



Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



**Student Pathways in Higher
Education Conference**

May 1-2 2017

DCU Institute of Education

Plenary IV: Near & Far: Supporting Student Mobility across Diverse Dimensions

Pathways and Progression from FET (College) to University & Institutes of Technology (IoTs) in Ireland : *Barriers to Progression*

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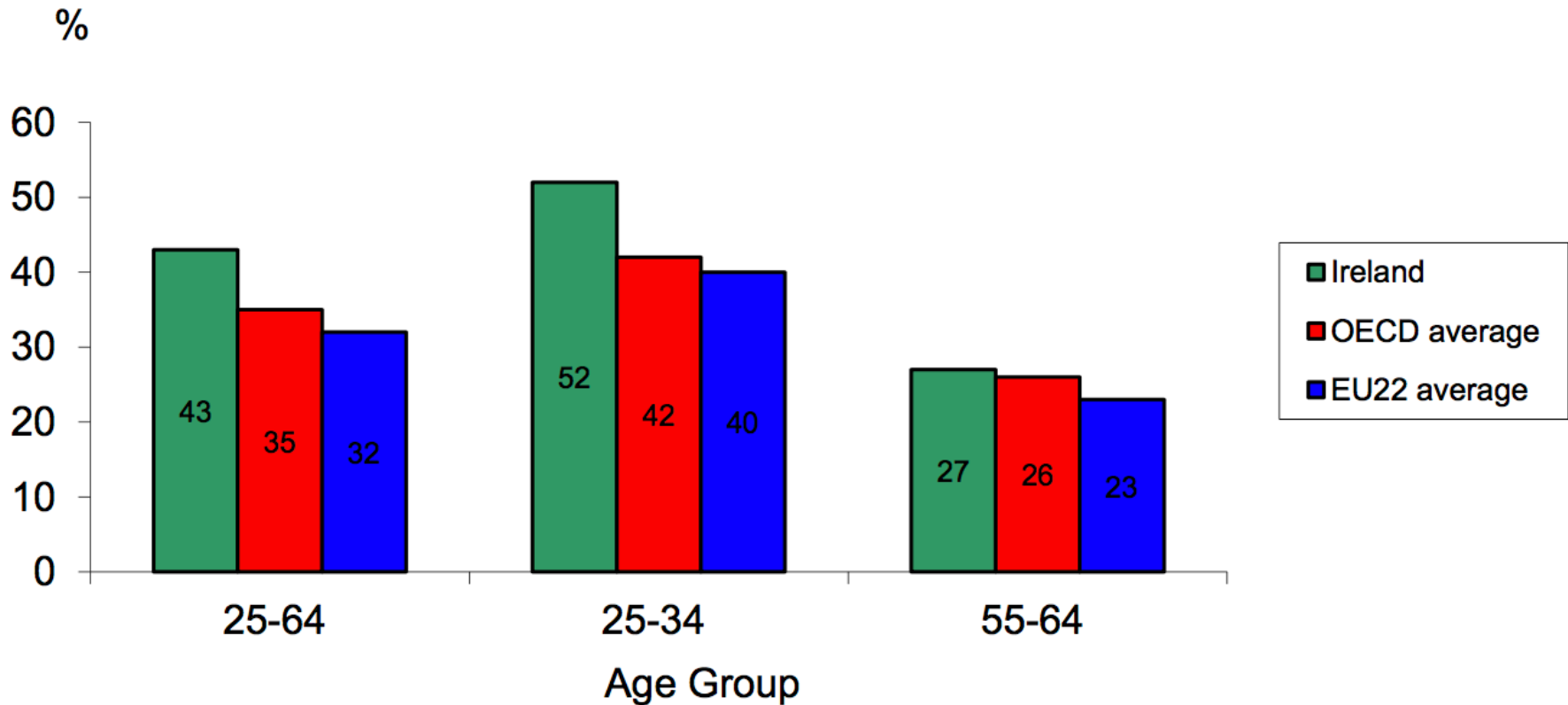
Ireland's Education journey

- For the generation born around 1950 many never made it beyond primary school.
- **Less than 20 per cent progressed to third level, many of them by means of a night degree.**
- Ireland was one of the last countries in northern Europe to wake up to the importance of investing in the education of its youth.
- For those born in Europe in the early 1930s, more than half completed their high school education in the UK, Germany and Estonia.
- **By contrast, in Ireland, Romania, Spain, Portugal and Greece, more than 70 per cent of children left school before this milestone.**
- By the time free education was introduced in 1967, **Ireland still ranked at the bottom of the European scale, lagging behind top performers – as well as the United States.**
- **1990s - rising skills of an educated workforce**, combined with an **open economy and EU membership**, enabled Irish living standards to catch up to our European neighbours.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the introduction of free education, one of the most important policy changes since the foundation of the State.



