Ballyfermot College of Further Education

Access to Education for All Policy

Policies and Procedures 2023-2025

Version History

Version	Date	Revision Description	Originator
1	26th June 2023	New document	P/DPs
2	30th June 2023	Revised document	P/DPs
3	24th August 2023	Revised document	P/DPs
4	25th September 2023	Approved by the Board of Management	BOM

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List of Acronyms

AP	Assistant Psychologist
BCFE	Ballyfermot College of Further Education
BTEA	Back to Education Allowance
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
City of Dublin ETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
DCU	Dublin City University
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
EDI	Equality/Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
ESF	European Social Fund
ETBI	Education and Training Board Ireland
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
IADT	Institute of Art, Design and Technology
IT	Information Technology
LGBQT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transexual, and Queer/Questioning Community
MIT eNROL AMS	Online Enrolment and Admissions Management System
MS	Microsoft
NLN	National Learning Network
NLN SSS	National Learning Network Student Support Service
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
PPSN	Personal Public Service Number
RES	Recommendations for Educational Supports
SLI	Sign Language Interpreter
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna/Further Education and Skills Service
SSF	Student Support Fund
SSO	Student Support Officer
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
UoD	University of Dundee
VSware	School Management Information System
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1 Ballyfermot College of Further Education (BCFE)

This policy aims to underpin BCFE's commitment to a learning environment in which all BCFE's students have equal opportunity to take full advantage of pursuing their further education while accessing courses in the college. BCFE is committed to providing additional and reasonable accommodations that will help to remove potential barriers that could prevent some students from equitable participation in their studies while in BCFE. The college strives to ensure no student is disadvantaged over another while pursuing their studies in BCFE and that their achievement can be compared fairly to the achievement of their peers. BCFE offers equity of access to its courses regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, learning difficulty, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. BCFE is committed to ensuring that equity, diversity, respect, and inclusion are firmly at the forefront of access to education for all in BCFE.

'Here at BCFE, we embrace diversity and welcome students of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and nationalities. Regardless of your differences, we guarantee to provide each student with a learning environment which is innovative and supportive'[1]

1.2 City of Dublin Education and Training Board (City of Dublin ETB)

BCFE as a constituent college of City of Dublin ETB comes under their operational ethos of one service for all.

City of Dublin ETB's *'Core Belief'* is that *'every person has a right to access education and training opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential'.*
(CDETB Statement of Strategy 2021-2025)[2]

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[1] *Principal's Welcome (Student Handbook 2023-2024)*

[2] https://www.cdetb.ie/media/cdetb/publications/Statement-of-Strategy-2021-2025.pdf *(Page 31)*

City of Dublin ETB's core values are set out as:

Inclusive – we are open to all learners who can benefit from the courses that we offer.

Respectful - we respect the right to equal treatment for all persons availing of our services.

Responsive - we are responsive to the changing needs of people and society.

Enabling - we provide opportunities to enable people to achieve their education and training potential.

City of Dublin ETB commits to:

Embracing - individuality, diversity, and inclusivity[3]

1.3 FET Professional Learning & Development (SOLAS, ETBI, City of Dublin ETB and BCFE)

The City of Dublin ETB, Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI) (and in turn BCFE as a FET college) now works in partnership with SOLAS (*An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna/Further Education and Skills Service).* SOLAS was established in 2013 under the Further Education and Training Act as an agency of the Irish Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

Minister Simon Harris in his Foreword for the Future FET: Transforming Learning The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024 commented:

'Ireland is a diverse and vibrant society, and the Programme for Government commits to encouraging and enabling full inclusion and equality for all. We recognise the importance of community education in facilitating integration of our diverse population; FET now has a vital role in enabling this equality and cohesion to flourish in communities throughout the country, working with the Government to create a fair, inclusive, and equitable Ireland for all. I congratulate SOLAS, ETBs, teachers, and instructors, as well as all the key stakeholders, in creating such an inclusive vision for Further Education and Training and I look forward to engaging with you all on bringing us there'[4]

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[3] https://www.cdetb.ie/media/cdetb/publications/Statement-of-Strategy-2021-2025.pdf *(Page 31)*

[4] Future FET: Transforming Learning The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy

2020-2024 https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

Minister Simon Harris' Foreword Page 3/4

SOLAS acknowledged in its Foreword that 'Future FET: Transforming Learning' is an ambitious new strategy based around the three core pillars of building skills, **fostering inclusion**, and facilitating pathways.

