

ANNUAL FET LEARNER SURVEY REPORT 1: INDUCTION

2022-2023 

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The Annual FET Learner Survey is an important tool that can be used to actively hear from learners and allow for evidence-based decision-making.

This year's survey was issued on 15th March to all service spheres. The survey sought to gather general feedback on the learner's experience in Further Education and Training in City of Dublin Education and Training Board. In addition, three thematic areas were identified for inclusion in this year's survey.

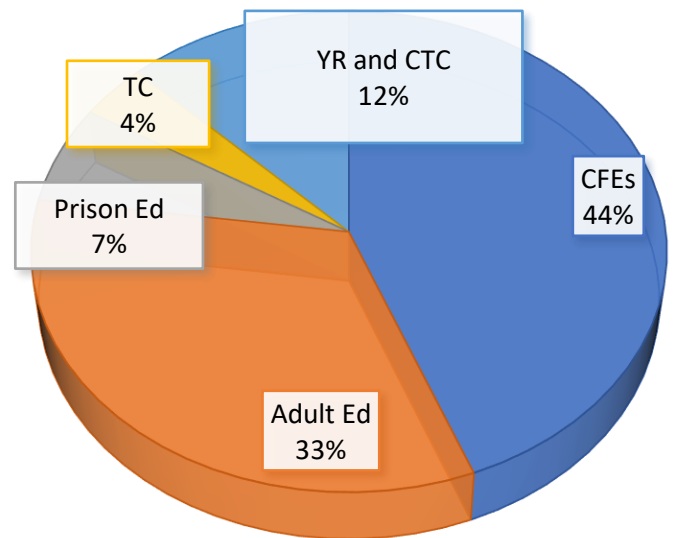
- Induction
- Social/Extra-Curricular Activities
- Progression Planning

Once the surveys were closed, results for each centre were produced and disseminated to the centres that participated.

Participation by learners across the scheme totalled **2144** responses representing a **279%** increase from 2021-2022.

Acknowledging the nuanced differences in provision models across service spheres, we attempted to maintain tones of similarity within the themes when developing the survey. However, sometimes it was necessary to include service sphere specific questions.

In this issue of the report, over-arching findings will be shared in relation to the core questions and those related to induction. The aim is to not only share the findings but also allow for a comprehensive understanding of what the survey entailed, what our intent was, what we hoped to discover along with possible steps moving forward based on the findings.



Level of participation by each service sphere in the survey

CORE QUESTIONS

The aim when drawing up the 'core' questions was to establish benchmarking questions that could be repeated each year, including data that has not previously been sought. This would allow for the development of historic data collection which in turn would enable us to trace trajectory of our learners and their enrolment from various fields. These core questions addressed the following: age of learners, ethnicity and the languages spoken by them, enrolment on full-time or part-time programmes, NFQ level of programme, channels through which learners found out about the course and if they had the specialist equipment needed for their course.

While **51.45%** of respondents were enrolled in full-time courses, **47.43%** were part-time and **1.12%** in Craft Apprenticeships.

LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Since we had never investigated the cultural diversity of our learners, through this year's survey, the initiative was undertaken to try and capture this information. It should be noted that the results from this year show a need to refine the wording for questions on ethnicity and languages spoken to get a more

accurate picture. While learners could select their ethnic description that best described their ethnicity, the option was also included for Other. In many cases (**155 learners**) learners used this option to insert their nationality. Similarly, when asked about languages, learners mentioned all the languages they might have studied at school as opposed to the native languages they would have spoken with their families.

