Co. Monaghan VEC

Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

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POLICY DOC 1. COMMUNICATIONS

POLICY: Co Monaghan VEC communicates with a wide and increasing range of stakeholders, internal and external. The range of media used differs across services, as some are centre based while others are outreach. Overall, Co Monaghan VEC's communication system aims to be:

- Transparent
- Informed
- Direct
- Effective
- Timely
- Confidential / Secure
- Positive

PROCEDURES:

1.   Communication with Learners

MIFET

Tutors use a range of media to communicate with students, including: oral, written, memos, emails and text messages. There is a formal procedure to deal with attendance and discipline, which involves students meeting with the Director and Attendance Officer (the course co-ordinator and/or tutor may also attend if they wish). There is also a complaints box that can be used by students.

While this range of media, formal and informal, is good, there are areas that could be improved/formalised. These are documented below:

- There is a need to establish a formal complaints/grievance procedure. This would involve the student, Director and a third party witness.
- There is scope to improve the level of individual contact between students and their course co-ordinator. Course co-ordinators should aim to have one meeting

per term with each of their students to discuss his/her progress, problems, issues, etc.

- The students have IT and internet access in MIFET. It should be possible to create an email address for each student and member of staff. This would provide another medium through which tutors and students could communicate.

Youthreach

Youthreach maintains a high level of communication with learners. Student progress and achievements are documented daily on the notice board. Each student then meets weekly with the manager on a one-to-one basis to discuss his/her progress. There is an open door policy and issues are dealt with as they arise.

While staff and learners communicate daily and openly, there is need to develop a formal grievance procedure for Youthreach trainees.

Literacy & Community Education

As these are outreach services, communication is largely between the tutor and learners. In addition, the service mangers visit each course and the guidance counsellors also visit regularly.

Monitoring of Communication with Students

Communication with students is monitored internally by the relevant course co-ordinators, tutors, special duties post holders and/or centre / programme managers. MIFET special duties post holders have specific responsibilities, including IT and Quality Assurance. Through this, they monitor the level and range of communication with students. Youthreach managers monitor communication with students through regular meetings and ensuring the notice board is kept up-to-date. Literacy and Community Education managers monitor communication with students through regular contact with tutors, visiting class groups and co-ordinating any written correspondence to class groups.

Equally, students have established communication media with staff through class representatives and a student representative on the MIFET Board of Governors.

2.   Communication with Staff

MIFET

MIFET staff meetings are held approx twice per term. These are attended by staff and the Director and minutes are taken. In addition, MIFET staff communicate regularly / daily with each other and the Director on an informal basis. This informal communication could be built upon through additional initiatives:

- Each course team could meet twice per semester - one meeting at the beginning and one at the end. These meetings would focus on student progress, problems, issues, assignments, exams, etc.
- A summary of the key decisions taken at these meetings should then be relayed to the Director.
- Staff should meet together briefly each week. This meeting would allow staff to identify problems and issues at an early stage and deal with these quickly, e.g. identify those absent and or regularly late.
- It should be possible to set up a staff notice board on the network in addition to the notice board in the office. This network notice board, together with personal email addresses for staff, would provide a quick effective way of communicating with all staff. Staff, in turn, would be required to check their emails and notice board every day/every other day.

Youthreach

Youthreach staff communicate in a range of ways. As the centres are very small, there is daily/regular informal communication among staff. In addition, the staff notice board provides information.
Staff participate in a daily meeting / briefing session at 9am (classes start at 9.15am). This provides an opportunity to update staff on any issues / problems and monitor learners' progress.

Literacy & Community Education

As outreach services, tutors are located around the county. The service managers discuss the course in advance with the tutors and contact them regularly throughout to monitor progress / deal with problems. Service managers also visit classes regularly to communicate with learners and staff. In addition, tutors contact the VEC regularly and highlight any issues / requests.

Monitoring of Communication with Staff

The MIFET Director/centre managers are responsible for monitoring communication with staff. They ensure that staff meetings are held at the required frequency and/or as and when necessary. The Adult Literacy Organiser and Community Education Facilitator monitor the Adult Literacy and Community Education programmes.
The QA Committee, comprising MIFET Director, centre / programme / service managers and MIFET QA Co-ordinator, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the recommended actions.

3. *Communication with Other Stakeholders*

Co Mongahan VEC communicates with a wide range of external stakeholders. This communication is a two-way process, i.e. stakeholders liaise with the VEC and the VEC, in turn, maintains a high level of communication with relevant bodies / groups / agencies. All relevant information is circulated throughout the VEC services and centres. Through this, the VEC can:

- Ensure the VEC is informed of all new and imminent developments in education and training;
- Ensure VEC programmes fulfil criteria set down by relevant bodies, e.g. DES, FETAC;
- Ensure learners receive the supports required;
- Maintain awareness of other services and identify any potential for joint projects / partnerships;
- Share learning and identify examples of good practice;
- Maintain awareness of industry needs and ensure programmes are relevant, and

- Contribute to local and regional development.

Examples of external stakeholders include DES, FETAC, schools, employers, national networks (e.g. Youthreach, Community Education Facilitators Assoc, and Adult Literacy Organisers' Assoc), Government Depts, County Development Board, County Childcare Committee, Co. Monaghan Partnership, probation services / Gardai, etc.

Monitoring of Communication with other Stakeholders

The centre and programme managers are responsible for ensuring that the relevant stakeholders are communicated with and consulted as required. They also ensure that all information is circulated to relevant personnel / learners.

At a strategic level, the CEO and Committee identify key groups/agencies/sectors that the VEC should communicate /develop working relationships with.

Equally, stakeholders are encouraged and facilitated to communicate with the VEC as and when they wish.

POLICY DOC 2.   EQUALITY

Co Monaghan VEC has an equality policy statement and a supporting document: *Equality and Diversity for Staff*. Relevant extracts of which are contained within (other sections are more relevant to Staff Recruitment and Development and included therein).

POLICY

- Co Monaghan VEC is committed to equality of opportunity in all its policies, practices and services.

- Co Monaghan VEC shall ensure that no user of any VEC service, employee, job applicant or student will receive less favourable treatment due to his/her sex, martial status, family status, age, sexual orientation, political persuasion, religion, disability, race, and/or membership of the travelling community in terms of recruitment, pay and conditions of work, training and work experience and opportunities for career promotion.

- All employees will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their abilities and merits only, and according to the requirements of the job. All employees will have equal opportunity to show ability and to progress within the VEC and its associated bodies.

PROCEDURES

1.   Equality Planning

Co Monaghan VEC has a very diverse staff and client base, including learners of all ages, learners at all stages, non-nationals, people with physical and learning disabilities and members of the travelling community. The VEC provides relevant supports and assistance to all its learners and staff to enable them to realise their full potential.

Co Monaghan VEC is committed to equality and supports this through its actions in the areas of: non discrimination, promotion and language and organisational image.

