involve a course team as such. There are exceptions to this which include ITABE and pre-college courses
- The AES put learners forward at multiple points in the year, often utilising the 6 certification periods.
- Tutors must have at least a Level 7 qualification on the NFQ but will often also be Teaching Council registered
- The AES has a stable cohort of part-time tutors which is supplemented by a panel qualified in a wider variety of areas to ensure that the service can maintain responsiveness and flexibility Tutors will often work across AES regions and within in grant-aided community providers
- There are mechanisms for tutors to share practice and resources across the different services
- There are mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating second providers, and these providers operate under the quality assurance system of the AES.

The Education Service to Prisons

The Education Service to Prisons (ESP) operates the same quality assurance processes as the AES; however, it can often deliver courses at a higher-level including degree programmes through the Open University. The ESP also works in partnership with Pathways, a CDETБ transition centre for newly-released prisoners. It also allows prisoners to complete courses which they began in prison. See [Link to short video](#) on this service sphere.

Youthreach

The quality assurance system for Youthreach reflects legacy quality assurance agreements with QQI). See [Link to short video](#) on this service sphere.

Key features of the quality assurance system which apply to Youthreach:

- The overarching legacy quality assurance procedures are generally broad procedures focused on quality assurance processes. However, the quality assurance of assessment procedures is very detailed
- More detailed sub-processes will apply in line with the overarching procedures and are generally applicable across all Youthreach centres; however sub-processes were developed at centre level and therefore give rise to differences. Mechanisms have been employed to review these at service-sphere level to achieve higher levels of consistency. Regular co-ordinator meetings occur at service-sphere level with the CDETБ Youthreach Co-ordinator
- There are well-established subject matter groups from across all Youthreach services that meet to share practice and resources with a view to achieving consistency and best practice across the centres
- Assessments are locally-devised and subject to very detailed and time-intensive internal verification (IV) and external authentication (EA) at the end of the programme. They are usually subject to formal peer review prior to being issued to learners, which reflect legacy agreements as part of national consultations which took place quite some time ago and included FETAC (now QQI)
- IV and EA processes are carried out at centre level. Results Approval Panels are held by the CDETБ Youthreach Co-ordinator at a service level with a selection of co-ordinators
- Newer CDETБ policies and procedures developed under CDETБ collaborative governance structures are more detailed in nature and their application can often require adaptation for use within a rolling-intake model
- Applicants are assessed for entry against pre-defined courses. Entry criteria are defined as applicants are generally of school going age 16-20 years old. There is a focus on giving learners a choice of modules and it can include, health and fitness, beauty, cooking, framing etc
- Youthreach learners can be put forward for certification at multiple points in the year
- In general, Youthreach teachers or resource teachers now require teaching qualification in addition to being Teaching Council registered as part of recruitment and selection procedures.

Corporate-level QA Strategies, Structures, Plans, Policies, Procedures and Processes

These apply at a corporate level and include plans, policies, procedures and processes which operate at CDETБ level including:

- CDETБ Policy and Procedure on CDETБ's approach to quality assurance, maintenance and enhancement and the development of CDETБ policies and procedures
- CDETБ Policy and Procedure on Programme Development, QQI Validation and Course Approval
- CDETБ Policy and Procedure for Centre Applications for Programme Modification/ Development and Course Approval
- CDETБ Governance Units ToRs and supporting documentation
- CDETБ Quality Improvement Plan and Progress Reports

Those listed above apply at CDETБ level to all CDETБ Service Spheres which are represented on governance structures.

CDETБ Policies, Procedures and Supporting Documentation that apply to CDETБ Centres

These are now developed under by the Quality Assurance Development Group (QADG) overseen by CDETБ's Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC).

However, some policies can apply to all services spheres, or one or more as specified and include those listed in the box below.

- [CDETБ Quality Teams Terms of Reference for Colleges/Centres/Services](#)
- CDETБ Policy and Procedure on Course Titles, Taglines and Descriptions
- [CDETБ QA Assessment Guidelines for Colleges of FE – Deadlines/Extensions/Repeats/Reasonable Accommodations and Supports](#)
- [CDETБ QA Assessment Guidelines for Colleges of FE – Suspected Academic Malpractice with Investigation Procedures](#)
- External Appeals Policy and Procedure
- CDETБ Admissions Policy for College of Further Education
- CDETБ Quality Assuring Assessment Policy and Procedures – for online/ blended delivery from 2020/21 onwards including using alternative assessment instruments (all service spheres)
- [CDETБ Quality Assuring Alternatives to Work Placement/Experience for online/ blended delivery from 2020/21 onwards \(all service spheres\)](#)

- CDETБ Blended Learning and Blended Programme Delivery Policy and Procedures, updated 2021 to take account of the establishment of Quality Teams and provision for online assessment (all service spheres)
- Policy and Procedure for Early Appointment of External Authenticator to review assessment instruments from 2020/21 onwards (all service spheres)
- Policy and Procedure for the development of Skills development Plans to provide for alternatives to Work Experience/Work Practice including work simulation. This included agreed and consistent assessment strategies and governance processes as part of FETs process to approve such plans
- Policy and Procedure for Online Internal Verification and External Authentication from 2021 onwards (all service spheres)
- Updated IV documentation and reports to take account of alternative assessment, from 2020/21 onwards (all service spheres)
- Updated Guidance and Reports for the External Authentication to take account of online processes and early appointment provisions, from 2020 onwards (all service spheres)
- Annual Monitoring, and Review Procedures for Course, Centre Quality Reviews which include the Results Approval Function updated and applicable from 2021 onwards and linked to CDETБ's institutional review (all service spheres)
- Policy and procedure for CDETБ Faulty-based Communities of Practice, CDETБ also supported a FET manager-grade CoP in operation since the Covid-19 crisis, which was reviewed in May 2021 with the report available.

This reflects a CDETБ-level approach to new policy and procedure development and is dealt with in more detail in the previous section on governance structures and related processes. Several of the more recent policy and procedure areas were subject to review in 2021 as part of annual monitoring and review processes. The early appointment EAs and the move to online IV and EA were considered positive, and learners confirmed they were well prepared for alternative assessments which protected academic integrity. This is dealt with in more detail under Objective 2.

CDETБ Programmes and Programme Modules

The development and modification of CDETБ programmes is overseen by the Programme Management and Development Committee (PMDC) as a subcommittee of the QASPC. CDETБ owns a significant bank of programmes which represents an organisational resource asset.

CDETБ has 216 programmes validated and accredited by QQI. However, some of these programmes were previously validated to CDVEC and some to FÁS, all of which are now owned by CDETБ. Newer programmes have been validated to CDETБ as a provider.

CDETБ programmes which can be delivered in Colleges of Further Education, the AES, ESP and Youthreach are stored on the CDU Moodle site³⁵ to which CDETБ staff are provided access. These programmes were mostly developed between 2009 and 2015 and led to QQI major awards divided as follows:

NFQ Level	Programmes leading to Major awards	Programme modules leading to QQI component awards
Level 6	43 programmes	323 modules
Level 5	69 programmes	429 modules
Level 4	15 programmes	99 modules
Level 3	3 programmes	74 modules
Level 2	1 programme	26 modules
Level 1	n/a	6 modules
Total	131 programmes	957 programme modules

The remainder of the legacy programmes, which were designed for delivery in the Training Centres by FÁS and inherited by CDETБ through an agreed process,³⁶ are held by the Training Standards Office for each of the Training Centres as they include assessment instruments as part of validated programmes unlike programmes delivered in other service spheres. A closed system is operated, with protocols for the secure holding and issuing of the existing assessment instruments known now as an Assessment Specification (AS). These have not been subject to any significant updates since the dissolution of the former Curriculum Development Unit in FÁS which developed them pre-2014.

A more integrated approach to programme development was demonstrated by CDETБ with two programmes validated to CDETБ that can be delivered in Colleges and were adapted for delivery in the Training Centres. The programmes are in Software Development and Computer Systems and Networks at level 5 in 2016.

³⁵ CDU Moodle Site curriculum.etbonline.ie

³⁶ The moving over of these programmes to CDETБ along with other ETBs occurred between 2016/17 and assessment instruments that were held on a nationally secured system were moved over to individual ETBs as per the transitioned programmes.

Newer programmes developed by CDETБ post the development subsequent implementation of the new QQI Validation Policy and Criteria in 2018 include

- Advanced Dance Studies, developed in conjunction with relevant HEIs and Industry, leading to a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate and both Irish and British industry-relevant qualifications
- *Fit for Life*, developed in conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society, leading to a Level 4 Special Purpose Award
- Auctioneering and Property Management Apprenticeship, developed in conjunction with industry
- Dental Nursing Traineeship (Higher Certificate), developed in conjunction with industry
- CDETБ also applied for differential validation for the new Level 6 Early Learning and Care programme.³⁷

Training Centres led the provision for locally-devised assessment for the development of new Assessment Specifications (AS)³⁸ as part of updated quality assurance procedures for Training Centres and involved extensive stakeholder engagement. These updates were proposed to the QASPC and recommended by this unit to the Senior Leadership Team and approved in May 2021. This will see the development of new AS as part of programme development in Training Centres. Moreover, there are agreed protocols with other ETBs about the sharing of newly developed AS as part of a closed assessment system.

Feedback from programme boards is positive about the delivery of new programmes; however, service-level reviews have highlighted the need to update legacy programmes leading to QQI awards.

Programmes leading to accreditation by other awarding bodies remain the intellectual property of those awarding bodies and are developed under their quality assurance systems. Furthermore, the appointment of 'certification centres' for other awarding bodies remains a system which operates between CDETБ centres and those awarding bodies and is not within the authority of CDETБ to appoint. There have been national discussions with other awarding bodies to move to a system akin to that of QQI in having bilateral agreements between ETBs as 'providers' and awarding bodies, but it would not necessarily cover programme development.

³⁷ [CDETБ engaged in a self-evaluation process of the shared programme and made appropriate updates based on consultation carried out under the oversight of the PMDC](#)

³⁸ To replace the legacy term of Assessment Instrument Specification (AIS)

CDETБ Professional Learning and Development / Teaching and Learning resources

PLD/TL resources are often in the form of videos and specific teaching and learning resources such as teaching materials and assessment instruments but do not include assessment instruments from Training Centres. The development of new resources and the facilitation of sharing resources from across CDETБ has been led both by the new PLD Co-ordinator working with the CDU Library that manages the Moodle site, and by the TEL Co-ordinator. In addition, resources were developed to support new processes as part of quality assuring alternative assessment, alternatives to work experience/work placement and online IV and EA processes.

Evaluation

There is strong practice in quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance at centre level, which has been evidenced through learner and staff feedback. The documented approach does not always reflect practice in this regard and reflects quality assurance for a diverse, multi-service and multi-centre provider and its development journey thus far, rather than statutory guidelines per se, although legacy procedures reflect legacy QA guidelines. This makes it quite complicated for the end-user, as old systems remain active while being replaced by new policies and procedures which are developed collaboratively with the intention of achieving a more integrated system.

The feedback from staff and centres is that the FET corporate level QA policies and procedures are sometimes difficult to find, difficult to understand and version control can be an issue; for example, new policies developed supersede legacy polies but both versions are in circulation at the same time.

What is clear from the feedback from service spheres is that collaborative approaches are favoured. There was also consensus across service spheres that they felt part of quality assurance policy and procedure development and recognised themselves as the implementers of CDETБ policy and procedure. This again reinforces the concept that service spheres are both contributors to and beneficiaries of the QA system, and ownership of the system is key to its success.

The communication of QA is also an important aspect to be considered in this section, and feedback attested that Quality Teams have been a particularly positive development and have the potential to be developed further. At centre and service levels, there are local processes in place for the dissemination of QA information.

Service-level reviews highlighted the need for targeted PLD opportunities for Quality Teams to further develop capacity and capability of members.

Meetings between the FET Unit and the Quality Teams to discuss issues arising worked particularly well since their establishment. The issue of quality assuring alternatives to work experience was subject to national agreements and was particularly complex. In response to this, upon issuing guidance, including in the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), clinics were established for Quality Teams to attend with centre SMEs to engage with the requirements and ask further questions. Answers were added to the FAQ document, and questions that required governance unit guidance were taken to the PMDC. Agreed directions and decisions were communicated to Quality Teams in a timely fashion. This reflects the importance of supporting implementation and embedding practice by allocating appropriate time for engagement and discussion with Quality Teams and linking governance and practice on the ground effectively. Feedback from staff at the online staff consultation event strongly attested to the positive impact of FET Unit as a source of support and as an example of effective collaboration.

Currently, CDETБ does not have an organisational-level learner handbook in place. This would be challenging considering the diversity of services. However, consolidated service-level handbooks with appendices which apply to different awarding body processes would be beneficial. This would also allow services to focus on what should be present as part of the learning experience within each service sphere, regardless of where the learners may be undertaking a course. The challenge of involving staff and other stakeholders in policy development work where they may have extensive duties already and other commitments was referenced under Objective 1b).

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Quality Teams at centre/service sphere level supports the development and communication of documented procedures
- Guidance documentation in the form of FAQs supported the communication of QA procedures
- Clinics with QA teams and teaching staff helped communicate and implement QA changes, e.g. quality assuring work experience
- Collaborative approaches across centres
- Update to the QA for Training Centres represents an important move towards a more integrated QA system across CDETБ
- The development of new policies and procedures has significant 'buy in' from service spheres.

Challenges

- Time constraints impact the availability of staff members to contribute to development work needed by working groups and committees.
- Different processes for different awarding bodies
- Complicated nature of QA documentation
- QA documentation being housed in various places and lack of version-control
- Need for more defined metrics as part of self-evaluation processes for centres/ services to measure themselves against
- Staffing levels in the FET Unit are insufficient to support the development and documentation of QA processes

Areas for Enhancement

- Develop consolidated service-level learner handbooks
- Establish a CoP for Quality Teams as a means to build capacity
- Build on the clinics for QA teams to include discussions on key areas, opportunities for collaboration and PLD
- Update the QA documentation for Youthreach and Adult Education Services and where appropriate bring greater alignment of templates, process, technology and tools used across the CDETБ
- Enhance the use of technology to reduce the administrative burden associated with QA procedures
- Create a one-stop shop on SharePoint for all CDETБ's QA documentation, information and updates
- Use the output from self-evaluation processes to inform the selection of areas for review to prioritise and support delivery more effectively.

Conclusion

There is clear evidence of extensive work being carried out in the areas of development as part of a documented approach to QA, based on the output. Feedback is positive about the level of collaboration involved in this work at all levels. Time and resources are relevant challenges to development in the area, as many staff take part in development work for the benefit of all on top of other duties. More provision needs to be considered for release and/or appropriate remuneration/compensation for staff to engage in such work. More resourcing of the central support services is required to support the extensive demands for development work.

With legacy procedures still in place and new CDETБ policies and procedures in QA in development, for the upmost clarity it would be important to express a general statement in the following terms:

In the event of any conflict between legacy service-sphere-specific QA policies and procedures and more newly-developed CDETБ policies and procedures, the latter will prevail.

CDETБ would benefit from consolidating and documenting sub-processes more coherently for all service spheres. Collaborative practices are very developed in certain areas within certain service spheres, with Quality Teams working together at centre level to update and achieve greater consistency of QA practice. However, this practice could be strengthened and made universal across all service spheres.

The update to the QA for Training Centres is highly significant and represents an important move towards a more integrated QA system across CDETБ.

The development of new policies and procedures has significant 'buy in' from service spheres. The effectiveness of some of the more recently developed ones has been evidenced. Some of the older policies and procedures require review with QTs to examine if they are working as intended or if they require further updating and adaptation to be more effective.

CDETБ legacy programmes require review, and a more integrated approach taken to programme development for delivery across all service spheres. Review of existing programmes is dealt with in more detail under Objective 1d Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation.

The CDETБ CoPs which have been established on both a faculty (subject area) and role basis will assist in promoting teachers/tutors/instructors to collaborate in their subject areas and non-teaching staff e.g. Moodle Administrators and FET Managers on a role basis. Moodle Administrators and FET Managers. Output from self-evaluation processes and feedback from CoPs and QTs could also inform the development of resources. CDETБ would benefit from an agreed process to strengthen the quality assurance of resources developed. For example, peer review by SMEs not involved in the development³⁹ prior to publication.

The development of service-level learner handbooks for both learners and educators, would be beneficial. Handbooks could include appendices for inclusion or exclusion depending on diversity of provision of a centre within a service sphere. These would include highlighting processes for input from learners into decision making (learner voice) and what to do if something goes wrong. This process would aid in creating more consistency of approach in relation to sub-processes within service spheres.

³⁹ Independent subject-matter expert (SME) to the SME that developed the resources for sharing

More work is needed to ensure that all relevant policies, procedures, programmes, and resources can be accessed easily by staff in more user-friendly formats while ensuring version control is managed.

Learner Journey – QA Lens

1. Information to Learners on Opportunities in FET/Advertising CDETb Courses
2. Recruitment – Application process
3. Selection Process - Assessment of learner needs and course requirements/provision of guidance
4. Course Planning including assessment planning and learner supports
5. Admission/Induction/Assessment of learning needs
6. Course commencement/Teaching and Learning/Monitoring student performance/progress⁴⁰
7. Assessment/Feedback/Secure storage
8. Interim Course Team Review with learners on progress and performance/guidance
9. Improvements made based on feedback received/feedback to learners⁴¹
10. Teaching and Learning/Monitoring student performance/progress/guidance
11. Assessment/Feedback/Secure storage
12. Teaching and Learning/Monitoring student performance/progress/guidance
13. End of Programme/Examinations/Repeat where applicable
14. Recruitment and selection of External Authenticators
15. Internal Verification/Recording of Provisional Grades
16. External Authenticator / Awarding Body External Examiner Visits
17. End of Course Cycle Review - Course-level learner achievement / utilising data from relevant sources and feedback from relevant stakeholders
18. End of Course Cycle: - Results Approval Panel Meeting⁴² for Centre/College/Service Sphere, includes final Learner Results sign off to be put forward for certification
19. External Appeals Process
20. Learner Queries - dedicated personnel to respond to any issues in timely fashion
21. Learner Transfer⁴³/Progression within CDETb or to further/higher education industry
22. Annual Centre/College/Service Quality Review– Quality Team utilising data from Course Reviews, EA reports, PLSS and other sources for Quality Improvement Planning

⁴⁰ Teaching/instructional approach modified in response where relevant in to monitoring activity feedback

⁴¹ Where improvements require changes to CDETb-level policies/procedures/programmes feedback can be submitted at this point to the CDU FET Development Unit or at the end of the course cycle

⁴² For some service spheres the RAP panel and Quality Review can occur at the same time of year

⁴³ Transfer can occur at any point in the course; however, progression is considered to occur after completion of the course

23. QIP and feedback on CDETb quality assurance procedures⁴⁴ reported to CDU FET Unit for collation and reporting to relevant governance units to identify trends/target support
24. New Course Development/Modifications to existing Course proposals/Processes at Centre/College/Service level arising from monitoring and review process (self-evaluation) to be approved by Quality Team
25. Applications to modify or develop new CDETb Programmes Development/Applications to deliver new courses to be submitted to the CDU FET Development for processing with CDETb Governance units.

4.4 Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Description

The area of public sector recruitment and selection of staff is highly regulated. Across all staffing grades, CDETb has a robust recruitment policy and procedure which is led at corporate level through senior management and the Human Resources (HR) department, in conjunction with the CDETb Board and centre leadership. The ethos is that appointments are made on merit and through fair and transparent recruitment processes. Recruitment processes in CDETb comply with employment legislation and follow best practice for public service recruitment. This is a highly regulated area informed by numerous circulars issued by the Department of Education⁴⁵. CDETb has dedicated webpages on its public website (www.cdetb.ie) which provide information about working with CDETb. Key documents are available on these webpages which provide interested parties, including CDETb staff and other stakeholders, with information on CDETb staffing, recruitment policy, job opportunities and candidate information.

The recruitment process for education staff is managed by the CDETb's Human Resources (HR) department and follows CDETb's recruitment policies and procedures. As part of CDETb's on-going staffing plans, centre and service leadership teams are required, from time to time, to identify new priority staffing posts within their area and the rationale behind the prioritisation. New posts require approval from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and SOLAS and this can determine how posts are to be filled. Where the filling of a posts is approved, HR proceeds with the recruitment process. The hiring manager with HR develops the role specification documentation and the job application form. Both documents require final approval before the post is advertised.

⁴⁴ Quality Teams can modify and improve centre level procedures once they remain in line with the agreed and relevant CDETb level policies and procedures

⁴⁵ gov.ie - Circulars (www.gov.ie)

The two exceptions exist to the above:

- where the role involves teaching a very small number of teaching hours which can include short-term cover this can be dealt with at centre level.
- the AES arrange and conduct their own recruitment for their part-time tutor panel. The rationale for this is the frequency and breadth of the recruitment drive involved is best managed at service level. However, it is conducted in accordance with agreed policies and procedures and under the oversight of HR. Recruitment of non-tutor roles remain within the remit of the HR Department.

The approach taken by CDETB to recruitment and selection when sourcing new staff involves established criteria for the role including specific qualifications and an ability to deliver utilising their qualifications and experience. For academic staff, there was a strong emphasis on qualifications in the subject area and industry experience for more vocationally orientated programmes. One of the key challenges in HR is that the department is still using paper-based systems which are very resource intensive and time consuming. CDETB will be the last ETB to move to the shared services platform and this will create more efficiencies for the delivery of these critical corporate services.

Colleges, Youthreach and the Education Service to Prisons now require new teaching/tutor staff to be registered with the Teaching Council and a teaching qualification is prioritised. In the review process, CFE management voiced concern about Teaching Council requirements for their service sphere as it can make it very difficult for them to recruit industry experts.

Training Centres prioritise industry experience, and a teaching qualification can include a 'train the trainer' qualification. Instructors are often highly-qualified industry professionals and are required as a minimum to have a qualification at least one level higher than the programme they are delivering.

In the Adult Education Service, tutors must have a Level 7 qualification in a relevant subject along with relevant experience but do not have to have a teaching qualification. While they are not required to be registered with the Teaching Council, many are. Teachers of ESOL are the exception as they are obliged to hold a recognised qualification in English language teaching.

The HR section has reported significant service innovations are part of their service-level review including a move to online processes including:

- online meetings
- organising online interviews and issuing, letters and contracts related to the recruitment and selection process electronically.
- Sick leave referrals with access to the relevant online portal provided online
- Provision of online training for new processes including a new online system for part-time teacher claims

New Staff Induction

CDETB operates a centralised induction programme for new teaching staff and is supplemented by service and centre specific inductions where the new staff member will be based and address:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Codes of conduct
- Quality assurance and pedagogical standards where applicable
- Accessing PLD, resources and support

Professional Learning and Development (PLD)

Once they are in their role, staff are encouraged to pursue PLD opportunities and further qualifications that will have a direct benefit to their area of work. PLD is offered in CDETB through a combination of CDETB- and centre-led initiatives. CDETB-led PLD is compiled based on consultation with leadership teams and relevant centre-based staff. The offering is reflected in a yearly calendar, which is issued at several points in the year. Access is voluntary and provided on a 'first come first serve' basis. Attendance is not currently tracked within CDETB, although it has been examined due to the size it is difficult to find an appropriate system to support such tracking without requiring additional resourcing. PLD is provided through:

- in-house delivery by internal or external experts
- recorded sessions and resource videos on the CDU Moodle site which can be accessed at any point
- external delivery by third parties either accredited or non-accredited⁴⁶
- Communities of Practice (CoP)/Professional Learning Networks (PLN)

All sessions are evaluated, and feedback is used to improve delivery on an ongoing basis.

The function of co-ordinating PLD across a provider as diverse and large as CDETB is a considerable undertaking. While CDETB has always run regular CPD for staff through its CPD calendar, it was only in early 2020 that a full-time PLD Co-ordinator was appointed in line with other ETBs. All PLD Co-ordinators are part of a national network and are cognisant of the SOLAS PLD strategy⁴⁷ in carrying out their roles. As outlined previously, a robust response to the PLD needs of the organisation was provided in light of the Covid-19 crisis due to the need to pivot work practices significantly and within a short space of time. Professional learning and development opportunities provided in 2020/2021 were informed by the commitments made in the CDETB statement of strategy and the PLD needs arising from the move to emergency remote teaching and learning.

⁴⁶ Funding of such initiatives are subject to an application and approval process.

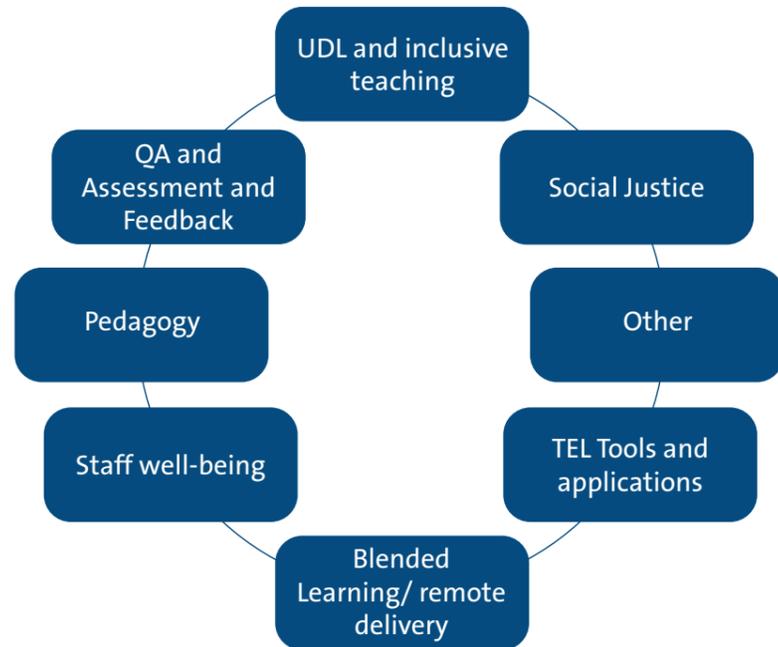
⁴⁷ [SOLAS | Learning Works](#)

The uptake of PLD from staff during the last 18 months has been phenomenal, and it has had a significant impact on both teaching practice and staff morale, particularly during the early and difficult days of remote delivery. The feedback reports from staff and learners available in Appendix 22 demonstrate this.

Overview of PLD offering from 2020:

- From April to July 2020, over 3,800 staff participants attended 23 online internal PLD sessions focused on pedagogy and upskilling in the use of TEL for teaching and learning
- 74 CDETБ staff were awarded the UDL Badge with AHEAD and UCD, of which 36 went on to complete the Facilitator’s Badge with staff upskilling in UDL principles and practices
- With new course cycles in 2020/2021, 1,218 participants attended 86 PLD sessions offered internally. There were 1,402 site users of PLD and teaching and learning resources in 2020/2021
- Over 100 staff were supported on externally accredited programmes through HEIs in the areas such as TEL, Programme Design for Validation, Change Management and RPL
- There are 46 Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Support (TELMS) mentors across the service spheres.

Figure 9: Themes addressed in Professional Learning and Development sessions 2020/2021



Further information on the diversity and impact of the PLD offering is summarised in the 2020/2021 report on PLD.

In addition to the extensive internal PLD offerings provided to staff, CDETБ demonstrated its commitment to staff development, inclusive education and embedding UDL principles and practice across its FET provision through the development of a new level 9 Postgraduate Certificate. This was developed in 2020/2021 with Trinity College in inclusion, diversity and learner support with funding made available for 35 CDETБ staff members to participate in its first iteration in 2021/22.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice have been established in 16 faculty areas over the past 18 months to support collaborative practice and informal PLD in teaching, learning and assessment. More information can be found in this [video](#).

Figure 10: Communities of Practice for FET educators



International benchmarking of practice and sharing learning is provided through the International Desk, utilising diverse sources of funding. International projects have provided significant opportunities for staff development in teaching and learning. Through these processes, CDET B has worked in collaboration with other FET private and public providers, such as Belfast Met and H2 Learning, to continue to examine models of good practice and use the learning to improve practices within CDET B. Many policies and procedures, models of practice and resources have originated from such projects, including [Blend4VET](#) and [TELMS](#), which supported CDET B's development of its policy and procedures on blended learning.

Evaluation

Recruitment

The level of recruitment activity in CDET B is immense despite a relatively small staff in CDET B's HR Department. The HR department is considered a key asset within the organisation and a source of significant support and expertise. The HR Department contributes significantly to quality in this regard. There are constraints as a result of the regulated environment which impacts on both the approval and timings of appointments and the procurement of expertise such as industry experts, due to qualification and pay barriers. Consultation with corporate services staff has also indicated a desire to hold on to innovations which have been achieved due to more online and remote working, while also requesting further examination of how processes can be updated and streamlined further in the interests of staff at both corporate and centre level.

