



CAVAN INSTITUTE'S MISSION IS TO DELIVER
EXCELLENCE IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
SO THAT STUDENTS, STAFF AND THE WIDER
COMMUNITY CAN ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL.



COUNTY CAVAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE AN CHABHÁIN

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PRÍOMH-OIFIGEACH: Colm Mac Giolla Bhui B.Comm., D.S.A., M.Sc.



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GLOSSARY

AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology	KPI	Key Performance Indicator
CAS	Common Awards System	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	NEFHEA	North East Further & Higher Education Alliance
CI	Cavan Institute	NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
CPD	Continuous Professional Development	NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
DES	Department of Education & Skills	NUI	National University of Ireland
DKIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology	OLC	Open Learning Centre
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair	PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
FE	Further Education	QA	Quality Assurance
FESS	Further Education Support Service	QQAAI	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland
FETAC	Further Education & Training Awards Council	RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
HETAC	Higher Education & Training Awards Council	SNA	Special Needs Assistant
HSE	Health Service Executive	SOLAS	Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanunaigh agus Scileanna
ICT	Information & Communications Technology	SOS	Student Online Service
IOT	Institute(s) of Technology	SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
IP	Internet Protocol	VEC	Vocational Education Committee
IPA	Institute of Public Administration	VET	Vocational Education & Training
IS	Information Systems	VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
IT	Information Technology	VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
ITB	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown		
IUQB	Irish University Quality Board		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategic plan, the culmination of two years' work by a wide variety of stakeholders, has been driven largely by Cavan Institute's staff, who have demonstrated their capacity to identify new opportunities, seek excellence and embrace change. They have been central to the Institute's success and will accept readily the responsibilities associated with the implementation of the proposed strategy. The development of the plan involved extensive teamwork. In addition to a *Strategic Planning Steering Group*, led by the management team, working groups were established for specific tasks. The contribution of staff members who joined these groups was highly significant in that they conducted the research, undertook the data collection and put forward ideas of central importance to the future of the Institute.

Institute students and graduates, who were consulted by different means and at various stages, have also helped to shape this vision. The *Steering Group* is grateful for their input and for the guidance and suggestions received from the Board of Management and the CEO of County Cavan VEC.

The support provided by the business community, the local authorities, state agencies, and the wider community and voluntary sector – whose representatives gave generously of their time – is much appreciated. The willingness of these stakeholders to continue to engage with the Institute over the lifetime of the plan represents a welcome commitment to both students and staff.

In the completion of the planning process, the Institute gained greatly from external academic input, as well as from the contributions of FÁS and the Department of Education and Skills. The involvement of staff from post-primary schools, Youthreach, the adult education sector, Institutes of Technology (AIT, DKIT and ITB) and NUI Maynooth has helped to determine the thrust of the final document and, through an on-going partnership, to reflect the important role played by this Institute in Irish further education.

It is expected that the extent and level of consultation associated with this plan will provide added credibility to its ultimate aim, which is to enrich the lives and enhance the career prospects of each student whom Cavan Institute is privileged to serve.



ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF COUNTY CAVAN VEC



As chairperson of County Cavan Vocational Education Committee and of Cavan Institute's Board of Management, I am delighted to introduce Cavan Institute's Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

Many changes have taken place in further and higher education in recent times, and these changes present challenges and opportunities to Cavan Institute. In this evolving context, the Institute has drawn up a Strategic Plan, which will act as a "road map" for the next five years.

I believe firmly that Cavan Institute is in a strong position to continue to lead the educational development of the North East region and to make a positive impact on the economic, social and cultural profile of this region. It has proven its capacity to do so during the last 25 years and is well-positioned to consolidate this position over the next five years.

I have no doubt that this Strategic Plan will strengthen the Institute's capacity to expand and adapt its courses to suit emerging labour market needs, to evolve innovative teaching and learning methods, and to provide an important stepping stone on the education ladder for post-leaving certificate students and mature learners.

I congratulate all who have been involved in the development of this plan, in particular, the Director of the Institute, Ms. Ann Marie Lacey, and the CEO of Co. Cavan VEC, Mr. Colm McEvoy, whose dedication, commitment and foresight have contributed significantly to the Institute's success to date.

I look forward to supporting the management and staff in the implementation of this plan. Bail ó Dhia ar an obair.

Madeleine Argue, *Chairperson*
County Cavan VEC
Cavan Institute Board of Management

FOREWORD BY THE CEO OF COUNTY CAVAN VEC



On behalf of County Cavan Vocational Education Committee, I wish to commend Cavan Institute on the enormous positive impact that it has had on the lives of students from all over Ireland over the last three decades and on the benefits brought to the local, regional and national economy in consistently producing high-quality graduates.

It is significant that the development of this plan coincided with the celebration by the Institute of its 25th anniversary. During a time of high unemployment and mass emigration in the early 1980s, the CEO and committee of County Cavan VEC showed remarkable foresight and vision in their efforts to establish a third level college in the county to stem the tide of young people leaving for work or study. Cavan Institute (then Cavan College of Further Studies) opened its doors in 1985 to a cohort of 76 students. Twenty five years on, today's economic backdrop echoes that period in many ways. However, the education landscape in this region has been transformed.

Cavan Institute has emerged as a beacon for school leavers and mature students, some of whom cannot afford to travel far afield for their education. Demand for courses has never been so high. The Institute is now the third-largest provider of further education in the state, having enrolled almost 1,650 students on its full-time courses and over 350 students on part-time certified courses during the 2010-2011 academic year. The Institute attracts students from throughout the region, with nearly 50% coming from outside of the county.

I am immensely proud of the achievements and reputation of Cavan Institute. The Director, Ms Ann Marie Lacey, has again shown foresight and initiative in developing what is understood to be the first strategic plan for a further education college in Ireland. The Institute represents a model of best practice for the emerging further education sector nationally and rightly takes its place on the continuum of education from second level through to higher education.

I wish to convey my full support to the management and staff of the Institute as they move to the next phase of implementing the actions and striving to achieve the objectives set out in this plan. I congratulate them on their dedication and commitment to date and wish them every success in the future.

Colm McEvoy, *Chief Executive Officer*
County Cavan VEC

RÉAMHRÁ STIÚRTHÓIR, INSTITIÚID AN CHABHÁIN

INTRODUCTION BY THE DIRECTOR OF CAVAN INSTITUTE



Is mór dom an céad Phlean Straitéiseach curtha ar bhonn foirmiúil Institiúid an Chabháin a chur faoi bhur mbráid. Tháinig an plean seo le chéile tar éis chomhairliúchán inmheánach agus seachtrach. Aithníonn sé tosaíochataí, cuspóirí agus gníomhartha a chabhróidh linn fás agus forbairt a threorú ag an Institiúid ar aghaidh go dtí 2016. Tá muinín agam go mbainfimid ár spriocanna amach agus go leanfaimid de thionchar dearfach a chur i bhfeidhm ar ár bpobal mic léinn agus ar an réigiún ina iomláine.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Cavan Institute's first formalised strategic plan. This plan, the result of extensive consultation both internally and externally, identifies priorities, objectives and actions that will help us to guide growth and development at the Institute through to 2016. I am confident that we will achieve our goals and that we will continue to exert a positive influence on our community of students and on the region as a whole.

This *Strategic Plan 2012-2016* is launched at a time of great economic upheaval, which challenges the Institute to be creative, innovative and responsive to students' needs. These three qualities have been the hallmark of success to date, and they will stand us in good stead in future years. Another feature of the Institute has been its ability to progress and achieve success with limited resources. Such a proven capacity to deliver value through economies of scale will again prove crucial as we set out to achieve the challenging, yet realistic, objectives proposed in the strategy.

In summary, Cavan Institute has a track record in producing high quality graduates who are well placed to secure employment or to progress to higher education. It is regarded as a centre of excellence for the region, attracting students from throughout the North East and beyond. It also responds to labour market needs and has a proven capacity to develop specialist courses not available elsewhere in the region.

The purpose of this plan is to build on past successes and to consolidate our efforts into the future. As mentioned earlier, the strategy has been produced through a collaborative and consultative process, which involved the Board of Management, staff, students and graduates. It has been informed by input from local businesses, state and voluntary sector agencies, post-primary schools, Youthreach and adult education, Institutes of Technology and Universities, as well as the Department of Education and Skills.

I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the plan for their ideas and support. The staff of the Institute look forward to implementing the actions, achieving the goals and continually enhancing our efforts to meet the needs and fulfil the expectations of all stakeholders.

Ann Marie Lacey, *Director*
Cavan Institute

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

MISSION

Cavan Institute's mission is to deliver excellence in further education and training so that students, staff and the wider community can achieve their potential.

VISION

The Institute is committed to:

- providing nationally and internationally recognised programmes of study that bridge the transition to employment or higher education
- fostering a caring, inclusive and responsive learning environment and a culture of innovation and collaboration
- promoting and providing access to lifelong learning
- enhancing the social, economic and cultural development of the region.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cavan Institute has grown and developed dramatically over the years, particularly so during the past decade when student enrolment has trebled, the range of courses offered has broadened, staff numbers have increased and systems have evolved to manage a further education centre of this size. Now the third-largest further education college in the country, the Institute recognises the need for a formalised plan to guide progress over the next five years and to consolidate and expand the range of initiatives that have helped the Institute develop to this stage.

This plan has been prepared during a time of substantial change and uncertainty over the country's financial and economic fortunes. It has been suggested that the forthcoming years will see continued high unemployment, marginal economic growth, additional austerity measures and a "do better with less" culture. Such an environment, should the predictions be accurate, will influence the Irish education and training sector as a whole, and the expansion and aspirations of this Institute, in particular. There is likely to be a direct impact on the community of students which the Institute was established to serve, with more people opting for further education to gain qualifications and others wishing to upskill or retrain following redundancy or unemployment.

As a starting point, this plan provides an overview of the Institute, the courses, the students and the structures. The context in which learning is currently delivered and a range of factors which could affect the Institute's future development are then identified. Most importantly, the plan recognises and reasserts the original impetus for the establishment of a further education college within the North East, which was to provide local education opportunities for the young people and adults of this region and to boost the economic prospects of this region through the availability of an educated workforce.

