

Enrolment Policy and Practice for PLC Courses

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.

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

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:

- Enrolment of persons under the age of 16
- 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.
- 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)

- 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.

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.

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 cannot be accepted. In notifying any applicant of a refusal to consider their application, they should be provided with details of how to appeal such a decision.

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.

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, however mature learners suitability for courses will be assessed at interview based on qualifications (if any) and experience

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