



**FET**  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

# Professional Development Strategy

## 2017-2019

**SOLAS**

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus  
Further Education and Training Authority



**etbi**

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland  
Boird Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann

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# 1. Foreword



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Chief Executive Officer,  
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General Secretary,  
Education and Training  
Boards Ireland

We are very pleased to introduce this strategy for the professional development of all those who work in the further education and training (FET) sector. The strategy, which is the first of its kind, was developed by SOLAS in close collaboration with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and its member Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and reflects a comprehensive evidence gathering, stakeholder consultation and research process.

Over the past number of years, the FET sector has experienced a challenging period of integration and reform. Throughout this time of change, FET practitioners – those working with learners, in support and administration, and in management – have demonstrated their on-going passion and commitment to supporting the best quality experience for all who avail of FET programmes and services. The theme of change is likely to be a constant in FET, as the sector strives to anticipate and respond effectively to ongoing social and economic developments. It is within this context that the capability and confidence of practitioners will be increasingly critical to the achievement of better outcomes for learners, employers and communities.

It is recognised that practitioners in the FET sector are highly qualified and have a strong tradition of engaging in professional development activities. The purpose of this strategy is to build on and further develop this culture by providing future-focused and targeted professional development, while creating the supports and structures required for an integrated, consistent and strategic approach. The strategy aims to achieve this through 19 actions under three strategic goals of developing infrastructure and delivery systems, increasing FET sector capability and sustainable funding and resourcing.

The experience of developing this strategy has been very positive. There has been a tremendous level of positive engagement and support from stakeholders across the FET sector including ETB staff and management teams, unions, professional associations, state agencies and the Department of Education and Skills.

We look forward to continuing positive engagement as the strategy is implemented. We are confident that it will make a significant contribution to improving the quality of programmes and services while enhancing the standing and identity of the FET sector.

Paul O'Toole

Michael Moriarty



# 2

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2.1. Background

The further education and training (FET) sector in Ireland provides a wide range of programmes and services for a diverse range of individuals over 16 years of age. These services are provided mainly through the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The ETBs employ around 10,000 FET practitioners as teachers, tutors, instructors, trainers, guidance specialists, managers, coordinators, and administrative and support staff. The effectiveness and quality of FET depends, ultimately, on the excellence of this workforce.

The FET Professional Development Strategy stems from a commitment set out in the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019*, which reflects the strong link between professional development within the sector and the quality of the education and training provided. It also reflects national and European policy, which places the professional competence of the workforce as central to the ability of FET to respond to the changing needs of employers and learners.

The strategy sets out how, over the next three years, the sector will collectively renew and further embed a strong professional development culture across the Education and Training Board (ETB) network by:

- ▶ building on existing good practice throughout the sector
- ▶ developing a professional development framework and structures to support ETBs in meeting the FET needs of learners, employers and communities.

The complex and changing nature of the FET practitioner role means that professional development is vital to a workforce that has to anticipate, respond to and meet the needs of a constantly evolving economy and society. As Guskey states, ‘One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development.’<sup>1</sup>

All actors within the FET sector will have a role in the future of FET professional development and in making this strategy a success. The strategy envisages a model of professional development that is individually embraced, organisationally driven and strategically directed.

## 2.2. Strategy development process

The development of the strategy took place from April to June 2016 and was guided by an advisory group involving SOLAS, Education Training Board Ireland (ETBI), Further Education and Support Service (FESS), representatives of seven ETBs and a research consultant. It is based on an extensive data collection and consultation process and was informed by a review of national and international practice in FET professional development.

In order to address the fact that there was no existing evidence base on the size, demographics, characteristics and skill needs of the FET workforce, a skills profile survey of ETB staff was undertaken in late 2015 with the support of an advisory group and in consultation with key stakeholders, including ETB senior management, staff associations and unions.

As well as providing a detailed picture of the ETB workforce involved in FET, the profile also serves as an evidence base on which to develop a strategic approach to professional development.

The FET Skills Profile captured information on 54 different job roles, but these can be described in terms of three high-level practitioner groups:

- ▶ Learning practitioners
- ▶ Managers
- ▶ Support and administration staff.

## 2.3. FET skills profile findings

The skills profile is based on survey responses from 4,400 FET practitioners and some of the main findings are as follows:

- ▶ Just over half (54%) of skills profile respondents work full-time, more than a third (38%) are part-time and 8% are sessional or occasional.
- ▶ Nearly three-quarters (74%) of skills profile respondents are female and a quarter (26%) are male.
- ▶ The FET workforce is characterised by extensive experience and long service within the sector.
- ▶ The FET sector has a highly qualified workforce. Two-thirds of staff (67%) are qualified to either Level 8 or Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

<sup>1</sup> Guskey, T. (2000), *Evaluating Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- ▶ The FET workforce is relatively confident in terms of 'soft' skill areas such as communication skills, teamwork and customer service, as well as the core teaching/training skill areas.
- ▶ Confidence levels are lower in other skill areas such as quality assurance, technology enhanced learning, dealing with challenging behaviour, etc.
- ▶ The confidence levels of learning practitioners in technical skill areas are, in general, not related to whether or not the practitioner holds a teaching qualification.

Qualitative responses to the skills profile indicate wide-ranging development needs in areas such as contemporary professional practice, subject- and course-related expertise, and technology and systems to support the modern learning process and environment.

#### 2.4. Our commitment to strategic FET professional development

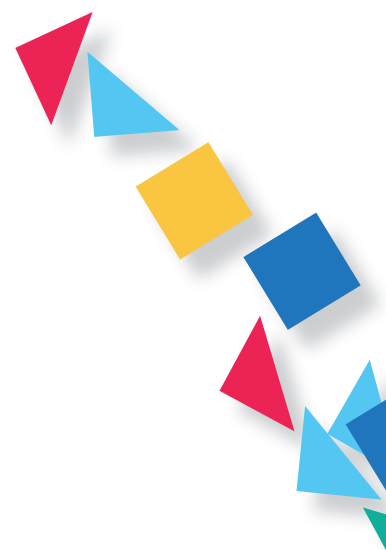
FET practitioners report high levels of participation and engagement with the professional development activities they have experienced. However, there is clear evidence of wide-ranging development needs and of significant barriers to accessing sufficient and appropriate professional development opportunities. These barriers include cost, location, working patterns and lack of availability. Many practitioners point to the lack of a strategic and coordinated approach to the implementation of professional development in the sector.

There is much professional development activity currently taking place across the FET sector and the sector has a strong existing culture of ongoing professional development. However, evidence from the strategy development process suggests that much of the current activity is self-directed and reactive to day-to-day operational circumstances. There is a clear need for national structures to ensure that professional development activities are coordinated, quality assured and strategically focused in a consistent manner throughout the sector.

Over the lifetime of the strategy SOLAS, ETBI and the ETBs will collaborate to develop the systems, infrastructure and funding for focused and targeted professional development in the FET sector. The required actions are addressed under three strategic goals as follows:

#### Goal 1 – Creating the infrastructure and delivery systems for high-quality professional development

- ▶ A national steering group will be set up to provide strategic oversight of FET professional development.
- ▶ Each ETB will identify a professional development lead at senior management level with responsibility for 'championing' professional development within the organisation.
- ▶ A dedicated professional development coordinator will be identified in each ETB, reporting to the professional development lead.
- ▶ Planning for strategic sector-wide development initiatives will be carried out by SOLAS in conjunction with ETBI and under the guidance of the National Steering Group.
- ▶ A fund and a planning mechanism will be developed for joint action between groups of ETBs on professional development priorities.
- ▶ A range of professional development delivery methods will be put in place to ensure consistent and appropriate access to development opportunities across the sector.



## Goal 2 – Increasing FET sector capability through relevant, targeted professional development

The skills profile and consultation evidence showed the high degree of commonality across all ETBs in relation to the priority areas for the professional development of FET staff. These areas will form a set of strategic priorities for targeted development interventions over the lifetime of the strategy.

The strategic priorities identified are:

- ▶ Working with and supporting FET learners
- ▶ Vocational upskilling and reskilling
- ▶ Employer engagement
- ▶ Quality assurance
- ▶ Technology enhanced learning (TEL)
- ▶ Information and communication technology (ICT)
- ▶ Leadership and management development

## Goal 3: Sustainable funding and resourcing of professional development

A number of funding channels will be established for professional development in the FET sector:

- ▶ ETBs will receive dedicated funding for professional development activity, through the SOLAS-managed funding allocation process.
- ▶ SOLAS will establish a central FET professional development budget in order to fund the development of interventions to address strategic development needs at a national level.
- ▶ A new professional development innovation fund will be established as an enabler for joint action at national level and across groups of ETBs.

Over the lifetime of this strategy mechanisms will be developed to enable the recording and tracking of professional development activities at individual, ETB and national level.





3

**PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AS  
AN ENABLER OF  
CHANGE IN FET**



### 3.1. FET sector change: building an integrated sector

The further education and training (FET) sector in Ireland provides a wide range of programmes and services for a diverse range of individuals over 16 years of age. It is one of the main providers of reskilling and upskilling programmes for those who are unemployed or inactive, and for employees. It assists individuals to progress to higher education who otherwise could not directly do so. Another important role is to provide ‘second chance’ education for the many individuals who have not completed second level education.

Serving a uniquely diverse cohort of learners achieving learning outcomes at Level 1 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or equivalent, FET enables learners and communities to achieve their developmental, personal, social, career and employment aspirations. In so doing, FET improves the well-being of individuals, communities and enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

The sector has undergone a period of substantial change and reorganisation in recent years. The aim has been to develop, arguably for the first time, a coherent FET sector that is positioned to support growth and active inclusion by delivering the skills and training needed by an increasingly diverse learner base.

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 restructured the FET organisational landscape, streamlining the previous 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The ETBs took on responsibility for the former FÁS training function, while SOLAS was established to provide funding and strategic oversight to the sector. These reforms had the aim of ‘bringing local and regional coherence to FET’ and a more **integrated FET system**.<sup>3</sup>

The ETBs employ around 10,000 practitioners as teachers, tutors, instructors, trainers, guidance specialists, managers, coordinators, and administrative and support staff. These are the FET practitioners who are the focus of this strategy. The effectiveness and quality of the FET sector depends, ultimately, on the excellence of this workforce.<sup>4</sup>

2 SOLAS (2014), *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019*.

3 SOLAS (2014), *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019*.

4 While it is recognised that the FET sector includes other education and training providers outside of the ETBs, the FET practitioners in ETBs are the primary focus of this strategy.

This strategy stems from a commitment set out in the *FET Strategy 2014–2019*, which reflects the strong link between professional development within the sector and the quality of the education and training provided. The vital role of professional development in ensuring effective delivery of education and training experiences is furthermore highlighted in the *Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy and Action Plan 2016–2019*.

The FET sector has a strong tradition of professional development, is highly qualified and is committed to providing the best outcomes for learners, employers and the communities they serve. It has been very resourceful in devising and carrying out a range of professional development activities within a strong culture of self-directed learning. However, the limitations arising from the lack of a coordinated, coherent and strategic approach are generally recognised and strongly evidenced.

### 3.2. Aim of the strategy

The integration and reform of the FET sector creates a challenge to ensure that its workforce is supported to meet changing needs, and an opportunity to provide a consistent system of professional development for all those working in the sector. This strategy sets out how, over the next three years, the sector will **collectively renew and further embed a strong professional development culture across the ETB network by:**

- ▶ building on existing good practice throughout the sector
- ▶ developing a professional development framework and structures to support ETBs in meeting the FET needs of learners, employers and communities.

The strategy aims to ensure that professional development is planned, delivered and reviewed as an integrated process throughout the FET sector. In doing so, and reflecting the fact that the new FET landscape is still establishing itself, the strategy aims to support the growth of a unified sector identity: an identity that has the quality and professionalism of the FET practitioner at its heart.

### 3.3. How the strategy has been developed?

The strategy is based on an extensive data collection and consultation process and was informed by a review of national and international practice in FET professional development.

#### FET skills profile survey

At the start of the process, there was no existing evidence base on the size, demographics, characteristics and skill needs of the FET workforce. In order to address this, an FET skills profile survey was undertaken in late 2015 with the support of an advisory group and in consultation with key stakeholders, including ETB senior management, staff associations and unions.

The skills profile survey was designed iteratively during 2015, taking into account stakeholder feedback. A pilot of the tool was undertaken in three ETBs in September 2015. As the development phase progressed, a liaison group was set up, which included representatives from all ETBs. The liaison group members were, with support, responsible for determining the survey population, ensuring the distribution of communications about the survey as well as the survey link itself, and providing reminders/encouragement to staff to participate. The delivery of the survey to staff was therefore managed by ETB liaison group members and benefitted from substantial commitment and ownership by ETB management and staff.

All ETBs launched the survey in November 2015. In total, **over 4,400 FET practitioners completed the skills profile survey** across the 16 ETBs (an estimated overall response rate of 45.9%). Ten out of the 16 ETBs achieved a response rate of over 50%. A skills profile report was prepared for and distributed to each ETB in March 2016.

#### Strategy consultation

The development of the strategy took place from April to June 2016 and was guided by a Strategy Advisory Group involving SOLAS, ETBI, FESS, representatives of seven ETBs and an independent expert.

During April 2016, SOLAS undertook a round of consultations with ETB senior leaders to reflect on the skills profile evidence and begin to build consensus around actions to support improved professional development.

Ten consultation workshops were also held during May 2016 with around 100 FET practitioners. The purpose of the workshops was to:

- ▶ deepen the understanding of the professional development needs of practitioners, based on the themes emerging from the skills profile survey
- ▶ explore priorities and potential solutions to be considered in the context of the strategy.

#### Literature review

A literature review was undertaken, which looked at how professional development plans and strategies had been formulated in FET sectors internationally. This drew on evidence from across Europe, North and Central America, Australia and New Zealand. It also included a review of complementary national strategies in Ireland.

*the strategy aims to support the growth of a unified sector identity: an identity that has the quality and professionalism of the FET practitioner at its heart*

### 3.4. Vision and principles

Our vision for the professional development strategy is that it will:

- ▶ contribute to the delivery of high-quality provision and support to FET learners, employers and communities
- ▶ develop a world-class FET workforce with the skills, knowledge and adaptability to effectively support a diverse learner base
- ▶ impact positively on FET learner outcomes through the high quality of practice and provision, therein providing benefits for Ireland's economy and society
- ▶ embed a coherent, sector-led culture of ongoing professional development that is attuned to the evolving nature of FET roles
- ▶ support the development of the FET sector's identity and status.

The strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- ▶ **Sector-driven:** It provides an overarching framework for a national system of professional development across the FET sector. It marks a move from mainly self-directed professional development to an approach which is guided by the needs of the sector.
- ▶ **Holistic:** It encapsulates a whole-workforce approach to professional development based on the concept of the 'FET practitioner'. This encompasses those involved in teaching, tutoring and training, as well as management, guidance, support and administrative staff.
- ▶ **Evidence-based:** It emphasises the importance of having a planned approach to professional development, based on an evidence-led, critical appraisal of 'what is needed' and 'what works'.
- ▶ **Flexible and accessible:** It affords opportunities for all FET practitioners to access professional development through a variety of delivery modes and locations.
- ▶ **Future-focused:** It aligns professional development opportunities not just with the demands of today, but also with a view to the needs of learners, the economy and society in the future.

### 3.5. Contribution to FET strategy goals

This strategy was articulated as a specific requirement under the *FET Strategy 2014–2019* goal of 'Quality Provision' – a recognition of the key contribution made by practitioners to the quality of FET outcomes. However, it is clear that a strategic and coherent approach to professional development in the sector can contribute significantly to all the goals of the FET Strategy:

- ▶ **Skills for the economy:** By equipping FET practitioners with the skills and knowledge to prepare learners for the requirements of enterprise today and into the future.
- ▶ **Active inclusion:** By ensuring that the full diversity of learners can be supported to achieve their education and training ambitions.
- ▶ **Integrated planning and funding:** By introducing a consistent, strategic and planned approach to professional development in individual ETBs and across the sector as a whole, thereby ensuring efficiency and value for money.
- ▶ **Standing of FET:** By addressing 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.



A man with a beard and short dark hair is looking down at a laptop screen. He is wearing a dark, patterned button-down shirt. In the background, two other people are visible, one of whom is holding a white folder or document. The entire image has a blue color cast.

# 4

**THE POLICY  
CONTEXT**

## 4.1. Policy drivers

One of SOLAS's first major actions – in partnership with the sector – was to produce a five-year strategy (*FET Strategy 2014–2019*) which sought to define the mission of FET and the scope of the newly integrated FET sector. The FET Strategy aims to deliver a higher-quality learning experience, leading to better outcomes for all those who engage in FET. It recognises that further education and training enables individuals and communities to achieve their developmental, personal, social, career and employment aspirations. In so doing, FET improves the well-being of individuals, communities and enterprises. The strategy notes that the FET workforce is crucial to the future success of the sector and identifies the requirement to develop an evidence-based professional development strategy.

A number of recent national strategy documents have placed the FET sector centre stage in a renewed focus on supporting skills development together with active inclusion in Ireland.

The *National Skills Strategy* published by the Department of Education and Skills in January 2016 emphasised the importance of the FET sector being sufficiently responsive to the needs of employers and individuals and ensuring that provision is geared towards courses that provide successful outcomes for learners.<sup>5</sup> The strategy identifies the sectors and occupations that are anticipated to support jobs growth in Ireland over the next decade.

The overarching vision of the strategy up to 2025 is based on having an 'education and training system [that] will deliver more flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary skills provision', therein maximising the return on public investment. This flexibility will, in time, impact on the programmes provided and therefore the professional development of FET practitioners.

The fifth *Action Plan for Jobs*, published in January 2016, continues to place skills at the heart of cross-departmental government plans to support jobs, growth and innovation. It emphasises that 'we need skills at all qualification levels'.<sup>6</sup> The plan includes new 'disruptive reforms' to support enterprise skills supply, including 25 new apprenticeship programmes led by industry.

Among the medium-term targets set out in the plan are to:

- ▶ double investment in training and upskilling in enterprise agency clients by 2020 (from €132 million in 2011)
- ▶ meet 74% of ICT skills demand with domestic supply by 2018 (59% of demand in 2014)
- ▶ meet the EU participation in lifelong learning target of 15% by 2020 (up from 6.7% of adults engaged in 2014).

While not solely falling on the FET sector, these targets indicate the scale and breadth of ambition in improving skills provision nationally. Participation in lifelong learning in Ireland has long been below the EU average. Improved participation depends, in part, on the relevance of provision and innovation in delivery methods offered by FET providers.

While the unemployment rate has fallen substantially since 2012, high levels of economic inactivity persist among the working age population. The *Pathways to Work 2016–2020* strategy continues the recent focus on support for the long-term unemployed and also seeks to 'extend the approach of activation to other people who, although not classified as unemployed jobseekers, have the potential and the desire to play a more active role in the labour force'.<sup>7</sup>

The FET sector plays a growing role in providing support to the long-term unemployed and youth unemployed – groups that are being increasingly referred by the Department of Social Protection to undertake job-related training as a condition of receiving employment support. The skills profile evidence and the consultation workshops undertaken both emphasise that FET practitioners have identified professional development needs relating to working with and supporting this group of learners.

The *Enterprise 2025 Strategy* published in 2015 by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation identifies sectors such as ICT, life sciences and financial services, as potential engines for growth.<sup>8</sup> The strategy identifies skills development as central to the ambition to create over a quarter of a million new jobs over the next decade. There are projected needs to fill jobs in the next five years in growth areas such as data analytics, hospitality and bio-pharma.

5 Department of Education and Skills (2016), *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025*.

6 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2016), *Action Plan for Jobs 2016*.

7 Department of Social Protection (2016), *Pathways to Work 2016–2020*.

8 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2015), *Enterprise 2025; Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015–2025 Background Report*.

The FET sector, alongside the universities and institutes of technology, plays a key role in ensuring that learners are well prepared for the jobs of the future.

There is also an ambition, as set out in the FET Strategy, and reflected in the *National Skills Strategy*, for the sector to increase its focus on providing support for the upskilling of employees.

All of these demands highlight the need for FET practitioners to maintain their skills and industry knowledge on an ongoing basis through professional development.

## 4.2. The European perspective

The objective of making European vocational education and training globally competitive and attractive has put the quality of teachers, trainers and leaders in vocational education and training in the spotlight. For example, the Council of the EU conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') emphasises that 'there is a need to ensure high-quality teaching, to provide adequate initial teacher education, continuous professional development for teachers and trainers, and to make teaching an attractive career-choice'.<sup>9</sup> The Council conclusions also acknowledge the importance of leadership of education and training institutions.

### 2015 Riga Declaration

In terms of EU policy direction in this area, the 2015 Riga Declaration of EU Ministers in charge of vocational education and training (VET) sets five medium-term deliverables for the period 2015–2020 as part of a renewed effort to raise the status of VET to support jobs and growth, including to:

Introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings.<sup>10</sup>

The Riga medium-term deliverables for VET provided some examples of actions that member states might implement in continuing professional development (CPD) for VET teachers. These include reviewing FET workforce skills and aligning them with labour market needs, effective partnership with business, and empowering networks that support VET teachers.

### Diversity and scope of professional development

European-wide research shows that the adult learning sector is very diverse.<sup>11</sup> This diversity can be seen in the various target groups and subjects/areas covered by adult learning courses. It is also evident in the professional pathways to becoming an adult learning professional, the employment situation of adult learning professionals and the competencies required to work in the sector. This level of diversity presents challenges in developing the sector as a whole.

In 2009 the European Commission commissioned a study on Adult Learning Professions in Europe (ALPINE) in order to determine who is working in the field of adult education and to improve the quality of adult learning professionals. Information was gathered in 32 countries. The study showed that adult learning professionals require certain competencies to carry out a wide variety of tasks. However, it found that little attention has been paid to defining these competencies or to the continuing professional development of the sector.

The European centre for the development of vocational training, Cedefop, has emphasised the need for member states to take a comprehensive approach to the development of further education and training personnel. It stresses the importance of providing 'adequate training not only for teachers but also for other personnel. Especially important is training for middle managers who do not always have the skills to effectively manage human resources and motivate teachers for change'.<sup>12</sup> It also notes that teaching and training staff are taking on a broader role than in the past, and that managerial, administrative, teamworking, interdisciplinary and communications skills should be key to CPD practice.

9 Council of the European Union (2009), Council conclusions on a *Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training (ET2020)*.

10 Riga Conclusions (2015), On a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015–2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué, European Commission (2015).

11 EU Commission (2010), *Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals: Contribution to the Development of a Reference Framework of Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals*.

12 [www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5156\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5156_en.pdf)

A Danish 'reform competence project' identified that fostering this changing identity within the workforce is important in implementing structural and pedagogical change. In this programme, 'change agents' were used to support staff.<sup>13</sup> This reflected that it was middle managers who needed additional competencies to support change in learning practice. Cedefop suggests that using models that include a bottom-up approach, which includes the workforce throughout the planning and implementation of CPD, can be seen as particular best practice.<sup>14</sup>

### Peer support and professional exchange

Another way in which identity with the FET workforce can be fostered is through peer support. As such, peer support is seen as an important element of professional development. Current thinking focuses both on the traditional conception of mentoring (where a more senior member of staff mentors more junior members of staff), and on peer-group mentoring. This idea reflects suggestions made by Cedefop that, in the future, there will be less focus on hierarchy within VET/FET.<sup>15</sup>

In Finland, for example, the Osaava Programme aims to enhance teachers' professional development through new forms of in-service and professional training. An important part of this looks at the development of peer-group mentoring through collaboration with universities, teacher education departments and VET colleges.<sup>16</sup> This programme increased the number of staff participating in CPD from 30,000 in 2009 to 70,000 in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

Best practice sharing can form an integral aspect of CPD. This can be either informal or formal, organisation-based or include a form of exchange. Collaborative CPD can be more effective than individual CPD (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; General Teaching Council UK, 2005; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005; Perez et al., 2007; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). As such, cultivating and maintaining networks is seen as an important feature of CPD best practice.

In the Finnish Tukeyva programme teacher participation is encouraged by creating 'study circles' and 'experience exchange groups' involving staff from different departments and institutions. Networks would include meetings with colleagues and online information exchange, discussions and counselling:

*Partnerships and networked or collaborative ways of working can bring added value to operations as knowledge is shared and innovated in networks. Professionalism and expertise are no longer understood as personal properties, but closely tied to communities, organisations.<sup>18</sup>*

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD there are two features of effective professional communities. Firstly, they involve the comparison of different perspectives and challenging of norms. Often participants are supported to process new understanding/ideas and the implications for teaching. Sometimes this may involve challenging problematic beliefs and testing the efficacy of competing ideas.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, communities should focus on analysing the impact of teaching and training on student learning. Cultivating a sense of shared responsibility for outcomes can help reflection on practice.

### 4.3. International approaches to FET professional development

By introducing a professional development strategy, the FET sector in Ireland is aligning itself with best international practice. Similar strategies and plans have been used in countries such as Australia, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England, Denmark and Finland.

There are themes apparent across many of the above strategies that align with FET in Ireland. However, while international plans tend to focus on the learning practitioner, this strategy differs in its inclusive, whole-sector approach to professional development by emphasising the role that all FET staff have in supporting successful outcomes for learners.

13 Training of Trainers Network (TTnet) (2003), [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewjWy7T14MLMAhUmDMAKHw2KBIQQFggiMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cedefop.europa.eu%2Ffiles%2F2123-att1-1-S3\\_-\\_DK\\_case\\_-\\_Reform\\_Competence\\_Project.pdf&usq=AFQjCNEEnXo21j1AXEkiU54UE9Jz-qgtVA&cad=rja](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewjWy7T14MLMAhUmDMAKHw2KBIQQFggiMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cedefop.europa.eu%2Ffiles%2F2123-att1-1-S3_-_DK_case_-_Reform_Competence_Project.pdf&usq=AFQjCNEEnXo21j1AXEkiU54UE9Jz-qgtVA&cad=rja)

14 [www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5156\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5156_en.pdf)

15 Cedefop (2009), Competence framework.

16 Heikkinen, Hannu L.T. (ed.) (2012), *Peer-Group Mentoring for Teacher Development*.

17 OECD (2013), [http://www.oecd.org/edu/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20FINLAND\\_EN.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20FINLAND_EN.pdf)

18 Volmari (2009), *Defining VET Professions in Europe*

19 Timperley H., Wilson A., Barrar H. & Fung I. (2007) <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/48727127.pdf>

The scope of FET (or VET) sector professional development plans varies considerably by country, including the links to other education sectors (e.g. strategies incorporating further and higher education), and whether the responsibility for professional development sits at national or regional level. In some cases, professional development is a regulatory requirement. These differences in scope and sector structure make it difficult to draw direct comparisons to the FET sector in Ireland.

However, in Scotland and Northern Ireland the Standards Council and Education and Training Inspectorate respectively echo the Irish approach by linking the professional development of staff directly to the quality of further education and training outcomes.

Professional development strategies in both jurisdictions also refer to the importance of sharing professional learning outcomes to develop practice across the sector and of developing flexible approaches to professional learning through the use of technology in particular. In Northern Ireland a specific emphasis is placed on equipping professionals to better respond to local needs, including those of small and medium enterprises.

FET professionals working in the Australian TAFE (technical and further education) system are encouraged by the Australian Education Union to undertake CPD, although actual requirements vary by state. The state of Queensland produced a CPD strategy for teachers in VET for the period of 2012–2015, which all employees of the TAFE system are encouraged to work towards. The strategy is underpinned by the idea that the individual professional needs to make active decisions about what is involved in their own CPD, as well as taking an active role in their learning.

It sets out 'overarching goals' which are to be accomplished by achievements in all of four underlying pillars (teaching learning and assessment; leadership; industry; and business development). The goals are to:

- ▶ build the capability of the VET sector and drive quality teaching, learning and assessment practices
- ▶ cultivate a continuous professional learning culture where the method, process and recognition of learning is supported and promoted within a changing tertiary education and training landscape
- ▶ instil an inclusive learning culture into the everyday operation of VET that recognises and accepts equity and diversity in the provision of effective learner support
- ▶ embed sustainable practices throughout all aspects of the VET sector
- ▶ embed sound professional language and the use of inclusive learning principles in all aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and business practice.



A woman with dark hair, smiling warmly, is the central focus of the image. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly denim, shirt. In the background, several children are visible, some looking towards the camera and others looking away, creating a sense of a busy, positive classroom environment. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent pink filter.

