

# BEGIN HERE GO ANYWHERE

*Dunboyne College of Further Education and the Meath Chronicle  
present a guide to further education options*





From two courses in a disused school building to a student body numbering 1,000, Dunboyne College of Further Education has become a massive success story of the last two decades and has major plans for the future including its own state of the art campus as principal **DENIS LEONARD** explains to Gavan Becton

# ‘We give our students the passport to move on into higher education or employment’

**If you were to look for someone to champion an education campus from scratch, one that would fill the needs of a huge swathe of the population previously uncatered for, someone who would use innovation and the initiative to offset obstacles and share a vision to bring all stakeholders together, then you’d not need to look much further than Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE) and its principal, Denis Leonard.**

The Mayo native has worked in second-level education since 1984 where he served as both a teacher and a guidance counsellor. He has overseen the transition of Dunboyne College from 40 students in 2003 with two courses in an old drafty school building to a progressive and pioneering launch pad of further education and employment courses with a 1,000 strong student body.

As it celebrates two decades of serving the populous regions of Meath, West Dublin and north Kildare, DCFE is now preparing for life on a much bigger stage, its very own multi-million euro campus,

the first of its kind anywhere in the country and a vital cog in the educational journey for thousands of students.

“Back in 2002 myself and other guidance counsellors at St. Peter’s College, Dunboyne identified the impact of a lack of a third level college in Meath was having on our students. They were enrolling on courses in Dublin then dropping out within months because they couldn’t rely on the transport links and bus service to college.”

“So that got us thinking about running courses that would allow our students to progress on to IT Blanchardstown, or to Maynooth University. We started with Business and Social Studies in the old primary school, the only building that was available.”

“There were no similar courses anywhere else in this entire region not in west Dublin or north Kildare or even in this area of Meath, so there was a real need.”

“Once we started many of the secondary schools then asked for other courses so we expanded to Pre-Nursing in conjunction with DCU, which was very successful. Then Maynooth University

## No long wait for an offer of a place

“Unlike applications to universities made via the CAO students apply directly to the college for our courses and we normally turn around applications with an offer within a few days,” says Denis Leonard, College Principal. “Each application and personal statement is reviewed by a teacher and then we will make an offer. We ask that students list their choices in order of preference and always try and offer the student one of their top choices, ideally their number 1 choice. Obviously the earlier a student applies the better chance they have of getting their first choice as courses fill up quickly. At this stage of the year we have limited places in courses but we try and not turn away students if at all possible.”

Queries to the college are dealt with on the phone by Christine Carroll and Vilma Keza.

Fees for all courses are €200 which covers course and examination fees and all material for the course.

With Leaving Certificate results out last week Denis Leonard advises students thinking of applying to Dunboyne to apply online immediately.

Dunboyne College of Further Education principal, Denis Leonard and (above inset) Christine Carroll and Vilma Keza, College Administration Staff and (right), the DCFE Senior Management Team.

announced links into their Arts & Science programmes so we offered courses that allowed progression links to Maynooth. The first year we had 40 students, then 80, then the next year 120, and so on, until today when we have 1000 students. We are now one of the top five providers of Further Education and Training (FET) in the entire country.”

Denis became the college principal in 2014 when DCFE separated from St Peter’s College to become a standalone college.

“Attracting students wasn’t an issue but getting teacher allocation in those early days was difficult. Through the hard work of Meath VEC and later Louth and Meath ETB we were able to increase our teacher allocation and thus the number of courses we could offer.”

As word of mouth about Dunboyne’s growing success rate of sending students into employment or onto degree courses expanded, so did the need for additional space.

Courses moved to prefabricated accommodation in St Peter’s, before finding its current home in the



Minister Helen McEntee sampling the Cookery course students’ efforts on a visit to DCFE.

Dunboyne Business Park in 2007.

“We took over one quarter of a building in the first year but since then we grew to where we are today, with 1,000 students and over 60 courses, and we are renting 22 units. The growth of the college has been tremendous over the past 19 years and that demand is growing to serve a demographic of over 400,000.”

A major part of the success story of DCFE is the shifting attitudes towards the points race and its narrow focus on third level

education. The much-maligned CAO ‘rat race’ is slowly being replaced by the realisation that there are now more avenues for students to reach their potential and career destination. It’s something that Denis believes is vital for students’ wellbeing and development.

“We need to educate the public about the kind of courses in our sector, they are pre-employment, traineeships, apprenticeships and also pre-university focused. “We offer students that year where they



learn how to complete coursework for college, develop research and referencing skills, get industry placement experience, and really they become independent and self-directed learners.