SOLAS Strategic Priority: Fostering Inclusion

Active inclusion and community development have always been a central tenet of the work of ETBs and FET providers, with an extensive reach into and across local communities. FET balances the needs of skills for work with the just as critical skills for life through provision that supports citizenship and prosperity across communities and develops social capital. FET ensures that supports are available to allow any individual, regardless of background or formal education level, an opportunity to learn and develop. By pledging consistent levels of support and good practice for all learners; rooting FET in its communities; targeting and facilitating participation by the most marginalised groups in society; and tailoring literacy and numeracy resources to meet complex learner needs, a strong inclusive ethos will continue to underpin all FET[5].

1.4 City of Dublin FET Student Supports and Engagement Services

The City of Dublin FET Student Supports and Engagement Services was established in late 2022 to support and empower City of Dublin ETB FET centres to provide a high-quality learning experience for all, through the sharing of practice and the collaborative development of policies, resources, and toolkits. Part of the Services remit is to produce monthly Newsletters (first released in March 2023) to highlight news, policy updates, resources and snapshots of the great practice that is happening across City of Dublin Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training centres in relation to learner supports and learner engagement.

City of Dublin ETB STUDENT SUPPORTS AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE March 2023 Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 1
The National FET Strategy 2020-2024 identified Student Supports as a key area of strategic focus under the pillar of Inclusion and was highlighted again in the recommendations arising from the recent inaugural review of FET in City of Dublin ETB. Our service was established to support and empower City of Dublin ETB FET centres to provide a high-quality learning

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[5] *The FET Professional Learning & Development Statement of Strategy 2020-2024*

https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

Pages 45-48

experience for all, through the sharing of practice and the collaborative development of policies, resources, and toolkits[6].

In the SEN Resources Section there is a wealth of material related to neurodiversity developed by the Psychology Service, which is now available on the City Of Dublin Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) Moodle site.[7]

Delivering on City of Dublin ETB's core belief that every person has a right to access education and training opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential, Director of FET Blake Hodkinson announced on Monday that fees for PLC have been reduced to €50 for the 2023-2024 academic year. This will undoubtedly improve access, inclusion, and education pathways for current and prospective learners.[8]

Student Supports and Engagement Services Student Survey 2022-2023

The Annual FET Student Survey (issued on the 15th of March 2023) is considered an important tool that can be used to actively hear from students and allow for evidence-based decision-making (within the City of Dublin ETB and within individual centres).

The survey sought to gather general feedback on the students' experience in Further Education and Training in City of Dublin Education and Training Board.
This year the three thematic areas for the survey were:
- Induction
- Social/Extra-Curricular Activities
- Progression Planning

Participation by students across the City of Dublin education providers (for 2022-2023) totalled 2144 responses representing a 279% increase from 2021-2022. The level of participation by City of Dublin's colleges of FE was 44%.

Overall, students enrolled on City of Dublin FET courses would recommend their course

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[6] *City of Dublin ETB STUDENT SUPPORTS AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE March 2023 Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 1*

[7] *CDU: All courses (etbonline.ie)*

[8] *City of Dublin ETB STUDENT SUPPORTS AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE May/June2023 Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 3*

and their centre to others. 90% of students enrolled in courses in City of Dublin ETB FET centres would recommend the course, while 89% of students would recommend the centre. This speaks to the overall satisfaction the students in FET feel regarding their learning environment and their chosen education pathway and studies.

2. Definition

2.1 Access to education for all is the ability of all people to have equal opportunity in education, regardless of their gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, learning difficulty, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.

Equity/Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in BCFE

Equity/Equality
BCFE aims to have equity/equality in education by providing equal opportunity to all its students to develop valuable skills and knowledge that help them complete their course, to develop personally, to graduate, to progress in-house or externally and to contribute to both the workplace and to society.

Diversity
BCFE very much welcomes and values diversity in the classroom and college. Having the broadest range of diversity in BCFE (in relation to gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, learning difficulty, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background) enriches the teaching, learning, social environment, and day-to-day life of the college.