5

**TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK  
FOR FET PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

## 5.1. The FET practitioner – a distinctive role

This strategy puts forward the concept of the FET practitioner as a unified way of understanding the sector workforce. **The FET practitioner can be defined as anyone working in the sector who is involved in working directly with learners or in supporting or influencing the learner experience in FET.**

This encompasses a diverse range of roles and embraces a wide array of professional development needs and practices. The term ‘FET practitioner’ reflects the important role of all staff in contributing to the quality and success of the sector. This is at the heart of the principle of inclusivity in the strategy.

While FET practitioners share values and objectives, they are employed in a wide variety of job roles. The FET skills profile captured information on 54 different jobs roles, but these can be described in terms of three high-level groups of staff:

- ▶ **Learning practitioners**, comprising c.72% of the overall workforce. Job roles within the learning practitioner group include post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) teachers, adult literacy tutors, community education tutors, VTOS tutors, Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) tutors, Youthreach resource persons, guidance counsellors and instructors in training services. Learning practitioners are not only linked to different programme areas, they work across a wide range of subject/course areas.
- ▶ **Managers**, comprising c.14% of the overall workforce. In addition to ETB central management staff this group also includes a range of programme coordination roles, adult education officers, training services managers and assistant managers, and further education principals, directors and deputies.
- ▶ **Support and administration staff**, comprising c.13% of the workforce. This group includes administrators supporting ETB central functions, administrators and support staff associated with specific programme areas, development officers, guidance information officers, training standards officers, and clerical staff in training services.

There are **important distinctive elements to teaching, training or tutoring in the FET sector** that mark it out from first or second level teaching or teaching in higher education. This is not to say that the skills, competences and theoretical knowledge underpinning teaching and training at all levels do not share a common grounding. Rather, it emphasises

that FET learning practitioners are uniquely characterised in terms of their:

- ▶ **Dual professionalism** as teachers/trainers and vocational/subject experts. They have ‘deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning processes and contexts for diverse learners, matched with expert subject knowledge and skills’.<sup>20</sup> The breadth of subjects/courses taught in FET and the focus on vocationally related subjects places demands on learning practitioners in terms of their ongoing professional development.
- ▶ Focus on **working with adult learners**. Different teaching and training strategies and techniques are required for adult learners than for children/young people. The concept of ‘andragogy’ reflects that, in general, adults have a concept of self and autonomy, life experience, a readiness to learn and a more problem-centred approach to learning.<sup>21</sup>
- ▶ Delivery of education and training to a **diverse learner base and across a wide range of settings**. FET learning practitioners operate in the classroom, the training centre, the community and in work-based learning environments. They deliver to a wide cohort of learners, often with discrete and sometimes additional support needs.

Many of the above demands and challenges faced by FET learning practitioners are also experienced by and influence those in management, support, administration and guidance roles.

## 5.2. The importance of professional development to the FET practitioner role

FET practitioners support **skills renewal** across the economy by providing **skills development** and retraining opportunities to adults wishing to pursue or develop a career. They are also tasked with cultivating the **transversal skills** of learners and with providing effective preparation for a technology-led and changing labour market.

FET practitioners promote inclusion, through the management, support or delivery of further education and training to learners who may lack the skills or qualifications to progress. These learners may need

20 Institute for Learning (2012), *Professionalism; Education and Training Practitioners Across Further Education and Skills*, England.

21 Knowles M. (1970), *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, Macmillan, New York.

additional supports or face challenges to participating in the labour market or in society more widely. In this sense, FET practitioners are **agents for active inclusion**.

The complex and changing nature of the FET practitioner role means that **professional development is vital** to a workforce that has to anticipate, respond to and meet the needs of a constantly evolving economy and society. As Guskey states, 'One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development.'<sup>22</sup>

The importance of professional development to the changing roles of practitioners in vocational education and training (VET) was strongly acknowledged in an EU study of 21 European countries commissioned by Cedefop.<sup>23</sup> The outputs from the study revealed serious discrepancies between the training of professionals in VET and their work realities. It recognised the challenges to all working in the sector, such as the increase in administrative tasks and responsibilities, the individualisation of learning, supporting learner autonomy, the significance of networking, and the expansion of responsibilities related to quality assurance.

In the above context, the provision of relevant, structured and consistent professional development and networking for learning practitioners, managers and support staff takes centre stage.

### 5.3. FET professional development as a process

Professional development in educational contexts is defined as 'the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students'.<sup>24</sup>

International definitions of professional development emphasise both the wide range of activities that it involves, and the **importance of professional development as a process**. In addition to formal training programmes, it can include other activities such as informal professional exchange, practitioner research on best practice, and self-reflection.

This strategy builds on these definitions by defining professional development for FET practitioners as a cyclical, evidence-based and reflective process involving the following dimensions:

- ▶ **Identify:** The decision to address a professional development need must be based on a thorough analysis which draws on all available evidence. The strategy recognises that the requirements for the development of FET practitioners can be identified at individual, organisational or sectoral level and can be both operational and strategic in nature.
- ▶ **Plan:** Professional development activities need to be carefully designed and planned to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs identified, the characteristics of the audience and the context in which they take place. Plans need to take account of the relevance of delivery methods, content, location, time and cost.
- ▶ **Deliver:** The strategy reflects a broad view of what constitutes professional development, and how it can be delivered, which includes courses, training, seminars, work-based learning and self-directed learning. This is in line with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) definition of lifelong learning, which encompasses **formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning**.<sup>25</sup>
- ▶ **Review:** There are a number of aspects to the review of professional development activities. These include the informal and formal evaluation of programme effectiveness, with a view to continuous improvement, increased value for investment and transfer of knowledge. It also includes the practice of ongoing reflection by the practitioner, the employer, professional networks and the sector, which informs the formal identification of development requirements.

Professional development can also be considered in the context of an individual's career journey. The professional development needs of individual FET practitioners evolve at different stages in their careers. This path runs from **initial induction, through early career, mid-career, to advanced development**. Professional development needs can be generally mapped to this career path, running from 'foundation' level to 'developing', 'proficient' and 'expert' levels.

The path does not necessarily always follow a straight line, however. There are often opportunities and needs to divert, shift focus and change roles.

22 Guskey, T. (2000), *Evaluating Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

23 Cedefop (2009), *Defining VET Professions*.

24 Hassel, E. (1999), *Professional Development: Learning From the Best*. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

25 CSO (2010), *Quarterly National Household Survey: Lifelong Learning Quarter 3 2008*

An effective, embedded culture of ongoing professional development can support these shifts and adaptations by providing development at a level appropriate to the competence and career path of the individual practitioner.

#### 5.4. FET professional development – key roles

All actors within the FET sector will have a role in the future of FET professional development and in making this strategy a success. The strategy envisages a **model of professional development that is individually embraced, organisationally driven and strategically directed**. In any professional development model, the responsibility for active engagement rests primarily with the individual practitioner. However, the support, collaboration and commitment of all key stakeholders are key to ensuring the successful implementation of a coherent, strategic approach.

Professional development in the sector will be primarily supported, facilitated and structured by the local ETB organisation, as the employer, with support at a national level from ETBI and support services. Professional development needs to be purposeful and aligned to organisation plans and objectives. A key role for ETB managers is therefore to support, facilitate and structure the professional development process for individual FET practitioners. **Professional development should form part of an ongoing**

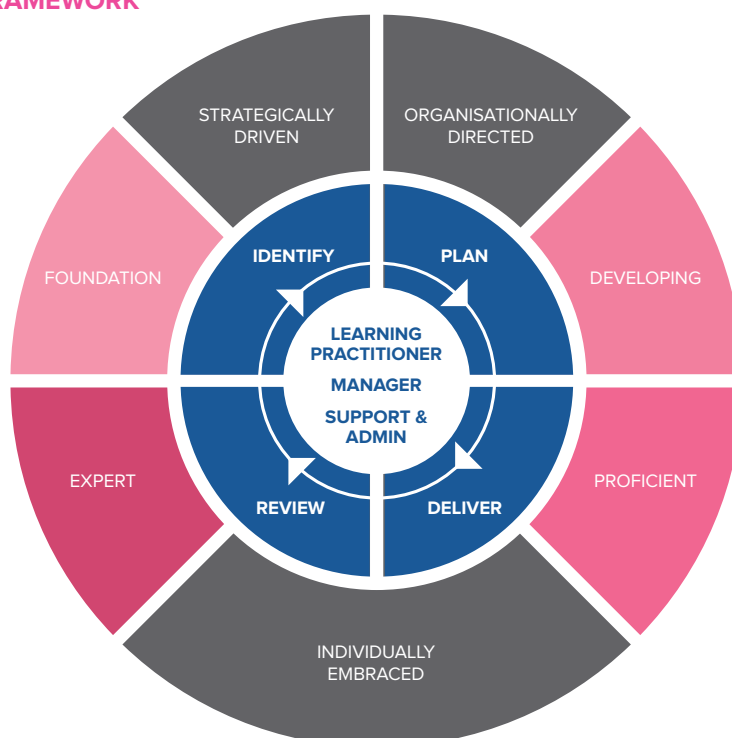
**dialogue between FET practitioners and their managers, and it should be enabled and championed by senior leaders within ETBs.**

The Further Education and Training Act 2013 states that one of the functions of SOLAS is 'to provide or assist in the provision of training to persons charged with the delivery of further education and training programmes'. In this context, SOLAS is responsible for coordinating and funding implementation of the professional development strategy and for creating national targeted professional development in collaboration with ETBI and other support services and stakeholders in the sector.

Professional development also requires structured delivery, at both local and national level, in operational and strategic areas of work. SOLAS and ETBI have a shared role in facilitating cross-ETB professional exchange, in anchoring a sector-wide approach and in ensuring that the conditions for successful professional development systems are in place across all ETBs.

Figure 3.1 depicts the key considerations and concepts which will contribute to the development of a framework for professional development in the FET sector. It reflects the roles of key players, the stages of practitioner development and defines a process for addressing ongoing professional development needs. It is anticipated that a detailed framework for the professional development of FET practitioner roles will be developed within the lifetime of this strategy.

**FIGURE 3.1 KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCEPTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**





6

**WHERE ARE  
WE NOW?**

## 6.1. A profile of the workforce

The FET skills profile survey provided a snapshot of the evolving FET workforce as it stood at the end of 2015. The profile is based on information gathered from over 4,400 staff members working in FET through the ETBs in Ireland, nearly half of the entire estimated workforce in 2015. This makes it one of the largest research exercises focusing on the FET workforce undertaken in any country in recent years. Inputs were provided from all 16 ETBs and across the full range of FET jobs, including learning practitioners, managers and support staff.

The 16 ETBs vary considerably in terms of size, organisational structures and the range of services they provide. Despite this, there are striking similarities across the sector in the structure of the workforce, its skills profile and its development needs.

### The FET workforce by job role and type

Although there are a large number of individual job titles in the sector, around half of the ETB workforce involved in FET can be categorised within seven key job roles (PLC teacher; adult literacy tutor; community education tutor; Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) tutor; Youthreach resource person; administrators supporting ETB central functions; and instructors in training services).

At aggregate level, across the three high-level job categories of learning practitioner, manager and support/administration staff there were:

- ▶ 2,937 skills profile respondents in **learning practitioner** roles (66.6% of all responses)
- ▶ 591 skills profile respondents in **management** roles (13.4% of all responses)
- ▶ 544 skills profile respondents in **support/administration** roles (12.3% of all responses)
- ▶ 335 skills profile respondents in **other** roles (7.6% of all respondents).

The 'other' category was generally used by respondents who typically appeared to be looking for a one-to-one match with their job title, rather than being able to select the closest-matching job role. Just over half of the 'other' job role respondents work in Adult, Basic and Community Education (175 respondents). This encompassed a mix of staff in administration or support jobs (e.g. caretakers, administrators, clerical officers), plus a considerable number of respondents who defined their job role in relation to specific teaching/training areas (e.g. art tutors, drama teachers, ESOL tutors, first aid instructors, hair and beauty teachers). It is inevitable that under any meaningful classification of job roles, some respondents will want to define their role in individual terms.

TABLE 4.1 TOP 12 JOB ROLES BY SHARE OF RESPONDENTS

Programme area	Job role	Number of respondents	Share of respondents
PLC	PLC teacher	739	16.8%
Adult, Basic and Community Education	Adult literacy tutor	347	7.9%
Adult, Basic and Community Education	Community education tutor	296	6.7%
BTEI	Tutor	276	6.3%
Youthreach	Resource person	201	4.6%
ETB management/support	Administrator	189	4.3%
Training services	Instructor	183	4.2%
Youthreach	Teacher	182	4.1%
Adult, Basic and Community Education	Other	175	4.0%
PLC	PLC tutor	153	3.5%
VTOS	Teacher	152	3.4%
ETB Management/support	Manager /senior manager	110	2.5%
<b>Total (top 12 job roles)</b>		<b>3,003</b>	<b>68.1%</b>

## Age profile

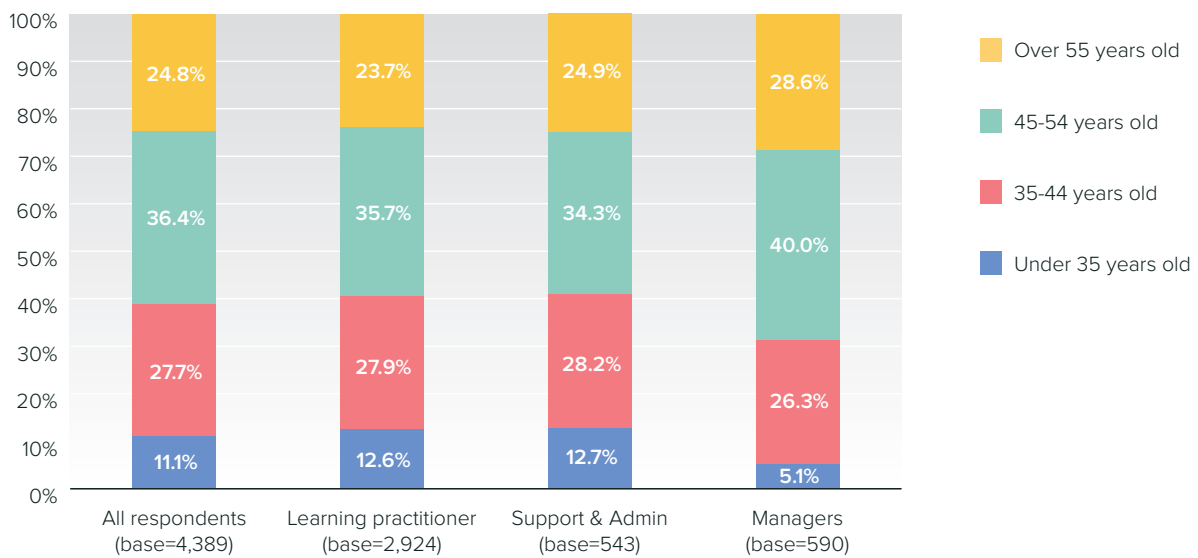
The FET workforce features a concentration of staff in the older age categories. Around one in ten FET practitioners is under 35 years of age (Figure 3.2). Conversely, nearly a quarter of the workforce is over 55 years old. This age profile is seen across learning practitioners and support roles, while there are even fewer younger people in management roles.

