

Report from the Director of ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit 2019/2020

The Further Education Sub-Committee operated under the Joint Further Education Representative Group, JFERG, (ACCS / JMB schools) until June 2019 when JFERG was disbanded due to the establishment of the ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit (FESU).

ACCS would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following JFERG Group members to the group since its establishment in 2014:

Mr. John Irwin	General Secretary (ACCS)
Ms. Áine O'Sullivan	Assistant General Secretary (ACCS)
Mr. John Curtis	General Secretary (JMB)
Dr. Michael Redmond	Director, Research and Development (JMB)
Ms. Frances Kelly	Deputy Principal, Moate Business College
Mr. Fintan Kemple	Gorey Community School / NACED
Mr. Seamus Scully	Scoil Mhuire Clane / NACED
Ms. Catherine O'Sullivan	JMB FE Special Advisor
Ms. Finola Butler	Further Education Support Service (FESS)

ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit (FESU)

The Further Education Support Unit was established in September 2019. The work previously undertaken by JFERG is now performed through the newly established ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit. Catherine O'Sullivan has been appointed as the Director of the Support Unit.

The ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit is involved in the following activities:

- Supporting schools in consultation with Education & Training Board of Ireland (ETBI) and SOLAS regarding the Programme Learner Support Services (PLSS) and Funding Allocations Request Reporting (FARR) systems.
- Establishing arrangements with ACCS and JMB schools both nationally and regionally to work effectively with SOLAS and Education & Training Board (ETB) structures.
- Co-ordinating and supporting schools in relation to planning and re-focusing provision in consultation with SOLAS in response to the recommendations from the Post Leaving Certificate evaluation.
- Co-ordinating the provision of relevant Continuous Professional Development to schools.
- Collaborating with relevant stakeholders locally to ensure best provision standards are provided.
- Supporting schools with the process of QQI Quality Assurance, QQI reengagement and QQI Programme validation.
- Providing a communication channel facilitating the exchange of information between ACCS / JMB, ETB, ETBI, SOLAS, QQI and other relevant stakeholders.
- Contributing to the establishment of formal arrangements through Education & Training Board (ETB) and Further Education Training (FET) Services to facilitate collaboration between ETB FET services and ACCS/JMB schools. Collaborate to develop and share Further Education Training mechanisms to support and encourage cohesive, integrated local planning and delivery.
- Supporting collaboration between Education & Training Board and ACCS / JMB colleagues to improve practice, share policies, procedures, information and resources in areas of supporting Further Education Training learners, programme planning and delivery through the Regional ETBI, ACCS / JMB Further Education Training Liaison Group.

- Representing ACCS and JMB schools on relevant Further Education national working groups, steering groups and advisory groups.
- Advising and updating the Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) Executive and Joint Managerial Body (JMB) Council on Further Education and Training matters as requested.

National Representation

ACCS is actively represented on the following committees / groups at National Level:

1. PLC Programme Improvement Advisory Committee
2. PLSS Advisory Group
3. PLSS Steering Committee
4. ETBI Voluntary Secondary Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) FET National Liaison Group
5. ETBI Voluntary Secondary Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) FET Regional Liaison Group
6. Advisory Committee for the development of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for the Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector
7. NAPD – FE Committee
8. ETBI DEIS Transitions to FET Network

CPD / In-service Training

ACCS Further Education Seminar (co-hosted with JMB)

The annual Further Education Seminar which is open to all Principals, Deputy Principals and FE Coordinators was held on the 16th January 2020 in the Sheraton Athlone Hotel. Finola Butler of FESS delivered a presentation on the new ELC Professional award standards at Levels 5 & 6. This was followed by a very informative presentation delivered by Dr. Deirdre Stritch Approval and Monitoring Manager – QQI. Deirdre briefed delegates on the QQI Re-engagement process for legacy providers. Greg Bissett of SOLAS facilitated a practical session on Funding Allocations Requests and Reporting (FARR). The afternoon session 'Delivering FE courses in your Centre 2020' was delivered by Catherine O'Sullivan, Director ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit.

'It was very detailed and informative. Very helpful. Excellent briefing and support with all aspects of process and documentation. The session on QQI Re-engagement was excellent. It was one of the best In-service days hosted by ACCS / JMB to date'

Comments from Delegates

SOLAS / ACCS / JMB In-Service on Funding, Planning Parameters, Reporting, Grant Assurance, FARR and PLSS

On the 7th of November 2019 SOLAS in conjunction with the ACCS and JMB hosted a CPD event on Funding and Planning. The event was open to all Principals, Deputy Principals and FE Coordinators. Joan Hennessy of SOLAS delivered a presentation on FET Funding Parameters and Requirements, Planning Parameters and Requirements for FET Provision, Programme Specific Parameters and Requirements, Reporting, Grant Assurance visits. Greg Bissett from SOLAS delivered a session on Funding Allocations Requests and Reporting (FARR).

'It was a most informative session; all presenters were excellent and clarified a lot of queries participants had. The quality of the sessions was hugely beneficial. The timing of this event was excellent as FAR documents are due next month.'

Comments from Delegates

Programme Learner Support Services PLSS Training

The Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) is a joint project between SOLAS (the National Further Education and Training Authority) and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). PLSS is a suite of software applications that are designed to provide an integrated approach to the collection and processing of personal data of users of PLSS and FET programmes (PLC & BTEI) funded through SOLAS. In-service training on the use of PLSS is currently being delivered on a regional basis by the ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit.

