



# FET LEARNER VOICE POLICY

Policy Area	FET Strategic Framework
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Monitored	Annually
Responsibility	College of FET
Approval	FET Quality Council

# 1. Introduction

1.1 Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's College of FET values learners as partners in the education process. It is committed to promoting the learner voice, as part of the quality assurance and enhancement processes of its provision and support services.

1.2 The development of the Learner Voice has been identified as a key strategic priority for the FET sector at national and local level. It will result in the enrichment of the individual learning experience, strengthen our quality assurance and evaluation processes, and support the development and promotion of the FET sector as a whole.

1.2.1 The SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024<sup>1</sup> highlighted 1) the need to develop the learner voice *'on organisation oversight, planning provision, delivering support services, curriculum development, quality assurance and improvement, and future strategy'*, 2) the need to *'build capacity of learners to engage effectively in structures and articulate views and positions that can be taken into account by SOLAS, ETBs, other FET providers and other key stakeholders'*, and 3) the need to *'use FET learners as ambassadors for the value of learning in our system'*.

1.2.2 The LCETB College of FET Strategic Framework 2022-2025<sup>2</sup> describes how the Learner Voice is about fostering Inclusion and prioritising a learner-centred approach. *'Placing learners at the centre of everything we do means listening to their perspectives to enhance the teaching and learning environments and outcomes, respond to their needs, and empower them to fulfil their potential.'*

1.2.3 The QQI Institutional Review of Quality Assurance LCETB Report (2021) also recommended the development of *'consistent and effective mechanisms to capture the learner voice, and use it to inform decision-making at Centre/College campus level, and FET management level.'*

1.3 This policy is related to other LCETB documents:

- [FET Learner Charter](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [FET Learner Complaints Procedure](#)
- [LCETB Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Action Plan](#)
- [Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Implementation Process](#)
- [FET Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Quality Council Terms of Reference](#)
- [FET Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#)
- FET Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy (in development)

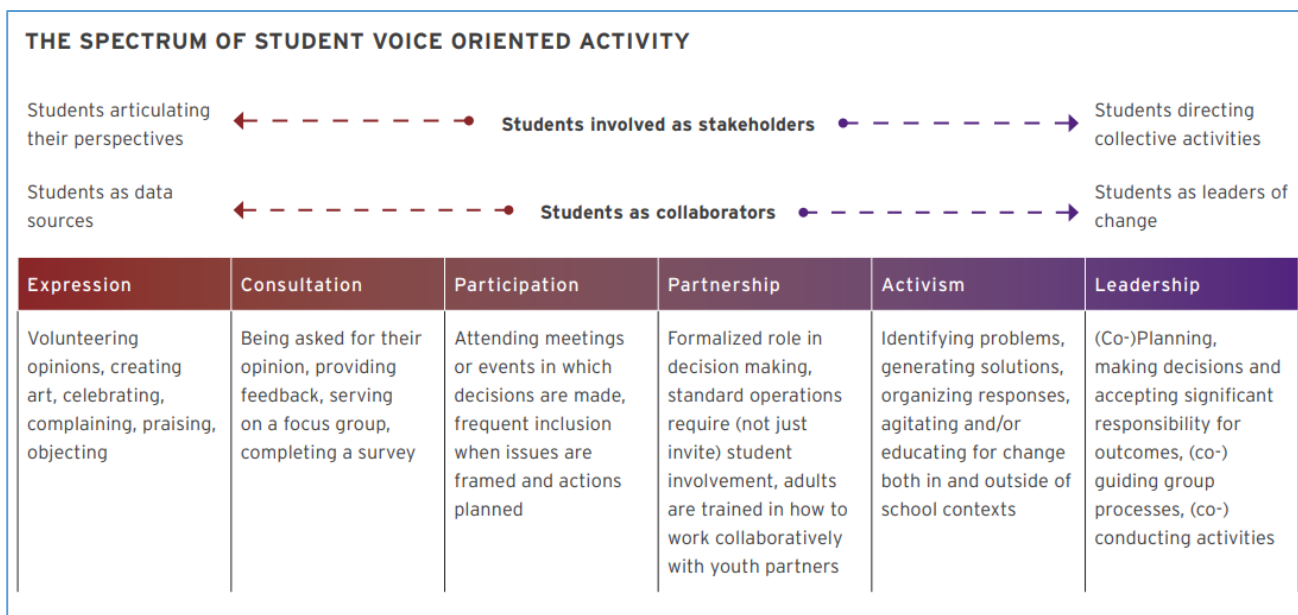
1.4 There are many definitions for the learner voice. It can be defined as *"how [learners] come to play a more active role in their education...as a direct result of their [educators] becoming more attentive, in sustained or routine ways, to what students want to say about their experience of learning."* Hargreaves (2004)