## Gender

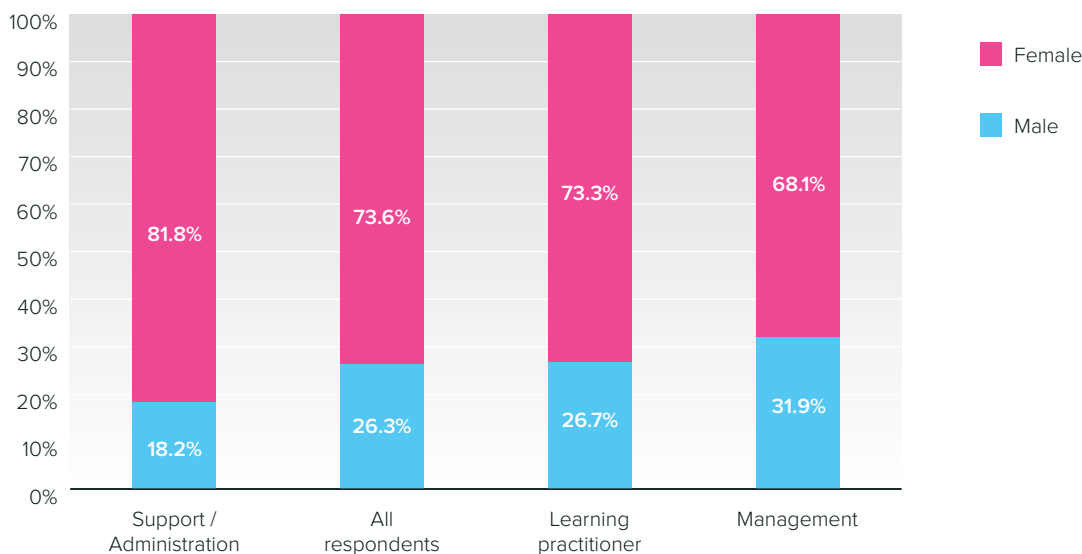
Nearly three-quarters (74%) of skills profile respondents are female and a quarter (26%) are male. This is fairly typical of education-related sectors across Europe. The gender balance is quite similar across the different age bands, reflecting that the existing gender profile is well established.

The concentration of female staff is even more striking in relation to support and administration job roles, where more than four out of five workers are female, significantly higher than for management and learning practitioner job roles (Figure 3.3).

**FIGURE 3.2 AGE PROFILE OF THE FET WORKFORCE BY JOB TYPE**



**FIGURE 3.3 GENDER PROFILE OF THE FET WORKFORCE BY JOB TYPE**



**TABLE 4.2 WORKING PATTERNS OF FET STAFF**

Working pattern	Number of respondents	Share of respondents
Full-time staff	2,365	54.0%
Part-time staff (with a regular working pattern during the year)	1,646	37.6%
Sessional or occasional delivery of short courses	368	8.4%

### Working patterns

As shown in Table 4.2 there is a significant share of FET practitioners working on a part-time or sessional basis, which has substantial implications for the organisation of professional development. Just over half (54%) of skills profile respondents work full-time, more than a third (38%) are part-time and 8% are sessional or occasional.

Part-time and sessional working is concentrated among learning practitioners, particularly in Adult, Basic and Community Education and BTEI. Less than half (44%) of learning practitioner respondents report working full-time, compared with 75% of support/administration staff and 87% of managers.

Most ETBs have a pool of sessional staff engaged, to varying degrees, over the course of the year. For example, a tutor might be contracted to deliver one programme annually. The difficulties experienced by part-time and occasional staff in accessing professional development support were a common issue raised during the consultation workshops that informed the strategy.

### FET experience

The skills profile collected evidence on the dynamic of FET careers. The FET workforce is characterised by extensive experience and long service within the sector. Just fewer than 20% of the workforce joined within the last five years, and just 7% in the last two years. This indicates a low level of staff turnover in the sector which reflects, in the main, the constraints on recruitment in recent years.

It paints a picture of a workforce that has extensive experience of managing, supporting and delivering FET. However, the mature age profile of the workforce highlights an increasingly pressing need for succession planning supported by development – a key theme identified in the various strategy consultations with ETB leaders, managers and staff.

Not only does the FET workforce have relatively long service, it is also characterised by a high level of stability within job roles. Once people join the sector, they tend to stay for a long career and often do not change jobs.

Two-thirds of staff (66%) have been in their current role for over five years. More than a third have been in their current role for over ten years. Conversely, fewer than one in six FET staff members has been doing their current job for less than two years.

### Subject areas and programme levels

Skills profile respondents in learning practitioner roles were asked at which programme levels they regularly teach/train/tutor, based on the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) levels or equivalent. Respondents were allowed to select multiple levels.

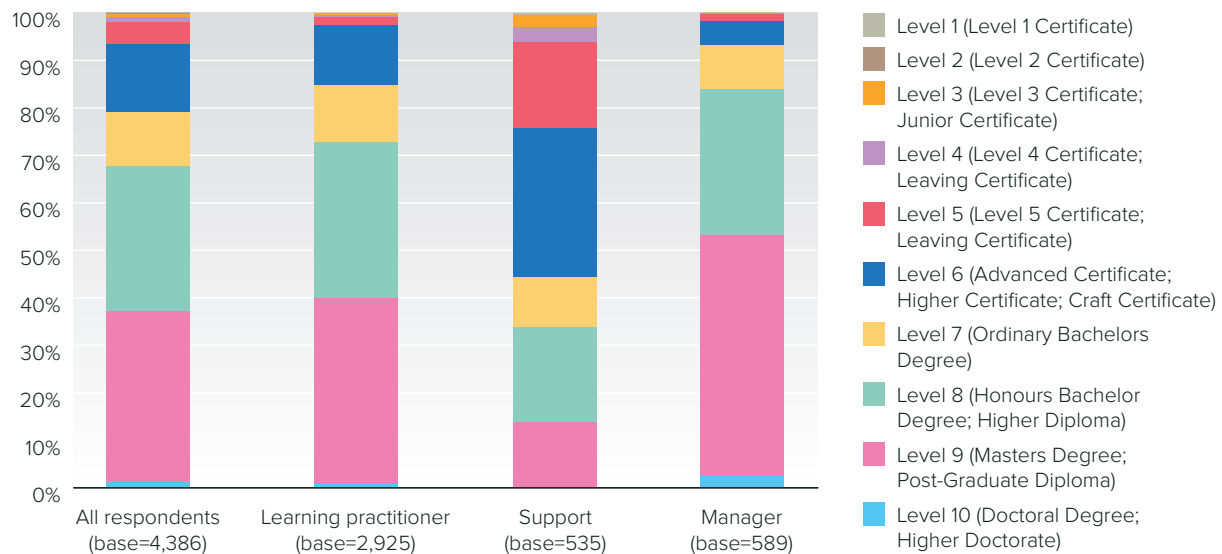
Table 4.3 presents the pattern of teaching by programme level. It shows the majority of learning practitioners focused on the higher NFQ levels. Older learning practitioners are marginally more likely to be teaching NFQ Level 1–2 or unaccredited learning, while younger learning practitioners are more likely to be teaching at NFQ Levels 3–4 and 5–6, but this probably reflects the age profile by programme area.

**TABLE 4.3 PROGRAMME LEVELS DELIVERED**

Programme level	Number of respondents	Share of respondents
NFQ Level 1–2 or equivalent	501	17.2%
NFQ Level 3–4 or equivalent	1,393	47.9%
NFQ Level 5–6 or equivalent	1,711	58.8%
Unaccredited learning	769	26.4%



FIGURE 3.4 HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION BY JOB TYPE



### Qualifications profile

The FET sector has a highly qualified workforce. Two-thirds of staff (67%) are qualified to either Level 8 (e.g. honours bachelor’s degree, higher diploma) or Level 9 (master’s degree, postgraduate diploma) based on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). There is some variation by job type (Figure 3.4). Support staff are more typically qualified up to level 6 (e.g. advanced certificate, higher certificate, craft certificate).

The profile of highest qualification is very similar for men and women working within the sector. Full-time staff are slightly more highly qualified than part-time or sessional staff, with the latter two groups sharing a similar profile. However, younger staff are generally more highly qualified than older staff: 84% of staff under 35 years old are qualified to Level 8 or above, compared to 67% of 45–54 years and only 54% of staff over 55 years old.

Around seven out of ten learning practitioners currently hold a teaching/training qualification (71%). An additional small share of respondents (3%) were in the process of working towards a teaching/training qualification when the skills profile was undertaken.

A large portion of the staff who do not hold a formal teaching/training qualification tend to have long service, having come into the sector at a time when there was less focus on qualifications. However, many of these staff are registered as teachers by the Teaching Council through a special provision and on the basis of their previous teaching experience. Younger learning practitioners, in turn, are much more

likely to hold a teaching qualification (87% of the under 35s hold a teaching qualification).

The teaching/training qualifications held by learning practitioners are generally at Level 8 or 9 on the NFQ.

Around four out of five (78%) learning practitioners hold a non-teaching qualification in their main course/subject specialism. This is self-reported data and therefore inevitably depends on the respondent’s own interpretation of the link between qualifications and subjects. The pattern is consistent across the different age categories and by gender. Overall, 93% of learning practitioner respondents reported having either a teaching qualification or a relevant subject qualification.

### Level of confidence in key skill areas

FET practitioners responding to the skills profile survey were asked to consider 19 skill areas that were identified, in initial consultations with the sector, as being relevant to people working in FET. Not all skill areas were relevant to all job roles, but they had a degree of applicability across a range of different jobs and work areas. Respondents were asked to self-report whether they felt that they had a ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ level of confidence in using each skill.

Overall, the skills profile suggests a workforce that is relatively confident in terms of ‘soft’ skill areas such as communication skills, teamwork and customer service, as well as the core teaching/training skill areas. Far fewer staff are highly confident in some

technical skills (such as planning and budgeting, quality assurance). There is also less confidence in terms of ICT and, in particular, the use of technology to enhance learning. Skills such as addressing literacy and numeracy issues and dealing with challenging behaviours are also more clearly evident as areas for development.

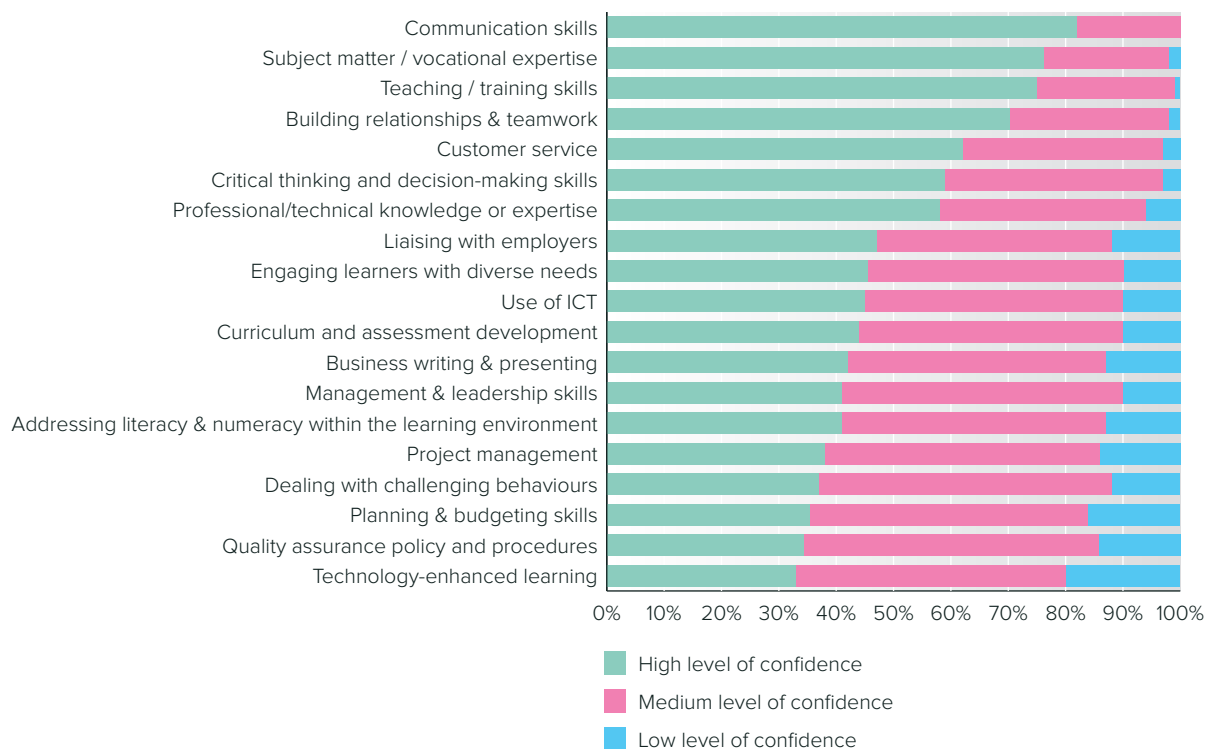
The following tables (Figures 3.5–3.7) separately illustrate the skills confidence levels of FET learning practitioners, managers and administration/support staff. In interpreting data on these self-reported confidence levels, it is useful to consider both low and medium confidence levels as indicative of a possible professional development need.

