

**Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na Gaillimhe
County Galway Vocational Education Committee**



**Learner
Handbook**

Learner Handbook

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Learner Handbook

FOREWORD - Seosamh Mac Donncha

It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome you to ‘Lifelong Learning in Co Galway’. This Learner Handbook has been produced for the benefit of all learners who have enrolled in any of our Adult, Further and Community Education programmes. It contains important information on policies, procedures and regulations that are relevant to you. We invite you to make yourself aware of its contents and to consult it whenever the need arises.

Through our Adult, Further and Community Education service we strive to continually develop and provide a wide range of quality learning opportunities that will enable learners to realise their full potential. These programmes are provided at our Schools and Centres throughout the County and have been developed in co-operation with a wide range of partners for the benefit of the learner. We cater for a broad cross-section of the community, providing adults with learning opportunities for vocational, professional and personal development. We provide you with the opportunity to up-skill and re-train on both a full-time and part-time basis.

I am confident that we can provide you with the educational opportunity that best suits your needs and circumstances. I hope that you enjoy your time with us and that your experience will be rewarding and enhancing.

Seosamh Mac Donncha

Chief Executive Officer - County Galway Vocational Education Committee.

FOREWORD - Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha

Co. Galway VEC through its Adult Education services is busy supporting you as a learner to return to education and enjoy the learning experience.

All of the programmes are offered at various levels of certification and cover a wide range of courses from childcare to business to media, art, computers, administration, as well as the Junior and Leaving Certificate.

It is important that you as a learner achieve your potential while studying with us and continue to grow and develop as an individual. Teachers are in place to encourage you to progress with your studies and help you plan your career.

I would like to wish you every success in your studies.

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha
Adult Education Officer

INTRODUCTION

County Galway VEC is one of thirty three Vocational Education Committees operating within the State and has responsibility for delivering a range of services including second level education, adult and further education and other support services to young people and adults within County Galway.

County Galway VEC is a registered FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) Provider offering various courses on a full-time and part-time basis through our Schools/Centres.

Adult and Further Education is a major focus of our educational remit and programmes are designed to meet the needs of specific target groups. Literacy, Community Education, Arts Education, Adult Education Guidance, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses and Back to Education programmes (BTEI) are offered at various locations throughout the county.

Third Level Student Grant Scheme, School Transport, Youth Affairs and Outdoor Education are all areas that also fall within the remit of the VEC.

COUNTY GALWAY VEC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of County Galway VEC is to provide education, training and community support services to all learners. Programmes are offered at different levels appropriate to learner's ability and are of the highest quality, are cost-effective and accessible.

Programmes will:

- Enable individuals and communities to develop to their full potential and to participate actively as members of society:
- Contribute to social, economic and cultural development at a local, regional and national level.

County Galway VEC is committed to providing learners with:

- Accessible, quality education and courses.
- A learning environment and resources that supports and stimulates learners to realise their full potential.
- Accurate information about programmes and expectations.
- Assessment of learning that is fair, valid and timely.
- A skilled, qualified and supportive staff that will treat all learners with dignity and respect and be responsive to learners needs.
- A fair and consistent application of all rules and regulations.
- A healthy and safe environment that promotes a positive learning experience.

POLICY STATEMENT ON ADMISSION FOR LEARNERS

Admission to a particular course/activity is subject to:

- Places being available
- Applicants fulfilling the required criteria

Admission is governed by three principles that:

- In the professional judgement of the School/Centre Authority (the term ‘School/Centre Authority’, indicates the Chief Executive Officer or an officer designated to act on his behalf), and following an interview (if deemed appropriate) the learner is suitable for a course/activity.
- In the professional judgement of the School/Centre Authority, the learner, because of previous education, training or experience, is considered likely to benefit from attendance.
- Participation will contribute positively to the course/activity and in no way infringe upon the opportunities or rights of other learners or staff.

All disputes in relation to admission will be referred to the CEO or a designated officer.

LEARNER RESPONSIBILITIES

Learners are obliged to make themselves aware of, and comply with, these County Galway VEC rules and regulations of the school/centre in which they are registered. Learners must provide themselves with such books, stationery, equipment and materials as may be required by the School/Centre Authority. In addition, each learner has a responsibility in a number of areas:

To fellow learners

To co-operate in the creation and maintenance of a respectful and suitable environment.

To staff

To fulfil all obligations to ensure the smooth running of the school/centre.

