

# HEI FET Forum

Strategic Plan  
2017 - 2020



Higher Education Institutions  
Further Education and Training Forum



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# Foreword

This Strategic Plan for the HEI FET Forum<sup>1</sup> has been developed following the establishment of a national network of Higher Education Institutions engaged in the development and provision of third level professional qualifications for those working or intending to work in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to further engage members in the advancement of teaching, learning and research in the Further Education and Training sector and to widen the Forum's engagement with stakeholders across FET.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with all member Institutions and will be used to contribute to the emergent community of practice in the field.

The development of this plan has been informed by recent publications including:

- » **Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 (SOLAS, 2014)**
- » **Further Education and Training: Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019 (SOLAS, 2016)**
- » **Teaching Council (2011) Further Education: General and Programme Requirement for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications**
- » **Teaching Council (2011) Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education**
- » **Teaching Council (2016) Cosán: National Framework for Teachers' Learning**
- » **Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019 (SOLAS/ETBI, 2016)**
- » **Department of Education (2016) Action Plan for Education 2016-2019**

This Strategic Plan also acknowledges the *Riga Conclusions in 2015*, signed by European Ministers for Education including Ireland's Minister. The *Riga Conclusions* sets out to "introduce systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development for VET<sup>2</sup> teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work based settings" (European Commission, 2015).

The Further Education and Training sector has undergone transformational change over the past five years with the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2013, the formation of SOLAS as the National policy and funding body in 2013 and a significant increase in the number and diversity of learners. The SOLAS FET Services Plan 2016 sets out a budget of €634.436M with a target of reaching 339,283 learners for SOLAS funded FET provision (SOLAS, 2016b). The sector is evolving and changing to meet these demands. This Strategic Plan aims to contribute to the sector's development through engagement with all stakeholders in this field of practice.

<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Institutions: Further Education and Training Forum

<sup>2</sup> Vocational Education and Training

# Background to the HEI FET Forum

In 2011, the Teaching Council of Ireland introduced requirements for new teacher education qualifications (TEQ) for Further Education (Teaching Council, 2011). In response, a number of Higher Education providers designed programmes specifically for those in the further education sector. These were subsequently awarded professional accreditation by the Teaching Council.

During 2012, a number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with Teaching Council approved teacher education programmes for Further Education came together to form the Higher Education Institutions Further Education and Training Forum (HEI FET Forum), also referred to in this document as the 'Forum'. The Forum is a national network focussed on the continued enhancement of teaching and learning in the Further Education and Training sector. It aims to support the sector through collaborative working approaches and the development of communities of practice. In particular, the Forum aims to:

- » **Share knowledge and practice in education, specifically for the further education and training sector with regard to qualifications for teachers, tutors and other facilitators of learning in Further Education and Training;**
- » **Contribute to the quality of teaching, learning and research in Further Education and Training;**
- » **Promote awareness about initial and continued professional development (CPD) for practitioners and new entrants to the sector;**
- » **Explore common areas of interest such as research, programme design, assessment and placement;**
- » **Contribute to an emergent community of practice in Further Education and Training**

The Forum seeks to engage with and influence national policy for the sector, and has established links with the Teaching Council, SOLAS, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the Further Education Practitioner Network (FEN), Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and other stakeholders across the FET sector.

On a practical level the Forum creates networking opportunities and develops relationships based on shared experiences and a more cohesive voice. It also opens opportunities for collaboration and research amongst the Forum members, some of whom have started to collaborate on national research projects.

The HEI FET Forum membership comprises eight Higher Education providers as listed:

1. **NUI Galway**
2. **Mary Immaculate College**
3. **Waterford Institute of Technology**
4. **National College of Ireland**
5. **Marino Institute of Education**
6. **Maynooth University**
7. **Dublin City University**
8. **National College of Art & Design**

The Forum meets three times per year. The Teaching Council of Ireland and SOLAS regularly attend Forum meetings.

The Forum has organised a number of national events including national colloquiums (2014 in Waterford Institute of Technology and 2015 in the National College of Ireland). With the adoption of this strategic plan the Forum will further collaboratively organise seminars, conference contributions and workshops to create awareness of teacher education qualifications for further education, to address issues relating to continued professional development in the FET sector, and to share and disseminate the experiences of the Forum members in relation to policy, practice and research in FET.



