

ConexUs!

Quarterly Insights into Quality Assurance in the FET Sector

Issue 2

**Covid-19 &
Contingencies**

**Alternative
Assessment**

**Strategy
Development**

**Professional
Development**

**Emergency
Remote
Learning**

**Learner
Forum
2021**



cmetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Chabháin agus Mhuineacháin
*Cavan and Monaghan
Education and Training Board*

WELCOME

ConexUs! YOUR QA NEWSLETTER

CMETB's Quality Mission Statement is :

"To enable CMETB to provide Learner Centred education and training that consistently conforms to the highest national standards".

QA involves the systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality and efficiency. The confidence provided by QA is two fold—internally to staff & learners and externally to the public, government agencies, regulators and third parties. CMETB has a collective responsibility to deliver quality programmes to their learners.

With a robust QA process in place, CMETB centres and services can:

- Meet the needs of our diverse learner cohorts
- Take ownership and responsibility of providing quality solutions to meet the needs of our stakeholders
- Actively seek out ways to make improvements in our provision
- Instill a pride in being part of a successful, dynamic learner-centred organisation

FOREWORD

Welcome to Issue 2 of ConexUs! a new CMETB publication for all things QA. The name of the newsletter derives from the Latin for connection or joining together a connecting structure.

This newsletter will give you an insight into items relating to Quality Assurance. Some you may be aware of and others will provide you with additional insights.

We welcome inputs and testimonials from various centres and services because, let's face it, some great things are happening at centre level and now you have a platform to communicate it to the wider CMETB community.

To promote or showcase an article in the newsletter, please submit a short paragraph to the **ConexUs!** editorial team below.

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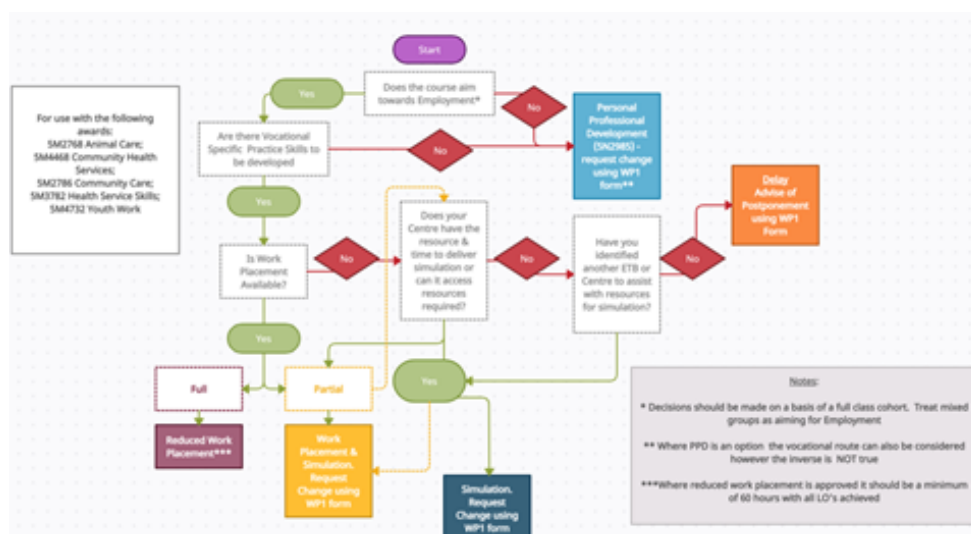
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ALTERNATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE PROCESS



CMETB centres and services have started a process of developing alternatives for their learners' to work experience/work placement procedures. To overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19, QQI has facilitated ETBs to make alternative arrangements for work placements provided robust Governance processes are in place to support

CMETB's self-auditing process for contingency purposes identified possible alternative work placement routes for programmes with a vocational focus.

Each area identified will progress either with full work placement (where possible) or reduced work placement (60 hours) & simulation or full simulation subject to the availability of suitable resources.

Award Type	Award Title
Care Awards (WP1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5M2768 Animal <u>Care</u>; 5M4468 Community Health <u>Services</u>; 5M2786 Community <u>Care</u>; 5M3782 Health Service <u>Skills</u>; 5M4732 Youth Work
Nursing Awards (WP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5M4339 Healthcare Support, 5M4349 Nursing Studies
Catering/Hort Awards (WP3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5M2805 Catering Support, 5M2586 Horticulture, 5M2088 Professional Cookery
Childcare Awards (WP4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4M2014 Early Childhood Education & Care Support 5M2009 Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) 6M2007 ECCE
Social and Vocational (WP5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6M2218 Social and Vocational Integration

CMETB is also aware of the need to prepare for the changing world of work for learners. It is evident that post Covid-19, some work operations will not revert back to the pre-Covid-19 scenario, impacts of these contingencies will be measured in May/June with a view to recommending changes to QQI.