Looking specifically at learning practitioners, it is noteworthy that confidence levels are lower in certain areas, such as managing challenging behaviours and dealing with diverse learner groups, irrespective of whether or not practitioners have a teaching qualification. **This shows that qualifications are not, in themselves, a reliable indicator of development needs.**

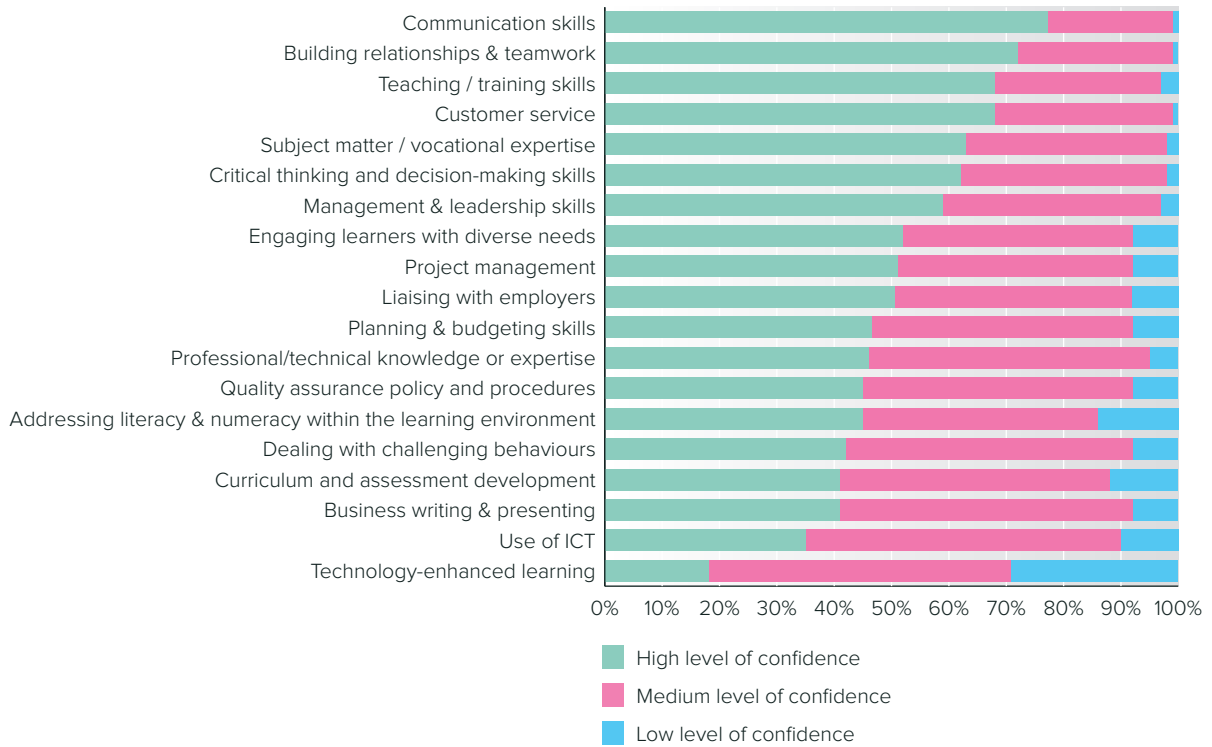
There are clear development needs over and above initial training. In particular, ongoing professional development is essential to equip FET practitioners for changing role requirements.

Although learning practitioners report relatively high confidence levels in subject- or course-related knowledge, the qualitative responses to the skills profile survey, as well as subsequent consultations, indicate **wide-ranging development needs in areas such as contemporary professional practice, and subject- and course-related expertise. A further key development requirement involves technology and systems to support the modern learning process and environment.**

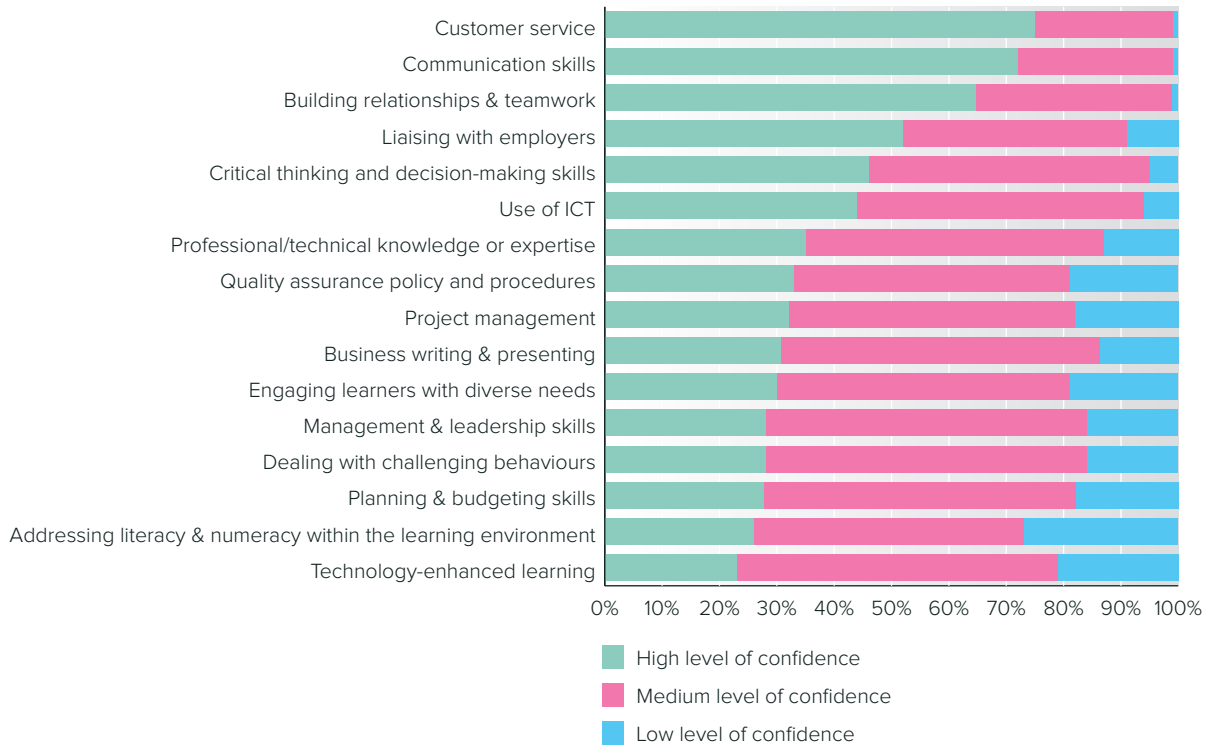
**FIGURE 3.5 LEARNING PRACTITIONERS: LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN USING PARTICULAR SKILLS**



**FIGURE 3.6 MANAGERS: LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN USING PARTICULAR SKILLS**



**FIGURE 3.7 SUPPORT AND ADMINISTRATION STAFF: LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN USING PARTICULAR SKILLS**



## 6.2. Practitioner experience of professional development

The skills profile survey and subsequent consultations provide evidence that the FET sector has a strong professional development culture. The majority of FET staff (84%) have undertaken some form of professional development in the last two years. However, support and administration staff (64%) are significantly less likely than learning practitioners (88%) or managers (89%) to have engaged with professional development.

FET practitioners report high levels of participation and engagement with the professional development activities they have experienced. However, this must be contextualised in terms of the type and level of professional development currently available in the sector.

The specific professional development activities that staff report as finding useful are wide-ranging, partly reflecting the diversity of roles within the sector. There is no 'one size fits all' in terms of what the FET workforce determines as useful, relevant professional development.

In general, FET practitioners place a high value on activities that give them access to the 'latest thinking', allow them to 'share and exchange ideas' and, in the context of systems and procedures, makes them feel that they have up-to-date knowledge on relevant policies. There is significant evidence of a largely unmet demand for this type of development in the sector.

Staff in the sector are very well disposed to seminars, workshops and other forms of professional development that offer the opportunity for professional exchange, especially when sessions are highly interactive. Learning practitioners, in particular, seek increased access to development opportunities through formal networks (e.g. professional bodies) and local groupings of shared interest – on both a formal and ad hoc basis.

## 6.3. Perspectives on professional development needs

Skills profile survey respondents in all roles were asked to reflect on whether there were specific skill areas in which they required additional support and development. These development needs were further clarified and crystallised in consultation meetings with ETBs and focus groups with practitioners.

The overall picture is one of **widespread need across the sector for relevant professional development in specific areas**. This reflects what might be expected in a culture of continuous improvement and a rapidly changing sector. In substantive terms, there is **close alignment between the types of training that managers identify for their reporting staff and those presented by staff themselves**. While senior leaders in ETBs also reflected the needs identified by staff and managers, they cited **additional strategic areas for professional development in the sector, particularly in strategic management and liaison with industry and employers**.

The wide-ranging consultations on development needs have resulted in the following list of seven priority areas, which will be the focus of the professional development strategy in the period to 2019:

- ▶ Working with and supporting FET learners
- ▶ Vocational upskilling and reskilling
- ▶ Employer engagement
- ▶ Quality assurance
- ▶ Technology enhanced learning
- ▶ Information and communications technology
- ▶ Management and leadership.

Further details of these development areas, and the intended strategic response, are outlined under Strategic Goal 2 – Increasing FET sector capability through relevant targeted professional development.

## 6.4. Barriers to accessing professional development opportunities

While the skills profile survey and the consultation process indicated generally high levels of engagement with professional development of some form, there is clear evidence that many staff face a number of significant barriers to accessing sufficient and appropriate professional development opportunities:

- ▶ **Cost:** Due to the limited funding available, many FET practitioners are faced with the prospect of self-funding their training and development. In many cases the costs attaching to this are prohibitive, particularly when travel and childcare costs are considered.

- ▶ **Location:** Many professional development opportunities are not provided locally and can make attendance at programmes challenging, particularly in rural ETBs.
- ▶ **Working patterns:** Part-time or occasional staff face particular difficulties in accessing in-service events outside of their normal contracted hours. Some of these staff work in more than one location and may engage in supplementary employment, which leaves them little time or opportunity for professional development. There is reluctance among some learning practitioners to attend training outside mandated hours but others, particularly part-time tutors, are interested in training programmes run during school holidays which would not impact on their earnings.
- ▶ **Availability and relevance:** Some staff report that in-service professional development courses and workshops are at times too general, inappropriate or not relevant to their specific requirements. This can relate to a mismatch between the professional development on offer and the career stage of the practitioner, or a need for more subject- or course-specific interventions. There is also a commonplace view that the notice given for programmes is frequently too short, making them difficult to plan for and attend.

*the challenge, in the context of a future strategic approach, is to create the structures and mechanisms to enable the sector to build on existing good practice*

## 6.5. Current provision and funding of FET professional development

Professional development activities in the FET sector are currently supported by a relatively small CPD budget which is distributed to ETBs as part of the annual funding for the VTOS and Youthreach programmes. This budget amounts to €300,000 annually. In general, ETBs avail of this budget to support a programme of professional development events, based on needs determined by individual staff together with programme managers and coordinators. A number of ETBs use part of this

funding as a bursary fund and invite applications from staff who wish to avail of self-identified development opportunities.

As well as the direct CPD budget, there are also a number of agencies and organisations that receive funding from SOLAS to provide professional development supports to the sector. The total of this funding amounts to approximately €1.3 million per year and is distributed via an existing grants system to a range of organisations. Some of the main organisations who provide such professional development activities are the Further Education Support Service (FESS), Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)/National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) and a number of ETB staff associations. Please see Appendix 2 for a description of these activities.

In addition to the direct funding for professional development detailed above, ETBs can avail of some professional support services from specialist agencies such as the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD), the Health and Safety Authority, HSE, etc. In a number of cases, the sector has been able to access European funding under programmes such as Erasmus, for projects relating to professional development.

As part of its range of services to the ETBs, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) plans and organises a variety of training programmes for ETB staff in areas such as data protection, performance management and instructional leadership.

The resources available to ETBs to plan and coordinate professional development activities vary greatly. In a very small number of ETBs, there is a dedicated staffing resource. However, in the vast majority of ETBs, the function is carried out by a staff member or members in addition to their main responsibilities.

### Existing good practice

There are many examples of good practice across the FET sector in the identification of professional development needs, as well as in the structuring, planning and implementation of professional development activities and professional exchange (please see Appendix 4 for a number of examples).

Good practice in the sector is implemented by individual ETBs, networks of practitioners in similar roles both within and across ETBs, or by national support organisations such as the Further Education Support Service (FESS). In many cases, the capacity of ETBs to develop and implement innovative and effective approaches to professional development is strongly related to the resources at their disposal for CPD development and coordination.

The challenge, in the context of a future strategic approach, is to **create the structures and mechanisms to enable the sector to build on existing good practice** to the benefit of the entire workforce.

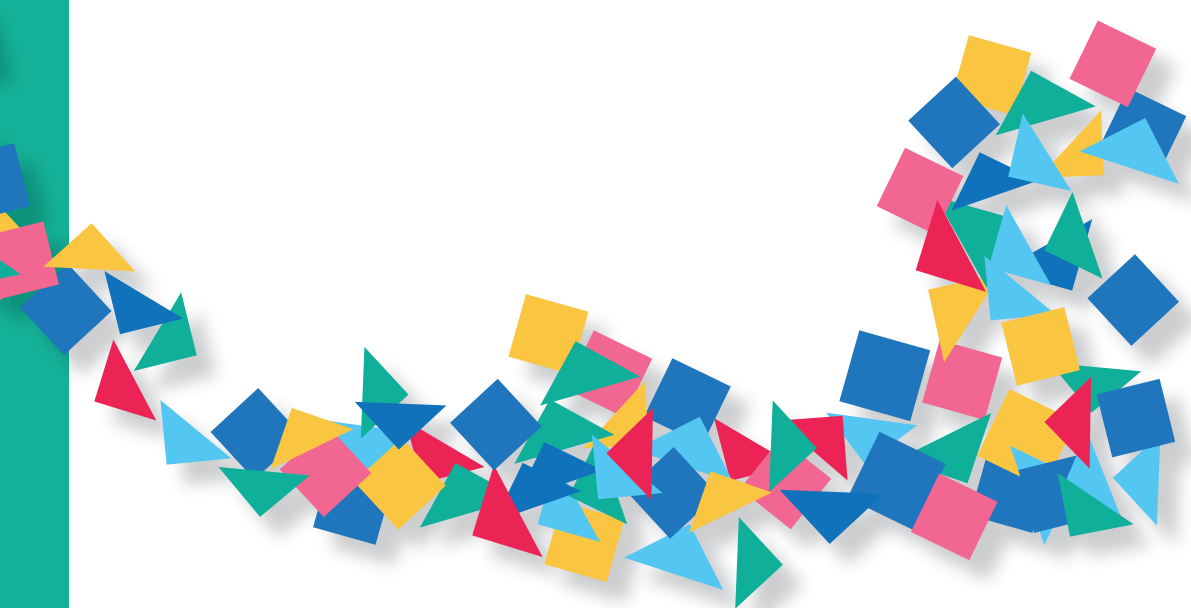
### Professional development provision for teachers

A large number of FET practitioners, primarily those delivering the PLC programme, operate in what are deemed to be 'recognised schools' by the Department of Education and Skills.<sup>26</sup> Since the commencement, in November 2013, of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, those who teach in recognised schools are required to be registered with the Teaching Council. In order to be eligible for registration as a teacher in further education (FE), a person must have a primary degree, together with a recognised FE teaching qualification. Details of the further education teacher qualifications accredited by the Teaching Council are provided at Appendix 1.