Inclusion
BCFE aims to put in place systems and supports that foster inclusion and that value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the college allowing diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all. All students receive equal access and experience equal opportunities to teaching and learning within BCFE.

2.2 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, and queer/questioning community (LGBQT+)

BCFE is an all-inclusive college, and both acknowledges and fully embraces that there will be a variety of sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions amongst its student population.

If applicable, students can alert the relevant course co-ordinator to a preferred forename and/or surname. This will be recorded on BCFE's Student Management Database Systems (VSware) beside the birth name. BCFE staff will use the preferred forename and/or surname.

However, it is important that students are aware that though a preferred name can be recorded on the college's database (and used by staff) all official personal data must match an individual's Personal Public Service Number (PPSN).

It is also important for students to be aware that their BCFE email address will have their official name as part of their email address naming convention and that this cannot be changed to their preferred name.

At registration each student must provide proof of identity, and this is matched to official SOLAS, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) records.

If a student wishes to officially change notification of gender and/or name on BCFE's data systems and for Certification purposes the following official documents will be needed.

- Gender Recognition Certificate for gender change
- Deed Pole document for name change

BCFE is committed to broadening its staff's understanding of presenting sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions through current and relevant training. It has engaged with ShoutOut to deliver such training. ShoutOut is an organisation that 'promotes inclusion through education'[9] which perfectly fits in with BCFE's ethos of being the provider of education for all.

3. Policy Scope
Recognising our position within the City of Dublin ETB, BCFE has a responsibility to provide educational opportunity and support to all. BCFE is committed to ensuring that equity/equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded into all its processes, policies, and procedures and into its teaching and learning.

4. Policy Statement

BCFE as a college of City of Dublin ETB aims to educate through a curriculum that embodies the central values of equality, diversity, and inclusion to facilitate learning for all students, particularly for those who traditionally have been previously denied access to education.

BCFE continues to review the design, structure, delivery, and content of its curriculum within the spirit of equality, diversity, and inclusion. This it carries out in conjunction with its course specific awarding bodies.

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[9] https://www.shoutout.ie/

BCFE does not permit overt or covert discriminatory practices regarding gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, learning difficulty, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.

It is the policy of the City of Dublin ETB and therefore of BCFE that structured in-service programmes be provided to meet the needs of the college and staff in respect of equality, diversity, and inclusion training.

BCFE seeks to adopt the following practices:
- Identification and removal of barriers to student access to courses at BCFE.
- Welcome and support for students with additional needs.
- Support for members of the community who have care responsibilities and wish to study.
- Recognition of diversity in its recruitment and marketing literature.
- Creation of a climate that accepts and celebrates diversity.

4.1 Responsibilities:
Students
- It is each student's responsibility to seek supports if needed and/or if known prior to starting in the college that they are needed.
- It is the student's responsibility to engage with these supports (when put in place) fully.
- It is each student's responsibility to let the support provider (individual support staff member) know when they cannot make a support appointment.
- It is the student's responsibility to attend all classes as best as is possible and to relay to the relevant course coordinator if long-term absences are foreseen (providing the relevant medical certification).

BCFE
- It is BCFE's responsibility to provide reasonable supports upon request.
- It is BCFE's responsibility to provide reasonable supports during term time only.
- It is BCFE's staff's responsibility to keep an accurate record of all students' attendance on the college's student management system (VSware).
- It is BCFE's responsibility to regularly review all student attendance and progress throughout each academic year and to make an informed decision to offer additional reasonable accommodations (if available) where deemed necessary.

5. BCFE's Student Support Services

BCFE strives to provide a wraparound service of supports to cater for all students who require them whatever their need.

The college will endeavour to provide specific supports (in the form of reasonable accommodations) for students who declare (on application) additional needs, disabilities, and/or learning difficulties. If an applicant does not declare on application a specific need but a need becomes apparent as the year progresses every effort will be made to provide some level of support.

BCFE advertises its Student Supports Poster[10] on BCFE's website, in the Student Handbook and on the student online portal, MyBCFE. Each location will contain the necessary information to guide the student to access the support they need – the type of support, who offers the support and the email/telephone contact details of the support person. BCFE's Student Council also advertise the available supports via their social media platforms.