For more information please contact your centre co-ordinator or QA Team.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT PREPARATION (Form's 1 & 2)

Over the last year, CMETB has taken swift action to adapt to the unprecedented levels of disruption posed by COVID-19. CMETB has implemented a range of modified teaching, learning and assessment alternatives to maintain suitable levels of assessment for learners.

The QA team disseminated two types of forms to Centres in February 2021. Form 2 was sent out to tutors via Centre Heads/Managers to outline if there would be use of any alternative method of assessment other than the assessment prescribed on the QQI module descriptor and if so how these could be facilitated. Centre Heads/Managers summarised the feedback from tutors using the Form 1 (via MS forms) and the alternative assessment methods were approved by the FET Management & Quality Council. CMETB noted that this year many centres opted for an assignment based style of assessment instead of an online examination.

This exercise was afforded extra time to prepare for alternative assessment this year as management took the decision early to go with alternative assessments in order to provide clarity and certainty to our learners. Last year CMETB was acting under pressurised time constraints. This extension offered time to prepare in advance which was welcomed by tutors.

For more information, please contact your centre co-ordinator or QA Team.

FESS 2021 CALENDAR

FESS are currently working through their Spring 2021 programme calendar. Webinars including: Online clinic(s) to support FET practitioners with blended learning, Reimagining your Course – The move to Blended Learning; and Reimagining your assessment for remote learners are just some of the useful PL&D resources out there for tutors/co-ordinators.

CMETB encourages tutors to participate in these. For more information, click [here](#)



REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT MALPRACTICE POLICY

The QA Subgroup are reviewing policies first introduced into practice two years ago, the most recent being the Assessment Malpractice policy. The purpose of this review is to build on learnings from implementation and ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose. The next version of the policy (v3) will be presented to the FET Management & Quality Council for approval in June.

EMERGENCY REMOTE LEARNING



CMETB Staff have and continue to respond to the needs of learners during the ongoing emergency and in recent months have utilised remote learning environments, ICT and blended learning methodologies in order to meet the teaching and learning needs in a safe and interactive way.

The range of platforms and resources being used by Further Education & Training staff is comprehensive. These can vary depending on familiarity with platforms, internet connectivity and use of TEL. With such an array of platforms, resources and other online supports available, it can be difficult to know which are the preferred options in terms of the needs of tutors and learners. The visual below with associated links contains some tried and tested resources that may help to provide some useful support and guidance.

Our CMETB TEL Officer Siobhán has kindly developed a one stop shop for resources and tools to make remote teaching and learning more accessible and user friendly with the use of Wakelet and MS Stream.

See links below. If you require TEL support, please contact siobhanmccarra@cmetb.ie

CMETB TEL Resources

[FET - TEL Training Videos](#)

[Student Support Videos](#)

[MS Teams Wakelet Collection](#)

[MS Forms Wakelet Collection](#)

[Office 365 Wakelet Collection](#)

[PowerPoint Wakelet Collection](#)

[OneDrive Wakelet Collection](#)

[Microsoft Educator Center](#)

Remote Learning Resources

[T & L Forum Webinars & Events](#)

[EDEN \(European Distance
& E-learning Network\)](#)

[Society for Research
into Higher Education:](#)

[AONTAS
Update & Engagement Webinar](#)

LEARNER FORUM 2021

CMETB's first virtual Learner Forum was held on Tuesday 23rd March 2021 as a result of demand for such an event were evidenced in our recent Learner Survey. #LearnerVoice and #StayingConnected were central themes of the recent Learner Survey and they carried into our Learner Forum Event. The Learner Forum invited CMETB learners from across the FET Service to participate in a special event to discuss findings of our recent Learner Survey and also look at topics important to learners such as Motivation, Resilience, Wellbeing as well as providing tips on how to study effectively.

Key note speakers on the day included: Mickey Graham (Cavan GAA), Shane Martin, (Psychologist/Author), Siobhan Magee (FESS), Orla Maguire (Guidance Counsellor) & Martin Fox (Learner Journey).

