BORD OIDEACHAIS
AGUS OILIÚNA CHIARRAÍ

KERRY EDUCATION
AND TRAINING BOARD

KERRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

FET CONSULTATION PROCESS

Stakeholder Focus Group Sessions - QA Unit 2021

In preparation for the Inaugural QQI Institutional Review, Kerry ETB embarked on a series of focus group consultations with key stakeholders. Fourteen focus group sessions, with 139 participants, took place and the discussions are documented here. This document will inform the Kerry ETB Self Evaluation Report and pertains to a particular focus on meeting learner needs and teaching and learning processes.

QA Unit 2021

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Report Structure

This report is presented in three distinct sections.

SECTION 1 outlines the methodological approach used.

SECTION 2 contains individual reports from each focus group session commencing with learner focus groups, leading into the staff focus groups under the three different themed areas, Virtual Learning Environment, Learning Styles and Learner Supports.
This section concludes with the employer focus group session and collaborative partner's focus group session.

SECTION 3 documents the common themes that emerged from the focus group sessions with the key stakeholders - learners, staff and employers. It also offers some recommendations.

One Word

Learners were asked to offer one word to describe their experience of learning with Kerry ETB. These are the words that were provided by learners.

Fulfilling

Exceptional

Supportive

Competent

Optimistic

Inspiring

Good

Eye-Opening

Optimistic

Empowering

Gratitude

Worthwhile

Inclusive

Positive

Beneficial

Amazing

Enjoyable

Interactive

Emotional

Great

Experience

Belonging

Privileged

Stress-free

Memorable

Empowerment

Unique

Progression

Memorable

Growth

Invigorating

Professional

1 | Context and Methodological Approach

In preparation for the inaugural QQI institutional review, Kerry ETB embarked on a process of self-evaluation, part of which consisted of fourteen focus group sessions with learners, staff, employers and partners. The process was agreed at the Inaugural Review Steering Group and documented in its Implementation Plan, or identified as an additional action in review.

Questionnaires were designed and shared with Campus Managers/Principals/ AEOs for circulation to staff, learners and employers (see Appendix One). Based on the content of the questionnaires and the emerging themes the purpose of the focus groups was agreed by the QA Governance Board on 22nd March 2021, as were the specific questions (see Appendix Two and Three).

The focus groups with learners focused on the Learning Environment and touched on all common areas. The focus groups with staff also focused specifically on 'The Learning Environment' and on the following:
• Virtual Learning Environment
• Learning Styles
• Learner Support

A focus group to explore the role of Kerry ETB in supporting those most distanced from the education and training system also took place and another to explore the role in supporting employers in the region.

At each focus group session the facilitator asked all to verify that the session could be recorded and that contact details could be retained for future contact and/ or invite to future meetings. The sessions took place between Thursday 25th March and Wednesday 12th May 2021.

1.1 Selection Process

The learners were selected by staff within the centre. Learner selection was largely based on the availability to participate in the focus group session. Teachers, tutors and instructors were invited to attend by the AEO/ Principal/ Campus Manager. Employers were identified through the Business Support Unit, Kerry College, Monavalley Campus.

1.2 Participation

All fourteen focus group consultation meetings took place using the Kerry ETB and Kerry College MS Teams platforms. In total 139 people participated in the focus group sessions. Invites were issued centrally by the offices of the Principal, AEO or Campus Manager and all meetings (bar one) were facilitated by a staff member from the QA Unit. There was a good level of participation in the focus group consultation process and this is outlined in the table below:

Staff	Staff No.	Learners	Learner No.	Employers	No.	Partners	No.
Kerry College Monavalley Campus	10	Kerry College Monavalley Campus	8	Employers (through Business Support Unit)	6	Social Health and Education Project (SHEP)	4
Kerry College Denny Street, Clash Road, Listowel Campuses	14	Kerry College Denny Street, Clash Road, Listowel Campuses	27				
FET Centres	10	FET Centres	7				
Youthreach	7	Youthreach	9				
VTOS & YR Learning Support Teachers	6	VTOS Learners	9				
VTOS Teachers & Co-Ordinators	12						
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Working Group	10						
TOTAL	69		60		6		4

GRAND TOTAL = 139 PARTICIPANTS

2 | Focus Group Reports

2.1 Learner Focus Groups

1. KERRY COLLEGE DENNY STREET, CLASH ROAD, LISTOWEL CAMPUSES

FOCUS GROUP Friday 26th March 2021

Twenty seven learners attended a focus group session on Friday 26th March from 11.15-12.30pm. The meeting was organised by Stephen Goulding, Kerry College and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit.

Stephen Goulding did a short introduction outlining the purpose of the meeting. Aoife McCormack asked all to verify that the session could be recorded and that QA Unit/Kerry College could retain their contact details and make contact with all in the future if QQI requested a meeting with this group. All agreed and inputted their agreement into the chat feature.

Experience of Kerry College to Date
Overall the response was positive with some learners identifying the difficulty with not having had work experience. They identified the gap in preparing assignments and difficulty in engaging with the Level 5 Personal and Professional Development module (PPD) which some said was not relevant. However, the overwhelming response was positive and two main themes emerged - the ability of the learners to adapt to change and the work that their teachers were doing to adapt to an online environment.

One learner commented *'they are putting in their best to help us learn so we must do our best too.'* Many learners expressed amazement at their own adaptability in the face of the global pandemic, while acknowledging the difficulty of learning online and from home. One gap identified by many in the current environment was the social interaction.

Using MS Team for Assessment
Many were still adapting to using MS Teams and some highlighted that the training they got from their teachers was 'fantastic' acknowledging gaps in their technology skills. Many felt that having the material on Teams helped with revision and provided a good point of reference for preparing for assessment. It also meant that learners could plan their assessment and learning for a time that suited them, while still working to deadlines. All said they still felt nervous about doing assessments.

Most respondents spoke about how they felt their teachers *'went above and beyond'* in helping them preparing for assessment online. They felt that teachers had *'taken us under their wing'*. Some learners felt that preparing for assessment has helped them in their own personal lives, with some subject matter helping with stressful family situations. Some learners highlighted that they found the use of breakout rooms helpful during learning.

Others felt that the online assessment has given them more opportunity to participate, particularly one learner who has a chronic illness and would have been unable to attend to the same extent in the college environment. This learner will complete her studies ahead of her own expected schedule.

Those coming from second level to Kerry College highlighted the advantage of having experience of learning on line the previous year and this was helpful. However, *'Teams is helpful if you are cracking on with assignments as it is easy to find information'*.

'If you weren't nervous there would be something wrong with you. New to everyone. Everyone has grown in a different way. We found out something else about ourselves. We all grew into it."

Assessment: Expectations and Marking

Expectations at assessment and marking is clear to all. All participants referred to the briefs they received from their teachers. They receive written briefs and teachers go through them in class. All said that the briefs are clear and outline what is to be done. The marking schemes clearly state how assessments are marked.

Having the brief on MS Teams allowed learners to refresh and check. Learners again pointed to the flexibility of teachers who respond quickly to queries from learners. Many referred to the *'massive amount of support'* that teachers give in guiding and helping the learner.

Learning Preferences and Assessment

Learners spoke about how material is presented in a variety of formats such as written, PowerPoints, video clips, YouTube clips, etc. Some spoke about how teachers checked with them when they started in Kerry College about their preferred way to learn. Some referred to identifying their learning styles as part of their coursework. Others referred to the variety of assessment techniques which gave everyone a chance. *'It is fair, you have a kind of half and half of written and skills demonstration and you can bring you up in your marks. It gives you a nice balance'*.

However many recognised that there was not much room for flexibility this year with remote learning and assessments online, requiring the learner to adapt to this change in expectation. Others also acknowledged that some courses do not allow for flexibility as assessment techniques are inflexible.

Some learners pointed out that their briefs outline different ways to submit assessment e.g. video but *'we are given the option but we feel we don't really have the option'*.

One learner spoke about his difficulties with Dyslexia and how he nearly left the course. He spoke about how the teachers and his class group *'calmed'* him and *'reassured him'* and how glad he is now that he stayed.

Formative Feedback for Learning and Assessment

Discussion centred on an overwhelming sense of support and encouragement and the benefits of receiving feedback. Some referred to the focussed nature of the feedback and assignment support sessions they received. One learner stated that getting feedback and the way it is presented makes him feel that *'they are always behind you'*. Some learners did say that feedback sometimes lacked consistency and felt that it was generic saying that it is *'sometimes helpful and sometimes pointless'*. Many referred to how fast feedback came to them and how it *'brings you back to what you should be doing, it's great to get a focus and get pointers on the direction to go'*.

2. MONAVALLEY CAMPUS

FOCUS GROUP 13th April 2021

Eight participants attended a focus group session on Monday 13th April 2021 from 2.00-3.00pm.

The meeting was organised by Mallory Higgins and Kasia Lyko, Kerry College Monavalley Campus and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit. The learners attend Kerry College Monavalley Campus and were participating in the following courses:
- IT Support Technician
- Outdoor Activity Instructor Level 6
- Wind Turbine Traineeship
- Digital Photography
- Medical Administration
- Hairdressing
- Broadcast Production Skills
- Commis Chef (Apprenticeship)

Mallory Higgins did a short introduction outlining the purpose of the meeting. Aoife McCormack asked all to verify that the session could be recorded and that QA Unit/Kerry College could retain their contact details and make contact with all in the future if QQI requested a meeting with this group. All agreed and inputted their agreement into the chat feature.

Experience of Kerry College to Date
All learners reported a positive experience and acknowledged that they were getting on well. One learner spoke about studying with Kerry College over two different time periods and in different locations and said that both were *'more than what I expected'.* One learner reflected the importance of learning on a *'highly renowned'* course. However all mentioned the challenges of studying on line, while understanding its requirement given public health restrictions.

Using MS Team for Assessment
Many learners referred to how MS Teams has been helpful to learn theory, for storing information, keeping in touch during times of public health restrictions. One learner stated *'it is very handy to have files in one place.'* Some are using Zoom rather than Teams. Many spoke about using breakout rooms and how useful they are. Others referred to the ease of use with MS Teams, even when they felt they were not IT savvy. For one learner, who is studying to be an IT Support Technician, working online and sharing screens helped greatly to develop skills that will be required for the workplace.