Over its lifetime, the Institute has witnessed dramatic changes in the further education sector in Ireland. This document identifies how this sector might continue to evolve. Although further education remains a sector in its infancy, it has huge potential to meet the education and training needs of a wide cohort of school leavers and adults alike. This sector is also an important channel through which to address the skills shortages identified at national level.

Research for this plan has entailed looking to other countries to analyse how they structure and resource their further education provision. This plan makes a number of recommendations with regard to the future profile and identity of the sector in Ireland, advocating a delivery model based on the centralised provision of further education and training through a number of dedicated regional FE colleges. It also advances possibilities for expanding the remit of the sector, based on the Education and Training Boards Act 2011 and the establishment of SOLAS. The importance of student retention and certification is also stressed and the plan proposes that these be used to measure successful delivery by providers of further or 'PLC' education, as currently termed and resourced.

Arising from the views and suggestions of diverse stakeholders, a broad range of possible initiatives has been identified in the plan and

these are presented under three main themes, as follows:

1. *Education Offering*
2. *Student Experience*
3. *Organisation Capacity*

Concentrating on these themes, the Institute has established a number of objectives and associated actions that identify how to improve and enhance the education and training provided, cater for the holistic needs of students, and build on current practice by becoming more efficient and streamlined as an organisation. In terms of implementation, specific goals and targets have been identified and articulated in a manner which will allow the Institute to work incrementally towards their achievement, while measuring progress along the way.



Cavan Institute's Main Campus Building

ABOUT CAVAN INSTITUTE

INSTITUTE PROFILE

Cavan Institute provides further education programmes on a full-time and part-time basis for students primarily from the North East region. Established in 1985 by the local statutory education authority, County Cavan Vocational Education Committee, the Institute continues to operate under the direction of the VEC and is overseen by a board of management, which consists of nominees from the VEC and the local authority, staff and students at the Institute, education professionals, and representatives of the local business and community sectors.

Full-time courses are delivered under the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) scheme, which is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). In the 2010-2011 academic year, 1,649 students were enrolled on full-time courses under this scheme, while a further 350 students pursued studies on a part-time basis leading to national awards. As indicated earlier, the number of full-time students attending the Institute has trebled over the past decade, as illustrated below.

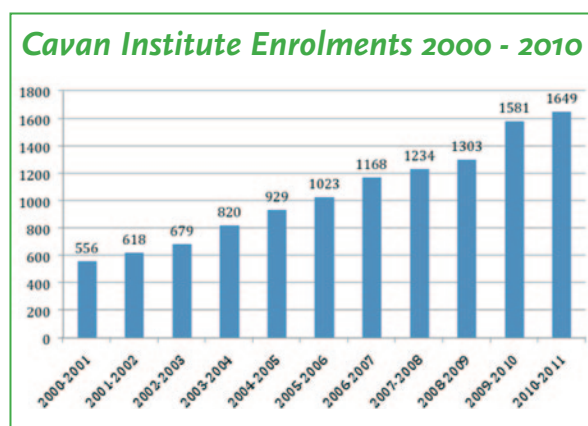


Figure 1: Growth in Enrolments 2000-2010

In terms of student demand, there are on average four applicants for every course place available. Significantly, the Institute puts forward the highest number of students for FETAC certification annually and it has been the largest DES provider of FETAC awards over recent years. Quality assurance agreements have been signed with a number of other awarding bodies. In addition to full-time provision, part-time/flexible learning courses are provided by the School of Lifelong Learning. Through this mode of delivery, students can avail of business and professional courses including degree programmes. The Institute also offers staff development initiatives, designed specifically to meet the needs of the local businesses, statutory bodies and the voluntary sector.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

Full-time courses are structured into five schools of education: the School of Business and Humanities; the School of Computing, Engineering and Science; the School of Health Care, Sport and Education; the School of Beauty Therapy and Hairdressing; and the School of Design, Performing Arts and Services. Each school is organised into departments. Part-time provision is organised through the School of Lifelong Learning. The range of courses on offer on a part-time basis is broadly similar to the full-time provision, with many courses leading to full national certification. The range of courses is influenced strongly by the anticipated demands from employers, with an increasing emphasis upon retraining and up-skilling. Modules on offer range from Level 5 to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

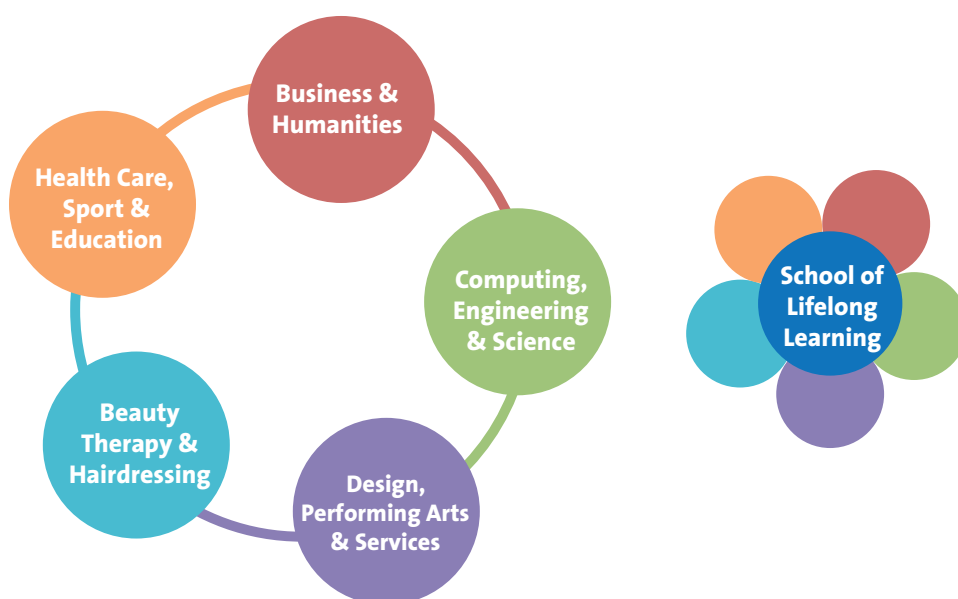
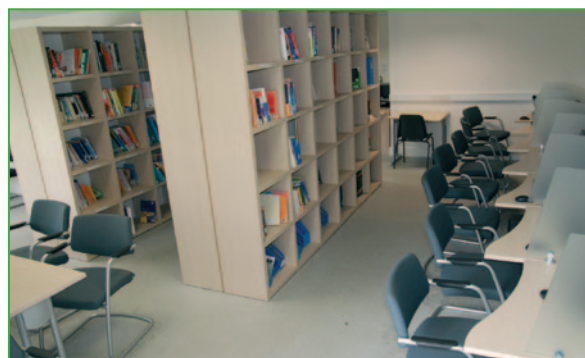


Figure 2: School Structure at Cavan Institute

CAMPUS

Since 2007, the Institute has been located on a purpose-built campus on the outskirts of Cavan town. Situated on a seven acre site, there is potential to expand facilities to cater for a constantly increasing student demand, mainly from across the North East region. The campus currently includes 55 classrooms and lecture theatres, as well as science and IT laboratories. Other specialised teaching facilities, such as trades workshops, hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, and a fully-fitted training kitchen, are complemented by a library, canteen, health centre and additional student resources. Particular emphasis has been placed on information technology (IT) capabilities. High-speed 100mb broadband is available through the local metropolitan area network, with video-conference technology and voice-over IP communications systems also in place.



ENROLMENTS & RETENTION

The Institute has approval to deliver 126 full-time courses and currently has the capacity to deliver 75 such courses, mainly at levels 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Growth in student numbers alone is not the only measure of the Institute's success.

More relevant are the rates of retention and certification among the student population. In 2009-2010, the average retention rate was 85%, with 94% of those students achieving certification. Such retention and certification rates have remained consistent over the last number of years.

PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

In partnership with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), the Institute offers a number of Level 7 and Level 8 courses whereby students complete the first year of these degree programmes in Cavan and progress to year two in AIT. Specific

partnerships have also been developed with Dundalk Institute of Technology (through the NEFHEA alliance) and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Further links have been established with colleges and universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Through the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS), all courses at the Institute provide progression routes to higher education degree, diploma and certificate programmes. The map below highlights some of the established links/ progression routes for students. Each of the colleges identified below is roughly one and a half hours' drive from Cavan town (average distance 100 kilometres).