Learner Feedback helps to improve our FET Services and ensure we respond to learner needs. Some of the feedback we received included the following:



UPDATED CAO FORMAT

The Central Applications Office (CAO) has been updated to ensure an integration system for all applications, incorporating for the first time apprenticeships and further education. All options will display in the one document alongside Higher Ed options. This is a very welcomed development for learners to access FET and will improve access to CMETB programmes.

LAUNCH OF "THE RIGHT COURSE"

The Right Course initiative was launched in January 2021 by Minister Simon Harris and provides a one-stop shop for all kinds of educational routes and supports for learners including provision offered by ETBs.

To visit this site click [here](https://gov.ie/therightcourse)



QQI INAUGURAL REVIEW UPDATE

The clock is counting down on the inaugural review and preparatory work continues to gather pace. We have recently completed our second round of learner consultations via the 2021 FET Learner Survey and the Virtual Learning Forum



The findings of the Learner Survey were presented to FET management and administrative staff at our FET Breakfast briefing on Thursday 15th April, where our interactive database of results of the 2020 and 2021 learner surveys was also launched. To access our infographics highlighting the main findings of the 2021 Learner Survey, please click [here](#) and [here](#).

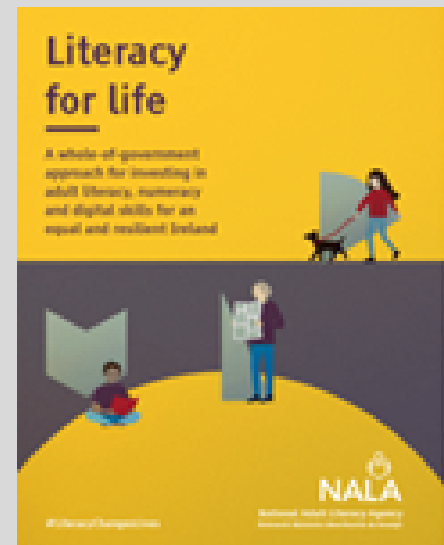
Our Provider Profile, which is a key part of the inaugural review process, has been drafted and was recently approved by the FET Management and Quality Council. The document is now being progressed to the design and print stage and will receive final approval from the Inaugural Review Steering Committee and the Chief Executive in advance of its submission to QQI by Friday 7th May.

Attention is now focused on drafting the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which is the principal document of the inaugural review process and which must be submitted to QQI by Friday 25th April. As part of the ongoing consultation process we are currently engaging with learner representatives, second providers and employer representatives. A staff consultation event, involving members of the different CMETB governance groups and sub-groups, along with senior management and representatives of the various support services to include HR, Finance, Land and Buildings, Procurement and Compliance, took place on Thursday 15th April.



CONTINUATION OF SOLAS 10 YEAR STRATEGY ON LITERACY, NUMERACY & DIGITAL LITERACY

Basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills are a crucial enabler of full participation in work and society. Gaps in reading, writing, mathematical or digital skills may hamper learners' progress in working towards qualifications, which in turn puts them at a disadvantage in the job market. Such challenges can also present practical constraints in negotiating daily life and may discourage people from participating in their communities and developing their personal potential.



On the other hand, strong literacy, numeracy and digital skills allow individuals to engage effectively with public institutions and access public services, understand and act upon new information and policy changes; use technology; and advocate for themselves and their communities in relation to issues that affect their lives.

SOLAS
learning works

The strategy will take a whole-of-government approach and provide a framework to support individuals to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The consultation paper is now available on the SOLAS website.

The consultation process highlighted emerging themes that include:

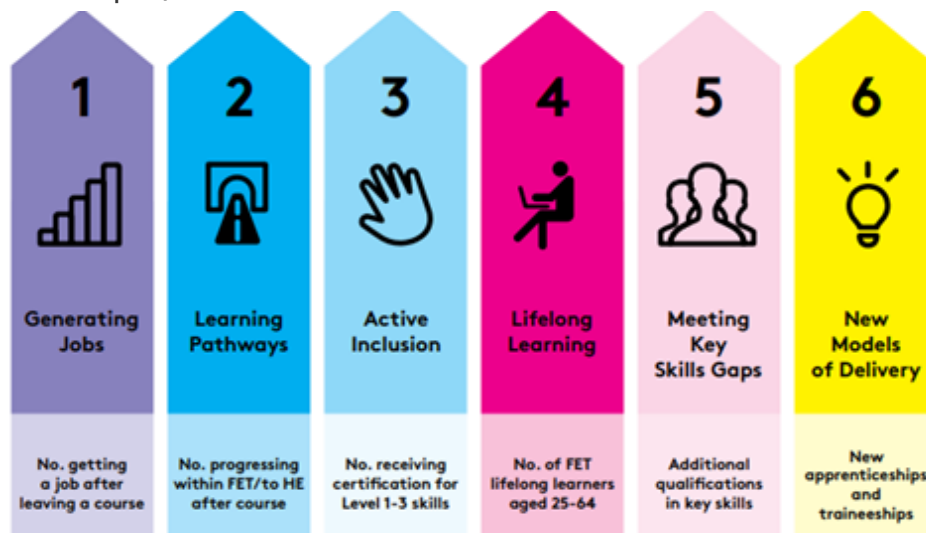
- Different Meanings of ALND
- Awareness and Access to Information and Supports
- Digital Divide
- Priorities and Actions
- Measuring Success