While some are doing online assessments many others highlighted their need to return to the centre to learn practical skills for assessment. One learner stated that he could practice at home but it is the *'little things'* that the instructor can show or say to *'help you adjust and do it better'.*

Assessment: Expectations and Marking
Many spoke about the briefs they receive and how marking and weighting is really clear. They spoke about how instructions are *'broken down'* and how they *'speak about it in class'* so they are really clear about what is expected. In recent months it was stated that *'we use Teams to interact and can ask questions'.* Others spoke about how their assessment is primarily *'hands on'* and how they will demonstrate their skills by doing and completing specific tasks.

Learning Preferences and Assessment
Many readily identified their own preferred way to learn and how, for most, they like to learn in a *'mixed'* way. One learner shared how their instructor did a questionnaire at the start of the course about their learning styles. All learners spoke about how delivery takes place in a number of different ways, through video, explanations in class, reading material, written work, practice questions and so forth. One participant said that the course was *'bespoke to each person'.* They also acknowledged how the course is divided neatly between theory and practical skills as a *'mix of hands-on and theory'.*

However as a participant in the Outdoor Activity Instructor Level 6 course stated *'watching the video is not the same as doing the (paddle) stroke'* and was supported by another learner who said that *'we need to consolidate the theory by doing'*. This reflects the limitations imposed by the public health restrictions.

One learner, participating in the Wind Turbine Traineeship acknowledged that given the nature of their assessment and the high risk health and safety elements that it is not possible to adapt this to all needs.

Formative Feedback for Learning and Assessment

The importance of building skills and getting feedback was highlighted by all. The importance of the face to face nature of this and being in centre was discussed. All agreed that feedback was an important element of their course. One learner said it was *'indispensable really'*. Another stated *'no way could you improve your skills without feedback'*.

Learners also spoke about the 'human element' as being important in the day to day and how it *'gives a bit of confidence'*. This *'positive reinforcement, guidance and clarity'* was shared as *'invaluable'*. One learner said that the feedback she has received was *'excellent ... it allows you to reflect, go back to the brief and get on the right path'*.

Many spoke about the importance of verbal feedback, while recognising the importance of getting written feedback too for reflection and reference.

Gained most from Experience

Many spoke about having confidence in their own ability and self-belief. They acknowledged that their instructor *'had a lot to do with this'* and many referred to the key relationship with the instructor. One participant stated *'having a person who can show you - it takes away the mystery'*.

3. PART-TIME PROGRAMMES

FOCUS GROUP 15th April 2021

Seven learners attended a focus group via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 15th April from 3:30 to 4:30 PM. The meeting was organised and facilitated by Kevin Fay, Kerry ETB.

Kevin Fay did a short introduction outlining the purpose of the meeting. He stated that the session would be recorded for purposes of the Kerry ETB Self Evaluation Report to QQI, that learner experiences are important to this report and noted that if the participants felt more comfortable they could switch off their cameras. Kevin then asked if a record of the participant's contact details could be made in the instance that QQI would like a meeting with the focus groups in the future. The above was agreed on by all learners.

Experience to Date

Feedback from the learners is overall very positive, with one learner stating the *'course itself has been perfect'*. Getting additional supports from tutors and Centre Managers is described as being very helpful. Learners stated how it saves time and allows more flexibility in their life now that courses are online. One learner stated how having recordings of the classes allow her to listen back to classes as many times as is needed, which is helpful for the types of courses she is taking.

Learners talked about how they were apprehensive about the move from centre to online learning last year, *'when they said originally that we were going online, I was dreading it'* but now some prefer it to in class, *'I'm really happy with online learning'*. Some felt they had learned a new skill from having to adapt to IT changes, and it has made them *'far more confident online'* now. One learner who is studying art *'found it very easy…it sounds weird doing an art class online, but it actually works'* and stated how the requirement of homework regularly meant that you didn't let things slide and that a discipline is required when doing a course.

However, the learners did note the downside of moving to online classes is the lack of practical and demonstration classes, *'practical side is very hard, but otherwise it's very doable'* which was noted as being very difficult in some courses. A lack of a good internet connection was also noted as being an issue for a learner, which she would not have noticed before the move online.

Using MS Team for Assessment

Learners overall maintained that their experiences with prepping and doing assessments online were positive. One learner stated they were *'more comfortable doing assignments at home'* saying that there is not a big difference between online and in-class if you know the subject.

Another learner had a positive experience because of how online learning was structured. The tutor had due dates for assignments on the calendar on Zoom, with the learner saying they felt the *'deadlines were way more obvious'* because they were online.

The support that staff gave to learners was also noted. Learners recalled mannequins being dropped to their homes for practical demonstrations that had to be done online and noted how the tutors adapted to their needs very well. Another learner had experience with a tutor allocating 1:1 time with learners towards assessment time, which they found really good as the dynamics in a group class may not encourage speaking up if someone isn't understanding a topic.

Assessment: Expectations and Marking

Learners stated that it was clear what was expected of them in the assignments. One learner said how they were *'talked through the assignments'* which they found very helpful, saying that the supports learners received from their tutor were *'so good'*. It was also discussed how feedback was constantly available from tutors. One learner said how their feedback was given weekly, which they found *'really good'*. One learner who was studying art noted how it is interpretive, which by nature makes it difficult to assess, when referring to tutor support and expectations of learners from the tutors said *'she did keep us in line too at the same time'*.

Learning Preferences and Assessment

There was a range of learning preferences mentioned by the learners: learning by doing, real-life examples, visual learning, and repetitive learning to name a few. One learner noted that explanation from the teacher and then follow up reading on the topic was most helpful. The learner pointed out how the tutor was aware of the different learning styles and was *'professional, respectful and patient'* in how he taught the class and was always open to questions that are *'very, very important for me'* in terms of learning style. A positive outcome of having to learn online was that the resources for classes were all online, with a learner saying it is *'kind of easier than looking for all the information in a library'*.

A learner whose preference for learning would be having concepts explained a few times until they understand it feels that time taken by the tutor to break down the topic so that it can be understood can vary from tutor to tutor. In the courses where the tutors haven't taken the time to do this, the learner says *'I struggle then big time and I become overwhelmed and all those assignments pile up'*.

The lack of 1:1 time between learner and tutor was discussed as being a big drawback in online learning. Learners note how they would have taken advantage of in-person conversations with their tutor post-class when in centres, but there is a lack of it currently. One participant suggested time for '1:1 needs to be online as well and needs to be incorporated in the class hours' as learners don't always feel comfortable asking questions in front of everyone in the online class. Some learners had experience with breakout rooms in-class time. They found it very helpful for speaking to tutors while not in front of the whole class.

A learner whose preferred learning is through doing noted that finding out that work experience had been cancelled was *'really disappointing'*. The learner noted that they 'feel like I'd have learned a lot more' if they were on work experience, even though the demonstrations online were *'fantastic and well thought out'*. When discussing confidence levels with doing the demonstrations in a real-life setting after doing them online, the learner said 'I'm very nervous about it', saying that the at-home demo is *'just not the same… really would have preferred to work in the setting itself'*.

From experience with presenting to their classes, the learners noted how hard it must be for tutors to teach a class when learners have their cameras turned off, saying it feels like *'talking to no one'*. The learners would encourage it to be made mandatory for learners to have to turn on their cameras, saying it must be 'very hard' for the tutors and that it is *'a bit of respect for the tutor really'*. The learners note how the blank screen doesn't help with learning.

Formative Feedback for Learning and Assessment

There was a resoundingly positive response to this discussion, with learners saying that they got feedback on *'every single part'* of the work they would send tutors. Other learners said that the support was very good, and they were given *'very detailed responses'* when they sent assignments to their tutors for their feedback.

Recommendations to Kerry ETB

All the learners were enthusiastic about Kerry ETB and all would recommend their course to someone who is looking to do a course. One learner said, *'I would unhesitantly recommend it'*, and that the centre in their locality *'adds to the overall pleasure'* of living in their community.

Accessibility and choice of centres were highlighted. One learner would recommend based on the flexibility of the hours in their centre, saying they were *'able to do the course because it fitted around family life'*. Leaners also pointed out that the structure of doing a course, especially during lockdown, helped them, saying it was *'something to look forward to'*. The learners also commended the support they received, saying it was *'fantastic'*. One learner felt that all levels of staff in their centre went out of their way to help learners, that *'it felt like a little family at the end of it'*. They mentioned that the centre facilitates all levels of learners, and enabled the learners to *'learn the way we learn'*.

Another learner noted that they appreciated the level of organization in the ETB management while helping to change hours of classes, and felt *'very grateful'* for the interaction, communication and flexibility in the ETB.

4. VTOS LEARNER

FOCUS GROUP 15th April 2021

The meeting was organised by Shivaun Shanahan and Kate Ann O'Dowd and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit.

Shivaun Shanahan did a short introduction outlining the purpose of the meeting. Aoife McCormack asked all to verify that the session could be recorded and that QA Unit/Kerry College could retain their contact details and make contact with all in the future if QQI requested a meeting with this group. All agreed and inputted their agreement into the chat feature.

Nine learners participated in the focus group.

Experience of VTOS to Date
Many participants spoke about enjoying their course and about how it had met or surpassed their expectations. Some spoke about *'thoroughly enjoying the content'* and how it had helped them improve their interpersonal skills, their daily lives and also helped their families. Many spoke about having much improved computer skills as they learned remotely but acknowledge that it was difficult and many were happy at returning to their centre to learn. One learner referred to this in-centre *'energy'* and referred to his improved *'quality of life'* stating that when there *'you make connections and they help you through as friends'*. Many referred to the *'vibe'* in their centres and how they are *'welcomed with a smile'*.

Preparing for Assessment and Using MS Team
All participants spoke about how they had clear direction on what was expected of them at assessment time. Some acknowledged how at the start they were nervous, one participant stated *'It scared me out of my living daylights!'* but that with the help and support of teachers and other learners there was then *'no sense of panic'* and *'there is no pressure'*. One learner spoke about how the teachers work hard to *'put you at ease'* and it became *'so easy and free-flowing'*.

Many learners referred to the self-doubt they had coming into the programme and how the teachers *'have our backs'* and they *'really want you to succeed'*. While learners acknowledged their preference to learning in centre, using MS Teams was helpful for learners. One learner referred to how they could *'replay the class'* and *'share our screens with each other'*. However, the preference for in centre interaction was strongly expressed by all. This was expressed 'as a partnership together' with classmates and teachers. One participant summarised the in-centre experience as *'you are welcomed with a smile and if that happens first thing in the morning you know you will have a good day.'*

Assessment: Expectations and Marking
All spoke about being clear on what is expected at assessment. All spoke about how they can check with the teacher if they are not sure. Clear briefs and marking sheets are provided to all. Tips and guidelines are provided and information on assessment is provided well in advance. One learner shared how *'if it's going to be in any way challenging, it is broken down for us'*. Many spoke about being supported in such a way and *'if anything is not clear I can ask the teacher'* with another adding *'that they will tell you right away, how you will be marked and what we need to focus on'*. One learner stated that *'they give us great guidance on how to achieve marks by reading books, looking things up online'*. One learner shared how she was not in education for 36 years and she found how the brief was broken down and *'the tips and guidelines I am clear on where I was going'*.

