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# PLC ENROLMENT Policy

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## Contents

1	Enrolment Policy and Practice for PLC Courses .....	2
1.1	Introduction .....	2
1.2	SOLAS (DES) PLC Approvals Criteria (extract) .....	2
o	Background .....	2
o	Participants .....	3
o	Course Structure .....	3
1.3	Interpretation and application .....	3
1.4	Applicants Suitability for Courses .....	4
1.5	Proof of Identity .....	5
1.6	International –EU/EEA applicants .....	6
1.7	International – Non EU/EEA applicants .....	6
1.8	Applications from individuals in the protection process to PLC courses .....	6
1.9	Implementation of Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/22/EU) – Right to work 7	
1.10	Advertising and Publicity .....	9

# 1 Enrolment Policy and Practice for PLC Courses

## 1.1 Introduction

The conditions governing the establishment of Post Leaving Certificate course, and the recognition and enrolment of participants onto these courses are set down by SOLAS (and previously by the Department of Education and Skills). These conditions are intrinsically linked to the allocation of resources, both financial and staffing, and must be observed in their entirety. Some variation in interpretation and application has emerged over time in colleges, leading to disparity of approach. The following sets out how CETB PLC colleges and centres are to implement these requirements.

For clarity, the following extracts are taken from the SOLAS approval requirements for PLC courses.

## 1.2 SOLAS (DES) PLC Approvals Criteria (extract)

### o Background

The Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Programme is self-contained whole-time learning experience designed to provide successful participants with specific vocational skills to enhance their prospects of securing lasting, full-time employment or progression to other studies.

The Programme caters for those who:

- have completed senior cycle education, and require further vocational education and training to enhance their prospects of employment or progression to other studies.
- are adults returning to education who may not have completed the senior cycle but are deemed by the provider to have the necessary competencies and capacity to undertake the Programme.
- are unemployed and are seeking to upskill in order to enhance their prospects of gaining employment

The aim of the Programme is to provide participants with specific vocational skills. It is intended, therefore, that this Programme will provide for a more intensive development of

technical skills, including new technologies, combining opportunities for work experience, vocational studies and general studies.

### ○ **Participants**

- Participants must be at least 16 years of age on commencing the course.
- Participants may not repeat a programme.
- Academic entry requirements should be appropriate to the award being offered and may include the Established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), QQI Level 4 or equivalent.
- The terms of Department of Education & Skills Circular 0013/2011 in relation to the PLC participant contribution must be complied with.

### ○ **Course Structure**

- PLC courses must be full-time courses and the Department's requirements on the length of the school year must be met. The school year is at least 167 days as outlined in the Department of Education & Skills Circular Letter M29/95

**NOTE:** While standard time allocations per course and per individual component have not been specified by CETB or SOLAS, centres are reminded that QQI (FETAC) guidelines on course durations, i.e. total learner effort, for Level 5 and 6 programmes equate to a total learner commitment of 1200 hours, with the requirement that 800 hours of these be contact hours. Over a 33 week academic year (167 days) this equates to approximately 24 hours per week.

## **1.3 Interpretation and application**

The conditions outlined above provide for a wide and varied target population who may benefit from, and be enrolled into, PLC courses. CETB fully recognises the contribution that PLC provision can make to the development of vocational skills, preparation for further study and personal development, and, within the parameters set out, seeks to minimise any possible barriers to possible participation.

However, the following practices **are not** acceptable under the guidelines:

1. Enrolment of persons under the age of 16

2. Enrolment of persons who have not completed post primary education (Leaving Certificate), when, at the time of application such a person is, or should be enrolled in a post primary school. This does not preclude acceptance of applications from students in their Leaving Certificate year who will have completed the Leaving Certificate examinations in the June prior to commencement on a PLC course, however it is to remove the opportunity for students enrolled in post primary schools deciding to opt out prior to the completion of their Leaving Certificate studies and examinations.<sup>1</sup>
3. Part-enrolment, where students are provided with the opportunity to take less than the full number of component awards required to achieve certification over the normal length of the course (generally one year)<sup>2</sup>
4. Scheduling/timetabling courses in a manner that clearly indicates that they are part-time. This would include reducing the level of delivery by reducing contact hours, scheduling into less than five days etc.