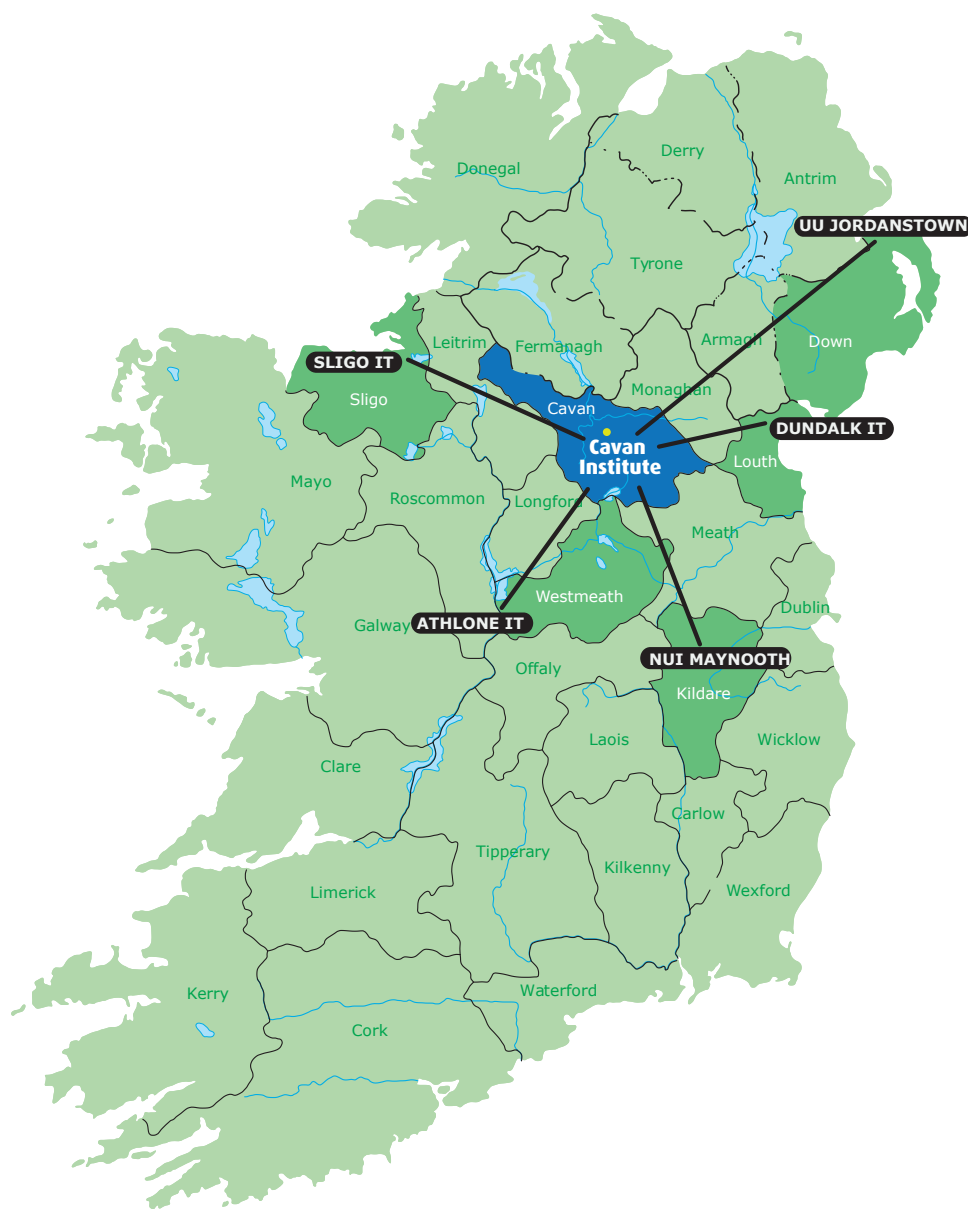


Figure 3: Indicative Progression Routes for CI Students

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

This section reviews the range of factors that have influenced the content of the strategic plan. The internal environment within which Institute management and staff have been working to date is considered, and external factors which will potentially pose challenges and opportunities during the next five years are identified.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Since its establishment, the Institute has developed expertise across a range of core areas. Curricula have been extended to address opportunities in emerging industry sectors and multimedia/web, health and technology courses, for example, are currently in high demand. Enrolment is at an all-time record, while, as already indicated, student retention and certification rates are consistently high.

➔ Cap on PLC Places

An important factor in the context of internal strategic planning is the nature of the allocation of resources to the Institute to facilitate the

high demand for further education places. A cap on student numbers was applied by the Department of Education and Skills in 2003. While this number has increased somewhat subsequently, it has remained static over the past 2-3 years. As the chart below shows, for more than five years now, the Institute has delivered education and training to at least 25% more students than provided for by the cap. County Cavan VEC and Cavan Institute continue to call for a review of this restriction nationally and for a greater allocation of resources in circumstances where demand can be met, based on proven ability to deliver.

➔ Changing Student Needs/Profile

In recent years, the profile of students studying either on a full-time or on a part-time basis has changed significantly. The student body now comprises a much wider age cohort, with varying levels of academic achievement and engagement with mainstream education. More and more students are seeking to reskill and upskill, and ever greater numbers are progressing to higher education on completion of their studies.

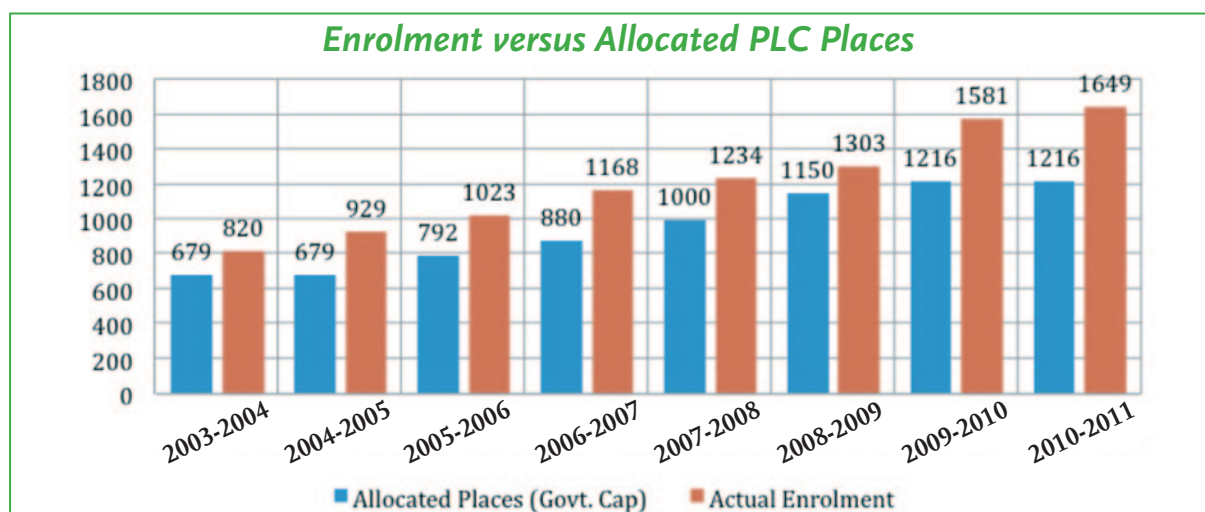


Figure 4: Enrolments versus Allocated PLC Places

The Institute has also witnessed increased demand for education and training from people in employment, who wish to guarantee the relevance of their skills and competences. Demand for more flexible modes of learning has increased and the Institute anticipates a continuing level of interest from those opting to study on this basis. There are significant opportunities to expand the provision of certified courses, and the content of courses/modules that might be offered, the preferred delivery modes and the scheduling of such courses has been the subject of research for this plan.

Increasing numbers of students have been away from the formal education system for a considerable period, and particular supports have been put in place to scaffold their transition back to full-time education. Others need additional support to develop independent learning skills, to adapt to the rigours of study and assessment, and occasionally to enhance literacy or numeracy skills. The staff have developed a reputation for providing individual attention to students and for fostering an “EduCare” culture through the Open Learning Centre and other initiatives. As the student base becomes increasingly diverse, extra demands are placed on the support structure and staff. How to cater for diversity remains a challenging priority.

➔ Staff & Structures to Support Growth

As a consequence of endeavouring to provide flexible and diverse programmes and meet the demand for part-time provision, the number and profile of staff has grown and changed over the years. In order to continue to provide a quality education and training service in core disciplines and for emerging employment opportunities, it is essential to deploy teachers who are experts in particular fields.

During the development of this plan, the Institute had 1,649 students studying on a full-time basis, 350 students studying on a part-time basis, an academic staff that numbered in excess of 100 (full-time and part-time) and a portfolio that extended to 75 courses. To continue to support students and staff and to deliver best-quality courses, the Institute recognises the necessity to expand services and structures, which may take the form of new or enhanced departments, additional support mechanisms and revised teams/groups.

➔ Curriculum Development

The range and diversity of subject matter covered within the existing portfolio is illustrated in Figure 5. Interest in new and expanded programmes has been identified through consultation with stakeholders.



Figure 5: Courses at Cavan Institute

Projections include a likely expansion in programme delivery related to new areas, such as the green and alternative energy sector, the tourism and hospitality industry, and the agri-foods sector. Opportunities also exist to meet the continuous professional development needs of industrial, commercial and service sector staff across the region. The Institute has proven its capacity to work with other agencies, such as the HSE, FÁS and SkillNet, in providing bespoke courses. It is well-placed, therefore, to become the lead agency in the delivery of some of the training and upskilling initiatives proposed under the new programme for government.

The curricula and requirements of awarding bodies are subject to on-going revision and this has implications for the maintenance of quality standards. Another important issue over the next five years is the changeover to a common awards system. This is already happening nationally and individual staff members have led standards developments groups in particular disciplines. The Institute is engaged currently in an extensive review of all programmes leading to awards at levels 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

🔗 Key Competences for Students & Graduates

Through consultation with local business organisations and other employers, it has become apparent that there are a number of core competences that are required in the workplace, regardless of vocational area. Likewise, consultation with representatives from the higher education sector has identified those attributes needed for success at third level. Such requirements are echoed in the recommendations of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report)*.

The *National Skills Strategy* alludes to a “generic skills portfolio” which includes fundamental skills in literacy, numeracy and IT, as well as communications and interpersonal skills, and skills related to higher-order thinking.

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework elaborates a set of competences that “citizens require for their personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability in our knowledge-based society.”¹

Students at the Institute have many reasons for pursuing further education and training: to gain employment, to progress to further study or simply for personal fulfilment. It is recognised that, in addition to vocational knowledge and skills, the generic competences and life skills to allow students to succeed in the future must be built into the design and delivery of programmes and should be considered an integral part of the overall student experience.

🔗 Resources & Facilities

The anticipated substantial demand on existing resources has been highlighted above. The implementation of this plan will involve an attempt to achieve a vision based on limited budgets. There is general recognition of the necessity to discover new ways to deliver services and to continue to pursue funding through existing streams and alternative sources so that the campus may be developed and the education offering enhanced.

The lack of adequate facilities in the area of sports is one of the Institute’s biggest deficits. This situation, thankfully, has not diminished the interest which students take in sports, nor has it impeded their success on the national



All-Ireland FE League and Championship Winners 2011

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf (Accessed 4/2/2011)

stage. The Gaelic football team won two All-Ireland titles in 2011, namely, the Further Education All-Ireland League and the Further Education All-Ireland Championship. Such performance (allied to success in previous years in handball, soccer and ladies football), is juxtaposed starkly with the absence of on-site facilities. Consequently, investment in on-campus sports facilities has been included as a priority in the plan.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

From the commencement of this formal planning initiative up to its launch date, the economic and education landscape in Ireland has shifted greatly. Some of the most important developments and trends which have emerged or are in the pipeline are summarised below.

➔ National Education Strategy

The launch of this plan follows on from a number of national publications, many of whose recommendations and findings have informed its development. These reports include:

- *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (January 2011)
- *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education* (October 2010)
- *Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-15*
- *Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a national skills strategy* (March 2007)

➔ Local Education Strategy

County Cavan VEC continues to evolve and plan for the development of all centres under its remit. Most recently, staff from the Institute contributed to the development of two key initiatives that will drive the growth and development of the VEC as a whole. The objectives and

goals of *Cavan Institute Strategic Plan 2012-2016* are aligned with the goals and objectives in:

- *County Cavan VEC Education Plan 2011-2016*
- *County Cavan VEC ICT Strategy 2010*

The Institute benefits from a shared mission with the VEC and is supported and facilitated by the various developments under planning and implementation within the committee.