To school/centre

To respect the buildings and property and to ensure the school/centre maintains a respected position in the community as a whole.

To the community

To behave responsibly and respectfully in the community.

To health and safety

To ensure the Health and Safety procedures and regulations are adhered to.

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LEARNER PROPERTY

Co Galway VEC does not accept any responsibility for the loss of or damage to the property of any learner.

CO GALWAY VEC PROPERTY

Learners may be liable for the cost of repair or replacement of Co Galway VEC property damaged through wilful or careless conduct.

CHANGE OF REGISTRATION/PPS DETAILS

Learners must immediately notify the school/centre of any change in registration details.

Co Galway VEC will not be responsible for any consequences due to any failure on the part of the learner/participant to make such notification. PPS numbers must be accurate and pertain to the person using it.

EXAMINATIONS

Learners must comply with the rules and regulations of the examining body relevant to the course being attended.

ATTENDANCE

Every course/activity requires a commitment to attend all parts of the programme on offer fully and punctually. A learner unable to attend a particular class/scheduled event must inform the appropriate member of staff. Learners must comply with the rules and regulations on attendance relevant to that programme. Any learner unable to fulfil these commitments may be required to leave the course/activity. Because FETAC courses are modular even short absences can negatively impact on the overall result.

Any learner, who wishes to seek further clarification of this policy, should contact his/her Principal, Centre Director/Co-ordinator or HR Department.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Learners are expected to behave responsibly at all times, to observe and abide by the Code of Behaviour and not to engage in any activity that might bring the school/centre into disrepute. Learners are required to attend regularly and punctually all timetabled activities i.e. classes, practicals, work practice, assessment, field trips etc. Learners are expected to conform to the directions of the staff member(s) responsible. Should any learner, during any timetabled activity, be responsible for a breach of good conduct, or fail to obey instruction from a staff member, the learner may be required to withdraw from the particular timetabled activity and the matter brought to the notice of the Principal/Centre Director/Co-ordinator for appropriate action to be taken.

DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

Learners are required to make good, to the satisfaction of the school/centre, any damage or loss that they intentionally cause to any property of the school/centre or for any such loss or damage that occurs as a result of their recklessness or negligence. Learners are similarly required to make good any damage or loss that they cause to the personal property of any other learner or member of staff.

BREACHES OF DISCIPLINE

Any act or omission, which affects adversely the rights of any learner/staff member or which disrupts the orderly and responsible conduct of any school/centre activity, or which violates the Code of Conduct, shall constitute a breach of discipline. Disciplinary action may result in a fine, suspension for a fixed period or permanent expulsion from the course.

MISCONDUCT

In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the following are examples of offences:

- Conduct which is disruptive, or which may disrupt teaching, work practice or study.
- Bullying or sexual harassment of any learner or member of staff.
- Abuse of alcohol (drunkenness) or other substances or abuse, possession, supply of any illegal drug on the school/centre premises.
- Obstruction or harassment of any member of staff or learner in the performance of duties, work or other VEC activity.
- Damaging, defacing or misappropriating any property of the school/centre.
- Any theft of property or any other dishonest or illegal acts which may adversely effect the school/centre, tutor or fellow learner.
- Tampering with safety equipment.
- Smoking in non-designated areas.
- Any unduly noisy or unruly behaviour or the use of foul or abusive language.
- Acts or omissions by learners, while outside school/centre, engaged in field trips, work experience or activities organised by the school/centre or while representing the school/centre would breach the Code of Conduct.

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- Activity which adversely affects, or is likely to adversely affect the reputation of the school/centre, the learners or members of staff.
- Any behaviour which is racially or sexually offensive or which is offensive to those with learning and/or physical disabilities or impediments.
- Use of computers for any activity other than Co Galway VEC educational purposes.
- Breaching assessment regulations.
- Incitement or encouragement of any other person or persons to do any of the aforementioned behaviours.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

Any particularly serious cases of misconduct may be treated by the school/centre as gross misconduct. For example, any misconduct involving violence or a serious threat of violence, deliberate damage to property, endangering the health or safety of others, deliberate breach of school/centre guidelines relating to security issues or any other criminal activities affecting the school/centre or other learners are likely to be treated as gross misconduct. Any learner caught using other candidate's work may be disqualified from the programme. It is emphasised that this is not an exhaustive list of the types of case that the school/centre may treat as gross misconduct. All examples of offences outlined above are demonstrative and in no way prevents the appropriate member of staff from considering and adjudicating upon the conduct or action of any learner which is thought to constitute a breach of discipline.