A1.3a. Population that has attained higher education (2015), by age group



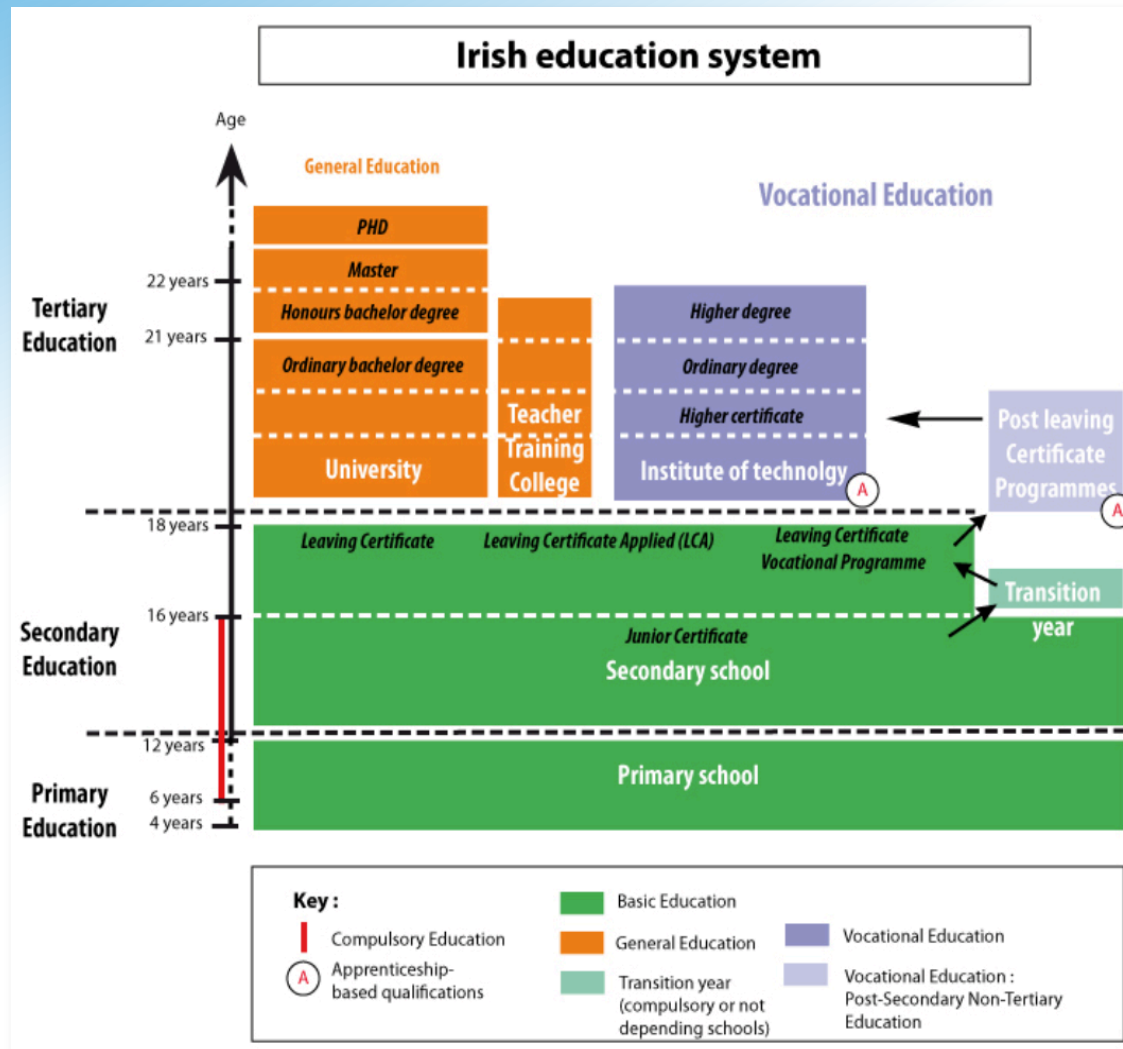
Department of Education and Skills (2016) EDUCATION AT A GLANCE - OECD INDICATORS A Country Profile for Ireland STATISTICS SECTION, Dublin, Ireland, p.5

In the boom years, many boys left school before Leaving Certificate to take up employment, especially in building. However, these job opportunities disappeared after 2007 and, as a result, many more boys are completing their Leaving Cert today.

