

ETBI's New Professional Learning & Development Hub

Providing centralised support for FET practitioners' professional development

This article announces the establishment of a new Professional Learning & Development Hub at Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). The hub aims to support the professional development of further education and training (FET) practitioners nationwide by providing centralised support to the ETB FET sector. The article describes the hub's work, benefits, and goals.

In September 2022 a Professional Learning & Development Hub was established at Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), funded by SOLAS. It is intended to provide centralised support to the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) further education and training (FET) sector and to lead the development of structures for the professional development of FET practitioners nationwide.

The effectiveness and quality of the further education and training sector depends ultimately on the excellence of its workforce. —Andrew Brownlee, CEO, SOLAS

More than 10,000 people currently work in further education and training in various roles (practitioner, leadership and management, administrative, ancillary), so the establishment of the Professional Learning & Development (PL&D) hub is paramount to ensuring that staff have the capability and confidence required for their role and respond more readily to meet the evolving needs of learners in a constantly changing environment.

A PL&D hub manager was recently appointed and will support delivery on national targets and goals identified for critical skills areas, such as leadership and management, technology-enhanced learning, quality assurance, vocational upskilling, and enterprise engagement.

The hub will work closely with SOLAS and the ETB networks, including the chief executive and directors of FET forums; the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; the professional learning and development coordinators; and the wider stakeholder groups across FET. It will support the implementation of the FET strategy, Future FET: Transforming Learning, by addressing the key enabling theme of staffing, capabilities, and structure. A formal PL&D steering group has also been established, with representatives from SOLAS, ETBI, directors of FET, and other key stakeholders.



Jessica Mullen
ETBI Professional
Learning & Development
Hub Manager, Education
and Training Boards
Ireland

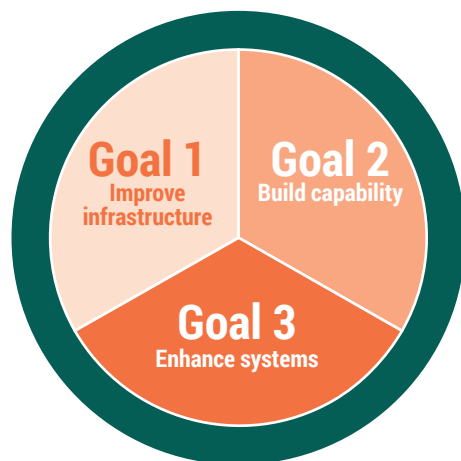
Centralising provision of professional learning and development opportunities across all 16 ETBs ensures the continued development of FET practitioners' expertise, while building a talent pipeline and embedding communities of practice in FET.

The FET Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) Strategy 2020–2024 shapes the evolution of professional learning and development to deliver on the future FET goals set out in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020–2024. The PL&D strategy's three goals guiding professional learning and development in the sector are:

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure – Expanding access to learning resources and strengthening the delivery infrastructure for effective PL&D, including learning networks for sharing good practice nationally.

Goal 2: Build Capacity – Building the capability of those who work in the FET sector by identifying and deploying strategic PL&D initiatives in priority areas.

Goal 3: Enhance Systems – Developing sustainable systems to meet the planning, funding, resourcing, and evaluation requirements of PL&D in the FET sector.



PL&D strategic goals 2020–2024

One example of work undertaken by the hub since its establishment earlier in 2022 is the rollout of first-time initiatives in the area of active consent for the FET sector. As part of this cross-government-funded initiative, the hub, with the support of the PL&D coordinator network and the directors' forum, is providing workers across the sector with an opportunity to engage with multiple programmes developed by the Active* Consent team based at University of Galway. These programmes are pivotal in supporting education and training in consent, sexual violence, and harassment.

The first point-of-contact programme – the facilitator-led workshops and a series of self-directed modules – provide staff with specialist knowledge and information, skills, and support they need to deal appropriately with disclosure of sexual violence and increases their awareness of the causes and effects. FET staff can continue their professional learning beyond these programmes through a newly created digital resource, www.consenthub.ie, where they have access to podcasts, educational posters, and other development opportunities. ETBI will support the sector by running an online campaign on active consent awareness in November 2022.

Throughout 2023 the hub will continue to support skills development in critical areas through innovative and targeted PL&D opportunities offered through a national calendar, a series of themed events, and ongoing collaboration with providers who have expert knowledge in key areas.

The ETBI Professional Learning & Development hub will also support the sector with regard to FET guidance, information, and recruitment. Supports will include advising on high-quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training; providing PL&D opportunities for guidance practitioners across FET; and promoting the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in centres for education and FET settings.

The PL&D hub will also promote the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in non-formal settings in accordance with national priorities; advise on policy and strategies for promoting a continuum of guidance in lifelong learning; and provide advice, support, materials, and resources for guidance counselling in education and FET.

The hub will also lead and contribute to the exchange of information on guidance counselling provision and practice in FET with other guidance and employment services through Euroguidance, the National Resource Centre, both in Ireland and in other EU member states.

REFERENCES

Active* Consent (2022) Active* Consent: Ireland's National Resource Hub on Consent. www.consenthub.ie/.

SOLAS (2019) Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy. Dublin: SOLAS.

SOLAS (2020) The FET Professional Learning & Development Statement of Strategy 2020–2024. www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1e2e117467/solas-professional-dev-strategy.pdf.

SOLAS (2020) The FET Professional Learning & Development Statement of Strategy 2020–2024. www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1e2e117467/solas-professional-dev-strategy.pdf.

The establishment of the Professional Learning & Development (PL&D) hub will ensure that staff have the capability and confidence required for their role.