LANGUAGE

2063 learners (**96%** response rate) responded to the question about the languages they had grown up with, with many listing multiple languages. In total, **85 languages** were recorded, highlighting the linguistic diversity of our learner body. English (**56.8%**), Irish (**10.84%**) and Ukrainian (**4.6%**) were the most spoken languages. Since the question was open-ended and interpreted differently, the data collected might not be extremely accurate. Nonetheless, besides English, Irish and Ukrainian, some other languages most commonly spoken by our learners were

- Russian
- Romanian
- Spanish and Polish
- Arabic
- Somali
- Portuguese
- Ndebele
- Chinese, German and Italian
- Yoruba
- Lithuanian
- Bengali
- Lingala and Tigrinya

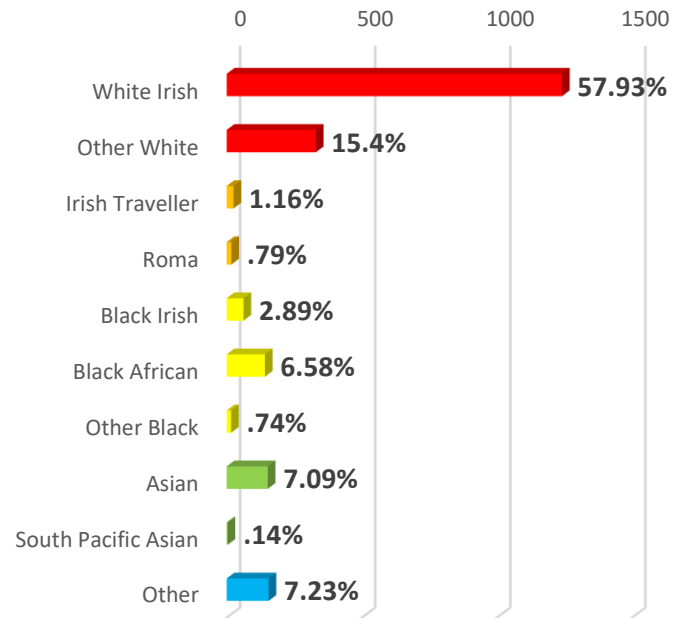
Mentions of other languages included but aren't limited to Zulu, Urdu, Pashto, Persian, Tagalog, Latvian, Croatian, Georgian, Shona, Igbo, Swahili, Hindi, Afrikaans, Irish Sign Language (ISL), Creole, Hungarian, Tamil, Japanese, Albanian, Amharic, Filipino etc.

The number of languages presented span the global map and truly highlight how diverse our learning population is.



The 85 languages spoken by our learners.

ETHNICITY



The ethnic demographic of our learners.

Looking into the ethnicity of our learners, while learners who are White Irish are the

largest demographic, across the scheme, the numbers still total to only **57.93%** of the entire learning population.

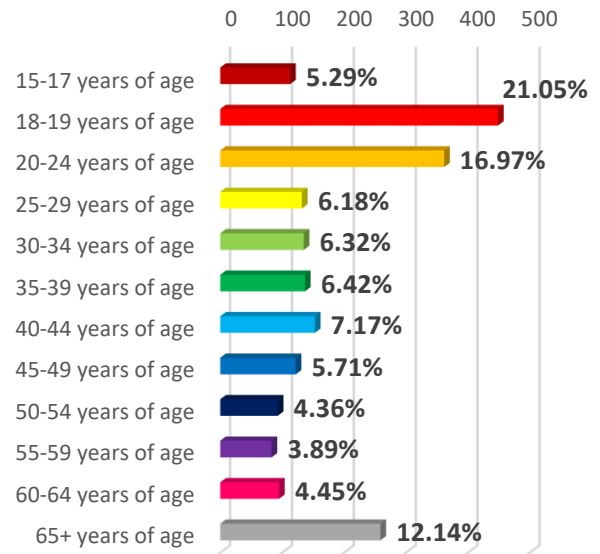
This implies that around **42%** of our learners aren't of Irish descent and this yet again, speaks to the distinctness represented by our learners. We cater to a wide-ranging cohort of ethnicities. Other White (**15.4%**) and Asian (**7.09%**) were recorded as the second and third largest ethnicities.