"They get all the skills and experience they need to continue to further study or enter employment. Someone could come here because they love Science but might have not done that well in the Leaving Cert. That could be because they had to do Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography as well as their preferred science subjects. In Dunboyne College they do Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Lab Techniques, Anatomy, etc., etc. Those doing computers get practical experience with us in a whole range of computer applications so naturally they excel because that is their passion. It is clear to us that they're going to get the kind of grades and marks that justifies their interest and passion

and gives them the passport to move on into higher education or employment; all our courses require students to complete a work placement in the industry they are hoping to enter. Similarly, those who want to qualify as hairdressers or learn the skills of being a journalist have the opportunity to develop their talents on our courses, get experience, get that industry qualification, and ultimately get a job"

An interesting statistic that Denis uses to highlight the beneficial approach of using DCFE as a stepping stone to third level is the attrition rate of students who drop out of their chosen 3rd level course having gone the direct CAO route. "It's between 10 and 20% and on some degree courses it can be up to 50%. That figure drops to just three percent if students have undertaken a year's study and preparation on a further education course like the

ones in Dunboyne."

The rate of those gaining employment from Dunboyne is also impressive. "All the students on our Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy, Professional Cookery, Childcare courses for example are walking into jobs when they finish. In fact, they have their choice of several jobs as employers contact the college to recruit directly from our courses."

A further salient factor in this decision-making process is finance. Courses fees in DCFE are €200 per year. That is in contrast to €3,000 or more for a university course and that is without factoring in the cost of accommodation or other expenses. It is an expensive outlay for a course that a student may not ultimately be suited to and eventually drop out of. A FET course seems like a very practical investment especially given that there are also grants and scholarships available for students to help further reduce costs.

As DCFE's reputation continues to grow, so too does its ambition. The college campus, currently housed in the Dunboyne Business Park in its patchwork of separate buildings, will move to a multi-million greenfield site in the near future. In December 2021 Minister Simon Harris announced the first purpose-built FET College of the Future in the country would be built in Dunboyne.

Denis says the new campus will cater for the further education needs of the growing population it serves for decades to come with room for growth and expansion also.

"The vision that our LMETB and our Chief Executive Martin O'Brien has for this greenfield site is to house all Further Education and Training courses including the ones we run at the moment, but also Traineeships, Apprenticeships and to expand into other areas like specialised engineering, retrofitting, renewable energy, robotics, advanced manufacturing, 3D concrete printing, cybersecurity as well as courses for those in work who might need to be upskilled or need additional courses. The scope of what we can do in a new campus will be tremendous."

"There's so many industries now in this area of Meath looking for qualified employees. This whole region is growing demographically as well as economically with many companies coming to us to recruit staff or have their staff trained, and this coupled with a growing number of secondary schools in the area means there will be a demand for places in the new college campus.

"We never envisaged when we started that the demand would be so great or that we would expand so quickly. We are happy that we have met those needs and are confident that we will continue to do so."

# Getting to DCFE

The DCFE campus is just off the M3 (Junction 5), 30 minutes from Navan and 10 minutes from the Blanchardstown exit off the M50.

The college is serviced by a variety of bus and rail transport links from Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, Go Ahead and Iarnród Éireann, as well as a variety of local private operators.

## Public Transport Routes

Dublin Bus 70 route from Burlington Road to Dunboyne serving

Burlington Rd. / O'Connell Bridge / Stoneybatter / Navan Rd. Garda Station / Ashtown / Littlepace / Dunboyne

Go Ahead Route 270 from Blanchardstown Shopping Centre to Dunboyne servicing Blanchardstown Centre / Clonee / Dunboyne

Go Ahead Route 239 - from Blanchardstown Shopping Centre to Liffey Valley Shopping Centre serving Blanchardstown Centre / Clonsilla Rail Station / Lucan Village / Liffey Valley Shopping Centre.

Change at Clonsilla Train station for M3 Parkway train or change at Blanchardstown Shopping Centre for Route 70 or 270 to Dunboyne

Bus Éireann Route 105 from Drogheda calling at Duleek, Kentstown, Ashbourne, Ratoath, Bracetown, Dunboyne and Blanchardstown

Students may also use Bus Éireann Routes 109 (Cavan, Kells, Navan, Dunshaughlin to Dublin) and connect with local services to Dunboyne.

## Train Services

Iarnród Éireann services to the M3 Parkway commence in Dublin Docklands and calls at stations in Drumcondra, Broombridge, Ashtown, Navan Road Parkway, Castleknock, Coolmine, Clonsilla,

Hansfield and M3 Parkway, Dunboyne.

All trains servicing Clonsilla including those coming from Mullingar and Enfield can be used to transfer to Dunboyne.