Due to CDET B being a statutory body, recruitment is highly regulated, and appointments can take time, in particular where sanctions for new posts are required. In more recent times, there has been a move towards the creation of agreed centralised roles, such the PLD Co-ordinator and the TEL Co-ordinator. However, this approach assumes that all ETBs are the same size. For an ETB as large and diverse as CDET B, singular, uniform and centralised appointments are unlikely to be sufficient to achieve impact across the sector. Feedback from consultations with members of governance units/FET Manager CoPs and service-level reviews indicated the need for reciprocal posts at centre level in priority development areas including technical support staff to progress the development of TEL and blended delivery. These issues cannot be resolved unilaterally by CDET B and require collaboration with all relevant sectoral partners.



The AES service-level review reported that managing the recruitment processes for the tutor panel places a considerable administrative burden on the AES. The service formed the view that there must be a way in which it can be streamlined. More engagement with HR in is proposed by the service to examine this.

Professional Learning and Development

Feedback from both staff and learners about PLD, has been extremely positive and clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the response employed. The extent and diversity of provision clearly shows a strong commitment by CDET B to invest in PLD for staff in line with both national and EU level quality indicators.

79% of CDET B educators agreed or strongly agreed that appropriate professional learning and development opportunities were provided to support them with online delivery. In addition to the support of colleagues, staff also identified the important role of TEL mentors as a significant source of support to them in the move to online teaching.



Staff reported having benefitted from the support of colleagues through attending PLD sessions to maintain and develop connectivity which is reflected in the following:



This impact was also reflected in feedback from learners who reported improvement in their teachers' online teaching skills over the year. The responses were overwhelming positive, with many of the learners complementing the teachers for the work they put in and many expressing concern for how the changes must have been affecting them. However, some learners indicated that there was no improvement with some teaching practice and there was a correlation between this and staff coming from a low digital skills base in centres, and where there were multiple online platforms being used.

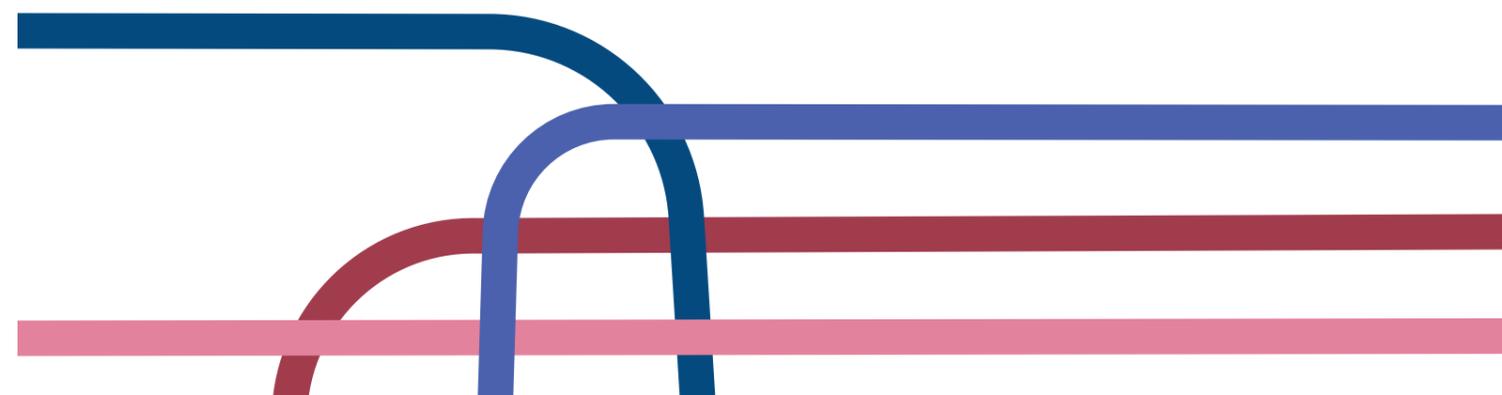
This feedback demonstrates the success of mentoring initiatives such as TELMS which uses a cascade model, by training teachers to be mentors to other teachers. It involves three stages:

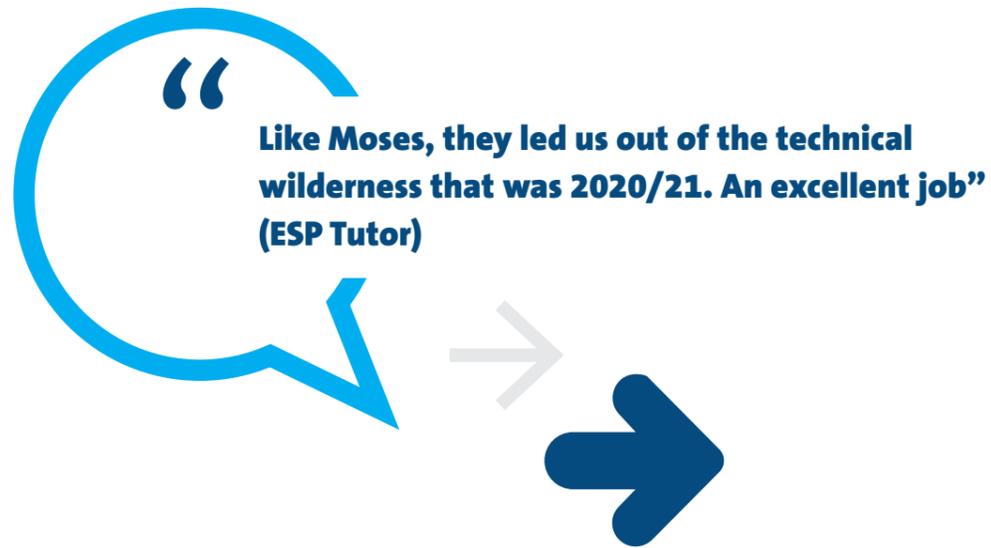
- The mentor will deliver a class for a teacher using a TEL tool(s),
- The mentor and teacher will co-delivery a class using a TEL tool(s)
- The teacher will deliver a class using a TEL tool(s) on their own

Initiatives such as this support the embedding of new practice and mentors remain available to teachers they are assigned to work with. The mentors also develop resources which can be accessed via the CDU Moodle site.



PLD provision was not limited to academic staff, and significant initiatives were employed with administration and corporate services staff, supported by the HR Department in the areas of online working.





The effectiveness of PLD delivery in the last 18 months has been clearly demonstrated. It is acknowledged that the needs of the organisation were unmistakably apparent due to the pivoting in delivery, and the PLD was devised in reactively, based on obvious needs. The flexible delivery model of PLD employed is a significant strength and there was consensus on the positive impact of the greater levels of access created as result.

Staff Management and Development

Service-level reviews explored staff management and development in more detail.

- Performance of staff is monitored by centre management. While there are collective agreements and regulatory processes prescribed where staff underperform, there is an absence of policies and procedures for feeding back more regularly on staff performance and using such processes to enhance performance
- Training centre staff generally, must avail of industry CPD to maintain their qualifications
- After 4 years, staff receive contracts of indefinite duration (CID) with the exception of teachers in Colleges of FE who receive CIDs at the end of their 2nd year. This can often little time to assess performance before roles become permanent
- All services reported at service/centre level, meetings, course reviews, continuous improvement planning initiatives are used to receive input into decision making in this area
- Emails, Moodle, Bulletins, Notice Boards are used to inform staff
- Communities of Practice and the TELMS (TEL Mentorship programme) were cited as very positive
- Blended Methodology with synchronous and asynchronous delivery was also considered very positive. This also allowed service spheres to arrange sessions as follow ups to asynchronous to reflect on and embed the learning
- Peer support/experts on staff was cited as a key source of PLD and support (connectivity) including TELMs mentors was cited.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Extensive PLD offering for FET staff available internally
- Availability of PLD recordings and resources through CDU Moodle site
- Significant commitment and investment in staff through funding/subsidising accredited qualifications offered by HEIs
- TELMS model highly effective in supporting staff to develop and apply new skills
- Establishment of CoPs for educators across 16 faculty areas
- Professional Learning Networks supported by the Psychological Services, e.g. Guidance staff
- Transition from paper-based systems to electronic systems in HR.

Challenges

- Delays in receiving sanction for posts impacts on CDETБ's ability to deliver its programmes and services effectively and to a high standard in line with its mission and objectives
- Shortage of administrative staff in HR places a considerable burden on recruitment and induction processes and systems
- More time needed to implement and embed what is learned before engaging in more PLD. The importance of follow on and support after PLD sessions was emphasised
- Staff not always aware of PLD opportunities, particularly funded and accredited PLD opportunities.

Suggested areas for enhancement

- Develop a PLD strategy for the organisation to include:
 - assessment of PLD needs of staff requires a more systematic approach
 - impact monitoring mechanisms for PLD as part of self-evaluation processes
 - application of TELMS model for cascade training in other areas of PLD
 - Strengthening of feedback mechanisms for staff, particularly new appointees.
- Targeted PLD offerings based on the outputs of self-evaluation processes and staff performance reviews
- Training and support for CoP facilitators
- Strengthening of feedback mechanisms for staff, particularly new appointees.

Conclusion

CDETБ ensures the appointment of appropriately qualified and experience staff and has effective systems for providing professional learning and development. However, the former can be strengthened by retaining efficiencies achieved through use of online systems and a further move away from paper-based systems. Corporate-level staff have indicated that a more in-depth review of work practices with staff would be beneficial for CDETБ in creating more efficiencies.

CDETБ is impacted by delays in posts being sanctioned which affects the provision of relevant expertise and support being available, be it centrally or at centre level.

CDETБ would also benefit from the development of national guidance on performance management especially for newer recruits, subject to discussion with relevant partners including national partners, as such guidance has not yet been developed in the sector.

In conclusion, PLD provision is effective and demonstrates a commitment to an increased investment in continuous professional development for staff, in particular FET educators. Not only is CDETБ performing well in a key area of QA, including the EQAVET quality indicator of investment in FET educator training, but it is also actively addressing its mission and strategic objectives.

4.5 Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

Description

Programme development is key to meeting new and emerging needs of learners and communities, which may also correspond with strategic agreements with SOLAS⁴⁸, and which reflect national and regional demand forecasting. The ability of CDETБ to update existing programmes and develop new programmes is key to meeting its mission and strategic objectives through delivering quality programmes which respond to the needs of learners.

CDETБ has a responsibility to directly manage and oversee the development of its programmes leading to QQI awards, including amendments and changes to its existing programmes efficiently and effectively. It is strategically essential that CDETБ has the capacity to develop its own programmes to respond to learner needs in Dublin City in line with its mission and strategic objectives. This resource bank of programmes is a significant resource asset for the organisation. It does not currently include programmes which lead to awards from non-QQI awarding bodies as they remain the intellectual property of the other awarding bodies and are shared with CDETБ centres subject to bilateral arrangements with the relevant awarding bodies.

⁴⁸ [14717_SOLAS_etb_city_of_dublin_web.pdf\(regionalskills.ie\)](#)

While CDETБ deliver programmes which lead to certification from a multitude of awarding bodies, QQI as an awarding body remains CDETБ's main partner. Of the total of 2,421 course offerings in 2020, 1,232 (51%) were QQI validated. Uncertified courses in 2020 totalled 989 (40.9%), reflecting the general education provision in the AES (including Community Education, which is typically non-accredited) and in the Education Service to Prisons.

Table 5: Source - CDETБ Provider Profile

Awarding Body	2018	2019	2020	
	Number of Courses	Number of Courses	Number of Courses	% of Total 2020
QQI-FE	1,521	1,334	1,232	50.9%
Uncertified Courses	1,348	1,194	989	40.9%
Pearson	83	69	64	2.6%
ICS SKILLS	63	49	25	1.0%
Department of Education & Skills	49	42	44	1.8%
Approved EN Certifying Body	25	27	21	0.9%
City & Guilds	19	12	5	0.2%
PHECC	13	12	8	0.3%
ATI	7	7	8	0.3%
ERS	5	8	8	0.3%
CITB (Construction Industry Training Board)	3	1	1	0.5%
MICROSOFT	3	1		0.0%
OFTEC	3	4	4	0.2%
British Horse Society	2	2		0.0%
CompTIA	2	3	1	0.0%
ITEC	2	2	3	0.5%
Dublin City University	1	1	1	0.5%
EASA	1	4	1	0.5%
Oracle	1			0.0%
Autodesk			1	0.5%
CISCO			1	0.0%
EHA (Environmental Health Association Ireland)		1	2	0.1%
GQA Qualifications			1	0.0%
University of Dundee		1	1	0.0%
Total	3,151	2,774	2,421	100%

This section addresses the programme management processes employed by CDETБ to formally modify, firstly validated programmes and secondly to develop new programmes. These processes are utilised where the curricula provided in existing CDETБ programmes validated by QQI do not meet the identified needs. However, now it is important to understand how the development of the two distinct governance processes arose.

CDETБ Programme Development, Approval and Validation – Background

CDETБ has been developing programmes for a considerable time, especially prior to the 2018 validation policy. The CDETБ legacy programmes developed pre-2018 were developed under previous programme validation agreements with QQI (formerly FETAC) leading to Common Award System (CAS) type awards. This accounts for the majority of CDETБ programmes.

CDETБ has a statutory responsibility to review and co-ordinate course delivery within Dublin City to meet the needs of learners. This responsibility considers demand and supply issues and meeting the evolving needs of learners in the City of Dublin to ensure positive outcomes for learners in progression to industry or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In addition, there is greater emphasis on more involved processes to assess the capacity of centres to be appointed as certification centres.

To maintain sufficient oversight, it was decided that all centres planning new course offerings regardless of programme or awarding body would be required to apply for approval so that delivery could be appropriately co-ordinated across the city. In 2015, several policies, procedures and initiatives were initiated in this area including:

- Policies and procedures on programme approval, validation and delivery were developed and issued. This included the concept of courses versus programmes, the former being derivatives of a programme
- A new policy on Course Titles was introduced to promote transparency and clear advertising
- A new approval process known as the FET process was devised for all new course offerings in consultation with the then FET Steering Group (now the FET Consultation Group). This process requires:
 - a solid rationale including how delivery of the new course meets strategic objectives and benefits the learner
 - a clear title which reflects the offering and clear progression routes
 - additional resources required for delivery including training needs
 - The new course offering cannot undermine existing delivery especially where investment and resources are based in another centre which has a track record for delivery in the particular area. This prevents duplication of resources and oversupply.
- A new approval process for modifications to programmes or to develop new programmes or CAS awards with QQI was established under the then Programme Management Committee (now the Programme Management and Development Committee)

- The use of modules in programmes without formal approval as part of remaining credit value was prohibited, unless already provided for within the programme.

As a follow up, a review process was conducted across all service spheres in CDETБ in 2016-17 to ensure that programmes were being delivered within validation agreements with QQI and that course titles reflected the offering to learners. This resulted in consultation and follow up with centres and service to ensure compliance was achieved. It was also used as a communication tool as it introduced new approval processes to a much wider cohort of staff across CDETБ. Applications in relation to (1) new course delivery and changes to existing courses and (2) developing new programmes PMDC processes arose from these reviews.

QQI Validation Policy and Criteria

The validation policy for Higher Education and Training (HET) and FET programmes leading to QQI awards came into full operation in 2018⁴⁹. The policy significantly adds to the transparency and objectivity of the process, and quality of the programmes. However, the process is more comprehensive and resource-intensive and impacts on the ability of CDETБ to be responsive.

The Validation Policy and Criteria also allows FET providers to develop programmes leading to non-CAS awards. This creates an efficiency in that a CAS award specification does not have to be developed first. This is a welcome flexibility as one of the downsides of the CAS awards is the rigidity they create for programme development, as programmes must be in line with very detailed award standards, which can date quickly. However, programme development leading to non-CAS awards is more demanding due to the lack of specificity in the award standards.

Programme Review and Evaluation

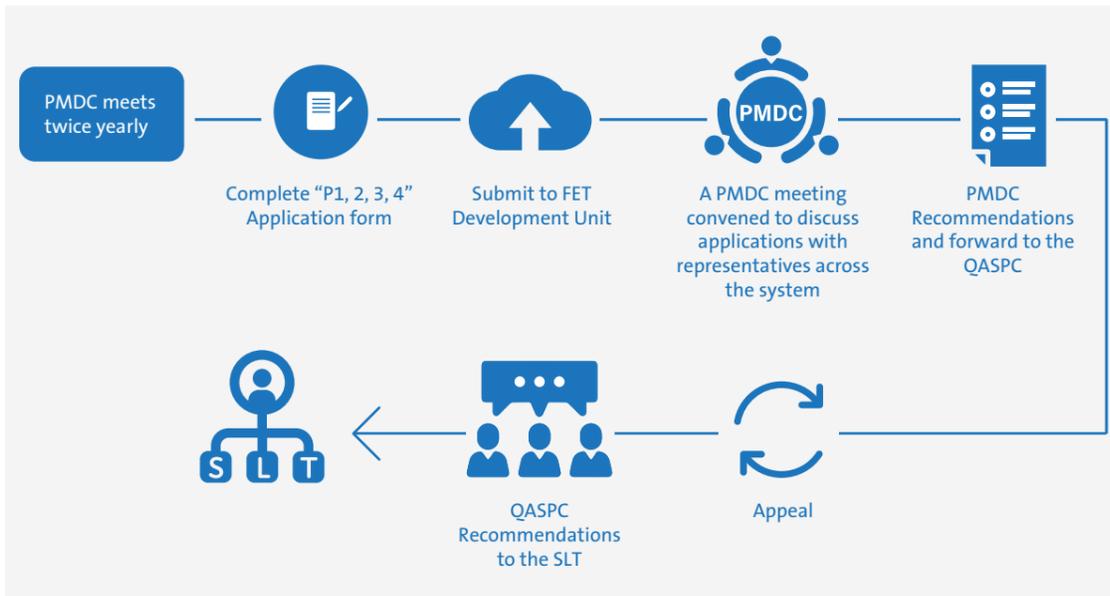
CDETБ legacy procedures prescribe in-depth programme evaluations every 5 years. However, this in general applied to colleges, centres, and services as providers in their own right. While courses are reviewed at centre-level, as CDETБ is now the provider it makes sense that in-depth programme evaluations for the purposes of updating/improving programmes would be conducted on a collaborative basis across centres delivering the programme. Where shared curricula are incorporated into CDETБ programmes, e.g. Early Learning and Care (ELC), programme evaluation is undertaken in collaboration with the national programme board.

CDETБ Programme Development and Modification Process

The procedure to develop or modify a CDETБ programme is overseen by the PMDC and is set out in the following graphic:

⁴⁹ [Application for Validation \(FET\) \(qqi.ie\)](https://www.qqi.ie)

Figure 11: CDETБ Programme Development and Modification Process



Type of Application	Forms
<p>“Programme/P Form” Applications will go to the Programme Management Development Committee (PMDC) for Consultation and Recommendations to FET Directors and QASPC.</p> <p>All PMDC applications can be submitted to the FET Development Unit at any time.</p>	
1. To modify an existing programme or programme module (within the *20% rule)	P1 Request to Modify an Existing Programme Module or Programme
2. To develop a new programme or programme module	P2 Notice of Interest to Develop a Programme Module or a Programme.
3. 20% Rule allows for modification of the programme by additions or corrections to content and/or adding modules to the programme under the additional 15 credit limit. (Applies to CAS legacy awards only)	NOTE: The Award as set out by QQI cannot be altered or modified in any way. See QQI.ie

The next section examines the P2 process of applying to develop a new programme.

Oversight of Programme Development (prior to submission to QQI for validation)

1. Request must be approved under P1 process above, which requires research and a strong rationale. This should be informed by identification of demand and relevancy to the needs within Dublin city
2. Once approved the FET Unit will work with the writing team. Specialist training is provided, usually through FESS unless the members already have expertise in the area
3. Progress is to be reported to PMDC
4. Self-evaluation occurs of the developed or developing programme. This involves external experts used as programme evaluators, who can be brought in at different points of the process
5. Once self-evaluation is complete and agreed updates are made, the programme is determined as ready for submission to the PMDC for final consideration and recommendation if appropriate. A key role of the PMDC is to ensure agreed processes for development have been adhered to and the programme meets QQI validation requirements prior to submission
6. Once recommended by PMDC to QASPC and subject to the final approval of the SLT the programme is submitted to QQI for validation within nominated certification centres where capacity and capability has been assessed as present at the time of submission.

In recent years, CDETБ has developed several programmes which were validated by QQI, namely:

- Advanced Dance Studies Level 6 Advanced Certificate and both Irish and British industry-relevant qualifications
- Health and Wellbeing (Fit for Work and Life), developed in conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society - Level 4 Special Purpose Award
- Auctioneering and Property Services Apprenticeship- Level 6 Advanced Certificate
- Dental Nursing Traineeship - Higher Certificate.

Programmes currently under development include a Level 3 Climate Justice programme, a Level 4 programme in Social Innovation in the Community, developed in partnership with Young Social Innovators (YSI), and a Level 5 Essentials for Remote Working, all leading to QQI non-CAS Special Purpose Awards.

Where there are co-design arrangements, there will be a persisting relationship following the validation of the programme, to include programme review and the updating of curriculum resources. YSI is a good example of this as the nature of the ongoing relationship is provided for under a Memorandum of Understanding.

Non-QQI Award Programme Development

Programmes leading to non-QQI awards are developed by the relevant awarding body e.g., City and Guilds. CDETБ therefore does not oversee the development or modifications of these programmes; it relies on the capacity of such awarding bodies to do so. These agreements are beneficial in that CDETБ can benefit from the resources, experience and quality assurance processes in programme development of the other awarding body in terms of programme development. However, as CDETБ is not recognised as a provider with many of these awarding bodies, each CDETБ centre must apply to become a certification centre in its own right to deliver these programmes, where they have not been nominated as such already. This can be a very onerous quality assurance process and can often carry the commercial pressure of a minimum spend which relies on enrolling a minimum number of learners onto the relevant course. Many CDETБ centres are already nominated centres for other awarding bodies which significant flexibility in selecting the most appropriate programme and accreditation for course delivery to meet the needs of learners.

Employer Engagement

In addition to the relationships with industry developed by centres themselves, the Employer Engagement Unit has played a key role in assisting CDETБ with identifying and addressing labour market needs by working closely with employers, CDETБ centres and SOLAS. CDETБ has increased the number of apprenticeships and traineeships in full-time and part-time programmes aimed at promoting labour-market activation for the unemployment including Skills to Advance programmes. The Employer Engagement Unit is a key centralised mechanism for identifying training needs in the labour market consistent with both European and national quality goals for FET, and support centres in making applications for new course offerings based on existing CDETБ programmes and in the development of new programmes aimed at industry. CDETБ is also represented at the Regional Skills forum which is also an important mechanism through which the regional needs of industry are identified with participating employers.

Arrangements in place to ensure Alignment with Strategic Goals / Regional Needs

Requests to Modify

Centres may apply to modify an existing programme (using the P1 form). While this usually means a request to add a programme module under the 20% rule⁵⁰, it can include requests to modify aspects of the programme within CDETБ's remit as a provider. The latter requests must be subject to consultation with other centres delivering the programme, where the modification has been approved, the programme/programme module has been updated and centres are advised. Modifications are currently restricted to what is provided in the award specification. Indicative content can be updated. However, where learning outcomes and assessment methods/techniques require updating but are specified in the award descriptor, this is outside the current remit of CDETБ to update.

Requests to Develop

In general, centres identify needs either through local and regional data or consultation with community or industry partners. The exception to this is where the Employer Engagement Unit or FET Unit apply as part of a CDETБ-led initiative e.g., Skills to Advance. Where the centre/service identifies a need for which there is not a suitable CDETБ programme(s) or one is not available through another relevant awarding body, this will result in a Request to Develop (P2 Form).

Applications to develop are currently decided against the following broad strategic areas, to include:

1. legacy programmes which need to be revalidated (selection to be made based on certification data/degree of disparity with current industry practices/research/theories/models of practice)
2. developing new programmes for blended delivery. Converting a legacy programme to blended delivery is provided for under [CDETБ's Policy on Blended Learning](#) and delivery and is subject to approval under the FET process dealt with in more detail further on.
3. new programmes to meet the expected awards standards at levels 1-4 due to be published by QQI in 2022
4. new areas for programme development informed by local/regional data/expert reports/strategic performance agreements.

⁵⁰ 20% Rule allows for modification of the legacy programme by additions or corrections to content and/or adding modules to the programme under the additional 15 credit limit. (Applies to CAS legacy awards only)

While regional data is useful to inform the identification of emerging needs within Dublin city, local knowledge from centres about needs emerging at community level is also highly relevant. The latter are not always captured at the regional level but remain legitimate needs to be addressed by CDETБ. It is also important to recognise that regional data may identify needs; however, this is not always reflected by learner demand. For example, regional forecasting has previously identified labour market needs within hospitality, e.g. culinary arts. However, if CDETБ were to invest heavily based on this data alone it would end up with empty facilities as learner demand does not always correspond with labour market needs. The reasons behind this can be complex, however, one factor is that the terms and conditions associated with such roles are not always attractive enough to generate learner demand for the relevant qualifications. This is not something that cannot be addressed by CDETБ alone, within its remit as a provider of FET programmes.

Arrangements in place for Collaborative Programme Development

- New Programme Development
 - ETBs through sharing curricula for new programmes, the most recent of which was the new Early Learning and Care programme whereby CDETБ seconded a member of staff on a full-time basis to the writing team
 - Community providers through sharing curricula for new programmes. An MOU is to be concluded with grant aided providers in this respect to support re-engagement
 - Co-design with specialist groups –Industry/NGOs/community providers/regulatory bodies For example, the Irish Cancer Society and Young Social Innovators.
- Existing programmes
 - VEC sectoral shared legacy programmes can be shared; however, they will be subject to validation if CDETБ was not already validated to deliver the programme
 - Programme modules can be shared with CDETБ by another ETB where they have been developed under agreed sectoral processes within another ETB and CDETБ is validated under one of their programmes to deliver the module. The sharing can be subject to additional validation in the receiving ETB. A recent example of this is the Domestic Gas Safety supplemental award (PG24761) which was developed by Cork ETB and shared with CDETБ for the purpose of an application for differential validation. The sharing of Training Centre programmes and associated assessment instruments occurs through common and agreed protocols to ensure a closed system is maintained
 - Programmes can be shared with community providers subject to agreed protocols. For example, it must come within their scope of provision with QQI, and it must not undermine existing provision within CDETБ.

Modifying Courses

The process for requesting modifications to courses (e.g. making changes to course titles, mode of delivery, specialisms) is addressed through the FET process. Applications are typically made following analysis and findings from centre monitoring and review processes and must demonstrate how the new course proposal to strategic objectives/agreements of CDETБ and cite regional/local demand for the new course offering based on relevant sources of information/data to ensure alignment with strategic goals.

Due to the nature of legacy programmes, CDETБ centres can put together a multitude of new courses based on existing programmes without the need to update existing curricula. These new course offerings are subject to approval prior to being offered to learners, which is also in line with the QQI requirement to “*have procedures for coordinating provision at faculty (or equivalent) level and at college or centre (or equivalent) level for multiple programmes*” which are subject to “*formal internal provider approval processes against defined criteria*”⁵¹.

This is dealt with in more detail under [Objective 3 Programme Monitoring and Review](#)

Evaluation

Programme modification and development is a key function of quality maintenance, enhancement and assurance which allows CDETБ to continue to meet the needs of learners within Dublin City.

CDETБ has strong practice and considerable experience in programme development, including experience developed in new programme development under new policies. The new approach to programme development has significant benefits. CDETБ has utilised the flexibility of the non-CAS award programme development process to address gaps in the suite of QQI CAS awards. The programmes developed by CDETБ in the past four years have provided learners with qualifications and programmes which contribute to their personal development as well as to the overall social, economic and cultural development of the city. However, the benefits have come at the cost to flexibility and responsiveness, which are important attributes of a regional FET provider such as CDETБ.

CDETБ demonstrates a strong ability to engage in collaborative programme development as all new programmes developed by CDETБ under the new validation policy have involved strong collaboration with a variety of partners including industry, NGOs and other ETBs.

⁵¹ QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, Programme Development and Approval

CDETБ can develop different courses based on existing programmes without formally modifying or developing new programmes. It can also nominate certification centres based on assessing capacity. The FET process is an embedded process for approving centres for such delivery; applications must demonstrate how the new course proposal to strategic objectives/agreements of CDETБ. They must also cite regional/local demand for the new course offering based on relevant sources of information/data to ensure alignment with strategic goals. The level of applications for new course offerings every year in CDETБ is considerable and is dealt with in more detail in the section on Programme Monitoring and Review.