Learning Preferences and Assessment
All participants showed a great awareness of their preferred way to learn and noting that it varied, depending on what they were learning. One participant spoke about how he now preferred to get written information as English is not his first language and getting things in writing gave him a chance to read and understand it in his own time.

All acknowledged how people learned in different ways in their classrooms and that this was accommodated by teachers. Some learners spoke about how they were preparing for an exam that day

and had learned ways to prepare for exams and assessments. One learner spoke about how he likes to 'go out for a walk and think about it and then it makes sense' and how the breaks at lunch help him do that, as well as prepare prior to assessment.

One learner spoke about preferring *'to read and do practice tests'*. Many spoke about having written tests and also having to do skills demonstrations and how *'one balances out the other'*.

Formative Feedback for Learning and Assessment

All spoke about how helpful it is to get feedback. Most spoke about verbal feedback and how *'invaluable'* it is. One learner said that 'it is given in an encouraging way, it is really helpful, they want to get the best out of you'. Another spoke about how getting feedback *'makes such a difference'*. Getting feedback has given some 'a new lease of confidence' and many referred to the self-doubt they had on arrival and how now they *'see things in a different light'*.

One learner spoke about getting written feedback being very helpful as English is not their first language and when written *'It is very useful, I can come back'*.

Gained Most

The key word that emerged when considering what they had gained most was a sense of self-confidence. All participants spoke strongly about this and were able to readily give examples of this.

Many spoke about the skills they had gained that they can use in their every-day lives. One learner spoke about how it is so different from his former work-place and how now he can *'stand back'* and *'look before I leap'*, referencing in particular learning on the *'Personal and Interpersonal Skills'* module. Another learner spoke about how the course has helped him to improve his English and how this has meant *'everything'*. Another participant agreed and highlighted how they have learned a whole new vocabulary that *'helps every day in my life'*.

This was echoed by another learner who spoke about how being in VTOS helped in every aspect of their lives - *'re-evaluating my life, my personal effectiveness, my self-care, knowing my career anchors, my family'*. One learner said it *'made me realise to focus on the journey'*.

Learners cited one word to describe their experiences of learning with Kerry ETB.

One Word
- Empowerment
- Privileged
- Great
- Accomplishment
- Gratitude
- Amazing
- Optimistic
- Invigorating
- Good experience

5. YOUTHREACH LEARNER

FOCUS GROUP 15th April 2021

The meeting was organised by Shivaun Shanahan and Kate Ann O'Dowd and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit.

Shivaun Shanahan did a short introduction outlining the purpose of the meeting. Aoife McCormack asked all to verify that the session could be recorded and that QA Unit/Kerry College could retain their contact details and make contact with all in the future if QQI requested a meeting with this group. All agreed and inputted their agreement into the chat feature.

Nine learners participated in the meeting.

Experience of Youthreach to Date
Participants spoke about their positive experience in Youthreach and how much it differed from their expectation that it would be like school.
One participant spoke about how they felt *'relieved'* when they realised that it was not like school.

Many reflected a preference for being in the centre but indicated that MS Teams supported their learning while working remotely. Those who were in their second year of studies agreed that this *'lockdown'* was better than the last because of MS Teams.

Having the structure of attending the centre is important. However the MS Teams calendar provided this structure remotely to some. It was strongly agreed by all that being in-centre is important and the particular focus for all was on the value of relationships with teachers and other learners. It was clear that in-centre provision is preferred by all.

Preparing for Assessment and Using MS Team
It was generally felt that MS Teams worked well during the pandemic and that it was a good *'support tool but not the main tool'*. Learners spoke about how it provided a place for them to interact and meet their fellow learners. Having a structure to the day was important and many spoke about how the calendar provided a lot of information on classes, breaks etc. One participant reflected the importance of this as it helped maintain the *'bond with students and teachers'* which was important because they *'would see the teachers more than my own family. I consider them my family'*. Many reflected that MS Teams provided a good place to *'chat'*.

Assessment: Expectations and Marking
All participants referred to the briefs they receive from their teachers that clearly outline what is expected and how they have *'a table broken down on where marks will go to so you can see clearly what you are being marked on'*. Many spoke about how the briefs are discussed in class and how they can *'go back to'* the teachers to clarify anything. Many referred to how things are *'explained easily'* and that teachers *'give plenty of notice for assessment and they remind us constantly'*.

Learning Preferences and Assessment
All felt that their preferred way to learn was taken into account by the teachers, particularly in the delivery. Many referred to having pictures, charts, videos, being shown what to do, having time to practice as all key points in their learning. One learner spoke about the importance of having time to write things down and read the briefs as this helps her learn best and is a *'great help'* to her. All learners showed a great awareness of their own strengths in learning.

Formative Feedback for Learning and Assessment
All participants gave clear examples of how getting feedback helped their learning and preparation for assessment. It helped to identify *'what you know and what you need to work harder on'*. One learner spoke about how getting feedback has given her an awareness of her own standards and another how it

provides *'more motivation to work a lot better'*. One participant referred to how *'they help you look at areas to improve and they approach it in lots of different ways'*. Many were able to refer to how they have integrated the learning from feedback into their work, with one learner who has Dyslexia saying that such feedback has helped him to take time to *'slow down and read over my work'*. Having the opportunity to prepare drafts was helpful for many.

Gained Most
All spoke about how being in Youthreach had 'boosted' their confidence and examples provided were the ways that they could now *'express an opinion'*, *'have confidence in my work'* and *'have positive relationships'*. One participant cited the special role that teachers had in this and that *'they help you with yourself - it's not just about the school work'*. One participant said 'as my confidence grew my motivation grew' and many reflected how they now had *'higher standards'* for themselves. Many are hoping to progress with their learning, something they say they would never have considered before participation in the Kerry ETB Youthreach programmes.

One participant spoke about having met *'wonderful people and gaining friends'* and another how there was *'an overall improvement in my health'*. Many reflected having had poor experiences in school and how much they *'enjoyed'* being in Youthreach. Another learner spoke about how they now *'seek help'* and how they are more *'open to asking for help'* than before they started.

Learners cited one word to describe their experiences of learning with Kerry ETB.

One Word
- Amazing
- Memorable
- Inspiring
- Interactive
- Worthwhile
- Enjoyable
- Unique
- Stress Free
- Eye Opening

2.2 | Staff Focus Groups

2.2.1 Virtual Learning Environment

1. KERRY COLLEGE, MONAVALLEY CAMPUS STAFF

FOCUS GROUP Friday 13th April 2021

On Monday 12th April 2021 ten teaching staff from Kerry College, Monavalley Campus meet to participate in a focus group session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on the virtual learning environment that is operating arising from COVID 19 public health restrictions. This report forms a key as part of the self-reflection process pertaining to Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process.

Participants said that Teams was easy for learners to use and that it provided both structure (filing and keeping track of assignments) and flexibility (recording classes and allowing them to play it back). Breakout rooms were very helpful, and will be particularly so for some learning e.g. Communications modules. It was also helpful for providing resources to learners who required additional support and was helpful for revision work.

However, others noted the limitations of MS Teams e.g. a wish to download some apps that are available on MS Teams but not available locally. Others noted that feedback is restricted by a word count. Others noted that the Whiteboard function was helpful, but also limited.

Some participants noted that they use other technology such as Zoom, Moodle, Padlet and Google to work with learners and that many learners make contact with them using their personal e-mail address, despite having a Kerry College e-mail address.

Others reflected the very real opportunities that were provided this year with one participant reflecting that his learners got to meet *'amazing guest speakers'* who would never have linked with the group in normal circumstances.

VLE in the Future
Participants agreed that as a communication tool, for flexibility of theory learning and to organise and file assessment relevant information, Teams is a good resource. It was also identified as a possible future focus on providing learning resources for those who may require additional support. However many reflected a very real need for face to face centre based tuition.
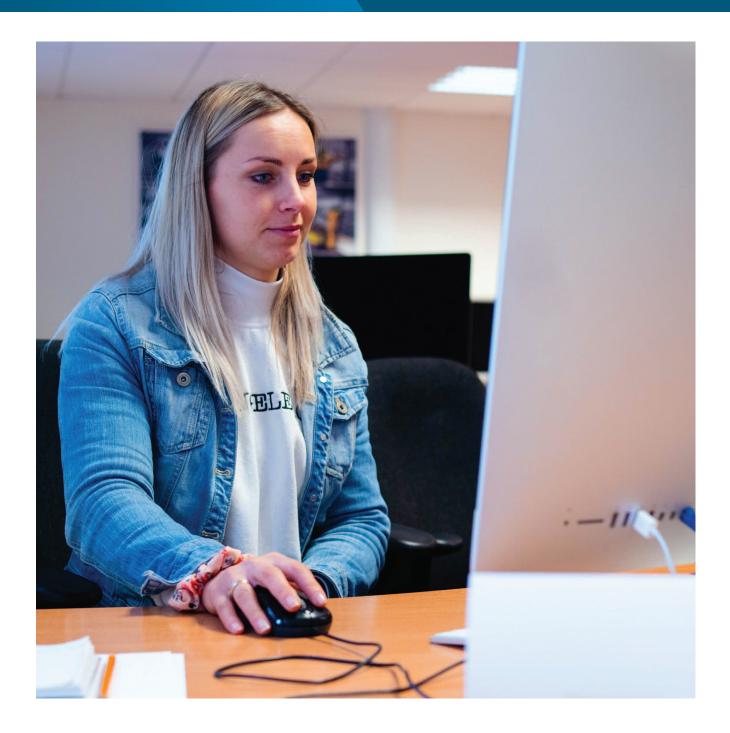
What would support you?
The participants expressed an openness to working with the VLE in the future but believed that it would need be done in a planned fashion *'consider it and map it out'*. It was recommended that registering learners in advance of course commencement take place and also the provision of induction to Teams for learners to meet the challenge of covering content *'my course is short enough'*. It was also agreed that there is a real difficulty with delivering with a group split into those present in the room and those at home, *'either all in or out'* works best. Technical support for instructors if they run into IT difficulty was also raised as a future possibility.