# Current Context

The policy context for this Strategic Plan is informed by developments in the sector including the establishment of new national structures for the delivery of programmes and a new national agency with responsibility for setting national policy and managing funding into the sector.

In 2013, Ireland's 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) were dissolved and replaced by 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The ETBs, established under and governed according to the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, are statutory education authorities that have responsibility for education and training, and youth education. They manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges and a range of adult and further education centres. Also in 2013, the national state training agency, FAS, was replaced by a new national authority, SOLAS, which has responsibility for Further Education and Training.

The *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2018* (SOLAS, 2014) sets out the national strategy for further education and training. Its stated aims include the delivery of "a higher quality learning experience leading to better outcomes" for all those who engage in further education and training (SOLAS, 2014, p. 3). The strategy identifies the need for initial and continuing professional development for practitioners including teachers and tutors and highlights the importance for practitioners to possess both vocational competence and pedagogical expertise for the sector to meet the needs of a growing population of diverse learners with complex and multiple needs (SOLAS, 2014, p. 110).

A framework for continued professional development for the sector (*Further Education and Training: Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019*) was published by SOLAS in 2016. This strategy sets out the need to develop the infrastructure for professional development for FET practitioners. It highlights the importance of the standing and identity of the sector "by addressing the professional development requirements in an effective manner, thereby raising the confidence of FET staff in their day to day practice and the confidence of the public in the quality of the FET services they provide" (2016, p. 9). The strategy recognises two fundamental characteristics of the FET practitioner; the dual professionalism of the role, that is the requirement to be learning practitioners and also subject experts, and the focus on working with adult learners. The implementation of this strategy is due to begin in early 2017 and its impact on the adult educator, termed "learning practitioner" in the strategy will unfold over the next two years.

The HEI FET Forum aims to work with stakeholders in FET in achieving the objectives set out in the FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) and in making a contribution to this field of practice. In particular, the Forum strategy aims to address the high level goals set out in the SOLAS strategy for FET. These are:

- » **Skills for the Economy**
- » **Active Inclusion**
- » **Quality provision**
- » **Integrated Planning and Funding**
- » **Standing of FET**

# Vision, Mission and Values

## **Vision**

The Forum's Vision is to enhance and contribute to the quality of teaching and learning, engagement, pedagogy and research in Further Education and Training.

## **Mission**

The mission of the HEI FET Forum is to contribute to the continual improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in Further Education and Training by drawing on the combined expertise of its members.

The Forum's strength lies in its capacity to deliver relevant educational programmes and to undertake collaborative research that will inform programme development, contribute to the enhancement of practice, and inform national policy. The Forum embodies a spirit of collaboration among Higher Education Institutions and external stakeholders aimed at supporting excellence in Further Education and Training.

## **Values**

Our values are based on the underpinning principles of adult education including respect for the learner, equality, empowerment, open collaboration and trust.

# Governance

The Forum aims to ensure it fulfils its stated goals and objectives by ensuring a regular process of sustainable engagement with partners and stakeholders; securing funding to ensure the financial viability of the Forum; securing an on-line and off-line presence; and securing permanent administration in a national location.





# Strategic Goals 2017 - 2020

The strategic goals of the HEI FET Forum as articulated in the Forum's Strategy document are:

- > **Professional Development:**  
development and delivery of high quality practitioner orientated professional development initiatives and programmes that prepare practitioners for working in the sector and that support responses to societal, economic and industry challenges.
- > **Research:**  
develop and contribute to an emergent field of research in Further Education and Training (FET). Assemble a repository of research proposals, secure funded research and determine targets for peer-reviewed research publication.
- > **Policy and Advocacy:**  
build relationships with key national and international stakeholders and advisory bodies with a view to contributing to national policy.
- > **Engagement with Practitioners:**  
engage with practitioners in FET through collaboration at a national and regional level with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the Further Education Network (FEN), Further Education Support Services (FESS) and other relevant FET practitioner bodies and networks.
- > **Pedagogy in FET:**  
promote and model adult learning theories, philosophies, and pedagogies in FET teaching and learning activities.

# Strategic Objectives and Actions 2017 - 2020

## Professional Development in Further Education and Training:

deliver high quality practitioner orientated professional development initiatives and programmes.