Discrimination

Under the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equality Status Act 2000, discrimination is outlawed under 9 headings:

Gender Grounds

Marital Status Grounds

Family Status Grounds

Sexual Orientation Grounds

Traveller Community Membership

Age Grounds

Disability Grounds

Race Grounds

Religious Grounds

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably than a person of the other sex (or a person of the same sex but of different marital status) is treated, or would be treated in the same circumstances.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a person is obliged to comply with a requirement relating to employment which is not essential to the job but with which a substantially greater proportion of persons of the other sex, a different marital status, age, race etc are able to comply.

Victimisation occurs when a person is penalised or treated less favourably because of pursuing their rights to equal treatment, supporting action or giving notice of intention to take or support action under equality legislation. Victimisation is prohibited under the legislation.

Co Monaghan VEC abides by the Equality Act, 1998 and the Equality Status Act 2000 in all its operations.

In addition, Co Monaghan VEC adheres to the *Draft Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities in VECs, July 2005.*

Promotion

Co Monaghan VEC's promotion procedures will not discriminate on grounds of sex, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

Language and Organisation Image

Co Monaghan VEC will demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities by using non-discriminatory language and images in all its documents/publications.

2.   Equality Training

Co Monaghan VEC is currently preparing a training plan for all its staff. This will include provision for equality training and diversity awareness training. Some staff members have recently attended national training organised by the VEC NPF in the areas of equality and disability. They will disseminate this information widely among VEC personnel.

The VEC received an additional budgetary allocation for 2006 from the DES to enhance further education provision for those with special needs / disability. This will be used to provide training for staff dealing with special needs and / or to purchase equipment or materials and/or to carry out refurbishments or minor structural works.

The VEC organises a range of staff training, which also focuses on equality. Mental Health Awareness seminars and Health and Safety and Fire Safety training have focused on inclusivity and equality, i.e. dealing with persons with mental health problems, manual handling and lifting, attending to those incapacitated in the event of a fire / emergency, etc.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Equality Policy

The Equality policy will be monitored and reviewed by Co Monaghan VEC, in consultation with relevant managers and staff/their representatives. Each Principal/Head of Centre / service manager / programme manager is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy with regard to those members of staff under his/her supervision. All staff are requested to familiarise themselves with the equality policy.

Co Monaghan VEC will especially review and improve existing practices and procedures where inequalities have been found or alleged to exist.

POLICY DOC 3.   STAFF RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

POLICY: Co Monaghan VEC is an equal opportunities employer and encourages and facilitates diversity. All employees will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their abilities and merits only, and according to the requirements of the job. All employees will have equal opportunity to show ability and to progress within the VEC and its associated bodies.

PROCEDURES

1.   Staff Recruitment and Allocation

Co Monaghan VEC's recruitment and selection procedures provide equal access at all stages to all candidates. The recruitment and selection process involves three distinct stages:

(i)   Advertising:

Applicants for posts are given clear and accurate information about posts through advertisements (in local and national press and on the VEC website), job descriptions, memoranda of information and interviews. This enables them to assess their own suitability for the post.

Job descriptions are prepared by the relevant centre/programme manager and forwarded to the HR department at HQ. HR personnel standardise the descriptions to ensure they contain all the required information in an accessible understandable format.

All advertisements and recruitment literature reflect Co Monaghan VEC's commitment to equality of opportunity and indicate that the Committee is an equal opportunities employer. Advertisements are aimed at as wide a group of suitably qualified and experienced people as possible.

(ii)   Application Forms

Standard application forms are used for all administration, teaching, teaching assistant and caretaking posts. The forms are available from the VEC office and on-line. Applicants must complete and submit these. They may also be requested to submit a CV.

Application forms require only information considered necessary for selection for the post. No questions in relation to marital status or personal circumstances are asked.

(iii)   Interviews

Interviews are conducted on a reasonable, fair and objective basis. All persons involved in recruitment and selection interviewing ensure that they are fully aware of their obligations under this policy and the law governing discrimination, and that selection is made on a fair and objective basis. Relevant training and/or guidance is, as far as practicable, provided to VEC selection board members.

There is an agreed composition for interview panels for administrative and teaching posts. Both interview panels contain a relevant balance of expertise and interest, e.g. VEC Committee representative, education specialist, personnel expert, CEO, etc. Furthermore, both sexes are represented, where possible, on interview panels.

Interviews are generally held in the VEC HQ, which is wheelchair accessible. Interviews deal only with the applicant's suitability for the post and ability to fulfil the post requirements. There are no assumptions that individuals, because of sex, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, race and/or membership of the travelling community, possess characteristics which might put them at a disadvantage/advantage.

Interviewees are scored according to a standard marking sheet. Records of all interviews are maintained in the HR department. Interviewees are notified in writing of the outcome of the interview.

Monitoring of Staff Recruitment

There is a dedicated HR department based at the VEC HQ. This comprises a department head and 2.5 staff. This department is responsible for all staff recruitment. It ensures the correct policies, procedures and practices are observed and maintains all records.

2.   Staff Induction

All staff undergo an initial induction process and are supported in their new role. In the administrative centre, staff are supplied with guidelines which are explained by an existing staff member. New staff are allocated to a department and the Head of Department is responsible for their induction into the relevant role. In the schools / training centres, new staff are briefed by the principal /centre manager re the school/centre (rules, policies, code of conduct, staff, etc) and their role and responsibilities.

A VEC staff handbook and an information pack for new tutors will be / are currently being developed as additional induction supports.

Monitoring of Staff Induction

This responsibility is shared among the HR department and relevant department heads / centre managers. HR issue all staff based at the administrative centre with guidelines and assign them to a department. Thereafter, the department head is responsible for their induction and HR ensures this is carried out.

Teaching staff are allocated to a centre and the centre manager is responsible for their induction. The HR department checks with the centre that the new staff member has received the necessary induction and support.

3.   Staff Development

All staff are afforded opportunities for development and training.

Development

Co Monaghan VEC operates the Performance Management Development System (PMDS). In this way, each member of administrative, adult education, caretaking,

cleaning and special needs staff has clear goals and objectives and their performance is monitored and reviewed through a series of supportive meetings with the relevant section head / line manager. Teaching staff also have clear lines of communication and management. Principals, Deputy Principals and special duties post holders provide a high level of support and direction to teaching staff.

Training

All staff are encouraged and facilitated to participate in relevant training. Teaching staff participate in regular in-service training days. Administrative / project staff also attend relevant training for their roles. Records are maintained of all training undertaken by staff.

In addition, general skills training (e.g. IT, first aid, etc) is organised by the VEC and staff are encouraged and supported to participate.

The VEC has recently conducted a training needs survey among non-teaching staff based on the skills set and knowledge base recommended for VEC personnel through the VEC NPF. A training plan is being developed from this, which will provide a range of training opportunities to staff.

In addition to work related training, employees are supported to undertake additional education and training. There are a range of supports available to administrative staff to participate in certificate / degree / masters programmes. The level of support is contingent on a number of factors, including level of employment and length of service. These factors are documented and staff can apply to HQ for the relevant support.

It is planned to extend the VEC's in-career training opportunities to part-time adult / community / literacy education tutors. They will be encouraged and supported to participate in relevant training.

Monitoring of Staff Development

This is carried out by the HR department and the relevant centre managers. Centre managers ensure that staff participate in the required in-service training and are the first point of contact for requests to participate in additional training. All requests are forwarded to the HR department, which officially sanctions leave to attend and maintain records of the course and the attendees.