A copy of Guidelines for Disciplinary Procedures/Codes of Behaviour may be obtained from the Principal or Centre Director/Co-ordinator.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 imposes a statutory duty on employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees while at work. This duty extends to others who may be affected by that work. Learners should be aware that they also have a duty under the Safety, Health and Welfare Act to assist Co. Galway VEC in maintaining a safe place to pursue their course and a specific legal duty not to interfere with anything that may compromise safety management at the school/centre. Health and Safety at work affects everyone. Any lapse of care and attention can cause injuries and damage property. Co Galway VEC will treat any act that may compromise health and safety management as a serious offence and may be subject to disciplinary action.

DIGNITY AND RESPECT

Co. Galway VEC is committed to the promotion of an environment that upholds the dignity and respect of the individual and which supports every individual's right to study and/or work in an environment, which is free from any bullying, harassment or intimidation. Co. Galway VEC recognises the right of every individual to work/study in such an environment and requires all staff and learners to recognise their responsibilities in this regard. Bullying, harassment or intimidation of others by learners or staff will NOT be tolerated.

This policy applies to the behaviour of staff and learners of the school/centre and others engaged in activities or providing services relating to the school/centre.

FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Walk to the nearest exit point.

Do not delay to pick up personal belongings.

Disconnect all electrical appliances (where appropriate).

Close all doors behind you (where appropriate).

On arriving at the designated assembly point(s) please obey the requests of teacher/staff.

Do not re-enter the building until authorisation has been given.

FIRST AID

All accidents and injuries, while attending timetabled activities, must be reported to a member of staff so that injuries can be assessed and medical attention arranged.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Learners requiring a doctor or chemist, while attending timetabled activities, should contact a member of staff. Costs for these services are the responsibility of the learner. Learners on specific long-term medication or with a medical history that may be pertinent to their course of study should inform the Course Director. Learners can be assured that all information will be treated in strict confidence.

Please note that full copies of our Health, Safety and Welfare Policy, and Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy, are available from the Principal, Centre Director/Co-ordinator or HR Department.

EQUALITY FOR LEARNERS POLICY STATEMENT

Co Galway VEC is committed to providing equal access to all learners regardless of their gender, marital status, family status, disability, religion, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic/national origins or membership of the travelling community. However, this policy in no way implies that Co. Galway VEC will not demand equivalent performance in assessments for equivalent academic awards, from all learners. All learners attending Co Galway VEC programmes are expected to comply with rules, regulations and policies stated in the Learner Handbook.

Co Galway VEC aims to provide learners and staff with an environment free from discrimination and harassment and to ensure that its policies, procedures, structures and services create no disadvantage or disincentive to any learner. Co Galway VEC recognises that the learning environment for both staff and learners must be one that values and promotes individual differences. All staff and learners have the right to equitable treatment at the school/centre.

All learners have the right to pursue their education and training in an environment in which their culture, experiences and differences are recognised and supported. This can be sustained through classroom instruction that encourages diversity.

Co Galway VEC is committed to:

- ensuring that promotional and teaching materials do not use discriminatory language and where appropriate reflect the diversity within the school/centre and broader community.
- ensuring that all learners are encouraged to participate in the diverse range of courses on offer;
- providing a learning environment that encourages learners to remain in the course by removing barriers and ensuring tutors have the skills to deliver courses that are inclusive.

If any learner feels they have not been treated equitably they should inform the Principal or Centre Director/Co-ordinator.

Please note that a full copy of our Equality Policy is available from the Principal, Centre Director/Co-ordinator or HR Department.



FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL

As the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) gives people the opportunity to gain recognition for learning in education or training centres, in the work place and in the community.

FETAC functions include:

- Making and promoting awards
- Validating programmes
- Monitoring and ensuring the quality of programmes
- Determining standards

PLACING FETAC AWARDS IN THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

FETAC is responsible for developing a new system of qualifications for the further education and training sector. This system is part of the overall development of the new 10-level National Framework of Qualifications that will, in time include all awards available in the state from the basic level (Level 1) to the most advanced (Level 10) levels of learning. FETAC has specific responsibility for providing a range of awards at levels 1-6 in the new framework.

For further information please go to the FETAC website, www.fetac.ie

The National Framework of Qualifications is illustrated on back cover.