The possibility of a blended learning model i.e. some days in centre and some online was discussed and it was recommended that *'if is to take place it should be two consecutive days in and then others out'*.

Teaching and Learning Spaces/Advantages to in-centre
Participants reflected that being in-centre gives the learners *'access to equipment'* so that they can learn the practical skills required. However, a strong theme emerged from this discussion and it was the relationship between instructor and learner and the care of the learner being central to the learning process.

Participants reported the value of being physically alongside their learners especially to be *'on the spot, to show and amend'* and *'know when they are engaged'*. This was summarised by one participant as *'when I am in centre I can show them that I care about them'*. The group spoke about the key *'intangibles'* that are not formal learning outcomes but that *'confidence building is a key element'* and being online *'cannot create that chemistry'*. Participants also reflected that *'operating as a team is important'* and it allows the instructor to *'check in, as a natural flow'*. Related to this participants also reflected that giving feedback took much more time online than face to face.

2. KERRY FET CENTRES PART-TIME PROVISION

Friday 16th April 2021

Kevin Fay, AEO and Ciara Lynch organised a focus group meeting for ten teaching staff from across a variety of part-time programmes provision including Adult Literacy, BTEI and Community Education on Friday 16th April 2021. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on the virtual learning environment (VLE) that has emerged in response to the public health restrictions. This focus group took place as part of the self-evaluation stage of the Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process. The session was facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit.

Use of MS Teams to Support Learners to Learn
Participants shared a variety of experience in how well MS Teams supported their learners to learn.

For the most part it was recognised as useful, as a good alternative to the classroom and was *'working out really well'*, with some learners *'really enjoying it'* and seeing the relevance for future careers. Many referred to using Zoom with learners as they found it easier to use and from there some transitioned to MS Teams. One participant shared that for learners it provided a space to talk to and link with others during public health restrictions as *'a lot of them live alone so it is the only interaction they have had'*.

The discussion focussed on, where learners have laptops, the use of MS Teams is much better and one participant noted that their group of ESOL learners was happy to continue to work on MS Teams rather than return to a centre where they will not be able to see their tutor's mouth when speaking.

However, some limitations were noted that centred on the learner's literacy skills, the course QQI level, prior IT knowledge, level of engagement in centre prior to embarking online, at home Wi Fi access and acquisition of practical skills.

It was reflected that it was useful to focus on theory work while working online but that returning to the centre was important for the acquisition of the required practical skills in particular for some Healthcare and Horticulture modules. In this regard, it proved a good *'stop gap'* measure. One participant had checked with her learners prior to the focus group and reported that they preferred the classroom to online as they *'found it hard to motivate themselves at home'*.

Some participants shared how some groups of adults with additional needs were fully engaged in the online environment and working online really helped *'build their confidence in their IT skills'*. It was noted that some groups came on *'in leaps and bounds'* with technology. One participant shared how some learners were resistant to using technology in the classroom and were now engaging well with Teams.

Consider Virtual Learning Platform (VLP) in the Future
Many noted the *'huge amount of potential'* for using this VLP in the future but for many it would be in a blended way and for others the classroom delivery is required.

Some referred to their plans to continue to use it in the classroom for social distancing purposes. Other participants referred to using MS Teams in a blended environment for filing resources that can be accessed by learners in their own time. One participant reported that they found it a helpful tool for doing and recording mock interviews, recording evidence and giving feedback to learners. Many referred to how their learners have become self-directed learners by engaging online with one participant saying that it was *'empowering for the learners'*. One teacher shared that for one of her subjects areas (Anatomy and Physiology) it made it *'100% easier'* as she was able to share videos, quizzes and other materials and the learner could view it in their own time. One person noted that it is important now with all the learning and the gains in building skills it is important *'to not just drop it'* as it is an important skill in a digital age.

It was recognised by all that use will depend on the group, subject and tutor. One participant said they would not consider it in the future as it is *'not conducive to practical subjects'*. Alternative support methods during public health restrictions were shared e.g. how Horticulture learners were supported by sending them seeds and videos on how to do it themselves at home but this depended on *'the resources they had at home'*. One participant stated that *'there is a perception that everyone has a smartphone now'* and many agreed that this was not the case for some of their learners. Another participant stated that *'they have to be able to demonstrate that they can work together and bring it out into the workplace'* and this can only be done if they come together for their learning. It was also shared that *'Zoom is more user friendly and they would have used Zoom in other situations'*.

Some referred to being able to participate themselves in professional development opportunities and meetings that they would not have had access to in the past.

Future Support for Staff
Participants were able to identify what would support them to deliver online to learners in the future. Many spoke about the need for additional professional development opportunities to enhance their skills. One participant said that in getting CPD it is important to *'keep it simple, do it step by step and use it straight away'*. One participant requested that Kerry ETB ask FESS to move their CPD sessions to the afternoons as it is more difficulty to attend with classes often scheduled for every morning.

For learners working online *'knowing their digital skills in advance'* was identified as an important advantage. Some reflected that an induction for learners at the start would be helpful with one participant suggesting a week long induction to help them log-in to Teams, learn to upload and download and other skills. However it was cautioned that a *'balance'* would be required as many have low digital skills and it would be important *'not to scare them'*. *'Meeting them face to face and getting them set up on teams'* was identified as central.

Another participant suggested using the time between now and May to do MS Teams training with learners would *'help them to further build the learners skills'*. The amount of screen-time was identified as an issue for both tutor and learner when using the screen to engage and prepare.

An important theme of remaining *'learner centred'* emerged. It is important to 'think big but act small' by working with a few apps and trying it out slowly with the different groups of learners. Some staff members said that it is important to remain aware of the learners and ask *'where are they at? Why are they here? Why did they sign up for the course?'* It is important *'to get their feedback as you are going through'* to see *'what is working and what isn't working.'*

One participant said it would be helpful to have a policy on whether cameras should be on or off. Where they were on it built *'great cohesion'* and where not there was *'drop-off'*.

'Development time built into contracts' was identified as important for online material development.

One participant shared findings from a recent TEL course survey which found that *'TEL Champions are more supportive and responsive than CPD opportunities as they could go with specific issues they have encountered'*.

Teaching and Learning Spaces are designed well for using Technology
For the most part, all agreed that the teaching and learning spaces are well-designed for using technology. There are some issues in some locations e.g. Wi-Fi is not properly enabled; patchy access to broadband or no interactive whiteboards. This is not universal however with some participants sharing that upgrades are taking place. One participant noted that they are very *'fortunate'* with their set-up and noted that administration staff in the centre are *'always willing to troubleshoot'*. Some requested the use of hybrid devices (e.g. Surface Pros) for the teachers and learners. Many referred to using interactive whiteboards when in centre.

3. YOUTHREACH STAFF

15th April 2021

On Wednesday 15h April 2021 seven Youthreach Resource Workers and Co-ordinators from the Listowel, Killarney and Tralee Youthreach Centres participated in 'Virtual Learning Environment' focus group session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on the virtual learning environment that is operating arising from COIVD 19 public health restrictions. This report forms a key as part of the self-reflection process pertaining to Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process.

MS Teams Supporting Learners
All participants spoke about how this academic year differed from the previous year and how MS Teams provided structure and a single communication point with learners. One participant commented that there was *'no comparison'* to the previous year's lockdown and referred to its use for *'storing worksheets, directions, linking to e-mails, recording class - it was a huge improvement'*.

Many referred to how it was a helpful tool for *'chatting to each other'* but it worked best where relationships were well established with learners. Some spoke about how they used it to integrate other learning tools such as Mentimeter, Khan Academy, Kahoot and YouTube to make it more interactive. Many found that it worked better for Level 4 learners. Some Level 3 learners found it difficult to manage the MS Teams folders.

However, it has its 'limitations', is *'not perfect'* and the *'can be hard to use with a mobile phone'*. The *'over the shoulder'* and *'side by side encouragement'* was hard to replicate on line as was the emotional support that many learners require.

Many referred to the training provided and how that helped build their own skills for working virtually.

VLE in the Future
Participants conveyed the real importance of relationship building and face to face delivery to meet all the needs of the Youthreach learner. However, there was openness to using MS Teams and other technologies as part of the in centre learning. Using it for assessment emerged as a strong theme in particular for storing drafts and assessment evidence. Discussion centred on a common system for all to use to store assessments. It was noted that 'there are lots of brilliant ideas' and learners can link with some resources in their own time.

However, it was noted that the participants *'wouldn't want to lose the flexibility'* they have with in centre delivery while acknowledging that for learners 'it is the future for them' but cautioned that *'it has its limitations'*.
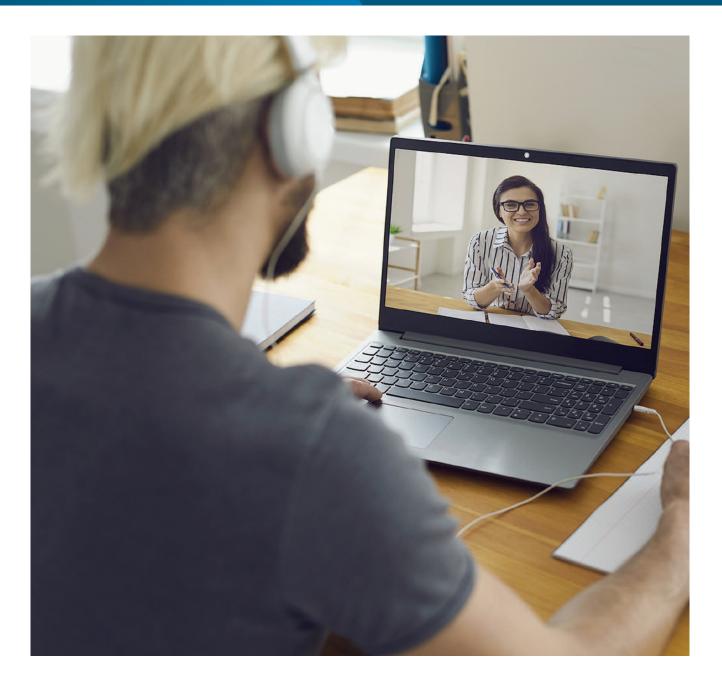
Future Support for Staff
Many participants spoke about how additional training would help them feel more competent in using the MS Office suite. TEL training for teaching staff during the summer programmes would be helpful. One participant suggested that a questionnaire be distributed to identify the specific TEL needs so that the training could be tailored to the needs.

It was mooted that if all used the same system for storing information it would be helpful e.g. One Note. Hybrid devices such as Surface Pros would help hugely in the delivery it would allow them *'to be able to deliver with flexibility'*.