The HR department is also responsible for assessing training needs, organising relevant staff training and ensuring a broad range of participation among administrative staff. Records of all training are maintained and these are reviewed by the CEO.

POLICY DOC 4.   ACCESS TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

POLICY: Co Monaghan VEC seeks to provide a comprehensive information and guidance and support service to existing and potential learners. Through its information provision and guidance support, it aims to enable learners to make informed choices regarding their area of study. Moreover, the VEC encourages and facilitates all learners to participate successfully in their chosen area of study and/or transfer/progress to other programmes.

PROCEDURES:

1.   Information Provision

Co Monaghan VEC provides information to learners and potential learners through a variety of media. The information is accessible, user friendly and informative. In addition, Co Monaghan VEC personnel are proactive in dealing with queries and providing any additional information required.

Potential Learners

Information to potential learners is provided through:

- MIFET Prospectus
- MIFET Open Day
- MIFET stand at Higher Options Conference, RDS, Dublin
- Visits by MIFET and Guidance personnel to local schools
- MIFET stand in local shopping centre
- Advertising in local and national press and on local and national radio
- Notices in parish bulletins
- Availability of VEC Information Officer, MIFET/Youthreach Guidance Counsellor, AEGIS Counsellor and MIFET personnel to meet potential learners and provide information
- VEC general information provided at reception in HQ

- MIFET and Co Mongahan VEC websites
- Networking with a range of agencies and services, e.g. Health Board, Probation Service, Education Welfare Service, FAS, Home School Liaison Officers, etc
- Information evenings, presentations and taster sessions
- Mail drops

Learners

Information to existing / registered learners is provided through the means listed above and:

- FETAC module descriptors / FETAC Website
- Availability of / link to FETAC Modules on local network which students can download
- Notice board
- Course outline, timetable, work plan, etc

What else could / should be done?

As stated, information is user friendly, informative and provided through a diverse range of media. Co. Monaghan VEC is continually seeking to enhance and develop its services, including information provision. To this end, there are additional forms of information provision that are in the process of being developed / planned:

MIFET

- A Welcome Pack / Handbook is being developed for new students. This will contain a range of relevant information, including: policies, timetable, map of the building, Health and Safety policy and procedures, services available to students, book deposit scheme, grievance procedure, fees and grants, recommended texts, etc.
- All of the MIFET prospectus information is being made available on the MIFET website and the Co Monaghan VEC website.
- A descriptor for each module will be made available on the local IT network and through the MIFET prospectus on the MIFET website and the main Co.

Monaghan VEC website. In this way, students and potential students can obtain full information re the course and its modules.

- The website will also provide a brief staff profile. This will allow students to familiarise themselves with staff from the beginning.
- A booklet for each course is being developed. This will detail the subjects to be studied, contain the relevant module descriptors and outline the assessment requirements.
- A term newsletter will be developed for students. This will highlight news and significant developments, deadlines and projects that students need to be aware of.

Youthreach

- There is scope for Youthreach to produce their own information material. At present, they use that produced for Youthreach nationally.

Monitoring of Information Provision

There are a number of personnel involved in the monitoring of information provision. Publications, such as prospectuses, are devised by the centre manager / Director in association with teaching staff and in consultation with the CEO, Guidance Counsellor, etc.

On an ongoing basis, the VEC's Information Officer and Guidance Counsellors are responsible for ensuring that all learners (existing and potential) receive accurate timely information and support as and when required.

In addition, special duties post holders have specific responsibilities, including quality assurance, advertising, local news items, website maintenance and timetable development. Teaching staff are also responsible for information provision re course content, assessment requirements, etc.

The suggested new areas of information provision will be developed and implemented by the QA team comprising Director of MIFET, centre / programme managers and MIFET QA co-ordinator.

2.   *Learner Entry Arrangements*

The learner / student recruitment and selection process is open and transparent across all Co. Monaghan VEC services.

MIFET

The MIFET prospectus outlines the basic Leaving Certificate requirements, or equivalent, to participate on each MIFET course.

Applications are screened by the Director of MIFET and all applicants meeting the stated requirements are offered a place. Those applicants who do not meet the stated requirements are referred to the college guidance counsellor. He meets with the applicant to discuss the course, their interests, experience, prior learning and inform them of other courses/programmes that might be of interest. He may also conduct an aptitude/ability test. Many of these applicants are offered a place at MIFET. Where the counsellor considers it would not be in the applicant's best interests to participate on their chosen course, he will seek to accommodate them on an alternative relevant course/programme within the VEC service, e.g. basic skills with the literacy service, BTEI, etc, or elsewhere. In all cases, the aim is to enable the learner to participate on a course/programme that is best suited to his/her needs, abilities and interests.

Where programmes are over subscribed, a waiting list is maintained. All efforts are made to accommodate those on the list by the end of September.

VTOS applications to MIFET are processed as outlined above. VTOS places are allocated by giving priority to those with greatest educational need. In the event that the number of VTOS places (allocated to the VEC by the DES) is over subscribed, the applicant is offered a course place at MIFET, without VTOS financial support. He/she may be directed to another scheme for financial support, e.g. Back to Education Allowance.

Youthreach

Young people seeking to join Youthreach are invited with their parents/guardian to interview and are considered against a standard checklist. In the event of over

subscription, the centre manager will prioritise based on age, level of education and needs within the home. Those who cannot be accommodated are placed on a waiting list. All efforts are made to ensure they do not remain on this list for a long time.

The Youthreach Guidance Counsellor meets with all applicants and trainees and works with them to identify a range of options and progression routes, including return to/remain at school, BTEI, MIFET, and employment.

Adult Literacy and Community Education

These courses run subject to demand. The service managers advertise a course and invite applications. Applicants are informed that a minimum number of participants is required for the course to proceed. In the event that a course is oversubscribed, efforts are made to accommodate all applicants and a second course may be organised.

The learner entry process could be enhanced in various ways:

MIFET

- While every effort is made to accommodate applicants who do not meet the basic requirements, the students' interests and those of the class group and tutor should all be considered. If a student cannot cope with the course, he/she, the class group and the tutor are all adversely affected. To avoid this, an applicant who possesses no previous certified learning and is considered unlikely to succeed on the course, should be referred to level 3 or 4 prior to entry onto level 5/6 programmes.
- A Student Charter should be developed
- Where an applicant is not admitted to his/her chosen course and wishes to appeal the decision, a procedure is required. The applicant should, in the first instance, present his/her case to the Director of MIFET. Failing a satisfactory resolution, the subsequent stages are to contact the MIFET Board of Governors, the CEO of the VEC and the VEC Committee.

Youthreach

- There is scope to develop a formal assessment system for trainees upon entry to the programme. At present, they are informally assessed and this could be enhanced.

General

- Advertising of courses should state the minimum number of participants required for the course to proceed. This will inform learners at the earliest stage of the possibility that the course may not run.
- Admission regulations and requirements for many of the VEC's services are established by the Department of Education and Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (e.g. with regard to asylum seekers, refugees, long term unemployed, etc). The obligation by the VEC to adhere to Departmental guidelines should be set out on the VEC website with a link to the relevant departmental website.