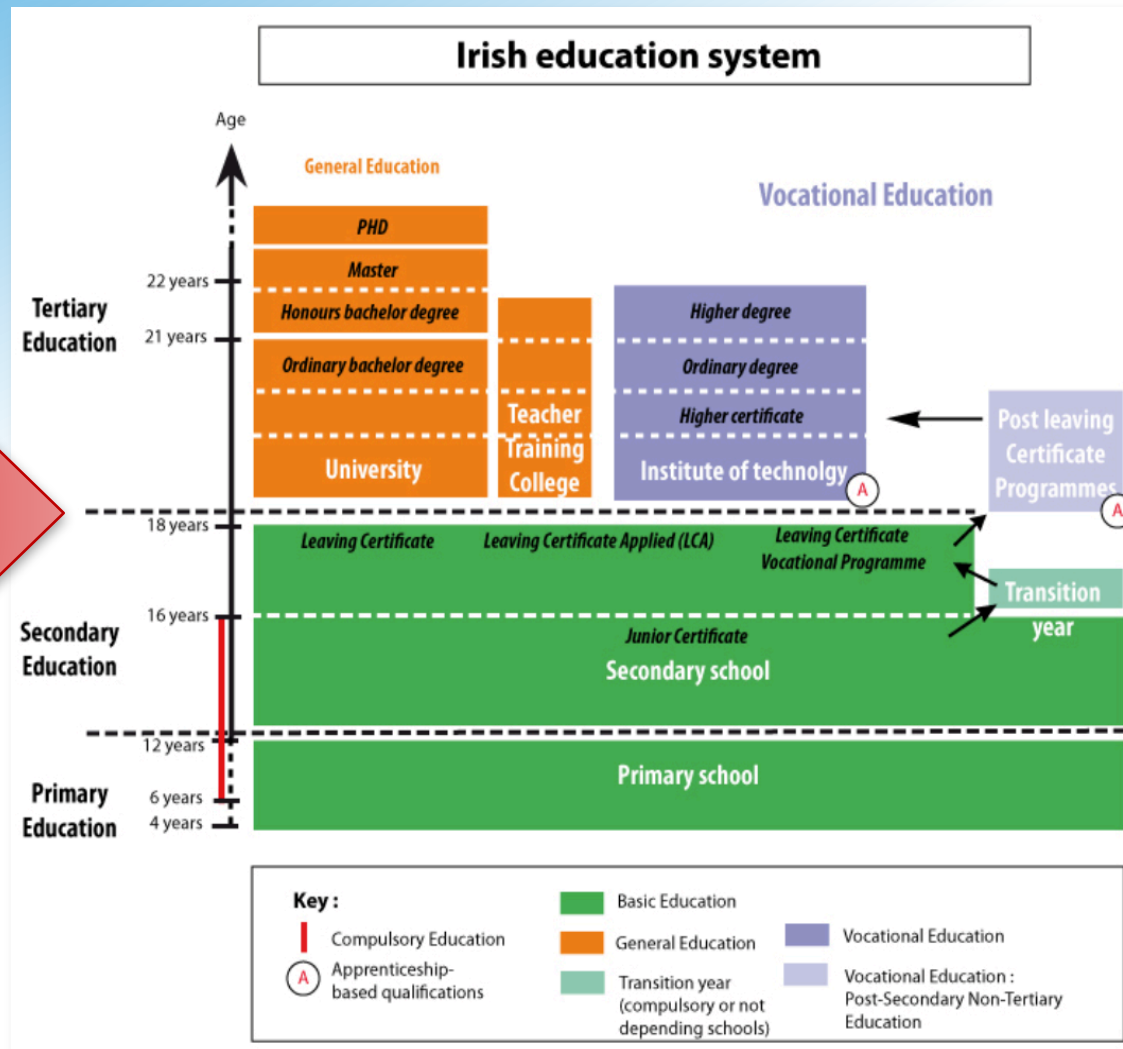
For girls, the proportion completing their second level education was already high before the recession began and it has remained high.

Currently at 58%, our third-level participation rate is one of the highest in Europe,