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<sup>1</sup> [SOLAS FET Strategy 20-24.pdf \(lcetb.ie\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [QT194 Strategic Framework WEB CROPPED copy \(lcetb.ie\)](#)

It sits within the Learner Engagement Spectrum towards shared responsibility, decision-making and partnership roles at all levels of the organisation. The College of FET recognises that, as we continue to develop a culture of meaningful learner engagement over the next few years, it will work towards developing more genuine partnership mechanisms.



*Motivation, Engagement, And Student Voice - Eric Toshalis And Michael J. Nakkula (2012)*

1.5 The benefits of the learner voice include:

- ✚ Enhanced learning experience for learners, sense of enjoyment and belonging;
- ✚ Increased wellbeing of learners and staff;
- ✚ Learners feel more engaged, leading to increased participation, retention and progression for FET learners;
- ✚ Consistency of approaches leads to patterns of positive change and improvement in teaching, learning and assessments and learner supports;
- ✚ Empowerment of learners and experience of democratic processes;
- ✚ Visible changes that can be linked to learner feedback;
- ✚ Enhanced partnership between learners, staff and the organisation;
- ✚ Improved perception of the FET sector.

1.6 The LCETB College of FET Learner Voice Policy sits within the wider context of the College of FET Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which guides the practice of collecting, analysing, and using data to document progress, and uses an evidence-based approach to inform planning and decision-making processes.

1.7 It sets out the scope, key principles and objectives of the meaningful engagement of FET learners to share their views about their learning experience. It also outlines the range of learner voice mechanisms used across the College of FET, and key roles and responsibilities involved.

## 2. Policy Objectives

- 2.1 To provide coherence and consistency of approach in all College of FET learner voice initiatives.
- 2.2 To clarify and communicate the College of FET values and expectations of the learner voice mechanisms for learners, staff and the organisation.
- 2.3 To link learner voice activities to quality enhancement in the College of FET.
- 2.4 To ensure the effectiveness of our learner voice mechanisms and close the feedback loop.
- 2.5 To harness digital technologies to advance the learner voice in the College of FET.
- 2.6 To recognise the valuable contribution learners can make in the College of FET change management processes.
- 2.7 To capture good practice across the College of FET and share it with all key stakeholders, and with the FET sector.
- 2.8 To positively influence FET learners' mental health and wellbeing, through meaningful engagement in their own learning processes.
- 2.9 To promote the value of FET learning in the Irish education system.

## Scope

**All LCETB College of FET learners, irrespective of location, mode of delivery, level or type of provision and/or support service, should have fair opportunities to share their views and feedback on their learning experience.**

## Guiding Principles

- **Learner-centredness:** Placing learners at the centre of everything we do means listening to their perspectives to enhance the teaching and learning environments and outcomes, respond to their needs, and empower them to fulfil their potential.
- **Inclusion and Accessibility:** All learner voice activities should consider the diversity of FET learners in their design and delivery, using UDL approaches. They should be inclusive and accessible to all, including part-time learners.
- **Dignity and Respect:** We will promote a culture of respect, dignity and wellbeing and provide a safe environment through openness, responsiveness, active listening to diverse perspectives, and ensuring that all forms of discrimination are prevented and addressed.
- **Appropriateness and timeliness:** All learner voice mechanisms should offer a range of formal and informal options, appropriate to learners' circumstances to encourage maximum participation. Consultations should be planned 'just in time' to capture learner feedback at key times of their learning journeys.
- **Empowerment:** We value the learner voice as a democratic experience, highlighting learners' rights and responsibility in influencing decisions affecting their experiences.
- **Accountability and transparency:** All learner voice activities must explain why feedback is collected, how it is shared and how it will be used. Actions taken as a result of learner feedback, should be highlighted and communicated.
- **Supportive:** We will support learners to develop the skills to fully engage in learner voice mechanisms.
- **Data protection:** Learner voice activities must adhere to LCETB Data Protection Policy and protect learners' anonymity (unless consent is given).

