



# Griffith College

**Consultation on National Access Plan**

**2022-2026**

**Submission on behalf of Griffith College**

**June 2021**



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,  
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta  
Department of Further and Higher Education,  
Research, Innovation and Science

**HEA**

HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

# **Submission on the National Access Plan 2022-2026 on behalf of Griffith College**

## *Introduction*

Griffith College welcomes the consultation for the next National Access Plan. It supports Minister Simon Harris whose priority is to deliver a more equitable higher education system.

As the country's leading private HEI with campuses in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, Griffith is pleased to accept the invitation to make a submission. We have almost 50 years' experience of providing choice for learners of all ages. Our alternative options complement and extend those available in public sector HEIs. Over the past four decades, we have been privileged to open up access to tens of thousands of student learners to educational and professional qualifications that have enriched their lives and contributed to the development of skills in the Irish workforce.

The HEA background paper acknowledges the transformative power of education and says it is essential that pathways to higher education are available to all those seeking to upskill or further their personal development through higher education. It adds, "Central to engagement with students from under-represented backgrounds and their communities are the Access Officers and staff in place in each HEI".

Regrettably, none of the State's €43 million for access provision to HEIs has been made available to private providers. Many hard-pressed disadvantaged families have no option, therefore, but to make great sacrifices so their daughters or sons can attend courses of their choice in private HEIs that are not available to them in public sector institutions. They do so without any assistance from the state in the form of SUSI grants and other supports. Many more disadvantaged students would attend private HEIs if entitlement to funding were student-centred rather than institution-centred. It will be recalled that the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education chose to make a specific recommendation in a special report in 2017 that SUSI grants be extended to these students (Appendix 1).

In view of this report and our sense of obligation to our students we feel we must again highlight the need for an even-handed approach in the government's access policies. Disadvantaged students in private HEIs feel they are treated with neither equity nor equality by the state. It is timely to address this in the next five-year plan which could set out a roadmap for the implementation of the Oireachtas report.

The new Plan is the first since that report was published four years ago. The authors of the forthcoming Plan might examine how the report could be implemented in a fair and equitable manner. Reluctance to do so might prompt the Oireachtas to seek an explanation as to why a Government Plan on equity of access would choose to ignore key recommendations on this issue from an all-party committee of members of the Dáil and Seanad.

Griffith College, like other private higher education institutions can and want to contribute to the advancement of students without exception.

Griffith College, with campuses in inner city Dublin, Cork and Limerick has a particular interest and commitment to working with disadvantaged groups and has evidenced its commitment in previous proposals. The college has direct experience of delivering programmes under Springboard and is a pioneer in the development of new apprenticeship programmes, for example in healthcare.

The college has a track record of providing access and support for students across a wide range of disciplines from levels 5 to 9 on the national framework of qualifications. It is ready and available to

support the Minister's priority of delivering a more equitable further and higher education system and could achieve significantly for disadvantaged students with the removal of some specific current obstacles.

Griffith College welcomes this opportunity to contribute and outlines its suggestions and observations below under the various categories in the hope they are helpful to future students. The College wishes the review every success and would be delighted to engage further in any of the suggestions or proposals outlined.

*Responses to questions:*

**What should our overall vision for equity of access to higher education in Ireland be for 2022-2026?**

- Nobody should be left behind. Places and supports should be available for all qualified applicants who wish to advance their careers through participation in further education, apprenticeships or higher education
- The vision recognises that real equity means treating people differently, dependent on their needs, but with equal outcome. Equity of access means that entitlement to funding is student centred - as recommended by the Oireachtas Education Committee - rather institution centred
- Equity means treating CAO applicants equally if they choose to attend public or private HEIs by providing them with equal access to SUSI grants and other supports, as recommended by the Oireachtas Education Committee
- Such a vision brings Ireland into line with most EU member countries who make no distinction between public and private HEIs when it comes to state recognition and support (Appendix 2)
- Progress can be measured by using benchmarks of national performance in improving equity of access. For instance, a comparison of progression rates of school going students to higher education in Dublin 6 at 99% with Dublin 17 at 15% (albeit 7 years ago) indicates that insufficient progress has been achieved over the half century since Dr Pat Clancy first recorded participation statistics by postal district.

### **Who are the target groups that should be specified in the next National Access Plan?**

- Under-represented participation in higher education – students in DEIS schools; the inner city; certain postal codes; counties with low representation; those in prison or other detention centres; travellers; children of immigrants and those in care
- Students in private HEIs from disadvantaged backgrounds who feel they are discriminated against when it comes to exercising their right to attend a QQI accredited course of their choice
- While some progress has been made in relation to progression rates into higher education from DEIS schools, more needs to be done, particularly in relation to progression from further education to higher education, the development of earn and learn opportunities and the widespread dissemination of apprenticeships. A submission on this was made previously by Griffith to the HEA (Appendix 3)
- It is important to focus attention on the wider issue of overall participation where indicators of national improvements must be centre stage within the national dashboard measuring process on equity of access. The Dublin 6 and Dublin 17 participation rates cited above speak for themselves. If true equity of access is to be achieved nobody must be left behind.

### **How do we ensure that vulnerable members of our society are included (e.g. students currently in care or who have experience of being in care)?**

- Closer co-ordination of support programmes targeted at hard-to-reach groups, especially young people at risk of dropping out of the education system
- Greater emphasis in such programmes on career counselling and provision of information about courses available in further and higher education as well as details about pre-entry supports including access schemes, student mentoring and homework clubs
- Regular structured liaison between the National Access Office and the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) which deals with families who have difficulties in relation to school attendance. These discussions should focus on emerging educational trends and needs among disadvantaged young people
- Similar discussions should take place with Tusla which deals with most of the 6,000 children in state care across the country
- The Office of the Children's Ombudsman often picks up emerging problems before other state agencies which could also assist the National Access Office in developing its programmes.