CDETБ has a strong track record in governance in programme management and development. This is particularly evident in the number of programmes successfully developed and validated in recent years across a range of award types and NFQ levels. The Programme Management and Development Committee (PMDC) has existed in different forms for a considerable time. It is an embedded governance unit. It receives and considers applications to modify and develop programmes and makes recommendations to the QASPC prior to submission to QQI for validation.

In the service level reviews, all service spheres reported strong awareness and adherence to CDETБ policies and procedures in programme development and validation, however they also reported that legacy programmes required updating. It was emphasised by the Employer Engagement Unit that it is a significant advantage that CDETБ is classed as a provider and can nominate certification centres, as it allows greater levels of responsiveness when utilising existing CDETБ programmes validated by QQI.

New FET programmes which have been validated by QQI under its recent validation policy have involved far more detailed documentation, which often includes programme specific quality assurance processes and programme specific resources including around workplace monitoring. This creates additional pressure on centres to engage in more demanding programme delivery while being limited to utilising centre-level resources only. If every new FET programme requires resources of a similar nature, it will take considerable time to update existing legacy programmes where revalidation is required without devolved responsibility. An institutional view is required to meet new demands in this area by creating CDETБ infrastructure instead of programme/centre specific infrastructure. For example, work-place monitoring and entry assessments in certain areas of learning needs could be a centralised function or semi-centralised. National programme boards for every programme also requires significant resourcing.

The emphasis on more holistic programme development can often fail to take account of part-time delivery, and the ability of learners to build up accreditation over time, thereby creating access issues for learners who cannot complete a full-time programme, often CDETБ's most vulnerable learners. This is particularly important when one considers that 60% of CDETБ's learners (over 40,000) are accessing programmes part-time. Both the AES and ESP have raised concerns about this.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- 22 staff members from CFEs, AES, ESP, TC and FET Unit have been sponsored to undertake the Level 9 Certificate in Programme Design for Validation with Maynooth University (in conjunction with FESS) since 2020. A number of those staff members have since been leading programme development initiatives in their centres/service spheres, e.g. on the Level 3 Climate Justice programme, the Level 4 Social Innovation in the Community and the application for differential validation for the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care
- CDETБ successfully applied for validation for a number of programmes from NFQ Level 4-6 which were developed in collaboration with partners in industry and civil society since 2018:
- Advanced Dance Studies, developed in conjunction with relevant HEIs and Industry leading to a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate and both Irish and British industry-relevant qualifications
- Health and Wellbeing (Fit for Work and Life) Special Purpose Award. developed in conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society, leading to a Level 4 Special Purpose Award
- Auctioneering and Property Management Apprenticeship, developed in conjunction with industry
- Dental Nursing Traineeship (Higher Certificate), developed in conjunction with industry.

CDETБ also successfully applied for differential validation for the new Level 6 Early Learning and Care programme.

Significant updates to CDETБ programmes were made to programmes under nationally-agreed emergency remote delivery arrangements because of COVID-19 restrictions to delivery and work-based learning. These included the provision of the selection of alternatives assessment methods/techniques and alternatives to work placement and work practice.

Challenges

- Programme Development leading to QQI awards is a much lengthier and more involved process now
- The delivery of new programmes is now much more involved as seen with the new Early Learning and Care programmes. Institutional capacity building of shared resources is needed if new programmes are developed in a similar fashion

- More defined criteria are needed for programme development approval informed by projections about needs within Dublin City. Increased connectivity between the Strategic Development Group and the PMDC was put forward as a recommendation as part of governance group consultation in this regard
- Legacy programmes (QQI) require updating and CDETБ-level co-ordination
- Lack of clarity about the interaction between the New QQI Validation Policy and CAS awards with detailed awards specification, which can significantly restrict, how quickly CDETБ can update out-of-date learning outcomes
- FET unit is not resourced sufficiently to meet the demands of programme development within the organisation.

Areas for Enhancement

- Upskill more staff in curriculum and programme development
- Build on the knowledge and expertise of graduates of the Level Certificate in Programme Design for Validation with Maynooth University (in conjunction with FESS) to facilitate programme development
- Updating legacy programmes.

Conclusion

CDETБ has a strong record of accomplishment in programme development, with robust and embedded processes for the formal modification and development of new programmes which are approved prior to submission to QQI. They are comprehensive, transparent, and objective. There are effective structures in place for collaborative programme development. CDETБ has also been capacity building by developing programmes under the new QQI Validation Policy and Criteria. CDETБ has strong practice of identifying new learner demand, engaging with industry and working with partners including other ETBs to continue to modify and develop its programme provision. There has been a decrease in programme development and significant programme updating activity for the following reasons:

- Under-resourcing in the FET Unit impacts the amount of support that can be given to centres to support programme development
- The newer policy and criteria for QQI validation differs considerably from the one under which legacy programmes were developed leading to CAS awards and require further capacity building and significantly more resourcing
- The new validation processes with QQI are more involved and lengthier

- Legacy programmes lead to CAS awards, which means the learning outcomes are specified in the award descriptors⁵². This specificity restricts updating the programmes leading to CAS awards, as updating learning outcomes specified in the award remains outside the remit of a provider
- Locally-devised assessments were not provided for within the QA applicable to Training Centres due to the nature of programme development which occurred under FÁS.

These issues have been ameliorated by CDETБ's ability to nominate certification centres under its own governance processes, to continue to develop new course offerings based on existing programmes, and the ability to convert them to blended delivery subject to 30% restriction for remote delivery⁵³. This includes the provision for ETBs to continue to share under legacy processes. However, legacy programmes need to be reviewed and updated in a more meaningful manner, to include updating learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

Capacity building will need to continue in new programme development. However, due consideration is also required to ensure sufficient flexibility is maintained as part of programme delivery while also meeting policy requirements, including different pathways and modes of delivery to future-proof programmes and support responsiveness.

It is also worth considering whether an interim solution to allow the updating of the curricula and assessments of legacy programmes can be put in place for the benefit of learners. Legacy programmes account for the majority of CDETБ programmes. If such updates require re-validation, it will be quite some time before programmes will get updated, and this has considerable implications for meeting the more immediate needs of learners. Developing institutional capacity to meet new programme delivery requirements, which reduces the need to provide programme-specific and centre-specific resourcing such as workplace monitors, would enable CDETБ to move towards more updated modes of programme delivery. Though this still takes time, it will expedite processes by achieving synergies and economies of scale. It may be timely for QQI and ETBs to consider trialling devolved responsibility under the new Validation Policy and Criteria to include agreed review models for updating legacy programmes without sacrificing quality.

Some of the updates made as part of emergency responses could be retained in the interests of greater flexibility to respond to learner needs. They are subject to robust governance, under Quality Teams and using early appointment of EAs.

Significantly more resourcing is required to engage in programme development and modification of the scale needed in this area, particularly through the FET Unit as the central unit which supports activity in this area.

⁵² Special purpose and supplemental awards are smaller, more focused awards and will contain at least one component award; however, usually they contain 2-3, whereas a Major Award will require at least 8 component awards as per its mandatory and elective specification.

⁵³ Dealt with under the FET process

4.6 Access, Transfer and Progression

Description

Access, Transfer and Progression “describes the pathways available to learners to enter and transfer between, and progress from programmes of education and training, which are the main route to achieving awards and qualifications”⁵⁴. Access, Transfer and Progression are processes where the knowledge, skill and competence are recognised, firstly for the purpose of commencing a programme, secondly to transfer to another programme and finally to progress to a higher programme. The definition of both transfer and progression for vocational education should also capture transfer and progression into the workplace and not be limited to the education sphere.

CDETБ operates oversight of ATP both through the FET process, and its policy on advertising of courses. Under the FET process, proposals from centres as part of new course offerings are examined, and this involves an examination of the target groups of learners for access and the curriculum. Additionally, there must be identified progression routes. All of these proposals are reflected in the proposed title of the course.

Access

It is clear from CDETБ’s Provider Profile that one of the organisations’ key strengths is that as an institution it can meet learners where they are at, due to the diversity of courses with flexible learning pathways from level 1 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). CDETБ also has an extensive network of access points across Dublin City including through collaborative partners who refer learners to CDETБ services.

All CDETБ validated programmes target specific learner groups with programme learning outcomes that reflect not only the programme content, but the needs and expectations of that target learning group.

CDETБ has established area teams using the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth UBU area-based profiling information, taking an example from the best practice model in the NEIC initiative as the basis for ensuring that all learners in the community are aware of and can access the full range of services. This area-based profile information will also serve to increase organisational knowledge and improvement of services. The CDETБ Patchwork to Network⁵⁵ report outlines this initiative in more detail.

⁵⁴ QQI ATP Policy Restatement available at [ATP Policy Restatement FINAL 2018.pdf \(qqi.ie\)](#)

⁵⁵ [CDETБ Report, From Patchwork to Network](#).



Case Study: Integrated Services Process in the North East Inner City

As part of central government-sponsored North East Inner City initiative (NEIC), CDETБ explored ways of improving the integration of CDETБ services including those provided through funded organisations – the AES and the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) – hours in cooperation (AES), second providers (TC) and targeted services (ESP), including specialist education provision for learners in homeless services, drug services and post-prison release provision.

This began with the development of an area-based team comprising senior CDETБ staff from across the various service spheres. Meetings of the North Inner-City Team (NICT) are chaired by a FET director, and it is serviced and supported by a member of the FET Development Unit. The NICT enables staff from across the service spheres to share, communicate, plan and develop collaborative responses to the needs of learners in the area. The NICT also functions as a sounding board and reporting point for the various supported service networks in which CDETБ staff are involved.

In 2018, the providers worked together for the first time to advertise courses and recruit learners collectively to reduce competition between centres and expand the choice of courses available to learners. This also involved particular centres agreeing to target specific learner groups, to provide particular courses or to change the NFQ level of the provision offered to improve progression options for learners in need of additional support. Youth services funded through CDETБ, who provide non formal educational opportunities to young people aged 10–25 years of age, were also part of this response. This involved the street outreach team working in the north inner city speaking with young people who were not in education, training or employment and linking them into the various options available. The review of this collaborate initiative was very positive both for the learners and the staff involved.

The structures that have been developed by CDETБ in the north inner city area have the potential to be applied across the city as a model of integrating CDETБ service provision and enhancing learner access, progression and outcomes.

CDETБ provides education services to learners in the Dublin prisons, enhancing their opportunity to access the labour market / progress to FE or HE. The AES provides a range of pre-college programmes to learners planning to progress to CFEs and TCs. It also works in partnership with both CFEs and TCs to provide in-course supports to learners on Level 5 and 6 programmes.

CDETБ also delivers FET programmes in specialist projects targeting people in homelessness, drug rehabilitation, asylum seekers and migrant workers and encourages engagement in education activities for the personal, social, and cultural development of the individual and their community.



Case Study: Neurodiversity Access to IT-Based Apprenticeship (NFQ Level 5) Coláiste Dhúlaigh

Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education (CDCFE) is one of the largest and longest-established CDETБ FET centres. It offers PLC courses at QQI levels 5 and 6 and at Higher National Diploma in a wide range of disciplines. This provides transfer options for learners between programmes at the same level using the QQI accreditation system and progression routes for learners inside the college as well as courses that lead to entry to universities and institutes of technology, with some courses gaining entry to second year. It also provides a range of programmes progressing to apprenticeships and employment.

CDCFE is located on four campuses – Coolock, Raheny, Kilbarrack and Malahide – and provides programmes delivered by a team of tutors dedicated to the highest standards of teaching and learning in a caring, supportive and friendly atmosphere. To remove barriers to access and participation, CDCFE provides a number of targeted programmes through its Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) or traineeship provision. One example of this is a VTOS course (level 5 – 5M0529) in Neurodiversity Access to IT which targets students who are neuro-diverse and need additional supports in accessing work placements who may wish to progress to third level or IT employment opportunities. The college works in partnership with a local social enterprise group called *Not So Different* in recruiting and supporting the students on this programme in work-based settings.

In line with CDETБ’s guidelines, this course advertisement outlines the entry requirements, course content and progression routes. See page 22 of the [brochure](#).

This case study demonstrates the need to formally and accurately assess the applicant’s learning needs prior to giving them a place on a programme so as to ensure it meets those needs. This includes reflecting the access requirements and procedures in the information provided to the public so that learners are empowered to make informed choices at the

outset.

There is an onus on a provider to assess the learning needs of an applicant formally and accurately prior to giving them a place on a programme to ensure it meets their learning needs. This is reflected in access procedures and in information relayed to the public so that learners are empowered to make informed choices at the outset.

Access procedures are set out in the legacy procedures for services spheres except for colleges of further education which were updated in 2016 as result of examination of the area by a CDETБ working group. They were updated again in 2020 to reflect legislative changes which applied to recognised schools under the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018, which was commenced by way of statutory instrument in 2020⁵⁶. One of the key changes enacted was that “*Schools will be required by law to accept all applicants where they have places and if there are more applicants than places available, selection criteria will be required.*”⁵⁷ CDETБ devised an admissions policy for colleges in 2018 and shared it with other ETBs through national collaborative structures. This policy is currently being revised to reflect all service spheres and recent developments such as the inclusion of FET courses on the CAO and English language requirements for FET programmes.

Service-level reviews with Quality Teams demonstrate that all service spheres use the following in their admissions procedures:

- All service spheres can take applications directly from learners or through FETCH which is populated through scheduling of courses through PLSS using the national course database. This application is used to assess needs/suitability including additional learning needs
- There is a nationally-agreed enrolment form for FET courses
- Applications are made by prospective learners which are used to assess needs/suitability, including additional learning needs. (This is an informal process in the AES)
- Applicants are assessed by reference to criteria. Applicants are informed of all relevant criteria to be applied to assess suitability/learning needs in person or via published centre-level material
- If the application is progressed to interview, this stage will be used both to further assess needs and suitability and to offer guidance in this respect. Both CFEs and the AES can provide access to guidance counsellors within their services
- The assessment of English Language is provided for
- Induction programmes, learner handbooks and information materials are provided at centre level. For an example, please see Pearse College.

⁵⁶ Legal advice was obtained and indicated compliance was required by Colleges of FE
⁵⁷ Education (admissions to schools) Act 2018 www.gov.ie

As per entry specifications set out in the programme descriptor, a learner will be assessed to ensure they have achieved the minimum **NFQ award level indicators** of the level below that to which they are applying, as set out in the relevant programme descriptors. In the Adult Education Service, an assessment of the learner's literacy needs determines what level of programme they are offered. The focus is on ensuring the learner is matched to the correct programme of education and training to ease progression for the applicant. When the course is leading to the higher levels on the NFQ, the processes become more formal.

For example, an interview within the AES can start initially as a one-to-one 'chat' to make the learner more comfortable so as to reduce the barrier to access. However, a more structured assessment of their literacy needs will follow. It is also important to make the following distinctions between how the assessment of learner needs/suitability is carried out depending on the service sphere, which reflect NFQ levels:

- Both the AES and ESP assess learner needs first, and then match a programme module or cluster modules to meet the determined needs. The latter is also restricted to the prison population or those who are on early release from prison and availing of the Pathways centre. Currently, CDETБ programmes and CAS awards permit certification to be built up in the form of components, which is fully utilised by these services to the benefit of learners. It is a key strength of the current system
- Youthreach centres assess suitability based on highly-defined service-level criteria. For example, the applicant cannot still be officially enrolled in a secondary school. This also reflects the nature of this service, as it is an alternative to secondary school. Trainees receive an allowance
- Both Training Centres and CFEs assess learners with reference to pre-defined criteria for the course(s) to which the learner has applied for access, reflecting that these centres deliver at higher levels of the NFQ. Entry requirements can be particularly defined for Apprenticeships, and this has precipitated the development of more pre-apprenticeship programmes to facilitate access, many being delivered by CFEs, demonstrating a more integrated system.

Funding for some services spheres, including second providers, can be linked to the recruitment of learners; whether this continues to be appropriate needs to be considered as part of quality improvement planning, in the interests of service spheres and their learners. Blended learning was cited in service-level reviews as a significant opportunity to offer more flexibility in learning opportunities. This is also recognised in CDETБ policy and procedure on Blended Learning and will be dealt with in more detail under Objective 2. Many centres have already been formally approved under the policy and procedure for blended programme delivery. The review of blended learning focuses on appropriate transitioning from emergency remote delivery to a blended approach subject to approval criteria.

Currently there is a statement on RPL in the legacy QA procedures. In practice, Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) is commonly used for access purposes. Where learners have completed the Leaving Certificate or a Level 4 programme, they are deemed suitable for entry to a level 5. RPL on formal and informal learning for access is also commonly utilised for mature learners.

CDETБ has a policy for advertising courses to ensure entry criteria are clear and new courses are scrutinised as part of the FET process. However, there is no CDETБ guidance material to inform consistent needs assessment, including through RPL and ESOL assessment to achieve a more robust institutional approach in the interests of learners, staff, and collaborative partners. The AES have developed a literacy awareness training programme to assist with needs assessments, and there is some collaboration between some CFEs and the AES within their region in learner supports. There is also a pilot underway as part of the new ELC⁵⁸ programme to develop more institutional capacity in needs assessment, particularly assessment of literacy and English language needs for entry and provision of learner supports, which utilises internal expertise under the CDETБ ESOL Development Officer and the Adult Education Service. This involves a common approach and the development of expert panels of assessors that can be selected by centres to carry out assessments. Inclusion on the panels will be subject to experience, expertise and training will support a common approach.

Transfer

Transfer between FET providers is facilitated mainly through the QQI certification system which applies to FET, allowing learners to achieve certification at minor-award level. This means learners can complete modules with several providers and be put forward for certification at different points and can accumulate credit value to achieve a major award. This is a significant strength within the system as it facilitates the RPCL across the sector.

Opportunities to transfer within CDETБ centres are facilitated within centres, particularly those delivering at higher levels on the NFQ. Where a learner finds a course is not suitable for them, they will often be offered a place, subject to availability, on another course within the centre.

Progression

Data on progression is limited within CDETБ as the PLSS system is only designed to capture progression within 4 weeks after completion. CDETБ awaits the outcome of data from the joint SOLAS/Central Statistics Office (CSO) initiative which aims to track FET learner progression using the CSO systems.

However, based on the national definitions and using progress in accordance with the NFQ, progression is generally achieved under national schemes or through collaborative arrangements which provide for learners to progress on to:

- FET programmes at a higher level within CDETБ or through another provider
- HE programmes
- Employment in industry.

⁵⁸ Early Learning and Care programme

Progression within FET Programmes

Owing to the diversity of learners in FET, it is important to recognise that the concept of progression should be more pluralistic and reflect the distance travelled for the learner or cohort of learners and recognise the wider benefits of education, as well as its impact on social, family and community life. For more vulnerable learners, completing a module can be a significant achievement and represent progress. CDETБ learners at lower levels of the NFQ will often progress from one course onto another at the same level, and those courses can include one or more modules leading to an accumulation of accreditation over time. Such learners can take more time to achieve enough accreditation to progress on to the next NFQ level.

Progression routes within CDETБ could be clearer and more streamlined for all service spheres and learners to remove barriers to access. This requires more collaboration to be facilitated across services spheres and centres. Progression into other external FET providers is provided for as part of certification and RPCL processes.

It is also a significant and welcome development that FET programmes are now available through the CAO.

Progression to HE Programmes

CDETБ learners avail of nationally agreed schemes for progression overseen by the CAO including the Higher Links Scheme (HLS). This allows graduates to apply for places in HEIs based on the results from their FET programme. Many learners avail of this, and it is successful in creating a clear progression route based on the learners' results. Other schemes involving universities tend to be quota-based schemes, thereby creating intensive competition among FET applicants for places. Places are allocated based on grades that have been converted into points using agreed formulas.

Progression from FET to HE has improved in recent times, with many joint national and regional initiatives in the area through a variety of fora including HEI⁵⁹ specific fora. Many CDETБ staff participate in such initiatives and advocate on behalf of FET graduates to improve progression routes. However, there is still work to be completed in this area, particularly with Level 6 programmes which do not provide any additional benefit through the CAO, while advanced entry is still mainly subject to bilateral arrangements with HEIs. Relationships with HEIs and the establishment of agreements tend to occur at centre level and can be involved and time consuming. Furthermore, formalising such agreements can be subject to complicated processes within the HEI governance structures. Decision-making about access will not always involve input from relevant academic staff, as was experienced in the Maths for STEM project. Where MOUs are concluded, they tend to be viewed as centre-based assets rather than whole-CDETБ-level agreements which apply across programmes and service spheres.

⁵⁹ Higher Education Institution. For example, CDETБ staff participate on Trinity College structures in this regard.

This can result in some learners having more enhanced progression routes in certain CDETБ centres than others despite being on the similar courses.

The presence of two different credit systems for FET and HE programmes and awards does not help the matter. This is most pronounced at level 6, where there are two awards on the NFQ:

- Level 6 – Higher Certificate (HE)
- Level 6 – Advanced Certificate (FE)

CDETБ is unique in that it delivers and is validated for programmes leading to both awards, or their equivalents. One of the fundamental issues is that, based on the credit system, the accreditation of learner effort is capped on an Advanced Certificate at a lower level to that of a Higher Certificate and prevents parity of esteem. The review of the two level 6 awards initiated by QQI is most welcome in this respect.

Progression to Industry

CDETБ has numerous industry-focused programmes that have been developed in consultation with industry, including but not limited to Apprenticeship and Traineeships. Where a course leads to a role within industry the pedagogy needs to reflect this in the practice and monitoring of work-based learning. Programme development is often more complex and resource-heavy while apprenticeships, as national programmes, also come with extensive responsibilities for the co-ordinating provider as they have responsibility and oversight of the QA for all collaborating providers. Employers also have a more onerous responsibility to the learners as employees. This makes such programmes very resource-intensive and learner numbers are often smaller. Such programmes were a common feature in the Training Centres, who have considerable expertise in this area. However, there has been more development of these type of labour-market-activation programmes in other service spheres, including Colleges of Further Education. PLC programmes can have an industry focus also, which is recorded as within PLSS. The AES also target workers with programmes delivered in the workplace, and both Youthreach and second providers cater for more vocationally-orientated learners through their programme offerings which lead to employment.

It is important to note, that many CDETБ learners already in employment will complete programmes on a part-time basis of long or short duration to develop skills in particular areas relevant to their work. The programme may not be at higher level than their highest accreditation already achieved, however it permits industry progression by keeping up to date or adding to their knowledge, skills, and competence.

RPL for Certification

While RPL from prior certification is provided for⁶⁰, CDETb does not currently provide certification for RPL of informal/formal learning in a widespread fashion. However, CDETb has participated in a national project with the Irish Defence forces (TOBAR) aimed at capacity building in this area.

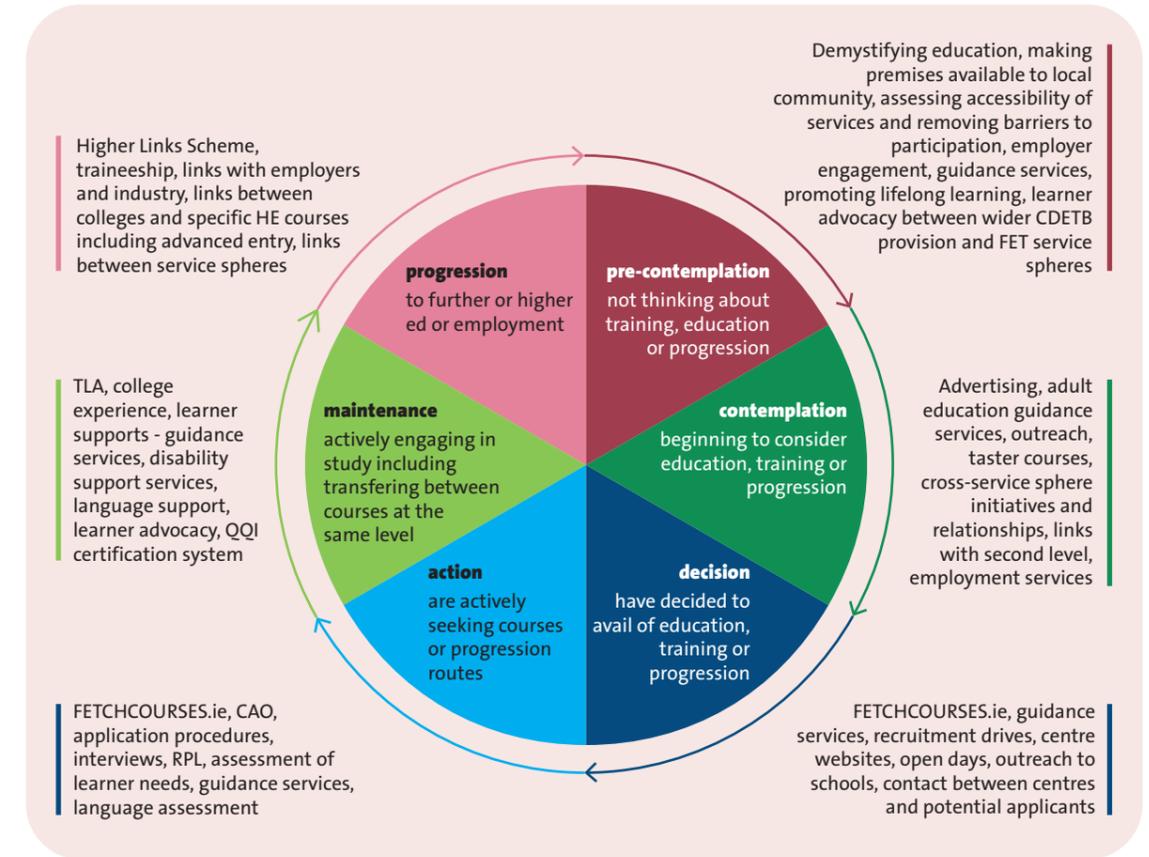
The Advanced Dance Studies programme in Inchicore College is an example of a programme which provided multiple access and exit points depending on the progression pathway sought by the learner. Learners can complete year 1 and progress to a HEI as a collaborative partner or continue and complete year 2 to achieve industry qualifications for the purposes of teaching. Applicants can benefit from RPCL to enter year 2 where they wish to pursue industry progression solely.

Evaluation

One of the key findings of the CDETb review process was that in delivering on CDETb’s mission to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of the city, centres were creating a desire in learners, especially in under-represented groups, to access education and training. Another was that the existing learner journeys in the legacy QA procedures that began with open days and advertising of courses did not capture the work taking place in the non-formal education classroom, where learners are being encouraged to consider progression routes that they would never have contemplated. To include that finding, the learner journeys that underpin CDETb’s QA processes were updated to reflect the pre-contemplation phase of accessing education/making a positive life change.”

60 QQI List of Exemptions

Figure 12: Access, transfer and progression in CDETb based on the Wheel of Change



CDETb has a strong practice in ATP, with an ethos of access and good examples of programmes with multiple access, exit and progress routes contained in one programme. CDETb’s greatest strength is that it has the capability to meet learners at any point in their learning journey, with multiple touch points through which learners can access. However, this is also CDETb’s greatest challenge, as the dispersed and fragmented nature of the centres and services can often make it difficult for a learner to navigate. In addition, learners will often be granted access based on where they apply and based on services available within that centre. There is also a balance to be struck between not creating barriers while also assessing needs effectively to ensure learners are placed on the course which is most aligned to their learning needs.

While there are common and agreed principles, their application can differ, and there is a vulnerability due to the lack of more detailed procedure in the area. Course-level criteria and the way learner needs are assessed can differ across centres, sometimes due to the module selection which can also differ considerably. However, it would be beneficial for more consistent practice to be developed in the area, particularly in RPL, for access and the assessment of learner needs.

In the service-level reviews, the AES highlighted that some of data required under the nationally-agreed learner enrolment form, including data from very vulnerable learners, is excessive and acts as a barrier to entry, particularly for vulnerable learners. Learners who rely on state benefits can be deterred when they have to provide their social security details to access education, including hobby courses. Where a course is in receipt of ESF⁶¹ funding this information must be collected for auditing purposes. Providing access for vulnerable learners is a key quality indicator for FET. The counter argument could be made that only through the collection of data can this be accurately measured; however, the section which collects more detailed data on vulnerability is optional and may not act as a barrier per se. However, it is worth noting that funding requirements to address social exclusion may themselves contribute to exclusionary practice.

As part of consultation with learners, feedback was clear that learners want easier ways to access information and services to address their needs and that course titles/descriptions should be clearer. Many learners indicated that they did not know about FET opportunities available to them, regardless of whether they were accessing FET as direct school leavers, through unemployment support services or changing careers. This is not unique to CDETБ; it is recognised as a national issue which is being addressed, for example, through the inclusion of FET courses on the CAO from 2022. Learners reported that making the decision to continue with education or to return to education was stressful, that navigating the options was difficult and that receiving the correct guidance in a timely fashion was essential. However, when they did make the connection with a CDETБ centre, in general they found the interaction very positive and supportive and felt more confident in their choices. It is not clear how many FET learners are potentially lost through these types of barriers to accessing services.