Monitoring of Learner Entry Arrangements

The Director of MIFET and centre / programme managers are responsible for monitoring the learner entry arrangements. They screen applications and ensure they are all processed fairly, equally and in the best interests of the learner and the class group. The additional areas will be developed and implemented by the QA team.

3. Recognition of Prior Learning

As outlined, Co Monaghan VEC considers all applicants, whether they meet the basic requirements or not. In addition, the VEC services follow established guidelines set down by FETAC, ECDL and other bodies re requirements, previous certified learning and exemptions. Through this, prior learning and experience is recorded and considered. However, the VEC does not have a formal policy or procedure re the recognition of prior learning. This will be developed in accordance with guidelines set out by FETAC at a later stage, and staff training will be provided, as necessary/required.

4. Facilitating Diversity

Co Monaghan VEC encourages and facilitates access to and diversity on all programmes. Student progress is a key objective and efforts are made to facilitate all students to progress and realise their potential. It is recognised that all learners have different needs and centre/service managers and MIFET course co-ordinators (in consultation with the Director) ensure these are accommodated through a range of additional services, including:

- Basic skills classes for students in areas such as IT, Essay writing and Literacy/Numeracy
- ESOL classes for non-national learners
- Learner induction / study skills programmes
- Extra tuition
- Guidance / counselling / information service
- Part-time study option for learners
- Provision of a range of adult literacy and community education courses on an outreach basis. This facilitates people who have limited access to transport.
- VTOS funding for childcare
- Specialised equipment for students with dyslexia / other learning difficulties – funded through the Fund for Students with Disabilities
- Lift, wheelchair accessibility and carrying chairs available at MIFET (other centres/services deal with needs as they arise)
- Special education training and resource materials for Youthreach personnel

The VEC received an additional budgetary allocation for 2006 from the DES to enhance further education provision for those with special needs / disability. This will be used to provide training for staff dealing with students with disabilities / special education needs and / or to purchase equipment or materials and / or to carry out refurbishments or minor structural works.

Co Monaghan VEC could enhance its work in this area in a number of ways:

- There is a need to establish a pool of resource people, i.e. signers, interpreters and personal assistants. The VEC could then draw on these as and when the need arises in one of its services / class groups.
- Tutors should have the opportunity to be trained in learning disability awareness and approaches. This would broaden their skills base in dealing with diversity.

Monitoring Facilitating Diversity

The Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers are responsible for ensuring that all learners are facilitated to participate and realise their potential on their programme of study. They will be aware of any special needs through a range of sources, including application forms, interviews, disclosure by learners and notification by tutors. They will discuss the type of additional support required with the relevant tutor and, where necessary, with the learners. They will then provide the necessary support within the constraints of the VEC remit and budget.

The additional actions will be developed by the QA team in association with the VEC HR department.

POLICY DOC 5.   *Programme Development, Delivery and Review*

POLICY: Co Mongahan VEC seeks to design and deliver a broad range of courses that meet the demands of learners and stakeholders and can be supported by its resource base (tutors and budgets). The VEC aims to create, develop, support, encourage and facilitate an active, positive and inclusive learning environment in Co. Monaghan, through the delivery of quality education and training to all age-groups and communities in the county.

PROCEDURES

1.   Need Identification

Co Monaghan VEC aims to provide a diverse range of programmes to meet student demand, community demand, agency demand and the demands of local industry. To this end, the VEC consults a range of stakeholders re the relevance of its programmes and seeks ideas for new programmes. The stakeholders include:

Local Businesses

As part of its consultation for a 5-year development plan, Co Monaghan VEC conducts a survey of businesses in the county re their training needs. This provides a range of feedback that can be considered for inclusion in the Adult Education programme, Youthreach, Literacy and Community Education and MIFET.

Work placement is an integral part of MIFET courses and the Youthreach programme. This brings tutors and students in direct contact with employers. Through this, tutors gain feedback re the relevance of the course of study; areas that should be covered, etc. Tutors can use this information to adapt their courses for subsequent years, introduce new modules, change emphasis, etc.

Local industry nominates two representatives to the MIFET Board of Governors. This provides an additional link to employers through which they are informed of MIFET programmes, planned and underway, and can comment re these.

The County Childcare Committee works in co-operation with the VEC. The AEO is a member of both the Board and the Quality and Training sub-committee. Through this, she is advised of the training needs of practitioners and can provide /adapt courses accordingly. She can also use this forum as a conduit to inform practitioners of the existing range of training services.

Adult Education Guidance and Information Service (AEGIS)

The AEGIS service deals with a range of diverse clients. This provides a good overview of training needs and interests. This information is then shared with relevant VEC personnel who can design and provide courses to meet these needs.

Agencies/Services/Groups

Relevant agencies such as NLC, Rehab Care, Local Employment Services, Community Employment Schemes, etc and community /voluntary groups are also an important source of need identification. The Adult Literacy and Community Education Services have strong links with these bodies.

Students

Learner feedback is a vital source of information. All programmes are evaluated at the end. Students are requested to complete a basic evaluation form. This provides a range of feedback re the course, tutor, materials, etc. This information is used in the design and delivery of future programmes.

In addition, students' comments and feedback provided at open days, school visits and publicity stands are recorded and used in planning.

Co Mongahan VEC could enhance its work in the area of need identification by developing a system to follow up on people who do not complete courses. The reasons for dropping out may provide additional information re learner needs.

Monitoring of Need Identification

All staff contribute to need identification on an ongoing basis. The Director of MIFET, course co-ordinators and centre/programme managers are responsible for ensuring that programmes are relevant, reviewed regularly and adapted where necessary to meet needs. At a strategic level, the VEC committee, CEO, APO and planning officer are responsible for consulting formally with stakeholders and developing strategic and annual service plans according to departmental requirements.

2.   Programme Design

Co Mongahan VEC seeks to design and deliver a broad range of programmes that:

- Meet VEC, DES and FETAC / other certifying bodies' criteria
- Meet the demands of learners and stakeholders
- Can be supported by its resource base (tutors and budgets).

Within this corporate objective, each service /centre is responsible for the design of its own programmes.

MIFET

There is an established programme design procedure. The Director ensures staff are informed of VEC, DES and FETAC/certifying body programme criteria. Course co-ordinators review these criteria and the list of FETAC/certifying body modules that comprise the award. The mandatory modules are automatically included in the programme. The optional modules are chosen based on student demand and preferences, progression routes available, tutor qualifications, employers' requests and facilities available.

The course co-ordinator prepares a programme based on these criteria and considerations. This is then discussed with and approved by the Director.

A meeting is held for all teaching staff at the end of the year, at which the course co-ordinators discuss their proposed programme for the following year.

Youthreach

The Youthreach programme is holistic and designed to meet the trainee's needs. It focuses on accredited and unaccredited learning and includes a broad range of subjects. The Youthreach manager sets the programme according to national guidelines and input from staff and trainees. The programme is documented and each trainee's position on the programme is clearly set out. Trainees progress on the programme according to their abilities and needs. Flexible timetable and attendance options are available.