➔ Education & Economic Developments

Notable developments have taken place in the last year and other changes are in train, which will have an impact on students within the further education and training sector, as well as on the national education and economic landscapes in the coming years. These developments include:

Education

- The restructuring of the Department of Education and Skills to include the education remit of FÁS, with the establishment of a new further education and training authority SOLAS
- The establishment of 16 new local education and training boards arising from the rationalisation of the VEC sector and the allocation of more varied and enhanced functions to those new boards
- The introduction of a national student contribution for PLC courses
- Initiatives in the *Government for National Recovery 2011-2016*² programme which include:
 - “The development of a new graduate and apprentice internship scheme, work placement programmes and further education opportunities for our young unemployed”

² http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2011/Programme_for_Government_2011.pdf (Accessed 7/3/11)

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- “The creation of a Jobs Fund which will expand eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance”
 - “Expanded training options for jobseekers across the VEC, further and higher education sectors to facilitate upskilling of the labour force”

- The amalgamation of the existing national qualifications and quality assurance bodies for students – FETAC, HETAC, NQAI and IUQB – into one new agency, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQAAI)
- The recommended rationalisation of the higher education sector with the possible emergence of clusters formed by groups of education establishments

Economic

Of particular concern has been:

- The drastic shrinking of the construction industry and the trades sector, with a spike in unemployment most notably among young males, together with large scale redundancies in a number of leading local and national companies, most notably Quinn Insurance which made over 300 people redundant in the North East region during 2010-2011. The effects of this have been felt in many off-shoot businesses which have had to let staff go as a result.
- The austerity measures being implemented by government in order to manage national debt.
- The current economic crisis which may continue for the lifetime of this plan. Such circumstances will present challenges for staff and for students. It is expected that demand for education and training will continue to increase, with exciting opportunities likely to emerge for the further education and training sector as a whole.

The proposed strategy describes how the Institute intends to continue to innovate, seek new opportunities and build on best practice, albeit under difficult circumstances.

OTHER FACTORS

Additional factors which are likely to have an influence on the future development of the Institute include:

- possible changes to the further education and training sector in Ireland, a topic which is addressed in more detail in the next section, and adjustments in the strategic direction/positioning of higher education colleges
- the delivery by private, online and other providers of courses similar to those delivered at the Institute
- revisions to the fragmented nature of the Higher Education Links Scheme, which facilitates access to courses delivered by Institutes of Technology or Universities on the basis of FETAC qualifications
- changing industry standards in vocational areas covered by existing courses
- continued availability of high speed broadband, links to the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) and access to state-of-the-art ICT for administration and learning
- obligations under the “Croke Park Agreement”, the implications of other developments under the social partnership model, and general legislative provisions.

To the fullest possible extent, the Institute has taken account of the above factors and is mindful of the need to be flexible and responsive to on-going changes in the external environment.

SUMMARY

Cavan Institute has demonstrated dramatic growth in recent years and especially in the past decade. Courses and services have expanded to meet demand. It has developed a reputation for facilitating students to achieve success and for providing innovative, market-led courses. An ability to develop and deliver niche programmes in emerging sectors, strong links with higher education colleges which provide progression opportunities for many students, and a strong emphasis on retention and certification have been important success factors. The Institute has a strong track record in delivering for its students and for enhancing the education profile of the North East region.

The Institute has evolved to meet demand, accommodating greater numbers of students than provided for under the enrolment cap introduced by the Department of Education

and Skills. It has established a reputation for being student-centred and for providing additional supports to ensure effective learning. However, there are identified deficits in service provision and, in order to fulfil its potential, the Institute will need to provide further resources, such as sports facilities and expanded ICT services, for example.

In a period of national austerity and in the likely absence of increased government funding for investment, it is essential to discover new ways to achieve more with existing financial resources. Developing partnerships to exploit synergies with other agencies involved in education and training represents one such possibility. The Institute should be alert to the potential opportunities presented by changes and developments in the external environment, and it must have the flexibility, determination and “can do” attitude required to respond to those opportunities.



Cavan Institute Graduation Day 2011

POSITIONING AND ROLE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

In conducting research into the broader context within which further education is delivered, both in Ireland and selected other countries, and from consultation with stakeholders, a number of issues have come to the fore.

1. There are significant opportunities for defining “Further Education” as a discrete sector within the overall spectrum of education and training provision in Ireland. Cavan Institute and counterpart FE colleges throughout the country constitute an important stepping stone on the education ladder and provide evidence to support the granting of appropriate status to the respective colleges. Currently FE is grouped under the very broad heading of “Further and Adult Education” provision. The Institute is neither a second-level nor a higher-education establishment, yet it is classified as the former for a range of purposes and recognised as the latter for others.
2. There is scope for consolidating and expanding the remit of a defined “Further Education” sector to include the delivery of additional vocationally orientated training programmes and apprenticeship schemes, which to now have fallen under the remit of FÁS and the Institutes of Technology. The model of work-based training could be broadened to other vocational areas and a wide range of innovative, tailored courses could be delivered under the auspices of the FE colleges.
3. In terms of the allocation of resources nationally and assessment of impact, the model of funding and resourcing the PLC sector operates on the basis of tradition

rather than annual performance. Little recognition is given to outputs or effectiveness. For example, retention and certification rates do not form part of the decision-making process as a basis on which to grant funding. It is possible to adopt and apply a new way of resourcing further education which is outcomes-based rather than continue with an automatic renewal of historical inputs. Also worth considering is the recognition of students studying on a part-time basis, for the purposes of allocation of resources, since more and more students opt for this mode of delivery.

Each of the above proposals has the potential to strengthen and consolidate educational opportunities nationally, while delivering value for money and making the best use of scarce resources on a regional basis.

CURRENT PROVISION

In this country at present, “Further and Adult Education” is an umbrella title for all education that takes place beyond second-level schooling but outside of the third level system. The provision is diverse in its breadth and purpose and, in terms of students and delivery modes, encompasses all opportunities provided through PLC programmes, under the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), through Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, through adult literacy, community education and what are traditionally termed “night classes”. There is no single identifiable remit or purpose to this “second-chance education” model, yet extremely valuable outcomes are achieved by each of the above sub-sectors.

There are, therefore, distinct opportunities to delineate further what occurs within this broad sphere so that the remit of each sub-sector is clearly understood, and so that the learning paths and purposes become transparent for all stakeholders.

CENTRALISED PROVISION OF FE

Relocating “Further Education” from under the umbrella of “Further and Adult Education” could provide further legitimacy and currency to the opportunities and progression routes available to students who study at a further education college, with centralised provision of certified courses and clear links to the third-level or higher education sector.

A cap of approximately 32,688 PLC places is currently in force nationally for the FE sector. It would appear to make sound economic sense to lift this cap and invest in education and training at a time when upskilling is of clear benefit to the economy. To supplement such an initiative, new and innovative means of using and distributing existing resources must be identified. One solution is to allocate PLC places centrally to a reduced number of dedicated FE colleges. As a result, students would receive their education in well-resourced, fit-for-purpose further education colleges, which are in a position to deliver economies of scale and become centres of excellence. Centralised provision is also recognised internationally as providing the best outcomes. For instance, the Ministry of Education in Finland has “encouraged vocational education and training providers to increase their cooperation, aiming to collect the provision of VET into bigger and more effective units” (Kyrö, 2006).³

Rather than allocate a small number of PLC places throughout a large scattering of educational establishments, many of which are resourced and designed for the provision of second-level education, it would be more

effective in the long term to build up further education and training provision through distributing these PLC places centrally, with locations in key geographic areas, including those not already having the benefit of a higher education institution. As Cavan Institute exemplifies, the location of a further education college in a region without an Institute of Technology or a University improves access and participation by students, some of whom do not have the resources or indeed the points to progress immediately to higher education.

This Institute represents a model for how this sector could develop, based on centralised provision. It is more than just the range and content of courses that sets an Institute apart from general providers of PLC programmes. Also of importance is the culture and ethos which allows for a holistic approach towards meeting the specific needs and aspirations of students some of whom are receiving a second chance or alternative route to access higher education. This type of pre-college experience cannot be replicated fully in a second-level school or college.

AN EXPANDED REMIT FOR THE FE SECTOR

The subsuming of the educational remit of FÁS within the designation of the Department of Education and Skills and the establishment of SOLAS is to be welcomed as a positive initiative with the potential for achieving efficiencies and economies of scale within further education and training.

The Education and Training Boards Bill (2011) provides for an expanded role for the 16 new education and training boards, including the provision of support services to other education and training service providers, and the delivery of training for bodies who provide funding for this (e.g. SOLAS).⁴

³ Kyrö, M. (2006) *Vocational Education & Training in Finland*. Available from <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/13029.aspx> (Accessed 8/3/2011)

⁴ http://www.education.ie/admin/servlet/blobservlet/bill_gen_sch_educ_train_boards_bill (Accessed 16/11/11)

The Institute has identified an on-going need among local industry and other employers for continuous professional development, a remit discharged to date under the “One-Step Up” and other similar programmes operated by FÁS. Expertise exists within the Institute to deliver many of the courses that were suggested during consultation with employers in the preparation of this strategic plan. This is one example of how Cavan Institute and other further education colleges might deliver training on behalf of SOLAS. The Institute has in the past successfully delivered training for other state agencies as part of service level agreements and it is well placed to engage with SOLAS in the delivery of training to expanded target groups under similar agreements.