FETAC ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

It is your duty to familiarise yourself with the regulations relating to written examinations, assignments and practical assessments and the consequences of infringing these regulations.

WRITTEN COURSEWORK (ASSIGNMENTS / PROJECTS)

- i. You must observe deadlines for submission of written coursework for assessment.
- ii. You must sign a declaration that all coursework (assignments, projects, records, collection of work, portfolios etc) submitted for assessment **is your own original work**. Material direct from the Internet or other sources, is not your own work, and will be deemed as plagiarism.

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- iii. Where group projects/assignments are undertaken, all candidates must indicate their own work and submit supporting evidence of each individual's contribution to the group project/assignment.
- iv. You must not access files of any other candidate on a computer or elsewhere.
- v. You must not interfere with or damage in any way the work of other learners.

WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

1. You must carefully note the date, time and location for all written examinations.
2. You are required to be in the exam room prior to the commencement of the exam.
3. You will not be admitted to the exam room after the exam has commenced.
4. If you leave the exam room before the set end time you must give the superintendent the exam papers, answer books and all answer material eg disks etc.
5. You must not bring any mobile phones, books, paper or notes (except in the case of open book exams) into the exam room.
6. During the exam, you must not communicate with or attempt to communicate with any other candidate.
7. You must not damage the exam room or any of its contents.
8. You must obey the directions of the superintendent in all matters relating to the exam.
9. You may be expelled from the exam room if your behaviour, in the opinion of the superintendent, could impact on the successful conduct of the exam.
10. At the conclusion of the exam, you should stop writing immediately, give all answer materials to the superintendent and remain in your seat until instructed otherwise.

COMPUTERISED EXAMINATIONS

The regulations applying to the written examinations will be adopted as appropriate for the conduct of computerised examinations. In addition:

1. You must complete the examination at the computer allocated to you by the superintendent.

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2. You must not bring any cd, floppy disk, memory stick or computer equipment into the examination room.
3. You must not access files of any other person or candidate on the computer.
4. You must not tamper with any computer or equipment in the exam room.
5. At the conclusion of the exam you should stop typing immediately, give all answer materials (disks, printed material) to the superintendent and remain in your seat until instructed otherwise.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS

The regulations applying to the written examination will be adopted as appropriate for the conduct of practical assessments. In addition you must:

1. Wear personal protective equipment where appropriate to the assessment in question.
2. Use safety procedures and practices at all times.
3. Ensure you do not compromise your safety, the safety of the assessor, the safety of the public or the safety of the environment.

PENALTIES FOR BREACH OF ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

Any breach of Co Galway VEC Assessment Regulations or attempted breach, by any learner or on behalf of any other learner will be treated as an offence.

A breach of assessment regulations shall be deemed to have occurred when there has been an actual or attempted form of:

- Cheating
- Copying
- Plagiarism
- Misrepresentation
- Bribery
- Falsification
- Personating or other such form of deception
- Untrue claims of ownership of assignments carried out by the learner

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Penalties imposed for breach of assessment regulations may constitute any, or all, of the following:

- No credit in the assessment, or part of the assessment, in which the offence was committed.
- No credit for the module in which the offence was committed.
- No credit for all of the modules for a particular year of the course being followed.
- Ineligible for an award during the year of the breach.
- Suspension of the candidate, from all activities of the college/centre, for a fixed period of time.
- A recommendation to the Co. Galway VEC Chief Executive Officer for the formal expulsion of the candidate from the school/centre.
- You will be notified, in writing, when a suspected breach of assessment regulation is being investigated.

PRESENTING FETAC PORTFOLIOS

A Portfolio of Coursework is an ordered collection of a learner's work 'in one place'. Where possible the candidates will be given responsibility for assembling their own portfolios.

- Each candidate will have an individual folder to present his or her work.
- Each portfolio should have a FETAC cover page detailing the module, module code, the candidates name and their exam number.
- Candidates work (including marked exam scripts) should be presented in the order it appears in the module descriptor.
- Each section should be clearly identified with a cover page or tagged, the relevant marking sheet and the relevant brief.
- These portfolios are given to the tutor who will issue the candidate with a receipt.
- All evidence will be kept until the appeals period has passed.