Teaching and Learning Spaces Well Designed for Using Technology
The importance of on-site delivery was stressed again at this stage of the focus group. This allows for a broader learning of life skills, which can depend on the learner and their needs, e.g. loading the dishwasher/ personal hygiene and for the support of emotional, behavioural and interpersonal needs. However it was acknowledged that for further education being competent with technology was important.

Office 365 is not new to the learners it just requires practice and to keep a record of passwords. *'Making the leap'* is now important as it removes the need for USB keys when filing systems on MS Teams are used.

Many referred to the new teaching and learning environments (now the learners' homes or place of residence) and one participant said 'there is chaos in their lives and using the screen can cause anxiety for some learners'. Others reflected how some home environments were unsuitable as *'learning spaces'* and that the chaos starts *'creeping into the learning environment'* and that *'safe place disappears'* for some of the learners.

One participant referred to the health impacts of a lot of screen time and noted that many learners also spend time gaming and it is important to *'have a balance'*.

2.2.2 Learner Supports

1. KERRY COLLEGE CLASH, DENNY STREET AND LISTOWEL CAMPUS STAFF

FOCUS GROUP Friday 16th April 2021

On Friday 16th April, Stephen Goulding and Tomina Shine organised a meeting of 14 staff to attend a focus group session. Aoife McCormack, QA Unit facilitated the session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on the learner supports provided by the Kerry College campuses, as part of the self-evaluation stage of the Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process. Time was given to also reflect on the experience of the virtual learning environment imposed by public health restrictions.

Why Learner Support is Being Offered

Participants reflected that learner support is offered for a number of reasons but primarily because it is needed. In many cases it is offered to support learners' achieve certification in a Major Award.

Some participants reflected the key role of providing support to build confidence and develop a 'professional identity' of the learner. Many spoke about supporting learners and encouraging them to keep making attempts at learning so that their confidence develops and in time counteracts their 'lack of self-belief'.

It was shared that 'massive gaps' are identified at interview stage and mental health issues can present at the start or during the year. It was indicated that all teachers facilitate learner support but that Care and Learning Support Teams play a significant role.

When it is Offered

Learner support is offered to meet both additional needs and temporary needs of learners. Targeting learner needs in a holistic way to ensure 'meaningful inclusion' is a key aspect of the 'relationship building' that takes place. One participant stated support 'is always there, there is never a time that we don't offer it'. Discussion reflected how, while 1:1 support is offered, support is provided in many different ways and particularly through feedback and relationship building. Another person stated that it happens 'all day every day' and that by engaging with learners 'the more you show you care the more there is continuous engagement'.

Many teachers reflected that they would be 'lost without' the Care and Learning Support Teams. A teacher that is new to the centre spoke about this and how these teams both support learners and teachers but in particular show 'great empathy' to the learner. It is 'not in your face', it is 'very clever how they do it'. It was also reflected that this form of additional support is managed in a very good targeted way over a three week period, after which it is reviewed. This approach has proved very successful.

Some reflected the different profiles of learners who can have varying needs, some being more mature and some coming directly from second level. Related to this was the importance of having time to build the relationship and have dialogue with the learner 'it is critical as it helps identify needs'. It was noted that support is also required for the learner who is a high achiever.

How Learner Support is Delivered

Participants referred to the 'formal' learning support and the 'less formal' learning support that takes place. One participant reflected that the less formal support is 'so wrapped up in teaching' and helps to build rapport, relationships and to help 'break a pattern of thinking …. to believe in themselves.' This reframing was noted as critical and that learning is 'not just a magic thing that happens' noting a key aspect for learners is having to learn to learn.

It was noted that support needs can change from day to day and the core relationship with the learner is important to be able to support them. The importance of in-class motivation, professional collaboration and having a holistic picture was raised. *'There is no one particular way, it is tailored to everyone'*.

The important role that the Personal Assistants (PA) play was recognised as was the need to have a set number of PA for the future in Kerry College. A discussion took place on the importance of placing learners at the correct NFQ level so they can achieve their potential and so teachers can support their completion and retention.

What is the Impact on Learners

Having support integrating throughout the College means that learners can create *'meaningful plans rather than day to day'*. It was remarked that participants witness learners *'grow in personal confidence and educationally'*. This was widely agreed with participants saying that they have seen learners *'changing their lives and overcoming their past'* and that their time with Kerry College is a chance for *'changing the whole landscape for them'*. One participant was supported when reflecting *'It is a joy to watch the sense of achievement'*.

An important element that emerged was the supportive role of the teacher and a reflection that learners *'know that the teachers are there for the learner'*. The development of positive relationships is an outcome that was identified during discussion as well as the knowledge that the learners 'know it is okay to ask for help'. One participant said *'they understand the impact it has on them and it helps them recognise that they are able to achieve'*.

It was reflected that the level of need amongst some learners was much higher and that the Care and Learning Support Teams play an important role in supporting such learners. The group reflected that there are high levels of needs amongst those learners who experience anxiety and that with COVID many face huge barriers.

A cautionary note was raised by one teacher who wrote after the session to say that *'while we would like to focus on the positive impacts … we have to be honest and acknowledge that sometimes the level of support we give can set up some learners for a fall'*. This comment had particular focus on learners progressing to Higher Education opportunities.

2. VTOS AND YOUTHREACH PROGRAMMES

15th April 2021

On Wednesday 15h April 2021 six staff members working in Kerry ETB Youthreach and VTOS programmes participated in 'Learner Support' focus group session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect on the support provided to learners. This report forms a key part of the self-reflection process pertaining to Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process.

The session was organised by Shivaun Shanahan and Kate Ann O'Dowd and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit.

Why Learner Support is being Offered
Initial engagement with learner support staff happens in some centres to ascertain where the learners *'are at'* in particular to *'see gaps and what needs to be supported'*. The purpose at this stage is to help in building a profile of the learner so that an individual learning plan can be developed. Participants were keen to stress that 'it is not just about the literacy and numeracy it is abo*ut the whole person'*.

Others reflected that at the start it is important to *'concentrate on the relationship'* and allow them to *'settle in'* and *'take time to allow them to trust you'*. A key aspect is the importance of being careful with *'questions asked'* at an early stage as the learners often *'feel all their life they didn't achieve'*. Participants agreed that a clear need exists not to reinforce that perception.

In many cases the Kerry ETB staff are *'starting from scratch'*. It was stressed by all that supports are required for academic, emotional and behavioural needs, acknowledging that learner support is multi-layered. Participants spoke about the changing profile of learner and the number of learners who do not have English as their first language and who are *'very bright people who want to get on'*. One participant

shared that the approach taken is a trauma informed approach. A commonly shared view was how a whole centre approach to learner support is needed.

When Learner Support is Offered
One participant spoke about the Individual Learning Plan and Student Support Plans that start at the induction when the student arrives. *'It gives a clear picture of where they are at'*.

Another participant noted that the last thing that is wanted is 'to put pressure on them, you would frighten them and you have to tread lightly'. Related to this one participant, when discussing using formal initial assessment tools said *'assessment doesn't tell you everything, you have to build a relationship so they know this is a nice safe space that they can trust'*.

An important aspect is that they know that support is available *'from the get go'* and that it is available to all so no individual is *'stigmatised as being out for support'*. It is a core part of the service and part of the relationship.

Many spoke about the *'fear of assessment'* and how much work needs to be done to *'erode that fear'* so that learners can participate well in certification activity.

How Learner Support is Delivered
A core element in learner support is *'building self-esteem'* and *'approaching things with a new eye'*. Some of the support is delivered in 1:1 sessions but is also integrated in the delivery across the centres. One participant reflected that 'communication with colleagues is vital' and the support needs are discussed at staff meetings in some centres.

The issue of attendance was raised and acknowledged that *'it can fluctuate'* which requires the teachers to be flexible in their approach.

What is the Impact on Learners
Many reflected on the increased confidence, skills and independence of learners as they approach the end of their programmes. One participant spoke about 'green shoots' and seeing *'growth is knowing*

that learning is exciting'. Many reflected how the change in learners is evident *'in their body language, how they hold themselves'*. Other examples of personal growth are how learners are prepared to help their own children with homework, being able to read a leaflet that they couldn't read before the programme or knowing that the *'teachers are on their side'*.

Other Issues

Many reflected that effective delivery of learner support online was difficult and that face to face contact is important. Key elements are *'having the craic'* and *'bringing back the love of learning'* were discussed. Some spoke about how outings are a great way to develop skills and improve interpersonal skills.

The concept of independent learning was discussed and one participant stated that *'independent learning is a skill'* and another suggested having a base year outside of QQI to facilitate this. Related to this the length of the programme was discussed, as was the comparison made with the school setting where learners have a longer time to achieve the same level of certification.

2.2.3 Learning Styles

1. TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP

25th March 2021

On Thursday 25th March 2021 the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Working Group took part in a focus group session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on learner supports and the learning environment across the breadth of Kerry ETB Further Education and Training provision as part of the Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process.

Teacher Awareness of Learners Preferred Learning Styles
Participants referred to their use of a number of tools and mechanisms to identify preferred learning styles at the start of the course such as:

- Surveys at the start of the year
- Learner support assessment to raise awareness of the process of learning
- VARK and other online learning style tools at the beginning of the year to give a basis to see how our students learn.

It was also shared that the development and use of different materials along with a keen observation of learner orientation are used to identify preferred learning styles. Approaches in some settings were varied e.g. discussion, make a collage, reading key information, writing a piece and using video. This allows the learner to delve into the subject matter over time, refresh and review their learning. A key strategy in one area was to engage as many of the senses as possible.

One participant noted the importance of a whole centre approach and provided an example how at the design stage the Centre Manager links with the tutor at the course outline stage to ensure that all needs are met and *'make sure that there is something in it for everyone'.*

Interestingly, participants acknowledged that the most recent theory and research shows that providing for flexibility of learning is critical and a universal design for

learning is a key future strategy. The participants also acknowledged an awareness of their own learning style bias and being mindful of the broader picture when delivering.

Accommodating Learning Styles
Participants provided solid examples of how learning styles are accommodated and supported in the design and delivery of courses. It is done *'right from the start'.* Some referred to the design stage and the importance of presenting materials in a variety of formats. Others referred to the importance of having *'different materials to match the needs and practicalities of the course'.*

Others spoke about the partnership and reflective practice at a centre level where teachers are supported by the Centre Manager to de-brief, reflect and integrate learning into their practice.