### **How can pre-entry and post-entry activities be developed?**

- Pre-entry support for second level students from their TY year onwards, from the local FE and HE providers; arranging visits to dispel the mystery of FE/HE and creating a sense of expectation and normality about progressing beyond second level
- Pre-entry academic supports for students in subjects they find difficult, for example through a mentoring system using FE/HE tutors. Support classes could be arranged in the FE/HE institutions or school or conducted under supervision in the student's home. The student's link and association with FE/HE role model mentors would provide a pull towards educational progression to third level
- Pre-entry advice and supports for second level students in relation to their choice and mode of their potential third level studies, detailing the role of traditional FE/HE programmes, apprenticeships and the range of full time, part time, blended, block release modes available
- Pre-entry and post-entry support from the FE/HE institutions' learning support units, catering for students with specific additional learning needs and those requiring bridging or ongoing support in relation to particular subject areas
- Post-entry support from FE/HE institutions in monitoring and supporting the students' engagement and progress throughout their programme. The support roles would be undertaken variously by the FE/HE academic success coaches, learner engagement officers, learner support units and counsellors, working directly with the programme delivery team of lecturers, tutors, programme leaders and administrators.

**How can current funding programmes be better utilised to further the objectives of the National Access Plan?**

- More accurate targeting of resources and the avoidance of duplication of effort by various agencies, access programme providers, youth groups and others
- More widespread dissemination of best practice at home and abroad. Initiatives that work in specific areas or with targeted groups should be brought to the attention of access officers in a more systematic way
- Funding for new initiatives and pilot schemes as suggested by Griffith College – see Appendix 3.

### **How can the goal of mainstreaming be further embedded within HEIs?**

- Resourcing the learning support units of FE/HE institutions so that students with particular learning needs can undertake their programme on an equal (or equivalent) basis as others (e.g. supports for learners with ADHD, maths, language, etc.)
- Resourcing students facing personal challenges, through pastoral care from the programme team and wider counselling support
- Assisting students facing financial challenges, through funding tuition and related resources (e.g. laptops, equipment, licences, etc) and/ or with an income
- Having and supporting an inclusive and diverse body of staff where students have role models with whom they can readily identify. Diversity in full-time staff may be achieved over time, with the engagement of part-time and guest teaching staff providing immediate impact.

### **How can a whole-of education approach to widening participation in higher education be achieved?**

- Age and culturally appropriate messages should stress the importance of staying in education until a young person has acquired a qualification such as an apprenticeship or award from a further or higher education institution. This messaging can begin in the CSPE programme and other courses dealing with young people's well-being and should be backed up by targeted social media postings
- Accelerate moves to a unified tertiary education system. Transferring from apprenticeships and further education to higher education is still a maze for many young people. Much clearer pathways are needed to access public and private HEIs for those not going the traditional route directly into college from the Leaving Certificate
- The promise by Minister Harris of a single applications system for further and higher education is welcome and overdue.

### **How can pathways between further education and training and higher education be better developed?**

- Review and rebalance the relative weightings afforded to the Leaving Certificate and FE awards at NFQ levels 5 and 6 to immediately improve FE to HE progression
- Provide continued SUSI funding for FE students to enable them to progress to linked programmes in private HEIs
- Provide and promote clear access, transfer and progression routes for students on all ETB/FE programmes on to their local public and private HEIs.

Note: A detailed proposal to provide equity of access to HE for FE learners is given in Appendix 3. The proposal was developed jointly by Griffith College in association with ETB and FE colleges.

**How can other social inclusion initiatives outside of the higher education sector be harnessed to support equity of access objectives?**

- A fact pack should be prepared by the National Access Office for distribution to other state agencies as well as to sporting, youth, and other groups. This would outline the range and benefits of the various educational and training options including apprenticeships, earn and learn opportunities, traineeships, further and higher education qualifications. The pack should list the various wrap-around supports available to disadvantaged young people which can help them further their educational careers. It should be presented in a lively fashion, aimed at young people.
- Social media ‘influencers’ as well as business, social and community groups should be enlisted to help promote the various ‘school is cool’ and ‘get a qualification’ messages.

**What challenges has Covid-19 presented in relation to an inclusive higher education system and how can they be addressed?**

- Unequal access to IT/Broadband widened the gap between those with good home supports and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The €250 grant support for students for the move to online learning cost €50m. It should have been targeted specifically at disadvantaged students in public and private HEIs, rather than being allocated exclusively to students in public colleges regardless of their financial circumstances. As mentioned previously, students in private HEIs were unfairly prevented from availing of the €250 grant support
- Apart from financial/IT disparities, COVID-19 also highlighted the importance of on-campus contact with fellow students, staff and support structures for all students, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**What aspects of equity of access to higher education currently work or do not work from a student perspective?**

- National access programmes (e.g. HEAR and DARE) have been extraordinarily effective, but do not extend to the full range of institutions accepting CAO applicants or the full range of target groups. An expansion to include students enrolling in private HEIs could see significant improvement
- While meritocratic in its design, the CAO applications system has been shown to favour students attending a small group of fee-paying secondary schools. An increased use of relative performance ranking - where the ‘value-added’ by DEIS schools could be considered, for instance - would improve the opportunities available to applicants from less affluent backgrounds
- Institutional access initiatives (e.g. the Trinity Access Programme) have proven highly effective. State support for the roll-out of further institutional initiatives in public and private HEIs would cast the net wider

- Measures such as Springboard have been effective in increasing the number of older and other non-traditional students in higher education. The extension of Springboard to cover higher certificates and primary degrees in target skills disciplines for students who are part of the priority groups may improve participation.

**What is the biggest challenge for students in accessing higher education?**

- Students who are the first in their family to attend higher education often experience a lack of peer ‘sponsorship’ to encourage and support them
- For students with a disability, a lack of clarity around supports and accessibility can be a significant ‘push’ factor
- A shortage of suitable accommodation at an affordable price, is a cause of significant concern among third-level applicants
- In general, the cost of attending higher education presents anxiety and uncertainty to prospective college applicants
- Students who avail of their right to enrol in a private HEI have no access to SUSI grants and other state supports and feel that they have been treated unfairly. They see it as discrimination, pure and simple.

**What can make a difference for students accessing and completing higher education?**

- Earn and learn combinations in specific areas have been shown to work. A good example is the initiative taken jointly by the Central Bank of Ireland and Griffith College. The Bank encourages final year Leaving Certificate students to begin working with it when they leave second level education but to study at night-time for an honours business degree. The four-year scheme is particularly attractive for students coming from families with modest incomes
- The range of apprenticeships is increasingly steadily with many of them leading to further or higher education qualifications. The new apprenticeships are mainly outside of the traditional craft-based trades and appealing to a wider cohort of young people.