The programme is continuously monitored and evaluated by staff and changed regularly to ensure it meets the trainees' needs and abilities.

Adult Literacy and Community Education

These courses are needs driven. They are designed based on the needs and abilities of the learners and, where possible, accreditation is included. Where it is not possible for learners to meet the criteria for formal accreditation, certification of attendance and achievement is awarded.

Where a programme includes certification, it is designed by the service / programme manager in consultation with the tutor, based on the requirements of the certifying body; learner demand, resources and facilities available, etc.

The Programme Design process could be enhanced in a number of ways:

At MIFET

- A standard template could be prepared to document employers' feedback. This would be a useful resource in programme design.

At Youthreach

- Including more community based work
- Allocating more time to planning among staff before the trainees return /start in September

In Literacy and Community Education

- Greater integration regarding the SLOs required for each course - tutors and co-ordinators could work and plan together to ensure that learners are not required to do the same assessment twice.

Monitoring of Programme Design

The Director of MIFET, centre managers, programme managers and course co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that programmes are designed according to VEC and DES criteria; the requirements of the certifying body; student demand; stakeholders' needs, including employers' requests; resources available and progression routes available.

The QA team will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended new actions.

3.   *Programme Approval*

Co Monaghan VEC prepares its accredited programmes according to relevant criteria / guidelines / award requirements, e.g. FETAC. The list of programmes is then submitted to DES for sanction. Where a programme is prepared at the request of an external funder, e.g. Health Board, the programme will be submitted to the contracting body for approval.

Occasionally, a MIFET course co-ordinator/tutor may devise a module according to the FETAC template for module preparation. This will be done in agreement with the Director / course co-ordinator and submitted to FETAC for approval.

Youthreach and adult / community education managers issue a copy of their programme to the CEO.

Tutors prepare lessons plans and work sheets which they supply to the course co-ordinator / service manager.

Monitoring of Programme Approval

The Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers are responsible for ensuring that all programmes have secured the necessary approval.

4.   *Programme Planning*

The course co-ordinator / centre manager is responsible for planning the delivery of the programme. He / she consults with the tutors teaching on the programme re the development of an annual programme plan. This plan aims to meet all the deadlines and requirements set down by the certifying body.

Within Youthreach, there are regular staff meetings. These focus on achieving the programme plan. Progression on the programme is displayed on the notice board. Each trainee can see what he / she has achieved / must achieve in order to fulfil the programme requirements.

This system could be tighter in MIFET with the development of a year long plan detailing the assignment and assessment dates for all modules, as outlined in Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners. Furthermore, assessments should not commence until after 30th September (the latest date for students to enrol on full-time courses). This will facilitate late entrants to the course to catch up with course materials before assessment.

Monitoring of Programme Planning

The Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers are responsible for ensuring that all programmes are planned and necessary deadlines / requirements achieved. Where there is deviation, the managers will discuss this with the relevant course-co -ordinator / tutor to ensure the plan is revised accordingly and fully implemented.

The Director of MIFET and MIFET QA co-ordinator will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the new actions.

5.   Programme Delivery

Co Monaghan VEC applies the most appropriate methodologies and resources in the delivery of its programmes. Tutors and managers aim to create a positive learning experience and encourage and facilitate all learners to progress. Tutors and managers are very approachable and learners are encouraged to approach staff with any problems/concerns they might have.

During the year/programme, staff communicate frequently. Course/programme team meetings are organised by the course co-ordinator / centre manager. The frequency of these is at his/her discretion. However, Monaghan VEC centres are small and there is a high level of informal staff communication. In this way, programme progress and any issues / problems are discussed at an early stage. Furthermore, the counselling service

enhances and facilitates programme delivery. Students can be referred / self-refer to the counsellor. He will meet with the student; discuss any problems/issues and work with them and teaching staff to resolve these.

There is scope to enhance programme delivery:

I.   There is a need to organise additional meetings between staff to formally monitor progress, identify issues and engage in future planning. MIFET Course Team meetings should be held monthly. Equally, there is scope for greater cohesion among tutors delivering different elements of Literacy and Community education programmes. The outreach basis of these services can make it difficult to achieve cohesion among tutors and engage in planning together.

II.   Long term programmes run under the Literacy and Community Education services require ongoing guidance built into the programme plan. In addition, a longer induction period might benefit some learners and enable them to cope with the course.
     Similarly, the development and operation of a standard study skills programme for all MIFET students at the beginning of the year would be beneficial.

III. Existing means of communication at MIFET could be supplemented by a monthly progress report focussing on assignment/assessment results, attendance, and general progress (see draft overleaf). This would be a standard template that tutors would complete for each class group. This would then be copied to the course co-ordinator. In this way, he/she could be informed at an early stage of any issues / problem students. This will enable early intervention.

IV.   External examiners' reports should be copied to all relevant staff and maintained with course records. At present, this is not applied consistently across centres and programmes. In addition, the external examiners' reports should be discussed at staff meetings and necessary action taken.

MIFET Progress Sheet

Course: *Module:*

Course Co-ordinator: *Tutor:*

Date:

Group Issues:

Subject Issues:

Attendance:

Tutor Signature: *Date:*

Monitoring of Programme Delivery

The Director of MIFET, centre managers, programme managers and course co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that programmes are delivered according to the requirements of the certifying body, students' needs and resources available. They monitor programme delivery through regular communication (formal and informal) with tutors, learners and employers and ensure problems / issues are identified and dealt with at the earliest possible stage.

The QA team will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended new actions.

6.   Learner Records

Co Monaghan VEC services retain all student records, client profiles and course registers.

Monitoring of Learner Records

The Director of MIFET, centre managers, programme managers, course co-ordinators and administration staff (where applicable) are responsible for ensuring that all records are maintained accurately and retained securely.

7.   Provision and Maintenance of Resources

Co. Monaghan VEC programmes are adequately resourced. Every effort is made to ensure students and staff have access to the required materials and resources. Where additional resources are required, a request is made to the Director / centre manager / service manager who will seek to accommodate the need, subject to budget constraints. There are a number of maintenance personnel employed by the VEC to ensure equipment and accommodation is functioning and of adequate standard. In addition, there is a dedicated stock taking function to ensure all resources are accounted for and maintained. For outreach services, e.g. community education, all efforts are made to ensure the venue is safe, secure and of adequate standard.

Resource management could be enhanced by employing an IT co-ordinator for all VEC services. This would reduce the costs associated with maintenance, software purchase and licensing arrangements.

Monitoring of Provision and Maintenance of Resources

The Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers are responsible for ensuring that the necessary resources are available and maintained. They negotiate resource allocations with VEC management, i.e. CEO and APO, and provide resources accordingly.

8. Health & Safety

Co Mongahan VEC has clearly established and documented Health and Safety Policies. These are provided to staff and students and Health and Safety and First Aid training is organised. In addition, the VEC organises an independent Health and Safety review to identify any problem areas / potential dangers. The results of this are communicated to staff and appropriate action taken.

Co Monaghan VEC complies with all relevant Health & Safety / Fire Safety legislation and organises fire drills at the required frequency.