The importance of participation in the online environment and for some *'Leaving the camera on is so important. It has more of a natural on-site element to it.'*

In some centres student support services help learners with assignments while in others they pair students with complementary skills to *'knit them together to support each other; pairing and teams are very important.'*

Some participants referred to using MS Team to record their sessions and assignments so that the learners *'can find it so they can go over and over it again'.* Many referred to the huge benefit of on line and provided examples of how learners are grasping some concepts at a faster rate than previous years.

However it was also acknowledged that a multi-media approach was intrinsic to delivery in the past and this approach has moved from scissors, to interactive whiteboards to online.

Using different styles of delivery was acknowledged as important *'there are so many ways to teach it. You put all the different methods out there and quickly they will choose their own preferred method but this may not stay the same across the course'.* This shift over time was acknowledged by all and its importance for the learner and teacher to *'keep it varied for them and for myself as a teacher'.* Content driven delivery was a key aspect in many settings to address authentic learning gaps.

An Accessible Teaching and Learning Space

All participants referred to the great efforts made to ensuring that the online teaching and learning space is accessible to everyone and that every effort is made to meet all learning styles. The roll-out of laptops to learners was a huge part of having an accessible space to learn for everyone.

However some referred to challenges in providing accessible physical space in some locations referring to physical constraints in some buildings.

In other locations the Care Teams are in continuous collaboration with teachers and academic support teams and they find that *'being flexible and [having] open communication is most effective'*. This team also creates links with external support services that can support learners e.g. psychological interventions.

One participant observed the *'genuine care of the learner'* as evident in the discussions and that this is a critical *'to get the right thing in place for the learner so they don't feel inadequate, that they are being singled out.'* It was highlighted that this expertise is a *'critical element that shouldn't be lost'* adding that *'the policies and procedures don't matter if this is missing'*. The discussion centred around respect for this key aspect of work and was summarised by one participant as *'learners feelings are fundamental not ornamental'*.

Continued Improvements

There was much discussion and willingness to focus on continued improvement to better support the learner. Much of this is focussed on six main areas:
• Dedicated IT Supports for learners
• Dedicated IT Support for teachers
• Flexible Assessment Techniques
• Standardised Learner Supports
• Professional Development
• Respect and Value

IT Supports for Learners

This discussion was framed by many instances of staff working to help learners get connected which created a 'pinch-point by eating into teaching time'. Solutions proposed were:
• IT set-up and basics are delivered as part of induction e.g. how to upload assignments. This would allow some students learn in a more independent fashion.

• Increased technical support for learners to get connected quickly.

IT Support for Teachers

It was reported that 'some struggle with technology and can't go to the courses to take time out of the teaching'. It was proposed that:
• a dedicated helpdesk and support for teachers is established to respond to teachers issues as they arise.
• a timetabled training once a month for teachers e.g. one day once a month so they don't have to be worried about missing time off with the students.
• a specific conversation needed to take place about what would be helpful to take forward in technology from the pandemic and develop a training plan for next year.

Flexible Assessment Techniques

Being able to use different assessment techniques to those prescribed was raised. More flexibility within module assessments was also highlighted as a need. It was suggested that teachers be provided with training in assessing alternative evidence reliably. Standardised Learner Supports Disparity in what is available to support learners was highlighted as a gap e.g. psychological and academic supports. It was framed as *'all our learner deserve to have the same access, it is a human right'*.

Professional Development

Participants raised the huge workload that has come with working online and proposed professional development sessions on using technology to prepare effectively and efficiently and for records management.

Respect and Value

The appreciation for the genuine care for the learner and supporting this was foremost to participants' minds. A call for this being valued and reflected in the values and core actions of the organisation was echoed across the group. One person stated *'You can tick the box but if what is on the ground is not correct, if we say our core values are in it, and they aren't … it might look great if you start off but then you have no validity in the public domain, just none'*.

2. VTOS STAFF FOCUS GROUP

Wednesday 15th April 2021

On Wednesday 15th April 2021 the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Working Group took part in a focus group session. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on learner supports and the learning environment as part of the Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process.

Twelve participants took part in the focus group sessions from the Tralee, Killarney and South Kerry VTOS Programmes.

Teacher Awareness of Learners Preferred Learning Styles

Teachers spoke about how awareness is built from the very start, from induction of the learner and how a number of techniques and tools are used. Where formal tools are used the teacher and learner consider the results and reflect on them together. The teacher then 'presents different techniques that might support their learning styles'. The various methods help the learner become aware that *'they do have a learning style, they do have a mode of learning and they do have a range of intelligences as well.'* It was stated that this work is *'ongoing and is very much part of the development of their identity as a learner ... of their self-concept and moving away from the idea that I am good at/ I am bad at'.*

A real effort is made to develop understandings of multiple intelligences, learning styles, fixed and growth mind-sets, the concept of locus of control and so forth. The importance of 'enhancing self-awareness and self-confidence' was discussed and acknowledged as a process over the lifetime of the programme. The development of thinking that 'I have different ways of learning and a wide range of intelligences' is promoted.

Others spoke about how individual modules such as Communications and Career Preparation & Planning lend themselves well to considering strengths, self-advocacy and recognised styles, often in a fun way.

There was a real awareness by teachers of *'something that works for me but might not work for them'* and clear examples of how they work hard to accommodate all needs in the teaching and learning environment. A recognition that for some learners their preferred style is curtailed when English is not their first language was highlighted.

Accommodating Learning Styles

Participants spoke about combining different elements in their delivery such as having reading materials and visual aids so they and the learners can all 'enjoy the mix'. They also spoke about allowing *'things to evolve'* and that 'peoples' styles come to the surface'.

Another participant spoke about *'treating each day individually'* and recognised the importance of how the group work together and help each other. An important element is allowing learners *'figure out their own methods to learn and discover their own way of learning'.* A key element of the learner being in control, learning at their own pace and enjoying doing something new was reflected in the discussion.

The theme of partnership strongly emerged and how this is facilitated by the teachers through group discussion, brainstorming, asking learners to teach the person next to them or explain to the group. The creation of 'interactive' learning environment is a key role and 'empowering' learners to take on different roles. This approach is used in the classroom and also on MS Teams.

For learners who do not speak English as their first language it is important to *'pitch the vocabulary at the level they understand'.* Making sure that the learner 'knows what journey they are on' and understands the tasks to be completed was stated as important.

A key element that emerged at this stage of the discussion was being open as a teacher and *'learning from them'* (the learners), as well as the importance for the teacher to have an awareness of the differences in group dynamic, cohesion and make-up. These differences can sometimes be most evident between the first and second year groups.

An Accessible Teaching and Learning Space

It was acknowledged that physical spaces are not always accessible to all but that efforts are made to provide learners with accessible spaces. They key theme that emerged in this discussion was the real effort to create accessible learning environments where all cultures are respected, where everyone feels safe and welcome. A central aspect is that the *'person in front of you is the most important'*. Having 'conversations and dialogue so everyone feels included' or finds the right path was discussed. The involvement of all staff, not just teaching staff, in the conversation was highlighted as an important aspect. It was stated that *'it is the students'* centre' and *'how they deal with each other'* is critical. The participants reflected an equality in their centres *'the rules are the same for the staff as they are for the students'*. The issue of 'safety' for all learners was also highlighted as important. Centres that are *'welcoming for everybody'* was a core element for all participants.

Continued Improvements

It was generally felt that the person centred approach works greatly with learners and in the centres. However some modifications would help learners greatly and these are detailed below.

Correct placement and productive referrals was raised as an issue across the ETB *'we must put the student first'*. This requires more focussed work.

A continued reflection on the curriculum and modules delivered is required especially how they can be useful and relevant for learners 'we should teach what is purposeful for them'. It was commented that the positive impact of this approach is seen not only for the individual learner but often for their families and community as well.

Others spoke about the administrative demands and the difficulty of balancing the bureaucratic with the learner centred approach.

It was acknowledged that having laptops for learners made a 'huge difference' but that broadband continued to be an issue for some learners.

2.3 | Employer Focus Group

EMPLOYERS FOCUS GROUP

7th April 2021

A focus group took place on Wednesday 7th April 2021. It was organised by the Business Support Unit, Kerry College and facilitated by Aoife McCormack, QA Unit. There were six representatives of employers in attendance who were from a diverse range of businesses and industries across County Kerry. They represented the following:

Beauty Rooms, Kenmare; Dairymaster; Larkin's Bar & Restaurant, Milltown; Liebherr; Office of Public Works; Cahernane House Hotel; TLI and Corinne Evans Physiotherapy.

Some participants had consulted with representative organisations of which they are members namely Kerry Tourism Industry Federation and Irish Hotels Federation.

Experience of Engaging with Kerry ETB

All spoke of having a positive experience engaging with Kerry ETB. Participants spoke about the *'excellent training',* high placement rates of Kerry ETB *'course completers'* and reflected that dealings are *'useful and helpful'* and *'overall our experience has been very positive'.* Others stated *'we are very well supported by Kerry ETB'* and another that 'the courses are quite practical'. It was also shared by one participant that in their company's experience the *'ETB candidates have been every bit as good as those coming from an IT or University in the sense of the level of training they receive'.*

However, two representatives reflected that they did not know until recently what Kerry ETB could provide to them or the groups they represent, but also accepted that they could now reach out and collaborate with the ETB more, framing this as *'maybe it is our own fault for not engaging with the ETB or that the ETB was not selling itself properly'.* One participant reflected that a strong partnership

approach now exists since 2012 when they initiated contact. Then three courses for their specialised industry were developed as, at that time, it was *'near impossible to recruit people in that industry'.* This participant reported that the employment record from the three courses is close to 100%, stating that *'Kerry College is an invaluable resource ... to help a company like ours expand and grow'.* Other participants highlighted that they worked with those who had completed different courses in Kerry College and reflected that some course completers are better equipped for the workplace than others.

Course Type and Benefits

Participants reflected that the right course is being provided *'so much so that competitors are nipping at our heels,'* for those who finish their studies. Participants highlighted the collaborative way of working together at the course design stage. Others spoke about how the lines of communication are open with the instructors to ensure that new industry demands are met. This flexibility, as well as the responsive nature of Kerry ETB, was highlighted by many participants. Two examples were given. The TLI representative spoke of the skills required in their sector to meet the needs for the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan and Corinne Evans highlighted the speedy development of the Infection Prevention and Control course in response to the COVD-19 pandemic.

Many participants reflected the high level of skills that those who study with Kerry ETB have on completion, with one participant stating that the 'standard of student is better than those coming from the private providers'.