Stakeholders such as NALA and AONTAS are very involved in driving this new initiative forward in association with CMETB.

SOLAS FET STRATEGY (2020-2024)

Future FET

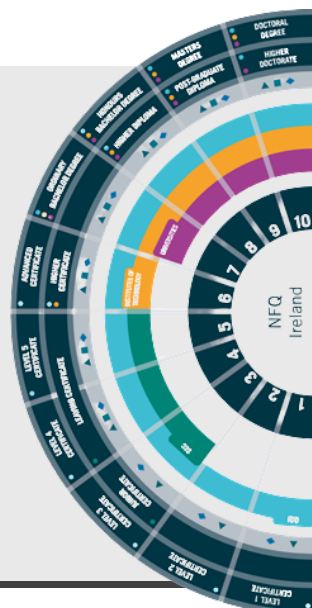
Future FET: Transforming Learning, The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024 is an ambitious new strategy that recognises the broad and multifaceted nature of FET provision and how, as Minister Harris describes "FET can put you on a pathway to anywhere you want to go in education, in work and in life" (FET Strategy 2020-2024, p.3)



This Strategy is aimed at Transforming Learning over the next 5 years. The new approach is based around three strategic pillars: building skills; fostering inclusion; and facilitating pathways. This will be underpinned by four enabling themes: Digital Transformation, Learner & Performance Focus, Staffing & Standards and Capital Development. The new Strategy will also place emphasis on promoting the FET Outcomes listed in the diagram above. CMETB is finalising our own strategy to align with this transformative model. Click [here](#) to access the Full FET Strategy.

Introduction of QQI Micro Accreditation

Micro-credentials are units of assessment that are smaller than traditional programmes of learning such as degrees and diplomas. They demonstrate that a learner has mastered a certain skill-set or demonstrated a level of achievement in a particular area. In December 2020, QQI's Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) approved some new micro-credential courses across a wide range of disciplines in education including the Scaffolding apprenticeship devised by LOETB. To read more on this information please click [here](#)



CMETB PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021

SOLAS has recently published the new FET Professional Learning and Development: Statement of Strategy 2020 – 2024, which builds on the progress achieved under the previous strategy. This updated strategy is focused on shaping Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) to support the delivery of the 'Future FET' agenda championed by the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024.

The strategy sets out three clear strategic goals which will inform and guide the approach to PL&D over the next 3 years:

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure

Goal 2: Build Capacity

Goal 3: Enhance Systems

Within each of these goals is a set of high-level actions which will guide the implementation of these goals. In addition, central to the strategy is the desire to create a culture of excellence in PL&D across ETBs and in support of this desire, five enabling themes have been identified, which will drive the actions identified under each of the three strategic goals:

Enabling Theme 1: Integrated Planning and Co-ordination

Enabling Theme 2: Individualised Learning

Enabling Theme 3: Flexible Delivery Systems

Enabling Theme 4: Transparency

Enabling Theme 5: Impact

For more information on the new PL&D Statement of Strategy please click [**here**](#).

**DO SOMETHING
TODAY
THAT YOUR
FUTURE SELF
WILL THANK YOU**

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

CMETB continues to roll out its 2021 Professional Learning and Development Plan with a further iteration of the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) Excel recently completed, while the monthly Wellbeing Webinar series continues with sessions to date focusing on stress management and resilience. These sessions were delivered by Shane Martin and Richard Burke.