Though there is a range of official supports available BCFE staff employ a very hands on, personal but professional approach to also providing daily support for students:

- The subject teacher – supports students and raises (observed) issues with the co-ordinator.
- The co-ordinator works with the student (in a pastoral care role) to find a solution or refers the students to the Guidance Counsellor or the Student Support Officer.
- The students also have access to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and outside agencies (and will be pointed in the appropriate direction by the Guidance Counsellor and the Student Support Officer).
- Regular team meetings are held – once every two to three weeks to discuss students and their progress (within the context of providing additional support if needed) to assist each student to get the most out of their studies, to succeed and to progress.

The supports provided in BCFE include:

5.1 Guidance Counselling

BCFE offers a Guidance Counselling Service[11] to its students, which aims to assist them to get maximum benefit from their college experience. There are three Guidance Counsellors in the college and each class group has a designated Guidance Counsellor. The service follows the two-strand model and incorporates both guidance and counselling within an educational setting.

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[10] Student Support Poster https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/student-support/

[11]https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/guidance-counselling-service/

Some students find college years can be an anxious and stressful time with lots of adjustments to make. The guidance counsellors provide a support service within an educational setting to students who are willing to engage in change and are prepared to face challenges in new ways. Students can have a variety of issues: academic or college related, personal, or mental health issues. All are important to the student concerned. The Guidance Counsellors may offer a limited number of one-to-one support sessions by appointment to students of BCFE in a caring, supportive, and non-judgmental environment.

Guidance Counsellors will also refer students to outside agencies when this is the most suitable course of action. While this is a confidential service there are limitations to confidentiality. These limitations are clearly defined in the BCFE Student Diary/Handbook. Students who wish to avail of the service should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. This service is supported by City of Dublin ETB Psychological Service[12].

All staff (teaching and ancillary staff) play an informal pastoral role within the college in relation to student welfare and wellbeing. BCFE offers a very caring environment to students from Level 4 to Level 8. Small class groups and daily one-to-one contact with students allow for this. Students who attend BCFE tend to fare better in this further education (FE) environment than if they went to larger, higher education (HE) institutions where they may not progress as well or indeed stay in a much larger, by nature less personal environment.

How to access this support service:
Email the BCFE Guidance Counsellor allocated to your course (information on this will be given at induction) to commence the process of making an appointment.

Email contact for BCFE's three Guidance Counsellors:

1. orla.nibhriain@bcfe.cdetb.ie

2. helen.bradley@bcfe.cdetb.ie

3. annemarie.lyons@bcfe.cdetb.ie

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[12] https://www.cdetb.ie/support-services/psychological-service/

5.2 National Learning Network Student Support Service (NLN SSS)

BCFE will endeavour to provide appropriate supports and services for all students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties to access its courses, within the limits of available resources. Each academic year funding (for the Disability Support Service)(DSS)[13] is made available from, An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS) and the European Social Fund (ESF) under the SOLAS Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD).

The Student Support Service (SSS) comes under the umbrella of the National Learning Network (NLN).[14]

Students with a wide variety of disabilities and learning difficulties are supported including those with a visual impairment, deaf/hard of hearing, physical disability, mental health condition, specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, developmental co-ordination disorders such as dyspraxia and significant ongoing illnesses. Applicants to the Fund for Students with Disabilities must meet certain nationality and residency criteria. The services and supports available to individual students will depend on the grant allocated by SOLAS on an academic yearly basis. BCFE works on the premise of providing reasonable accommodations.

Applicants with high end needs are encouraged to indicate on their application for their need for supports. This indication will not have any adverse effect on a student receiving a place on a course (if a place is available and certain criteria (for all) are met). The sooner the Student Support Officer is aware of a specific support need the sooner the application can be made to SOLAS for funding for these supports. It would mean supports can be available from the start of the academic year.

The type of supports available through the Student Support Service and the SOLAS funding are Irish Sign Language (ISL) Interpreters, Educational Support Workers (ESW) and Transportation and Learning Support. It also includes supports for documented learning difficulties e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, Autism amongst many other support needs.

Another area where reasonable accommodations may apply is for examinations during or/and at the end of the year. If a student who is accessing disability support was granted reasonable accommodations for Junior and/or Leaving Certificate, and they can provide the

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[13] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/disability-support-service/

[14] https://rehab.ie/national-learning-network/

Student Support Officer (SSO) with documentary evidence of this, they can avail of the same accommodations for end of year exams at BCFE. Examples of reasonable accommodations include a reader, scribe, extra time, spelling and grammar waiver and rest/movement breaks.