However, some gaps were also identified particularly by the hospitality sector acknowledging that more collaboration needed to take place to develop training needs. Some reflected a shortfall in practical application such as understanding specific business needs, sales, IT skills and practical beauty skills. It was identified that some courses *'need to be refined'.* The OPW reflected a need to change recruitment practices and advertise better in future as there was a low uptake last year.

More opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) for their staff, at all stages of the business, was reflected by all. This would help staff progress and do this in a networked way, perhaps with those they studied with originally. This CPD is also a need for business leaders.

Future Focus and Continuous Improvement

All participants reflected that Kerry ETB needed to continue to be flexible, innovative and responsive. Some recommendations were:

Courses

- More business skills and online sales/training skills for employers (Beauty and Hair)
- Include 3D laser scanning, skills in recording and preservation, how to write up a report (Stonemasonry).
- Include the language used by the Allied Health Professionals in the curriculum (Medical Administration).

Profile

- Build an awareness of what Kerry ETB offers for all businesses as *'there is a general lack of knowledge'*.
- Link with hospitality, hoteliers and vintners directly, an awareness is now created but great collaboration together can take place. *'Open the lines of communication there is a long way to go but this is a great start'*.

Many participants reflected the need to prepare and respond to industry needs for example:
- GDPR - Data security and privacy as this will be an issue for businesses for the future.
- Integrative Wellness: Mind - Body Wellness will be the new focus for the Beauty Industry and students need to be prepared for this.

Confidence in Kerry ETB

All said that they have confidence in Kerry ETB. Reasons given were quality end product, people who are employable, innovative and adaptable.

2.4 | Partners Focus Group

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS FOCUS GROUP

12th May 2021

On Wednesday 12th May 2021 four participants representing the Social, Health and Education Project (SHEP)[1] and the Kerry ETB Community Education Programme[2] met in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to reflect and self-evaluate on their collaborative partnership as part of the self-evaluation phase in the Kerry ETB Inaugural Review Process. The meeting took place at a scheduled partnership review meeting.

Collaborative Work

All participants were clearly able to verbalise the work that they do together. The work is centred around non-formal education that promotes wellbeing in a non-formal experiential way. SHEP expressed that working with Kerry ETB allows them *'respond in a joined up way'* and that the relationship with Kerry ETB is *'quite special'* It was noted that the partners come together to reflect, explore and create in response to a need *'in a holistic way'*. Kerry ETB expressed how this would not be done without this particular collaboration. Together they plan for, deliver and review flexible courses based on community needs. An important aspect is the maintenance of the ethos and values as expressed in the SLA.[3] The support gained through partnership in a professional and personal way was also mentioned. The importance for both partners to talk to the groups involved to ascertain their needs was expressed, as well as their focus on active inclusion.

SHEP: Experience of Working with Kerry ETB

Participants identified the experience of working with Kerry ETB as *'straightforward, positive and constructive'*. A strong personal and professional relationship was seen as the firm foundation of this. It was reflected that the SLA was needed to establish the funding relationship but reflected that this is just one aspect of the relationship between the organisations as *'mutual trust'* and *'respect'* were identified as the bedrock of the relationship. Because of this it was believed that *'the quality is better than with other ETBs'*.

Benefits of Working Together

It was expressed that there were many benefits in working together such as reducing time, delivering to community group needs, value for money and a focus on collaboration rather than competition. All of this is based on an understanding and trust that they are coming to the table for the right reasons. It was noted that the value of collaboration was not measured at a national level and that as reporting mechanisms have changed in ETBs, many of the outcomes that were previously reported are no longer captured.

Quality Collaborative Partnership

There was discussion on the quality of the work engaged in by the partners. SHEP experiential group work is not assessed but *'it does not mean it is not quality work'*. The SHEP participants highlighted that as an organisation they had made a strategic decision to *'pin our collar'* to non-accredited work in order to maintain the quality of their work and to continue to meet community and wellbeing needs. It was shared that all courses are evaluated and common themes emerge in those evaluations such as *'life-changing'* and *'confidence'*. While courses are not measured

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[1] SHEP is a community based organisation whose vision is to work 'in solidarity and partnership with others we seek to foster the well-being of people, families, communities and the wider world and to contribute to building a healthy, loving, socially just and sustainable way of living'.

[2] The Community Education promotes learning that supports individuals and groups to address issues in their community and empowers the development of a group of adults who have the confidence to participate as active citizens. The Community Education Programme aims to create an openness to alternative structures and sharing in learning rather than competing in it. Community education also aims to locate personal, individual experiences within the broader social and political context. Through the Community Education Programme, Kerry ETB delivers educational opportunities that are accessible, flexible in nature and are designed in consultation with the learners in over 100 community venues in Kerry. Kerry ETB's Community Education Facilitator has solid links with the community and voluntary sector, schools and adult education centres.

[3] Kerry ETB and SHEP Organisational Shared Values are expressed in the SLA as working in empowering ways; promoting inclusiveness and opposing unjust discrimination; facilitating reflective, inclusive spaces; working in ways that promote the integrity of the natural environment; being flexible and responsive to emerging needs and equality, inclusion, empowerment, social justice, equality of access and respect.

against the NFQ their quality, success and impact are measured by their high demand e.g. there are waiting list for many of the courses. It was noted that *'quality education does not have to have qualifications'*.

Examples of Working Together

The group identified many examples of working together such as providing workshops for parents to support their children's anxiety to personal development in variety of community settings. One area that dominated discussion was a model of working in Kenmare through a recovery focused mental health model with a number of community and statutory organisations. Other examples of predevelopment work were shared. The adaptation by SHEP to the online environment during public health restrictions was highlighted and commended by Kerry ETB participants. The discussion focussed on courses targeting groups in most need in Kerry. It was evident from the examples discussed that the collaboration ensures that learners and groups are at the core of the work and that there is a shared belief that those furthest from the education system have a right to access.

Future Focus

It was reflected that *'if we can do what we are currently doing, the way we are doing it, we will be satisfied'*. The importance of maintaining the

relationship and current practice was strongly expressed. An important element for all to retain in the future is the quality of their work. A vital aspect is agreeing plans of work together so they are sustainable from a quality perspective. The importance of the work continuing to be rooted in equality, social justice, empowerment and social inclusion for people who are furthest from education is the constant connection between the two partners.

Confidence in Kerry ETB

SHEP expressed confidence in their partnership with Kerry ETB acknowledging *'huge trust, strength and confidence'*. It was acknowledged that partnerships can change as different people come and go as they *'bring their own styles and gifts'*. In this instance SHEP was eager to stress that the relationship with Kerry ETB is also a personal one and if the Community Education Facilitator (CEF) left it was *'jeopardy for us. …Having a different person in the same job could be different, the organisational arrangements are dependent on the people in the job at the time. All the quality systems in the world won't make up for having the wrong person in the job'*. This is important not only for a sense of professionalism, passion for the work, common values and belief in the work but also for connections and relationships with people on the ground and for a continued annual provision.

3 | Emerging Themes from Focus Groups

3.1 | Learners

Five learner focus groups met.

The learner discussions and reports provide clear evidence of an 'expert learner' engaged in inclusive learning, where goals are clear and flexible and where there are good mechanisms to support learner variability. Positive learning experiences were clearly vocalised.

Learning Environment
- All learners spoke about how their learning environment in Kerry ETB helps boost their self-esteem and build their self-confidence. This chimes with findings published by Indecon (2020) that identified that 88% of learners who participated in Kerry ETB programmes reported that it increased individual's confidence and self-esteem.
- The majority of learners, particularly those engaged in part-time programmes spoke about the welcome they received in their centres.
- An inclusive and collaborative learning environment was identified by many of the learners.
- The central role of the teacher and Centre Manager emerged in discussions, acknowledging the importance of a whole centre approach.

Learning Styles
- Learners showed a great awareness for their preferred ways to learn and how this is supported through teaching and learning.

Learner Support
- All learners were able to clearly identify the supports they receive from their teachers/ tutors/ instructors.
- Feedback from the teacher/ tutor/ instructor emerged as a key area where learners feel most supported. However, some variance was also reported in how, when and the manner in which this was provided.
- All learners spoke about receiving assessment briefs that were clear and well explained.
- A clear sense of belonging emerged from the discussions.

Virtual Learning Environment
- Most learners expressed a preference for learning in-centre, although some positive aspects of learning online were readily identified.
- Some learners enjoyed the VLE and were able to identify many positives, along with a hope for its continuation.

Comment
The good practice in supporting learner variability should be resourced to the same extent across the Kerry ETB FET Provision.

3.2 | Staff

Seven staff groups met to focus on the areas below.

A clear sense of investment by staff in positive outcomes for learners emerged strongly in all focus group discussions. Central to this was the care of the learner and the value in creating collaborative learning environments based on trust, dialogue and affiliation.

Learning Environment
- Learner centred approaches clearly emerged and were reported at the sessions.
- Building learner confidence was identified as important by all staff focus groups.
- Pitching content and assessment to learner levels was identified by many participants as important in developing learner competence.

Learner Support
- Staff identified a number of ways they support the diverse needs of learners. It was clear that this is so strongly embedded in their day to day practice that reflection was required to help the group identify the myriad of ways they manage variability in the course of their daily work.
- Staff provided clear examples of how support to learners is provided across the academic journey of the learner.
- The process of learning to learn, and how this is a gap for many learners, was identified in many discussions.
- Evidence of the integration of learner support across centres and the existence of individualised supports in some locations bore testament to the different models that exist.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- The challenges and advantages of the virtual learning environment were readily discussed. A very real sense of an openness to work in a blended way in the future was expressed. However in-centre provision was identified as critical for learners who have diverse emotional, behavioural, social and academic needs.
- Many staff members highlighted the infrastructural advantages (MS Teams; laptops) that assisted in ensuring continuity and structure during public health restrictions.
- Staff identified that a VLE worked best where relationships are pre-established and the sense of team has already been developed.
- All had engaged in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) CPD and many showed an openness to further develop these skills through future CPD.
- Some staff members identified the possibilities for online and blended learning delivery and would welcome support for the development of curriculum and resources.

3.3 | Employers

One employer focus group met.

Employers expressed a confidence in Kerry ETB. A key theme emerged of how Kerry ETB provides employers with people who had a high standard of education and training and were ready for the workplace.

A spirit of collaboration and partnership between Kerry ETB staff and employers was evident and concrete examples were provided.

Gaps and areas for refinement were easily identified by employers in education and training provision, in knowledge about the role of Kerry ETB and in the knowledge of how collaboration could be developed for some sectors.