It is necessary to point out that as part of learner consultation, only learners that completed were consulted, and therefore CDETБ has a blind spot where it can see neither the views of those who left nor the reasons why they left. If institutional completion rates which were readily accessible are indicative, completion rates are strong; however, there is still a significant number of learners who leave courses early. It is essential this is the subject of research and review on the part of CDETБ.

From consultation with staff, frustration that many learners are left not knowing about their opportunities within FET and CDETБ was voiced. Staff were keen to see better messaging and branding at CDETБ-level to improve the situation. In addition, staff also expressed dissatisfaction with not always knowing the routes to access other services within CDETБ, which is not always clear or streamlined. However, there was universal commitment to more collaborative practice in this area which could be facilitated through CDETБ.

⁶¹ Economic and Social Fund

Transfers between providers work quite effectively due to the nature of FET certification and within larger centres such as colleges of further education where learners are also supported through guidance services. Transfers across CDETБ are more challenging and need further work to streamline.

CDETБ operates effective oversight to ensure courses provide appropriate progression pathways for learners, which are made clear through course advertising. However, learner feedback demonstrates that this can be improved further. Equally, more CDETБ-led initiatives to negotiate progression agreements would also be more beneficial. Certain service spheres have expertise in the creation of progression routes with external bodies, for example, Colleges with HEI and Training Centres with industry. As part of consultation with governance unit members, the extent of the industry contacts which Training Centres instructors have, was illuminated further as part of their review including the level of collaboration taking place across programme types to create placement opportunities for learners, and this was identified as a key strength within those centres. It would be useful to leverage service sphere or centre specific expertise in the creation of different progression pathways across all service spheres to the benefit of all CDETБ learners.

The service-level reviews identified the importance of cross-service sphere collaboration as key to access, transfer and progression.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Use of area team in north inner city creates clear pathways
- Strong learner-centred ethos
- Excellent relationships between individual centres and progression partners, e.g. HEIs, industry.

Challenges

- Information on course and programme offering
- Learners identify with centres, not the CDETБ – impact on access
- ATP arrangements at centre level
- Negotiating progression routes with HEI and industry
- Funding linked to learner enrolment is a potential risk.

Areas for Enhancement

- Communication of options available (course names, types of programmes available, progression routes, funding)
- Rollout of the north-inner city area team model to develop inter-centre/inter-service sphere collaboration to enhance and communicate pathways for learners
- Guidance and resources to support a consistent assessment of learners’ abilities and needs prior to beginning courses
- Increase in the flexibility of provision to encourage lifelong learning and support the workforce to access development opportunities relevant for changing social, economic, cultural and industry needs
- Strengthening and expanding corporate-level relationships with industry and employers to enhance access and progression
- Development of a CDETБ database of industry contacts under the remit of the Strategic Planning and Development Group.

Conclusion

There are considerable organisational strengths in the area of ATP including a strong learner-centred ethos which can be leveraged further. There are examples of good practice models as part of new programme development. However, it is clear from staff and learner stakeholder feedback that further work in raising both the status of FET and the profile of CDETБ and their services are needed.

It is also necessary for further research and development work to be completed in this area to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to assessment of learning needs and access, as the area is complex and subject to structural challenges, both internally and externally. As part of this, it is important for CDETБ to ensure commercial considerations connected to funding do not unduly influence and place unfair pressure on services when recruiting learners. To achieve this more collaboration needs to be facilitated by CDETБ-level structures through the formation of working groups with all relevant stakeholders represented.

CDETБ will be part of the national discussions on the inclusion of FET courses on the CAO which is timely in CDETБ’s development as an institution. The opportunities of a blended approach need to be appropriately leveraged in the interests of learners at all levels. Finally, institutional agreements for progression should be supported, and a common credit system between FET and HE is worthy of consideration as it could be an effective means by which to remedy issues of progression. This could not be addressed by CDETБ unilaterally.

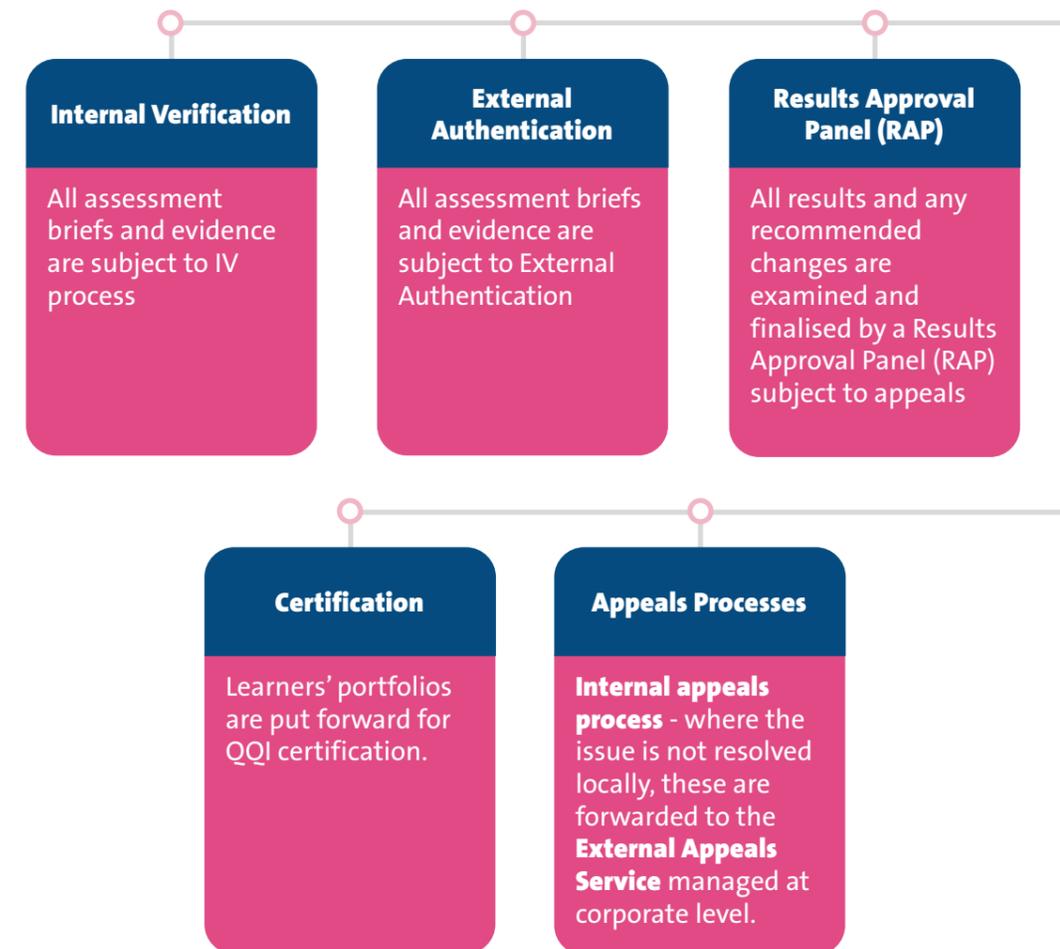
It requires national consideration. However, supporting collaboration and trust in the area across centres and service spheres would be beneficial to pool expertise and create a wider network amongst staff to share progression/placement knowledge with an aim to capitalise on social capital in the area of contact with a more institutional focus.

4.7 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

Description

The procedure to ensure the integrity of learner results for QQI awards is achieved in CDETБ through the process outlined below:

Figure 13: Procedure to ensure the integrity of learner results for QQI awards



Internal Verification (IV)

[CDETB's Policies and procedures on internal verification](#) are contained in legacy procedures per service sphere and were subject to updating.” Please keep the hyper link at the beginning of the sentence.

In general, Internal Verification processes are carried out at centre level. However, in the Adult Education Service IV is often undertaken by the same team in one region providing oversight at an area-level.

IV occurs at the end of a course once assessment has been completed. Internal verifiers check assessment briefs to ensure all learning outcomes are addressed and learner evidence is present, and that results are accurate based on the evidence presented. Where issues are identified, corrective action is taken by the teacher/instructor/tutor in conjunction with the learner where relevant. Internal Verification procedures were strengthened during the 2020-21 academic year to reflect the following newly developed policies and procedures which relate to all service spheres:

- Quality Assuring Assessment during Covid-19 Restrictions – for online/blended delivery including using alternative assessment instruments
- CDETB Quality Assuring Alternatives to Work Placement/Experience for online/blended delivery
- Policy and Procedure for Early Appointment of External Authenticator to review assessment instruments
- Guidance to Online IV and EA Process for CDETB Centres.

External Authentication

QQI defines External Authentication as the process that aims “to provide independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards”⁶²

The role of the external authenticator is to provide independent authentication of fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with QQI requirements and national standards;⁶³ it includes the following:

- Examining and evaluating all assessment instruments and marking schemes to ensure that the instruments meet the national standards of the award to which the module leads and that learning outcomes have been assessed via these instruments
- Ensuring Internal Verification has occurred and reporting on same

⁶² QQI, [Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, revised 2013, page 25](#)

⁶³ [Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators](#)

- Selecting a sample of learner evidence in accordance with the provider sampling strategy and moderating this evidence against the relevant standards. This may result in the EA proposing a change in grades awarded
- Liaising with Quality Teams and members of teaching/training/tutoring staff with requests for further information, and to discuss findings and provide constructive feedback
- Completing an EA Report which is furnished to the provider/centre.

CDETB in conjunction with Further Education Support Service (FESS) trained a new panel of External Authenticators (EAs) in 2019 to respond to the needs of CDETB centres. This panel was subsequently merged with the newly-created national panel hosted by ETBI.

External Authenticators (EAs) are selected by centres from a panel of subject-matter experts trained in accordance with nationally devised training programmes developed by FESS. EAs must be independent of the centre to ensure objectivity.

The policy and procedure for external authentication was strengthened prior to the May 2021 certification period, including the provision for conflict-of-interest declarations and additional protections for learner data. It was also strengthened to reflect the newly developed CDETB policy and procedures on Quality Assuring Assessment, Online IV/EA outlined previously.

PLD and accompanying resources and tools were provided to staff to facilitate the move to online IV and EA in the past 18 months. The TEL team provided guidance on online IV and EA and outlining models of best practice through the use of videos.

In 2020-1, guidance was issued to centres wishing to appoint EAs early in the assessment cycle. Many centres used it to support the integrity of assessment process on programmes where Work Experience was a critical module (e.g. Childcare), but where learners had been unable to complete the required work-based assessment due to creche closures.

All service spheres would also benefit from the practice of using common EAs across centres for the same programmes/modules. This model is being used for the new Early Learning Care programme pilot in CDETB taking place in three Colleges of Further Education.

Finally, CDETB has established several CoPs to facilitate collaborative practice across subject areas and roles. CoPs require appropriate and on-going support to be effective. This is dealt with in more detail under Objective 2.

Results Approval Panel (RAP)

The results approval process is a key stage in the provider’s assessment process and “ensures that appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment and authentication processes.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ QQI, [Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013, p. 28](#)

The results-approval process takes place following completion of the authentication process/ which includes the internal verification process and the external authentication process. The process must include consideration of the internal verification and external authentication reports. Results must be approved before being submitted to QQI, i.e., it is the responsibility of the results approval panel to agree that the results can be inputted into QQI's QBS system. It is for the RAP to consider any recommended grade changes by EAs. It will either hold these recommendations or not. There is also provision for a RAP to consult another subject-matter expert where there is disagreement between the teacher/instructor/tutor and the EA.

The RAP panel has an evaluative function and includes prescribing corrective action where appropriate.

RAPs are held at centre level in general, except for Youthreach, the AES and ESP who hold service-level RAPs. These centres also hold RAPs at multiple points in the year, using multiple certification periods. This also applies to Training Centres, however, the Training Centres hold RAPs separately. In addition to monitoring assessment, Finglas Training Centre will also hold RAPs for second providers to ensure the integrity of results for CDET B learners on programmes with second providers.

The RAP process was updated by the following in early 2021, prior to the May certification period:

- Annual Monitoring, and Review Procedures for Course, Centre Quality Reviews which include the Results Approval Function updated and applicable from 2021 onwards and linked to CDET B's institutional review (all service spheres).

In May 2021, many centres took the opportunity to take part in other centre/service sphere RAPs as observers.

External Appeals⁶⁵

Learners are notified of their right to have their exam script rechecked and to lodge an appeal to their overall grade. This is operated centrally through the CDU FET Development Unit and an external subject-matter expert is appointed to examine all assessment briefs, marking schemes and learner evidence. Invariably, the issue will turn on the assessment brief and whether the learner was given the appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their learning to the required standards, and if appropriate provision is made to achieve grading criteria.

⁶⁵ External to the CDET B Centres, the external expert is procured by CDET B centrally to review the appeal is independent [CDET B Policy and Procedure on External Appeals](#).

CDET B Oversight

CDET B oversight is maintained by attendance of personnel from CDET B FET Support Services and/or FET Directors attending RAP meetings at least once annually and generally prior to the May certification period, which has the highest volume of RAP activity in CDET B. The External Appeals service is also operated centrally through the CDU FET Development Unit. Moreover, EA reports are furnished to the CDU FET Development Unit, and a sample is selected every year. A report is furnished to the QASPC on the themes. Policies, procedures, and guidance documentation are updated, informed by feedback garnered centrally from EA reports and considered by the QASPC.

There was additional oversight in the last year of the assessment of alternatives to work experience because of Covid-restrictions. This included CDET B-devised assessment strategies which were utilised by centres to protect the integrity of assessment. Skills development plans were submitted by centres, many having availed of early appointment of EAs through the FET approval process to change the course offering to learners to offer work simulation. The FET Unit liaised extensively with Quality Teams about this initiative, which will be dealt with in more detail under Objective 2.

Non-QQI Awards

The processes to ensure the integrity of learner results for non QQI awards are subject to bi-lateral agreements between CDET B centres and those awarding bodies. In general, these processes involve a process for:

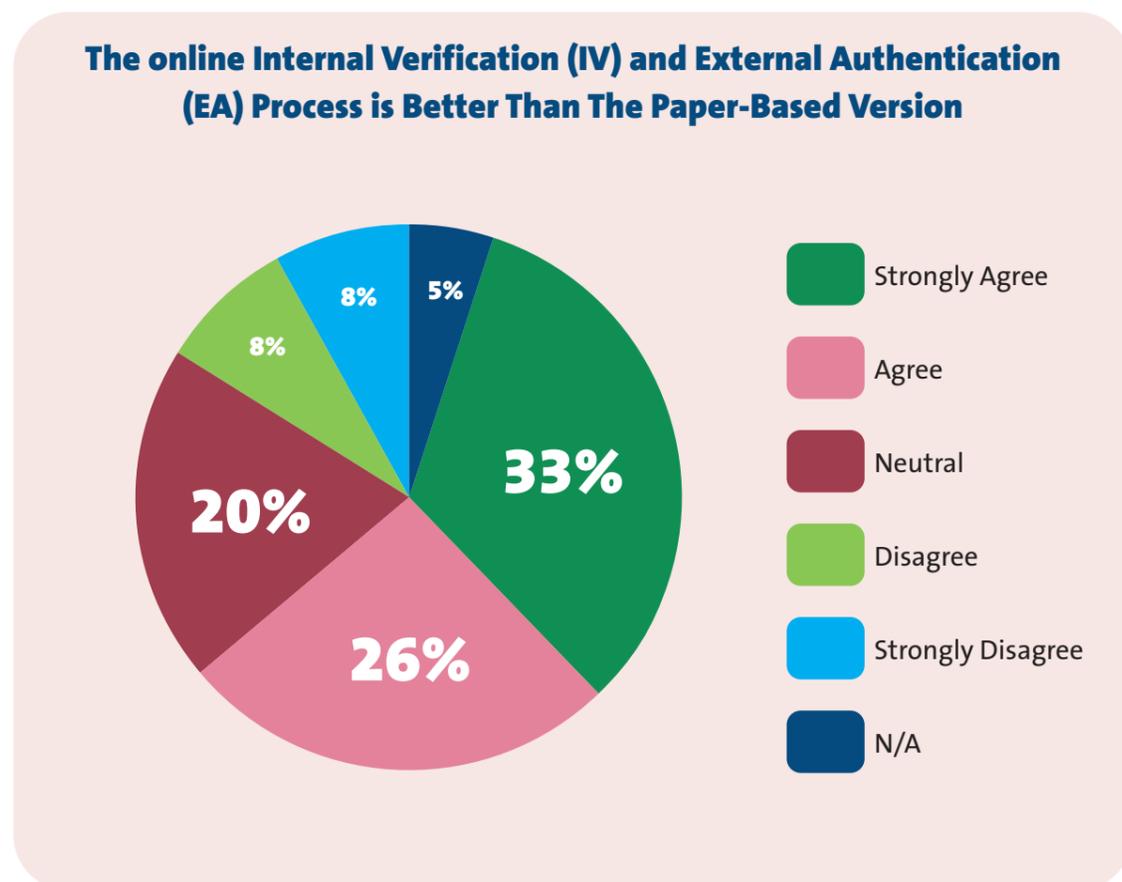
- Internal verification of learner evidence and results, often including the examination of assessment briefs prior to being issued
- External verification based on external evaluators appointed by the relevant awarding body who conduct site visits
- Inputting learner results into systems relevant to the awarding body
- Appeals processes at both centre and awarding body level.

Currently CDET B, does not conduct central oversight of these processes with oversight occurring at centre/sphere level. However, outcomes of completion, retention and certification are recorded on the PLSS system, including the provision for outcomes, where the information is available within four weeks of completion. This information is challenging to ascertain at institutional level for reasons highlighted already. Finally, Grade distribution data is not available to CDET B in a centralised fashion.

Evaluation

All service spheres deemed to be working well the decision making devolved to centres for quality-assuring assessment decision making. This area of QA has highly developed processes that are well embedded across CDETБ. Traditionally, the IV and EA processes are very time-intensive and involved and IV can often be more quantitative rather than qualitative, meaning feedback about practice can be limited. It was also cited as an issue as part of service-level reviews that feedback from EAs lacked detail and was not especially constructive. This may be attributed to the extensive workload of EAs during the May certification period and restrictions on pay levels.

Figure 14: IV & EA Process- Staff feedback



When asked in the staff survey about the online IV and EA processes, 59% of CFE teachers agreed or strongly agreed that online IV and EA is better than paper-based versions, with 16% disagreeing. Key reasons given for disagreeing included the nature of the award (art programmes, for example) and the IT skills of the staff member or the variety of platforms used in a particular centre. In addition to the central feedback on this, each principal/head of centre received the specific feedback of their own staff.

The early appointment of the EA introduced during 2020/21 provided staff with access to the EA in advance of issuing assessment briefs to students, thereby enabling them to get feedback at a more meaningful point in the assessment cycle. The updating of the EA reports permitted EAs to have examined assessment instruments earlier in the year and to provide feedback in that section of the report at an earlier point, while being able to complete the rest of the report at the end of the programme cycle as per normal practice. This was linked to the development of alternative assessment which will be dealt with in more detail in the section on assessment.

In addition to the early appointment of the EA, guidance on online IV and EA provided several models of best practice from across CDETБ, which were supported by videos created through the TEL Team and which significantly supported the initiative. The guidance also reflected the extensive PLD which had been delivered in the area.

The following emerged from the CDETБ staff survey:

- 59% agreed or strongly agreed online IV and EA is better than paper-based
- PLNs/CoPs/Mentorship⁶⁶ were identified as key supports by staff
- 48% agreed or strongly agreed Early Appointment of the EA worked well.

Through the service-level reviews, it was reported that teaching staff were more engaged and involved in the online IV and EA than the previous paper-based system.

The quality assurance procedures for CDETБ Training Centres were updated to provide for locally-devised assessment in May 2021, which represents a significant move forward towards a more integrated QA system. This was led by the Training Centres and considered and recommended by the QASPC and approved by CDETБ's SLT.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Strengthening of IV, EA and RAP procedures in 2020/21
- Guidance material, videos and PLD on managing online IV and EA
- Early appointment of the EA to support teaching and learning and enhance the feedback process from EAs.
- Locally-devised assessments
- Representation of FET Unit and FET Directors at RAPs
- Collation of EA and RAP reports centrally by FET Unit.

⁶⁶ For example, TELMS

Challenges

- Ensuring consistency of assessment for the same programmes and programme modules across centres and services
- Reliance on common assessment instruments can lead to deskilling or failure to develop skills in assessment
- FET Unit resourcing not sufficient to fully exploit the data returned via EA and RAP reports.

Areas for Enhancement

- Further extend and support the practice of locally-devised assessments
- Develop appropriate guidance material including guidance on UDL, supported by PLD
- PLD including the development of teaching and learning resources subject to independent peer review prior to dissemination/publication
- Provision for peer review prior to instruments being issued to learners
- Supported CoPs where teachers, instructors and tutors can share practice and resources
- Using common EAs across programme areas, centres and services, and capturing and disseminating learning
- Plan targeted PLD arising from analysis of issues raised in IV, EA and RAP reports.

It would be beneficial for self-evaluation processes in non-QQI programmes to take account of reasonable reporting as part of the output of these programmes, so that performance can be monitored and measured, and confirmation of any remedial actions required is provided for.

Conclusion

Current processes for the quality assurance of assessment are evolved and embedded processes with elevated levels of compliance. There have been significant innovations in quality assuring assessment and ensuring the integrity of results, and there is consensus that a good balance is being struck between centre autonomy and CDETБ oversight.

This can be further strengthened by CDETБ continuing to support the initiatives brought in this year in the area, to reflect all the learning in updated guidance material. Piloting a common EA across centres at programme level will provide meaningful feedback and develop CDETБ's capacity to ensure oversight of consistency of assessment. It will also serve to streamline processes and reduce the administrative burden on the FET Unit. Consultation with EAs on their experience could also be included in evaluative processes.

With further embedding of new initiatives and use of technology, further consideration could be given to streamlining IV and EA processes to ensure they are more qualitative and meaningful. This is important considering the time diverted from teaching and learning to carry out such activities. Finally, non-QQI programmes need to be integrated into RAP and Quality Reviews in a more consistent and coherent manner as part of monitoring, review including reporting activities across all service spheres/centres to ensure parity of oversight is achieved by CDETБ as a provider.

4.8 Information and Data Management

Description

In its [statement of strategy 2021–2025](#), CDETБ dedicated Pillar 4 (Processes) to focusing on Administration, Organisation and Support Systems, which includes information and data management systems. The CDETБ [annual report](#) and the [2021 service plan](#) outline both plans and developments in these areas.

CDETБ has multiple platforms for collecting data, including, but not limited to, systems for:

- Predicting funding needs and requesting funding
- Advertising and scheduling courses
- Local course application systems for enrolling and notifying learners with process updates and used to upload into centralised CDETБ recording systems
- timetabling of learners and for monitoring attendance/performance
- managing payments to learners where applicable and reporting on same
- recording early leaver, partial completer, full completer outcomes for learners
- putting learners forward for certification with relevant awarding bodies and recording grades (QBS for QQI, other systems for other awarding bodies)
- recording the placement of learners post completion
- reporting performance.

These systems create multiple streams of data both at centre level and CDETБ corporate level, which are subject to GDPR legislation. Systems such as MIT and VS Ware have different functions enabled in different centres, even in the same sphere of delivery. This makes the data from the systems more useful locally than centrally. CDETБ also accesses learner data through the QBS and the QQI publications and infographics.

For the purposes of self-evaluation, this section will focus on learner information and data management.

CDETБ uses a management information system known as the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) and data is hosted by SOLAS. The system allows for the sharing, collecting and use of the data system which has a number of portals, including the:

- National Programme Database (NPD) is a repository of FET programmes being delivered nationally. Programmes can be selected for scheduling purposes by individual ETBs at centre level
- National Course Calendar (NCC) for schedule of programmes based on the NPD
- FETCH is the front-facing website for FET courses which allows applicants to search, view and apply for courses online
- Learner Database is populated from FETCH online applications are transferred into the Learner Database. Further data entered at ETB level for enrolled learners creates a secure learner record.

Data from PLSS is used to populate the Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting System (FARR) to allow for reporting from learner to course to centre and to ETB level. The system is also very useful for auditing and reporting purposes such as ESF reporting and PLC returns to the Department.

The Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) as outlined previously is a key source of data, and both functionality and accuracy has increased more recently making it more useful to CDETБ. However, it also poses challenges, some of which are outlined a little later in this section.

Service-level reviews have indicated that the data collected is used in the following was for QA:

- Course reviews
- For outcome reports and to feedback to learners
- To meet data requests from Head Office
- For Audit Purposes
- Tutor Review Form and Evaluation Sheet (ESP)
- Service Analysis and Planning of provision and payment and repayments.

PLSS and both quantitative and qualitative indicators and sources of data/information have been set out previously. While there has been significant capacity built within the system already, and extensive training has been provided by the Data Analytics Officer. CDETБ centres also benefit from being able to submit queries centrally, which ensures consistency of advice.

CDETБ has a Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer. CDETБ manages data protection at corporate level and has published all relevant policies and procedures on its website, including the following:

- Data Protection Policy
- Breach Protocol
- CCTV
- CCTV Privacy Notice
- Privacy Notice – Students
- Privacy Notice – Employee, Board, Volunteer
- PLSS Data Protection Statement.

All queries about data protection are referred to this section in corporate services to ensure consistency in the provision of advice and decision-making. In addition to this, third-party processing agreements are recorded in Head Office. There is also a document retention policy operating in CDETБ. Data protection advice and training has been provided by CDETБ, and data protection was strengthened as part of online external authentication processes this year.

Evaluation

There is no shortage of data in CDETБ and the role of information and data within the quality assurance system is significant to inform decision making. However, the collection, management and sharing of data is a challenging area for CDETБ. Most of its systems were inherited from FÁS or the VEC or are developed nationally with different purposes. Ideally, CDETБ would like to harmonise its systems, which would improve efficiency and effectiveness, but this will take several years, involve multi-stakeholder agreements and cannot happen until the national developments for payroll and HR have been completed. The absence of systems that can communicate with each other places an additional administrative burden on staff and learners as the same information often needs to be requested and submitted several times. This is particularly true of learner data management. However, over the last number of years there has been significant investment by SOLAS in technology and data systems including PLSS, Moodle and the Microsoft suite. These have supported CDETБ developments in this area, which are reflected in CDETБ's annual report.

The PLSS system is designed to collect data from the different service spheres and diverse course types within ETBs, including CDETБ, in a uniform manner. While PLSS is a key data source for CDETБ at an organisational and centre level, it is difficult to determine what a single unit is or the ‘What is one?’ challenge for making meaningful comparisons for the following reasons:

- PLSS data is collected based on a calendar year. However, many of CDETБ’s courses are offered over an academic year or, because of rolling intake, will cross years and/or be delivered over multiple years
- Programmes of more than one-year duration are recorded as yearly, individual courses, although learners will not be put forward for certification in the first year
- FET courses within CDETБ are of different durations, ranging from several weeks to several years: one course could be for 35 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year, whereas another could be for one hour per week for six weeks. Both count as one course on PLSS in a given year
- The AES, ESP, Youthreach and second providers⁶⁷ funded by CDETБ through the TCs tend to operate rolling-intake models so learners can enrol at any point of the year. The AES and ESP will in general select modules to meet the needs of those presenting and will therefore tend to offer part-time module-based programmes, which could be limited to a single module. Learners in the AES and ESP will often complete a number of these part-time programmes over the course of a calendar year, creating a challenge on agreeing a shared definition of what is considered a course in these service spheres
- Although a rolling-intake model is used in both Youthreach and community-based second providers, they offer more defined programmes that are full time, so learners will often join existing cohorts of learners on the same full-time programme but be at different points of the programme
- TCs tend to offer predefined programmes on both a full-time and a part-time basis, and, while they do not operate on a rolling-intake basis, they do offer multiple but defined entry points during a calendar year. TC programmes can be very short or span multiple years depending on the learner cohort
- CFEs generally offer a defined number of full-time programmes over the academic year (September to May) and therefore cross over at least two calendar years, and programmes can be longer than one year in duration
- PLSS does not capture all CDETБ learners or capture them in their correct centre or service sphere, for example
- All apprenticeships are recorded on a national database and not on PLSS
- Traineeships, regardless of where they are delivered in CDETБ, must be recorded through the TCs due to the trainee payment system that applies
- Some degree programmes and part-time courses offered through evening schools in CFEs are not captured in PLSS as they are self-financing
- Programmes funded through other funding providers are not captured on PLSS

- Agreed protocols for when learners are removed from PLSS are not in place
- Centre staff remove learners from courses when their course is over. The end date for courses varies in the part-time rolling-intake courses, which are primarily delivered in AES and ESP.

While there is a dedicated Data Protection Officer at Head Office level, there is not a dedicated role in place across centres. The level of data collection is considerable and compliance with all regulatory and legal regimes is therefore more challenging.