FET System in context

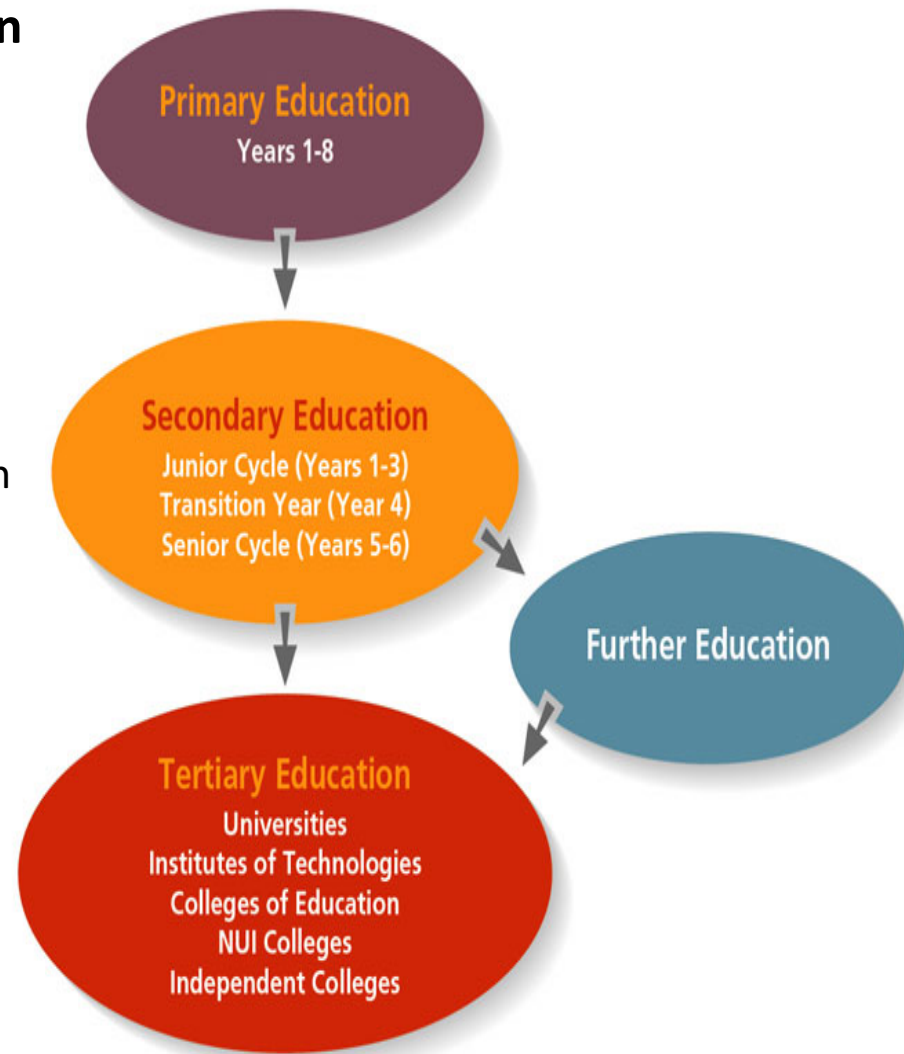


FET System in context



There are currently **1,417 Further Education Providers** registered with QQI comprising:

- Adult and Community Education and Training Centres
- Adult Literacy Centres
- Centres for Learners with Special Needs
- Community Training Workshops
- Post Leaving Cert (PLC) Centres/Further Education Colleges
- Secondary/Comprehensive Schools and Community Schools/Colleges
- Vocational Schools
- Vocational Training Opportunity Schemes (VTOS)
- Youthreach Centres
- Workplace Learning Centres



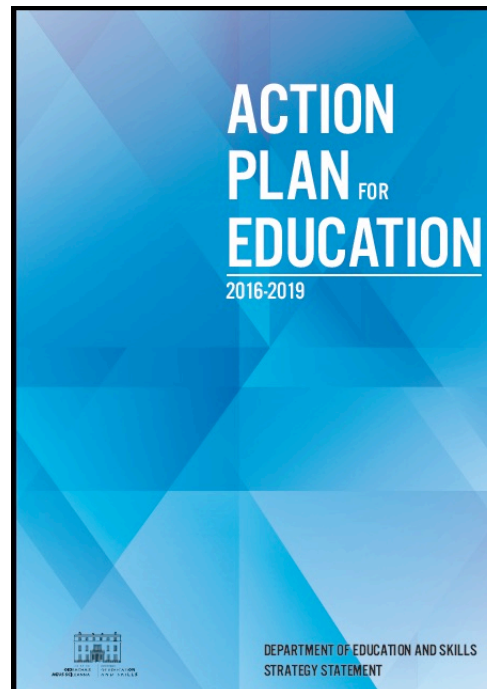
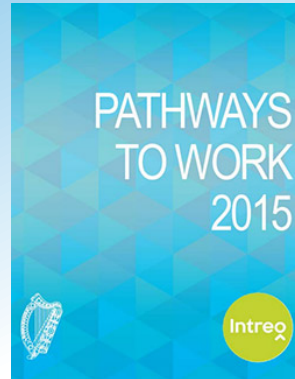
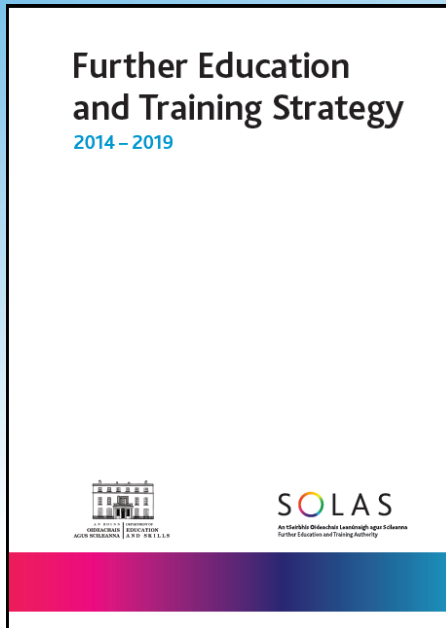
Defining FET in Ireland