- **Sustainability:** All learner voice activities should be supported and resourced to promote long-term engagement and participation.
- **Avoid duplication/ Purposeful process:** All learning activities should have a clear and specific purpose, and be used to inform decision-making at all levels of the College of FET.
- **Active listening / Meaningful engagement:** All learner voice activities promote a learner-centred approach, where learners are actively engaged, empowered, and valued as partners in the learning process.
- **Celebration:** By recognising and celebrating learners' achievements and success stories, we foster a positive learning environment, and a more inclusive educational experience for all.

### 3. Range of Learner Voice Activities

This section highlights the current LCETB FET practice to encourage the learner voice at governance, College of FET, campus and classroom levels. These activities benefit learners, FET practitioners and the wider organisation, towards enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

There are a wide range of learner voice activities across the College of FET. The list below is not exhaustive as FET practitioners constantly adapt to the wide diversity and evolving profile of learners. **The College of FET places equal value on all types of learner voice activities. It is the combination of these activities that ensures a learner-centred and accessible learner voice to all FET learners.** Creativity is always encouraged to develop new opportunities for learners to share their views.

#### 3.1. Informal Feedback

Informal feedback from learners happens every day in the College of FET campuses. This is an essential activity and is encouraged as a form of expression for learners. The informality and confidentiality of the exchanges between learners and FET practitioners is valued as a trust and relationship building opportunity, which is central to FET. It should also be balanced with the need to document recurrent issues, which can be acted on at classroom, campus and/or College of FET levels.

3.1.1. The College of FET encourages staff to ritualise informal feedback through breakfast meetings or other casual exchange opportunities.

3.1.2. Staff engaging in informal meetings are asked to report learner feedback to the campus FET Coordinator through a simple [Informal Feedback Form](#). The collated feedback should then be regularly brought up as a Learner Voice item on staff meeting agendas to identify necessary actions at campus level.

#### 3.2. College of FET Surveys

College of FET surveys provide learners with regular and formal opportunities to provide anonymous feedback on the quality of our FET provision and support services. This is essential to our quality improvement processes.

3.2.1. **An annual College of FET Learner Voice Survey** will be centrally issued through emails to all learners, apprentices and trainees, using their LCETB email addresses. Text messages with the survey link will be sent centrally to all PLSS registered learners with a short text message inviting them to complete. Posters announcing the survey will be on display in high visibility areas on campus, with a QR code for scanning and mobile phone access.

3.2.2. Survey questions will be reviewed periodically to ensure they reflect changes in FET priorities, learner supports and the learner profile. The questions will also be reviewed to ensure they are written in plain English in order for the survey to be accessible to all our learners.

3.2.3. Surveys must be scheduled at appropriate times, consideration should be given to learners on short courses, busy periods (examinations, work placements, holidays), other surveys, accessibility for vulnerable and hard to reach learners, etc.

3.2.4. A [College of FET Early Exit Survey](#) will be available at campus level to allow learners to feedback on the reasons for their leaving a course early. This form should be sent to all early leavers by FET Coordinators. An annual summary should be compiled at Campus level and shared with FET Managers to identify potential actions to be taken at campus or College of FET level.

3.2.5. FET Coordinators should make every effort to ensure a high response rate in their campus. Support should be provided to every learner who needs it to complete the surveys.

3.2.6. The confidential nature of surveys is essential to honest feedback, and anonymity should be preserved throughout survey processes.

3.2.7. Within the College of FET, we value and encourage open feedback from our learners to continuously improve our provision and support services. However, in line with our commitment to maintaining a respectful and confidential learning environment, we have a strict policy of disregarding any feedback that includes the names or personal identifiers of individuals. We believe in fostering a culture of constructive feedback that focuses on ideas, processes, and outcomes, while safeguarding the privacy and dignity of all involved parties.

3.2.8. Each campus will provide induction programmes and ongoing information to learners to signpost relevant channels for feedback, including where to report sensitive issues. We will ensure learners know about complaints procedures, so that complaints received from learners and other stakeholders can be resolved in a timely, fair and equitable manner (see *Complaints procedures*)

3.2.9. Feedback from the annual CoF Learner Voice Survey will be centrally collated by the Quality Assurance Support Service. A summary presentation of findings will be shared with individual provision, campus management, the FET Steering Group and the Quality Council.