A number of PL&D events are planned for the coming months:

The monthly Wellbeing Webinar series will continue with the next session taking place on Wednesday 21st April 2021 from 2:30pm – 3:30pm. The title of this session is 'A Personal Reboot' and will be delivered by James Sweetman, who previously presented at FET Meet 2019 and more recently at the FET eMeet event in December 2020. If you would like to register for this webinar please contact michaeldonohoe@cmetb.ie

Other programmes that are planned for the coming months include:

- **MOS Excel Expert – May/June 2021**
- **Advanced PowerPoint (with the option to complete the MOS PowerPoint certification) – May 2021**
- **Basic Energy Awareness Training - T.B.C.**

It is also hoped that our FET Meet will return to its traditional end of May slot and will once again take place virtually. Further information will be circulated via email in due course.

Please note that, in line with the new Professional Learning & Development Statement of Strategy 2020 – 2024 what was previously referred to as Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or Professional Development (PD) is now being referred to as Professional Learning and Development (PL&D).

**For more information on PL&D please
contact
michaeldonohoe@cmetb.ie.**



TABLEAU

Introductory training in data visualisation will be provided to CMETB using the Tableau platform. Tableau helps people and organisations become more data-driven through an interactive and dynamic visualisation and analytics platform.



SOLAS will be funding 1 Creator, 1 explorer and 5 viewer licenses for CMETB for a period of 12 months (December 22nd 2020 – December 22nd 2021)

Members of the PLSS Inhouse Committee will have access to this software in order to analyse their centre/service data in a user-friendly method.

FARR, PLSS & ESF



Many thanks to all Centres for inputting their course provision and planned programme indicators into PLSS & FARR for 2021.

The next FARR period will relate to mid-year forecasting returns in June 2021.

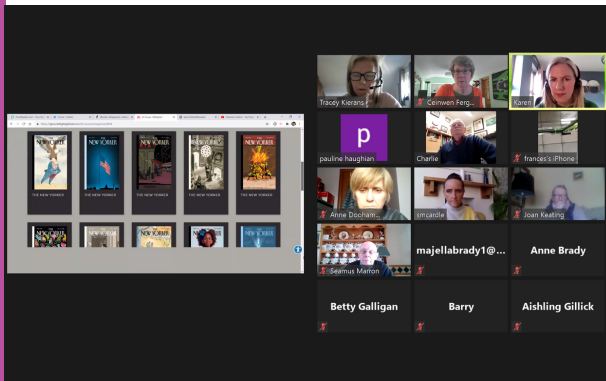
It is expected that in April 2021 there will be an ESF Audit scheduled in respect of 2020 learner data on PLSS. Your ongoing co-operation is much appreciated in compiling full datasets to ensure compliance and to enhance decision-making.

WAVE 2 LEARNER PAYMENTS (VTOS/YOUTHREACH)



Following the successful migration of the Wave 1 Learner Payments to Apprentices/Training Services Learners, the implementation of the Wave 2 Learners Payments Project is currently underway for Youthreach and Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) participants. This will introduce changes to the current payment systems used for VTOS and Youthreach learners in CMETB. These system changes will include the migration to the CoreHR payment system, and the implementation of a time and attendance system for recording time and attendance for Youthreach and VTOS Learners.

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2021



CMETB's Adult Education Service hosted its first ever online Adult Learners' Week in March 2021

CMETB's Adult Learners Week in conjunction with Aontas formed part of the National Adult Learning Festival which seeks to encourage participation from young and old in a range of vocational and hobby type courses. The theme of this year's Adult Learners' festival was "Building Back Better Together" and this was certainly the case in CMETB.

Marie Clerkin and Noelene Sharkey from the Adult Guidance Service quickly realised the demand and worked to ensure additional classes for the week and indeed well into the next week so that no learner was disappointed. Classes were offered in a range of subjects including make up and care of mature skin, gardening tips for spring, cooking, art, flower arranging, IT skills and accessing the library's online resources.

Learners flocked to these classes with some tutors hosting in excess of 50 learners at a time. Marie Clerkin, Information Officer, AEGIS Monaghan explained "It was wonderful to be able to accommodate such a large number of learners in all classes. In other years, we had to cap numbers but the beauty of the online event is that we were able to offer almost everyone a place". Noelene Sharkey, Information Officer, AEGIS Cavan continues "We had people who participated in an entire week of learning without once having to step outside their door. People participated in multiple classes whereas in the past they would only have perhaps done one".

In total, CMETB Adult Education Services, delivered taster sessions to 1500 learners during the week with additional learners participating in courses the following week. The appetite for online learning it seems is insatiable and particularly so for people, who for one reason or another, cannot leave home. CMETB's Adult Education Service has made a suite of unaccredited programmes available online for this term and will continue to do so post-COVID in response to this new and emerging need.