However, while White Irish and Other White are the predominant ethnicities in each service sphere, there are differences in the representation of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds in different parts of our provision. The third largest ethnicity in Colleges of Further Education, Youthreach (including Community Training Centres) were learners from **Black African** backgrounds while in Prison Education, it was **Irish Traveller** and **Asian** in Adult Education and Training Centres.

By capturing data regarding ethnicity and language, we can begin to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the engagement with minority groups and work towards improving our approach and supports for them.

AGE

Across the scheme, participation was highest by learners aged 18-19, followed by learners aged 20-24 and the third highest engagement was from learners aged 65+.



Age bracket of learners.

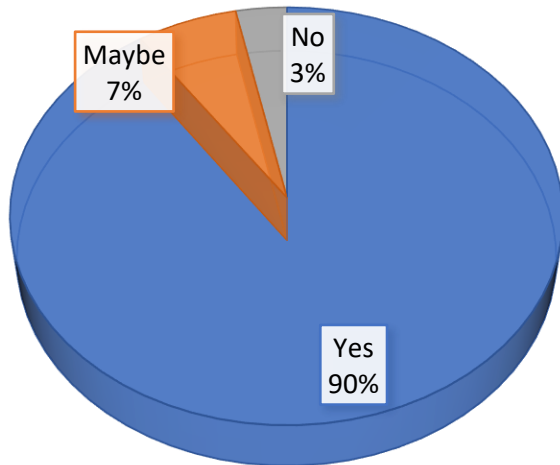
While analysing the data of learners from an age perspective, if we demarcate the learners under the age of 25 and over the age of 25, the participation has been recorded as **43.32%** and **56.68%** respectively.

While the participation by learners ages under 25 was significantly higher in Colleges of Further Education, it was almost equal in Training Centres. In both Prison Education and Adult Education, participation was higher for learners aged 25 and older.

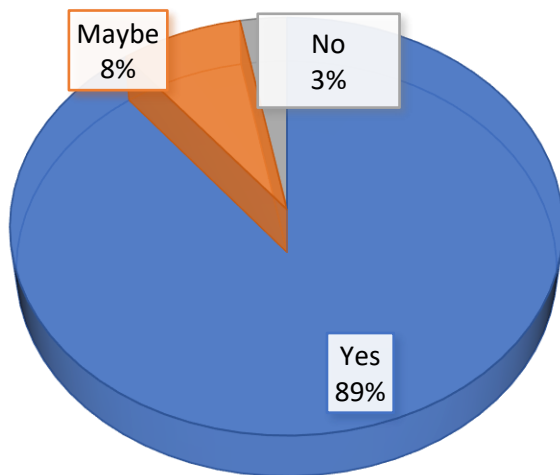
COURSE AND CENTRE SATISFACTION

Overall, learners enrolled on City of Dublin FET programmes would recommend their course and their centre to others. **90%** of learners enrolled in courses in City of Dublin ETB FET centres would recommend the course, while **89%** of learners would recommend the centre.

This speaks to the overall satisfaction our learners feel regarding their learning environment and their chosen education studies.



Learners' response to the question, 'Would you recommend the course?'



Learners' response to the question, 'Would you recommend the centre?'

The largest positive response stemmed from the Adult Education Service, where both questions were documented at **97%**, followed by Youthreach (**97%**), Training Centres (**94%**) while the lowest was from Colleges of Further Education (**83%**).

It is worth noting that learners in Colleges of Further Education were slightly more likely to recommend their centre over their course. For all other centres, the course recommendation was more than the centre recommendation.