All applicants who declare an additional need on their application form are registered with the Student Support Officer who completes a Needs Assessment Form with them and on foot of this assessment applies for funding to provide the necessary support to the SOLAS Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD).

Once the funding has been approved and supports are put in place the Student Support Officer then compiles a Recommended Educational Supports (RES) document (in consultation with the student) which is then uploaded to the individual's student's VSware account/profile so that each individual teacher can access it gaining invaluable information to allow them to adjust their teaching (if needs be) to accommodate the student.

Awareness is key for teaching staff – if they know a student has a particular difficulty, they can help them and give them a better educational experience (with a more positive outcome) as a result. The Student Support Officer also uploads 'help' sheets onto VSware giving information re a particular learning difficulty that again informs the teacher as to what difficulties the student faces and how best they can help them in a teaching and learning environment.

How to access this support service:
Email the NLN Student Support Officer, Áine Nally (aine.nally@nln.ie) requesting an appointment.

5.3 National Learning Network Psychological Support Service (NLN SSS)

In the academic year 2023-2024 the NLN are extending their support services in several City of Dublin ETB colleges. As a result, an Assistant Psychologist (AP) will attend BCFE two days a week.

The Assistant Psychologist will work closely with the Student Support Officer and BCFE's Student Support Team to provide students with social, organisational (skills) and well-being support[15].

How to access this support service:
Referral for this service is through the NLN Student Support Officer and Guidance Counsellors in BCFE.

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[15] NLN Psychological Service Support Diagramme.pdf

5.4 Academic Support

Academic support ensures that students who are experiencing difficulties with their academic learning have their educational needs met and are fully included in the student experience at BCFE.

Academic support is available to all students in BCFE no matter what level of course (Level 4 to Level 8) is being studied. A team of teachers headed by an Academic Support Coordinator provide this support daily during term time and for the full academic year.

Academic writing, assignment management and understanding, assignment planning, time management and general help with coping with the work and study involved in a course are all part of what the academic support staff assist with.

Academic support can also provide students with help with the IT skills needed for college, Including navigating and managing BCFE's IT and online learning systems, Internet research skills and general computer literacy needs.

Academic support:
- Facilitates all students to participate fully in the curriculum and achieve their academic potential at BCFE.
- Supports any student who is experiencing difficulties so, "no student is left behind"
- Helps develop increased self-esteem and positive attitudes for all students to the learning
  environment in BCFE.
- Encourages students to investigate and identify their individual learning styles and the type of learning that suits them best.
- Helps students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, as this is an important step in becoming an independent learner.

How to access this support service:
Email your course coordinator to request an appointment with a member of the academic support staff.

5.5 Financial Support

Financial support is offered in BCFE through the Student Support Fund (SSF). A set amount of money is set aside (from BCFE's financial budget) each academic year to fund this. Any student can apply (there are set criteria for those who will be eligible to avail of it).

An SSF form is filled out, the coordinator of the relevant course signs it and it is submitted through the Admin office. The SSF committee (consisting of the Principal, a

Deputy Principal, and college administration) review the forms once a week. There is a very quick weekly turnaround on the decision of the committee and the student can avail of the funds straight away.

The aim of this support is to help those in the greatest need with a small amount of money to cover food, transport costs, and general living expenses. One off larger payments can also be made in times of great need for students who are struggling financially such as around Christmas time. The monies are signed off on a six week roll over whereby the application will be reviewed again. Sometimes in that timescale a student struggling financially will have received a grant which will normally be back dated and then the SSF will be ceased.

In 2022-2023 an additional fund (known as the REACH Fund) was made available to FE colleges to help support their students. The monies from this fund was used to purchase pre-paid Leap cards. These leap cards were given to students who noted travelling expenses as being a particular barrier to attending college. The REACH Fund and resulting leap card scheme will continue for the 2023-2024 academic year. Going forward the REACH Fund may also be used to assist students avail of BCFE's canteen facilities and Art materials (from the college's Art shop).