The central function of data analytics is limited to one dedicated officer which is disproportionate for an organisation the size of CDETБ. One of the key issues reported as part of service-level reviews was the time and resources needed to collect, collate and interpret the data from so many sources. Tracking and monitoring learners after they have completed or left a course was identified as a challenge by centre managers but could be addressed if more resources could be secured.

PLSS is a system designed to create the uniform recording and reporting on a diverse range of services and it is both complex and limited in many respects. Therefore, it should be used with a degree of caution as the parameters set when requesting a particular report will dictate the accuracy of the information sought. The information from PLSS is most meaningful at course-team level and can be collated to centre level with the requisite knowledge.

The main issue for CDETБ is converting data into meaningful information which can be used to inform decision-making at the most appropriate level. The quantitative and qualitative indicators employed previously are highly relevant in this respect and could be converted into meaningful metrics to be used by CDETБ as part of self-evaluation and reporting process to aid centre leadership and CDETБ in quality improvement planning. For example, while the grade distribution statistics for CDETБ at institutional level are strong, it was clear at that module level some learner cohorts are receiving high levels of distinctions. This quality indicator needs to be examined as part of centre/service level self-evaluations, with further enquiry occurring and appropriate action implemented as part of follow-ups including supports such as PLD, where appropriate. This has been dealt with in more detail in other sections.

Service-level reviews have reported that this is a fast-moving area which represents a challenge for centre leadership and staff to keep up to date on and ensure compliance.

⁶⁷ Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives and Specialist Training Providers.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Dedicated Data Analyst as a central point of contact to all services ensures consistent guidance
- Training provided by Data Analytics Officer to centres
- Data is collected through multiple data systems.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Data management systems that do not interact with one and other:
 - Inherited systems at corporate and centre levels
 - Newly developing national rollout of systems
 - Different learner management systems in centres and service spheres.
- Limited personnel to collect, input and analyse the data and make it available to centres:
 - One data analytics person for the whole of CDETБ – to focus on corporate-level reporting, training of centre-based staff to utilise the data available and responding to local requests for data
 - Shortage of dedicated staff at centre level for collecting and inputting data onto PLSS
 - Quality of PLSS data heavily dependent on the process and personnel deployed for data collection and entry processes.
- Compliance with regulatory and legal regimes is challenging due to the volume of data and the lack of resourcing.

Areas for Enhancement

- Specific provision made at the point of enrolment/induction for learners to choose how their data is used after they are deemed to have left the courses (e.g. permission for CDETБ to follow up to establish their next steps, reasons for withdrawing early etc)
- Continue to modernise CDETБ's data systems
- Expand the research and data-analytics function at corporate level to support evidence-informed decision making and drive quality enhancement
- Centre-level/service-level roles for data protection and data analytics (subject to sanction)

- Provide CPD for staff at all levels in the use of data to inform decision-making and practice e.g.
- Using QQI infographics
- Using CSO data, SOLAS reports, skills shortage reports, etc. for course and programme development
- Interpreting staff and learner feedback for enhancing courses.

Conclusion

Data protection practice is supported at corporate level with both accessible and up to date policies and procedures in place.

The role of data in the QA system is developing, and capacity for both recording and using data is developing in a positive fashion. However, it is also important to recognise that caution is required in extracting data accurately for informed decision making. It is not the case that information is available at the touch of a button. In fact, a considerable care is required in compiling data to ensure it does not result in inaccurate conclusions. Increased resourcing in addition to guidance material and capacity building is required to promote the correct inputting, extraction and utilisation of data in quality improvement planning and organisational decision-making.

The area is closely connected to the use of metrics in self-evaluation to inform decision making. CDETБ as an organisation needs to clearly determine how it views success. Its view of success must be informed by its mission, values, strategic objectives, and external obligations and must respect the diversity and purpose of the different service spheres. When this is achieved, the use of data can be used more effectively to measure such success; however, it is clear that the sources of data are most meaningfully evaluated in the first instance at centre level and then reported on as part of self-evaluation, reporting and quality improvement planning which is level-appropriate.

Finally, there needs to be more provision for use of learner data, follow-up research for quality purposes and the provision of informed decision making and recording of same in circumstances where learners leave courses prior to completion.

The meaningful collection and use of data for monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision in CDETБ is discussed in more detail under [Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review](#), with recommendations in that section which will also enhance developments for information and data management.

4.9 Public Information and Communications

Description

As a public body, CDETБ is covered by the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In accordance with Section 8 of this Act, CDETБ publishes as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis and as part of normal business activities. This legislation applies at both corporate and centre levels. Websites and social media platforms are the primary way information is communicated to the public by CDETБ and its centres. The majority of centres/service spheres maintain their own websites, social media sites and related policies in line with CDETБ policies⁶⁸ and with the support of the relevant section of CDETБ corporate services.

The CDETБ corporate [website](#) is used for communicating to the public and gives an overview of the work of CDETБ. CDETБ is committed to providing accurate information to learners about their courses, so that learners can make an informed decision. This is reflected in CDETБ's policy on advertising courses which includes clear entry criteria. This policy was utilised as part of extensive course reviews which took place across services in 2015/16 to ensure compliance.

Links to the centre and service-sphere websites are also contained within the corporate website. Each website contains the relevant public information for that centre. This [link](#) will take you to a map of CDETБ centres including the second providers that are under the TCs' QA procedures. By clicking on a centre, you will be able to see the website for it. Many of the modes of communicating to the public including the recruitment of learners were outlined in Figure 12 in section F: Access, Transfer and Progression.

The CDETБ website also includes a quality assurance section with published policies, procedures and related documents. The reports from the Executive Self-Evaluation, QIPs and progress reports are also publicly available. This self-evaluation report and connected reports will be published to the website. The importance of this should not be underestimated, as publication of quality assurance policies, procedures and documentation highlights the extensive work carried out in CDETБ to ensure the quality of courses and related services. It also promotes public confidence in CDETБ and FET more generally. A nationally-agreed learner complaints process and form are available via the website to deal with grievances learners may have with services. The process is progressive in nature and provides opportunities for the relevant centre to communicate and remedy any issues in the first instance.

⁶⁸ <https://cityofdublin.etb.ie/policies-procedures/>.

At local level, service-level reviews reported that all course advertising is subject to vetting by members of Leadership/Quality Teams prior to publication. This includes publication on the FETCH website where all scheduled FET courses are advertised nationally using the national course databased, sign off is required and the members of staff who signed off are generally members of the centre leadership team. They are clearly identified through the database at the back end for CDETБ perusal purposes. The FETCH portal reflects nationally agreed generic statements about entry requirements, which are NFQ level specific and not particularly informative. However, they are supplemented by more course specific requirements at centre/service level within the actual provider.

The recruitment of learners and raising the profile of FET are key motivators for communication with the public this year in CDETБ. CDETБ drives advertisement campaigns led at corporate and centre levels on social media, in national newspapers, local radio and in other forums. Other centre-level communication processes include virtual and in-centre open days, recruitment fairs, local outreach with schools and community facilities, posters, websites, prospectuses, collaborative events with community partners etc.

The establishment of DFHEIRS and the availability of FET courses on the CAO website are positive developments in this area and will hopefully increase opportunities to communicate with the public.

Evaluation

When publishing QA information, the website could be made more accessible. Furthermore, some aspects are now out of date. It is also worth considering whether all the information on the website is necessary, for example the documentation for centres applying for new course approvals. Some documentation may be more appropriately stored on an internal platform for Quality Teams.

While CDETБ has processes to ensure course information and titles are accurate, feedback from learners suggests there is still work to be done to make course titles clearer, so learners could be more informed about what the course involved to assess if it was right for them.

Furthermore, it is clear that work is needed to develop and promote the CDETБ brand and corporate identity to raise the profile of FET and CDETБ as the statutory provider of FET programmes and services within Dublin city, in line with both the CDETБ mission and strategic objectives. It should improve access by informing learners of what courses and services they can avail of and how.

In addition, there would seem to be some tension between requirements under the Education Act (Admissions) 2018 enacted in 2019 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 as amended. Under the Education Act (Admissions), CDETБ would be required to enrol any applicant to a programme in a CFE as long as a place is available. This conflict between the need to enrol any applicant to a programme and the need to ensure that the programme is suitable for the learner have to be reconciled; CDETБ, as a provider under the aforementioned QQI Act, is required to accurately assess learner needs to ensure access to the appropriate programme is provided and that information to learners and industry partners is clear.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Considerable effort at centre-level to promote programmes and services and communicate with the wider public on the work of CDETБ.

Challenges

- Lack of awareness of CDETБ as a multi-centre provider among learners and of the wider programmes and services it offers
- CDETБ policy on Course Titles not being fully implemented across all courses/centres and impacts of the learner experience and outcomes
- Tension between the Education Act (2018) and the QQI Act (2012) regarding admissions.

Areas for Enhancement

- Enhance the accessibility of the CDETБ website
- Ensure course titles and information are clearly communicated in publicity materials and on public websites and communication channels
- Delegate oversight of the provision of information to learners at centre level to the Quality Teams and update the ToRs to reflect this
- Develop an internal and centralised platform for all QA related material for staff as a 'one stop shop'.

Conclusion

There is considerable provision made already for the publication of information including quality assurance information. It is clear from learner feedback that CDETБ must enhance its oversight of how information on courses is provided to learners to ensure that it is clear.

It is timely for the QA aspect of CDETБ's website to be reviewed, in line with other recommendations. This should not reduce public access to relevant material, rather it should seek to strike the balance more appropriately. The outcome of this inaugural institutional review will also be published on the CDETБ website including related reports on stakeholder consultation events.

4.10 Conclusion

There is robust evidence that CDETБ's QA system enables it to deliver effectively on its mission, values and strategic objectives, and significant work has been carried out in a relatively short space of time in developing and embedding ETБ-level governance structures which have overseen significant new policy, procedure, course, programme and resource development. This is testament to the presence of a vibrant culture of quality within the organisation which includes collaborative practice across the organisation and with external stakeholders. To further support good practice, CDETБ would benefit from strengthening its governance structures in the key areas outlined including increasing diversity, externality, separation between those who propose and those who approve and transparency for the wider staff cohort who benefit greatly from the work of the units. There are areas which require further consideration by governance units at CDETБ and Quality Team levels, including ATP with clearer course titles and consistent entry assessment processes, the review of programmes and provision for quality assuring and entering new collaborative arrangements. Some of these areas require further consultation with sectoral partners including QQI.

Strengthening the use of metrics and data in self-evaluation and decision-making in line with its mission, values and strategic objectives and obligations at all levels and would also be beneficial to measure success achieved by the organisation through its work. Finally, CDETБ would benefit from promoting the organisation, and its work including the diversity of programmes and services offered to FET learners within Dublin city. Utilising external expertise would assist greatly in this regard. Internally, one platform accessible to all staff for all QA related information, material and PLD opportunities would be highly beneficial and welcomed by all staff to be formatted in an accessible manner which is user-focused.

It is important that an appropriate balance is struck as to ensure the necessary level of autonomy remains at centre and service level in key areas with policies, procedures and approaches agreed within the governance units. For example, not every collaborative arrangement, or teaching and learning resource should be subject to individual approval through CDETБ governance units as this would significantly impact on service-level responsiveness.

5.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

5. Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

5.1 The Learning Environment

Description

CDETБ's 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'. Ensuring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) and the outcomes for learners and wider stakeholders are key aspects of CDETБ's QA system. Because of this, the primary focus of CDETБ's self-evaluation for the inaugural review was placed on the self-evaluation of TLA across the scheme.

The learning environments within CDETБ are diverse, reflecting the different service spheres, programme types and fields of learning. Different learning journeys which reflect this diversity have been mapped out and are available [here](#).

The quality of the learning environments is dependent mainly on the expertise of staff delivering programmes and related services, which includes supports for learners and access to resources.

Programme Descriptors and Programme-Related Resource Materials

Detailed programme descriptors are provided to all CDETБ educators as part of programme delivery and include detailed module descriptors, which contain indicative content and assessment strategies. The format of programme and programme module descriptors will differ depending on the body accrediting the programme. These documents are important resources that support educators and provide a more consistent learner experience across a multi-service, multi-centre provider such as CDETБ. Centres will often supplement these descriptors with service/programme specific documents and materials that have been developed by staff within the centre to support practice. Furthermore, significant work in recent years, facilitated through the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) Library/Moodle site, the PLD Co-ordinator and the TEL Co-ordinator, has been completed on the provision of additional teaching and learning resources available on the CDU Moodle site. A significant amount of these resources relate to TEL, reflecting the needs of the organisation in recent times.

Physical Learning Environment

CDET B provides a wide range of education and training to respond to both the needs of learners and those of the city. This provision is offered from over 60 centres across Dublin. Two centres are purpose-built FET training centres. Both TCs offer craft apprenticeships, night training and vocationally specific traineeships, one on the southside of Dublin City – [CDET B's Ballyfermot Training Centre](#) – and one on the northside of Dublin City – [Finglas Training Centre](#). The 13 CFEs operate from converted second-level schools; the Youthreach centres and Community Training Centres operate from a variety of locations including converted second-level schools, converted factories and converted houses. ESP operates in six training rooms in six prisons and its post-release centre operates from a converted factory in the NIC. The AES operates from local facilities all over the city, including converted second-level schools, community halls, libraries, community buildings and rooms made available in learners' own workplaces.

Each centre is striving to provide learner-centred, welcoming, accessible and high-quality facilities that are equipped with the appropriate technology available for its learners. The allocation of programmes to centres is governed through the FET process. Demonstrating that the centre can meet the specific requirements for the award is a key element of the FET application process. To provide teaching spaces in line with QQI award specifications and regulatory bodies, centres have developed purpose-built environments including science and technology labs, catering kitchens, beauty rooms, hospital wards, dentist rooms, gyms, animal grooming studios, hairdressers, dance studios and a variety of other industry-standard spaces.

Blended Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning

CDET B developed a policy and procedure for blended learning in 2018 and CDET B Blended Learning and Blended Programme Delivery Policy and Procedures are currently being updated.

This policy and procedures document was in situ prior to the Covid-19 crisis and the move to emergency remote delivery, provided for by QQI and other awarding bodies. The policy is strongly based on the QQI Topic Specific QA Guidelines on Blended Learning. It seeks to define blended learning within the context of TEL and provide for the conversion of legacy programmes to a blended delivery mode subject to a limit of one third being remote/online delivery.

Approvals for such conversions are subject to approval under the FET process and require the centre to achieve a certain level of capacity to deliver using a blended mode, including establishing a Centre TEL Team with defined ToRs which are common across CDET B. Conversion at the course team-level is subject to the oversight of the relevant TEL Team⁶⁹. There are also centre-level procedures for delivery, including provision for online assessment. Many centres and course teams have come through the process and have developed

⁶⁹ The TEL Team can be part of the Quality Team for smaller centres or be a distinct team for larger centres..

significant capacity in the area. Invariably, the online content and resources are created by CDET B educators and are programme- course- and learner-cohort specific, which demonstrates a considerable commitment to quality. The CDET B TEL mentoring 12-step programme is a significant asset for building capacity in this area.

In addition, a TEL mentor is available in every centre, supported by a TEL co-ordinator. Microsoft 365 and the Moodle platforms are available to staff and learners and Professional Learning and Development (PLD) upskilling opportunities are provided for staff in the area of digital learning. The additional budget made available by SOLAS in recent years is greatly enhancing CDET B's ability to equip centres and learners firstly to access appropriate technology, and secondly, through the availability of an enhanced PLD budget, to build the capacity of staff to integrate technology into TLA.

In 2020-21, the TEL Co-ordinator oversaw the procurement of 1,295 laptops/laptops and dongles for learners, alongside local donations of laptops, tablets, phones, and devices for loan to learners across the scheme to ensure as many learners as possible had access to an appropriate device to complete their course remotely. To ensure that staff had access to the technology they needed, 800 FET staff were provided with a digital device to assist their teaching and learning.

The Report on Professional Learning and Development (September 2020–June 2021) (Appendix 17) outlines the breadth of upskilling in TEL that has recently taken place in CDET B, the impact of that on TLA and how staff and learner feedback will shape PLD offerings. Arising from the review process, a PLD working group and a TEL-strategy working group have been established under the QADG to further develop both areas.

As CDET B was an early mover in the area of online and blended learning, many centres were in a strong position to leverage innovations and capacity building, which had already been developed prior to the blanket move to remote delivery in response to Covid-19 restrictions.

Blended learning and TEL is subject to a more in-depth review utilising the independent expert on the Inaugural Review Steering Committee and a CDET B working group lead by a member of the FET Development Unit. Feedback from centres suggests that the current policy and procedural area is complicated and difficult to navigate. It is also intended to use learner feedback on remote delivery to identify what worked, what did not, and what innovations should CDET B seek to keep. The purpose of the review is to improve the area by making it less complicated, and to provide more relevant examples and case studies of best practice to make the move more navigable. It is intended that this will allow CDET B to utilise what it has learned from emergency remote delivery, build on it and provide for quality decision making in the area, while supporting innovation at centre level in the interests of staff and learners.

Pathways Centre for recently released prisoners provides a useful case study by providing free sim cards and recording online sessions and content.

The ESP provided pre-recorded presentations and connected distraction packs for prisoners as they could not access the education service. The ESP are seeking to build on this learning to improve blended delivery going forward.

Communities of Practice, PLD and Teaching and Learning Resources

Communities of Practice (CoP) and Professional Learning Network (PLN) members engage in self-reflection and evaluations of their subject areas including their pedagogical approaches.

CDU Library

The CDU Library is a special lending library servicing the information and research needs of City of Dublin ETB staff, and associates of CDU-based projects and other staff engaged in educational research.

The library holds about 10,000 books and journals as well as videos, CD-ROMs and DVDs. It offers (within certain limits) a free book-purchasing scheme to CDETБ staff engaged in advanced study or research on the understanding that all such books will be returned to the CDU on completion of the study. The CDU catalogue is available online.⁷⁰

The Library Resource Centre is also the central point for the distribution of CDU publications, most of which are free to CDETБ centres. The CDETБ librarian works closely with the digital library project in ETBI, and continuing to update its catalogue and to work in partnership with the ETB sector in developing an online FET library is a priority area of work for the CDETБ library service in this QA cycle, enhancing the availability of journals and digital publications for FET learners.

The College Experience

CDETБ CFEs place a lot of emphasis on the out-of-classroom experience, recognising the availability of informal and non-formal learning opportunities, like participating in clubs and societies as contributing to the learning experience, developing the learner's social, emotional and leadership skills and contributing to wellbeing. The **CDETБ Sports and Cultural Council (SCC)** promotes and co-ordinates sporting and cultural events for all full-time CDETБ students. Sporting activities include a wide range of solo and team sports at both competitive and 'try-out' levels. Activities in the cultural area include debating competitions, workshops and exhibitions in music, film, theatre, dance, creative writing and art. A full calendar of events is organised on a voluntary basis by CDETБ teachers, and opportunities for participation are available to all full time CDETБ students. In addition, the Niall Smyth Memorial Bursary supports high achieving CDETБ students in their cultural and sporting pursuits.

⁷⁰ <http://curriculum.heritage4.com/>

Outdoor Education

Extracurricular activities such as sports are organised within centres. However, there are centralised services such as the **Outdoor Education Service** which operates through the CDU and provides significant opportunities for FET learners to engage in outdoor activities. The service also supports teachers with PLD in outdoor education to promote wider access for learners to outdoor pursuits and indoor activities such as climbing walls.

Work-based Learning

Specific monitoring and review arrangements are in place as part of programme specifications for programmes, which include a significant cohort of work-based learning, such as apprenticeships and traineeships. For Apprenticeships, the learning experience is also subject to monitoring by Senior Training Advisors to ensure work-based learning is of the appropriate standard.

For most legacy programmes validated by QQI, there are work experience and work placement modules which require a defined number of work-experience hours and a supervisor's report must be completed. The minimum numbers of hours to be completed is generally quite low for the work experience module and higher for work placement. The former will often be 2 weeks, although learners can undertake more than this, subject to agreement with their work-placement. The supervisor's reports constitute assessment evidence in and of themselves and are subject to marking by a CDETБ assessor based on agreed formula. While the latter is defined and prescriptive there can be an inconsistent approach by work-based supervisors in completing the report and CDETБ level guidance in relation to this is absent.

As part of delivery in the last year, there was significant work completed by ETBs (lead by CDETБ), culminating in a national agreement to address the issue of the lack of availability of or access to work-placements, while protecting the integrity of FET awards. The national measures taken were as follows:

- Career planning or personal and professional practice modules were delivered as an alternative to work experience/work practice modules at levels 4, 5 and 6 respectively for learners unable to complete a work placement
- Eligible learners were awarded credit through recognition of relevant prior learning where they had completed work placement requirements through previously certified programmes.

For the practice awards set out in the box below, additional measures were also put in place to ensure graduates attained the relevant practice skills to take up relevant roles in industry as 'new entrants':

- Level 5 Animal Care - 5M2768
- Level 5 Community Health Services 5M4468
- Level 5 Community Care - 5M278
- Level 5 Health Service Skills - 5M3782
- Level 5 Healthcare Support - 5M4339
- Level 5 Nursing Studies - 5M4349
- Level 5 Youth Work - 5M4732
- Level 5 Intellectual Disability Practice - 5M1761
- Level 4 Culinary Skills - 4M2063
- Level 5 Professional Cookery - 5M2088
- Level 5 Horticulture - 5M2586
- Level 4 Early Childhood Education and Care Support - 4M2014
- Level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) - 5M2009
- Level 6 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) - 6M2007

Each ETB was required to develop a robust process in line with the agreed measures. For the above listed awards, 'practice skills development plans' were put in place and were subject to governance⁷¹ and oversight processes within CDETБ, which included input from external subject matter experts. Plans included a combination of external work placement and/or internal work simulation to ensure all learning outcomes were achieved and relevant skills developed in accordance with the respective award. The full details of quality assurance measures put in place including policies, procedures, documentation, clinics and FAQs. This was an extremely resource-intensive process due to the extent of delivery and to protect the integrity of FET awards. It had to be addressed before CDETБ could begin its institutional review.

Work-based monitoring is part of the new ELC Pilot being put into operation across four Colleges of Further Education. Workplace monitors will be shared across centres and learning will be used for quality improvement planning and more extensive programme roll out.

⁷¹ The FET process was used supported by the FET Unit with oversight through FET Consultation Group. Every Skill Development Plan was subject to examination and oversight within CDETБ

Access to Resources

Access to resources is managed through systems that permit centres to apply for funding to upgrade buildings and communal spaces and to provide for programme specific resources. These systems are managed through corporate services in the areas of buildings, maintenance, finance including purchasing. Funding at ETБ level is sought through SOLAS using the Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting (FARR) system. This provides for projections for funding, based on course delivery and a business case request model for any additional funding required. Centre leadership teams identify resources needed to support a quality learning experience and make requests in the form of business cases using the relevant protocols through corporate services. Where this requires public procurement processes involving significant spend, it will also be overseen through corporate services.

Programmes validated by QQI often specify Special Validation Requirements (SVRs) which generally provide for access to prescribed resources to deliver the programme as validated. As part of applications for new course offering, applicant centres must specify how these will be met when they apply. As part of applications centres will also specify additional resources required and any addition PLD requirements to ensure the success of the new course offering.

Evaluation

Monitoring of the Learner Experience

The learner experience is monitored continually by staff on the ground from teachers/ instructors/ tutors/ learner support staff through to course co-ordinators and Quality and Leadership Teams. Service-level reviews by Quality Teams also reported mechanisms employed for obtaining learner feedback for the purposes of monitoring and improvement planning, such as class representatives and student councils. Training centres in particular emphasised the use of feedback from employers as part of monitoring the quality of the learning environment.

Formal monitoring and review processes are captured in CDETБ's policy and procedure on [Annual Monitoring, and Review Procedures for Course, Centre Quality Reviews](#) which include the Results Approval function updated and applicable from 2021 onwards and linked to CDETБ's institutional review (all service spheres)⁷². This provides for an examination of the performance of course delivery year. The importance of course reviews was highlighted by all service spheres. This year it also included appendices which provided for CDETБ staff and learner surveys, and focused consultation sessions with common themes and questions which were used by all service spheres. It is also included staff consultation events for L5/L6 Learners and L1/4 learners. This policy and procedure area does not currently provide for formal interim reviews so that feedback can be utilised for the benefit of same cohort of learners that provided it.

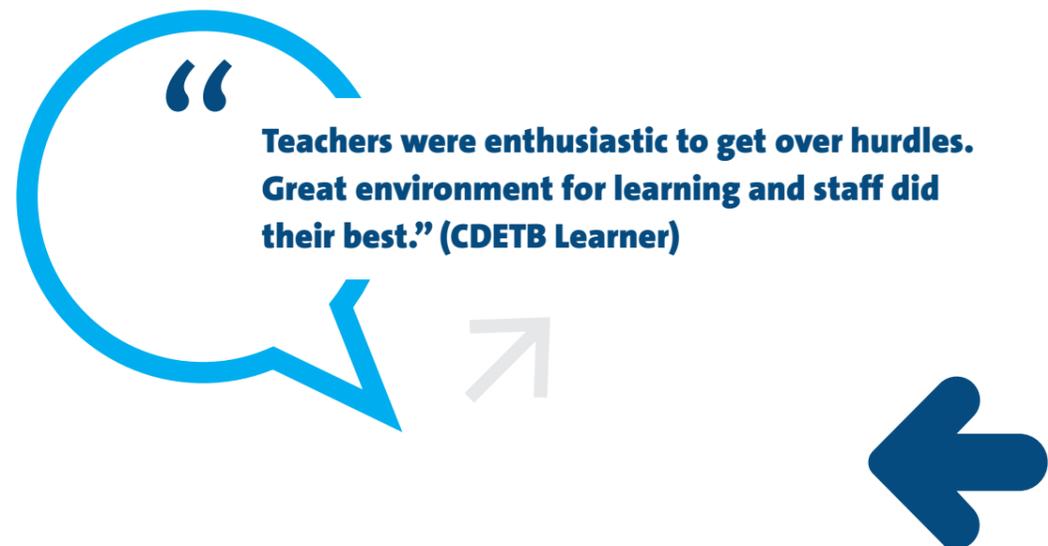
⁷² This is dealt with in more detail under Objective 3

Services spheres also emphasised the importance of the IV and EA processes as means of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. However, feedback on the lack of detail and engagement by some EAs was also reported, which caused disappointment with teaching staff as so much effort had been put into ensuring quality delivery on their behalf. A summary of findings from EA reports is also conducted centrally for reporting to the QASPC.

Learner feedback on the Learning Environment:

Technological Learning Environment

The feedback from learners about the learner experience within CDETБ was overall very positive and demonstrates a strong quality of service to learners.



The learner survey in 2021 asked several questions to check the effectiveness of the implementations of actions emerging from the review⁷³ of the impact of COVID 19 on teaching, learning and assessment conducted in 2020 whereby 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.

A significant majority of staff and learners reported that they had access to the technology they needed during the year:

- 85% of staff from staff survey agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to technology
- 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to the technology they needed to do their course with 7% actively disagreeing with the statement

⁷³ CDETБ Informing the future report

- 70% also agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to the equipment they needed to do their course with 11% of learners actively disagreeing⁷⁴ with the statement

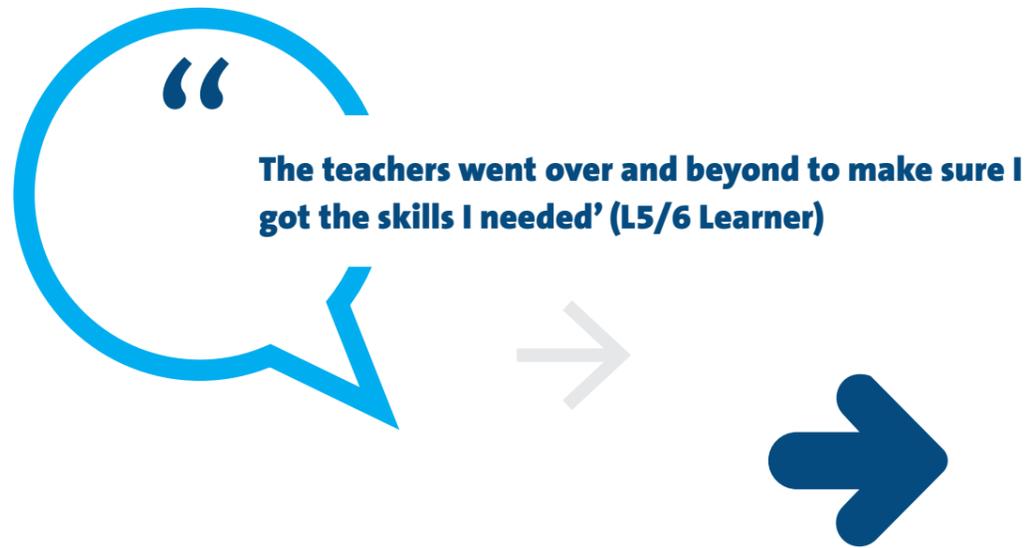


- 76% of staff responding to the staff survey agreed or strongly agreed that appropriate PLD opportunities were provided to support online delivery.