Monitoring of Health and Safety

The HR department of Co Monaghan VEC is responsible for the preparation and review of all policies, including Health and Safety. The Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers monitor their centres to ensure compliance with Health and Safety policy and facilitate staff to participate in relevant training.

The additional training action identified will be organised by the training officer in the HR department in consultation with the Director of MIFET, centre managers and programme managers.

9. Review Cycle of Existing Programmes

Existing programmes are reviewed annually at MIFET as part of the programme design process. All programmes are reviewed and adapted / amended / cancelled as deemed appropriate by the course co-ordinator and Director.

Youthreach programmes are reviewed on an ongoing basis and annually. The needs of the groups and staff are considered to ensure the programme is meeting these.

All programmes are evaluated at the end using an evaluation form. Programmes that have been contracted by a third party (e.g. FAS) are evaluated by the contracting body.

POLICY DOC 6.   FAIR & CONSISTENT ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

POLICY

Co Monaghan VEC centres and services aim to assess students in a way that is, fair, consistent, transparent, cognisant of student workloads and deadlines, accommodating of special needs and circumstances and fulfils the requirements of the certifying body.

PROCEDURES

1.   Co-ordinated Planning

MIFET
Assignments

There should be one departmental meeting per term. This should be convened by the course co-ordinator. At this meeting, the course team should develop and set the schedule of assignments for the course. This will ensure that, wherever possible, assignments do not overlap. This schedule will detail the year long plan for the course, i.e. assignments, briefs and dates. It will be distributed to students so they are informed of all course requirements and can plan accordingly.

Where possible, tutors will seek to integrate assignments. This will provide students with an opportunity to explore topics in greater depth and reduce the number of assignments to be submitted.

There needs to be consistency in module assessment across all services. The same modules should have the same briefs (e.g. if same module taught by different tutors in different class groups). This can be achieved by tutors meeting at the start of the year to discuss a common approach to the module and its requirements. This could be facilitated

by the development and use of a standard template for assignment briefs. This will set out the heading that should be explained in an assignment brief, i.e. title, length, percentage of course marks, structure of assignment, type of research required, etc.

Exams

There is only one opportunity to sit the examination. Staff notify students of exam dates. Students are given a minimum two weeks notice.

In very special circumstances, the tutor may request approval from the Director to provide a second exam. This must be a new paper.

This examinations policy is outlined in the MIFET Staff Guidelines and the Course Regulations provided to and signed by students. It will also be included in the tutor handbook.

A standardised cover sheet should be used for all exams. There is a standard examination cover sheet available from the office at MIFET.

There should be a standardised sign-in sheet used for all examinations. This would document the student's name, ID no and signature. In addition, students should be able to provide photo ID at examinations on request

Literacy, Youthreach and Community Education

In Literacy and Youthreach, assessment is tailored to the learner's needs and abilities. Learners are put forward for assessment when the tutor feels they are ready. This could be either of the two annual FETAC Assessment dates. Assessment is not time bound and learners are encouraged to prepare for assessment at their own pace. Nevertheless, they are strongly encouraged to realise their potential and work towards assessment.

There is scope to co-ordinate planning across the different VEC services. In some incidences, the same modules are taught at MIFET, BTEI and as part of the community education programme. It is necessary to ensure quality and consistency of standards across these services. To this end, co-ordinated planning for assessment is required.

Tutors delivering the same modules should meet for a planning day at the start of the year. At this, they would devise assignments, briefs and exams to be used over the course of the year. This would ensure a uniform standard was expected of all students undertaking common modules.

Monitoring of Co-ordinated Planning of Assessment

The QA committee will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended actions. When these are implemented, they will be monitored by course co-ordinators, MIFET QA co-ordinator, centre and programme managers.

2.   Information to Learners

- MIFET course teams will prepare a year long plan for the course. This will outline the assignments briefs and dates. It will be distributed to students at the beginning of the first semester, so they are informed of all course requirements and can plan accordingly.

  As assessment for Literacy and Youthreach students is not time bound, the tutors will inform them of the dates they should work towards.

- A descriptor for each module will be available on the local IT network and/or through the MIFET prospectus on the MIFET website and the main Co. Monaghan VEC website. In this way, students and potential students can obtain full information re the course and its modules.

- Students often request past papers. These should be made available to students to support them in their study. Through the system of co-ordinated planning, the exam papers drafted each year can be issued as past papers the following year.

- The examinations policy is outlined in the MIFET Staff Guidelines and the Course Regulations provided to and signed by students. It will also be included in the tutor handbook.

- The exam regulations should be read by the invigilator and handed out to the students. Where possible, i.e. in a centre based service, the students should sign and return these before the papers are circulated.

<u>*Monitoring of Information to Learners*</u>

The QA committee will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended actions. When these are implemented, they will be monitored by MIFET QA co-ordinator, course co-ordinators, relevant special duties post holders (e.g. special duties post holders with responsibility for assessment / IT), centre and programme managers.

3.   Security of Assessment Related Processes and Material

Preparation and storage of exam papers and scripts

- In centre-based services, e.g. MIFET/Youthreach, the exam papers and scripts should be kept in a locked safe. Tutors should sign when they are removing or placing scripts/papers from/in this safe.

- Within the safe, the exam papers should be kept in a sealed envelope. This should be signed by the invigilator and a witness (student) when being opened (similar to the Leaving Cert procedure).

- For portfolio / folder based assessments, security of the folder is paramount. Each centre / service manager will decide who is responsible for the security of the folder, i.e. tutor or student. This responsibility should be clearly documented and communicated to students and tutors.

  Where folders are to be located in centres, a locked storage area must be provided for this.

- In the event that a tutor moves employment / location mid-course, all efforts will be made to ensure he / she can continue to assess the students. Where assessments need to be routed to and from the tutor, registered post will be used in both directions (the VEC will be responsible or financing this).

- Where it is not possible for the tutor to complete the assessment process, alternatively suitably qualified staff will be contracted.

Integrity of exams

- Marking schemes must be prepared for all exams. These should be stored with the papers in the locked safe. For non centre-based services, i.e. community education, storage in a common safe is not feasible. Therefore, the community education facilitator will be responsible for storing the exams prepared by the tutors. He/she will forward one of these to the tutor in advance of the exam date.

- New exams must be set for each sitting.

- Where a re-sit exam is organised, it must be a new paper.

- Students must use the stationary provided by the centre

- Use of mobile phones is not permitted in exams

- All learner records are maintained accurately and stored securely

Supervisions of exams

- Where feasible, tutors should not supervise the subjects they teach. This requires careful scheduling of exam supervisors and, where possible, use of external supervisors. One exception to this is at the lower levels, e.g. level 4. For students at this level, it is reassuring to have the tutor they know and are familiar with as supervisor.

- The external supervisor should have technical expertise if relevant (e.g. the individual supervising an IT exam should be capable of dealing with technical problems).

- All supervisors must follow the exam regulations.

Monitoring of Security of Assessment Related Processes and Material

The QA committee will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended actions. When these are implemented, they will be monitored by MIFET QA co-ordinator, course co-ordinators, relevant special duties post holders (e.g. special duties post holders with responsibility for assessment / IT), centre and programme managers.