INDUCTION

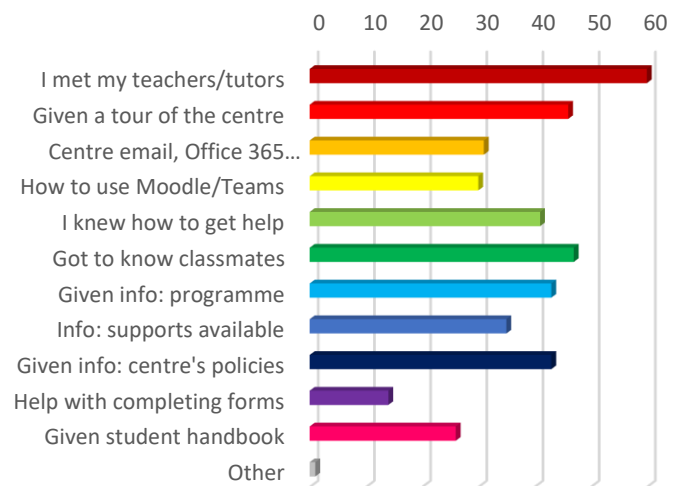
Induction was the first of the three themes explored in the learner survey.

In an attempt to gauge what resources were accessible to our learners, what might have been missing and also what our learners would prefer to have, learners were given a number of multiple-choice questions with the option of providing their own commentary.

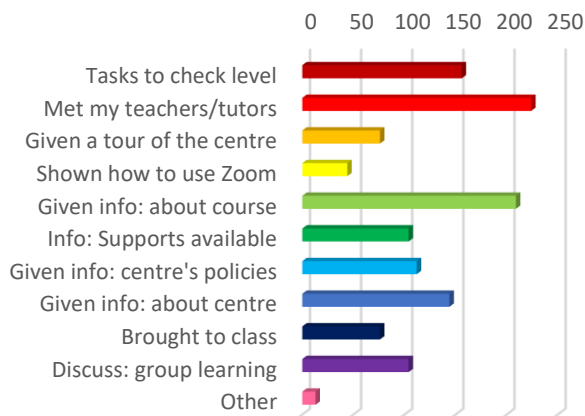
While we tried to replicate and maintain the range of questions across the scheme, the uniqueness of provision model and learner cohorts in some service spheres necessitated adaptations to these questions.



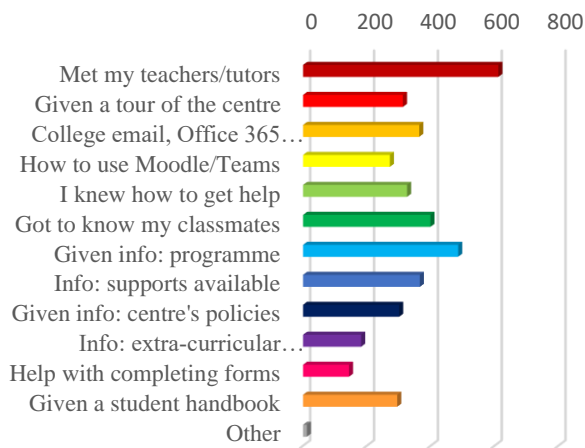
What induction looks like in Youthreach



What induction looks like in Training Centres



What induction (meeting) looks like in Adult Ed



What induction looks like in Colleges of Further Education

Some of the questions that were similar in intent and context asked to learners across all service spheres included the variety of resources provided to them during induction, how they felt after induction, how induction could be improved and what technological resources they were given access to.

Despite this, commonalities emerged, echoed by learners from each sphere. Learners were asked, through open-ended questions, what they believed could be done to improve induction for future learners starting a course. Their feedback is outlined in the section below.

'Access to more information':

It was evident that learners are seeking more information at induction than is sometimes provided.

From the open-ended questions that were asked and with the option to add additional comments under other questions, almost **130 comments** made by learners from Colleges of Further Education, Adult Education, Training Centres and Prison Education reflected the need for more information.

At the induction stage, learners would like more information about:

- The course
- The modules
- The campus
- The timetable
- Assessment schedules/submission deadlines

Below is a small selection of comments regarding learners wanting more information.