3.2.10. Analysis of findings at campus level will inform each FET campus self-evaluation processes. Analysis of findings at College of FET level will inform strategic and operational discussions around recurrent and cross-campus issues.

3.2.11 The actions taken in response to feedback will be communicated to the learning community in plain English, using the **'You said this, we did this' approach**. This can be done through physical and/or online noticeboards.

### 3.3. Themed Surveys and Focus Groups

These are snapshot surveys on particular themes. They tend to be carried out by FET Support Services (e.g. Technology-Enhanced Learning Support Service (TELSS) Digital experience survey, Learning Hubs surveys, etc.).

3.3.1. Consideration should be given to ensure the timing for these surveys does not interfere with other FET surveys. This will be helped by an agreed Learner Voice Calendar of activities.

3.3.2. At the end of each year, all support services should inform the Chairperson of the Learner Voice Implementation Group of any forthcoming survey/consultation planned. This would be part of an overall calendar of LV activity for the next calendar year.

3.3.3. A summary of findings and best practice, as well as actions identified to respond to findings will be collated by relevant Support Services and will be shared with the Quality Council and the FET Steering Group.

3.3.4. Following Learner survey findings, focus groups may be organised to further explore issues arising from learner voice activities. These focus groups will be facilitated by FET practitioners, resource workers or learner champions.

3.3.5. Best practice identified through these surveys will be documented using the LCETB [FET Best practice Toolkit](#).

### 3.4. Mid-Year and End of Year Course Surveys

The College of FET is committed to developing teaching and learning strategies, which focus on learners taking responsibility for their own learning and acquiring knowledge and skills to prepare them for work, life and active citizenship.

3.4.1. The College of FET Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy (to be developed) will highlight the need for structured, consistent and transparent feedback processes in the classrooms across the College of FET.

3.4.2. We will continue to harness new technologies to maximise classroom feedback, through the use of a range of tools such as MS Forms, Padlet, Vevox, Nurture, etc. through our TEL Support Service. *Full details re. software licensing are available at [TELSS Software Page](#).*

3.4.3. Mid-year surveys can be carried out to capture feedback for learners, and ensure action can be taken to benefit learners while they are still on the programme.

3.4.4. End of year classroom feedback can be sought by FET Practitioners and/or FET Coordinators on campus to get feedback from learners on specific courses. The feedback is used to refine course design and delivery, and is an essential element of provision planning for the College of FET.

### 3.5. Complaints Procedures

Each campus will provide induction programmes and ongoing information to learners to signpost relevant channels for feedback, including the reporting of sensitive issues. Formal complaints procedures ensure complaints received from learners and other stakeholders are resolved in a timely, fair and equitable manner (see [FET Learner Complaints Procedure](#)).

3.5.1. We will ensure FET practitioners are trained to support learners who wish to use the complaints procedures.

3.5.2. Summaries will be compiled by the Quality Assurance Support Service, to highlight main areas of complaints within the College of FET.

3.5.3. Findings will be presented to the Quality Council, and actions identified to address issues raised.

### 3.6. Learner Representation on College of FET Structures

Learner representation is a formal activity that aims to ensure the learner voice on organisation oversight, planning provision and support services, curriculum development, quality assurance and improvement. Whether they are elected or volunteers, learner representatives have the opportunity to influence change in the College of FET. Learner structures can also enhance a sense of belonging to FET campuses, and result in cross-provision enhancements. Our intent is to develop a consistent approach to the development of formal learner structures, which can fit all types of learning, and include a clear purpose.

3.6.1. There are a range of College of FET structures, which include learner representatives:

- Quality Assurance and Governance Structures: A learner representative sits on the College of FET Quality Council. Learner representation is also featured as part of the policy on the College of FET Quality Review processes.
- Cross-campus Working Groups: Learner representatives are encouraged to sit on FET Campuses' special focus working groups, such as Mental Health and Wellbeing working group, International Women's working group, etc. It is recommended that the ratio staff/learners on these groups should be 50/50.
- Learners Unions/Councils in College of FET settings: Some FET campuses have developed learner formal structures.