**How has Covid-19 impacted on students e.g. academic, financial, health, college experience and how can we address these impacts?**

Surveys of students show a longing to return to a more ‘normal’ set of arrangements for teaching and learning. They also show evidence of:

- Social isolation. Many students do not feel any particular bond with their peers which is understandable given that lockdown meant no opportunities to meet their classmates in college

- Academic isolation: Students also missed out on opportunities to study with and learn from their peers in a campus setting. The lack of a more traditional structure of teaching and learning on campus has affected many students' mental health and self-confidence
- Online collaboration has been problematic for disadvantaged students for various reasons e.g. cultural factors where there is little familiarity with shared online work or technical factors, such as poor broadband or limited access to computing facilities
- Disadvantaged students have been particularly affected by the lack of part-time jobs during the pandemic
- Many students will need additional pastoral care and counselling to assist them get back on track post-Covid. Some may need extra time to complete their studies as well as assistance in gaining relevant work experience.

**Appendix 1 Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education – Re SUSI grants**



**Tithe an Oireachtais**

**An Comhchoiste um Oideachas agus Scileanna**

**Tuarascáil maidir le hincháilitheacht deontais  
chothabhála do mhic léinn**

**(Tacaíocht Uilíoch Mac Léinn Éireann a mhúscailt)**

**Mean Fómhair 2017**

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**Houses of the Oireachtas**

**Joint Committee on Education and Skills**

**Report on the eligibility of maintenance grants to students  
(Wake-up SUSI)**

**September 2017**



**Tithe an  
Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas**

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**Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report  
on eligibility of maintenance grants to students**

**(Wake-up SUSI)**

**September 2017**

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## Chairman's Foreword

One of the topics the Joint Committee wished to consider was the concerns surrounding eligibility to maintenance grants (SUSI grants) to students attending certain private higher education colleges.

The Committee decided to hold a public meeting to hear the views of those affected and invited the Chairman and members of the Wake Up SUSI committee (which represents several student unions across the Country) to a public meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

From the evidence provided to the Committee it appeared that there was a distinct lack of clarity in relation to which colleges qualified for the payment of SUSI grants. Also there seemed to be a huge frustration for students in regards to the perceived inequality of the SUSI grant scheme.

I would like to thank the witnesses who appeared before the Committee to air their views on this matter.

Fiona O'Loughlin T.D.  
Chairman

September 2017



## Introduction

SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) is Ireland's single national awarding authority for all higher and further education grants. SUSI offers funding to eligible students in approved full-time, third-level education in Ireland and, in some cases, funding for students studying outside the State. However, some do not feel that the eligibility criterion is equitable and the Wake Up SUSI campaign was formed.

The Wake Up SUSI campaign represent 200 students who are eligible for SUSI grants based on income who have applied on the State approved CAO, for a State approved full-time QQI validated degree, at State recognised institutions who award up to Master's Level 9 on the National Qualifications Framework.

The Wake Up SUSI committee is seeking to have the same state funding made available to those other third-level students who are attending similar State approved institutions. They state that there should be equality for all Irish students regardless of the institution they attend.

### KEY ISSUES RAISED IN PRESENTATION

One of the main issues that the Committee heard was in relation to the CAO application process. It was stated that students who are eligible for the SUSI maintenance grant apply to certain CAO approved colleges and it is not until they have been accepted by their college of choice do they realise that the grant isn't available to them.

The Committee was told of the case were a student, who was eligible for a maintenance grant, applied to study a course in Dublin Business School (DBS). It was not until they were offered their college place did they realise that they would not be awarded a SUSI grant for the course. However, if the student had registered for the same course at the Dublin Institute of Technology, located only a few minutes up the road, the full SUSI grant of €2,800 and registration grant of €3,000 would have been paid. The student in question wished to complete a course in psychology and with very few colleges offering such courses they felt discriminated due to this restriction.

## EFFECT OF CURRENT SYSTEM

While dropout rates can be high in the first year of college due to a personal decision by the student not to continue, it was put to the Committee that there has been a high rate of college dropouts due to the lack of SUSI grants awarded to students in private colleges under the current system. Students who apply for courses, not aware that no grant will be made available, realise very soon that attending their preferred course is unsustainable and therefore dropout.

### **Key points raised by Wake Up SUSI**

The Wake Up SUSI committee have a number of questions that they feel need to be addressed. These are:

- “How can SUSI refuse grants to disadvantaged students? How can the State on the one hand fund private secondary schools to over €80 million a year, support private health care, private transport, and private media while discriminating against us merely because we attend private institutions?”
- Why are students being discriminated against because the QQI full-time degrees we chose happens to be at private colleges?
- Why is it that students attending non-state owned institutions like the Royal College of Surgeons, National College of Ireland among many others get their student grants and we are refused?”

## Conclusions

Attendance at a college, which doesn't attract a SUSI grant, may be necessary due to limited number of colleges offering a particular course. This can limit the choices open to those who rely on grants.

The CAO application process appears to be in need of review to ensure that all relevant information is easily accessible and clear.

The SUSI website may also need to be reviewed. Currently the website contains an "Eligibility Reckoner" which, upon entering particular details, suggests that an applicant may qualify for a SUSI grant. While the website does contain a list of colleges eligible for payment of a SUSI grant, the prominence of this information may need to be reviewed to assist students in making a fully informed decision regarding choice of college.

It was noted by the Committee that eligible students who attend private colleges do not wish to receive a higher grant; they just wish to receive the same level of grant to those who attend public institutions.

The Committee notes that, if a student attends Griffith College, which is a private college, and one attends the Dublin Institute of Technology both will receive the same Quality and Qualifications Ireland-approved degree. However, while one student may qualify for a SUSI grant, the other will not simply because of their choice of college.

The Committee also notes that it is recommended in the Cassells Report, Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, that low-income families whose children choose to attend private colleges should receive SUSI funding.

## Recommendations

The Committee recommends a review of the SUSI website and in particular the “Eligibility Reckoner” is undertaken to ensure that a student is clear on the SUSI eligibility regarding their choice of college. The Eligibility Reckoner should require the applicant to select their preferred college at the beginning of the process and, at that point, clearly indicate if a grant is payable in respect of their attendance at that college.