Teachers registered with the Teaching Council, including those in FET, are eligible for a range of professional development services provided for primary and post-primary teachers. Details of these services are provided at Appendix 3.

The financial allocation in 2016 for teacher training centres and in-career development to support primary and post-primary teachers was €36.3m.<sup>27</sup>

It is not currently possible to accurately quantify the number of FET practitioners who are registered with the Teaching Council, or the take-up of those staff of professional development services for teachers.



26 'Recognised school' means a school which is recognised by the Minister for Education and Skills in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act 1998.

27 Department of Education and Skills (2016), 'Organisation and Current Issues 2016; A Brief for the Information of the Minister for Education and Skills'.



**7**

**OUR COMMITMENT TO  
STRATEGIC FET PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

## 7.1. Goal 1: Creating the infrastructure and delivery systems for high-quality professional development

### National professional development structures

There is much professional development activity currently taking place across the FET sector and the sector has a strong existing culture of ongoing professional development. However, evidence from the strategy development process suggests that much of the current activity is self-directed and reactive to day-to-day operational circumstances. There is a **clear need for national structures to ensure that professional development activities are coordinated, quality assured and strategically focused in a consistent manner** throughout the sector.

As a first step in establishing these structures, a **national steering group will be set up** to serve the following purposes:

- ▶ Provide strategic oversight of FET professional development
- ▶ Act as a catalyst to remove blockages to successful implementation, especially where these cut across different organisations or parts of the sector
- ▶ Ensure that ownership of and accountability for the actions set out in the implementation plan are maintained
- ▶ Provide additional support and advice to ETBs and other organisations in the sector as they seek to further embed a professional development culture within their organisations
- ▶ Provide a mechanism to capture and share good practice, as well as communicate new ideas to the sector at large
- ▶ Monitor progress towards the successful completion of milestones set out in the implementation plan
- ▶ Ensure that implementation of the strategy is dynamic and responsive to new and emerging needs by carrying out an annual review of priorities and actions.

In addition to the above functions, the National Steering Group will provide guidance **on the development and maintenance of a detailed Framework of FET Professional Practice**. The purpose of the framework will be to facilitate shared

understanding of effective practice for FET roles, thereby facilitating the drawing up of professional development plans at individual, organisational and sectoral levels.

### Local professional development structure

There are a number of further actions required to embed professional development across the ETB network. **Each ETB will identify a professional development lead at senior management level with responsibility for 'championing' professional development within the organisation**, for ensuring that the ETB has effective systems to support a planned approach to professional development and to act as a catalyst for transparent and consistent professional development policy and practice within the organisation.

**A dedicated professional development coordinator will be identified in each ETB**, reporting to the professional development lead. The function of the coordinator will be to coordinate professional development activities for FET staff at ETB level, reflecting national priorities, and to develop systems and procedures for the effective management of professional development in conjunction with the senior management team and programme managers.

There is potential added value in facilitating a network of professional development coordinators across the sector, to share learning and support consistency of approach.

### Professional development planning process

It is intended that the current FET planning and grants allocation process will be extended to include annual planning and funding allocation for local ETB professional development activities. Some preliminary work has already commenced on gathering quantitative and qualitative information from ETBs on their professional development plans for 2016 and this will be built on in 2017 and beyond to enhance and support the new strategic approach. At ETB level this will give certainty and transparency to the allocation of ETB professional development budgets, as well as facilitating reports on planned activity and outturns. It will also enable alignment between national priorities and local actions.

**At national level, planning for strategic, sector-wide development initiatives will be carried out by SOLAS in conjunction with ETBI and under the guidance of the National Steering Group.**



The strategy will also provide a fund and a planning mechanism for joint action between groups of ETBs on professional development priorities. Of particular interest here are models for ETBs to collaborate in developing interventions for the sector as a whole.

### Delivery systems

It is clear that access to professional development opportunities is unbalanced across the sector and that there is a need to ensure consistency of access for all practitioners. The evidence from the skills profile survey and subsequent consultations show that many staff members feel constrained, to varying degrees, in their ability to pursue professional development opportunities.

The strategy presents an opportunity to ensure that a wide range of professional development delivery methods is in place, thereby helping to make professional development more accessible to FET staff.

#### ► Online/blended

There is a significant opportunity for **online and blended approaches to be further leveraged in the delivery of professional development in the FET sector**. Such flexible delivery methods can give FET practitioners greater choice over when, where and how they learn, and includes distance education, online learning, mixed-mode delivery, self-paced learning and self-directed learning. The flexibility of online and blended delivery means that it can potentially be an effective approach to overcoming many of the professional development access barriers described by FET staff.

#### ► Commissioned programmes

It is anticipated that, over the lifetime of the strategy, **a number of national interventions will be developed in response to the priority areas for professional development** set out under Goal 1. Due to the type of expertise required in many of these areas, and the resource-intensive nature of developing appropriate responses to identified needs, it is expected that most, if not all, of these programmes will be externally commissioned by SOLAS in collaboration with ETBI.

#### ► Strategic partnerships

As detailed previously, there are a number of organisations and agencies who are already providing development opportunities to FET practitioners in specific areas. Examples include the Further Education and Support Service (FESS) in programme development and quality assurance, the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) for FET guidance personnel, the National Learning Network and the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) for disability awareness, etc.

**It is intended to develop such relationships into strategic alliances, and to create additional partnerships with similar organisations that have a shared remit to deliver quality professional development to FET practitioners aimed at improving learner outcomes.**

#### ► Associates panel

**It is proposed to create a panel of associates with the aim of enabling the identification, pre-procurement and contracting (on a 'when-needed' basis) of suppliers who have the specialist technical skills, knowledge and experience necessary to assist in the successful delivery of professional development projects.** Such projects may include needs identification, programme development, programme delivery or monitoring and evaluation.

Associates may be required to work individually or as part of a team, depending upon the size and nature of the work they are to support. For smaller projects, responsibility for the delivery may be undertaken by a single associate, whereas for larger programmes, associates may work alongside SOLAS/ETBI/ETB staff and/or a delivery partner who has been commissioned through an open and competitive tendering process.

**The strategy will also explore the feasibility of establishing an 'internal associates' panel.** This is in recognition of the fact that many existing FET practitioners have the expertise to provide professional development services to their colleagues. Feedback from ETBs suggests that such internal expertise is an important resource in delivering professional development. While the use of such internal expertise can present challenges in terms of the lack of resources for backfills and the out-of-hours commitment required of the individual, it also can present a development opportunity for FET practitioners. It would also offer an opportunity to harness the wealth of expertise in the sector across a wide range of work areas.

### ► Professional exchange networks

There is an opportunity to build on and supplement existing mechanisms for sharing good work practice, thereby reducing duplication of effort when designing professional development interventions. This entails the creation of an infrastructure that makes professional exchange and access to learning resources much easier, providing the opportunity for sharing, amplifying and improving existing professional development.

**The strategy will provide a fund to support the establishment of new communities of practice where there is clear demand and evidence that these groups can be self-sustaining.**

### ► Cascade model

Cascade or train the trainer systems involve developing a small group who then transfer learning to the rest of the workforce. **The strategy will explore the 'cascade model' as an approach to implementing professional development, which offers a lot of potential benefits to the FET sector in terms of efficiency and the potential to reach far greater numbers of staff than through traditional methods.** It can increase ETB ownership of the development and is much more likely to embed the content in the organisation's culture. It offers the means to communicate the expertise of an individual/small group to a large group very efficiently. The approach can be scaled up quickly, thereby offering a potential model for the efficient roll-out of national professional development programmes.

The traditional pitfalls of cascade development models, i.e. dilution of material and lost content, are likely to be at a much lower risk level in the FET sector, given its learning and development culture and the pedagogical expertise of the workforce.

Research has shown, however, that the use of cascade approaches in the professional development of educators benefits from being rolled out in a context-sensitive and collaborative manner that seeks to involve practitioners in managing their own professional growth, while at the same time taking account of frameworks agreed at national level.<sup>28</sup> In this way a cascade model of training may promote genuine development rather than surface adherence to official policy.

### ► Professional development portal

As part of the strategy implementation, **the benefits and feasibility of an online FET professional development portal will be assessed.** The purpose of such an initiative would be to provide a repository of professional development materials, opportunities, research event calendars, etc., while also facilitating the development of an online professional community for FET.

An online portal was widely cited by FET practitioners as a need, not least to signpost professional development opportunities in all forms. While such a facility would almost certainly bring significant benefits in terms of knowledge sharing, the promotion of good practice and the building of a professional identity for the sector, it is also a potentially complex and resource-intensive undertaking and merits careful consideration.

### FET qualifications

The ongoing professional development of FET staff will be the primary focus of the strategy. However, there is potential for professional development to be structured to enable the future development of accredited qualifications, reflective of the needs of the FET sector, supporting both initial training and continuing development.

This reflects a common view, expressed in the consultation workshops and discussions with ETB senior leaders, that provision specific to the FET practitioner is not adequately addressed within the existing formal learning offer. The sector would benefit, therefore, from the development of modular-based FET qualifications within and across the roles of learning practitioners, managers and support and administration staff.

**In the period to 2019, the implementation of the strategy will include an examination of the feasibility of developing a suite of qualifications/modules for the FET learning practitioner that can be used at entry level and for skills updating.** As stated above, the focus of the strategy is on ongoing professional development. However, it is anticipated that the strategy can contribute significantly to an organic, incremental and action-research based approach to the development of renewed and relevant qualifications for the FET sector.

28 Hayes, D. (2000), Cascade Training and Teachers' Professional Development, *English Language Teaching Journal*, 54 (2) 135–145 Oxford University Press.

TABLE 4.4 GOAL 1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 1 – Creating the infrastructure and delivery systems for high-quality professional development					
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN					
Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Timeframe	
1.1 To establish local and national structures for coordinated, quality assured, strategically focused CPD	1.1.1	Agree Terms of Reference and composition of a national steering group with the Department of Education and Skills	SOLAS , ETBI, ETBs	ETB Chief Executive Forum, DES	November 2016
	1.1.2	Establish the national steering group			
	1.1.3	Specify role, responsibilities and expectations of FET directors as professional development leads and agree with CE Forum			
1.2 To ensure effective coordination of professional development activity at ETB level	1.2.1	Make dedicated provision for the coordination of professional development at ETB level	ETBI/ ETBs	SOLAS, DES	April 2017
	1.2.2	Develop and implement a coordinator orientation plan and create a national network of FET professional development coordinators			September 2017
1.3 To develop a professional development planning and grants allocation process	1.3.1	Develop a phased professional development planning process to tie in with existing planning systems and procedures	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	ETBI	From September 2017 – ongoing
1.4 To ensure FET practitioner skills are updated on a continual basis to deliver the relevant FET provision.	1.4.1	Ensure that ETB staff development plans are in place and are aligned with the <i>FET Skills Profile and Professional Development Strategy</i>	ETBs	ETBI/SOLAS	From September 2017 – ongoing
1.5 To develop a range of recognised professional development delivery methods	1.5.1	Develop guidelines/ frameworks/tools for the effective delivery of FET professional development and make available as appropriate	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	Project partners	From October 2017 – ongoing
1.6 To assess the feasibility of an online FET professional development portal	1.6.1	Conduct a feasibility study for the development of an online FET professional development portal and make recommendations to the National Steering Group	SOLAS, ETBI	Strategic partner	December 2018
1.7 To develop an approach to the accreditation of FET professional programmes	1.7.1	Agree an approach to accreditation at National Steering Group level in the context of the development of a FET qualifications framework	SOLAS, ETBI	Strategic partner, DES	October 2017

**GOAL 1 – Creating the infrastructure and delivery systems for high-quality professional development  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Timeframe
1.8 To provide better access for part-time and occasional staff to professional development opportunities	1.8.1 Establish a working group to identify issues preventing access to professional development by part-time and occasional staff	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	National Steering Group	From January 2017 – ongoing
	1.8.2 Develop an action plan and implement as appropriate in line with National Steering Group advice			

**7.2. Goal 2: Increasing FET sector capability through relevant, targeted professional development**

FET practitioners require reskilling throughout their evolving careers to meet the ever-changing needs of learners. This is at the heart of the National Skills Strategy ambition for the overall FET system to be more flexible and responsive, and to be able to provide a less narrow and more interdisciplinary provision of skills.<sup>29</sup> The skills profile and consultation evidence emphasised that, even when progression opportunities are limited, job roles within the sector are evolving. This is placing additional demands on FET practitioners:

- ▶ **Managers**, especially at mid-level, report having to deal with specific demands associated with a need to lead change with their teams (including dealing with resistance to change).
- ▶ **Support and administration** roles are becoming multi-faceted, partly as a consequence of new processes that support accountability and improved data collection across the sector, and also from the merger of systems associated with the organisational reform of FET.

- ▶ **Learning practitioners** strongly emphasise the professional development needs associated with teaching/instructing in areas in which they are not specialised or qualified (often at short notice). There is also a strong need identified by many practitioners to be upskilled in their current subject specialism. Many respondents to the skills profile perceived that they were ‘out of touch’ with current methodologies in industry and were, as such, not in a position to fully equip their learners for the modern workplace.

There was a striking degree of consensus between the issues emerging from the FET skills profile, the practitioner workshops and the discussions with ETB senior leaders. This shows a common understanding of the kind of actions that would enhance professional development within the sector and a shared vision, as encapsulated in this strategy.