Other sources of funding and grants for BCFE's students (to investigate themselves) include:
- Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) (Refer to website)[16]
- Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) (Refer to website)[17]
- Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) (Refer to website)[18]
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) (Refer to website)[19]

In addition, any of BCFE's courses that come under a traineeship banner have no fees and would also have a small subsistence allowance allocated to them.

How to access this support service:
Email info@bcfe.cdetb.ie for an application form for the Student Support Fund.

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[16] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/finance/susi/

[17] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/finance/btea-back-to-education-allowance/

[18] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/finance/back-to-education-initiative/

[19] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/finance/vtos-vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/

5.6 Information Technology (IT) Support

As a BCFE student IT will play a large role in all student class interactions, course and assignment work. All students have access to a wide range of equipment, software, online storage facilities and the loan of student laptops. All students will be required to sign a *BCFE and City of Dublin Student Computer and Network Acceptable Usage Form*[20] as part of their student documentation pack at the beginning of the academic year.

BCFE has a robust system in place for student IT support in the form of four full-time IT and equipment technicians, an outside company (QualCom) who oversees all BCFE's IT systems (hardware, software, and servers), two BCFE IT coordinators and a BCFE Moodle Coordinator. The academic support service can also provide IT support including navigating and managing BCFE's IT and online learning systems, Internet research skills and general computer literacy needs. There are a range of IT support materials available on BCFE' website[21] and on the student online portal, MyBCFE.

Each student in BCFE is issued with a student network account which will include a username and password. This will be issued to you by text at induction. The account also affords the student a printing allowance.

Through your BCFE student network and email account you have access to all the applications contained in Office 365. These include Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Calendar, Forms and as well as the virtual learning environments (VLEs) used in BCFE including Microsoft Teams and Moodle.

All these apps have options to work with them within an internet browser. However, it is recommended that the student downloads them to their computer to get the full functionality of the applications. It is also recommended that students work on assignments on either a laptop or desktop computer and not on a mobile phone.

All BCFE students will receive a Wriggle Connect account that contains bitesize IT Assistance (in the form of short videos) on using apps and IT tools e.g., assistive technology. These include free online tools for proofreading assignment work such as Grammarly https://www.grammarly.com/ and Writer https://writer.com/proofreading-checker/

If a student does not have their own computer, they can apply for the loan of a laptop (through the college's laptop loan scheme) for use while studying at BCFE. They can also use the student computer rooms on campus and there are computers and study spaces

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[20]https://www.bcfe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CDETB_BCFE_AUP_final-July-2022.pdf

[21] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/student-resources/computer-department-training-materials/

available in Ballyfermot Library which is next door to BCFE's main and Media buildings.

How to access this support service:
If students have difficulty in accessing any of the college's IT platforms or resources, they can inform their coordinator or module teacher who may be able to assist (if it is a subject specific) issue or if they have any overall technology related problems the student can request technical assistance by emailing comptech@bcfe.cdetb.ie (which uses a ticketing system to address the queries in order of when they come in).

5.7 Student Laptop and College Equipment Loan Scheme

Another invaluable area of support on offer in BCFE is in the loan of student laptops and college (course specific) equipment (e.g. TV/ Film and Sound equipment).

The laptop and college equipment loan scheme is continuing going forward into the 2023-2024 academic year.

Two **criteria** apply to being approved for a loan of all available laptops and college equipment:

- The student must be fully registered as a student of BCFE.
- All required student documentation must be completed and uploaded to the student's MIT account.
  This student documentation includes:
- BCFE Student Participation Form
- BCFE Learner Detail Form
- BCFE and City of Dublin Student Computer and Network Acceptable Usage Form
- BCFE Media (Film, Video, Voice, Photography and Coursework) Release Form 2023/2024
- BCFE Under 18 Parental/Guardian Permission Form

How to access this support service:
If students wish to apply for the loan of a laptop for use for the full academic year, they need to do so by emailing info@bcfe.cdetb.ie A laptop loan scheme link to an online form[22] will then be forwarded on request to the student via their BCFE email.

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[22] tinyurl.com/BCFE-Laptop-Loan-Agreement/ https://forms.office.com/e/MZETDy3bvn

If students wish to apply for the loan of available equipment (TV, film, and sound equipment) for use during the academic year, they need to do so by contacting the relevant course coordinator.