‘There has never existed a clear definition of FET in Ireland, nor has any specific rationale underlying FET provision been articulated.

Irish FET provision currently seeks to cater for the needs of school leavers, employees, firms, the unemployed and those on the margins of society without any clear mission objective relating to any particular component of provision’

(Smyth et al, 2013)

Policy reforms relating to FET





An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority

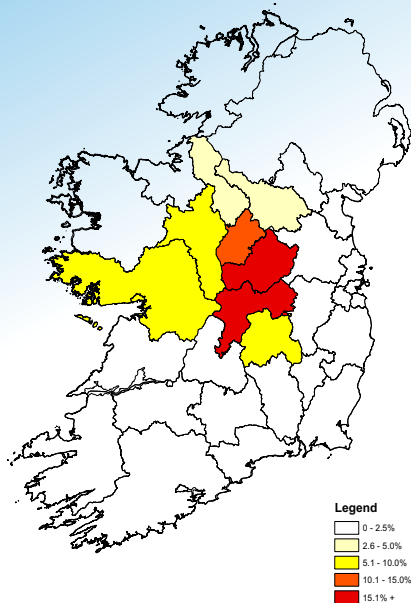
THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY 2014 – 2019



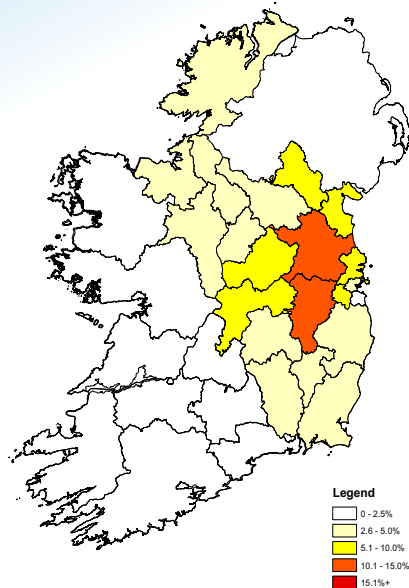
Origins of Collaboration

- Regional Provision & Catchment of the HEIs

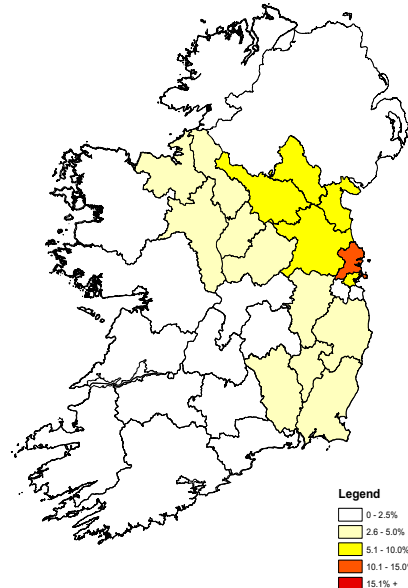
Athlone IT 2009-2011



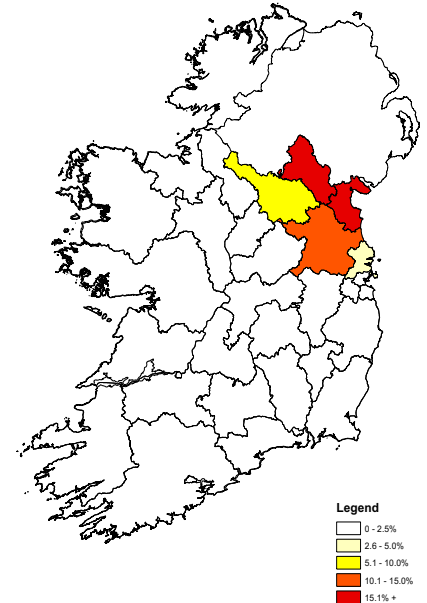
NUIM 2009-2011



DCU 2009-2011

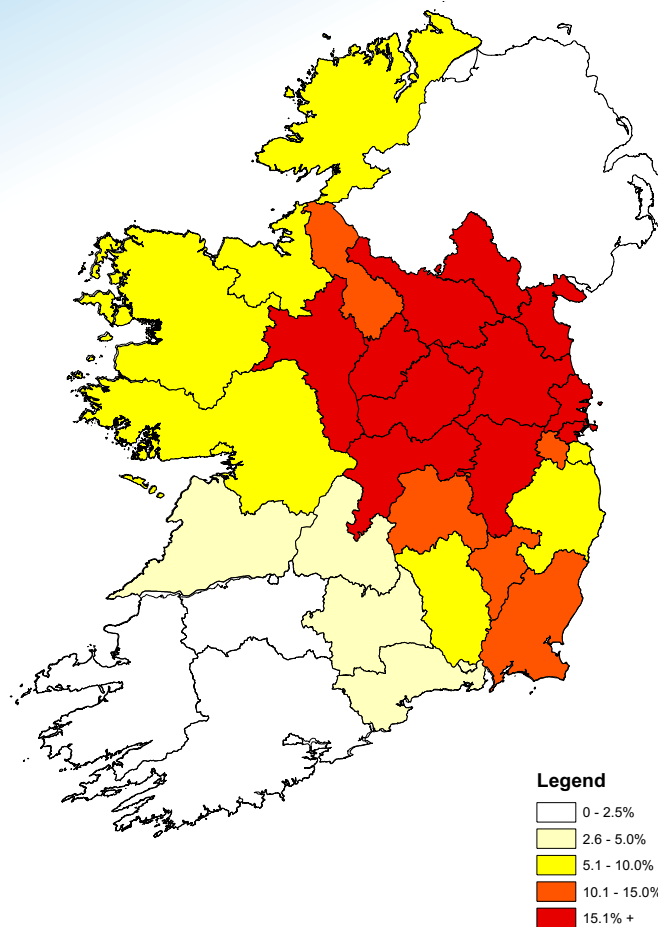


Dundalk IT 2009-2011



Origins of Collaboration

- Strategic Clustering of HEIs by the Higher Education Authority



FET & HE Stakeholders

FET & HE Supports Agencies

- SOLAS
- QQI
- Area networks

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

- Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB)
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB)
- Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDETB)
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB)
- Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)
- Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB)
- Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)
- Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB)

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)
- Dublin City University (DCU)
- Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)
- Maynooth University (MU)

Origins of Collaboration

- Bringing together the ETBs (Education & Training Boards) and the HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) reflects SOLAS' commitment to, ***'take advantage of the cluster structures and proposed Technological Universities to deliver an increasing number of seamless pathways to HE ...'*** (SOLAS, p106)