Delivering professionally accredited teacher education programmes that support national policy and strategy for FET is the cornerstone of the activities of the members of the Forum. To ensure that programmes continue to meet professional body and professional teaching requirements, the Forum will:

- » Gather information on teaching competence achievement and development needs from FET teachers who have successfully completed teacher education programmes
- » Collaborate with the Teaching Council to evaluate the requirements set out in "Further Education: General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications" (2011)
- » Review the Further Education requirements in light of assembled FET teacher data and Teaching Council evaluation(s) to collaborate with the Teaching Council in revising, as necessary, FET teaching qualification programme content and standards
- » Collaborate with SOLAS in the design, development and delivery of continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives as set out in the Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019 (SOLAS, 2016)

**Research:**

**develop and contribute to an emergent field of research  
in Further Education and Training**

There is a dearth of research in the field of FET in Ireland. The Forum seeks to address the lack of research by generating a body of literature that underpins up-to-date and emerging theories, pedagogies and practices in the field. The Forum will:

- » Identify research areas of interest which have the potential to contribute to enhancement of FET teacher knowledge and practice
- » Adopt research perspectives and methodologies that will bring tangible benefits to FET teaching knowledge and practice
- » Establish collaborative research groups from the Forum's members to carry out focussed research in the FET field
- » Collaborate with international FET researchers to build a comprehensive body of knowledge, practice and literature
- » Collaborate with practitioner groups to disseminate research via a range of channels including conferences, seminars, practitioner events and web based channels
- » Disseminate research outputs through structured and focussed channels in order to build the reputation of FET teaching, its philosophies and pedagogies

**Policy and Advocacy:**

build relationships with key national and international stakeholders and advisory bodies with a view to contributing to national policy.

Ongoing approach to policy contribution drawing on international experiences and benchmarking against best practice offers an opportunity to establish a platform in which ideas and information around teaching in the FET sector will be shared, amplified and progressed to strengthen national policy on teaching in FET. The Forum will:

- » Carry out desk research to build a body of literature around best practice models of teaching in FET with a view to shaping policy
- » Seek representation on relevant national and international policy fora to represent FET interests
- » Engage and work with other advocacy groups in FET
- » Draw on EU funding to arrange international training visits to providers of best practice teaching approaches
- » Maintain relationships with relevant national and international bodies and providers to develop a community of practice and body of knowledge that contributes to shaping policy in FET

**Engagement with Practitioners:**

engage with practitioners in FET through collaboration at a national and regional level with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the Further Education Network (FEN), Further Education Support Services (FESS) and other relevant FET practitioner bodies and networks.

To offer a channel, beyond existing channels, through which educational practitioners in FET have their say, the Forum will:

- » Establish formal relationships with ETBI, FEN, FESS and other relevant bodies and networks with a view to offering additional supports to FET practitioners
- » Engage and collaborate with FET practitioners on applied research projects
- » Disseminate Forum members research outputs through practical and accessible means such as collaboratively organised seminars, conference contributions and workshops
- » Explore models of engagement with learners and practitioners in FET

**Pedagogy in FET:**

promote and model adult learning theories, philosophies, and pedagogies in Further Education and Training teaching and learning activities.

Recognising that teaching in the FET sector must adopt pedagogies that are relevant to learners is fundamental to the success of teachers' teaching and learners' learning. Towards the promotion of pedagogies that respond to FET learners, the Forum will:

- » Contribute to a greater awareness of the unique pedagogies in FET
- » Promote pedagogies that are seen as appropriate to learners in FET
- » Collaborate with practitioners to identify best practice techniques and teaching methods to build a repertoire of ideas and information
- » Support practitioners in the curation and development of unique tools and supports that specifically respond to issues in FET teaching
- » Engage with teachers, other FET practitioners and relevant bodies to share a range of tools and supports

# Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategic Plan has a three-year timespan. Progress against the plan will be monitored on a regular basis, and appropriate action will be taken depending on the level of progress achieved.

The Plan comprises goals, objectives and actions. Annual implementation plans comprising actions, key performance indicators, deliverables and timelines, will be drafted to facilitate efficient monitoring and to provide clarity for all concerned. A report on these plans will be circulated at the end of each year culminating in an Annual Strategy Review Report.

