

E-college = free online learning opportunities in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland, including sustainability and micro qualifications

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 IRELAND

Timeline



ID number 28685

Background

Online learning offers opportunities to acquire formal qualifications, particularly for those who are unable to attend schools and colleges. eCollege is the national online learning service for the further education and training (FET) sector, funded by SOLAS.

Description

eCollege provides online courses, including computer programming, data science, office productivity and web and graphic design. In 2015, eCollege awarded two major four-year contracts worth EUR 7.5 million to Cenit college and Enovation solutions. Cenit college is responsible for the management of e-tutoring and related support services, while Enovation solutions handles monitoring and reporting services. This eCollege partnership is to ensure that online education and training is responsive, flexible, innovative, of high quality, and meets learners' personal, social and economic needs.

2015 Implementation

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, SOLAS published a tender to appoint an organisation to manage the delivery of fully online training as an end-to-end service under the e-college brand.

The service would include:

- (a) supporting eCollege learners through their learning journey, starting from managing enquiries from prospective learners;
- (b) monitoring and reporting on quality assurance mechanisms,
- (c) ensuring continuous review and improvement,
- (d) maintaining a relevant course offering;
- (e) providing the highest quality online learning to eCollege target groups in line with SOLAS policy and strategic priorities.

The contract was awarded to Cenit college at the end of 2019.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, eCollege underwent a new platform update and new features such as to do lists, instant messaging and focus mode were added. One of the first actions taken to support people affected by COVID-19 public health measures was to make eCollege courses available free of charge. Prior to this, eCollege courses were only available free-of-charge to people who are getting jobseeker's payments, disability allowance or One Parent Family Allowance, as well as people signing on for credits.

eCollege enrolments increased dramatically to 32 588 in 2020.

2021 Implementation

eCollege activities continued.

2022 Implementation

After a competitive process, consultancy services were selected to provide strategic review services. A Review Advisory Group was formed composed of internal SOLAS stakeholders, further education and training (FET) sector representatives, and industry representatives to govern the review process. This allowed an extensive review to take place.

In September 2022, two key supports for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) were approved: the National FET Certification Agreement for 2023 and Adobe Creative Cloud Licencing for the period September 2022 to August 2023. Both of these supports contribute to the delivery of flexible learning in FET.

A new instant application form for eCollege via Fetch courses was launched. In 2022, there were 18 667 new starts on the eCollege service.

Ongoing maintenance and continuous improvement projects were being carried out across eCollege and TEL.

2023 Completed

The e-college website was updated to include the expanded range of learning providers and courses, and also allowing the learner more search options to find courses based on individual interests and learning goals, including search options to identify courses in green skills/sustainability and micro qualifications.

E-college is now a mainstreamed programme in the Further Education and Training sector in Ireland, offering free, part-time, online programmes for employees.

Bodies responsible

- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners with disabilities
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[2018 eCollege report](#)

[SOLAS makes eCollege online courses available free of charge](#)

[Strategy for technology-enhanced learning in further education and training 2016-19](#)

[Ecollege Website](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Completed

Green Skills for Further Education and Training (FET) Roadmap 2021-2030

The policy roadmap 'Green Skills for FET 2021-30' sets a strategic direction for green skills initiatives throughout the Irish FET sector and points to key areas for the FET Sector in the transition to a green economy.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2019 Completed

Strategy for technology-enhanced learning in further education and training

In 2016, SOLAS and ETBI published a Strategy for technology-enhanced learning in further education and training 2016-19. The strategy examines ways of bringing technology into the further education and training sector to facilitate innovative teaching and learning practices.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28685>