The Committee also recommend that the Department undertake a review of the CAO application process to clearly identify the college courses and colleges that qualify for a SUSI grant.

The Committee further recommends that, subject to the course and college being QQI approved, eligibility for a maintenance grant should be based on the means of the student rather than on the choice of college. This approach could result in an increase in competition among colleges and may reduce costs.

The Committee further recommends that students enrolled at private colleges should, if eligible under the relevant SUSI criteria, be entitled to the same value of SUSI funding for payment of annual degree course fees that they would receive at an equivalent course in a state funded higher education institution.

The Committee further recommends that students enrolled in private colleges should be entitled to access the Student Assistance Fund.

## Appendix 1

### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

#### JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Deputies:	Joan Burton (LAB)
	Thomas Byrne (FF)
	Ciaran Cannon (FG)
	Jim Daly (FG)
	Catherine Martin (GP)
	Carol Nolan (SF)
	Fiona O'Loughlin (FF) (Chair)
Senators:	Maria Byrne (FG)
	Robbie Gallagher (FF)
	Trevor Ó'Clochartaigh (SF)
	Lynn Ruane (IND)

#### Notes:

1. Deputies nominated by the Dáil Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Dáil on 16 June 2016.
2. Senators nominated by the Seanad Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Seanad on 22 July 2016.

## Appendix 2

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (1) The Select Committee shall consider and report to the Dáil on—
  - (a) such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and
  - (b) European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments.
- (2) The Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- (3) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such—
  - (a) Bills,
  - (b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187,
  - (c) Estimates for Public Services, and
  - (d) other matters as shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and
  - (e) Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public monies, and
  - (f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.
- (4) The Joint Committee may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:
  - (a) matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible,
  - (b) public affairs administered by the Department,
  - (c) policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department,

- (d) Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department,
  - (e) policy and governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas,
  - (f) the general scheme or draft heads of any Bill,
  - (g) any post-enactment report laid before either House or both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas,
  - (h) statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009,
  - (i) strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997,
  - (j) annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law, and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (d) and (e) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and
  - (k) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.
- (5) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments—
- (a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
  - (b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
  - (c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and

- (d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.
- (6) The Chairman of the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be the Chairman of the Select Committee.
- (7) The following may attend meetings of the Select or Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (5) and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:
  - (a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern Ireland,
  - (b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
  - (c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.

#### B. SCOPE AND CONTEXT OF ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES (AS DERIVED FROM STANDING ORDERS)[DSO 84; SSO 70]

- (1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders.
- (2) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil and/or Seanad.
- (3) The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.
- (4) The Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—
  - a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or

- b) the principal office-holder of a body under the aegis of a Department or which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas:

Provided that the Chairman may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle / Cathaoirleach whose decision shall be final.

- (5) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives this instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Dáil Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

## Appendix 2 EU Supports for Public and Private HEIs - Comparison

Ireland is out of step with the majority of EU countries which support full time students in private HEIs. They don't distinguish between for-profit and non-profit HEIs in the same as Ireland does. In a number of member states state support is also given directly to private HEIs on foot of agreements to run specific courses.

(Unless otherwise stated the following is taken from Eurydice, the EU's official database for higher education in member states.)

**Austria:** Students at private universities have the same entitlement to study support as students at public universities, provided they fulfill the necessary requirements.

Federal provinces or municipalities are free to finance private universities. The federal government can contract private universities to supplement the range of courses offered by public universities. Private HEIs can also get federal payments from publicly advertised research, technology, development and innovation programmes.

**Belgium:** Not typically subsidised by the State ([privatehighereducation.be](http://privatehighereducation.be)).

**Bulgaria:** No state aid for private HEIs

**Croatia:** Private HEIs may be financed from the state budget, based on a previously concluded agreement, provided that the HEI: a) provides an activity in which the social demand exceeds the available public provision by public HEIs or an activity of special national interest; b) meets all legal requirements; c) complies with the criteria and priorities determined by the National Council, considering the level of available funds and the quality of the HEI.

**Cyprus:** All students, even those attending private universities are entitled to state support. There are significant variations in the fees that students pay to attend university. There are no tuition fees for undergraduate studies at state universities, however in private universities tuition fees apply and these vary between universities and courses provided. Students attending state universities may receive 1,700 euro per year, students attending private universities receive more, 2,200 euro per year, to consider that these students must pay tuition fees.

**Czech Republic:** Private HEIs receive a subsidy to cover social grants in the amount set by law. Subsidies allocated to a private HEI for accommodation scholarship are provided under the same conditions as in the case of public higher education institution.

**Denmark:** Tuition is free for Danish students and EU/EEA students at Danish public institutions and at most private educational institutions. Every Dane over the age of 18 is entitled to public support for his or her further education. All students enrolled on a higher education course are entitled to monthly grants for the duration of their chosen course, plus 12 months. Loans are also available.

**Estonia:** In 2019/20, there were 19 higher education institutions of which six were private schools, one of them a university. Private HEIs and the students studying at private schools can be funded from the state budget on the same grounds as state higher education institutions and universities in public law. A private HEI can apply for activity support and if the allocation of activity support is considered of national importance, the expenses of the private HEIs related to the provision of instruction at the level of higher education in the framework of the according curriculum are covered to the extent of the activity support on the basis, conditions and in accordance with the procedure applicable to state professional higher education schools and public universities provided for in the legislation.

**Finland:** No fees for EU students. Funding for all higher education - public and private - is determined according to the same criteria. The purpose of student financial aid is to guarantee subsistence during the period of study. Only full-time students in Finland are eligible for financial aid. (The maximum annual aid is EUR 14, 544, which includes the typical annual amount of housing supplement EUR 3 744).

**France:** The State can subsidise private higher education courses. Such institutions must have been “recognised” by the State: recognition results from monitoring an institution’s operation, courses dispensed, and supervisory and teaching staff. It then enables the institution concerned to request subsidies, the granting of which is not automatic.

**Germany:** In 2020 there was a total of 390 state-run and state-recognised institutions of higher education in the Federal Republic of Germany. These include 150 – mainly small – state-recognised institutions of higher education maintained privately or by the Churches.