The logo for SOLAS, featuring the word "SOLAS" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a circular rainbow gradient.

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority

- The initiative also aimed to help the achievement of HEA (Higher Education Authority) national targets for progression from FET to HE to 10% of those entering HE (on the basis of a FET qualification) by 2019

The logo for the Higher Education Authority (HEA). It features the letters "HEA" in a large, bold, blue font. To the right of "HEA" is a vertical red bar. To the right of the bar, the words "HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY" are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font, and below that, "AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS" is written in an even smaller, blue, sans-serif font.

Focus of the Collaboration

- **Identify barriers** to access, transfer & progression and propose appropriate & feasible solutions.
- Create greater **awareness of opportunities** for students in the Further Education and Training Sector to progress to Higher Education.
- **Collaborate on enhancing** transparent visible Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) **pathways and progression opportunities** across the region.
- Identify where resources and good practice could be **shared** and explore thematic collaborations.
- Foster and support **research on access, transfer and progression** across the FET & HE sectors to inform policy.
- Provide opportunities to **share & disseminate information** relevant to staff & students.
- **Collaborate with wider stakeholder groups** to further the above objectives.

Focus on FET-HE Collaboration

Relationships

- The development of key relationships across sectors is notable and the collaborative nature of the Network is a real strength. The involvement of SOLAS and QQI has been key and has added greatly to our work.

Regional Approach

- The focus has been on the student experience across the region, how they see and access pathways and progression opportunities, rather than the experience of one institution.