4. *Reasonable Accommodation*

- Tutors and centres will accommodate students with special needs to facilitate their progress on the course and at assessment. The provision of reasonable accommodation will be agreed between the Director and the tutor and documented.

Monitoring of Reasonable Accommodation

The MIFET director, centre and programme managers monitor reasonable accommodation. They liaise with tutors and course co-ordinators re learners' circumstances / needs and seek to provide reasonable accommodation, within the VEC's resource constraints and assessment requirements of the certifying body.

5. *Consistency of Marking between Assessors*

Accepting late assignments

- The MIFET staff guidelines and course regulations allow for the reduction of 1% per day for late submission of assignments. This will be implemented by all tutors from the outset. In this way, students will appreciate the importance of meeting deadlines and adhere to these.
- All assignments received at MIFET will be receipted using a standard form (sample overleaf). This will contain the student's details, course name, assignment title, tutors name and date of submission. This system will allow students and tutors to retain a copy of the receipt.

Level of choice in examinations

- Through MIFET course team meetings (1 per semester), tutors will develop the year long plan for assignments and agree broad parameters for the examinations. These should cover the level of choice provided to students, number of questions to be completed, etc.
- Similarly, the exams prepared jointly by tutors in community education / BTEI will allow the same level of choice.

ASSIGNMENT RECEIPT AND FEEDBACK FORM

Assignment	Allocated Percentage
Issue Date	Due Date
Assignment extension sought	
Date agreed _____	
Revised submission date _____	
Tutor Signature	Date
Candidate Signature	Date

Comment_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Unconfirmed Mark ☐ **Percentage deducted for late submission** ☐

Overall new mark ☐

Student Name _____ PPS Number _____

Course _____ Module Title _____

Submission Date _____ Tutor Signature _____

Date _____

I herby certify that this is all my own original work.

Signed_____

Marking

- Marking schemes must be prepared for all exams. These should be stored with the papers in the locked safe (or with the service manager in a non centre-based service).

- Some level of internal moderation will be applied. Tutors will provide one of their marked assignments from each batch to a peer moderator. The moderator will comment re the appropriateness of the mark, level of feedback provided, etc. In this way, there should be consistency of standards expected and grades allocated in modules that are taught across a number of programmes / services.
  In addition, Co Monaghan VEC will observe the cross moderation practices and guidelines as and when these are set down by FETAC.

Monitoring of Consistency of Marking between Assessors

The QA committee will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended actions. When these are implemented, they will be monitored by the MIFET QA co-ordinator, course co-ordinators, relevant special duties post holders (e.g. special duties post holders with responsibility for assessment), centre and programme managers.

6.   Assessment Performed by Third Parties

- Work experience is an integral module on FETAC programmes. Employers play a role in assessing students placed in their organisation. This is documented using a standard form supplied by FETAC. In some incidences, tutors will also request additional information to supplement this form.

- In some programmes, particular elements, e.g. First Aid, Manual Handling and Lifting, are provided by third parties. Co Monaghan VEC sources trainers for these programmes from a list of approved organisations provided by the HSA.

Monitoring of Assessment Performed by Third Parties

Course co-ordinators and tutors are responsible for monitoring work placements and the assessment performed by employers. Programme and centre managers and course co-

ordinators are responsible for sourcing external trainers, where required, and ensuring they are properly briefed and deliver a quality training programme.

7. Consistency of Marking with National Standards

- All new staff tutoring at level 5 attend FETAC in-service re assessment and preparation for external examination.
- FETAC provide assessment guidelines which staff follow. Similarly, the feedback from the external assessment process is noted and necessary action taken.

Monitoring of Consistency of Marking with National Standards

The Director of MIFET and centre / programme managers are responsible for ensuring that staff attend FETAC in-service, as required. They maintain records of participation by staff.

8. Feedback to Learners

Level of feedback provided on assignment / script

- There should be consistency in the level of feedback provided to students. Tutors should use a standard marking sheet (see page 43). This would contain the student's name and ID number, subject, date, mark allocated and percentage lost for late submission. It should also provide ½ page for tutor comments. This sheet should be in triplicate form; 1 copy is returned to the student; 1 is retained by the tutor and the other is held in the office.

Correcting draft assignments

- This area needs to be clarified. At present, some tutors will request a student to resubmit an assignment if he/she feels it is not a pass standard. However, clear guidelines are required in this area to ensure all students are treated fairly and equally.
- One approach (applied informally at present) involves the tutor reviewing a draft assignment in advance of the submission deadline and advising the student re this.

Once the deadline arrives, all assignments are considered to be final and re-submission is not permitted.

Monitoring of Feedback to Learners

The QA committee will be responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the recommended actions. When these are implemented, they will be monitored by MIFET QA co-ordinator, course co-ordinators, special duties post holders (where relevant, e.g. special duties post holders with responsibility for assessment), centre and programme managers.

9.   Learner Appeals

Marks are not appealed internally. Students who wish to have their marks appealed do so through the certifying body, e.g. FETAC.

Monitoring of Learner Appeals

Marks are not appealed internally. Students who wish to have their marks appealed do so through the certifying body, e.g. FETAC. The tutor / course co-ordinator / college administrator provides the student with the necessary information re making an appeal and any required supporting documentation.

10.   Return of Certification Data

Course co-ordinators, tutors and relevant special duties post holders (with responsibility for assessment) ensure that student data is maintained up to date, accurately and secure. They are responsible for the registration of students with FETAC; recording of all student results / achievement in the required format; preparation of material for external assessment and ensuring all course requirements are fulfilled.

Monitoring of Return of Certification Data

Course co-ordinators and tutors ensure that data is maintained up to date and in the required format for all their class groups. The programme / centre / service managers /

post holder with responsibility for assessment ensure the certifying body is provided with all the required data and materials.

11.   *Corrective Action*

- Where a student has an assessment related problem/issue, the first course of action is to work with the tutor / course co-ordinator. All efforts are made at this level to arrive at an outcome satisfactory to the learner and the VEC. Where this is not possible, the issue is referred further up the line by the tutor, i.e. to his/ her line manger and onwards.
- Co Mongahan VEC will notify FETAC of any issue / event they believe might interfere with the fair and consistent assessment of learners.

Monitoring of Corrective Action

The course co-ordinators and tutors monitor assessment on an on going basis. The Director of MIFET and centre/ programme managers are responsible for overseeing the overall assessment process; ensuring its integrity and taking the necessary action (including disclosure to FETAC) should any issue arise.

POLICY DOC 7.   PROTECTION FOR LEARNERS

Co Monaghan VEC is a statutory provider of education and training. It operates on a not for profit basis. Thus, it is not subject to Section 43 of the Qualifications Act. Programmes commence based on having a sufficient number of suitable applicants and continue for the set duration. Therefore, protection in the event of programme cessation does not apply. However, programmes may be cancelled in advance of commencement. In this respect, the VEC operates a protection policy.