The Institute already delivers trades courses in a number of disciplines and could offer a range of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programmes. Not only might it supply the training element of such courses, hitherto provided by the Institutes of Technology and in FÁS workshops, it could also support the apprentices through the work-based element of their course, as is currently the case with all students at the Institute for whom work experience is an integral element of full-time programmes. The potential exists to deliver all functions associated with taking apprentices through both the theoretical and practical elements of their training. A move in this direction might involve closer

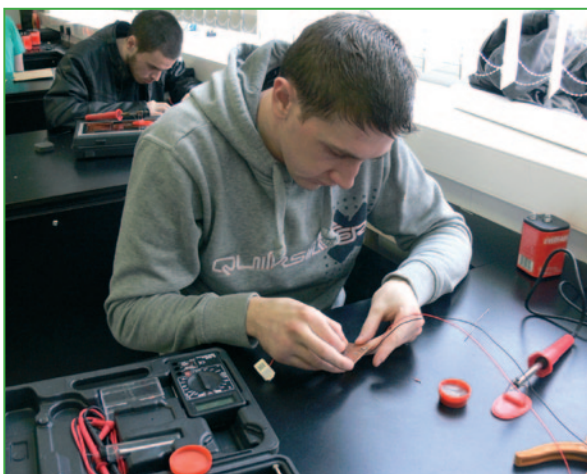
co-operation with the Institutes of Technology and this would be welcomed.

Another reason why the FE sector is best placed to provide for apprentice-type trainees is the evidence ⁵ that shows some of these students require extra tuition in the basics of mathematics and science, which are essential for success on many apprenticeships. The possibility of delivering a pre-apprenticeship training programme was raised during the consultation process for this plan. This element would allow the particular FE college to identify and provide for the needs of those students for whom the theoretical aspects might prove challenging. It is easier to identify such needs when the same establishment has responsibility for the total provision. In this way, tailored interventions in the form of tutorials or one-to-one tuition could be offered at appropriate stages.

RESOURCING THE FE SECTOR

As has been suggested above, increased economies of scale and greater efficiencies could be gained in the delivery of further education and training through a network of centralised, dedicated FE colleges, rather than as an add-on to the remit of second level schools. Allied with this is the conviction that centralised provision improves student performance, as demonstrated by criteria such as retention, certification and progression rates.

In order to improve the quality of the education offering which is funded through the PLC programme, providers should be accountable for the prudent use of their budget allocations. Rather than continue to fund on the basis of what is in situ, the sector and the services delivered would be enhanced were providers to be resourced on the basis of a proven capacity to deliver. Strong performance would be rewarded with an increase in funding and, consequently, resources would be allocated to those providers likely to use them to best advantage.



Electronics students

⁵ <http://arrow.dit.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=ltcds> (Accessed 29/05/2011)

It is recognised that some students, for a variety of reasons, are unable to participate in full-time programmes run on the traditional ‘on-campus’, ‘9-5’, weekday basis. A significant cohort of such students would be able to participate in further education were it to be provided on a more flexible basis. For the purposes of allocating resources, students who opt to study via part-time, flexible modes should be recognised as whole-time equivalents. This recommendation has been put forward in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* and is applicable equally to the field of further education.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In conducting the research and on-going consultation for this strategic plan, the Institute examined how other selected countries structure the provision of vocationally orientated education and training and how it is resourced. Of those countries, similar to Ireland, which provide a more generalised education programme during compulsory school years, Scotland provides the best example of how the sector has carved

out a distinct and identifiable remit for further education and training which is geared towards promoting access and progression. Vocational education and training in Scotland is provided mainly through a network of 43 FE colleges. As this Institute already has a very successful partnership with one such college, a first-hand knowledge of how the system operates is readily available.

The identified role of further education colleges in Scotland is to provide education and training for students pursuing a vocationally focused career path. They offer a range of options for school leavers and adults and constitute an important stepping-stone for students who wish to progress to higher education. Co-operation between the colleges, through the sharing of resources and joint initiatives, is a notable feature of the system. Furthermore, each college works diligently in fostering relationships with employers who assist by delivering quality work placement opportunities to students.⁶ Work-based learning is also facilitated within the Scottish sector. This Institute endeavours to provide similar opportunities for students, and

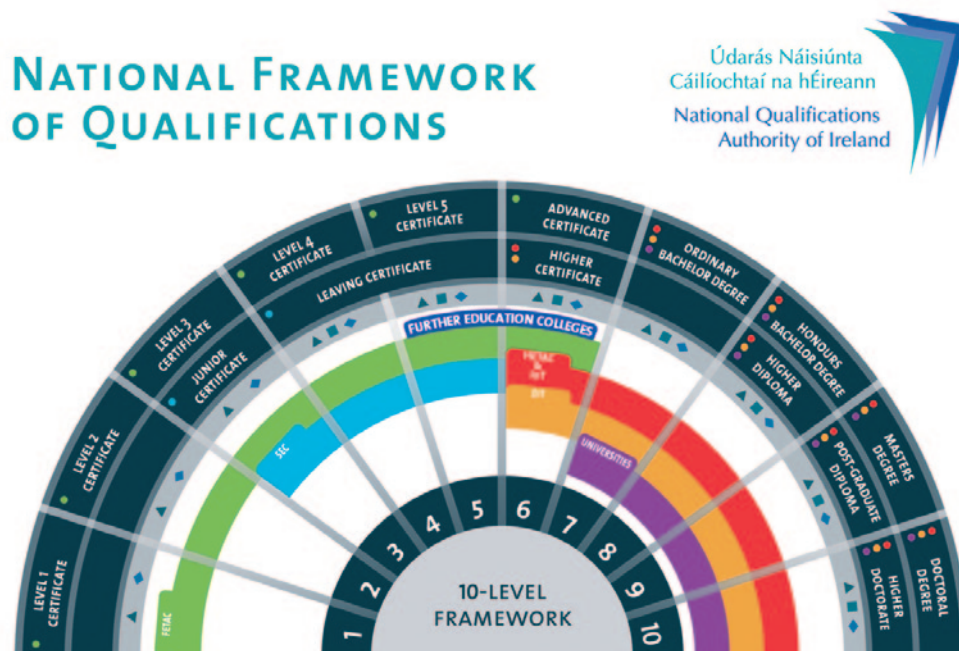


Figure 6: An Identified Space for FE Colleges on the Irish Education Spectrum⁷

⁶ <http://www.scotlandscollleges.ac.uk/curriculum/enterprise/employers-engaging-with-colleges.html> (Accessed 7/3/2011)

⁷ http://www.nqai.ie/FanDiagram/nqai_nfq_o8.html (Accessed 8/3/2011)

the aspiration to implement a similar approach to the Scottish model forms a substantial and critical element of the ambition outlined in this document.

Unlike Scotland, FE colleges in Ireland receive little official recognition as key providers for many students en route to higher education, nor has their role been identified explicitly in the recently published Higher Education Strategy. The experience of this Institute provides ample evidence that where a defined progression route to higher education exists many students will pursue that route. Figure 6 on the previous page, adapted from the NQAI, proposes a unique space on the education spectrum for FE colleges in Ireland. The diagram illustrates how the FE sector dovetails with colleges along the higher education arc, thereby making transparent the options for students taking a progression route.

Over time, and once a widespread network of well-resourced further education colleges has been established, these institutions could become a hub from which community education, adult basic education and youth initia-

tives might be delivered on an outreach basis in partnership with the adult education sector, thereby leading to further economies of scale and co-ordinated delivery of services. Counter-part FE colleges in Northern Ireland⁸ represent a good example of how this system can work effectively and how synergies may be achieved.

SUMMARY

Ultimately, the further education sector in Ireland needs to be accorded its own separate and unique identity. Its remit needs to be delineated clearly and the work of parallel agencies and providers streamlined in order to maximise resources. There is an important role for all of the providers currently operating in this notional space, and best use must be made of existing expertise in allocating responsibility for education and training for discrete sectors. Finally, the place and purpose of the further education and training sector on the academic spectrum needs to be recognised and promoted. As shown in Figure 7, there are many routes through education to the world of work and the further education sector constitutes an important stepping stone on that path.

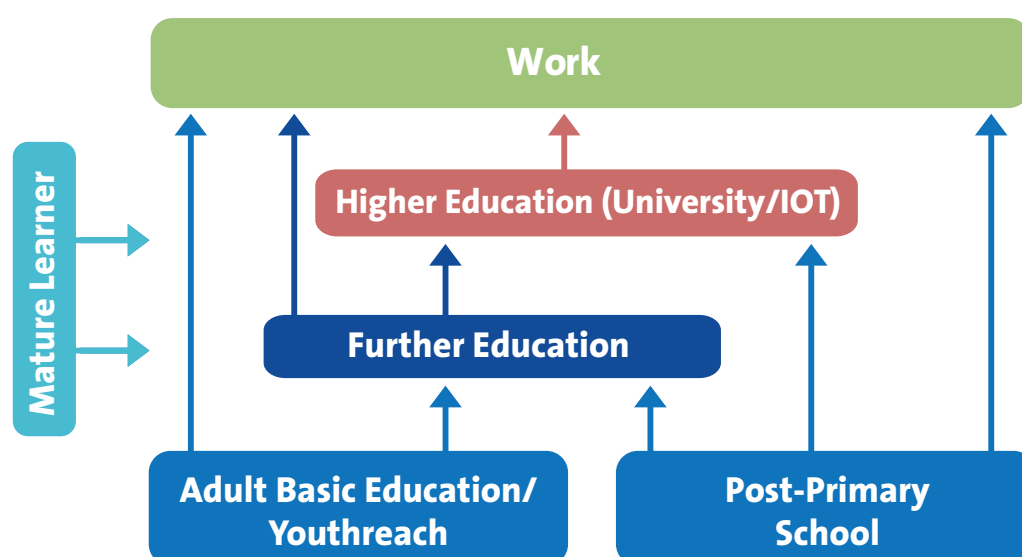


Figure 7: Alternative Paths Through Education to Work

⁸ <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/further-and-higher-education/further-education/fe.htm> (Accessed 8/3/2011)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND AIMS

Three goals have been identified as the strategic focus for the Institute over the period 2012-2016. These will focus on:

- GOAL 1:** Education Offering
- GOAL 2:** Student Experience
- GOAL 3:** Organisation Capacity

