GREEN SKILLS for FET

2021-2030

SOLAS
learning works

This document, compiled by the Construction, Quality & Green Skills team in SOLAS, sets out some key areas for the Further Education & Training (FET) sector and responds to the future skills requirements of the green economy. Under the headings of *Green Skills for Life, Green Skills for Construction* and *Green Skills for Careers* it builds upon the fantastic work already being undertaken by providers of FET to ensure that Ireland can meet its target of having net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. There is huge opportunity within the green economy to generate jobs, upskill employees, create awareness and grow sustainable areas such as renewable energy, retrofitting and electrical vehicles. As Ireland's future competitiveness will be increasingly linked to its ability to decarbonise, the FET sector plays a crucial role in the green transformation of the economy and society, delivering the requisite skills to guarantee a greener future for all.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Green Skills for FET 2021-2030 captures some of the key areas for the FET Sector in the transition to a green economy and responds to various EU and national directives.

The European Green Deal 2019 and the *Osnabrück Declaration on Vocational Education and Training 2020*, provide the context of the climate and environmental challenges and outline responses specific to the FET sector, while national mandates in relation to green skills are included in *Skills for Zero Carbon 2021, Housing for All 2021, Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2021-2025, Programme for Government 2020, Climate Action Plan 2021, and Future Jobs Ireland 2019.*

Green Skills for FET 2021-2030 responds to these mandates for the duration of their lifespan and sets a strategic direction for green skills initiatives throughout the Irish FET sector.

1.1 What are Green Skills?

There is no one agreed upon definition of green skills and various definitions are useful for different purposes. However, as the Further Education & Training Authority, SOLAS understands green skills in accordance with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) definition, that is

> the abilities needed to live in, develop and support a society which aims to reduce the negative impact of human activity on the environment.

Comments:

- generic green skills help develop awareness-raising or implementation of resource-efficient activities, ecocitizenship, etc.;
- specific green skills are required to implement standards and processes to protect ecosystems and biodiversity, and to reduce energy, materials and water consumption;
- highly-specialised green skills are required to develop and implement green technologies such as renewable energies, sewage treatment or recycling.

(CEDEFOP 2014, p. 101)

2. THE ROLE OF FET IN GREEN SKILLS

The FET sector is unique in that it offers every individual an opportunity and pathway to pursue education, regardless of previous levels of attainment. Serving around 200,000 unique learners each year, FET provides a continuum of learning opportunities from Level 1 to Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) focused on both core and specific skills development, accompanied by a range of learner supports to facilitate the active inclusion of all citizens.

FET also has direct links to local communities, their networks, and distinct regional enterprises, with the benefit of national support and investment. It is uniquely placed therefore, to provide opportunities to move into exciting, interesting vocations and careers within the green economy, in addition to creating pathways to pursue further green skills training within higher education. It also offers bespoke upskilling opportunities responding to the impact of social, economic, technological, and political changes on the employment market. Except for statutory apprenticeships, the maximum length of a FET course is one year, although some provision carries a two-year option with a distinct award at the end of each year. This means learner engagement with providers tends to be shorter term and that FET can respond to the labour market quickly.

Climate justice, sustainable development and the bioeconomy represent significant global and national challenges. All 3 areas require appropriate technological and cultural change, transforming the way goods are produced and services delivered. That change requires the monumental development of the appropriate knowledge and skills to drive it forward and several industries served by FET (construction, agriculture, etc.) have central roles to ensure that employees and employers have the sufficient skills to thrive in the green economy.

3. GREEN SKILLS FOR FET 2021-2030 OBJECTIVES

Significant work on designing new FET programmes (and adapting current ones) to meet the demands of the green economy and associated government policies has been underway for some time. Currently, there are approx. 50+ programmes being delivered by 16 ETBs with a focus on green skills. *Green Skills for FET 2021-2030* then, expands upon the innovative work already being done in the FET sector, and as a collaborative effort between SOLAS, ETBI and ETBs, is concerned with 3 main objectives:

1

Green Skills for Life

Objective: To create awareness of climate justice, sustainability and bioeconomic issues across FET learners, FET staff and school students.

a) **Green Skills Modules for All**
Make green skills and sustainability awareness modules available for all FET learners across the sector

b) **Professional Learning & Development of FET Staff**
Enhance the capability and confidence of FET practitioners to anticipate, respond to and meet the evolving needs of learners in the context of green and digital transitions

c) **Promote Green FET**
Promote the FET sector as a leader in providing skills for the green economy

2

Green Skills for Construction

Objective: To train and upskill those in construction occupations in the latest green technologies.

a) **Construction Apprenticeships**
Incorporate green skills and business training in curricula so the workforce remains equipped for technological advancement in the green economy

b) **Developing Construction Skills**
Ensure that FET construction programmes (i.e. CSCS) include a focus on green, sustainable practices and technologies to remain industry relevant

c) **NZEB Centres of Excellence**
Provide starter programmes, conversion courses, upskilling and post-apprenticeship courses in Near Zero Energy Building technologies in 6 Centres of Excellence nationwide

3

Green Skills for Careers

Objective: To create career opportunities in the green economy for the employed, unemployed and those within vulnerable sectors.

a) **Non-Construction Apprenticeships**
Expand non-construction apprenticeships curricula to include green, sustainable practices and technologies

b) **Skills to Compete/Skills to Advance**
Provide flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities in the green economy for employees, employers and the unemployed

c) **Just Transition**
Support employees, employers and enterprise which may be vulnerable in the shift to a green economy though the principle of Just Transition

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