A Strategy sub-committee will be established to monitor progress against plan, and will report to the Forum twice yearly, in January and July. A simple and brief methodology will be adopted to facilitate efficient monitoring. The agreed Institutional “leads” for each goal will indicate their progress to the sub-committee and these updates will form part of the Annual Strategy Review Report.

Towards the end of 2019, a three-year evaluation of the Strategic Plan will be conducted. This will be based on the Annual Strategy Review Reports. This process will enable the Forum to review the Strategic Plan, to highlight what has been learned, and to set the agenda for the next strategy.



# HEI FET Forum Institutions and Programmes

INSTITUTION	TITLE OF FET PROGRAMME	WEBSITE
<b>NUI Galway</b>	Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education)	<a href="https://www.nuigalway.ie/courses/adult-and-continuing-education-courses/professional-diploma-in-education.html">https://www.nuigalway.ie/courses/adult-and-continuing-education-courses/professional-diploma-in-education.html</a>
<b>Marino Institute of Education</b>	Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education)	<a href="https://www.mie.ie/en/Study_with_us/Postgraduate_Programmes/Professional_Diploma_in_Education_Further_Education/">https://www.mie.ie/en/Study_with_us/Postgraduate_Programmes/Professional_Diploma_in_Education_Further_Education/</a>
<b>Dublin City university (DCU)</b>	BSc Education & Training (Further, Adult and Continuing Education)	<a href="https://www.dcu.ie/courses/undergraduate/institute_of_education/education-and-training.shtml-0">https://www.dcu.ie/courses/undergraduate/institute_of_education/education-and-training.shtml-0</a>
<b>Mary Immaculate College</b>	Graduate Diploma / M.Ed. in Adult and Further Education	<a href="http://www.mic.ul.ie/cpd/Pages/PostgraduateDiplomainEducation.aspx">http://www.mic.ul.ie/cpd/Pages/PostgraduateDiplomainEducation.aspx</a>
<b>Maynooth University (MU)</b>	Higher Diploma in Further Education (Fulltime and part time)	<a href="https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/courses/higher-diploma-further-education">https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/courses/higher-diploma-further-education</a> <a href="https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/courses/higher-diploma-further-education-pt">https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/courses/higher-diploma-further-education-pt</a>
<b>National College of Art and Design (NCAD)</b>	Masters in Socially Engaged Art (Further Adult and Community Education)	<a href="http://www.ncad.ie/postgraduate/school-of-education/ma-in-socially-engaged-art-further-education/">http://www.ncad.ie/postgraduate/school-of-education/ma-in-socially-engaged-art-further-education/</a>
<b>National College of Ireland (NCI)</b>	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Learning and Teaching (Further Education Track)	<a href="https://www.ncirl.ie/Courses/Course-Details/course/Postgraduate-Diploma-in-Arts-in-Learning-and-Teaching---Further-Education-PGDLTFE3">https://www.ncirl.ie/Courses/Course-Details/course/Postgraduate-Diploma-in-Arts-in-Learning-and-Teaching---Further-Education-PGDLTFE3</a>
<b>Waterford institute of Technology (WIT)</b>	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Teaching in Further Education and Adult Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching in Further Education	<a href="https://www.wit.ie/courses/school/education/parttime/ba_hons_in_teaching_in_further_and_adult_education1">https://www.wit.ie/courses/school/education/parttime/ba_hons_in_teaching_in_further_and_adult_education1</a> <a href="https://www.wit.ie/courses/type/education/department_of_adult_continuing_education/pg-diploma-in-teaching-in-further-education-partime">https://www.wit.ie/courses/type/education/department_of_adult_continuing_education/pg-diploma-in-teaching-in-further-education-partime</a>



# Consultation Process

The development of this Strategic Plan included consultation with a number of stakeholders in FET. A number of stakeholder organisations were invited for feedback on the Plan including:

- » **AONTAS - The Irish National Adult Learning Organisation**
- » **Department of Education and Skills**
- » **Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)**
- » **Further Education Network (FEN)**
- » **The Teaching Council of Ireland**
- » **The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)**
- » **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)**
- » **SOLAS - The Further Education and Training Authority**

# References

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European Commission (2015) *Riga Conclusions*. Riga, European Commission. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf) (Accessed 18/01/2017)

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