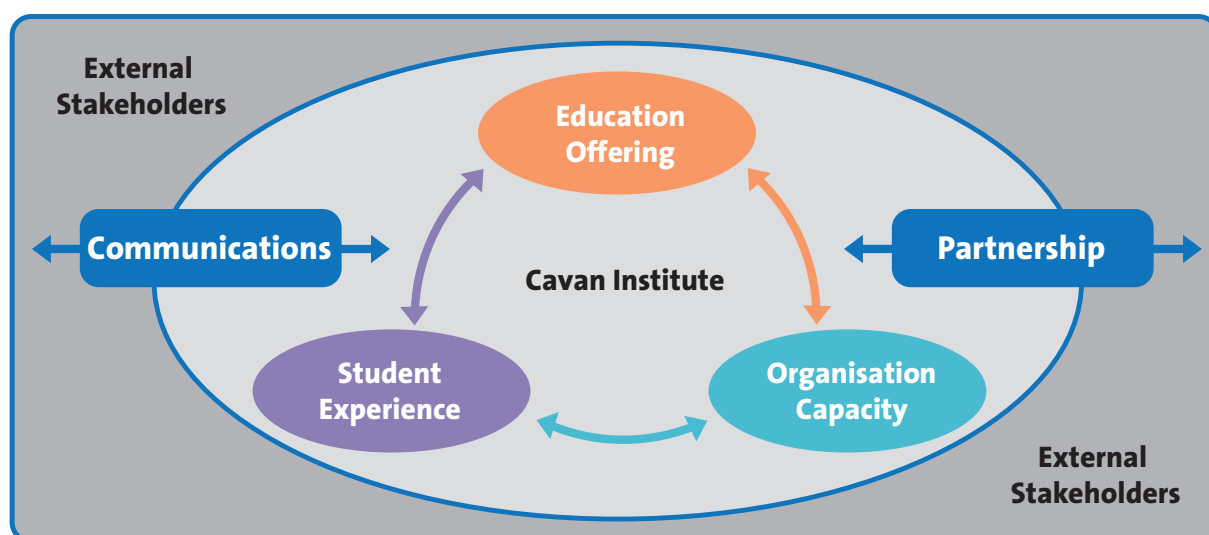


Figure 8: Strategic Priorities & Related Cross-Cutting Themes

Two cross-cutting themes – communications and partnership – are integral to the attainment of these goals.

- A.** Communications has been central to the success achieved to date. The Institute will maintain a focus on this vital dimension both internally and externally by using ICT networks and other media to interact with stakeholders or for running and participating in events, both on- and off-campus
- B.** A partnership attitude and related approaches have also contributed significantly so far, and the Institute will continue to make every

effort to maintain this focus, through engaging with employers, with state and voluntary agencies, and with other providers across the education and training spectrum. Partnership with other providers in the new Cavan/Monaghan Education and Training Board will present opportunities for improved efficiencies in service delivery and use of resources.

The aspirations underpinning each goal are explained and further details are included in the set of objectives aligned to each goal, as shown on the next page.

GOAL 1: EDUCATION OFFERING

The Institute will provide quality-assured education and training programmes, and deliver diverse, needs-led curricula, which support progression, meet current/future labour market demands and may be accessed through modes of delivery designed to suit the individual student.

Objectives: This goal will be achieved by:

- a) striving for excellence in teaching and learning
- b) maintaining the currency and suitability of academic programmes
- c) enhancing education and training provision and expanding into new subject areas.

GOAL 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The Institute will provide a supportive educational environment and a high-quality, holistic learning experience to enable students to fulfil their personal goals and realise their potential, in the process of becoming knowledgeable, skilled and confident graduates.

Objectives: This goal will be achieved by:

- a) supporting students to achieve their potential academically
- b) providing for extra-curricular needs of all students
- c) fostering a culture of civic engagement
- d) ensuring that students develop practical skills and gain meaningful work experience
- e) promoting the European and wider international dimension of education and training
- f) facilitating access, transfer and progression for students and graduates.

GOAL 3: ORGANISATION CAPACITY

The Institute will strive to strengthen its position as a leading provider of further education and training by achieving greater efficiency and quality standards, and by supporting the on-going development of facilities, resources and staff.

Objectives: This goal will be achieved by:

- a) continuing to innovate and build on best practice, and through demonstrating progress as a model for FE provision nationally
- b) developing an integrated campus which is resourced appropriately to deliver a broad range of courses and associated student services
- c) ensuring that staff are highly competent in their roles, experts in their specific fields and supported to perform all aspects of their duties
- d) identifying new sources of funding and income-generation possibilities
- e) pursuing efficiencies in how we use our resources.

The next section, *Implementation*, expands upon each of the above objectives. Each objective is defined in terms of indicative actions, which in turn are supported by Key Performance Indicators (or targets) and timelines to help measure on-going progress against planned outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL 1: EDUCATION OFFERING

The Institute will provide quality-assured education and training programmes, and deliver diverse, needs-led curricula, which support progression, meet current/future labour market demands and may be accessed through modes of delivery designed to suit the individual student.

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
1.1. Strive for excellence in teaching & learning.	1.1.1 Ensure that staff are experts in their specialist fields, and deploy the knowledge and skills of all employees to the fullest possible extent.	All academic staff at the Institute are registered with the Teaching Council. Academic staff attend relevant subject planning meetings. Academic staff have access to shared resources through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).	By 2012 By 2014
	1.1.2 Develop and implement an enhanced Teaching and Learning strategy.	The Institute's Teaching and Learning Strategy is published.	By 2014
	1.1.3 Support the integration of new technologies into teaching and learning and provide staff and students with access to the most up-to-date resources in a quality teaching environment.	An annual review of teachers' resource/technology needs is conducted. Staff are trained in new teaching techniques relevant to their area.	By 2013 <i>(and annually at year end thereafter)</i> By 2013
	1.1.4 Introduce new delivery modes to support flexible/blended learning by part-time and/or distance learners.	The delivery of a number of course modules is piloted using blended learning techniques.	By 2015
1.2 Maintain the currency and suitability of academic programmes.	1.2.1 Offer programmes of study leading to nationally and internationally recognised awards and maintain appropriate standards.	All relevant quality assurance agreements are renewed and updated, starting with the FETAC QA Agreement.	By 2012 <i>(and thereafter as required)</i>
	1.2.2 Establish a Business Forum, in partnership with other agencies, in order to consult with and engage the expertise of the local and regional business community and other employers.	A Business Forum and networks of specific expertise are established.	By 2012
	1.2.3 Support staff to become members of relevant professional bodies and associations and to take an active role on programme development teams.	Staff are members of professional bodies related to their area of expertise. Academic staff engage with or lead programme development teams.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
	1.2.4 Engage business representatives and other subject matter experts to deliver workshops, act as guest lecturers and provide technical expertise.	Members of the Business Forum and other industry contacts/experts are invited to engage in programme development and to address students, either informally or as guest lecturers.	By 2013 <i>(and on-going)</i>
	1.2.5 Conduct on-going monitoring and evaluation of course content and learning outcomes to ensure relevance and mapping to industry standards and new technologies/best practice.	All programmes and services undergo a critical evaluation.	Ongoing
1.3 Enhance education and training provision and expanding into new subject areas.	1.3.1 Strengthen links with local agencies, businesses and education providers, and work in partnership to share best practice and resources to help secure the economic future of the region.	A Business Forum and networks of specific expertise are established.	By 2012
		Demonstrable use is made of the Institute's facilities by external stakeholders.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>
		Education and training is delivered on an outreach basis.	By 2016
	1.3.2 Increase the availability of courses at Levels 5 & 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).	The Institute is engaged in further programme development at levels 5 and 6.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>
		Approval is sought from DES for delivery of additional level 5 and 6 courses.	By 2013
	1.3.3 Conduct regular needs analyses with key stakeholders to identify labour market and education trends, and seek opportunities to provide related courses on a full-time or part-time basis.	Industry needs analyses/labour market reviews are conducted.	By 2013 <i>(and again in 2015)</i>
	1.3.4 Pursue opportunities for students to study to degree level at the Institute, through partnerships with other colleges.	A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed with selected higher education establishments to consolidate partnership links.	By 2013
		The Institute is approved as an outreach centre for programmes at levels 6, 7 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.	By 2016
	1.3.5 Expand the provision of practical, skills-based courses and investigate options to deliver extra training programmes.	Courses are being run in new areas, subject to resources and demand.	By 2013
	1.3.6 Investigate the provision of work-based learning options, pursue Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for specific programmes and provide new delivery modes which include online learning.	RPL and work-based learning are integrated into programme development, where relevant.	By 2013
		A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is in development and online learning is delivered on a pilot basis, with a plan for its roll-out already established.	By 2014
		Semesterisation is piloted.	By 2014

GOAL 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The Institute will provide a supportive educational environment and a high-quality, holistic learning experience to enable students to fulfil their personal goals and realise their potential, in the process of becoming knowledgeable, skilled and confident graduates.

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
2.1 Support students to achieve their full potential.	2.1.1 Support students to access funding, where eligible, and put in place necessary learning supports to suit their needs.	The services of the Open Learning Centre (OLC) continue to expand.	By 2012 (and on-going)
	2.1.2 Support students to develop independent learning skills and to take responsibility for their own learning.	The OLC and guidance staff continue to provide independent learning skills workshops.	By 2012 (and on-going)
		All staff engage in promoting independent learning.	By 2012
		Policies, facilities and networks are in place to support learner autonomy.	By 2013
	2.1.3 Provide supports to students through tutorials, workshops, language classes, the student-tutor mentor model, the class tutor function and the Open Learning Centre (OLC).	Students have access to tutorials, workshops, literacy and numeracy support, and languages tuition, as required.	By 2013
	2.1.4 Design learning programmes that promote integration of content and assessment and focus on the core competencies required for academic achievement.	Programmes of study meet national/international standards and are approved and validated by the relevant awarding bodies.	By 2016
	2.1.5 Investigate new ways to deliver education and training and to distribute the teaching and assessment schedule so as to improve retention and provide optimum conditions for student success.	At least an 85% student completion/retention rate and a 95% certification rate are maintained.	By 2016
2.2 Provide for the extra-curricular needs of students.	2.2.1 Facilitate feedback networks and mechanisms for students, including the Student Council, the Class Representative System and student representation on the Board of Management	Information is available to students on all services via the student intranet, "Student Online Services" (SOS).	By 2012
		The Student Council continues to work towards supporting and representing students at all levels.	By 2013
	2.2.2 Enhance structures whereby students may access support and information, as required.	A range of communications and support networks and services are in place.	By 2013
	2.2.3 Build upon and enhance student services.	Existing services (shop, canteen, health centre, common rooms) are enhanced/improved.	By 2013
		Additional student services and facilities have been identified and are provided.	