Colleges are required, prior to calling applicants to interview, to determine if an applicant has not indicated the year of completion of their Leaving Certificate, whether they are currently enrolled or should be enrolled in a post primary school, and if it is determined that the individual is not completing the Leaving Certificate in the year of proposed entry, the application must be refused. If such a determination is not made until interview stage, similarly the applicant must be informed that their application is being referred to the Principal who will consider whether their circumstance merit consideration under 2 above . In notifying any applicant of a refusal to consider their application, they should be provided with details of how to appeal such a decision.

#### 1.4 Applicants Suitability for Courses

As referenced above, Post leaving Certificate Courses provide individuals with significant opportunities for learning and development, in preparation for entry into the world of work, as part of a learning journey to further and higher education, and/or for personal empowerment and development. It is important in considering applications for courses to consider, insofar as is possible, the following:

- **The suitability of the course to the applicant** – based on interest, prospective future employment/education opportunities, assessed capabilities, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> In unusual and particular circumstances where an application for enrolment is made by a person who would, in normal circumstances be excluded by this requirement, if, in the Principals opinion there is sufficient merit to consider the application, the application must be referred to the Director of FET for consideration and determination.

<sup>2</sup> As previous

- **Their likelihood of success** - will they be likely to complete the course and achieve the full award at the end
- Whether the course is at the correct level for the applicant and if additional supporting preliminary engagements might be more appropriate

To assist applicants in preparing for the interview process, and to provide additional information that would assist in making an assessment of their suitability or otherwise, a Personal Statement was introduced on a pilot basis for care courses in 2018-19. For 2019-20 this personal statement will be an option to be considered for applicants to all courses.

Insofar as it is possible, the application interview should seek to determine whether the applicant will benefit from the course and advise them of different or alternative options if necessary.

While we are conscious of the requirements for CETB and our colleges and schools to not only maintain enrolments, but also to meet national planning and performance outcomes, our first and primary focus must be on meeting the needs of the learners and ensuring, as far as we can, that they will have the opportunity to succeed.

## 1.5 Proof of Identity

Colleges are required to obtain proof of identity from students at the application stage. Forms of acceptable proof include, but are not limited to:

- Irish Birth certificate
- Passport
- Irish Driving Licence or learner Permit
- Medical card in individuals own name
- Irish Public Services Card
- Passport (from country of citizenship)
- Irish certificate of naturalisation
- Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card
- National Identity Card for EU/EEA/Swiss citizens
- National age card (issued by An Garda Síochána)

**A student may not be registered until and unless they have provided proof of identity.** A copy of the form of proof provided must be kept on the students file.

## 1.6 International –EU/EEA applicants

Individuals from EU/EEA states have the same entitlements to education as Irish citizens. Colleges are required to confirm the status of any applicant from an EU/EEA state **prior** to making an offer of a place on a course, by referencing to proof of identification. Only the following should be accepted as proof of identity in such circumstances:

- Passport (from country of citizenship)
- National Identity Card for EU/EEA/Swiss citizens

Queries regarding eligibility for enrolment for EU/EEA applicants must be forwarded to the Director of FET.

The requirement for full economic fees does not apply for EU/EEA eligible applicants.

## 1.7 International – Non EU/EEA applicants

Government policy determined that PLC provision be removed from the then Internationalisation register in May 2015, and this remains the case, despite proposals and engagement with the relevant parties. PLC programmes are not part of the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP), which provide for non-EU/EEA applicants to seek a valid visa to enter the country for study purposes.

Applicants who cannot evidence **AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION** that they have a legal entitlement to be in the country and avail of publicly funded education **CANNOT** be considered for enrolment. No offer, or tentative offer must be made to any individual who cannot prove that they have such an entitlement, through the presentation at application stage of a valid PPSN and/or appropriate visa.

## 1.8 Applications from individuals in the protection process to PLC courses

The Department of Education and Skills clarified in 2018 the position for individuals in the protection process (asylum seekers) vis a vis their entitlement to access PLC courses.