There was also a **high degree of commonality** across all ETBs in relation to the priority areas for the professional development of FET staff. These form a set of strategic priorities that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative evidence in the FET skills profile, and which were echoed and amplified during the focus groups with FET practitioners and consultations with ETB leaders and other stakeholders. They also reflect national policy priorities and developments in FET/VET internationally.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Education and Skills (2016), *Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025*

The strategic priorities identified are:

- ▶ Working with and supporting FET learners: Education and training for the FET learner cohort is distinctive from traditional pedagogy. FET learners in particular have a wide range of motivations, work and life experiences, and can present with additional personal, social and learning support needs. The profile of learners presents challenges, described by FET practitioners in terms of managing group dynamics, dealing effectively with ‘challenging behaviours’, identifying support needs and addressing underlying literacy and numeracy issues. Specific professional development approaches are required for the design, delivery, support and management of learning for a diverse learner base.
- ▶ Vocational upskilling and reskilling: The technical and professional knowledge of FET learning practitioners needs to be renewed over time to keep pace with new processes and technologies deployed within enterprise. The increasing national policy emphasis on skills development as a core FET role brings this into sharp focus. Subject matter knowledge was cited by learning practitioners and their managers in terms of the need for updating but also for staff who have been redeployed to new areas of delivery. It is widely acknowledged, however, both within the sector and internationally, that vocational skills updating is practically challenging to implement and requires significant investment and resources.
- ▶ Employer engagement: For the FET sector, employer engagement embraces relationship building, partnership working and, ultimately, more systematic involvement of employers in the planning, design and delivery of relevant FET provision. FET leaders increasingly identify the need for FET practitioners to play an effective role in employer engagement and therefore identify this area as a key skill requirement.
- ▶ Quality assurance: Quality assurance is fundamental to assuring the integrity and reliability of the further education and training process. There is clear evidence of need in the FET sector for an augmented and ongoing programme of provision in all elements of the quality assurance system (including curriculum design, assessment, verification, validation, quality assurance coordination and management).
- ▶ Technology enhanced learning (TEL): As in many areas of modern life, digital capacity is becoming more central to effective outcomes for FET learners. The use of technology to enhance learning is, in turn, becoming ‘intrinsic’ to FET in Ireland; TEL was by far the most commonly articulated development need cited by FET practitioners across the sector as a whole. As part of the recently published TEL Strategy, which was developed by SOLAS in partnership with ETBI and the ETBs, each ETB will have an action plan in place by the end of 2017 that will identify organisational requirements for advancing TEL, including in terms of professional development.
- ▶ Information and communication technology (ICT): As with TEL, the application of ICT is becoming central to the effective management, support and administration of FET. The skills profile evidence showed that management and administration staff, in particular, tend to define their skill needs in relation to quite specific IT systems, programmes and processes used on a day-to-day basis to support more efficient working. The ETBs have also agreed an ICT strategy, also launched in 2016, that sets the basis for a consistent use of technology throughout the sector, including infrastructure, systems and software.<sup>30</sup> A significant programme of professional development will also be central to the roll-out of this strategy.
- ▶ Leadership and management: The change process in the FET sector, and public sector reform in general, has created more complex and demanding challenges for ETB chief executives, senior and middle managers. It is acknowledged that leaders within FET provide strategic direction and guidance, while managers are responsible for giving effect to this strategic intent through the effective deployment of staff and resources. During the consultation process leaders and managers highlighted a range of development needs relating to the effective and efficient management of people, resources and systems within the context of a changing FET sector.

30 ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office Update – Newsletter January 2016 [https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Management-Organisation/ETB-SOLAS-Project-Management-Office/ETB\\_SOLAS\\_PMO\\_Newsletters/ETB-SOLAS-Project-Management-Office-Newsletter-January-2016.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Management-Organisation/ETB-SOLAS-Project-Management-Office/ETB_SOLAS_PMO_Newsletters/ETB-SOLAS-Project-Management-Office-Newsletter-January-2016.pdf)

TABLE 4.5 GOAL 2 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 2 – Increasing FET sector capability through relevant, targeted professional development IMPLEMENTATION PLAN					
Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Target Date	
2.1 To increase the capacity of FET staff in the use of <i>digital technology to enhance learning</i>	2.1.1	Implement development needs analysis (DNA) for TEL in FET as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish expert working group with 2–3 ETBs</li> <li>- Conduct national and international research</li> <li>- Develop a professional development framework in TEL</li> </ul>	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	DNA Working Group, Project partner(s), SOLAS Planning Unit	October 2016
	2.1.2	Commission the development of a range of interventions in TEL in line with the identified framework and make available to ETBs in line with the annual FET planning process			From April 2017 – ongoing
2.2 To develop the capacity of FET senior management teams to <i>lead change and the enhancement of performance</i> in their organisations	2.2.1	Conduct national and international research on FET leadership and management development and associated interventions	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	Project partner, SOLAS Planning Unit	November 2016
	2.2.2	Develop a professional development framework for FET leaders in consultation with ETB representatives			January 2017
	2.2.3	Implement a tailored leadership programme for ETB senior management teams in line with the identified framework			From April 2017 – ongoing
2.3 To develop the capacity of FET line managers to <i>build high performing teams and to manage change</i>	2.3.1	Develop an FET management development framework in consultation with ETB representatives	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	Project partner, SOLAS Planning Unit	From April 2017 – ongoing
	2.3.2	Develop a range of FET management development initiatives and make available to ETBs in line with the annual FET planning process			

**GOAL 2 – Increasing FET sector capability through relevant, targeted professional development  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Target Date
2.4 To develop the capacity of FET practitioners in <i>working with and supporting FET learners</i>	2.4.1 Implement development needs analysis (DNA) project for working with and supporting FET learners as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish expert working group with 2–3 ETBs</li> <li>- Conduct national and international research</li> <li>- Develop a professional development framework in supporting FET learners</li> </ul>	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	DNA Working Group, FESS, NCGE, Project partner, SOLAS Planning Unit	From April 2017 – ongoing
	2.4.2 Develop a range of professional development initiatives and make available to ETBs in line with the annual FET planning process			
2.5 To equip FET practitioners with the requisite skills to <i>engage with employers</i> in order to plan, promote and deliver FET programmes and services	2.5.1 Establish a technical group to identify FET professional development needs, based on emerging employer engagement framework	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	CE Forum, SOLAS Strategy Unit, Regional Skills Forums, employer reps	From April 2017 – ongoing
	2.5.2 Develop guidelines, interventions and supports and make available to ETBs			
2.6 To develop a strategy for the <i>vocational/subject matter reskilling and upskilling</i> of FET learning practitioners	2.6.1 Establish a technical group with ETBI and the ETBs and consider national and international research	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	Technical Sub-Group, DES, Project partner	From June 2017 – ongoing
	2.6.2 Develop pilot initiative(s) with ETBs and review			
	2.6.3 Agree an approach to vocational upskilling and reskilling and agree with DES/ ETB CE Forum			
2.7 To develop FET practitioner capability in all elements of the <i>quality assurance</i> system	2.7.1 Liaise with ETBI quality assurance forum and FESS re: FET professional development needs in quality assurance.	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	FESS, QA Forum	From April 2017 – ongoing
	2.7.2 Agree a work plan for the development of interventions as appropriate			
	2.7.3 Implement and review			

**GOAL 2 – Increasing FET sector capability through relevant, targeted professional development  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Target Date
<b>2.8 To support management and administration staff in the day-to-day use of ICT to support current FET business processes, in line with the ETB ICT strategy</b>	<b>2.8.1</b> Implement development needs analysis (DNA) project for ICT as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish expert working group with 2–3 ETBs</li> <li>- Conduct national and international research</li> <li>- Develop a professional development framework in the use of ICT to support FET business processes</li> </ul>	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs SOLAS–ETB PMO	DNA Working Group, Project partner, SOLAS Planning Unit	From June 2017–ongoing
	<b>2.8.2</b> Commission the development of a range of interventions in ICT in line with the identified framework			
	<b>2.8.3</b> Make interventions available to ETBs in line with the annual FET planning process			

### 7.3. Goal 3: Sustainable funding and resourcing of professional development

The goal for 2017–2019 is to have an effective level of resources in place to ensure appropriate professional development activity across the sector, recognising the need for effective balance between action and investment at the individual, the organisational and sector-wide levels. As with the implementation structures described in Goal 2, the desire is to facilitate flexibility and adequate resourcing at local ETB level, while ensuring that professional development is strategically resourced at a national level.

#### Ensuring consistency in funding approaches

As a result of how the sector has evolved, there are different practices in place in terms of resourcing professional development; in some cases there is a clear budget and/or a dedicated resource, in others there is neither. Across the sector, there is a lack of clarity about the resources available for professional development and how these are being deployed at local level.

The consultation workshops highlighted a level of confusion among FET practitioners about what professional development will be paid for and what will not. Much lies at the discretion of individual managers, but it is not always clear to staff on what basis these decisions are made. Indirect costs, such as replacement for staff engaged in professional development and travel, pose additional resourcing considerations.

The integration of ETB professional development plans with the FET planning process will provide the basis for a consistent approach to resourcing professional development.

Sustainable resourcing requires ETBs to be supported in developing clear policies for resourcing and scheduling professional development, as well as ensuring that all staff participate in relevant professional development.

From an efficiency perspective, the structure of the sector can easily lead to duplication of effort. There is a rationale, in some cases, for introducing mechanisms to pool resources across groups of ETBs and create higher-quality professional development activities that are accessible to a larger number of staff.



A number of funding channels will be established for professional development in the FET sector as follows:

- ▶ **ETBs will receive dedicated funding for professional development activity**, through the SOLAS-managed funding allocation process.
- ▶ **SOLAS will establish a central FET professional development budget**, in order to fund the development of interventions to address strategic development needs at a national level.
- ▶ **A new professional development innovation fund will be established as an enabler for joint action at national level and across groups of ETBs.**

The kinds of projects that may be supported by this fund include:

- the development of strategic/innovative approaches to meeting the requirements of FET practitioners
- cross-ETB projects to design, deliver or roll-out new approaches to addressing professional development needs in priority areas.

It is anticipated that the level of investment in professional development for FET practitioners will increase in a phased manner over the lifetime of the strategy. This is to be expected, given the requirement to develop infrastructure and delivery systems in the establishment phase.

### Measuring impact

The National Steering Group will ensure that appropriate evidence is being collected in order to monitor progress and understand the effectiveness of new professional development provision and approaches to the delivery of professional development. This includes commissioning research as required on major priority actions, as well as ensuring that consistent and useful monitoring information is gathered on professional development activity (without unduly burdening the sector).

Over the lifetime of this strategy **mechanisms will be developed to enable the recording and tracking of professional development activities at individual, ETB and national level.**

### Measures of success

The formation of the ETBs has involved bringing together staff with distinct cultures and working practices, including approaches to professional development. The process of integration is ongoing. It involves a change programme that is both a challenge for delivering a national professional development strategy and a marker for the importance of ongoing professional renewal.

This strategy envisages professional development as a shared responsibility between the individual, the institution, the ETB organisation and the sector. It focuses on key actions in the 3.5-year timeframe, although it does so with a view towards embedding the longer-term effectiveness and efficiency of professional development in the sector, for the benefit of the learner.

**The action plan that supports the strategy will set clear milestones and accountabilities to engender sector-wide ownership of the plan. This will include implementation and monitoring arrangements to help ensure that it can be delivered, reviewed and sustained.**

Success by 2019 will be evident in terms of having:

- ▶ additional relevant, targeted professional development provision that is high quality and shaped around the priority needs of the sector
- ▶ professional development systems embedded across the ETB network and accessible to all staff
- ▶ appropriate resources in place to sustainably support professional development
- ▶ monitoring and evaluation systems established so that professional development can be recorded, reflected on and targeted, based on the principle of continuous improvement
- ▶ mechanisms in place to promote a culture of excellence in professional development (including exchange of good practice) and support for development of national initiatives and delivery of professional development across ETBs and within networks of shared professional interest.

TABLE 4.6 GOAL 3 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 3 – Sustainable funding and resourcing of professional development IMPLEMENTATION PLAN					
Objectives	Actions	Lead	Support Partner	Timeframe	
3.1 To develop structures and procedures for the funding of professional development activity at local, national and cross-ETB levels	3.1.1	Develop procedures and protocols for a professional development fund for national strategic professional development programmes	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	SOLAS Planning and Finance Units	From October 2016 – ongoing
	3.1.2	Develop procedures and protocols for the distribution, monitoring and reporting of professional development funding at ETB level. Funding to be structured under two categories: strategic and discretionary (linked to goal 2, action 2.3)			
	3.1.3	Develop procedures and protocols for a professional development innovation fund for cross-ETB professional development initiatives			
3.2 To enable the recording and tracking of professional development activity at ETB and national level	3.2.1	Commission the development of a recording and tracking system for FET professional development	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	Project partner, Professional Development leads	January – December 2017
	3.2.2	Establish system in conjunction with FET PD leads and coordinators			
3.3 To develop a proposal for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating PD activities	3.3.1	Develop proposals for monitoring professional development against agreed criteria and implement as advised by the National Steering Group	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	National Steering Group, strategic partner	From January 2018
	3.3.2	Develop a programme of FET professional development evaluations and agree with the National Steering Group	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs	National Steering Group, strategic partner	From January 2018



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APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Further education teacher qualifications accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland

- ▶ Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), **Adult Training and Education Studies, NUIG** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ Graduate Diploma in Adult & Further Education, **Mary Immaculate College, Limerick** – NFQ Level 9
- ▶ Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Learning and Teaching, **National College of Ireland, Dublin** – NFQ Level 9
- ▶ Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Teaching in Further Education & Adult Education, **Waterford Institute of Technology** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching in Further Education, **Waterford Institute of Technology** – NFQ Level 9
- ▶ Higher Diploma in Further Education (HDFE), **NUI Maynooth** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), **Marino Institute of Education** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ BSc in Education and Training (Further, Adult and Continuing Education), **Dublin City University** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), **Mary Immaculate College** – NFQ Level 8
- ▶ MA in Socially Engaged Art (Further, Adult and Community Education), **National College of Art and Design** – NFQ Level 9

## Appendix 2: SOLAS-funded organisations providing professional development services to the FET sector

### Further Education and Support Service

The Further Education Support Service (FESS) was established in 1997 and plays an important national role in supporting the FET sector in Ireland. FESS supports all FET providers within ETBs as well as FET provision within voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools, special national schools and community/voluntary providers. The FESS team comprises a national manager and a team of regional support officers who are located in ETBs and who work in partnership with the FET sector and relevant stakeholders.