The impact of the investment in resources and staff development was felt by learners as the majority reported seeing an improvement in their teachers’/instructor’s ability to deliver online. Despite the challenges, they felt prepared for assessments and ready to move on to take their next steps upon completion of their course. Learners cited the support of teaching, training and tutoring staff as being key to their success.

⁷⁴ Students on courses that required access to specialist technology or equipment were more likely to respond negatively to these questions.



Older learners and learners with more responsibilities valued the flexibilities that came with online learning, including access to recorded classes or online materials after class.



Despite these endeavours to mitigate the issues with the online environment only 43% of learners agreed or strongly agreed that they had a lot of opportunities to interact with their classmates with 33% actively disagreeing with the statement. However, 63% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had had a good level of interaction with their teachers with 15% of learners actively disagreeing with the statement.

Learners also identified that the timeliness of the access could be improved. Only 50% of learners agreeing or strongly agreed that they think some online learning/learning from home should be kept as part of their course.

Social and Cultural Environment

While the initial motivation for taking up a course with CDETБ may be related to gaining a qualification or securing employment or promotion, the feedback from learners in May 2021 was that being on a CDETБ course was about more than that. Many of the level 5 and 6 learners felt that the college experience was diminished during COVID-19, that by not going into class they had missed interaction with classmates (81%), the college experience (69%) and social interactions (68%). Many learners at the cross-centre conclusion events also expressed surprise at finding out that their college/centre was part of a wider CDETБ family and that there were options available to them in other services spheres that they would benefit from. Learners at level 5 and 6, regardless of whether they were in a CFE or a TC, also saw themselves as college students and wanted the benefits that went with that title.

Many centres were very conscious of the need for learners to experience ‘college life’ and creatively devised a variety of events and opportunities to replicate social events that would take place throughout the year, including health promotion and well-being weeks and career weeks.

The Sports and Cultural Council plays a pivotal role in contributing to the “college experience” and non-formal learning opportunities for learners. While CFEs learners can avail of such opportunities and in doing so meet with learners from other CFE centres, there are limited mechanisms for learners from the other service spheres to engage with learners from other centres.

Work-based Learning

As part of service-level reviews, Quality Teams and learner consultations⁷⁵ the following findings emerged about work-based learning:

- The work experience module⁷⁶ involves experience of the workplace generally, rather than actual practice as it involves minimal contact hours
- More specialised and longer work practice is shaped by requirements of the programme and different service spheres e.g., work practice is longer and more programmes such as Traineeships and Apprenticeships will have long work placement built in
- The process to ensure the quality and relevance of work experience is weak and needs reform, except for that specified in the programme. Work experience is often a minimal aspect of a PLC programmes. Training Centres have the practice of following up with work placements and conducting site visits; however, the CFEs generally do not unless specified in the programme. YR and ESP do not generally deliver programmes which require work experience nor does AES; however, the AES does infrequently and, when it does, it is well-monitored

⁷⁵ The full reports from both events are available [here](#)

⁷⁶ Refers to CDETБ Legacy programmes which nearly all contain a mandatory module of work experience or work placement. The main difference being the length of contact time as part of work-placements, the latter being longer.

- The securing of a work-placement in many cases is dependent on the learner
- Work simulation may provide a better experience, subject to access to resources and facilities
- There is an issue with QBS⁷⁷ which automatically aims to support the achievement of full certification for learner where they have attained modules previously. This means that they may not have completed relevant work experience in their current programme. However, where they have completed work experience on a previous, unrelated programme they will receive the full award in the subsequent area. From a certification perspective, it will look like they are fully qualified in the new award but may not have completed work experience relevant to that award.

Despite the issues raised above, 48% of learners highlighted that they missed work experience. Many younger learners cited that completing work experience even just for two weeks gave them more confidence about what to expect in the world of work for their related industry. While other learners with experience of the workplace found alternative modules such as Personal and Professional Development more useful for preparing them for their next step. Both groups of learners cited the lack of relevant and independent work experience as having a negative impact on their progression options due to public health restrictions as employers requested proof of work experience.

The last year has been particularly challenging for teaching, learning and assessment. The feedback from learner consultations was overwhelmingly positive with the overriding theme being the support they received from staff in CDETБ centres, and the importance of this relationship for the quality of experience for the learner. The full reports from these events with summaries in the form of illustrations and newsletters available [here](#).

Resourcing at Corporate Level

The immense work carried out by corporate services including building, maintenance, finance and purchasing, including in risk management and reputational protection is recognised. There are significant challenges in this area due to the level and diversity of funding received by CDETБ and the associated regulatory and compliance regimes which apply including public procurement. The systems also remain mainly paper-based until there is a move to the shared services platform in line with other ETBs.

Feedback from the service level reviews and leadership teams has indicated that the complexities in navigating the ever-evolving and onerous funding and finance arrangements and processes are also challenging. This includes accessing a devolved capital budget for unplanned/emergency expenditure, which would benefit from being more aligned to the size of CDETБ and less restrictive to enable centres to utilise it more effectively for unplanned expenditure needs that arise, including where equipment breaks down. From a quality assurance perspective CDETБ is required to ensure that:

⁷⁷ QQI's Business System (QBS) The issue relates in particular to the certification aspect of the system

“Quality assurance is embedded in the provider’s activities at all levels and spans both the corporate domain⁷⁸ (e.g., governance, finance, human resources) and the academic domain”. In CDETБ governance and decision-making in this area, account is taken “of available resources for programme delivery and ensure that standards are maintained.”⁷⁹”

CDETБ Finance Department and centre leadership teams are moving towards working more closely together in this regard, to address barriers to accessing funding in promptly and effectively. This includes newly developed guidance material for certain aspects. This valuable work should continue within the agreed governance structures in line with previous recommendations in this report for collaboration and collective decision making to occur through the structures, beginning with the Strategic Planning and Development Committee.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Blended learning policy
- TELMs programme and targeted PLD in TEL supported the move to emergency remote delivery
- Access to technology and equipment, including the laptop loan scheme
- Commitment of teachers/tutors/instructors who went the extra mile
- Recordings of classes and instructional videos to support learning
- Work simulations
- CoPs for both subject areas and roles (e.g. Moodle Administrators)
- Diversity of learner profile added to the learner experience
- Sports and Cultural Committee
- College/centre events, e.g. Health Promotion Week, Wellbeing Week
- Online social events to replicate college social activities
- Outdoor Education Support Service
- CDU Library

When asked what they missed most about not being in centres, learners named interactions with classmates (82%) and the college experience (72%) as two of the things they missed the most. They identified their greatest challenge with remote learning as staying motivated (68%) and balancing home life (62%). Lack of IT skills (20%) and access to technology (17%) were identified as the least difficult aspect of remote study for respondents.

⁷⁸ <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/qg-1-core-statutory-quality-assurance-guidelines.pdf>

⁷⁹ ibid

Challenges

- Blended learning policy and procedures difficult to navigate
- Lack of relevant examples of blended learning in action
- Replicating the in-person learning experience in an online environment
- Absence of agreed guidance for accessing funding to support digital innovations at centre level
- The legacy modules on work experience involve experience of the workplace rather than work practice
- Process to ensure the quality and relevance of work experience is in need of reform
- Securing of work placement is the responsibility of the learner and relies on their social capital.

Areas for Enhancement

- Review policy and procedures on blended learning to make them more user-friendly, including examples of effective practice
- Investment in the CDU Library
- Resourcing the facilitation of CoPs to support their development as a key vehicle for collaboration in teaching, learning and assessment
- Consider mechanisms to ensure all learners have opportunities to avail of sports, social or cultural activities at centre level and across centres/service spheres
- Development of a CDETБ database of industry contacts for the purpose of enhancing access to quality work placements for learners.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning are at the heart of what CDETБ does, and there has been significant and valuable feedback received from staff and learners in this area, including the dangers of administrative burdens which distract from the key activity. It is also clear from the feedback that both staff and learners want access to more teaching and learning resources.

The key findings demonstrate the importance of the relationship between CDETБ educators and learners, and the significant role this plays in quality. It is clear that educators and learners adapted and upskilled in online delivery in a short space of time. It is also clear that significant quality improvements were made based on the actioning of findings from review in this area conducted in 2020.

Staff valued and benefited greatly from the level of PLD provision, and the opportunities provided for collaboration, and sharing of resources. Supporting the effective operation of CoPs is critical to supporting staff in cross-centre collaboration and sharing of resources.

Learners valued the support and engagement with CDETБ educators, including being listened to and having their needs recognised and understood, but missed interacting with each other and experiencing 'college life'.

It is clear from both staff and learner feedback that multiple platforms for online learning do not work as they create additional pressure on staff to upskill in multiple areas, and they cause confusion for learners trying to navigate a learning environment. There should be a common, centre-based approach that is appropriately resourced, including technical support, which allows effective targeting of PLD in both specific and common areas for all staff, further improving the user interface and experience for learners in the online learning environment. The feedback from staff and learners on blended learning and blended programme delivery is being used as part of a specific report already cited, and a summary of key 'takeaways' and implications is also supplied.

The blanket provision of work experience/work practice in CDETБ legacy programmes requires consideration. Generally, it is not robustly monitored because it represents such a small part of the programme, often just a minimum of 2 weeks culminating in a supervisor's report. It would make more sense to retain it for programmes with a stronger industry focus, and to strengthen the support and monitoring of it. Learner feedback is mixed, and there is provision for more suitable alternatives as a result of changes in certification nationally. These flexibilities should be retained to allow providers to make quality decisions about whether the work experience is relevant to individual course aims or if an alternative is more appropriate. Governance processes established to inform CDETБ decision-making in the last year of delivery could be retained to support this. Where work experience/practice is retained within a course, a whole institutional approach to monitoring would be beneficial. This institutional approach is currently being trialled with the new ELC programme. Learning from that will be used to inform the approach in the future.

Collaboration between corporate services and Quality/Leadership Teams through the governance structures charged with protecting quality and academic standards, in particular through the Strategic Planning and Development Group, would create significant benefit in resource provision for centres/programmes, in line with strategic objectives/agreements and quality improvement planning. Achieving collective solutions that address the compliance requirements within corporate services and the needs of centres and learners is more likely to be achieved through collaborative structures.

5.2 Assessment of Learners

Description

Programme descriptors and component specifications prescribe assessment methodologies, including the assessment instruments to be used. These documents are consistent across CDETБ as they were centrally devised and subject to centralised modifications as outlined previously in the report. Programme descriptors and module descriptors with programme specifications are managed at CDETБ level under the PMDC and cannot be altered at centre level ensuring consistency across CDETБ. Assessment instruments are devised based on the prescribed learning outcomes of the programme and in line with the assessment method prescribed. For non-QQI programmes, equivalent processes are prescribed by the relevant awarding body.

All service spheres will now operate a locally-devised assessment model since the update to the Training Centre quality assurance system occurred. However, there are strict protocols for the release of assessment instruments in the Training Centres, as a closed system is operated.

CDETБ has several developed policies and procedures for assessment which apply mainly to College of Further Education which are available [here](#) and include:

- CDETБ QA Assessment Guidelines for Colleges of FE – Deadlines, Extensions, Repeats, Reasonable Accommodations and Supports
- CDETБ QA Assessment Guidelines for Colleges of FE – Suspected Academic Malpractice with Investigation Procedures
- External Appeals Policy and Procedure.

The assessment instruments, learner evidence, marking schemes and learner feedback are subject to both internal verification and external authentication processes as outlined previously in [Section 4.7 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results](#). In service spheres, with the exception of training centres, this generally occurred at the end of delivery for CDETБ programmes. For non-QQI awarding bodies, their quality assurance processes for assessment apply under bi-lateral agreements and many of these include internal verification of assessment briefs prior to them being issued to learners. Assessment briefs issued to learners provide detail on the assessment being conducted and the expectations of the assessment. For learners at the lower levels, this brief is usually recorded in writing with instructions often provided orally, with follow up supports. Appendix 6 demonstrates the different stages involved in the assessment of learners for the different service spheres. While all the stages and standards of assessment are the same across the different service spheres, the procedures and processes are specifically tailored to reflect the provision offered.

For example, the AES operates on a rolling intake basis, primarily offering minor awards at levels 1–3 at the pace of the learner; it does not put learners forward for assessment until they have reached the required standard. As a result, the need for repeats or appeals is not relevant to this service sphere.

The following new policies and procedures were developed to respond to the need to provide for the use of alternative assessment instruments and assessment methods.

- CDETБ Quality Assuring Assessment Policy and Procedures – for online/blended delivery from 2020/21 onwards including using alternative assessment instruments (all service spheres)
- CDETБ Blended Learning and Blended Programme Delivery Policy and Procedures, updated in 2021 to take account of the establishment of Quality Teams and provision for online assessment (all service spheres)
- Policy and Procedure for Early Appointment of External Authenticator to review assessment instruments from 2020/21 onwards (all service spheres)
- Policy and Procedure for Online Internal Verification and External Authentication from 2021 onwards (all service spheres)
- Updated IV documentation and reports to take account of alternative assessment, from 2020/21 onwards (all service spheres)
- Updated Guidance and Reports for the External Authentication to take account of online processes and early appointment provisions, from 2020 onwards (all service spheres).

The policy and procedure on quality assuring assessment as part of online/blended delivery was comprehensive and took a process approach to quality assurance by providing for a blanket amendment to all CDETБ programmes to allow for alternative assessment methods/techniques to be used under a defined process. The document produced to reflect this provided guidance on the following:

- General Requirements for Quality Assuring Assessment – Applies to all Centres and all Assessment Events including Academic Integrity and Receipt of Learner Evidence online
- Practice Directions for Quality Teams and Teaching/Training Staff on Quality Assuring Alternative Assessment
- Selecting Alternative Techniques and Instruments for Assessment/Timing of Assessments/Assessment Load for Learners
- Devising Alternative Assessment Instruments
- Liaising with other CDETБ SMEs/Communities of Practice/Early Appointment of EA
- IV/EA process
- Reasonable accommodation in assessment
- Assessment Techniques, Instruments, Marking and Grading

- Devising Assessment Criteria/Assessment Rubrics
- Sample Assessment Criteria
- Devising a Marking Scheme
- Sample answers or solutions
- Grading Classifications
- Grading Criteria
- Conducting Assessment Online
- Academic Integrity Declaration
- Instructional/Action Word Definitions
- Quality Team/EA Verification Form for Alternative Assessment– to be used prior to assessment instrument being issued to learners.

As stated previously, in [“4.7 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results”](#), a significant cohort of staff reported that they found these new initiatives exceptionally positive and beneficial to their teaching and learning and assessment practice. This represents considerable progress in quality assuring assessment for CDETb.

As noted earlier, the monitoring of work-based learning for industry focused programmes such as Apprenticeships and Traineeships is specified in the programme with recognised statutory oversight roles for Apprenticeship programmes. As part of usual practice, CDETb staff assess the evidence from work-based learning which takes the form of a supervisor’s report; therefore, there is limited provision for assessment by non-CDETb staff in this area, unless provided for within a programme. Provisions for quality assuring alternatives to work-placement in legacy programmes has been dealt with in the previous section.

In apprenticeships and traineeships, oversight of any elements that require taking part in work placement are specifically named in the programme specifications. Authorised Officers, appointed by the provider as prescribed in statute, ensure the integrity of assessment of apprenticeships and traineeships. They also have in ensuring that new employers can meet the training requirements before being permitted to take on apprentices. Training Centres’ quality assurance system is used for Phases 1/3/5/7, which are assessed by CDETb staff. The other phases are assessed by work-based assessors in line with National Guidelines; they are overseen by the relevant Authorised Officer.

Finally, RPL is currently used predominately for access purposes and Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) can be used to provide access, programme contact exemptions and for the purposes of learners achieving Major awards, in the case of QQI component certification. The TOBAR project examines the use of RPL for the purposes of certification.

It has involved CDETb appointed mentors from the Adult Education Service working with members of the Defence Forces who have been working for considerable periods of time, with developed experience and expertise but no accreditation. Reports on this project are available [here](#).

Evaluation

This area was examined as part of the CDETb staff and learner surveys with the following results:

- 92% of staff⁸⁰ agreed or strongly agreed that they had prepared their students to complete assessments and exams in line with principles of academic integrity. This was corroborated from learner feedback via the learner survey with only 5% of CFE learners surveyed disagreeing that they were prepared sufficiently in this regard
- 77% of learners⁸¹ agreed or strongly agreed that they were given enough information to be able to do alternatives to skills demonstrations and exams.

These findings evidence the effectiveness of adaptations to CDETb’s QA system, with new policy and procedures in this area. As part of learner and staff consultation, both stakeholder groups reported that the added flexibility of using diverse types of assessment techniques and instruments was beneficial and progressive in teaching and learning⁸²

While there was comprehensive guidance provided, there was also feedback that quality assurance documentation was overly complicated and would benefit from review. It would be most beneficial for the draft CDETb Assessors’ Handbooks to be finalised, incorporating the work completed this year including in assessment of work practice skills.

Service-level reviews provided feedback on assessment which are reflected in the boxes below.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Digitisation of assessment across service spheres
- Use of online platforms for assessment, e.g. increased use of Moodle

⁸⁰ Responses were predominately received from the CFEs.

⁸¹ Highest response rate was from CFE learners

⁸² [All reports on consultations, newsletters and illustration related to teaching, learning and assessment](#)

Challenges

- Supervisors Reports' can vary – this requires more protocols to ensure integrity
- Variability of quality/relevance of placements
- Some awarding bodies are more prescriptive about giving prompt and more substantial feedback (CFEs)
- Assessment processes for non-QQI awarding bodies are specified by them, including online assessment protocols and some with specified platforms
- Procedures around repeats is not consistent across CFE.s

Areas for Enhancement

- Wider range of feedback mechanisms used, including video, audio, online annotations
- Improve the quality of feedback provided and to ensure that it is timely e.g., the requirement to annotate feedback should be clearer
- Online practices for giving feedback require more standardisation, including annotated feedback
- Further examination of CDETБ's RPL Policy and procedures for assessment, utilising learning from the TOBAR project.

Conclusion

There is evidence that the integrity of assessment and the quality assurance processes in assessment are involved and embedded. They have been the subject of considerable improvements this year, including the provision for locally-devised assessments in the Training Centres and the use of EA earlier in the assessment process in other service spheres, thereby significantly ameliorating key vulnerabilities in this area. Both developments require more support and training to embed them further and to develop practice in the area.

More guidance in the area for work-based supervisors completing reports would be beneficial, and there is significant potential for further developing RPL within CDETБ to the benefit of staff and learners. As provided for previously, staff would benefit from a CDETБ Assessors' Handbook with common templates. Over time, this should improve consistency of assessment for other awarding bodies also, as this is currently not provided for across CDETБ.

CoPs will greatly benefit staff in this regard, and the further sharing of practice and resources through these mechanisms and the CDU Moodle site. Finally, further discussion with QQI about holding on to current flexibilities in assessment would be useful. Feedback in this area has been positive, so it would be relatively seamless to do this within CDETБ, due to the process approach taken to the modification of assessment in CDETБ QQI programmes. The same principles apply to alternatives to work experience and work practice, which are not always the most suitable modules for learners. Work simulation also holds benefits, because it creates a more consistent practice approach to skills development in key areas, which may not always occur within industry due to differentials in practice and the time and resources required to train learners in work experience while also operating a business. Further examination of this is required, and more learning will be achieved this year which can be used as part of self-evaluation processes.

5.3 Support for Learners

Description

Equality and inclusion are key values of CDETБ. They are reflected in CDETБ's strategic objective in its new Statement of Strategy⁸³. Moreover, the National FET Strategy emphasises increasing inclusion. CDETБ is committed to supporting learners to achieve their potential and recognises the importance of supporting learners to do that. Learner support can be categorised in the following terms:

- Pastoral Care
- General teaching and learning supports as part of programme-related services and extracurricular activities.
- Reasonable accommodation
- Centralised and collaborative supports
- Professional Learning and Development
- Provision or funding of specialist services and programmes.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is defined as *"guidance and support which focuses on the learner's welfare and their social and emotional needs, rather than their purely educational ones"*.⁸⁴

⁸³ [CDETБ Statement of Strategy-2021-2025](#)

⁸⁴ [Oxford Reference 2022](#)

Pastoral care is provided through course co-ordinators, guidance counsellors (service sphere dependent) and through teaching and learner support staff. Some centres also organise programme-specific or centre-specific events to promote the well-being of learners including mental health and well-being weeks, as seen in Inchicore College of Further Education⁸⁵.

Many services and centres have care teams in place and specific services such as access to guidance counsellors. It is important to note that guidance counselling services are not available in all services, including the Training Centres. Some second providers are given grants for the delivery of these services to their younger and more vulnerable cohorts of learners.

General Teaching and Learning Supports as part of Programme-related Services and Extracurricular Activities

In most services, teaching/tutor staff are given additional hours to provide more targeted supports to learners. General teaching and learning supports include ‘wrap-around’ programme-related services and include study support and compassionate consideration as part of assessment. Both of these types of supports also include assisting learners to develop their self-efficacy, thereby becoming more empowered and confident in their abilities and prospects. Self-efficacy and confidence are also achieved through extracurricular activities and the promotion of peer learning and support as part of the learning experience.

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation can be defined as:

As providing special treatment or facilities or making adjustments for a person with a disability to enable them to access a service where “it would be impossible or unduly difficult for that person to participate... without the special treatment, facilities or adjustments. While there is no obligation to provide special treatment, facilities or adjustments if they give rise to anything more than a ‘nominal cost’. ...The meaning of ‘nominal cost’ will depend on the circumstances such as the size of and resources available to the organisation⁸⁶.

A large, well-resourced organisation is more likely to be able to afford a higher level of cost in making reasonable accommodation than a small one is, and relevant state grants available must also be factored in.

The following CDETБ policies and procedures are relevant guidance for accommodations as part of assessment practices:

⁸⁵ [Inchicore College of Further Education Health and Wellbeing Week 2021](#)

⁸⁶ The Equality Authority Schools and the Equal Status Act, 2005, 2nd Education, available at [Schools and the Equal Status Act \(File Format PDF 700KB\) \(assets.gov.ie\)](#)

- CDETБ QA Assessment Guidelines for Colleges of FE – Deadlines/Extensions/Repeats/Reasonable Accommodations and Supports and including compassionate consideration also⁸⁷
- Centralised and Collaborative Supports
 - Psychological Support Service
 - Collaborative Practice in Literacy, Numeracy and Language
 - Professional Learning
 - Funding of learner supports
 - Disability support services
 - Grant-aided centres and organisations providing targeted supports

Psychological Support Service

Centralised support services include the CDETБ Psychological Service, which was founded in 1960 and is currently staffed by its Chief Psychologist and a team of psychologists who deliver a comprehensive psychological service to the schools, colleges and centres within CDETБ. The service is delivered through a combination of individual, group and systemic approaches, participation in Care Teams, staff support and supervision and in-service training. The Psychological Support Service facilitates 10 Professional Learning Networks in areas such as wellbeing, guidance and learner supports.

Collaborative Practice in Literacy, Numeracy and Language

The Adult Education Service provides supports in the area of literacy and numeracy to learners in Training Centres and some CFEs. CDETБ AES has also devised a 4-week literacy awareness training for all FET staff. This training is being disseminated across ETBs nationally.

The AES offers pre-college courses in English for Academic Purposes aimed at learners progressing from basic language or general education courses to mainstream FET programmes. In several centres, language support classes are available to learners who may need additional support during their studies.

Since the introduction of specific language requirements as condition of entry to programmes, e.g. the requirement of a B2 language competency for entry the new Early Learning and Care programme, CDETБ has begun to pilot the central assessment of applicants for whom English is a second or other language as a means to identify the type of supports which may be needed either in advance of entry to a programme or during the programme.

⁸⁷ [Quality Assuring the Assessment Process | City of Dublin Education & Training Board \(etb.ie\)](#)

Sixteen ESOL practitioners from the AES, YR, specialist programmes, second level schools and community providers are participating in an upskilling initiative in Teaching Literacy to ESOL learners in spring 2022. This PLD initiative is directly responding to the growing number of learners accessing FET provision in the AES and YR in particular who are developing literacy for the first time through English.

Research into the barriers and enablers experienced by learners from linguistically and culturally diverse learners in FET is being undertaken by CDETБ's ESOL Development Officer and will contribute to CDETБ's approach to learner supports for this learner cohort.

Professional Learning

To support a more inclusive learning environment, there has been a significant uptake from staff in PLD in the area of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In 2020-1, 74 CDETБ staff were awarded the UDL Badge with AHEAD and UCD, of which 36 went on to complete the Facilitator's Badge with staff upskilling in UDL principles and practices.

In 2021, CDETБ developed a level 9 Post Graduate Certificate with Trinity College Dublin on Inclusion and Diversity in FET. CDETБ is in discussion with another HEI for similar programmes at levels 6, 7, 8.

Teaching and learning resources in this area also available through the CDU Moodle site accessible [here](#).

CDETБ operates Professional Learning Networks for both guidance counsellors and learner support staff through the Psychological Service and the CDU respectively. These provide valuable opportunities for staff to share practice and resources.



Case Study: PLN for Support teachers working in FET Colleges in CDETБ

The Professional Learning Network for Support teachers in FET colleges falls under the umbrella of the CDETБ's provision of PLNs through the Psychological Service; however, it is facilitated by the PLD Co-ordinator, a former Special Education teacher and Learning Support Co-ordinator.

Each FET college Principal proposes at least one teacher who works in a support for learning capacity to attend the PLN meetings over the course of any given year. Membership can change from year to year, depending on allocation of support hours. It may or may not be the individual responsible for coordination of support in the college. Some colleges are represented by more than one person, but all FET colleges are represented.

Eight FET colleges in CDETБ are supported in a part-time capacity by the National Learning Network's Disability Support Service. The remaining colleges have developed procedures and practices themselves to provide support for learning in their colleges.

How does the PLN go about its work?

The PLN operates using the same model as all other CDETБ PLN's. The theoretical underpinning of our PLN is that we effectively go through Kolb's experiential learning cycle. We come together in a semi-formal way, and we bring with us the concrete experiences that we have lived through back in our own colleges, where we have been working with support students and supporting teachers in making their materials and classes more accessible. Over coffee and cakes, we relive, we discuss, we offload, we support, and we listen. We share our experiences, and we reflect on our own actions and examine what went well and what didn't go so well; we try to work out why- what happened that made something work for us or not work? What are the conclusions we can draw- what could that mean for us in our individual centre- but what does it mean for others in their centres- we then go back out into the real world and we actively experiment again... we consciously trial our plan of action; if we have taken an idea from someone else or learned about a good practice that we think will work for us, we try it out.... And so, the cycle continues. This happens in a safe, shared space of trust, empathy and where bonds have been developed among the membership. The membership has worked together over time to address several key areas regarding support for learners in our colleges. These key areas are:

- A more shared understanding of induction and transition processes
- Collective approaches to designing "Assessment of Needs"
- Collaboration on Alternative Assessment during COVID
- Understanding Assistive Technology and what's on offer in CDETБ
- UDL and supporting learning for all
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Fund for Students with Disabilities

Members of the PLN have gone on to complete the Graduate Diploma in Inclusion, Learner Support, & Special Education with DCU. Others are currently studying on the Post Graduate Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion in FET which was co-designed by CDETБ with TCD.

Disability Support Service

Some Colleges of Further Education have specific support staff provided through the National Learning Network under a CDETБ-level, Service-level Agreement. This service is known as the Disability Support Service. However, it is not available in all colleges. These external staff engage in needs assessments and attend different colleges on different days and times to engage with learners.

Funding of Learner Supports

In CDETБ, learner supports are assessed and provided for at centre level, this includes seeking funding on the basis of projected needs including for reasonable accommodation. As part of admissions procedures, learners are requested to provide information on any additional learning needs or disabilities for funding and planning purposes. Learner needs assessment reports will be sought from learners who indicate they have additional learning needs. Funding is then sought centrally through FARR system⁸⁸ from SOLAS. Learners who are deaf or blind will be allocated funding first as they would not be able to access programmes otherwise.

Grant-aided Centres and Organisations providing Targeted Supports

CDETБ funds a range of organisations including the [Central Remedial Clinic](#), the [Peter McVerry Trust Learning Centre](#), [SPIRASI](#) and the [OWL](#) (Oireachtas work-based learning) project that specifically target particularly vulnerable learners with specialist training needs. Several courses have been co-designed and are delivered with collaborative support, including a course in Crumlin College with Spina Bifida Ireland and a health services course in Cabra Community College⁸⁹ with the Irish Deaf Society, based in the [Deaf Village](#).