5.8 BCFE's Period Poverty Support Scheme

BCFE's Student Council (on behalf the student body) and some staff had raised concerns re the prevalence of period poverty amongst the student cohort citing insufficient economic resources inhibiting many students to purchase period personal hygiene products. This was seen as a possible ongoing struggle for many and was/could be a barrier to attending college, participating in their education fully and in affecting both their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

It was decided in 2022-2023 to put in place in BCFE a period poverty support scheme by providing free period hygiene products in each applicable bathroom in the college. This scheme will continue going forward.

6. BCFE's Awarding Bodies EDI Policies

6.1 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

QQI's vision for going forward (as outlined in the **QQI Corporate Plan 2022):**[23]

We are committed to a vision of Ireland that offers diverse high quality further and higher education opportunities, enabling learners to reach their full potential through achieving qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally.
Vision, Mission, and Values Page 2

'We will play our part in ensuring that learners can achieve their potential within the further and higher education system by evaluating provider adherence to a national approach to access, transfer and progression and the appropriate recognition of prior learning.
1.2 Strategic Priority 1 Page 4

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[23] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/Corporate%20Plan%202022.pdf

We will play our part in ensuring that all learners are enabled to access accredited qualifications in learning environments suitable to their needs including in the workplace.
1.4 Strategic Priority 1 Page 5

We will contribute to ensuring a high-quality learning experience for international learners through our issuing of the International Education Mark for higher education and English language education providers.
2.3 Strategic Priority 2 Page 7

We will engage with community education providers to ensure access for their learners to education and training qualifications in the National Framework of Qualifications including by working in partnership with Education and Training Boards where appropriate.
3.1 Strategic Priority 3 Page 8

In addition - **QQI Statement of Strategy 2022-2024**:[24]

A key goal in the Department's strategy is to nurture the talent of everyone, facilitating their unique journey through lifelong learning. We offer QQI Awards that are relevant to learner needs.

QQI aims to develop Ireland's further and higher education and research systems to support people in reaching their full potential and to create value, prosperity, resilience, and a cohesive, sustainable, and vibrant society.

6.2 Pearson/BTEC

We are committed to ensuring that equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded into everything we do[25].

Equity, diversity and inclusion in Pearson qualifications and related service policy 2021

- We are committed to ensuring that equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded into everything we do.

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[24] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/statement-of-strategy-2022-24.pdf

[25] https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Support/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees/Equity_diversity_and_inclusion_policy.pdf

- All students should have equitable opportunities to access our qualifications, assessments, related products and services and the content of our qualifications and assessments should reflect the wide diversity of our students.
- We strive to support students of all abilities and to ensure we award our qualifications in a way that is fair to every learner.
- We are committed to developing qualifications that are accessible to, and representative of, the students taking them, where these are not restricted by government determined conditions.
 - We are committed to developing qualifications and assessments which are free from bias and do not discriminate against specific groups or protected characteristics.
- We are committed to making sure our qualifications and related products are of the appropriate demand and rigour, and that our learners are empowered by them.
- We are committed to designing qualifications that support the development of skills and abilities so that they enable progression and do not place a cap on learners' aspirations.
- We are committed to developing qualifications and assessments that refer to provision at levels above, alongside, and below, to enable the progression of learning.
- We monitor and review equity and diversity throughout the development of qualifications and
- We pledge to provide equity of opportunity within our assessments through inclusive design and reasonable adjustment.
- We are committed to designing assessment that is free from gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic, political, cultural, or other discrimination and stereotyping. elated products and services.

Access to study (of Pearson/BTEC awards)[26]

Our qualifications should:

- be available to everyone able to reach the required standards
- be free from any barriers that restrict access and progress.
- provide equal opportunities for all those who want to access the qualifications.

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[26] https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/BTEC-Higher-Nationals/journalism/2023/specification-and-sample-assessments/9781292720616-hn-journ-spec.pdf
Pearson HNC/HND Programme Specification Pgs. 17/18/5.3 and 5.5

Our equality policy requires that:

- all students have an equal opportunity to access our qualifications and assessments.
- our qualifications are awarded in a way that is fair to every student.

We are committed to making sure that:
- students with a protected characteristic as defined by law (for example race, sexuality, or religious belief) are not disadvantaged in comparison with students who do not share that characteristic.
- all students achieve the recognition they deserve for taking a qualification.
- this achievement can be compared fairly to the achievement of their peers.