FESS provides national, regional and local professional development workshops as part of its national and regional CPD calendar and local CPD activities based on provider needs/requests in areas such as quality assurance, programme development and review, assessment, internal verification/external authentication, self-evaluation, teaching and learning methodologies, motivating learners, learner well-being, academic writing and other programme specific areas.

FESS also provides support through telephone and email communication and through its website [www.fess.ie](http://www.fess.ie). The website currently provides a repository of resource lists developed by FET teachers, tutors and trainers covering more than 200 programme-specific or thematic-specific areas.

In addition FESS supports the FET sector by participating in FET forums, advisory groups, steering groups and working groups.

### Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)/ National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

The WIT/NALA accreditation project was established in 1997 as a partnership between the Department of Adult and Continuing Education in WIT and the NALA. The project designs and delivers nationally recognised programmes for adult and further education practitioners including the Higher Certificate in Arts in Literacy Development, the BA in Adult Education and the BA (Hons) in Adult Education. In 2016 c.180 FET practitioners are anticipated to attend WIT/NALA programmes.

### National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

The NCGE is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education, including FET, and to inform Department policy in the field of guidance.

One of the statutory functions of the NCGE is to organise and deliver continuing professional development for guidance staff practitioners. In relation to FET, the NCGE coordinates the annual professional development programme for the staff of the Adult Education Guidance Initiative nationally (c.39 adult education guidance coordinators, 38 adult education guidance counsellors and 40 adult guidance information officers). The professional development programme is organised for and is tailored to specific guidance roles in FET and the guidance service as a whole and caters for a range of related areas including positive psychology, peer support and information exchange, guidance development and future skills needs.

### Staff associations

There are a number of staff associations in the FET sector that provide opportunities for professional and information exchange for FET practitioners in similar roles across the sector. A number of these associations also provided some professional development events in areas of relevance to their members.

## Appendix 3:

# Professional development services for teachers

### Teaching Council

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for the teaching profession, which promotes and regulates professional standards in teaching. The Council admits teachers to the profession through their registration process and sets standards for teacher education and professional competence and conduct.

The Teaching Council has a range of functions relating to teacher education. These functions span the entire teaching career from entry to initial teacher education programmes, accreditation of such programmes, induction of newly qualified teachers into the profession and the continuing professional development of teachers throughout their careers. The Council recently introduced a new model of induction for teachers, Droichead, which will be available to all newly qualified primary and post-primary teachers from 2018/19.

In 2016 the Council launched its professional development framework for the teaching profession, Cosán, which sets out the approach to teachers' professional learning including values and principles, learning areas and standards to guide learning and reflection.

### Teacher education at primary and post-primary

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) funds and supports programmes to increase the quality of teaching and learning at primary and post-primary levels. These programmes include teacher training programmes, continuing professional development and supports for principals and teachers in their work. This is done through the teacher education programmes, education centres and support services for teachers at primary and post-primary level. The management of this process is supported by engagement through various steering committees, the provision of policy support as well as liaison with the Teaching Council, the Inspectorate and other sections of DES on a range of issues.

A national network of 21 education centres for teacher education is supported and appropriate groups, bodies and institutions are funded to design, develop and deliver professional development programmes.

### Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

The PDST is a cross-sectoral support service which offers professional development support to primary and post-primary teachers and school leaders. The work of the PDST contributes to school improvement by providing high-quality professional development on curricular and educational issues, fostering reflective practice and ongoing development among teachers and school leaders.

### Centre for School Leadership

The new Centre for School Leadership (CSL), located in Clare Education Centre, has been established by DES in partnership with representative bodies, for an initial three-year pilot period. DES has committed to an investment of €3m for this pilot.

The CSL will become a centre of excellence for school leaders, and the partnership will have many benefits for the profession in terms of the quality of training programmes, coordination of provision and increased accessibility.

The centre's responsibilities will cover the continuum of professional development for school leaders, from pre-appointment training and induction of newly appointed principals, to continuing professional development throughout careers.

## Appendix 4: Professional development in the FET sector – examples of good practice

### Moodle Champions Group in Limerick Clare ETB

The Moodle Champions Group was formed in 2014 to support a consistent and coherent approach to the adoption of Moodle across the FET Service. The champions group organises and promotes the use of Moodle across all FET programmes, centres and colleges and consists of key staff who lead on the adoption and use of Moodle across the range of full-time and part-time education and training programmes in Limerick and Clare. The group also acts as a very successful professional network, sharing best practice and resources. It coordinates the adoption and use of new technologies and resources by sharing experiences of pilot initiatives. Currently Limerick City VTOS programme is piloting the use of ePortfolios and digital badges while Limerick College of Further Education pilots the use of a new plagiarism plugin.

### SharePoint CPD Cascade Training at Limerick Clare ETB

A cascade model of CPD using a train the trainers approach was trialled in 2015 to introduce StaffConnect to all FET Staff in LCETB. StaffConnect is a branded SharePoint site used as LCETB's communication and collaboration platform enabling the sharing of information and collaboration across LCETB. A key goal was ensuring that all staff could use the StaffConnect site in their day-to-day work, including accessing and submitting relevant forms, downloading key resources as well as sharing resources and collaborating on documents and presentations.

An extensive FET-wide staff CPD initiative was delivered using a cascade training model, which involved upskilling 22 FET staff members, who in turn delivered CPD in their centres and across the service. A common curriculum and training materials were devised by the FET development team. Registration was managed through Survey Monkey and coordinated by the learning technology development officer. A total of 45 sessions took place involving more than 350 staff in locations across Clare and Limerick. All sessions were organised with the input and support of the centre management. Evaluations

with both participants and trainers suggest that this is an effective model to deliver CPD related to large-scale systems roll-out.

### Leadership and management development in Tipperary ETB

The establishment of Tipperary ETB in 2013 brought with it new relationships and challenges. The focus of the work at that time was on addressing day-to-day management of education provision; there were great difficulties in finding time and space for strategic thinking, future planning or leadership. Tipperary ETB devised a solution which was to provide professional development in organisational leadership and management. The objectives were to provide:

- ▶ time and space for leaders to learn about thinking and planning strategically
- ▶ an environment where peers could share experiences and knowledge
- ▶ a community of learning to enable the deepening and strengthening of professional relationships across the organisation.

It was agreed that the following issues needed to be addressed:

- ▶ Relevance to participants' work
- ▶ A balance of real-world practicality and some theoretical underpinnings
- ▶ Provision at realistic times
- ▶ A recognised qualification for those who were interested in qualification
- ▶ Facilitation by excellent teachers.

More than 20 members of senior management have participated in either one or two units with the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM): 'Becoming an Effective Leader' and 'Managing Stress and Conflict in the Organisation'. It is intended that a third unit, 'Developing Critical Thinking', be completed in the first term of the 2016/17 academic year.

## Industry engagement and entrepreneurship – Cork ETB

An FET college in Cork ETB has an active Industry Liaison Committee and a Jobs Advice Bureau. Specific training is provided for volunteers to these groups so that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to keep engagement with industry lively and up to date. Development includes site visits, training sessions and seminars.

The college is currently focusing on entrepreneurship. Seven staff will participate on the ETBI entrepreneurship training course in September 2016. Participants will form a group, which will be responsible for passing the information on to other staff in a cascade approach. The college has also engaged the Rubicon Centre, a business innovation hub based in Cork IT, to deliver entrepreneurship seminars.

The college is a member of the Sales Institute, a network for sales directors from blue chip progressive companies. Staff are encouraged to attend the breakfast seminars and turnout is good. The ETB is also a member of Network Cork, a not for profit national organisation for women in business, the professions and the arts, and staff regularly attend their events.

## Donegal ETB Youthreach Training Week

For the past 11 years Donegal ETB's Youthreach programme has been holding an annual August Training Week for staff upon their return from summer holidays. The Youthreach programme involves 6 centres and 180 learners. The county coordinator consults with staff throughout the year on their training needs. Professional development needs are also identified via feedback from staff during the Youthreach Quality Framework sessions. The availability of courses on offer is flexible to meet the changing needs of learners. Each member of staff has a development record for all training they participate in.

Examples of training carried out to date: Positive Classroom Management Using Restorative Practice Principles, Using Minecraft to Teach Maths, Teen Coaching Challenging Behaviour.

## Kerry ETB Train the Trainer Programme

The programme was developed to address a gap in standardised FET practitioner induction and accredited CPD.

The course was open to adult education officers, teaching colleagues and staff across further education. Staff training needs were identified via SurveyMonkey and course evaluations, staff meetings and feedback on the Results Approval Panel report. The course had a particular focus on staff who were not eligible for a postgraduate qualification in FET. The course contained all the requirements of the train the trainer course but also included units on adult learners and assessment techniques. Learners (practitioners) benefitted from an in-depth induction which incorporated ETB ethos and ethics and how both impact on daily practice. Participating staff gained the equivalent of a QQI Level 6 award. The course Content included:

- ▶ theory of training and adult learning
- ▶ the role of the trainer
- ▶ training needs analysis and programme design
- ▶ preparing for training delivery
- ▶ delivery and assessment
- ▶ evaluation of training.

## Online CPD resources at FESS

In 2015 the Further Education Support Service (FESS) established a project designed to encourage FET teachers and trainers to support each other's CPD nationally by developing and sharing resource lists on the FESS website [www.fess.ie](http://www.fess.ie). The resource lists cover QQI Levels 2–6, identify themes and topics from QQI components and suggest relevant websites, books, leaflets, organisations, etc. The strength of the initiative is that it has facilitated teachers and trainers to share resources that they find useful and store them in one accessible location. The sharing of information is an important CPD activity for teachers and trainers as it validates and recognises practitioners as contributors to the professional development of others.

The resource lists are of particular benefit to the professional development of those who are teaching programme modules for the first time or for teachers looking for new ideas. To date almost 200 resource lists have been uploaded to the FESS website and new resources are being developed on a continual basis.



### Continuing professional development calendar in the City of Dublin ETB

The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) is a support unit within the City of Dublin ETB (CDETb) which works in partnership with the ETB head office, schools, colleges and centres to support a coordinated approach to continuing professional development.

The CDU supports staff as essential contributors to the development of a flourishing learning community in CDETb and in the broader national and international educational community. This is achieved through initiating, developing, exchanging, implementing, supporting or managing educational initiatives, projects and support services.

Since 2005/6 the unit has developed and managed a continuing professional development calendar which is published twice a year.

Themes for the calendar are informed through:

- ▶ proposals from staff
- ▶ evaluation forms from previous CPD sessions
- ▶ consultation with management following inspections, evaluations, etc.
- ▶ national and organisational priorities as identified by DES, QQI, SOLAS, Teaching Council, etc.
- ▶ local, national and international projects e.g. pilot projects, Erasmus+, etc.
- ▶ City of Dublin Education and Training Board *Continuing Professional Development Policy*.

### Information and communications technology, Link Teachers Network at City of Dublin ETB

The ICT Link Teachers Network has been meeting since early 2011. The aim of the network is to promote the integration of ICT teaching and learning. CDETb link teachers are teachers nominated by principals and heads of centres with representatives from all CDETb schools, colleges and centres. The network provides an important space for innovation, dialogue, showcasing and sharing practice. Teachers are invited to participate in a 'show and tell'. The response from teachers is excellent and presentation topics are diverse. Topics have included Tellagami; Google Classroom; online register using Excel and Google Drive; video tutorials using Camtasia; StudyStack and Guidance Site for Students. Link teachers are encouraged to share what they have learnt at the network meetings with management and peers on their return to their own college/centre.

### Quality assurance good practice seminars at Kildare Wicklow ETB

KWETB identifies tutors who are proven, through QQI external authenticators' reports, to excel in their programme delivery. These tutors are then invited to present to colleagues at a number of seminars on quality assurance. The educational development officer organises the seminars and invites tutors and coordinators from across Kildare and Wicklow ETB. Seminars consist of presentations from high performers within the ETB and also external authenticators who have unique ideas to share, for example the use of video conferencing for assessments. The benefit of the session with the high performing staff member is that participants break up into smaller groups and have opportunities to discuss their own technical areas of interest; the sessions are specific as opposed to broad-ranging, general, CPD topics. Afterwards staff implement the changes in their teaching and measure effectiveness. Success is measured by the number of students who return self-reflection and evaluation forms.

### Integrated Literacy Training at Galway and Roscommon ETB

The integrated literacy training is aimed at FET tutors with little or no literacy teaching background, e.g. cooperation-hours tutors, tutors in the prison, Youthreach tutors, training centre instructors. Tutors and instructors are given clear guidelines and shown techniques on how to integrate literacy in the classroom in order to help learners who are having difficulty in accessing texts. The training incorporates the use of plain English and literacy friendly worksheets; teaching to different learning styles; how to use the language experience approach; and how to develop more formal writing. Feedback has been very positive, with tutors requesting follow-up sessions to cover TEL (technology enhanced learning); specific spelling and writing strategies; adapting and creating materials; and how to simplify texts. A booklet has been created specifically for craft instructors in training centres based on this work.

## Appendix 5: Project Advisory Group members

### FET skills profile – Project Advisory Group

Mary Lyons, SOLAS

Paul Malone, SOLAS

Pat O'Mahony, ETBI

Anne Walshe, NUI Galway

Sharon Browne, Kerry ETB

Fionnuala Anderson, Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB

Aine O'Sullivan, Kildare Wicklow ETB

Brenda Lynch, Kildare Wicklow ETB

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha, Galway Roscommon ETB

Eileen Condon, Tipperary ETB

Carol McCarthy, SOLAS (Secretariat)

Colin Howat, ICF International (project consultant)

### FET professional development strategy – Project Advisory Group

Mary Lyons, SOLAS

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Cynthia Deane, Kilkenny Carlow ETB

Carol Hanney, City of Dublin ETB

Pat O'Mahony, ETBI

Miriam O'Donoghue, Further Education Support Service

Anne Walshe, NUI Galway

John Fitzgibbons, Cork ETB

Sharon Browne, Kerry ETB

Aine O'Sullivan, Kildare Wicklow ETB

Brenda Lynch, Kildare Wicklow ETB

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