**Greece:** No private HEIs

**Hungary:** Non-state maintained HEIs are eligible to public support based on an agreement concluded with the state. The number of state funded places in each programme is set out by government decrees every year. Besides state funded places, the number of research contract supported places is also determined by field of study on an annual basis. Further grants may be obtained on a contractual basis for specific educational services (such as in-service training courses for teachers) or as research grants.

**Italy:** Students pay tuition fees in public and private universities (in the latter fees are usually higher), but students can be offered scholarships that cover totally or partially the costs of university fees, based both on merit, or on income. Regional governments can offer additional resources to support students. (European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education).

**Latvia:** The rules of registration and accreditation of an institution, licensing, registration and accreditation of study programmes are the same for public and private higher educational institutions. Private higher education institutions may offer education not only in the state language (Latvian) but also in other languages.

Private institutions may sign agreements with the Ministry of Education and Science, or other ministries or state institutions about training of certain specialists and thus receive funding from state budget.

Full-time students from private (state-accredited) higher education institutions may apply for loans to cover living costs. Loans to cover tuition fees are offered also for part-time students in private higher educational institutions.

**Lithuania:** The so-called 'study basket' (or student's basket) is the state funding of studies which is available to school leavers with the best performance record. State funding is provided to students of state-run higher education institutions following either a continual or extended form of studies. State funding may be provided to the students of private higher education institution if some programmes cannot be run in state-run higher education institution due to the objective circumstances. In the case when the cost of studies in a private higher education institution exceeds the standard cost of studies established by the state, the student is required to cover the difference.

An applicant who failed to receive a state-funded student place can choose a fee-paying study place and pay the full cost of studies. The cost of studies for fee-paying students is established and announced by every higher education institution. Upon enrolment to fee-paying study places, students become eligible to state-supported loans for covering the tuition fee.

**Luxembourg:** Students enrolled in accredited private higher education benefit from the same aids and advantages as those enrolled in public higher education.

**Malta:** Private universities include locally established universities and campuses of foreign universities. The Government's undergraduate scheme 2020/2021 is extending financial support to private HEIs. (educationgov.mt)

**Netherlands:** EU passport holders are automatically eligible for a tuition fee loan from the Dutch government. If they attend private universities and university colleges they are able to borrow the full amount if they are studying a Dutch accredited degree. (studyinholland.co.uk).

**Poland:** There are no special aids to help with the cost of fees, but non-public HEIs may be granted a subsidy to cover a part of fees paid by full-time students and full-time doctoral students.

**Portugal:** Private institutions are free to define the allocation of resources within their budgets. A student in private higher education can apply for a scholarship at the HEI they are attending. Any decision is made by the department responsible for social support, usually called social support offices.

Some HEIs have special funds to help students who are ineligible for scholarships. This support may be provided in exchange for the student performing tasks at the institution.

**Romania:** Funding comes from tuition fee and other educational fee, sponsorships, donations, grants, financing granted on a competitive basis, exploitation of the research, development and innovation sources, and other legal sources.

**Slovakia:** The Ministry of Education can provide subsidies to the private higher education institution based on a request for the implementation of accredited study programmes, research, development or artistic activity and for the development of the higher education institution. The ministry also provides private schools with subsidies for social support of students.

**Slovenia:** Private higher education institutions with a concession receive public funds to finance study and extra-curricular activities. They are not eligible for funding of investments and maintenance; however, they may apply for the part-financing of development projects through special calls for tender. Such funding is also available to private higher education institutions without a concession.

In the academic year 2018/2019, there were 20 private higher vocational colleges (28 public), three private universities (3 public), and 48 private independent higher education institutions (1 public).

**Spain:** Official grants and financial support for students enrolled in private universities is the same as the one offered to public university students.

The cost of fees for the provision of training services is established by each university and represents about 80% of the funding. In some private universities, students make considerably lower contributions, since these institutions receive subsidies from public regional and local bodies which make up for users' contributions.

**Sweden:** Private higher education institutions receive a subsidy to cover social grants in the amount set by law. A subsidy allocated to a private higher education institution for accommodation scholarship is the same as for a public higher education institution.

Private higher education institutions set study fees in their internal regulation, even for the standard length of study. These fees are not regulated by any legislation.

And finally

**England:**

Providers wishing to have their courses designated as eligible for student support must meet criteria of quality, financial sustainability, management and governance, and course eligibility. 'Specific Course Designation' by the Secretary of State is a process for deciding which courses taught by alternative private providers should be eligible for students to access finance (tuition fee and maintenance loans). Students received loans for tuition fees of up to £6165 in the 2018/19 academic year.

**Appendix 3 Equity of Access Proposal – Griffith College**

Towards the development of a new national plan for equity of  
access to higher education

*A submission on behalf of*

Griffith College

### Background:

Griffith College welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Minister for Education and Skills consultation process and to outline the case for advancing equity of access to higher education for graduates of FE programmes.

This submission reflects an updating of information previously presented by the College to the HEA (Providing Pathways for Further Education Graduates into Higher Education and Employment – May 2014) along with additional information under each of the four goals identified by HEA in relation to its national plan, as outlined below:

Goal 1: To promote access for disadvantaged groups to higher education.

Goal 2: To put in place coherent pathways from second level education, from further education and other non-traditional entry routes to higher education.

Goal 3: To increase completion rates by target student groups

Goal 4: To support evidence-based policy formulation

The College contends that coherent pathways currently exist for students completing second level education who seek admission and progression to higher education on the basis of their Leaving Certificate results. Using this group as a benchmark of existing best practice allows the access opportunities for other groups to be considered and evaluated. This submission concludes by making a number of specific recommendations which it believes would serve to address existing inequities faced by currently disadvantaged groups.

The report starts by addressing the challenges faced by FE students, the largest of the non-traditional learner cohorts seeking access to higher education.

### Background to Inequity of Demand (FE Students)

At present, there is considerable unsatisfied demand from FE students who wish to progress into higher education. Figures for 2013 indicate that while 15,767 applicants with FETAC qualifications applied for places through the CAO, there were only 3,033 acceptances. This represents a progression rate to higher education of 19.24% or fewer than one in five applicants. The corresponding rate for Leaving Certificate applicants is 70.49%. Since 2013, the inequity between the treatment of FE and Leaving Certificate students has persisted.