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
	2.2.4 Explore options to provide on-site sports facilities and to develop outdoor education and adventure facilities	Funding and other initiatives are pursued to enhance sports facilities on campus and to provide access to outdoor education and adventure facilities.	By 2015
2.3 Foster a culture of civic engagement.	2.3.1 Promote fundraising and charity work by students and staff.	The Institute identifies and supports key charities each year.	By 2012 (and annually)
	2.3.2 Facilitate recycling and promote eco-awareness throughout the Institute.	Annual eco-awareness raising campaigns are organised. Initiatives have been implemented to encourage all staff and students to conserve resources and to recycle.	By 2012 (and annually)
	2.3.3 Acknowledge students for their involvement in charitable, civic and project work.	Recognition is given annually to a student or group of students for their involvement in social responsibility activities.	By 2012
	2.3.4 Promote awareness of the work carried out by the community and voluntary sector, the Gardai and civil defences forces, and strengthen links between such groups and the student body.	Students are facilitated to become involved with the community and voluntary sector and to learn about their work through workshops, guest lectures, projects and competitions. Students engage with and support the work of the Gardai, the Community Police and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes through the College Care initiative and other activities. A focus on the competence of social and civic engagement is built into the design of programmes, where relevant.	By 2012 (and on-going) By 2016
2.4 Ensure that students develop practical skills and gain meaningful work place experience.	2.4.1 Focus on current industry practices and techniques through inviting guest speakers, attending industry events, trade shows, exhibitions and field trips related to the curriculum.	Visits to relevant trade shows and industry events are scheduled on the academic calendar.	By 2012 (and annually)
		Students showcase their work through hosting in-house events, made open to the public.	By 2012 (and annually)
		Members of the Business Forum and other industry contacts/experts are identified and scheduled to advise students, either informally or as guest lecturers.	By 2013 (and annually)
	2.4.2 Develop and build on relationships with work experience providers.	A work placement team is established to streamline all aspects of student placement.	By 2014
	2.4.3 Review the scheduling and duration of the work experience/practical placement as part of each programme of study.	Work experience is integrated into all new/revised FETAC programmes and those of other awarding bodies, as required.	By 2016

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
	2.4.4 Profile the importance of general employability skills.	<p>A network of expertise is established through the Business Forum.</p> <p>An emphasis on employability and communications skills is built into the design of all revised programmes.</p> <p>The students' spirit of entrepreneurship is fostered through various initiatives.</p>	By 2015
2.5 Promote the European and wider international dimension of education and training.	2.5.1 Facilitate students to progress their education through colleges or universities outside of Ireland and prepare students to work or study abroad.	<p>Additional formalised links are established with overseas universities and colleges to facilitate graduate progression.</p> <p>Workshops and other initiatives are delivered to enhance students' knowledge of the practicalities of studying or working abroad.</p>	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>
	2.5.2 Harness the cultural diversity of the student body, and encourage and support students to take a lead role in promoting their culture.	<p>Students establish clubs or societies through which to promote their identity, language and culture.</p> <p>Equality is embedded throughout all aspects of college life.</p>	By 2012
	2.5.3 Promote opportunities for international students to enrol at the Institute.	Links are established with relevant agencies and bodies that promote Ireland as a study destination for overseas students.	By 2013
	2.5.4 Develop European links, build international partnerships and identify related funding opportunities.	Participation in international student projects is increased.	By 2013
	2.5.5 Foster a culture of language learning, with the option to learn new languages including those of emerging economies.	<p>An analysis of emerging language skills needs is completed.</p> <p>Potential links are explored with partners in emerging economies so as to support the meaningful introduction of Ab Initio language programmes at the Institute.</p>	By 2014
	2.5.6 Provide students and staff with opportunities to participate in international study or work experience programmes/projects.	<p>The number of students participating in European or international mobilities is increased.</p> <p>Staff are given opportunities to participate in international mobility schemes.</p>	By 2016
2.6 Facilitate access, transfer and progression for students and graduates.	2.6.1 Develop and run programmes – either solely or in partnership with other agencies/organisations – aimed at facilitating students to access further education and/or supporting students who do not meet minimum entry requirements.	<p>Further initiatives are piloted and mainstreamed to promote access to education and training by students who are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Students access courses on a part-time, off-site or outreach basis, depending on their needs.</p>	<p>By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i></p> <p>By 2016</p>

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
	2.6.2 Use existing networks and new media to communicate knowledge about courses, services and progression options to stakeholders.	Timely and relevant communications are issued to prospective and current students via the Institute's website, Facebook and Twitter, and other relevant online or traditional networks.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>
		As part of the agreed MOU, IOTs are encouraged to include information about progression opportunities via further education colleges (and the higher education links scheme) in their promotional literature/material and presentations to schools.	By 2013
		A Communications, Media and Branding Strategy is published.	By 2014
	2.6.3 Establish a Graduates' Association and maintain online connections with all students, past and present.	An Alumni Association is formed, and communications with and between members involves a dedicated Facebook page, a reunion or other event, and newsletters emailed on a bi-annual basis.	By 2013
	2.6.4 Strengthen partnerships with Institutes of Technology (IOTs)/Universities in order to provide seamless transition for students to further study for students who wish to progress.	Memoranda of Understanding are signed with key partner IOTs. The Institute belongs to a cluster of educational establishments, which also include representation from the IOT and University sectors.	By 2013 By 2016



GOAL 3: ORGANISATION CAPACITY

The Institute will strive to strengthen its position as a leading provider of further education by achieving greater efficiency and quality standards, and by supporting the on-going development of facilities, resources and staff.

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
3.1 Continue to innovate and build on best practice, demonstrating success as a model for FE provision nationally.	3.1.1 Implement initiatives that improve student attendance, retention and certification rates, including electronic registers and new scheduling and delivery options.	<p>Policies and practices are in place to ensure maximum attention is given to meeting the needs of students and to supporting them at all levels.</p> <p>Semesterisation is piloted.</p> <p>Student retention and certification are maintained at minimum rates of 85% and 95% respectively.</p>	<p>By 2013</p> <p>By 2014</p> <p>By 2016</p>
	3.1.2 Pursue a partnership approach with selected providers of higher education to promote a seamless continuity of progression on the NFQ.	<p>Memoranda of Understanding are signed with key partner IOTs.</p> <p>The Institute belongs to a cluster of educational establishments, which also include representation from the IOT and University sectors.</p>	<p>By 2013</p> <p>By 2016</p>
	3.1.3 Maintain awareness among stakeholders through issuing cohesive, timely, accurate and streamlined communications using an appropriate range of media.	A Communications, Media and Branding Strategy is published.	By 2014
	3.1.4 Promote a model of best practice based on centralised provision of PLC courses, which allows for a wider course offering, better student outcomes, value for money and economies of scale.	<p>Courses are available on a modular basis, where feasible.</p> <p>Online/blended learning is built into all revised programmes.</p> <p>New services and courses are offered to meet labour market needs.</p> <p>Selected courses are delivered off-site through identified outreach centres.</p>	By 2016
3.2 Develop an integrated campus which is resourced appropriately to deliver a broad range of courses and associated student services.	3.2.1 Ensure the availability of Internet and ICT facilities and subject-related materials, as required.	<p>An annual review of teacher and classroom resource needs is conducted.</p> <p>Students and staff access college networks remotely, including SOS (students) and SharePoint (staff).</p> <p>Publication of the Institute's IT and IS Strategy</p> <p>A VLE is in development and blended learning has been piloted.</p>	<p>By 2012</p> <p>By 2012</p> <p>By 2013</p> <p>By 2014</p>
	3.2.2 Review accommodation requirements annually.	<p>Funding is sought to enhance and upgrade existing accommodation.</p> <p>In addition to wireless network access, a drop-in IT lab/project room is available</p>	<p>By 2012 (and annually thereafter)</p> <p>By 2014</p>

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
		in each block on campus and additional space is provided for students to study or conduct research with access to IT.	
	3.2.3 Develop and expand the Library and the Open Learning Centre.	Expanded library policies and procedures are in place, including arrangements for student access to library loans. The Open Learning Centre contains up-to-date learning supports and materials.	By 2013
	3.2.4 Enhance administration systems to support the full-time/part-time student population and staff.	The existing admissions structure evolves into a dedicated Admissions Office and team which deals with all aspects of student records, applications, transfers, exam registrations, Garda vetting, etc. The existing IT support structure becomes a dedicated IT Department, which supports a state-of-the art integrated IT network for teaching, learning and administration.	By 2014
	3.2.5 Explore options to provide on-site sports facilities and to develop outdoor education and adventure facilities	Funding and other initiatives are pursued to enhance sports facilities on campus and to provide access to outdoor education and adventure facilities.	By 2015
3.3 Ensure staff are highly competent in their roles, experts in their specific fields and supported to perform all aspects of their duties.	3.3.1 Implement a mentoring programme for new staff, and define and document the role of subject tutor, class tutor, special needs assistants, administrative and ancillary staff.	A mentoring system is in place for all new staff. The staff handbook is accessible online. An induction programme for new staff is provided on an annual basis.	By 2012
	3.3.2 Ensure that academic staff have the relevant experience and qualifications (as laid down by Teaching Council of Ireland) and provide opportunities for continuous professional development and upskilling for all staff, including access to international CPD and/or exchange programmes.	All academic staff are registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland. Institute staff engage in continuous professional development. All academic staff have access to shared resources through the VLE.	By 2012 By 2014
	3.3.3 Enhance staff facilities and teaching resources.	An annual review of teachers' resource/technology needs is conducted. New or updated materials/technologies have been procured, as resources permit. All staff have adequate work stations, storage space and access to IT facilities.	By 2012 <i>(and annually thereafter)</i>
	3.3.4 Promote a spirit of collegiality and the sharing of expertise among staff, foster team building through staff events and implement initiatives that promote the personal well-being of all staff.	The Sports and Social Committee continues to organise events and activities based on staff interests.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>