Finally, a detailed review of the provision of learner support across centres within CDETБ was conducted with a view to creating a CDETБ-level framework for consistent provision of learner supports which addresses the inclusion priority in the new national FET Strategy. A number of actions have arisen from this thus far including:

- A public procurement request for tenders for a mentor panel for learners
- More flexible start dates through Skills to Advance programmes
- Sanctions are also being requested for new psychologists, community education facilitators and administrative posts

⁸⁸ Funding Allocation Request and Reporting System

⁸⁹ [IDS and Cabra Community College \(CCC\)... - Irish Deaf Society \(facebook.com\)](#)

Evaluation

CDETБ's commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment and programmes of education is clear from the range of supports and initiatives in place across the organisation. Learner feedback on supports received was overwhelming positive and is particularly commendable considering the extremely challenging learning environment in place over the last 18 months. As part of learner consultation events summarised [here](#), learners emphasised the importance of the supports they received from CDETБ staff from access through to progression and in particular CDETБ educators. Learners reported that when they doubted themselves, the support from staff was very important to them and gave them the confidence to start, continue and complete their courses emphasising the importance of support before, during and after the course.



When it came to identifying the supports they most relied on, 749 learners answered the question with the majority listing staff as the main source of support. This included naming roles for example teachers, tutors, subject teachers, course coordinators and guidance counsellors as well as naming specific teachers.

Learners identified the following support as being important during the last year:

- Access to technology and online content including the laptop loan scheme and access to equipment
- Learners also named access to recorded classes and materials as a great support
- specific supports phone calls and emails from teachers, additional tutorial supports, counselling and guidance, extensions on submission of assignments
- classmates, other students, family, friends and work colleagues these involved both practical and emotional supports.



The following are key findings from the learner surveys:

- 73% of learners⁹⁰ agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like their opinion mattered and was listened to by their teachers. This increased to 78% for learners over 20 years of age and 79% for learner over 25 years of age. Only 6% of learners over 25 years of age actively disagreed with the statement
- 74% of learners⁹¹ agreed or strongly agreed that their personal needs and circumstances were taken into consideration when changes were happening to their courses with 10% of learners disagreeing with the statement.

Although learner feedback has been extremely positive about supports provided, it is important to note that learners that left courses without fully completing were not part of the research initiatives.

The key findings from Service Level Reviews highlighted the lack of consistency in learner support as it depends on legacy arrangements within service spheres and centres and there tends to be more consistency within service spheres than across them. In this vein, the following issues were identified with the FET funding model for learner supports:

- It requires formal needs assessment reports for learner to access funding within FET despite the requirement being removed at second level, due to lack of access to appropriate assessment through the National Educational Psychological Service **NEPs**. This means most learners coming from second level will not have reports. Assessment of level of need can only be based/evidenced via a report under our current funding model
- The funding model is also based on a calendar year versus an academic year. From January you will know who you will have until programme completion, however you are forecasting for funding for September as the learners have not been recruited yet

90 CFE learners

91 CFE learners

- Forms have also become more complicated
- Funding will often come too late for other students, and they can drop out before the supports can be put in place
- There is no allocation in CFEs for learner support staff. Teaching are staff often given extra hours where they have spare capacity. This is not necessarily best practice as staff allocated should be most experienced and trained staff.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Pastoral care
- Provision of mindfulness and wellbeing training
- PLN for Learning Support staff in CFEs
- Training in assessment needs for learning support teachers delivered by Dyslexia Ireland
- Implementation of UDL in teaching and assessment
- Provision of English language and literacy supports for learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Literacy training programme for FET educators
- Collaboration between AES and CFEs and TCs to provide literacy supports for learners in Level 5 and 6 programmes
- Disability Support Service

Challenges

- Lack of consistency in learner supports across centres
- No allocation in CFEs for learner support staff
- FET Funding model for learner supports is not fit for purpose

Areas for Enhancement

- Co-ordination of learner supports across the organisation

Conclusion

While there are many models of good practice in the area of learner supports, and while learner feedback is extremely positive in this area, demonstrating effectiveness, learners emphasised the importance of the pastoral care element: they feel listened to and cared about and that their different learning and other diverse needs are recognised and catered for.

However, there is a lack of co-ordination and consistency in the area. In the interests of staff and learners, a new CDETБ-level framework to achieve this, which takes account of learner, staff and quality/leadership teams' feedback, would be most welcome.

Due to issues with funding it has been recommended to work off a centre model. By pooling the resources into a resource room that learners can access, funding for the few can be used provide services both to those learners who attract funding, and for other learners who need support, but who do not meet the threshold for funding. If done in this way, there is no resultant reduction in service for learners for the former cohort.

5.4 Conclusion

There is convincing evidence of a positive and supportive learning environment and despite the challenges in the last year, adaptations to the QA system to support the integrity of assessments as part of remote delivery were found to be effective, by both staff and learners. The support and commitment of staff made a real difference to learners who emphasised the importance of this relationship to the quality of their experience. At the learner consultation events learners conveyed the transformative impact of completing FET courses with CDETБ and the positive impact this made on them both personally and in developing their knowledge, skills and competences in key areas. The findings from these events are captured in two reports available [here](#) for further perusal and will be used as part of quality improvement planning. However, there are areas for improvement, in particular achieving more consistent approach to learner supporting, further embedding new initiatives such as early access to external authenticators and supporting the devising of new assessment instruments in the Training Centres. Navigating financial and funding systems in order to ensure resources are in place to support programme delivery has been identified as challenging. However, collaborative work is taking place in this regard, which would be further strengthened by placing it within the formal governance structures where all relevant internal stakeholders from services spheres and corporate services can engage in examination of the area and engage in working on agreed solutions that will meet the needs of services, while also ensuring compliance with regulatory and auditing requirements.

6.

Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

6. Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

6.1 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Description

CDETБ is a learning community, with formal and informal self-evaluation, monitoring and review of quality built into everyday practices across the scheme. This is particularly true at centre level. The learner journey or [life cycle](#) for the different service spheres illustrates the points during the year where mini or major pauses take place to review processes or the impact of services offered. Most of these reviews happen in the hundreds of small teams responsible for the specific tasks, then cascade upwards into course and centre reviews.

CDETБ operates on the principle of subsidiarity, with the person closest to the task having the most authority to respond and make decisions for development and enhancements. Subsidiarity is essential to the effective functioning of the organisation, for example if decisions which affect a cohort of learners at module level, course level or centre level are made at corporate level, then CDETБ will lose effective quality improvement in planning and decision making at the levels which most immediately impact the learner. Equally, decision making which should occur at corporate level for consistency and oversight purposes sometimes occurs at module/course or centre level, which can have negative implications. A useful example of this is the modifying and updating of CDETБ programmes, which should occur centrally, as all relevant service spheres and centres delivering the programme must be considered to ensure updates can meet the needs of the organisation as a whole and not just one class or centre.

Moreover, CDETБ as a corporate entity has created and evolved corporate-level governance structures whose role is to consider and protect quality and academic standards across all service spheres including corporate and support spheres. Learning or challenges are brought to relevant governance groups via the centre-level RAP processes and the Quality team meetings. A recent example of the outcome of this process is the review of the impact of [COVID-19 on teaching, learning and assessment](#).

For more information on CDETБ's Approach to Quality Assurance Maintenance and Enhancement, see Section 1 of CDETБ's [Corporate Level Quality Assurance Procedures](#).

Quality Maintenance Enhancement and Assurance; Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Processes

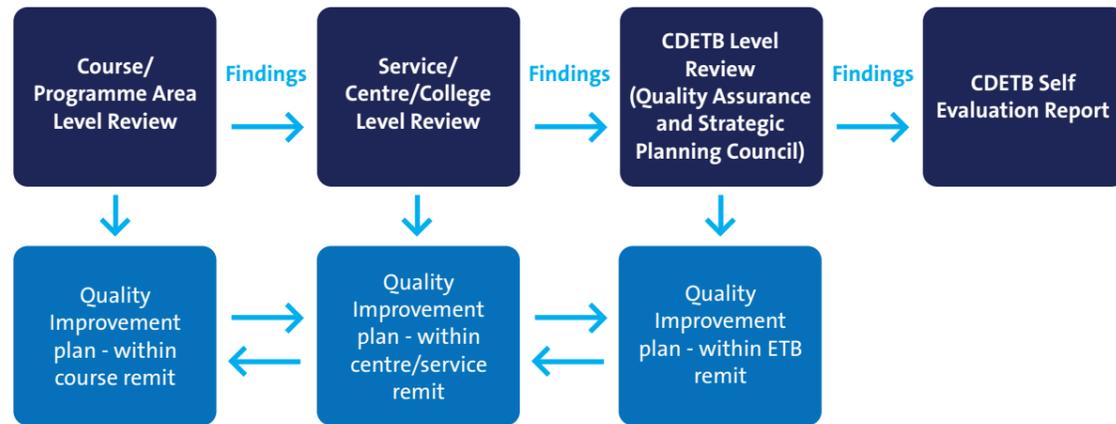
The current version of CDETБ's Quality Maintenance Enhancement and Assurance: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy and Procedures were developed from previous iterations which had been developed to achieve consistency in exam boards and Result Approval Panels. Due to the timing of these occurring, particularly in CFEs, a quality review aspect was incorporated in the existing processes. They were CFE-focused for the most part. During the 2020-21 year this policy and procedure area was updated to:

- Strengthen the quality review aspect
- Adapt them further for application across all service spheres
- Link the processes to CDETБ's Institutional Review.

The updates provided for the inclusion of appendices with agreed surveys for stakeholders including staff and learners. It also included consultation session formats for staff with agreed questions linked to annual and institutional review. These were common across all service spheres, subject to some adaptation for the AES and ESP in recognition of learners participating at lower levels on the NFQ. This demonstrated a significant shift and represented an institutional approach to both the annual and institutional reviews. It was the aim that such appendices would be retained and could be updated annually to hold on to progress made.

Monitoring and review are designed to occur at several levels with each level of review feeding into the next level. There are some aspects that the course/programme area team will be able to address within agreed centre/service policies, processes, procedures and resources, and there will be some aspects that can only be addressed at centre/service level within agreed ETБ policies, processes, procedures and allocated resources for the centre/service. Finally, there may be issues that arise which will have to be addressed at ETБ level to support centres and course teams. Quality Teams feed their findings into the FET Unit so that they can be collated and given visibility for consideration, discussion and recommended courses of action by the Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC) including via relevant Committees as appropriate. These recommendations go to the Senior Management and Leadership Team within CDETБ to become part of strategic and planning.

Figure 15: Quality improvement processes



The current process does not provide for interim course reviews, to ensure improvements are made for the benefit of and in response to feedback from the same cohort of learners.

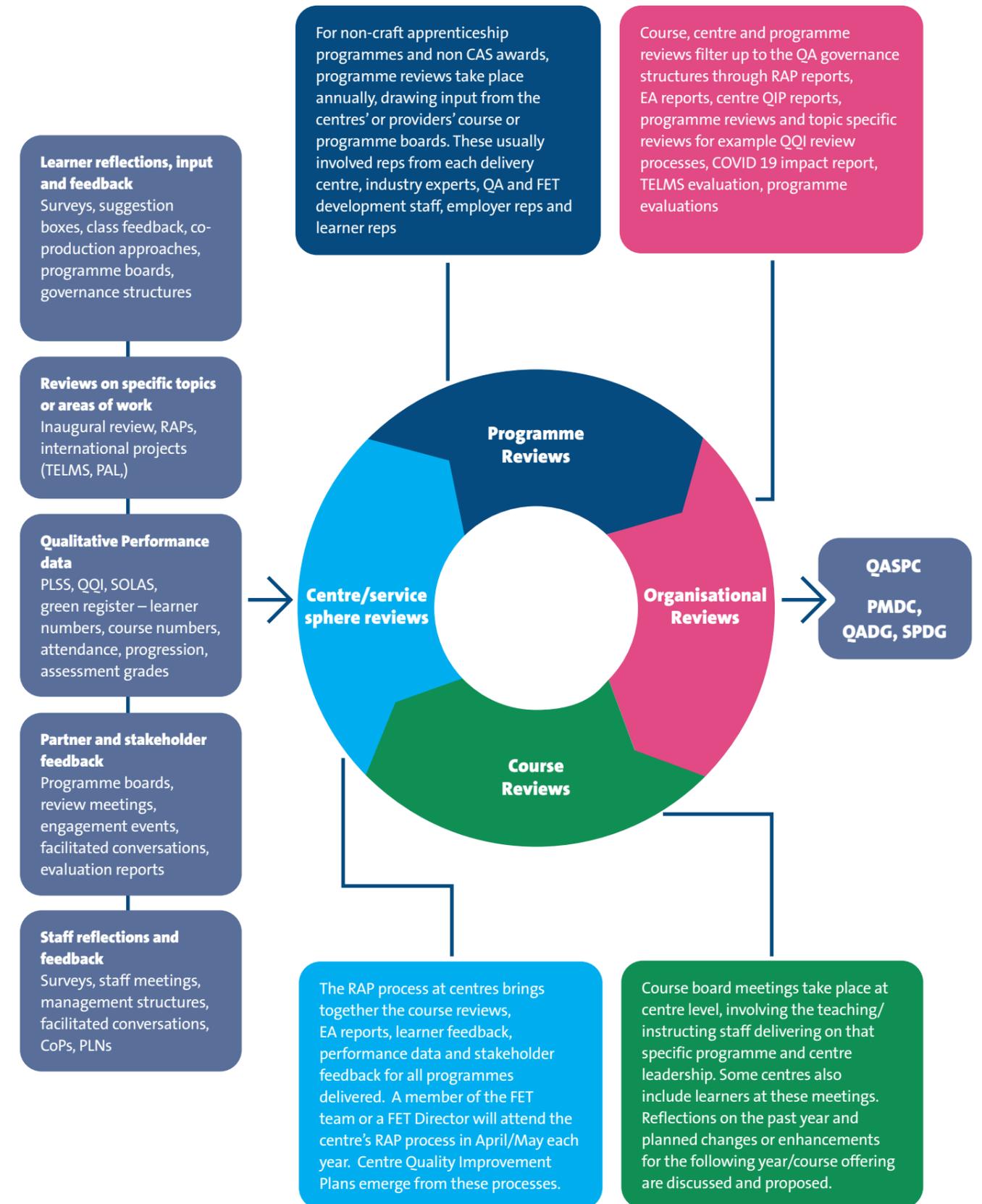
Institutional Review - CDETБ

Self-evaluation at CDETБ/institutional level focuses on the impact on learners and other stakeholders, rather than on policies and procedures only. Self-evaluation is taken as an opportunity to engage in crucially important dialogue with stakeholders, including learners, employers, collaborative partners, and external experts used by CDETБ in its quality assurance procedures. It is a deep level of self-evaluation with a broad systematic focus.

CDETБ Institutional Reviews also consider key areas by examining the way in which our Quality Assurance system supports our work, and the quality of the learning experience in a more fundamental manner – examining how we work as an ETБ – where our strengths lie and where we need to improve. These findings are published in a self-evaluation report which informs improvement planning and is provided to external review teams.

Institutional self-evaluation questions may be posed in course/service/centre level service self-evaluation processes as part of systemic review and will feed into an external review cycle when it is occurring. These reviews are aimed at examining how effective our quality assurance system is.

The best measure of our effectiveness is the quality of the learner experience of their journey with CDETБ, which is supported by our learning environment/community and the degree to which our activities in all service spheres are geared towards adding value and improving this experience.



The Connection between Course/Programme Area/Centre/Service and CDETb Level Processes

The outcomes of CDETb-led internal monitoring and review (course/programme area and centre/college/service level), institutional reviews and follow-up actions taken are considered by CDETb. The findings of self-evaluations are analysed and are available for, and connect to and support, any external review cycle.

The centre/college/service-level Quality Reports inform a quality improvement place at the centre/college/service-level, but all such reports are collated into a report by the FET Unit for submission to the Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council annually. In addition, the FET Unit supports Centre/College/Service Level reviews and conducts ETB wide research with stakeholders. This enables the Governance Units to identify themes arising across all service spheres and make recommendations as part of quality improvement planning at ETB level to support centre/college and service delivery.

CDETb used this self-evaluation process for the inaugural review to identify the range of strengths and key areas for enhancement pertaining to CDETb's self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes.

As part of CDETb's institutional self-evaluation, there has been a strong focus on engaging staff and learners at all levels and across all service spheres, and with our community and industry partners. It was an institutional review in the truest sense. With an institution as large and diverse as CDETb, the approach was taken to carry out an institutional review with a degree of focus based on what the institution sought to achieve from the process.

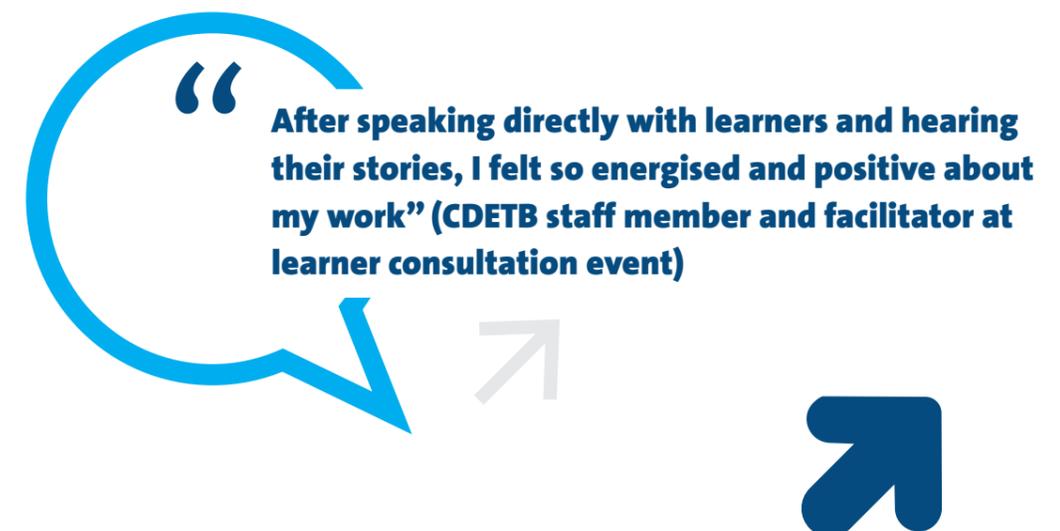
This approach is reflected in the methodology employed to conduct research, as CDETb saw a valuable opportunity in the review, and placed as much focus on what it wanted to achieve from engaging in the process (experiential aims) as it did on the output/outcomes from the process. It has been a particularly challenging period for staff, learners and our partners due to the degree of adaptation and pivoting required to continue to deliver our services and maintain their quality. CDETb agreed that the experiential aims for the review process were to:

- Be energising for staff
- Create space for self-evaluation and reflective practice
- Develop our concept of success within CDETb and of how this is built into our quality assurance system, using this to inform metrics and decision-making processes
- Amplify learner, staff and stakeholder voices within the institution to enable those who both contribute and benefit from our quality assurance system to feed meaningfully into our self-evaluation and decision-making processes
- Build a culture and capacity in self-evaluation and reflective practice, including facilitation of these practices with our staff across all service spheres and the corporate and FET support services spheres.

The experiential aims also reflect key aims of our existing [Quality Improvement Plan \(QIP\)](#). In addition, CDETb operated as an institution in conducting the process, with involvement and support from all levels and across all service spheres. As part of annual monitoring and review processes, service-level reviews and consultation and engagement with our stakeholders, the same research methodology was applied by all services spheres and centres and findings were collated to institutional level. This is the first time that has been achieved by the CDETb since its inception.

Evaluation

CDETb has achieved and learned about its own self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes from undertaking the self-evaluation process for the inaugural review. CDETb sought to use the institutional review to develop and embed self-evaluation practices across service spheres and at all levels within the organisation. It was also keen that the process would be a positive one for stakeholders, particularly staff and learners. This was particularly important considering the challenges faced by these groups due to both the momentous change in delivery and the need for the organisation to pivot at all levels. In these respects, the self-evaluation process has been successful for CDETb.





The above quotes reflect the wider findings of research in the commitment and passion of staff for their work and an appetite to engage and discuss quality assurance and its relevance to their professional practice. This was evidenced in findings from consultation at the CDETb staff event also. See [Listening and Learning](#) Report.

It is important that CDETb embeds and builds on what it has achieved as part of this process. Linking annual processes to the self-evaluation process demonstrated an ability to act as an institution and enabled findings from annual processes to be collated and considered at an institutional level. Previously, centres were using their own approaches to the collection of data and research and the differentials in practice made it difficult to scale findings up to corporate level in a meaningful way.

The use of quantitative and qualitative metrics needs to be strengthened to inform evaluations at centre level which currently can be fed up to corporate level decision-making. There was feedback from service-level reviews that clearer metrics informed by our mission, values and strategic objectives would allow us both to measure performance more accurately and to identify areas for improvement more accurately. Such metrics would allow findings to be collated by CDETb both to inform decision-making about the allocation of resources and supports, and to identify models of best practice to share across CDETb.

There are several limitations on this:

- Multiple sources and platforms must be used to extract data for examination
- Many of the sources are more recent editions. Practice in using data is still developing

- For Colleges of Further Education, the end of the programme cycle is an extremely busy time taken up with ensuring that learners complete, and that associated documentation is complete. It is not the best time to conduct any in-depth reviews. In addition, all the relevant data may not be available at the time of course team meetings, e.g., if some learners are still completing. So, receipt of EA reports does not always tally with end-of-year team meetings and staff are invariably on multiple course teams
- For other services, programmes end at different points of the year so attaching quality reviews to the end of programme cycles does not reflect rolling intake and multiple start and completion dates
- Other services such as the Adult Education Service and Education Service to Prisons are more inclined to deliver on a module-by-module basis and therefore there is not necessarily a course team, it can be one tutor delivering one module
- The self-evaluation policy and procedure are aimed at using the existing process of Results Approval Panel meetings, which is where a provider examines and confirms the integrity of the learner results prior to putting them forward for certification. Quality reviews were incorporated into this process with the rationale that it was building on current processes rather than creating a new distinct process. This may have affected the value placed on the quality review aspect when the drive at centre level is to ensure all learners that have completed are put forward for certification to ensure they can avail of relevant progression opportunities. This is especially true for Colleges of Further Education as they use one certification period which is linked to the CAO process.

All services reported that continuous improvement planning was employed. However, because of the above challenges, RAP reports, which are supposed to incorporate a quality review at least once annually, do not always capture the output of an in-depth quality review in a manner which can be meaningfully collated for perusal by the Quality and Strategic Planning Council. While CDETb confirms that quality-improvement planning based on self-evaluation occurs at centre level due to attendance of FET support service staff and FET Directors at RAP/Quality Reviews, reporting of the output needs to be strengthened. It is necessary for output from annual processes to be collated, analysed and followed up at corporate level through governance units. It is also clear that PLSS and grade distribution data can be used most meaningfully at course and centre level. The output of self-evaluations using metrics which utilise this data should be included as part of reporting processes, for example, where a centre identifies courses with low retention and/or grade distribution trends which require investigation. Identification of this and actions taken should form part of quality improvement plans and reporting of same.

Another vulnerability is the absence of formal interim course reviews, which would allow feedback from learners and stakeholders to be used in real time to their benefit, rather than at the end of the year for the benefit of the next cohort. This is also in keeping with the Lundy Model of Participation which indicates/holds that learners that are listened to and see their feedback acted on are more likely to gain more confidence and continue to participate and give feedback. Interim reviews will be trialled as part of the new ELC programme pilot within CDETb to include more formal mechanisms for capturing learning feedback.

The challenge for CDETБ is how to capture the learning emerging from the hundreds of local reviews taking place at course or centre level and share it across centres and service spheres and at CDETБ corporate level. CDETБ also mainly operates an 'oral' tradition with a lot of the communication about changes, improvements and developments taking place in meetings, staff rooms, stairwells, etc. So outside of the formal written documentation processes of IV, EA, RAPs and QIPs, very little of the rich impact of FET provision ever gets shared outside of the organisation.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Evidence of annual improvement planning at centre level
- Linking annual processes to the self-evaluation process enabled findings from annual processes to be collated and considered at an institutional level.

Challenges

- Multiple sources of data and platforms impedes effective use of data
- Capacity to use data is emerging but requires resourcing and training
- Absence of formal interim course reviews
- Capturing and analysing the rich data from IV/EA/RAP processes
- Lack of systematic processes for documenting and communicating successes and effective practice within CDETБ FET provision across and outside the organisation
- Resourcing the management of data-capturing and analysis at CDETБ-level and across centres.

Areas for Enhancement

- Examine, through the governance units, which aspects of the institutional review can be incorporated into annual monitoring and review processes
- Decouple the RAP and quality reviews
- Streamline reporting systems
- Include interim reviews and stakeholder feedback, especially learner feedback to improve delivery during the same delivery cycle.
- Develop a more dynamic monitoring and review model
- Assess impact of CDETБ's programmes and services in local and regional communities.

Conclusion

CDETБ has already undertaken significant improvements as part of carrying out this self-evaluation process as part of the inaugural review. CDETБ needs to consider what aspects of the self-evaluation process need to be retained, particularly after significant additional capacity was built over a short period. The Quality Maintenance Enhancement and Assurance: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy and Procedures need to be reviewed to incorporate relevant metrics by which success can more accurately be measured, while also reflecting and respecting the different delivery models in use across service spheres.

The output from self-evaluation processes requires improved reporting mechanisms for more effective quality improvement planning at centre and CDETБ level, strengthening evidence-informed decision making within CDETБ to further benefit teaching and learning and add value to services which are delivered to learners.

Further consideration of the impact of services provided to learners within CDETБ and across all funded organisations in local and regional communities is required. This is both extensive and complex and data is currently mainly collected through PLSS.

6.2 Programme Monitoring and Review

Description

The Course/Programme Area Quality Review plays a key role in the management of quality and standards and provides the opportunity to view the entire course through the eyes of the learner in a holistic manner by the course/programme area team. This is generally conducted annually and includes an examination of assessment outcomes for learners across the course. Interim course reviews also feed into the annual course review.

Course Level Reviews

As outlined under Objective 1, CDETБ can devise many different courses for use at centre level, based on the same programme, due to the nature of some⁹² legacy validated programmes. This is a key strength and currently is the main way in which the offering to learners is modified and changed to meet changing needs.

⁹² Former VEC legacy validated programmes

Courses are monitored as part of course reviews as set out in CDET B's [Quality Maintenance Enhancement and Assurance; Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy and Procedures](#).

Course teams propose changes to Quality/Leadership teams where relevant, as a consequence of these reviews. This could include changes in pedagogy, more integrated assessment, changing part of the curriculum through different module selection, or incorporating more extra-curricular activities to name a few. Where these changes are minor, they will be carried out at centre level. Where changes require a modification to an existing programme, for example adding a module, then the centre's Quality Team will apply to the Programme Management Development Committee (PMDC) via the FET Development Unit for a modification using the P1 form.

However, where the modification is significant enough to amount to a new course offering, including a move to a blended mode of delivery for a particular centre, approval will have to be sought by the relevant centre Quality Team through the process outlined [here](#).

A recent example of when CDET B implemented this process was when alternatives were required to work experience and work placement in 2020/21. They were also classed as new course offerings, as they deviated from what had been initially offered to learners and applications for changes were managed through this already embedded process within CDET B.

See more information on CDET B's new course offerings approval process in Section 2, part II of CDET B's [Quality Assurance Procedures](#).

CDET B nominates appropriate centres to be certification centres for the delivery of newly validated programmes. CDET B assesses and approves centres to deliver an iteration of a programme i.e. a course, taking account of several factors including their ability to meet the award and programme requirements which take in Special Validation Requirements (SVRs). The senior leadership of CDET B approves certification centres for programmes leading to QQI awards, but also takes in new course offerings leading to non-QQI awards.

Programme-Level Reviews

Centres can make applications to modify (P1) the curriculum and assessment strategy of a programme including the addition of modules, the modifying of indicative content and assessment strategies in line with the relevant award specification. This currently does not involve modifying outside of this remit, including not updating learning outcomes specified in the award descriptor, so it is limited in its application.

The larger scale evaluations of programmes by CDET B is provided for in the legacy procedures applicable to each service and should occur every 5 years. However, it is important to note that these evaluations were envisaged to be carried out by the centres/services as distinct providers in their own right. This is not the case anymore as CDET B is the provider.