'Have an information day/course. Distribute information booklets.'
 - Learner from Adult Ed (65+ years of age)

'I think the timetable could be a bit more organised and improved'
 - Learner from College of Further Ed (45-49 years of age)

'Send an email out before attending, letting us know all the information and everything we need.'
 - Apprentice from Training Centre (20-24 years of age, Plumbing)

'...I found myself having to ask simple questions about the course weeks after induction.'
 - Learner from College of Further Ed (18-19 years of age)

'A timeline for when assignments will be due and dates for exams.'
 - Apprentice from Training Centre (20-24 years of age)

'Give information re what is available to us – further education/courses in other centres...no info given to students re complaints policies/health and safety policies...'

 - Learner from Adult Ed (65+ years of age)

'Access to IT/Support with IT':

Across the scheme, learners repeatedly mentioned IT as being a recurring issue.

Around **105 comments** made under the open-ended questions talked of IT as an issue. These comments were made by learners from Colleges of Further Education, Prison Education and Adult Education.

The issues reported by learners included but weren't limited to:

- Laptops not being issued on time
- Email accounts not being set up
- Upskilling IT skills
- Inability to use software and/or difficulty accessing and actively using IT software
- Not having up-to-date IT tech required for courses

Following are a few comments regarding learners wanting access to and support with IT.

'Allow a more relaxed IT access as the world have migrated solely to a whole new digital experience.'

 - Learner from Prison Ed (40-44 years of age)

'Maybe have the old projectors in the rooms with the fancy whiteboard projectors cause sometimes the newer technology ie. The fancy whiteboards doesn't work.'

 - Learner from Adult Ed (20-25 years of age)

'Distribution of laptops should be on time.'

 - Learner from College of Further Ed (40-44 years of age)

'Provide students with reasons why they were not given laptops by the school regardless of completing the laptop scheme form.'

 - Learner from College of Further Ed (18-19 years of age)

'More access to computers and the internet especially for people learning to read, write and touch typing.'

 - Learner from Prison Ed (65+ years of age)

'Remind them to have important resources needed for the course like a working laptop, camera.'

 - Learner from Adult Ed (40-45 years of age)

'More internet and computer-based learning and support is needed in order to fit into the world we are going back into.'

 - Learner from Prison Ed (30-34 years of age)

'Help me with my computer/literacy skills.'

 - Learner from Adult Ed (65+ years of age)

'A lot of the mature students in my class had very little knowledge of computers. I think a quick lesson for anyone who might want or need it would be very beneficial as it could relieve some of the stress.'

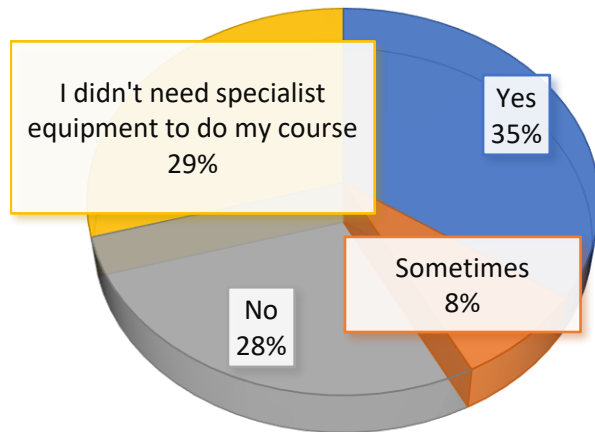
 - Learner from College of Further Ed (20-24 years of age)

'...use a week before the course starts so students and staff can all get into the college system with all emails and passwords working, this will improve learning and teaching from the first day as it will lessen stress of student passwords not working.'

 - Learner from College of Further Ed (45-49 years of age)

It is important to note though, that of the service spheres that were asked if they were provided with the necessary technical

equipment required for their course, 28% of learners across the board stated that they did not receive the required equipment.



Learners from Colleges of Further Education were more likely to state that they did not receive the specialist equipment needed for their course.