MOU

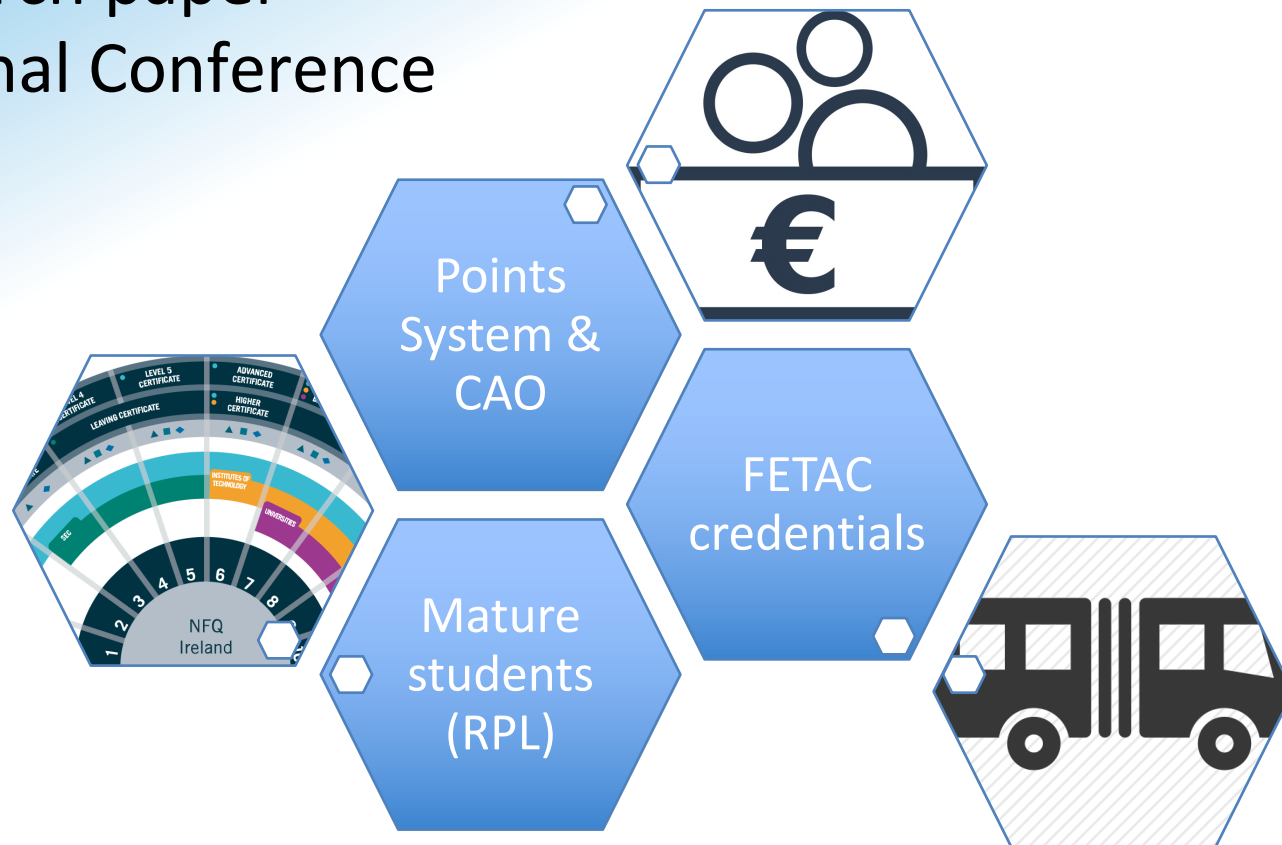
- A signed MOU was a tangible reflection of our shared institutional commitment to improved progression opportunities across the region.

Tangible Outcomes

- The sharing of knowledge & expertise, identification of barriers & good practice, greater awareness of opportunities & challenges for students and clarity on steps that could provide transparent progression opportunities from FET to HE.

Research on pathways focus

- Scoping exercise
- Research paper
- Regional Conference



Themes to be investigated

- **ATP opportunities and pathways from FET to HE** - Why do arrangements and requirements differ between FET Centres/Colleges and HEIs? What can be done to make pathways more equitable and transparent in this region?
- **What barriers do students, mature students, non-traditional students face** in terms of funding, grants and progression from training programmes and to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)? What are the solutions for this region?
- **Quality assurance at the counterpoints and shared concerns related to assessment, curriculum and content.** Should FET and HE collaborate at a curricular Level? If yes, what approach/models should be considered? If no, why not?
- **Clarity of information and guidance** – why do few students and their families know about all of the options available to them? What will bring around change in that regard in this region?