## Direct Bus Services

Private operators provide transport services to students to and from the college. These services operate during the college term only and are arranged independently from the college.

Enfield - Kilcock - Maynooth - Celbridge - Leixlip - DCFE

Contact Susan Clarke in Dunboyne College on 01 802 6577.

Longwood - Rathmolyon - Trim - Summerhill - DCFE Contact Adrian Byrne on 086 388 8500 / 086 271 2137 or info@trimtaxi.ie for further information.

Athboy - Trim - Kiltale - Batterstown - DCFE Contact Adrian Byrne on 086 388 8500 / 086 271 2137 or info@trimtaxi.ie for further information.

Navan - Dunshaughlin - DCFE Operated by McCaffrey Coaches. For further details contact (01) 802 6542 or email operations@mccaffreycoaches.com for further information.

You can find out more information about these travel options by visiting our transport section on our website [www.dunboynecollege.ie/students/transport-links](http://www.dunboynecollege.ie/students/transport-links).

## Driving

We also have a dedicated free student car park for those who choose to drive to the campus.

## Cycling

In line with our green campus policy we also provide facilities for those cycling to the college to secure their bicycles.







LMETB Chief Executive says new DCFE campus will be a key part of a wider network of schools, training facilities and centres providing education and training in Meath

# 'New Dunboyne College to be a focal point for education and training'

"Ireland's first FET College of the Future in Dunboyne will be a focal point for education and training provision and will contribute to the continued economic growth of the county" according to Martin G. O'Brien, Chief Executive, Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

"It will be procured and built by LMETB and will be a key part of a wider network of schools, training facilities and centres providing education and training in Meath, managed by Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). In reality, LMETB is a one-stop shop for all things education and training from literacy, primary and secondary schooling to advance upskilling for industry as well as advice and guidance support services."

LMETB also manages four Community National Schools, the Centre for European Schooling in Dunshaughlin, eighteen post-primary schools including O'Fiach College in Dundalk which also offers Post Leaving Certificate courses, two Post Leaving Certificate Colleges in Dunboyne College and Drogheda Institute, eight Youthreach Centres, a Regional Skills and Training Centre

“ Our schools and colleges also support career development for those training to be teachers and for newly qualified teachers and for those wishing to engage in industry training

(formerly the FAS training centre in Dundalk) and the newly established Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence in Dundalk (see below). It is also joint patron of 6 Community Schools at: Ardee, Kells, Trim, Athboy, Ashbourne, and Ballymakenny College, Drogheda. LMETB also provides an extensive range of further education services, including Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI), VTOS and Adult Guidance.

The ETB Chief Executive says that LMETB education and training services are available in every parish, village and town, making it one of the largest and fastest growing ETBs in the country. "A student can complete all stages of their education with LMETB from primary school right through secondary to further education or an apprenticeship.

This support continues when they are in work with industry standard upskilling available in the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) in Dundalk and our Further Education colleges including Dunboyne College."

There are over 13,000 students at primary and post-primary level, and over 20,000 students in Further Education and Training Programmes, Apprenticeships, Youthreach Programmes, Community and Local Education courses.

With that scale of services comes an impressive budget and a growing building programme. "The Further Education and Training budget alone is in excess of €60 million, with a further €100M dedicated to the delivery of first and second level education together with other supports and services," says O'Brien.

"The recent census figures



LMETB Chief Executive, Martin G. O'Brien.

means increased demand for education and training services, currently in Meath alone we have new schools under construction in Dunshaughlin for Coláiste Ríoga, a major new extension to Beaufort College in Navan, which will cater for a projected enrolment of 1,000 students, the Johnstown Education campus which includes the construction of a new Special Needs School for St Mary's and a large extension to Colaiste Na Mí, a new Community College in Enfield, a new school for Ard Ri Community National School and a new school for St Ultan's Special School in Navan, the construction of a new college for O'Carolan College in Nobber, a new school for Ashbourne Community National School as well as plans for the FET College of the Future in Dunboyne. In total the ETB Buildings Budget is in the region of €350

million and our team, led by Assistant Principal Officer, Sinéad Murphy, is managing 139 projects across both ETB and non ETB facilities and we expect more announcements over the coming months in terms of additional funding for projects."

The ETB employs a staff of approximately 2,500 fulltime and part-time across all LMETB services, including administrative, support and teaching staff. "We are continuously recruiting for all our schools and facilities," says the LMETB Chief Executive. "Our schools and colleges also support career development for those training to be teachers and for newly qualified teachers and for those wishing to engage in industry training. LMETB is dedicated to providing access, transfer and progression through its various courses in an agile and forward thinking environment"

## Recruiting Students - Placement Event planned for October



Trainee nurses

Employer engagement is at the heart of many courses in Dunboyne College as all students must complete a placement as part of their studies. In order to facilitate both students and employers a work placement and recruitment event will be held in October.

