

**Exploring the perceptions of the key stakeholders in the further education and training  
(FET sector on how they define FET, how they define good quality teaching and what  
supports and resources they identify as being necessary to enhance the quality of teaching  
in the sector.**

**Introduction**

My name is Mary Sheehy. I work as a Support Officer with the Further Education Support Service (FESS) and some of you will know me from this role but I am also a doctoral student at the University of Lincoln, UK. My research is concerned with how FET is defined, how good quality teaching is defined and identifying what supports and resources might enhance the quality of teaching in the sector. I have been given permission to carry out this research within Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB). I would be most grateful if you would consider participating in this research. Your responses will be anonymous and confidentiality is assured. Throughout this information leaflet and the online survey, I use the term teaching to encompass the activities of teaching, tutoring, instructing, facilitating, etc. This pamphlet explains my research so you can decide if you would like to participate. As I would need to gain a representative sample from across ETB provision, I would be very grateful for your participation.

**What is this research project *about*?**

This research project will explore the perceptions of those involved in the FET sector within WWETB on how FET is defined, how good quality teaching is defined and what supports and resources they identify as being necessary to enhance the quality of teaching in the sector. This is an opportunity for the key stakeholders, from learners to senior management, to have their voices heard on this topic. Similar research has been carried out at primary, post-primary and higher education levels, but not in the FET sector in Ireland.

**What are the aims of the research?**

My research aims to explore the thoughts and opinions of people working in the FET sector on how they define FET as this may impact how they function within it. The research also aims to identify the characteristics, qualities and skills that FET staff believe are indicative of good quality teaching as well as identifying the supports and resources that they deem necessary for the enhancement of the quality of teaching in the sector. This research is being carried out with a view to recommending supports and resources that might be put in place to ensure continuous improvement of teaching and learning experiences for the learners in the sector.

**Who else is and can be involved?**

I have identified a number of key groups of people who will be involved in the research:

- FET learner council/student council members
- FET teaching/training staff
- FET middle management
- Senior ETB management

The research will include an online survey and semi-structured interviews. An invitation will be issued from WWETB on my behalf for all staff involved in FET provision to participate in the online survey, these groups will include senior management (CE, DFET, AEOs, QA Team, etc,) middle management (Principals, Centre Managers, Programme Co-ordinators), teaching staff and learner/student council member. Following the online survey, a number of semi-structured interviews will be conducted with representatives of senior management, middle management and teaching staff. Participants in the online survey may volunteer to participate in the interview, but only a limited number of people will be interviewed.

### **What sorts of methods are being used?**

A mixed methods case study approach is being used in this research project, this includes an online survey and semi-structured interviews.

### **What are you being asked to do?**

The largest part of the research is the online survey, so your participation in that would be really appreciated. It will be relatively short and require you to give some basic information and your opinion. These online surveys are anonymous and confidential.

For those agreeing to participate in the semi-structured interview, the selection process will consider:

- Your role within the organisation
- Length of experience within the organisation
- Representative of one of the key stakeholder groups within the organisation
- Qualifications and experience profile of the participant
- Gender, to ensure a mix of responses and to identify if there are male/female gender differences in responses
- Age range in order to achieve a representative response.

### **Do you have to take part?**

Everyone invited to participate in the research has the right to refuse to get involved. This information leaflet, hopefully, answers any questions you may have in relation to participation in the research, if it does not, you are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns on [12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk). If you initially agree to participate and subsequently change your mind, that is perfectly fine, as participants have the right to withdraw from participation in the research at any point.

### **Can you be more involved in the project if you like?**

Where I am looking for the majority of participants is for the online survey. As part of the online survey you will be given the opportunity to indicate if you would be interested in participating in a semi-structured interview. If you would like to nominate yourself for participation in the interview but you would not like to indicate this within the online survey,

you are welcome to email [12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk) to indicate your interest. Following participation in the online survey, there will be no further requirement to be involved in the research unless participants wish to participate in the interview. After the interviews are completed, there will be no further requests to participate in this research.

### **Who will benefit from this research, and how?**

It is hoped that this research will contribute towards a definition of FET as the current definition defines FET more by what it is not than what it is. It is also anticipated that the research will highlight the characteristics, qualities and skills indicative of good quality teaching in the FET sector, this will be useful information for senior management in terms of recruitment and ongoing CPD, for middle management in that they may be better able to support their staff and for teaching staff it may raise awareness of their own teaching style and approach. The final element focusses on suggested supports and resources that might enhance the quality of teaching, it is envisaged that this will be useful information for the FET sector to consider in developing their teaching and learning policy and CPD planning. The findings of the research will be made available to WWETB, which they may consider when planning for the future developments and enhancement of provision. as part of their new quality assurance (QA) agreement with QQI.

I will be using the data gathered in their research project in order to complete my doctoral thesis. I may also have the opportunity to use it in writing academic articles or in conference presentations.

### **Who is funding this research?**

This research is being undertaken entirely at my own expense.

### **Who can I contact for more information or to get involved?**

I can be contacted by email as follows: [12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:12454387@students.lincoln.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or need clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me, or if you prefer, my academic supervisor, Dr Joss Winn, University of Lincoln [jwinn@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:jwinn@lincoln.ac.uk)