Therefore, the evaluation the programme descriptor and all relevant module descriptors needs to occur as part of a collaborative/collective process, with all centres delivering the related courses to ensure that the programme achieves its objectives. Over the last 5 years CDET B, undertook a number reviews across all programmes with a focus on ensuring that course delivery in centres adhered to the validated programme requirements in the following key areas:

- Consistency of all course titles utilised by centres with the overall title and aim of the relevant programme/s and linked QQI awards
- Consistency of programmes structures with the QQI major award certificate requirements
- Accuracy of programme information on the CDET B programme database.

Programme reviews, including interim reviews also occur with other awarding bodies in approved centres, for example Coláiste Dhúlaigh CFE and Ballyfermot CFE where degree programmes are delivered. This demonstrates capacity and capability in the area and the potential for leveraging this by sharing learning across CDET B and using it to inform a CDET B-level review model.

Evaluation

There is extensive activity in programme monitoring and review within CDET B, however it is curtailed in the degree of improvements which can be made as set out previously. The approach to modification respects the principle of subsidiarity and equally the new course approval process provides significant oversight of what is offered to learners in Dublin City and of which centres are best placed to do so, taking account of their capacity, capability and location. The level of new course offerings within CDET B is considerable every year.

Between 2017 and 2020 CDET B processed 422 applications for new course approvals leading to QQI awards and a further 64 for courses leading to non-QQI awards. In the 2019-20 academic year, 35 applications were made requesting change of delivery mode from face- to-face to blended delivery. This demonstrates strong practice in monitoring and review of courses delivery at centre level, as such applications represent output from such processes.

The strengths and challenges in the current processes for conducting course reviews have also been examined previously. New course offerings cannot continue to be based on the same pool of legacy programmes which require updating. Feedback from staff has made it clear that these programmes need to be updated. There is a pressing need for CDET B to review the curriculum and assessment strategies of its legacy programmes, as well as to develop new programmes. However, presently there are significant constraints involved as set out previously under Section 4.5. An agreed model for conducting effective programme-level reviews with a view to carrying out meaningful updates needs to be put in place and this requires discussion with QQI.

From staff feedback, including centre management, there is significant appetite for collaborative practice and to continue to strengthen fora within CDETБ to facilitate such practice including CoPs and PLNs. There would be considerable potential efficiencies for CDETБ to create a process for these reviews on a programme basis bringing together programme teams from across CDETБ to do this work collaboratively. A programme-review model to update the curriculum and assessments of legacy programmes in line with new QQI Validation Policies and Criteria for Programmes of Education and Training, needs to be examined by CDETБ's Programme Management Development Committee and agreed in consultation with QQI.

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Strong commitment to reviewing course offering at centre level
- Significant level of courses changes processed through the FET Unit.

Challenges

- Process of applying for approval of new courses fosters competition rather than collaboration
- Approval process is lengthy and creates tension between meeting the needs in a timely manner and co-ordination of delivery responsibilities
- Timing of decisions needs to reflect calendars of activity in service spheres, e.g., centres need decisions prior to marketing and recruitment drives
- The process does not address legacy approvals and there is an incentive to keep delivering a course in case the approval is lost
- Challenges of resourcing the management of programme review at ETБ level.

Areas for Enhancement

- Review legacy programmes (particularly the curricula and assessment strategies)
- Review the course application process
- Build on the appetite for collaborative practice to strengthen fora within CDETБ.

Conclusion

There is significant evidence of commitment based on new course-development output arising from monitoring and review activities particularly at course level. However, CDETБ and its centres and learners would benefit greatly if a model for programme-level review, that utilises models of good practice already in operation within CDETБ for different awarding bodies, is agreed and put in place in consultation with QQI, in line with CDETБ developed KPIs and statutory guidelines and utilising expertise within CDETБ. This should involve a CDETБ-led process which is collaborative in nature with relevant centres across service spheres allowing for a more integrated approach.

Recommendations made already about improving the new course application process and self-evaluation processes, including the use of relevant metrics, are also relevant here, as strengthening these processes will improve decision making. The new course application process also needs both to incorporate more CDETБ-led and collaborative practice to the benefit of all services and to issue decisions at times aligned to centre planning processes.

Finally, examining existing provision and whether consolidation needs to occur in particular areas should coincide with the examination of development opportunities as part of CDETБ's programme delivery portfolio to ameliorate any rationalisation unfairly impacting certain services or centres. A strategic planning group has been established to examine the potential future distribution of CDETБ courses. The group is incorporating multiple data sources and examining different models, both national and international, in its deliberations.

6.3 Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties

Description

It is clear from CDETБ's provider profile that it has an extensive network of relationships with other organisations⁹³ which enable it to reach more learners and enhance delivery of programmes. This report will address the following three areas:

1. Tutor Hours
2. Grant-Aided Providers
3. Contracted Training

⁹³ CDETБ Provider Profile, pp. 74-91

1. Tutor Hours

The AES delivers a substantial number of CDETБ programmes through a network of community partners under ‘tutor hours’. These community partners are generally local statutory and voluntary groups working in the local community and have long-standing relationships with CDETБ through the AES. CDETБ provides FET programmes to these groups often in the premises of the partner.

The courses (i.e. iterations of CDETБ programmes) are delivered under the quality assurance processes of CDETБ in the AES and the learners are CDETБ learners and reported as such. This involves:

Process for securing “tutor hours” under AES by community partners:

1. Applications submitted by community partners to their relevant AES region identifying local demand
2. Once approved, the organisation is notified and the number of hours identified
3. A needs assessment carried out with the learner cohort by appropriately qualified personnel within the AES
4. The relevant data is inputted to the PLSS system
5. AES tutor delivers the course and evaluates the course upon completion
6. For accredited courses: upon completion, assessment instruments and learner evidence is subject to centralised IV, EA and RAP processes and learners are in general put forward for certification at the next certification period.

Adult education learners are supported by the Adult Education Guidance staff who will assess their needs and guide them to the course most suitable for their needs. On completion of the courses the learner can discuss progression options with education guidance staff.

Courses will be delivered to the limit of the approved tutor hours for the partner organisation, and this can include the delivery of multiple courses to multiple learner cohorts depending on the needs identified.

2. Grant Aided Providers

CDETБ funds such providers through grant aid because these organisations and their staff are embedded and active in hard-to-reach communities. These organisations have built up a high degree of social capital within these communities and have a deep understanding of the needs of their clients and the trust and confidence this inspires within their communities.

Extensive social networks, local community infrastructure, expertise and local knowledge have been built up by these organisations over many years, often spanning several generations and take in a variety of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups. It is this significant social capital, community infrastructure and expertise which enables them to reach learners who are often at the greatest distance from accessing further or higher education and the labour market. Many learners who participate in adult education and training programmes delivered by adult and community education providers often progress on to CDETБ Colleges of Further Education or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

There are essentially two types of grant-aid FET relationships provided for within CDETБ, those funded and monitored by:

- **Finglas Training Centre:** The funding of not-for-profit community providers that deliver CDETБ programmes funded through Finglas Training Centre using the Training Centre QA procedures. These community providers include Community Training Centres (CTCs)⁹⁴, Local Training Initiatives⁹⁵ (LTIs) and Specialist Training Providers (STPs)⁹⁶ classed as second providers⁹⁷
- **The Adult Education service:** The funding by CDETБ of not-for-profit community providers that deliver their own programmes through the AES.

Both types of arrangements are provided for under detailed Service Level Agreements (SLAs). All current arrangements are legacy arrangements reflecting long standing relationships. The SLAs applicable to those coming under the Training Centres were previously devised by FÁS while AES SLAs were originally designed by CDVEC. Both SLAs are in line with the DPE Circular 13/2014 on grant aid⁹⁸ which sets out the responsibilities of both grantor and grantee as part of the management of and accountability for grants from Exchequer Funds. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two arrangements. Those grant-aided through the Training Centres must deliver under the CDETБ QA system applicable to Training Centres and are therefore second providers. While, in contrast, those grant-aided through the AES are invariably providers in their own right and deliver their programmes under their own quality assurance systems. There are two exceptions to the latter in the AES which could be considered more accurately as hybrid arrangements. For these arrangements, in addition to the conditions which apply under the grant-aid agreements, they are subject to the same process as those provided under tutor hours; however, the organisation’s tutor(s) will deliver the curriculum.

⁹⁴ Target learner group tends to be young people similar to Youthreach services

⁹⁵ Target learner group tends to be adults returning to education

⁹⁶ Target learner group tends to be learners with disabilities and have more specialised facilities

⁹⁷ A second provider is the term used when another provider (QQI registered or not) delivers a CDETБ programme on our behalf to our learners.

⁹⁸ [Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds \(circulars.gov.ie\)](#)

3. Contracted Training

These are contracted second providers that deliver CDETБ programmes using Training Centre QA procedures. Currently contracted training is limited to one course area in aircraft maintenance⁹⁹ and was subject to a bespoke e-tendering arrangement pursuant to public procurement requirements. Outside of these, contracted training is not currently used in CDETБ. However, this will change with the establishment of a new national framework for contracted training which has been developed in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). The Request for Tenders (RFT) was advertised but is now closed¹⁰⁰. Once established, CDETБ will be a contracted authority and be in a position to use appointed contracted trainers under the framework. In general, contracted training allows CDETБ to utilise private providers of education and training for the following purposes:

- Use the plant and resources of other organisations negating the need for CDETБ to invest in such resources
- To be able to trial pilot programmes without long-term commitments
- To be able to respond quickly to unforeseen and pressing needs within Dublin city, for example, a large employer closing down.

Contracted trainers deliver CDETБ programmes under the CDETБ’s QA system applicable to Training Centres and are subject to monitoring and review under those processes by Training Centre personnel. This includes site visits.

⁹⁹ [Aircraft Maintenance Technician Traineeship - Finglas Training Centre](#)

¹⁰⁰ <https://irl.eu-supply.com/ctm/Supplier/PublicPurchase/109652/0/0?returnUrl=&b=>

Figure 16: Relationship between CDETБ Adult Education Service (AES) and Partner Organisations

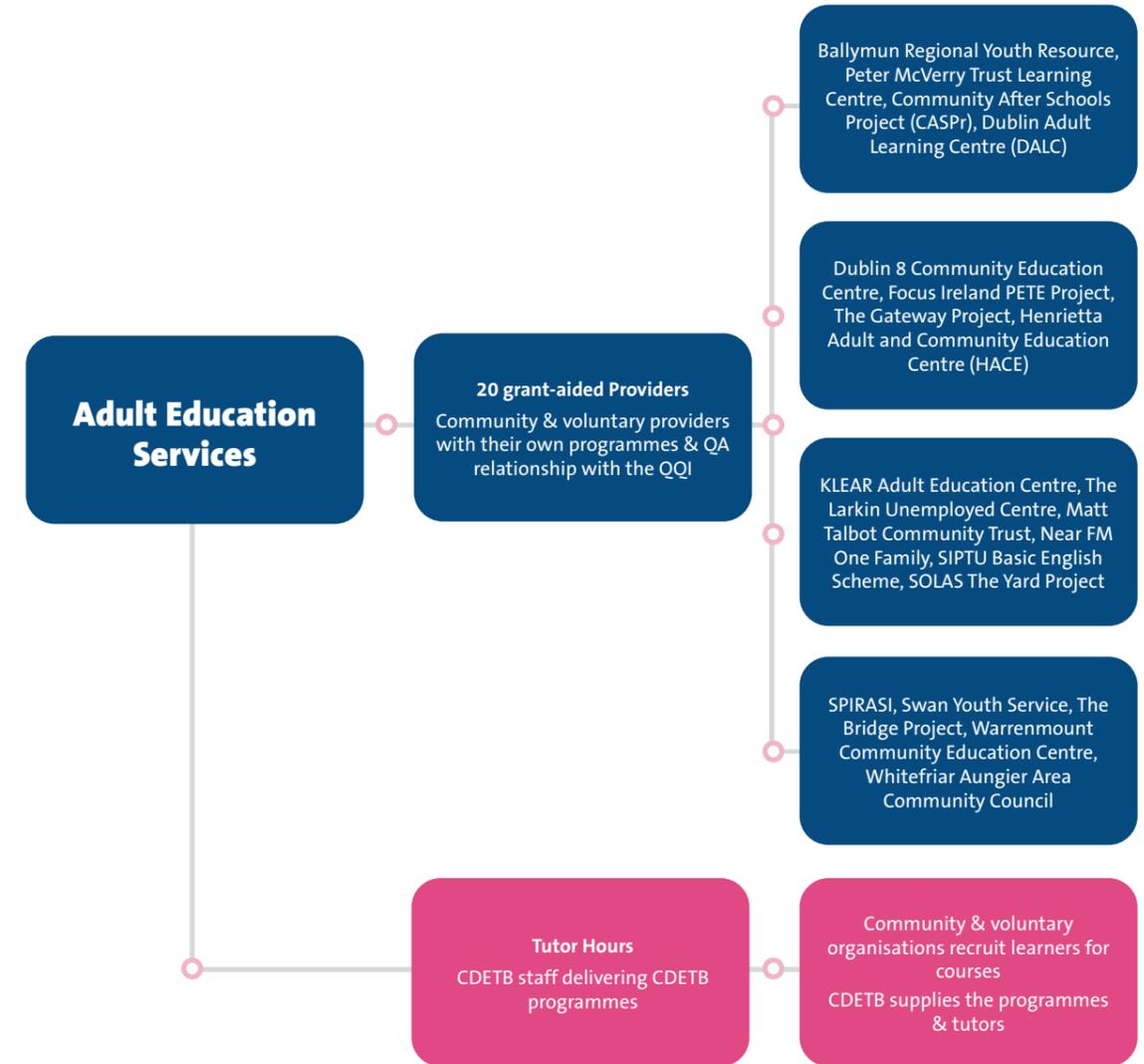
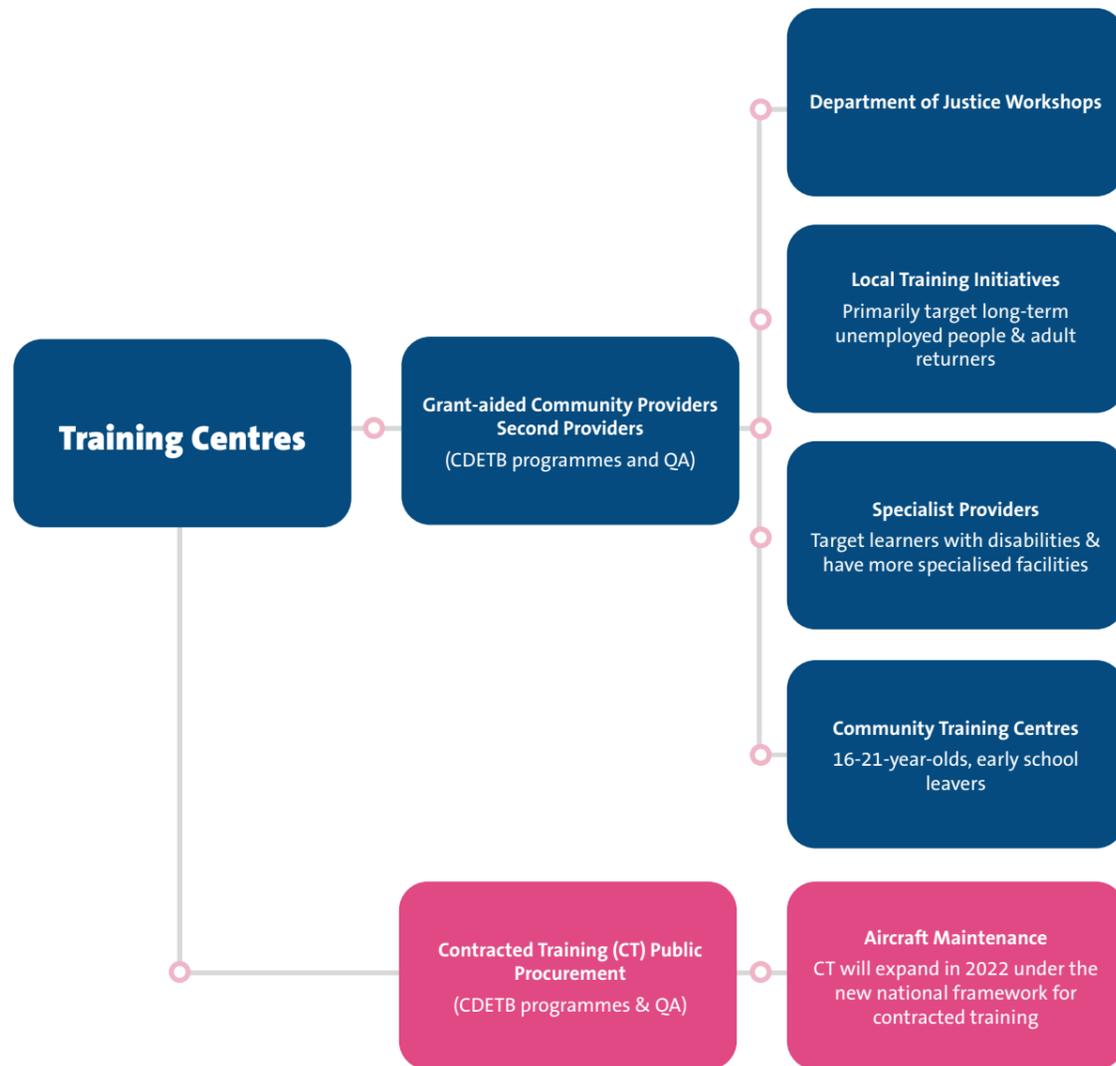


Figure 17: Relationship between CDETБ Training Centres and Partner Organisations



In 2019, CDETБ undertook a review, under the auspices of a cross-service CDETБ working group, of the area of collaborative arrangements and the provision of further education and training within local communities and communities of interest within the Adult Education Service. The focus was to assess the impact of new quality-assurance policies/guidelines issued by QQI on this sector and what it meant for CDETБ.

This approach reflects CDETБ's belief that community partners are essential in the successful delivery of FET programmes especially at the lower levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and for non-accredited programmes.

These partner organisations are key to CDETБ meeting European and national goals in achieving greater participation in FET programmes by educationally disadvantaged and socially excluded groups¹⁰¹ as provided for under:

- The Operational Guidelines Department of Education and Skills Community Education Programme, Operational Guidelines for Providers 2012
- The Department of Education and Skills Adult Literacy Programme Operational Guidelines for providers 2012
- The Department of Education and Skills Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) Operational Guidelines for providers 2012
- The Department of Education and Skills Adult Education Guidance Initiative Operational Guidelines for providers 2012
- The Further Education and Training Strategy as part of inclusion
- The European Quality Assurance Framework (EQAVET)¹⁰² because of the prevalence of vulnerable groups in further education.

The relationships with these organisations are an asset to CDETБ and will continue to be protected.

Selection of Collaborative Partners

When CDETБ enters into collaborative arrangements CDETБ adheres to the clear selection criteria, in particular where they relate to programme delivery, as outlined in the [QQI Sector Specific Statutory Guidelines that apply to ETBs](#).

A number of indicative areas are considered by CDETБ in respect of new prospective partners seeking to offer programmes with an ETБ through a collaborative arrangement, in particular, as second providers, and those seeking to continue to offer programmes under an existing collaborative arrangement. The QQI guidelines are interpreted in proportion to the level of responsibility that an ETБ delegates to a provider(s). The guidelines apply in full where considerable responsibility is delegated. Where less responsibility is delegated, expectations are less onerous¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ The learner group classification term of educationally disadvantaged and socially excluded is provided for under the Operational Guidelines Department of Education and Skills Community Education Programme, Operational Guidelines for Providers 2012.

¹⁰² Ireland is a signatory of EQAVET and QQI is the National Reference Point (NRP).

¹⁰³ [QQI Statutory Sector Specific – ETBs QA Guidelines, May 2017, Section 5.2, page 9](#)

The guidelines also reflect the need to ensure due diligence is conducted prior to entering into arrangements with third parties to ensure associated risks are identified and where present can be sufficiently addressed. This requirement is also reflected in the Code of Governance for Education and Training Boards¹⁰⁴. Programme delivery via third parties constitutes the highest level of risk to an education and training provider and there should be clear criteria employed as part of selection processes.

Evaluation

The current collaborative arrangements allow for CDET B to reach vulnerable groups of learners within their communities through long-standing relationships with community partners and specialist providers. These relationships benefit learners in Dublin city considerably and are intrinsically linked to CDET B's mission and values and recognised in the founding legislation of ETBs as there is a legal requirement for CDET B to collaborate with other providers.

Tutor Hours

This is an effective scheme in both the range of community providers and the beneficiaries. It allows the AES to deliver on key sectoral objectives and government policy on increasing participation of vulnerable groups in education. In addition, it allows CDET B to deliver on its mission to contribute to the personal development of the individual and the social, cultural and economic development of the city. This is particularly true of hard to reach learner cohorts across the city.

Documentation in relation to tutor hours would benefit from a more consistent approach across the AES. The wording used in the documentation does not always reflect that CDET B programmes are delivered under these arrangements and not partner organisation programmes. However, overall, this collaborative arrangement is significant in extending the reach of CDET B to more vulnerable learners through community partners working in the area.

Grant Aided Providers AES

The SLA which applies to grant aided providers in the AES reflects the nature of these arrangements and the fact that the majority are delivering their own programmes under their own QA. There is provision for the hybrid relationship in the main body of the SLA, which can be confusing, as it gives the impression that the clauses apply to all relevant organisations, which is not the case. An addendum to the SLA could deal with the adapted processes for these two arrangements. Monitoring as part of AES processes is of a more involved but informal nature as it relies on long-standing relationships and continual communications between members of AES leadership teams and their equivalents in the grant aided providers.

¹⁰⁴ gov.ie - Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards (www.gov.ie)

It is clear from the CDET B facilitated consultation with grant-aided community providers that took place in 2019¹⁰⁵ that CDET B's position was to encourage these providers to re-engage with QQI to maintain their independence and autonomy and wanted to hear from community providers themselves in this regard. The two key concerns voiced by the groups were in relation to the following:

- The resourcing and costs associated with QQI re-engagement and whether funding would be provided by CDET B
- The issue of capacity in terms of programme development as it requires significant and time and expertise.

Grant-Aided Second Providers and Contracted Training (Training Centres)

After ensuring suitability, CDET B is required to quality assure provision from Access (recruitment/selection/induction) through to Progression (certification/progression routes/ CAO/Learner queries) and everything in between, where CDET B programmes are being delivered by another provider to ensure parity as if it were being delivered by CDET B.

Second providers delivering CDET B programmes under CDET B Training Centre QA participated directly in the self-evaluation process, including learner consultation events, and provided considerable feedback in this regard. Prior to this, staff from community providers has also contributed to the development of many QA initiatives including in alternative assessment and programme development.

The SLAs that apply to these grant-aided providers are detailed and provide for monitoring, with dedicated personnel in the area of assessment and service evaluation who conduct site visits. As part of learner consultation, many learners from second providers gave feedback on their experience which was as equally as positive as the feedback from learners in CDET B centres. However, it is worth noting that some learners were of the view that their courses did not meet their needs; that course titles should be clearer; that there was a lack of access to appropriate equipment for their course.

Consideration needs to be given where services have funding arrangements applied to them which are linked to learner recruitment, and it represents an additional risk factor. This has been identified previously under Access, Transfer and Progression - Objective 1 (f).

In the consultation process, staff from community providers requested greater access to PLD and Communities of Practice, and access to a Moodle platform for learners.

The new contracted training framework will require examination and discussion in the QASPC.

¹⁰⁵ 9th September 2019, in AES Regional Office in Ballymun

Evidence of Effective Practice

- Collaborative relationships with community partners meet CDETb's mission and values and legislative responsibility to reach vulnerable groups of learners within their own communities, thereby contributing to the social, cultural and economic life of the city
- Tutor hours allow CDETb, through the AES, to deliver on key sectoral objectives, government policy and its own mission and values by increasing participation of vulnerable groups in education
- Thorough and detailed SLAs allow for mitigating risk.

Challenges

- Currently, there is no documented selection process for entering into collaborative arrangements, particularly in relation to new partnerships
- There will be considerable costs for community providers associated with the re-engagement with QQI
- Currently no formal arrangement exists for the appropriate sharing of CDETb curricula with community providers and for the involvement of these providers in the co-design of programmes
- Documentation covering activities funded through tutor hours is inconsistent across the AES, and does not reflect that CDETb delivers their own programmes under these arrangements
- Currently the existing CDETb working group on community provision does not include Training Centre staff
- Addressing risks inherent in arrangements with collaborative partnerships
- Resource implications for CDETb particularly around supporting collaborative providers with programme development.

Areas for Enhancement

- Develop a documented selection process for entering into collaborative arrangements, particularly in relation to new partnerships
- Provision of additional funding to support community providers re-engaging with QQI
- Develop a MOU with community providers providing for:
 - the appropriate sharing of curricula between CDETb
 - the co-design of programmes

- Develop a consistent documented approach to highlight the significant work undertaken by the AES with community organisation and providers
- Extend the CDETb working group on community provision to include Training Centre staff with responsibility in this area
- Ensure access to second providers to CDETb PLD initiatives
- Identify and address risks involved in collaborative arrangements.

Conclusion

The relationships with collaborative partners are a key organisational asset for CDETb, however, there are also inherent risks with such arrangements which have to be appropriately recognised and addressed.

It is in the interests of both CDETb and the community providers granted aided through the AES for those community providers to maintain their status and autonomy as providers in their own right.

Finally, although access to PLD is often dependent on CDETb email addresses for security reasons, every effort should be made to provide reasonable and appropriate access to staff from second providers in the community in PLD initiatives including CoPs as they are delivering CDETb programmes.

7.

Conclusions

7. Conclusions

CDETБ is relatively new as a corporate entity, but with a long history in further education and training. It has very strong quality culture which has shone through as part of this institutional review, including the appetite of staff for more collaborative practice. This is a key resource asset of the organisation and an important dimension to the quality assurance system. CDETБ has also been developing capacity to meet a multitude of new sectoral demands, which has required the development of institutional-level systems as part of quality assurance and new FET funding and reporting arrangements including extensive data collection systems.

While *'culture eats strategy for breakfast'*¹⁰⁶, it is also important that a positive culture is supported by organisational systems and strategies that accurately reflect the mission and cultural values of the organisation. This resource asset can be eroded without sufficient recognition and support.

The organisation has achieved significant advances in institutional development through taking a collaborative approach. However, these systems are still developing and require more modification and adaptation to support corporate-level decision-making at all levels informed by strengthened self-evaluation systems. The latter system needs to make more provision for better data utilisation and the use of metrics for performance measurement which are CDETБ-developed and reflect CDETБ's mission, values and strategic objectives, while also respecting the diversity of CDETБ provision. CDETБ has developed great capacity in the area of self-evaluation as part of this institutional review. It is important that the gains made are consolidated and embedded further. This includes ensuring that learner, staff, and stakeholder voices continue to be amplified as part of these activities and that both reflective and collaborative practice as part of quality improvement continue to be supported.

As part of this, CDETБ must be mindful of providing appropriate centre-level/service-level autonomy as part of quality-improvement planning and implementation, which is subject to effective oversight at corporate level and which adds value. CDETБ is a multi-service, multi-centre provider; quality assurance must be effective in this context and must respect the principle of subsidiarity, by ensuring corporate-level governance structures and decision-making add value and do not act as 'choke hold' on quality improvement occurring at appropriate levels. Finally, as part of further system development, the appropriate balance also needs to be struck between administrative burden and the impact this has on teaching and learning.

¹⁰⁶ Often attributed to Peter Drucker, Management Consultant (1909-2005)

CDETБ is an organisation where most staff are engaged in direct delivery, which means both quality-assurance and regulatory-compliance activities often require the redirection of time and resources from teaching and learning to these activities. It is therefore essential that these activities add value to programme delivery and the learning experience.

CDETБ's programmes are its key products, and it is important that a provider can update programme curriculum and assessment strategies to meet learner needs, especially with the diversity of learner groups which CDETБ caters for. Despite the challenges and limitations presented in this report, CDETБ is delivering effectively on its mission, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Moving towards more institutional capacity building in areas such as ATP, learner supports, and programme monitoring will create more efficiencies and synergies across the organisation. Work is required to achieve the developments requisite for CDETБ to remain true to its mission, values and strategic objectives, while also meeting sectoral demands. Resourcing is needed in key areas to support this. Resourcing needs to occur at levels which reflect the size of CDETБ provision, at centre, service and corporate levels. It requires all service spheres to be working together with sufficient resourcing to implement new initiatives.

8. Appendices

8. Appendices

[Link](#) to folder of all appendices and hyperlinks in this document

<http://cdetbcdu.ie/index.php/inaugural-review-appendices/>



QAI AWARD

CDETb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
City of Dublin Education and Training Board

CDETb Administrative Offices
Town Hall, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
DO4 PP46

Tel: 668 0614 Fax: 668 0710
E-mail: info@cdetb.ie
Web: www.cdetb.ie