"Over the past year we have seen an increase in the number of employers contact us to offer students placement and later in the year come back seeking to recruit qualified graduates for part-time

or full-time jobs so this year we are offering the employers the opportunity to come into college and meet with the students as they embark on their course," says Catherine Fox, Deputy Principal. "By engaging with the student at the start of their course they are able to support them in their studies as well as possibly gain a full-time member of staff." Those interested in meeting with students should email [sta.dbc@lmetb.ie](mailto:sta.dbc@lmetb.ie) with Student Recruitment event in the subject heading.



Students from the Professional Cookery Class displaying their culinary efforts, Eve Nester, Jack Fortune and Siobhan O'Brien.

Maynooth University, TU Dublin and DCU attracting a large number of DCFE graduates

# Dunboyne College graduates see the university offers roll in



John McGinnity,  
Maynooth University.



Prof Daire Keogh,  
DCU.

Over 90% of eligible students who apply to the CAO from Dunboyne College in 2021 received an offer for a Level 7 or 8 course in Irish Universities. Figures for the class of 2022 are not yet available.

Universities within the catchment area of Dunboyne are still the most popular with Maynooth University, TU Dublin and DCU attracting a large number of DCFE graduates.

Maynooth University offered 115 Dunboyne College graduates places on Level 8 courses. TUD Dublin colleges comprising of DIT, IT Blanchardstown and Tallaght IT made sixty (60) offers at level 8 and one hundred and twenty six (126) at level 7. DCU made thirty nine (39) offers to DCFE graduates. This was followed by 21 offers from UCD and 12 by Trinity College.

Multiple offers were also made by NUI Galway, University of Limerick, University College Cork, National College of Ireland, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology, and other Institutes of Technology.

Nine DCFE Art and Design graduates received offers from the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) with 5 getting offers from the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (Dun Laoghaire).

College Principal Denis Leonard believes that many students chose Dunboyne College because of its pre-university courses and established links with local universities.

John McGinnity, Maynooth University, says the university is delighted with the development of such a wide range of courses at Dunboyne College.

"These courses not only offer valuable educational opportunities but also provide direct links to

degrees courses in Maynooth University."

Prof Daire Keogh, DCU, says the university has developed an excellent working relationship with DCFE. "We have been consistently impressed by the quality of students who have progressed to DCU from DCFE. We are continuing to work with FET partners like DCFE, to create more pathways from specific Further Education awards to our undergraduate degree programmes."

Denis Leonard also points to the skills that students learn on a Further Education course as a factor in their continued success. "Students on these courses also learn referencing, research and self-directed learning which means they tend to be able to complete subsequent Level 7 or 8 degree courses. A student with a FET qualification has a 25% better chance of completing a Level 8 Degree."

Andrew Brownlee of the state training agency SOLAS supports these findings saying research shows that students under 300 points have a 50 percent chance of finishing a HE degree but for those who go through an FET course that improves to 75 percent.

This view is echoed by Diarmuid O'Callaghan of TU Dublin, Blanchardstown. "The track record of students studying in Blanchardstown after a QQI Level 5 course is particularly impressive.

Students entering the Institute through this route generally obtain excellent results and attain high academic standards throughout their third level course.

Students progressing from QQI Level 5 courses bring extremely relevant specific skills with them and typically are very focused in their first year in third level college."



## Night Classes Starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> September

### Dunboyne College of Further Education

Autumn Term September - December, 2022

Accredited QQI level 5 & 6 courses open to all **applicants over 18**

For enquiries please email [nightsschool.dbc@lmetb.ie](mailto:nightsschool.dbc@lmetb.ie)  
To Enrol <https://dunboyncollege.ie/>