One full days training was delivered in Portlaoise on 2nd of December 2019. The

'The briefing session was excellent, so not sure how to improve, maybe have more of them. I found it useful being able to set up courses on my Laptop while I was at the in-service. I loved the fact that I was able to work on PLSS for my centre while Catherine was in the room to answer my questions. The practical nature of this training was very helpful.'

Comments from Delegates

training focused on: PLSS Course Management, Calendar – Course Scheduling, Managing Learner Details / Outcomes – Referrals, PLSS Communication Tools and Generating Centre Reports. Delegates brought their own devices and were able to interact with the software during the training.

QQI Pilot

Five of the largest providers (Pilot Schools) in the Voluntary Secondary / Community Comprehensive sector (VSCCS) are participating in the re-engagement process at present. The Pilot Schools commenced the process in the fourth quarter of 2018. The providers have met on a regular basis to progress their work and share expertise. While each provider is responsible for their own Quality Assurance System the group is working collectively to design a Quality Assurance System that is fit for purpose and can be used as a template by other Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive schools as a resource for re-engaging with QQI.

QQI has invited representatives involved in the re-engagement process from the 5 Pilot Schools to attend a peer-learning event organised by QQI which is scheduled to take place on February 18th, 2020. Presentations will be made by QQI staff; experienced Panel members and representatives of providers that have already successfully completed reengagement. Some provider representatives have also been members of reengagement Panels and will share their feedback and insights gained from participating in the process from both perspectives.

It is expected that the five Pilot schools will have re-engaged with QQI by December 2020.

FE Support

ACCS is greatly appreciative of the support of Andrew Brownlee, Ciarán Conlon, Greg Bissett, Clare Wynne, Joan Hennessy, Gerry O'Connor, Audrey McCormack, Denise Hogan, Therese O'Connor, Síle Mullin, Marie Duffy, SOLAS, Walter Balfe and Colette Harrison, QQI, Fiona Maloney, Siobhan McEntee, Mary Mooty, Tanya Jones ETBI for their ongoing vital support.

Sincere thanks on behalf of ACCS to Dr. Michael Redmond of the JMB for his management of JFERG activities from 2014 – 2019, to Finola Butler and the FESS team for the support provided to our schools delivering Further Education programmes during the past academic year.

SOLAS

In 2019 SOLAS invited interested parties to make a submission to the Public Consultation on the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024 to assist SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills in defining the strategic direction of Further Education and Training in Ireland up to the year 2024.

Six core aspects of further education and training were identified by SOLAS.

ACCS through JFERG made a submission to the Public Consultation in May 2019 addressing each of the six areas.



QQI

- ACCS representatives are involved in QQI “Standards Development Groups to Develop Broad Standards at NFQ Levels 1 to 4”.
- In 2019, QQI conducted a five-month consultation on new awards standards for Early Learning and Care. As part of this process, an event was held to explain the new standards and their implications for potential programme developers, programme coordinators, quality assurance staff and others involved in ELC. This event was attended by ACCS representatives and a submission was made on behalf of ACCS FE providers by Aisling Kirby BA (Hons) ECCE, MEd to the Consultation on New Standards for Early Learning and Care Awards.

The submission can be read at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Current-consultations.aspx>

ETBI

ETBI – ETB VSCCS National and Regional Liaison Groups established in 2018 continue to operate. Kilkenny Carlow ETB and Limerick Clare ETB have been working closely with the Director of the ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit to determine the structure of the Regional Groups in the ETB areas.

The ACCS sector is represented on the ETBI DEIS Learners Transitions to FET Steering Group by Catherine O’Sullivan and Antoinette Nic Gearailt.

The ETB Supporting DEIS Learners Transition to FET group was established to support collaboration amongst ETB and non-ETB colleagues, to continually improve good practice and to develop proposals, policies and procedures, information and resources in the area. The group is responsible for identifying existing good practice that support Learners from DEIS Schools Transition to FET and providing recommendations to enhance good practice.

NAPD

The NAPD Further Education and Training Symposium 2020 - "The FET College of the Future – What Does it Look Like?" will take place on the 11th of March 2020 at the Clontarf Castle Hotel, Dublin. Speakers include William Beausang, Assistant Secretary, Tertiary Education Division, DES, Andrew Brownlee, Chief Executive Officer, SOLAS, Dr. Pdraig Walsh, Chief Executive, QQI, Catherine O'Sullivan, Director, ACCS / JMB Further Education Support Unit will speak on behalf of the ACCS / JMB sector on the topic "The FET College of the Future – What Does it Look Like?" - "The Regional and Local Perspective".

NACED

NACED is the National Association of Adult and Community Education Directors, who organise and run lifelong learning classes in their schools. As well as lobbying for adult education at a national level, NACED provides networking and professional development opportunities for directors of adult education in Community and Comprehensive schools.

ACCS commends NACED on the launch of their Adult Education booklet – "Adult Education Ireland, Promoting Lifelong Learning". Their website www.adulteducationireland.ie and its corresponding Facebook page continue to experience increased traffic.

*Ms. Catherine O'Sullivan,
Director of ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit.*