ATP Opportunities and Pathways

- Standardisation of the requirements sought by HEIs.
- Simplification of the pathways
- Pathways to be effectively communicated to all stakeholders.
- Simplification of the current QQI-FET offerings, e.g. collate offerings such as Business, Business Management, and e-Business etc. into a single Business offering with specialism provided by way of programme electives (pilot instrument)
- Universal articulation agreements
- FET in HE / HE in FET

Student Barriers

- Cognisance of funding issues as they affect students and learners.
- The involvement of DSP is necessary to simplify process and procedures in respect of social protection payments for learners.
- Expansion of part-time provision, ideally with financial support as a feature or the extension of existing supports to cover these
- Create wider opportunities for significant learner engagement with HE institutions while students are attending FET through initiatives such as learner shadowing, and taster days.
- Such interventions may be more beneficial to learners who require a deeper insight into the expectations within HE before making a decision.
- Provide a regional Guidance forum.

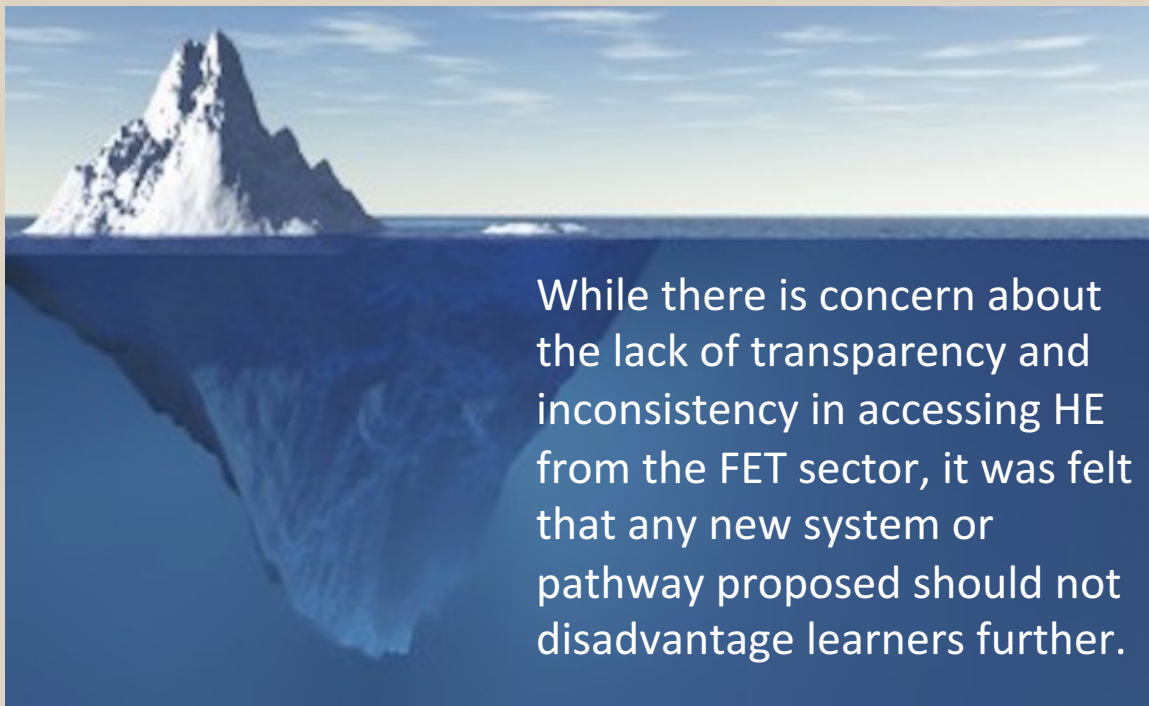
Quality Assurance at the Counterpoints

- Consistency within and between ETBs – consistency of entry requirements
- Input from both sectors on programme development teams, programme evaluation, and programme validation panels on QQI.
- Some short-term actions could include programmatic reviews/self-evaluation of programmes.
- HE faculty could act as external examiners/authenticators in FET.
- The need to maintain a balance between responding to the needs of the economy and the progression requirements was noted.
- The newly established Regional Skills Fora could provide a vehicle for collaboration as all of the FET and HEIs are represented.
- The need for clarity around progression routes for Careers Events.

Clarity of Information & Guidance

- The need for clarity around progression routes for Careers Events.
- Clarity & Transparency of information regarding links between FET and HE
- Enhancing the appeal of FET in Post-Primary Schools through guidance and curriculum
- Many Guidance Counsellors are unaware of FET courses and links.
- Lack of profile in media, which in turn diminishes the standing of FET
- More data on existing FET students who have progressed to HE / More transparency - provide data on number of FET places offered and cut off points particularly in the case of reserved places.
- More Guidance Counsellors in schools.
- Better marketing of FET courses and in particular increase the profile in media.

Moving forward



While there is concern about the lack of transparency and inconsistency in accessing HE from the FET sector, it was felt that any new system or pathway proposed should not disadvantage learners further.

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