The relative scarcity of HE places for FE students has a direct de-motivating effect on FE learners throughout their programmes of study, with the uncertainty they face in respect of their future prospects

presenting them with additional and unequal obstacles to their educational attainment and progress. For many FE graduate applicants to HE, the unavailability of progression opportunities results in a cessation, and often a complete termination of their formal education, which may lead directly to their persistent under-employment or unemployment.

Since 1995, there have been various initiatives and developments directed at facilitating the progression of FE students to HE. These have included original 'links' or pathway programmes between specific FEIs and HEIs; admissions systems ensuring guaranteed places; quota systems by programme; scoring systems based on eight FE subjects with a maximum of 50 points for distinctions; FE subjects with 25% additional weighting; scoring systems limited to 400 points; scoring systems using alternative metrics based on the Common Award System (CAS)<sup>1</sup>; quota systems based on individual arrangements between particular FEIs and HEIs, and ad hoc systems depending on the specific discipline, FEI, HEI and prevailing demand levels.

As a result of these many changes and often uncoordinated responses from different HEIs, FE students are faced with greater complexities and structural barriers in their progression to HE than those faced by Leaving Certificate students. In short, much of the original intention of providing guaranteed progression paths for the FE students who wish to continue their formal education to HE has been lost.

#### FE Learner Profile

A central focus of further education is to provide applied education and training to assist learners in their preparation for the workplace. For the majority of FE students and graduates, their priorities and interests lie in securing employment. However, as the 2013 CAO information confirms, a considerable number (15,767) are interested in continuing their education by progressing to higher education programmes.

When the progression rate for FETAC applicants of 19.24% is contrasted with the 70.49% rate for non-FETAC applicants, it is clear that FE students face unequal barriers to those faced by their Leaving Certificate counterparts.

GC has been in detailed discussions with the FE sector at all levels for the last 18 months in order to provide improved access for FE students to the College's HE programmes. These detailed discussions with FE College principals, ETB directors, FE lecturers, students and other stakeholders confirm the following:

- i) FE students come disproportionately from socially disadvantaged sectors of society
- ii) FE students can be standard bearers for their family / community, often being the first in their generation to progress beyond second level education
- iii) The majority of FE students qualify for maintenance grants
- iv) FE students often have lower levels of confidence and self-esteem than their peers in HEIs. This can arise particularly where students enter FEIs following their Leaving Certificate having failed to secure their choice of HE programme on their first attempt.

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<sup>1</sup> The Higher Education Links Scheme (HELs) introduced for CAO applicants in 2013

- v) Completion rates by students on FE programmes can be low for a variety of reasons: positive outcomes can arise where learners leave to take up meaningful employment; negative reasons arise where learners leave for financial reasons or where their social circumstances cannot sustain their ongoing participation
- vi) FE students making the progression to higher education could benefit from targeted supports, for example: identifying the most appropriate choice of programme for them to pursue; facilitating their orientation into higher education norms and expectations; and general confidence building.
- vii) There is a case for increasing the academic support for FE students as they progress to higher level stages within their HE programme (e.g. NFQ 6 to 7; 7 to 8, etc.)

While there is an absence of national comparative performance statistics on the relative academic performance of FE students who progress to higher education compared to their counterparts from other sources, the following points are generally accepted:

- i) FE students have an advantage over Leaving Certificate students having completed a wider range of assessment modes, for example: action research, projects, presentations, portfolios, etc.,
- ii) FE students who progress to HE generally perform at least as well as their Leaving Certificate counterparts with similar CAO points levels, particularly in the case of HE programmes with an applied focus.
- iii) FE students often have a greater maturity and life experience than school leavers, entering the higher education programme following greater personal reflection and deliberation.
- iv) Retention rates for FE students who progress to HE are strong where programmes link directly to employment and have an applied focus
- v) Non-completion rates by FE students in higher education more often result from financial and social circumstances rather than academic reasons.

Addressing the Situation:

There is a general willingness within the HE sector to support the progression of FE students into appropriate programmes. However, in many cases the HEIs face significant constraints which limit their ability to do so. For example, most HEIs have physical capacity constraints in relation to their teaching space and are currently operating at or near full capacity. In this regard, for every FE student admitted by a HEI, another non-FE student must be rejected.

The FE points system presents particular challenges for the HEIs. Most significantly the maximum point score for FE graduates is set at 400 compared to the 600 to 625 maximum point score set for Leaving Cert candidates. This has the direct effect of precluding FE graduates from entry to many HE programmes, particularly those at level 8 leading to honours degree awards.

The distribution of FE students' results is also negatively skewed with many students achieving a maximum of 400 points. If left unchecked, this could result in programmes at NFQ level 6 and 7 programmes becoming relatively unavailable to Leaving Certificate students with lower point scores. However, to avoid this potential imbalance, HEIs have adopted a quota system with respect to the admission of qualifying FE candidates.

A further rationale for the quota system arises from the considerable variation that can exist in the content, learning outcomes and educational experience of FE students from different FEIs, even within the same programme or discipline of study.

The net result of these constraints and different admission policies is that students wishing to progress to HE have a less than 1 in 5 chance of admission as an FE graduate, as opposed to a higher than 7 in 10 chance otherwise. Key stakeholders in the FE sector hold the view that these significantly different progression statistics can have a direct and considerable demotivating effect on FE students throughout their studies.

Given the willingness within the HE sector to facilitate FE students, particularly if it can be achieved without excluding others, many of the current restrictions faced by FE students could be readily addressed through the provision of additional HE places. Providing these extra places raises the matter of institutional resource capacity, both physical and human.

#### Mature Students: (Full-time)

Mature students in Ireland are defined as learners who have reached the age of 23 on January 1<sup>st</sup> in the year their programme commences (i.e. typically September). This contrasts with the age limit of 21 more commonly applied in other jurisdictions. For students who fail to meet HE admission criteria on their first attempt at Leaving Certificate, and who are not inclined to repeat the Leaving Certificate, it can result in a period of up to six years of exclusion from HE progression. By this time, their likelihood of a learner enrolling in HE is very considerably reduced.

Consideration should be given to redefining 'maturity' for access to HE programmes to 21 at time of commencement, in order to reduce the 'lost time' for students to three years.

The students who do apply on the basis of mature entry are typically considered by HEIs under their RPL / RPEL (Recognition of prior / experiential learning) procedures. Typically such applications are few in number and require individual consideration with places often limited by quotas if available at all.