However, an analysis of survey responses from 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 suggests a rewording of this question will be necessary for next year so that learners are first asked if they required access to specialist equipment and if so, then are asked further questions as it is possible there has been a misinterpretation of this question given the high percentage of learners that indicated that they didn't receive the equipment and the low number of qualitative responses from learners commenting on access to equipment.

'Social Interaction during Induction':

The final commonality that emerged revolved around social interaction. Learners want opportunities for social interaction as part of the induction process, e.g.

- Meeting previous learners
- Meeting classmates prior to commencement of classes
- Organisation of activities to engage with learners from other courses/other centres
- Informal interactions with tutors

Around **170 comments** reflected the desire for opportunities to interact socially and it stemmed from learners in Adult Ed, Training Centres and Colleges of Further Ed.

Following is a selection of comments regarding learners seeking opportunities to interact socially.

'...the social aspect is very important as you get older and to keep active and busy.'

- Learner from Adult Ed (65+ years of age)

'Have more time to get to know classmates.'

- Apprentice from Training Centre (20-24 years of age)

'I feel more social events or a fun class trip to get to know people more would help people settle in better.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (18-19 years of age)

'Allow us time to familiarise ourselves with the rooms and teachers.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (20-24 years of age)

'You have to organise some meetings with students to know each other.'

- Learner from Adult Ed (35-39 years of age)

'Meet classmates first and get to know them.'

- Apprentice from Training Centre (20-24 years of age)

'Introduce all tutors before the course starts'

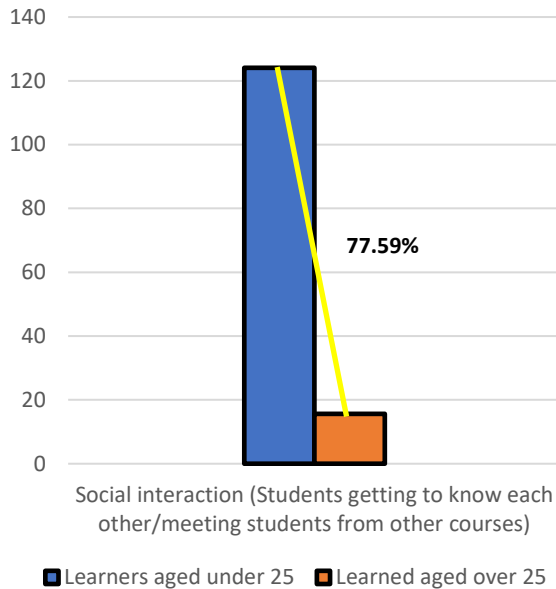
- Learner from College of Further Ed (35-39 years of age)

'Meet and greet with previous learners might also help...'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (65+ years of age)

An interesting finding that was made during the analysis of the data around social interaction within Colleges of Further

Education was the strong difference of opinion within learners if we were to demarcate them by age. Learners aged under 25 made up for **60.01%** of the learner population whereas for learners aged over 25, it was **39.89%**



Focussing specifically on comments made about social interaction and by using age as a factor of analysis, it was recorded that the difference in preference for social interaction by learners aged under 25 as opposed to learners aged over 25 is almost **78%**

Concluding remarks

The incredible response from learners in FET regarding this year has allowed us to compile a large reservoir of information. The more learners engage with the survey, the more representative it is which will allow us to visualise a better picture of what our learners need and how we can go about supporting them better.

Since it was not compulsory for learners to write their opinions for each open-ended question, the data recorded and presented so far has depended purely on how high or low the level of engagement was with the questions. While some service spheres had well over 1000 comments to pull data from, other service spheres had less than 100.

Lastly, the absence of Youthreach from this section of the findings is most likely a direct result of the structured implementation of the induction process as there were no suggestions for improvement from Youthreach learners regarding this theme.

Moving forward, the next report will address the themes of 'Social/Extra-Curricular Activities' and 'Progression Planning'.