COLLECTION OF LEARNER'S WORK AFTER THE APPEAL DATE

- After the appeal date for the assessment has passed, the Principal/Centre Director/Co-ordinator will notify learners of the time and date for collecting their work.
- Candidates should make arrangements to collect their work on that day, either in person or by sending a representative.
- Before accepting the returned work and signing the receipt, candidates should check that all the work is there. Any omissions should be reported to the Principal/Centre Director/Co-ordinator.

IF WORK IS NOT COLLECTED ON THE SPECIFIED DATE OR WITHIN ONE MONTH AFTER THE DATE IT WILL BE DISPOSED OF.

FETAC APPEAL PROCEDURE:

INTERNAL CONSULTATION

- A Learner who wishes to appeal his/her results should write to the Principal/Centre Director/Co-ordinator within three days of receiving the results advising that they are appealing their results.
- Upon receipt of an appeal the Principal/Centre Director/Co-ordinator will contact the learner and the tutor to discuss the grounds for the appeal and to explain the learner's grade.

EXTERNAL APPEAL

If the learner is still dissatisfied with the result of this meeting, he/she may request that their mark is appealed directly to FETAC. In this instance, the Appeals Application Form will be completed and submitted immediately.

An appeal is subject to the payment of a FETAC fee for each module appealed. Cheques are payable to FETAC. In the event of the result being favourably adjusted, the fee will be reimbursed.

The following procedures are applied in all appeal cases:

- The external examiner's/authenticator's report is checked for comments on the specific case.
- The centre will be required to forward the relevant assessment evidence, i.e. the complete candidate's portfolio of evidence.
- The evidence is re-assessed independently by another external examiner/authenticator.
- The final result is returned to FETAC, and to the school/centre.
- The learner will be notified thereafter.

CO. GALWAY VEC CONTACT DETAILS:



HEAD OFFICE:

County Galway VEC, An Coiléar Bán, Athenry, Co. Galway.

Tel: 091-874260

Fax: 091-874270

Web: www.countygalwayvec.com

Email: enquiries@cogalvec.ie

Seosamh Mac Donncha – Chief Executive Officer

Séan Duffy – Education Officer

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha – Adult Education Officer

Máiread Thompson – HR Manager

Charlie Mitchell – Finance Officer

Tomás Breathnach – Timire Gaeilge

Máire Uí Éanaigh – Community Education Facilitator

Mary Lane Heneghan – FETAC Co-ordinator

SCHOOLS

Tuam

(093) 24237

Mountbellew

(09096) 79231

Loughrea

(091) 841919

New Inn

(09096) 75811

Indreabhán & Inis Meáin

(091) 593119

Corr na Móna

(09495) 48006

Athenry

(091) 844159

Athenry, Col. an Eachréidh

(091) 874590

Inis Meáin, Oileáin Árann

(099) 61184

Inis Oírr, Oileáin Árann

(099) 75016

Ros Muc

(091) 574100

Cill Rónáin, Oileáin Árann

(099) 61184

Eileen Delaney

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Brian Ó Maoilchiaráin

Mairéad Ní Fhátharta

Bríd Uí Dhonncha

Peadar Ó Loideáin

Micheál Ó Goill

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YOUTHREACH CENTRES

Youthreach Tuam (093) 26246	David Parslow
Youthreach Ballinasloe (09096) 42158	Bill Day
Youthreach Letterfrack (095) 41893	Theresa McLoughlin
Youthreach Lettermore (091) 551473	Elesia Ní Cheannabháin
Youthreach Portumna (09097) 59576	Isabelle Ní Dhúinn

VTOS CENTRES

VTOS, Tuam (093) 25651	Michael McDonagh
VTOS, Ballinasloe (09096) 46492	Cathal Larkin
VTOS, Rosmuc (091) 574411	Mairéad Seoighe
VTOS, Letterfrack (095) 41302	Sorcha O'Toole

TRAVELLER TRAINING CENTRES

Madonna House Ballinasloe (09096) 43479	Rita Coen
ST. Benin's Tuam (093) 28640	Gerardine McDonagh
ST. Brendan's Loughrea (091) 841387	Catherine Cooney
Ballygar (09066) 24003	Dympna Collett

LITERACY OFFICES

Loughrea (091) 847850	Sheila Donnellan
Tuam (093) 26609	Sheila Holland Fox
Moycullen (091) 555877	Teresa Gilligan
Cladhnach An Cheathrú Rua (091) 506060	Neasa De Bhailis
Headford (091) 34746	Theresa Byrne

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

Petersburg OEC (09495) 46483	Patricia Walsh
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