If mature learners are to be encouraged to progress to HE and reassured that such progression is 'normal', then clear, commonly understood and well publicised pathways are required.

The recent Springboard and Momentum initiatives, supported by extensive 'normalisation' through print, radio and online media campaigns have been hugely positive in facilitating attitudinal change amongst potential learners.

### Mature Students: (Part-time)

The vast majority of HE programmes offered in Ireland are not available to learners on a part-time basis, either in the evenings, on weekends, on a block-release basis or via blended learning. Given the requirement to support career development throughout the working life of the learner, the absence of such provision results in many employees having their education terminated once they take up full-time employment.

In addressing these deficits, greater consideration might be given to providing programmes in modular format as envisaged under the ACCS scheme (Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects) schemes. These might offer an alternative to the traditional schedule of requiring learners to take 60 ECTS per year, by allowing learners to accumulate ECTS in line with their capacity to manage work and study commitments.

For example 60 ECTS top-up level 7 and level 8 programmes could be provided on a part-time evening basis over a number of years with the delivery schedule extending beyond the traditional academic calendar of September to April. Extensive use should be made of online / blended learning options to facilitate learners distant from HEI providers.

### Cost Considerations

A recent HEA report<sup>2</sup> provides the following information regarding higher education costs

	<b>HE Average</b>	<b>IOT Average</b>
Total Expenditure per Student (RGAM <sup>3</sup> )	€12,996	€10,491
Total Expenditure per Student (SRS <sup>4</sup> )	€10,243	€9,415

Costs relating to re-training students years later, for example through current government initiatives such as Springboard and Momentum typically average around €7,000 per student per 60 ECTS programme. Most of these students would also be in receipt of social welfare payments. More recent HEA reviews suggest a reduction in the average cost per student to approximately €9,000 per annum.

Certain students who do not secure access to their chosen course in Ireland elect to study in the UK. For the year ended 2014/15, SUSI maintenance grants to students attending higher level education courses in the UK totalled almost €4m.

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<sup>2</sup> HEA Publication: Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Education - December 2013

<sup>3</sup> Total expenditure per FTE student excluding research and depreciation with pension adjustments, based on weighted RGAM numbers incl. access adjustment.

<sup>4</sup> Total expenditure per FTE student excluding research and depreciation with pension adjustments, based on unadjusted SRS numbers.

While the above costs are considerable, the costs of not providing educational and training opportunities for students and their resulting under-employment or unemployment can have a significantly greater negative impact on society, both economically and socially.

Statement of Interest:

Griffith College wishes to provide tuition for FE and other non-traditional learners seeking to progress to higher education. In particular it wishes to remove current restrictions faced by students from low income families who wish to complete QQI approved programmes with the College.

Griffith College is a registered QQI provider and has been delivering higher education programmes since 1990, initially under the auspices of the University of Ulster, with the first of its NCEA (later HETAC, now QQI) programmes commencing in 1994. Currently the College provides a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in business, computing, media, design, law and other disciplines. College programmes are offered on a full-time day basis; on a part-time basis in the evening or at weekends; and where appropriate, on a blended or online basis. The College has three locations in Ireland for full-time delivery, in Dublin, Cork and Limerick,

For non-traditional learners, the cost of commuting to HE can present a significant barrier to their participation and continuing engagement. In this regard, Griffith's city locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick provide low-cost commuting opportunities for large populations of city based students. In the case of FE colleges, it is worth noting that 14 of the largest 20 FE Colleges nationally are well within 10 miles of Griffith college locations, with these FE Colleges teaching over 13,200 learners in 2013/14. (Ref. Annex 1).

Consultations with principals, counsellors and progression officers in ETB/FE Colleges continue to emphasise the importance of having locally based educational pathways for FE learners considering transition to higher education. Being able to live at home and retain their existing social connections are key to students' preparedness for successful progression to higher education.

QQI has approved Griffith College's quality assurance procedures and practices in respect of all its academic programmes, and its institutional review of the College was very positive. QQI's confidence in Griffith College is evidenced by devolving to the College the authority to manage its own validation sub-processes. Significantly, Griffith College is the only private College to have been afforded this devolved responsibility<sup>5</sup>.

Since 1974, when the College first began preparing students for professional accountancy examinations, the College has established a track record of providing effective training and education at affordable costs for students. This success is continually evidenced in the achievement of its learners in national and

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<sup>5</sup> NCI – The National College of Ireland – a public / private provider is the only other QQI registered institution to have been afforded devolved responsibility for its own validation sub-processes

international awards, and in the number of learners who choose to attend the College for their career and personal advancement.

The specific details reflect GC's commitment to advancing the education and careers of learners by means of current, employment-focused preparation for applied disciplines. This deliberate focus directly targets Ireland's prevailing social and economic imperatives, namely the need to increase ease and equity of access to higher education for previously under-represented groups<sup>6</sup> and the Minister for Education and Skills<sup>7</sup> commitment to providing pathways for adult learners to meaningful employment.

Specific Proposal:

The specific details of the proposal being advanced are as follows:

- i) Progression paths for FE, other non-traditional learners (ONTL) and students from low-income families will be offered and promoted to the relevant learner cohorts
- ii) Clear admission and progression entitlements will be communicated to each learner cohorts and their representative institutions and support groups.
- iii) In the case of FE students, detailed mappings of FE programmes will be provided outlining the precise admission and progression entitlements arising from particular performance levels (e.g. eight distinctions at level 5 will guarantee access to the first year of a HE programme at level 6, 7 or 8). These will be communicated to FE providers nationally.
- iv) The admission and progression entitlements for ONTLs will be clearly outlined and communicated, reflecting the application of the College's QQI approved arrangements for RPL / RPEL
- v) Progression paths for FE & ONTL will be offered in applied disciplines. These will reflect existing institutional strengths in areas currently yielding high employment opportunities, such as those targeted and supported by the HEA under its Springboard and Momentum initiatives. The discipline areas include:
  - Business (e.g. to include focus on sales, digital marketing, etc.)
  - Computing (e.g. to include web development, software testing, data analytics, etc.)