6.3 Dublin City University (DCU)

We are dedicated to encouraging and fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging for all[27].

DCU's Policy on Equity and Access[28]
The University positively promotes diversity and equality of opportunity. DCU shall respond to the needs of our students and employees irrespective of gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, membership of the traveller community or race.

The Policy confirms the University's commitment to:
- Develop, maintain, and support a comprehensive policy of equality within the University. DCU aims to create the conditions whereby students, staff and all others associated with the University are treated equitably regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, membership of the traveller community, religious beliefs, age, civil partnership status or family status.
- Develop, promote, maintain, and support policies to improve access to the University and to University education by economically or socially disadvantaged people, by people who have a disability and by people from sections of society significantly under-represented in the University.

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[27] https://www.dcu.ie/hr/edi-equality-diversity-inclusion
[28] https://www.dcu.ie/system/files/2021-06/33-equality_and_access_policy_hr_v2.pdf

6.4 University of Dundee (UoD)

We are committed to providing an inclusive environment for all[29].

University of Dundee Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy[30]

This Policy sets out how the University of Dundee intends to meet its statutory obligation to satisfy the requirements of the General and Specific Duties of the Equality Act 2010.

The University has a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. The University must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- The protected characteristics defined under the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief (including lack of belief), gender and sexual orientation.

This Policy is one of many policies and procedures, which the University has in place to support its commitment to an institutional Equality and Diversity strategy.

6.5 Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)

IADT is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion at work. Equality and fairness are fundamental and core to the Institute. [31].

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[29] https://www.dundee.ac.uk/equality-diversity
[30] https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/equality-and-diversity-policy

[31] https://www.iadt.ie/about/equality-diversity-inclusion

IADT celebrate diversity and difference and strive to provide an inclusive environment that is respectful of others and free from discrimination and harassment.

IADT is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion at work and to treating all our employees, students, stakeholders, and all other people involved in any aspect of the Institute equally, regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community or socio-economic background. Our culture is one that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion. We promote excellence, encourage creativity, and seek new ideas[32].

IADTs *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* seeks to build on its commitment to EDI.

Equality and fairness are fundamental and core to the Institute. We provide equal opportunities to our students and staff. We celebrate diversity and difference and seek to provide an inclusive environment that is respectful of others and free from discrimination and harassment. We are committed to positive actions to address any imbalances[33].

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[32] https://iadt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EDI-Draft-Policy_IADT.pdf

[33] https://www.iadt.ie/content/files/IADT_Strategic_Plan_WEB_AW.pdf

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7. Appendices

7.1 BCFE Student Support Service Poster[34]
7.2 BCFE Appointment Form for Guidance and Counselling[35]
7.3 BCFE Student Support Fund Application Form[36]
7.4 BCFE Student Laptop Loan online MS Form[37]
7.5 NLN Needs Assessment Form[38]
7.6 NLN Recommendations for Educational Support (RES) Form[39]
7.7 NLN Handbook for Students Availing of Supports Transitioning from School to College[40]
7.8 NLN Working with a Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) in the Further Education Classroom[41]
7.9 BCFE Information for Students with Disabilities, Health Conditions and/or Specific Learning Difficulties[42]
7.10 AS I AM The Autistic Guide to Starting College[43]
7.11 Academic Writing Handbook for Learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) Sector[44]
7.12 NLN Psychological Service Support Diagramme[45]

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[34] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/student-support/

[35] BCFE Appointment Form for Guidance and Counselling.pdf

[36] BCFE Student Support Fund Application Form 2023-2024.pdf

[37] tinyurl.com/BCFE-Laptop-Loan-Agreement/ https://forms.office.com/e/MZETDy3bvn

[38] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/disability-support-service/

[39] NLN Recommendations for Educational Support Form 2023-2024.pdf

[40] https://www.bcfe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Handbook-for-students.pdf

[41] Working with a Sign Language Interpreter in the Further Education Classroom.pdf

[42] https://www.bcfe.ie/current-students/support/disability-support-service/

[43] https://autismfriendlyhei.ie/

[44] Academic Writing Handbook For Students In The FET Sector.pdf

[45] NLN Psychological Service Support Diagramme.pdf