Objectives	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Target
	3.3.5 Investigate ways to streamline the administrative workload and promote greater use of IT-based communications systems.	It is widely used to streamline administrative functions and communications.	By 2012 <i>(and on-going)</i>
	3.3.6 Support initiatives taken by staff to integrate real-world examples/experience into the classroom, and to promote and pilot new teaching methodologies.	Staff are involved in the development of a VLE to support academic delivery. Timetable and schemes of work reflect initiatives, collaboration between teachers and new delivery methodologies.	By 2014
3.4 Identify new sources of funding and income generation possibilities.	3.4.1 Collaborate with state education and training providers/agencies.	Contracts are secured to deliver innovative training programmes. Good working relationships exist between staff and a range of outside agencies with responsibility for the procurement and delivery of education and training services.	By 2012
	3.4.2 Develop commercial programmes for specific clients or purposes.	A CPD needs-analysis is conducted among local industry and state agencies. Courses have been developed and run on a self-financing basis to address local/regional need.	By 2013 By 2014
	3.4.3 Attract international students.	Links are established with relevant agencies and bodies that promote Ireland as a study destination for overseas students.	By 2013
3.5 Pursue efficiencies in the use of resources.	3.5.1 Make best use of ICT networks, content management systems and online media to communicate effectively with stakeholders.	The online enrolment system is the single means by which to apply to the Institute and it is used to capture all relevant data to streamline registration and administrative systems. Publication of the Institute's Communications, Media and Branding Strategy.	By 2012 By 2014
	3.5.2 Support efforts to streamline delivery of services.	The timetable reflects optimised use of teaching space and other resources.	By 2013
	3.5.3 Promote economies of scale and value for money in all procurement of supplies and services, and reinforce the policy to help ensure prudent use of resources.	A procurement and supplier management system is in place and cost savings are achieved in the acquisition and utilisation of goods and services.	By 2014

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The proposals contained in this strategic plan have been reviewed by the Board of Management of the Institute and by County Cavan VEC. Responsibility for delivery of the stated objectives rests with the director of the Institute, supported by the deputy directors, the senior management team and all staff colleagues.

➔ Implementation by Steering Group

The indicative actions and Key Performance Indicators relate to achievable targets in line with the aims of the strategy. A Balanced Scorecard Framework will be used to record and communicate the specific tasks, resources, interim deadlines and other project management issues related to each phase of the process. The *Steering Group* will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the implementation of the plan and to review the scorecard.

➔ Implementation at School Level

The Institute's five schools are the primary academic units through which full-time courses are delivered. The head of each school will design an operational plan annually which will feed into the overall themes and objectives of this strategy. Similarly, the director of adult education will provide an operational plan for the School of Lifelong Learning.

➔ Implementation by Postholders

Staff members who hold posts of responsibility, (assistant principal or special duties) will also act as the drivers of initiatives. A review of the 'Schedule of Posts of Responsibility' took place at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year and posts were revised in light of the priority areas identified within the strategy. Staff were invited to comment on postholder responsibilities and the new schedule has been approved by the Board of Management.

➔ Implementation by Staff

All staff will be invited to participate in the implementation of stated initiatives. Teams will be formed to cover specific interest areas and will include staff from a cross-section of disciplines, responsibilities and functional areas. Each team will establish a project plan in line with the balanced scorecard, which identifies concrete short-term actions, the sequence and timing of activities, accountability factors, criteria for success and the resources necessary for effective outcomes.

While the plan covers the period 2012-2016, work in most areas will be underway or already completed by the end of year three. A full review is scheduled at that stage, with revised actions and priorities being selected, where necessary. During the fifth and final year, work will begin on development of the next strategic plan.



Cavan Institute Staff 2011

CONCLUSION

At the end of 2009, the Institute commenced the development of a first formal strategic plan. In the intervening period, national economic circumstances have deteriorated. Although the strategy will be implemented during a period of austerity and scarce resources, the vision for the next five years is positive and identifies how best to secure the future of this college as a centre of excellence.

Many benefits have already been realised from the consultation process, most notably the opening up of new lines of communication with stakeholders. As already mentioned, the Institute is most grateful for the support and input provided by so many individuals, organisations and agencies. It is hoped that this plan adequately reflects the extensive feedback received, and that the priorities and indicative actions which have emerged reflect the vision that the Institute's stakeholders have for its future development.

An ambitious set of objectives and performance indicators has been established and, in line with the track record of innovation and commitment shown by staff, it is likely that many additional targets will be achieved along the way in addition to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that have been highlighted. The strategic priorities and associated actions will now transfer to a balanced scorecard framework, which will facilitate the planning and monitoring of resources, timeframe, tasks and teams for action in each area. Progress has already been made towards achieving some of the targets and the *Strategic Planning Steering Group*, together with the Board of Management, will continue to monitor on-going achievements and any difficulties which may arise.









Over the last 25 years, staff at the Institute have demonstrated the capacity and willingness to enhance the curricula, to develop the campus, to build on successful courses and to introduce new courses in response to emerging employment trends and market needs. They will continue to do so, as they strive for excellence in the provision of quality education and training courses in accordance with national and international standards. As the Institute continues to grow, the existing "EduCare" ethos, focusing on a caring and supportive learning environment, will be reinforced and sustained.

The Institute will welcome any additional resources or recognition that may be assigned to the further education and training sector in Ireland. This sector is responsible to and for a large cohort of students and provides an alternative route to higher education for many, in accordance with what the Minister for Education and Skills has termed the "universalisation of higher learning opportunities"⁹. The respective FE colleges also ensure a second chance for those who have not had the benefit of further education or who have been unable to access such an opportunity, for whatever reason. The courses, structures and supports available at Cavan Institute have demonstrated that all students, whatever their background, can achieve a nationally recognised qualification. This level of inclusivity is a hallmark of Irish further education, in general, and of this Institute in particular. Society as a whole is enriched by knowledge, skills and competences which our graduates bring to their lives and respective careers.

⁹ Speech by Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn, TD, at the launch of the National Strategy for Higher Education, 30 May 2011. <http://www.education.ie>

APPENDICES

A: TIMELINE & ACTIVITIES

Nov 2009	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish Strategic Plan objectives, scope, process and project plan• Conduct research, establish contacts• Formation of Steering Group
Dec 2009	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of Strategic Plan Intranet page (on SharePoint Staff Site)• Staff Consultation: initial prompt questions yielding 8 draft priorities
Jan 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Survey: staff review of and feedback on proposed 8 priorities• Formation of 2 Working Groups
Feb 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SWOT analysis with a number of student groups• Survey of visitors to open day (prospective students)• Working Group meetings
Mar 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff consultation: focusing on a number of strategic questions• Working Group meetings
Apr 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey of 540 current students• Information about development of Strategic Plan publicised on Institute website• Visits by strategic planning researchers to a number of other colleges
Jun 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff Consultation Day: specific planning tasks & themed workshops• Staff Survey: online survey focusing on Teaching & Learning (70 responses)
Sep 2010	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff Presentation: update on work to date and projected Strategic Planning activities this year• Presentation to Board of Management and consultation based on key themes

Nov 2010

- Consultation day at the Institute

Internal: Administrative & Support Staff, New Tutors, Second Year Students

External: Local Businesses, Community & Voluntary Sector, Local Government & State Authorities, Past Students, Representatives from County Cavan VEC Head Office and Adult Education Services, Post-Primary Schools, Youthreach, Institutes of Technology, FESS, IPA

Jan 2011

- Consultation Morning: representatives the Department of Education and Skills, FÁS and NUI Maynooth

Feb 2011

- Survey of Graduates: online survey promoted via email and Facebook

Mar 2011

- Consultation with assistant principals and other holders of posts of responsibility at the Institute

May 2011

- Staff review of and feedback on first draft of Strategic Plan
- Presentation to staff

Nov 2011

- Approval of plan by CEO of County Cavan VEC and Board of Management of Cavan Institute

Jan 2012+

- Implementation of Strategic Plan with quarterly review by the Steering Group

Feb 2012

- Formal launch of Strategic Plan 2012-2016

B: TERMS OF REFERENCE

STEERING GROUP

Members

Ann Marie Lacey, Director, Cavan Institute; Gerry McKenny, Deputy Director, Cavan Institute; Adrian Delaney, Deputy Director, Cavan Institute; Finola Keogh, Tutor; Louise Clarke, Tutor; Yvonne Kerr, Tutor.

Terms of Reference

- Review and approve processes/methodologies being proposed
- Identify sources of internal/other intelligence
- Identify and recruit key staff members to lead/participate in working groups
- Provide direction and guidance to teams
- Approve strategic priorities
- Review draft documents
- Meet monthly

WORKING GROUPS

1. Anticipating Future Needs Working Group

Members

Cavan Institute tutors: Yvonne Kerr, Peter O'Hanlon, Philip McDonald, Joe English, Deirdre Donnelly, Enda O'Reilly, Siobhan McCabe, Aoife Ward, Dorothy Philips, Mary Henry, Cynthia Stewart.

Terms of Reference

- Research employment patterns, industry trends, emerging growth industries
- Identify the forces/agents that can impact on Cavan Institute, e.g., Department of Education and Skills, Unions, NFQ, Economy, Broadband infrastructure
- Profile current and past students, where they have gone, how useful they found their course
- Profile progression opportunities for CI students. Create mapping for all CI courses, where relevant progression opportunities exist.
- Profile courses on offer from other education providers
- Identify new curriculum areas/obsolete course areas
- Identify any major deficiencies in our current service provision
- Establish what resources would be required to implement/expand courses, address gaps, move into new business areas, if appropriate
- Identify potential new sources of funding
- Profile a staff structure/expertise that would be required to support this

2. Teaching & Learning Working Group

Members

Cavan Institute tutors: Louise Clarke, Katie Meakin, Sinead McCabe, Michelle Gallagher, Joanne McCaul, Maureen Lynch.

Terms of Reference

- Profile current teaching and learning
- Profile assessment techniques used and review requirements by various awarding bodies
- Profile current teaching tools, resources available
- Develop a body of learning about the wider domain of teaching styles, learning styles
- Profile use of blended learning within CI and by other organisations
- Options for expanding course provision into full open/online learning (self-directed)
- How best to train and support staff
- Explore models of best practice, both within Cavan Institute and elsewhere
- Implications/opportunities for Cavan Institute in rollout of Common Awards System
- Examine efficacy of curriculum development groups, programme boards, exam boards.



COUNTY CAVAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE AN CHABHÁIN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Colm McEvoy B.Comm., D.S.A., M.Sc.
PRÍOMH-OIFIGEACH: Colm Mac Giolla Bhui B.Comm., D.S.A., M.Sc.



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