3.6.2. Campus induction processes and ongoing communication with learners should regularly signpost opportunities for learners to become representatives on FET structures, committees, social clubs, etc.

3.6.3. All learner representatives should be supported in their role at campus level. The College of FET will avail of national or local training available to support learners to effectively carry out their representation roles.

### 3.7. Capturing the Wider Benefits of Learning (CWBL)

A College of FET Framework for 'Capturing the Wider Benefits of Learning' (CWBL) was developed in 2010, as a [self-assessment tool](#) for learners to assess their before and after level of skill development on a course. It looks at all wider benefits of learning under 4 headings: Personal Learning; Health and Wellbeing; Family and Community; and Future Plans for Education and Employment.

This tool is administered at local level by Community Education tutors in Limerick City and Clare, and is used to enhance teaching and learning in community settings.



## 4. How we use the Learner Voice

The learner voice mechanisms outlined in this policy all aim to identify areas of excellence and opportunity for quality enhancements across the College of FET.

### 4.1. To make changes

This policy clarifies the feedback loop for each Learner Voice mechanism used in the College of FET.

4.1.1. Learner feedback is shared at relevant levels in the organisation, so that appropriate action can be taken at classroom, campus or College of FET level.

4.1.2. A Learner Voice item should be added to general staff meetings agendas to ensure the feedback collated is discussed and actions can be identified.

4.1.3. The College of FET will promote a **'You said this, we did this'** approach through physical and online noticeboards to update learners on actions taken in response to their feedback.

### 4.2. To capture FET Best Practice

As part of our quality assurance processes, we use the feedback from learners to identify best practice across the College of FET.

4.2.1. We encourage all FET Staff to use all available methods to share the best practice identified across campuses. Some of the methods to be used include:

- the [College of FET Best Practice Toolkit](#). This user-friendly document provides a template to consistently ensure good practice is documented and shared across the College of FET. A [repository of Case Studies](#) is also available to collate examples of good practice that can be shared at national and international level.
- Digital tools can also be used to capture best practice through learner videos and [Show and TEL](#) interviews. These tools are used by the Learning Hub and TELSS staff for internal sharing, and aim to be inspirational and highlight best practice.

### 4.3. To promote the FET sector

The learner voice mechanisms aim to acknowledge learners as key stakeholders of the FET sector. By expressing their opinions and reflecting on their journey, learners contribute to enhancing the FET sector.

#### 4.3.1. Testimonials

Learner testimonials are real-life examples of the FET learners' experience in LCETB. They highlight the diversity of our learners and recognise their achievements. They are a powerful tool to promote the value of learning, and recognise the FET sector as a valuable pathway. They can also be useful to identify learners as potential learner champions/ambassadors for internal or national fora.

4.3.1.1. The collation of testimonials will be supported by FET Provision, Support Services and the LCETB Communications Unit.

4.3.1.2. We will use all learner voice mechanisms ethically. The issue of learner and staff consent must be clearly communicated, in line with our [GDPR policy](#). It is understood consent is finite and can be withdrawn at any stage. If learner image/story is to be used for other purposes than the original one, permission must be sought again. It must be made clear that learners can withdraw consent at any time.

4.3.1.3. It is understood that learners share their stories with LCETB on a voluntary basis only; however, if external partners want to compensate learner champions to attend their own fora, the external agency's own compensation processes can apply.

4.3.1.4. The College of FET will harness new technologies to ensure testimonials are widely shared on a range of platforms. These include:

- Learner Podcasts;
- Learner videos;
- Visuals across FET campus buildings, brochures, press articles;
- Show and TEL interviews;
- Personal reflections captured at classroom level.

4.3.1.5. Internal showcase events will be organised by Learning Hub staff on campuses to show learner videos. The purpose of those is for internal sharing, inspiration and highlighting best practice.

4.3.1.6. When learner testimonials are used externally, they become promotional materials, and therefore fall under processes defined by the LCETB Communication Unit policy (to be developed).

4.3.1.7.A Learner Voice page on the College of FET website will gather all relevant and authorised videos/podcasts/Best practice repository.

#### 4.3.2. Learner-led Initiatives and Celebrations

4.3.2.1. The College of FET values all learners as partners of our teaching and learning community. We recognise and celebrate the achievements, progress, and efforts of learners throughout their learning journey. The learner voice, awards and celebrations are all interconnected. They contribute to creating an inclusive and empowering educational experience, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment, boosting self-esteem and motivation, and can inspire others.