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<sup>6</sup> HEA: How Equal?: Access to Higher Education in Ireland: Research Papers (Nov 2013)  
[http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/conference\\_publication.pdf](http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/conference_publication.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> 05 March, 2014 - Reforming Education, Building a Better Future - Speech by Ruairí Quinn, T.D. Minister for Education and Skills – <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Speeches/2014-Speeches/SP14-03-05.html#sthash.0sbP6AK5.dpuf>

- Media (e.g. to include applied skills in content development for online productions, layout and design, multimedia, etc.)
- Law (e.g. legal executive roles, administration, file preparation and management)
- Pharmaceutical Science and related business / manufacturing processes.

*(All of the above programmes enjoy strong links to direct employment.)*

- vi) The programmes will be managed exclusively in accordance with GC's quality assurance procedures and practices.
- vii) All programmes will involve a comprehensive learner preparation process to ensure the matching of suitably qualified FE & ONTL applicants onto programmes appropriate to the learners' capabilities and interests.
- viii) Learners will be selected and admitted on the basis of their suitability for the programme, with all applicants being met and interviewed in advance to facilitate informed decision-making by all concerned.
- ix) FE candidates who meet the entry requirements having completed their FE programme in one or more sittings will be considered. So too will candidates who meet the matriculation requirements through a combination of their learner attainments at both Leaving Certificate and FE.
- x) ONTL candidates warranting admission on the basis of RPL / RPEL will be considered under the College's QQI approved QA procedures.
- xi) In addition to the general supports provided for learners, FE & ONTL students will be supported throughout their studies by means of specific induction, small group tutorials, and ongoing mentoring and review of their individual performance on a one-to-one basis by a dedicated member of the academic teaching team.
- xii) Programmes will be offered at level 6, 7 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and delivered on a full-time, part-time or blended learning basis as appropriate.
- xiii) All programmes will lead to NFQ awards.
- xiv) On successful completion of each (60 ECTS) stage of their programme, students will be in a position to secure and sustain meaningful employment in the sector in which they've studied.

- xv) On programme completion, graduates may seek progression into related advanced programmes of their choosing in any HE institution. Equally, should they so choose, they will be given guaranteed progression into advanced related programmes at GC where such exist, leading to Higher Certificate or degree awards at level 7 and 8, or postgraduate awards at level 9.
- xvi) Subject to demand, programmes will be delivered in GC at its constituent campuses and college locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.
- xvii) The maximum number of FE and ONTL learners admitted into any cohort will be 25, with such students integrated into programme cohorts of no more than 50 in total.
- xviii) It is proposed to initially limit the overall number of FE and ONTL student places to 200 in the first year in order to ensure the careful and successful management of the programme from the outset. It is understood that these students would consist of many cohorts distributed across five applied disciplines with programmes delivered in Dublin Cork and Limerick. (Beyond the pilot programme, Griffith College would have the capacity to provide in excess of 600 places per annum for FE progression students – 350 in Dublin, 150 in Cork and 100 in Limerick).
- xix) It is proposed that where an FE or ONTL applicant's circumstances would entitle them to maintenance grants, registration fee support or access to the HEA hardship fund if attending an IOT or public institution, that these entitlements be applied in an identical manner to their QQI approved programme in Griffith College.
- xx) It is proposed that the shortfall in student fees (of approximately €2,500 per annum) would be borne by learners, but facilitated by a student loan mechanism to support students who need assistance.
- xxi) In the case of students with particular economic challenges, it is proposed that they would be able to apply for additional support from the HEA hardship fund on a similar basis to students attending approved higher education programmes in other institutions.
- xxii) No payment would be made by the State to Griffith College in respect of tuition (i.e. saving €6,000 per student). Similarly, no payment would be made by the State toward Griffith College's infrastructural or capital costs.

Note on Griffith's Private Status:

xxiii) As a private provider, GC has successfully delivered Springboard programmes with funding directly provided by HEA. The College also has a history of government funding of its computing science programmes dating back to 1996. Accordingly, the direct funding of GC by the HEA is not new.

xxiv) (Goal 3): To ensure the success of the programme, it is essential that students who would otherwise be eligible for SUSI grants would not be precluded as a result of GC's private status.

(Similar funding of students, along with SUSI eligibility is currently available to other private providers, for example St. Nicholas Montessori College of Ireland, BIMM (British Institute of Modern Music); Sound Training College and Setanta.)

xxv) It is proposed that FE and ONTL students who successfully complete the programme and choose to progress their studies directly with GC, would continue to be eligible for government funding support on a similar basis to that provided to them in respect of their first year.

xxvi) If deemed to be successful by the HEA, it is proposed that GC would seek approval for the proposal to be continued, subject to annual reviews taking on board any improvements that might be suggested.

xxvii) (Goal 4): As a learning organisation, GC is committed to identifying and pursuing best-practice that is evidenced-based. It is proposed that this GC initiative would operate initially on a pilot basis for one year and would be subject to separate ongoing reporting to the Higher Education Authority, in accordance with HEA determined monitoring arrangements.

xxviii) It is proposed that the pilot project would be used as a basis for undertaking considerable action research in order to better understand the issues involved in FE to HE progression. This educational research will be published and made freely available in order to inform and improve the specification, delivery and management of future HE programmes in terms of completion rates, learner satisfaction and overall economic benefit. (Goal 4)

**Annex 1: Ireland's 20 largest FE Colleges**

College	ETB	Enrolments 2013/14
Cork College of Commerce	Cork	1743
Ballyfermot College of FE	City of Dublin	1456
Cavan Institute	Cavan Monaghan	
Limerick College of FE	Limerick Clare	1209
Coláiste Dhúlaigh	City of Dublin	1191
Galway Technical Institute	Galway Roscommon	
St John's Central	Cork	1150
St Thomas Community College	Kildare Wicklow	
Coláiste Stiofán Naofa	Cork	883
Senior College Dún Laoghaire	Dublin Dún Laoghaire	868
Inchicore College of FE	City of Dublin	801
Carlow Vocational school	Carlow Kilkenny	
Liberties College	City of Dublin	764
Waterford College of FE	Wexford Waterford	
Sallynoggin College of FE	Dublin Dun Laoghaire	710
Dún Laoghaire FE Institute	Dublin Dun Laoghaire	680
Crumlin College of FE	City of Dublin	666
Ballinode College	Mayo Sligo Leitrim	
Coláiste Íde	City of Dublin	562
Rathmines College	City of Dublin	530
		13213