The DES position, based on an initial letter to VEC's in 2001, is that anyone, other than individuals in the categories identified in the letter as having an entitlement to access PLC courses on a free fees basis, i.e. individuals in the protection process:

*“...should be charged the economic fee, which, for all future fees levied, should be £2,877<sup>3</sup> per annum. Participants who pay the economic fee should be self-supporting, and have approval to remain in the State (i.e. student visa or green handbook stamped by Gardai). If not approved to stay in Ireland, it is suggested that students be told in a letter that the college is willing to enrol them on payment of the economic fee and production of an approval letter from the D/JELR to stay in Ireland.”*

*The Department wishes to clarify that people in the protection process can access PLC provision provided they pay the full economic fee, which currently stands at €3, 653.”*

PLC applicants who meet the terms of the pilot scheme as referenced in DES circulars 48/2015, 55/2017 61/2018 may be eligible for free fees but they must apply and be assessed in accordance with the conditions set out in the pilot scheme.

## **1.9 Implementation of Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/22/EU) – Right to work**

Following the Governments decision on 26th June, Ireland has now opted in to the EU (recast) Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/22/EU) and new measures have been implemented regarding the revised manner for treatment of eligible individuals with regards to the right to access education. This is linked to an assessed entitlement to enter the labour market in accordance with the provisions of the directive.

The Directive sets out the standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. International protection applications who are waiting **9 months or more** for a first instance recommendation from the International Protection Office have access to the labour market. The Directive does not apply retrospectively, it applies only to those already waiting on a first instance recommendation for 9 months or more on the date the directive comes into force, or those to apply thereafter.

Under this Directive, eligible applicants may be entitled to avail of further education and training in the same manner as Irish citizens. Eligible applicants may apply to the Minister for Justice and Equality for a labour market permission.

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<sup>3</sup> €3,653 for 2018



Eligible applicants will have access to all further education and training programmes which will now include access to Apprenticeships and Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).

**Access to PLC provision will be subject to the payment of the full economic fee as set out in the Department's circular letter dated 27 September 2001.**

**Eligibility to participate on these programmes on the basis of permission to access the labour market must be verified by the production of the applicant's labour market permission letter from the Department of Justice and Equality.**

With the exception of those conditions that require an applicant to hold a medical cards and/or be in receipt of a Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP) payment (e.g. jobseekers allowance, jobseekers benefit etc.) all of the provision of the programme operational guidelines apply to any applications received from the cohort of eligible international protection applicants, granted permission to access the labour market and should be taken into consideration in determining applications in the usual way.

As protection applicants do not have an entitlement to income support from DEASP apart from that relating to direct provision, the payment of a training allowance, in lieu of such a payment will not apply.

With the exception of those applicants referred to specific provision via INTREO under the management of a case officer, **ETBs, must in the first place, refer each eligible applicant to the Adult Guidance Service to provide support and guidance on the most suitable available FET provision to meet the needs of the applicant.**

To Summarize:

1. **Applicants must have been waiting for 9 months or more on the date the Directive came into operation or 9 months from that date, to be deemed eligible.**
2. **Applicants wishing to access education must hold a labour market permission to be eligible**
3. **PLC applicants, meeting the conditions, must pay the full economic fee**
4. **Meal and travel allowances, where applicable may be paid but no training allowances**
5. **An eligible applicant applying for a FET programme must be referred, in the first instance, to the Adult Guidance service**

An eligible applicant in dispersed mode VTOS should be treated as VTOS, therefore no non-EU fees apply, however they cannot be counted on PLC returns.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.10 Advertising and Publicity

When advertising courses, irrespective of the media, college and centres are required to note the following:

- Emphasis is on the full-time nature of the programme
- No reference to “morning” or “afternoons” only is permissible
- That courses lead to nationally and internationally recognised certification and awards
- That the normal requirement for entry is Leaving Certificate (including LCA) or equivalent, however mature learners suitability for courses will be assessed at interview based on qualifications (if any) and experience

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<sup>4</sup> Based on advice from SOLAS, may be subject to review