4.3.2.2. We encourage and support learner-led initiatives, clubs, or societies that allow learners to explore their interests, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the wider campus community.

4.3.2.3. We will support learner-led initiatives for the benefit of all learners and involve learners in the organisation of various events, such as learners' work exhibitions, special events, charity events, etc. They are a celebration of excellence across FET provision in Limerick and Clare.

4.3.2.4. We will include learner representatives in organising working groups, and support their initiative through social media to ensure maximum visibility of these learner-centred initiatives.

4.3.2.5. The College of FET will hold annual large scale cross-campus conferring ceremonies to celebrate FET learners. These events will be widely promoted at local level, using various platforms.

## 5. Monitoring of the Policy

The monitoring of the implementation of the Learner voice policy will be carried out by the Learner Voice Implementation Group.

The group will develop an implementation plan to include an annual calendar of LV activities.

Summary quality enhancement reports will be prepared by relevant campuses and Support Services, to provide evidence that learner views have resulted in quality improvements.

A College of FET Quality Enhancement picture will be presented to the FET Steering Group and shared at Quality Council level.

The review of the LV policy will take place for necessary updates. All major modifications will be presented to the Quality Council for approval.

## 6. Responsibilities

The implementation of this Learner Voice Policy is a collective approach and involves people at all levels of the organisation.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Quality Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Approve the Learner Voice Policy</li> <li>▪ Review findings from LV activities and identify actions to be taken at CoF level.</li> </ul>
Director of FET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure the LV is recognised as a priority in all College of FET campuses</li> <li>▪ Allocate resources to carry out learner events and LV activities</li> </ul>
FET Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the implementation of the LV policy</li> <li>▪ Review findings from LV activities and identify relevant actions at CoF level.</li> </ul>
Learner Voice Implementation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor the implementation of the LV Policy</li> <li>▪ Review and update LV policy every 3 years</li> <li>▪ Agree an annual Calendar of LV activities with relevant staff</li> <li>▪ Use findings to build an CoF QA enhancement picture</li> <li>▪ Monitor and communicate actions taken as a result of learner feedback</li> </ul>
FET Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the implementation of the LV policy</li> <li>▪ Review findings from LV activities and identify relevant actions at Campus level.</li> <li>▪ Use 'You said this...we did this...' approach through noticeboards on campus</li> <li>▪ Call for regular LV staff meeting, to discuss issues emerging and take action at campus level.</li> <li>▪ Identify participants for Learner forum and other learner events/case studies</li> <li>▪ Where relevant, support learner representation on Campus structures</li> </ul>
QASS & QA Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Train FET practitioners to support learners who wish to use complaints procedures.</li> <li>▪ Summarise complaints and present annual findings to Quality council, and suggest quality enhancements</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate CoF Survey working group, manage roll out of survey and collate and disseminate findings.</li> <li>▪ Support FET Coordinators to include LV activities in their self-evaluation processes.</li> </ul>
Support Services Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning Hub staff to develop podcasts and videos and organise internal showcase events.</li> <li>▪ TELSS to develop show and TEL videos</li> <li>▪ Anchor staff members to support learner-led initiatives</li> <li>▪ FET Support Services to manage Themed surveys and disseminate findings and actions.</li> <li>▪ Support use of Best practice toolkit and update repository</li> </ul>
FET practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers/Tutors/Resource workers or other FET practitioners accompanying vulnerable groups to encourage learners to be more reflective and vocal on their views and needs.</li> <li>▪ Use suggestion boxes in campuses as advocates for their learners.</li> <li>▪ Implement TLA Policy on learner feedback processes at classroom/course level.</li> </ul>
Learner Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undergo training</li> <li>▪ Share feedback with learners</li> </ul>
All learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actively engage in all LV activities and give open and constructive feedback, in line with FET policies.</li> <li>▪ Volunteer to represent fellow learners on FET structures</li> <li>▪ Take part in elections of learner unions/learner reps.</li> </ul>
LCETB Communications Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guide and work with FET practitioners to develop articles and videos as testimonials.</li> <li>▪ Support social media presence for all learner events</li> <li>▪ Organise whole CoF graduation ceremonies</li> </ul>