3.4 | Collaborative Partners

One focus group with a community partner organisation, who play a key role in Kerry ETB's non-formal education provision, met in May 2021. A keen sense of valuable, dynamic and effective collaboration to meet the needs of individuals and groups that are the furthest from the education system was evident in the discussions. The need to capture the outcomes of this non-formal education and the wider benefits of non-accredited provision was discussed.

3.5 | Recommendations to Consider for Future Action

The Inaugural Review Steering Group will generate areas for future improvement and focus by Kerry ETB. It is recommended, based on the voice of learners, staff, employers and partners that there is consideration given to the following:

Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Document examples of feedback to learners and develop clear expectations at an organisational level for these formative and summative feedback processes.
- Explore and support blended learning opportunities.
- Support curriculum design for future online and blended learning delivery.
- Explore the options of more flexibility, using UDL principles, within module assessments.
- Conduct a high level reflection on teaching, learning and assessment during the public health restrictions.

Active Inclusion
- Develop a standardised learner supports model across FET provision.
- Research, design and develop a shared model of Learner Support services (including PA staff where required).
- Continue to support and value the core relationship between practitioner and learner and augment this support where needed.
- Support Universal Design for Learning across centres and colleges of further education and training.
- Provide technical support to learners engaged in online learning.

Access, Transfer and Progression
- Ensure the correct placement of learners on courses to support their independence of learning and their achievement.
- Develop and deliver TEL induction for learners prior to the commencement of courses.
- Explore the extension of some programmes/ courses to support learning to learn

Capacity Building
- Continue TEL Continuous Professional Development at scheduled times.
- Develop an IT Helpdesk to assist teaching staff with day to day TEL challenges.
- Develop teaching staff capacity in feedback of and for learning to learners.
- Develop teaching staff capacity in assessing alternative evidence.

Partnership
- Develop a plan for employer engagement and promotion of Kerry ETB provision and services.
- That partnership continues to meet the needs of those furthest from the education system.
- That mechanisms are developed to strategically manage active inclusion and measure its impact for learners and communities..

Appendices

Appendix 1 |

Questionnaires and Surveys

A number of surveys were circulated to key stakeholders.

- **Learner Survey:**
https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=G1uLaEkYakuSu9_iLFk5gh9P14ZqRjlFkACs5rkPO-hBUQkRZWk9GSFYzRFAxMFo5S1c4NjZSRDg5Ti4u&AnalyzerToken=AtJUaHiUwv33bkuJjvQKdKIh5J1AaYsb

- **Learner Support Survey:**
https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=G1uLaEkYakuSu9_iLFk5giUBlCwIFC9EklbFWhnFYBx-UQkI4STkxOTBOQ0RGQ0xYRTZBTlVITjZFOS4u&AnalyzerToken=d5HR3zMI3FOCvTxijRv4o4NSUWcqT8FD

- **Staff Survey:**
https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=G1uLaEkYakuSu9_iLFk5gh9P14ZqRjlFkACs5rkPOhBUN08wWDREVzlaVlRBRzZWV0hTWU9JOUVRRC4u&AnalyzerToken=MeohjveKS4OaZJo6OTyEh6QmeHs9PduO

- **Employer Survey:**
https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=G1uLaEkYakuSu9_iLFk5giUBlCwIFC9EklbFWhnFYBx-UQkVUWTdINDU4VFZUMzFYV1lWNzgwVks5MS4u&AnalyzerToken=Sl6R26KtFIDyIGMlH2II4miIhdByMSpe

Appendix 2

Learner and Staff Engagement Documentation from QA Officer

QQI established Core Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016.

In 2018 all 16 ETBs completed re-engagement process with QQI establishing quality assurance policies and procedures in accordance with section 30 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Education and Training Act 2012.

In 2019 and 2020 Kerry ETB submitted a Self-Evaluation Report to QQI followed by a dialogue meeting. Self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an ETBs quality assurance system and QQI has responsibility to carry out Statutory review of providers quality assurance procedures and their effective implementation as set out in the 2012 Act.

The first such review of Kerry ETB is due to take place on a scheduled basis in 2021/2022.

Submission of Self Evaluation Report	Planning Visit	Main Review Visit	Draft Review Report to ETB	ETB Advises on any Factual Accuracy Issues	ETB provides Formal Response
25th June 2021	7th Oct 2021	29th Nov to 3rd Dec 2021	25th Feb 2022	4th March 2022	25th March

QQI published 3 reports to assist ETBs with the Inaugural Review - available on the QQI Website.
- Inaugural Quality Assurance Review of Education and Training Boards Policy
- Inaugural Review Handbook
- Sectoral Report Terms of Reference Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in ETBs.

The key phases of the process are as follows:

1. Kerry ETB will undertake a comprehensive and inclusive self-evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures. This will result in the production of a self-evaluation report. **All FET Staff will be involved in this process through various methods. FET learners, FET teaching staff, community partners, employers and other partners will be consulted during this self-evaluation process, which will take place January to April 2021**.

2. **QQI will appoint an external review team** to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance procedures. This will include reviewing the self-evaluation report and discussing the ETB's quality system with a broad range of ETB staff, learners and stakeholders over the course of a week-long visit to the ETB.

3. The review process will result in the **production of an independent review report by the QQI review team**, which will make a number of findings, commendations and recommendations on the operation of the ETB's quality assurance system.

4. Kerry ETB will be asked to provide a formal response to the report, which will be included in the published report.

5. The ETB will then prepare an action plan to address the issues identified in the review.

6. A year after submission of the action plan, the ETB will provide a follow-up report on its progress against the actions outlined in its action plan.

An Inaugural Review Steering Group has been set up with representatives from FET full-time and part-time provision, management, administration, quality assurance, to oversee and guide the self-evaluation process, and draft the self-evaluation report.

Active participation is essential to this process. If you want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact Bernadette Corridan bcorridan@kerryetb.ie

KEY TASKS FOR CAMPUS MANAGERS & AEOs

TO COMPLETE	DEADLINE FOR CAMPUS MANAGERS & AEOs
A. FOCUS GROUP WITH LEARNERS: QUESTIONS FOR LEARNER FOCUS GROUP Commence by requesting agreement to record the Teams session. Also request permission to add their contact details to a database for use when setting up review panel meetings with QQI. Learners can record their agreement in Chat. 1. How are you getting on, is the course what you expected? Optional follow up question if answer is no - tell me more about this. 2. How do you find preparing for assessment does working with Microsoft Teams help or hinder your preparation? 3. Is it clear to you what is expected from assessment and how your assessment will be marked? 4. Do you have a preferred way to learn e.g. visual/hearing/reading and writing/doing. Is that taken into account at assessment time? 5. Does teacher/tutor/instructor feedback help you to learn and prepare for assessment? 6. What have you gained most from your experience in Kerry College/Centre (VTOS, Youthreach & ABE) 7. Give me one word to describe your experience of Kerry College. (optional)	Submit report to Bernadette Corridan by 20th April 2021
B. FOCUS GROUP WITH TEACHERS/TUTORS/INSTRUCTORS - The Learning Environment QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS GROUP - CHOOSE ONE SET OF QUESTIONS: Commence by requesting agreement to record the Teams session. Also request permission to add their contact details to a database for use when setting up review panel meetings with QQI. Staff can record their agreement in Chat. **Virtual Learning Environment questions:** 1. Is the use of Teams supporting your learners to learn? 2. Will you consider the use of the virtual platform in the future? 3. What would support you to do this? 4. Do you agree that teaching and learning spaces are designed well for using technology? Why?	Submit report to Bernadette Corridan by 20th April 2021

TO COMPLETE	DEADLINE FOR CAMPUS MANAGERS & AEOs
Learning Styles questions: 1. Are Teachers/Tutors/Instructors aware of learners preferred teaching/learning styles in their classroom and how? 2. How are these learning styles accommodated and supported in the design and delivery of your course? 3. Is the teaching and learning space accessible to everyone? Does it meet all learning styles? 4. How can we improve this? **Learner Support questions:** 1. Why is learner support offered 2. When is learner support offered 3. How is learner support delivered 4. What is the impact on learners	Submit report to Bernadette Corridan by 20th April 2021
C: Learner Case Studies/Learner Testimonials If you have any Learner Case Studies or Learner Testimonials please forward.	
Hold a **meeting with all staff (teaching and non-teaching) to reflect** on findings from teaching staff and learner focus groups and/or MS Forms surveys.	**April 2021**

TO LEAD AND SUPPORT
Circulate **learner and staff posters** to all staff in your Campus/Centre

Add Inaugural **Review as an item on staff meetings Agenda** to:
   a. Brief all staff on the significance of the process, reference the Inaugural Review Implementation Plan 2021.
   b. Remind colleagues of deadline to complete FET staff survey, and support completion rate of learner survey for each centre 16th April 2021.
   c. Inform colleagues to attend the Inaugural Review briefing sessions.
   d. Remind colleagues of the Review Panel Visit in November/December 2021

2. **Be available the week of** 29th Nov to 3rd Dec 2021 for the QQI Main Review Panel visit.

Appendix 3 |

Employer Engagement documentation from QA Officer

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The key phases of the process are as follows:

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8. **QQI will appoint an external review team** to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance procedures. This will include reviewing the self-evaluation report and discussing the ETB's quality system with a broad range of ETB staff, learners and stakeholders over the course of a **week-long visit to the ETB**.

9. The review process will result in the **production of an independent review report by the QQI review team**, which will make a number of findings, commendations and recommendations on the operation of the ETB's quality assurance system.

10. Kerry ETB will be asked to provide a formal response to the report, which will be included in the published report.

11. The ETB will then prepare an action plan to address the issues identified in the review.

12. A year after submission of the action plan, the ETB will provide a follow-up report on its progress against the actions outlined in its action plan.

An Inaugural Review Steering Group has been set up with representatives from FET full-time and part-time provision, management, administration, quality assurance, to oversee and guide the self-evaluation process, and draft the self-evaluation report.

Active participation is essential to this process. If you want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact Bernadette Corridan bcorridan@kerryetb.ie

KEY TASKS FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

TO COMPLETE	DEADLINE FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
A: Review the employer survey to summarise and generate observations commendations and recommendations from survey findings.	
Focus Group Hold a focus group meeting with employers (min 6 and max 8) and ask the following questions 1. What is your experience of engaging with Kerry ETB? 2. Are we providing the right kind of course for your business? 3. What are the benefits of these courses to your business? 4. What can we do more of in the future?	Submit report to Bernadette Corridan by 20th April 2021

KERRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD (KERRY ETB)

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Kerry Education and Training Board