POLICY

Co Monaghan VEC provides protection for all learners on its programmes and at its centres. It does this through:

- Informing applicants / potential learners of the condition(s) under which a programme can begin and may be cancelled, i.e. in the event of under-subscription
- Providing applicants with an opportunity to transfer to another programme within the VEC services and beyond, if possible
- Operating a clear process for the expeditious refund of any monies paid in the event of programme cancellation

PROCEDURES

Cessation of Programmes

Prospectuses and publicity information will state that programmes will run subject to sufficient demand.

Applicants to a programme that is cancelled prior to commencement are notified in writing or by phone by the Director / centre / service manger at the earliest opportunity. Applicants are provided with the opportunity to transfer to another VEC programme / centre.

In the main, fees are not requested until it has been agreed that the programme will commence. However, some learners, e.g. those on DSCFA / FAS schemes may seek to pay their fees upon application. Such applicants are facilitated to do this. In the event that

the programme is cancelled, they are informed of the refund procedure.

POLICY DOC 8.   SUB-CONTRACTING / PROCURING PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Co Monaghan VEC does not sub-contract / procure programme delivery.

POLICY DOC 9.   SELF- EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

POLICY   Co Monaghan VEC continually seeks to improve the quality of its services and programmes. Co Monaghan VEC considers evaluation an important process to review existing services / programmes; identify areas for improvement and ensure quality programme provision. Co Mongahan VEC centres and services will conduct evaluations on a planned and regular basis. The evaluations will involve all relevant staff, learners and other stakeholders.

PROCEDURES – these differ across services / programmes and are documented accordingly:

A.   Self- Evaluation at MIFET

1.   Assignment of responsibility

There are eight departments in MIFET:

1. Tourism
2. Childcare
3. IT
4. Art
5. Office Administration
6. Hair
7. Beauty
8. Health Care (Nursing & Health Care Support)

Each department has a head / co-ordinator who will be responsible for co-ordinating the self-evaluation exercise. In addition, there will be a designated individual with responsibility for overall evaluation co-ordination. This individual will ensure that each department is evaluated as scheduled and according to the agreed procedure.

2.   *Frequency*

Two departments will be evaluated each year. In this way, each department will be evaluated every four years.

3.   *Range*

The departmental evaluation will encompass all the programmes running in the department at the time of the evaluation, i.e. years 1 & 2 of a course, health care support and nursing, etc.

4.   *Learner Involvement*

MIFET is a small open college. In this way, students and tutors are in regular contact and views on the programme are shared. However, to ensure all students' views are reflected and gain a fuller picture, students will be required to complete an evaluation form (anonymously). This will be prepared by MIFET staff and apply across all programmes (allowing for subject and other differences).

The evaluations will be supplemented by group discussion at the time of the self-evaluation process. In this way, current and past learners' views will be considered. Where feasible, efforts will be made to talk to past students re the relevance of the programme to their subsequent employment / further study.

5.   *External Evaluator*

MIFET will seek to appoint an evaluator with programme and industry knowledge / expertise. In this way, he/she will focus on both the quality of the programme per se and its relevance to the labour market.

6.   *Methodology*

MIFET will conduct self-evaluations using the option (A) set out by FETAC, i.e. the departmental team will undertake the evaluations and prepare a preliminary report. The external evaluator will then be required to consider this report and conduct some sampling and interviews with learners. The evaluator will then contribute to the

preliminary report, which will be amended as required. The final report will contain the agreed findings of the departmental team and the external evaluator.

The evaluation reports will be circulated to MIFET staff, Co Monaghan VEC and forwarded to FETAC.

B.   Self-Evaluation of Literacy and Community Education Programmes

The Literacy and Community Education Programmes involve the delivery of a broad range of modules across a number of subject areas and in various locations around the county. As outreach and dispersed services, the self-evaluation process will differ from that to be applied at a centre-based service such as MIFET.

1.   Assignment of Responsibility

The Literacy and Community Education Programme managers will be responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the self-evaluation process. They will select the external evaluator and work with tutors to ensure the necessary data is compiled, maintained and stored securely.

2.   Frequency

Each category of modules (see No 3. Range below) will be evaluated on a tri-annual basis. In this way, evaluation will be an ongoing process, i.e. category (i) will be evaluated first, then categories (ii) and (iii). The process will then re commence with category (i).

3.   Range

There are a range of modules at Levels 1-5 delivered under the Literacy and Community Education Programmes. For the purposes of self-evaluation, these will be grouped into 3 categories: (i) levels 1-3, (ii) level 4 and (iii) level 5 modules.

4.   Learner Involvement

The Literacy and Community Education Programmes are client centered and delivered by a group of dedicated, approachable tutors. In this way, learners and tutors are in regular

contact and views on modules and programme are shared. However, to ensure all learners' views are reflected and gain a fuller picture, learners will be required to complete an evaluation form. This will be prepared by Programme managers and apply across all modules (allowing for subject and other differences).

The evaluations will be supplemented by group discussions at the time of the self evaluation process.

Where feasible, efforts will be made to talk to past learners re the relevance, applicability and benefit of the modules and their learning experience.

5.   External Evaluator

The evaluator selected will be familiar with the level of module; the assessment system and have an appreciation / understanding of adult / community education and adult literacy ethos. In this way, he/she will focus on both the quality of the course and its relevance / benefit to the learners.

6.   Methodology

The Literacy and Community Education Programmes will conduct self-evaluations using the option (B) set out by FETAC, i.e. an external evaluator will be engaged from the outset to establish and implement the evaluation process. This option is considered to be preferable in outreach services with part-time tutors, as there are no course co-ordinators and or special duties post holders to assume responsibility for the preparation of evaluation reports or co-ordination of the evaluation process.

The evaluation reports will be circulated to relevant personnel and services in Co Monaghan VEC and forwarded to FETAC.

C.   Self-Evaluation of Youthreach Programmes

The Youthreach centres are implementing the Quality Framework Initiative for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres. This initiative includes self-evaluation processes and procedures. It identifies 27 priority areas of which at least 9 should be focussed on during each annual evaluation. Thus, self-evaluation at Youthreach will comprise a very broad holistic review of the centre, its structure, management,

environment, ethos, staff and programmes. The FETAC QA self-evaluation process and the Quality Framework Initiative should be compatible and mutually supportive. To this end, it is planned to:

(i) Follow the self-evaluation process and guidelines set out in the Quality Framework Initiative. This will entail annual evaluation of at least 9 areas of operation within each Youthreach centre. This self-evaluation will be conducted with the assistance of an external facilitator.

and

(ii) Link with the Literacy and Community Education Services for the purposes of self evaluation of modules and programmes. Youthreach offers modules at levels 3 and 4, similar to Literacy and Community Education. Thus, it will be beneficial to include these in the evaluation process outlined in pages 53-54 for Literacy and Community Education. The Youthreach centres will contribute to and follow the same self-evaluation procedures as the Literacy and Community Education services. The different needs and nature of the Youthreach client group will be recognised and accounted for in the self-evaluation process.

The managers of the Youthreach centres will be responsible for:
- Ensuring the self-evaluation process is implemented;
- Liaising with tutors re their role in self-evaluation;
- Selecting and liaising with external facilitators and evaluators;
- Contributing to the process and reports and
- Ensuring the reports are circulated among the VEC and other relevant bodies, e.g. FETAC.