For more information on programmes available contact CMETB AEGIS on 047-30800 or 049 4377001

GENERATION APPRENTICESHIP - CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021

The number of current women apprentices has surpassed 1000 for the first time in Ireland.



March 8th recognised International Women's Day 2021 and as part of the celebration Apprenticeship Ireland highlighted local Monaghan woman Joanne McGuigan who is one of three female sheet metal work apprentices in Ireland but the first in 17 years!

Speaking about Women in Apprenticeships, Joanne said: "Everyone should get a chance to do whatever they want - no matter who they are." Joanne felt an apprenticeship is a good fit for her because of the mix of learning opportunities - combining learning skills in the classroom with learning in the work environment.

The number of women apprentices has surpassed 1000 for the first time in the history of apprenticeships in Ireland rising from just 26 in 2015. Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science said: "There is still much to be done and one of my key goals as Minister is to increase diversity and the gender balance in our apprenticeship system." CMETB currently have 27 registered female apprentices.

COMMIS CHEF APPRENTICESHIP CAPSTONE EVENT



Cavan Institute Commis Chef apprentices created a wonderful, simulated restaurant environment on 21 December 2020 as part of their capstone module assessment. The apprentices used their culinary skills in Cavan Institute's new state of the art industrial kitchen to provide board members and CMETB staff with an opulent 6-course meal experience. The restaurant room was laid out to allow space to adhere to Covid-19 Guidelines.

Proud tutors Michelle McElvogue and Pauric White co-ordinated the sumptuous event while Ann Marie Lacey paid homage to the hard-working apprentices.

CMETB would like to wish these exceptional apprentices all the best in their future careers.

SKILLS TO ADVANCE

Supporting Cavan/Monaghan Businesses through Skills to Advance

Through the Skills to Advance initiative CMETB can actively engage with local employers offering certified training that delivers upskilling and reskilling opportunities. These programmes are aimed at equipping employees with the skills required to progress in their current job, or to take advantage of new job opportunities and adapt to a changing job market



Speaking about the benefits of training courses under Skills to Advance Peter Richardson, Sales Manager at McAree Engineering, had this to say about the courses his employees have participated on:

“We have been delighted with our links with CMETB which has allowed us to upskill our team in a number of key areas. Our staff have developed their skills through participation in a range of courses including the ILM Certificate in Leadership & Management and Reception & Office Skills”.

“In addition, the ability to source quite technical courses like HR, Accounting Technician and Solidworks locally to us is a big advantage and it is a further encouragement to our staff to participate.”

Click [here](#) to read the full article

SKILLS TO ADVANCE SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

To find out more information on what training opportunities are available to employees the Skills to Advance Newsletter is available [here](#)

Make skills work for
your business

**Spring 2021
Newsletter**
SKILLS TO ADVANCE

Funded courses
for employees

Courses tailored for
your business needs



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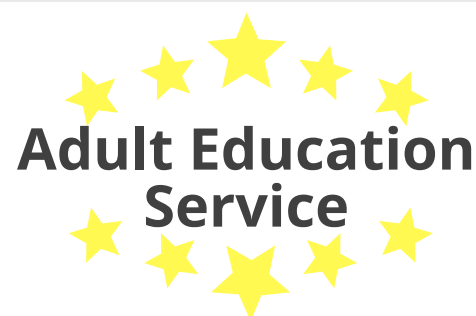
GRANT THORNTON & MONAGHAN INSTITUTE LAUNCH COMPETITION FOR BUSINESS LEARNERS

Grant Thornton, one of the world's leading organisations of independent audit, tax and advisory companies is collaborating with Monaghan Institute to launch a competition for business students. Monaghan native Janette Maxwell (*pictured right*), Associate Director in the Tax Department at Grant Thornton, together with Monaghan Institute's Business department tutors, virtually launched the competition with students in January. This competition opportunity will highlight the career opportunities and progression routes available locally and the possibility of working with an International company in the future. The Business students will participate in the competition by creating a self-endorsing, professional 'Personal Statement' about their skills, career goals and progression plans. Grant Thornton generously sponsored prizes for the competition.



THIS ISSUE'S HEROES

Well done to our colleagues Deirdre Byrne & the Adult Education Team who cater for learners across a huge variety of programmes. Congratulations on the engagement with 1500+ diverse learners who availed of courses during Adult Learners Week!



Would you like to add something to our Social Media Platform?

Contact our Communications Officer geraldinegray@cmethb.ie



For more information on QA topics, please feel free to connect with a member of our QA Team:

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Research & Evaluation, Professional Learning &
Development