Module	Time	Price	Duration
<b>Hobby Classes</b>			
An Introduction to Interior Design	7:00-8:30pm	€90	6 Weeks
An Introduction to Natural Cosmetics	7:00-9:00pm	€90	6 Weeks
Basic Hairstyling Skills <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:30pm	€90	6 Weeks
Makeup & Skin care <i>*New</i>	7:00-9:00pm	€90	6 Weeks
Photography <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:30pm	€90	6 Weeks
Using your smart phone <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:00pm	€60	4 Weeks
Reflexology <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:30pm	€90	6 Weeks
Flower Arranging <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:30pm	€90	6 Weeks
<b>Health &amp; Fitness Classes</b>			
Cooking for friends and Family	7:00-9:00pm	€100	6 Weeks
Yoga <i>*Mixed Level</i>	7:00-8:00pm	€90	8 Weeks
Introduction to Mindfulness	7:00-9:00pm	€100	6 Weeks
Nutrition QQI Level 5 <i>*New</i>	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
<b>IT/Computer</b>			
An Introduction to Microsoft Word (Beginner) <i>*New</i>	7:00-8:30pm	€100	6 Weeks
Word Processing QQI Level 5 <i>*not at beginner level</i>	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Excel/Spreadsheet Methods QQI Level 5 <i>*not at beginner level</i>	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Bookkeeping Manual & Computerised QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
<b>QQI Level 5/ Job Related Classes</b>			
Medical Terminology QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Special Needs Assisting QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Human Resource QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Business Administration QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Care Skills QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Care of the Older Person QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
<b>QQI Level 6/ Job Related Classes</b>			
Training Delivery & Evaluation QQI Level 6	6:30-9:30pm	€270	12 Weeks
Training Needs Identification & Design QQI Level 6	6:30-9:30pm	€270	12 Weeks
Special Needs Assisting QQI Level 6 <i>*Level 5 should be completed</i>	6:30-9:30pm	€270	12 Weeks
Human Resource QQI Level 6	6:30-9:30pm	€270	12 Weeks
<b>**Online Classes**</b>			
Business Administration QQI Level 5	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
Anatomy and Physiology (Human Body) QQI Level 5 <i>*New</i>	6:30-9:30pm	€265	12 Weeks
<b>Skills to Advance</b>			
Digital Marketing QQI Level 5 <i>*Online</i>	TBC	Free	12 Weeks
Through the Skills to Advance Initiative, Louth & Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and Dunboyne College are offering fully accredited, tutor led, education and training programmes, with up to 100% funding for eligible employees.			

Please contact Catherine on [sta.dbc@lmetb.ie](mailto:sta.dbc@lmetb.ie)

#### Please Note

- Course fees/dates and times will be displayed on the 'Apply now Night Class' button which can be found on [www.dunboyncollege.ie](http://www.dunboyncollege.ie). Once you select the course you want to enrol on details will be shown.
- Fees are **non-refundable** except where a course is not held due to insufficient enrolment numbers.
- Correspondence regarding courses will be by email **only**.
- Courses are only provided for those over **18 years of age**.
- Where class materials are required the cost will be carried by the student.
- All course participants attend at their own risk. Neither Dunboyne College of Further Education or LMETB accept liability for damage or injury to persons or property, or for property mislaid while present in the college or on the grounds.
- Please note if a course is not filled it will be cancelled, so please book early to avoid disappointment.
- Enrolment is open from August 2022. Enrol now on the college website [www.dunboyncollege.ie](http://www.dunboyncollege.ie).
- If you are a registered teacher and would like to teach a night class please contact [nightsschool.dbc@lmetb.ie](mailto:nightsschool.dbc@lmetb.ie)





While life on campus can be a wonderful experience for students, the financial implications for families sending a student to college can be prohibitive as Personal Finance expert **JILL KERBY** explains

# Costs of going to college can be crippling



The cost of funding a college education can be eye watering.

While college going students and parents will be celebrating the return to campuses and classrooms this Autumn, nobody can be happy about the impact that the cost of living crisis will have on paying for this new college year.

Official consumer price inflation is running at over 9% - a rate probably not seen since most parents reading this were in primary school and just about everything is getting more expensive.

There may still be no official fees for publicly funded courses in Irish universities but there is still the student contribution or registration charge (for student services and examinations) that has been capped (not scrapped) at €3,000 for the 2022-23 term.

Meanwhile, Irish and non EU nationals attending degree awarding private colleges and higher institutes of education can expect a range of fees that may be much higher than the €3,000 undergraduate student contribution at publicly funded institutions.

Sadly, registration charges and fees



**JILL KERBY**

jill@jillkerby.ie

are only a small part of the third level student's budget. The price of pretty much every other expense, from housing, food, heat and electricity, broadband, books and materials, transport and entertainment has increased.

Finding an affordable room in a shared room or digs has become a nightmare for many.

According to the latest annual TU cost of college survey by TU Dublin, students who live away from home and attend college or university in Dublin should expect their average spending budget for the 2022-23 college years to reach just over €13,300. The largest expenditure is €5,724 for rent, next is the €3,000 student contribution, followed by €1,746 for food and €576 for utilities, though both of these last two expenses could be higher over the winter, especially if gas and electricity

prices increase again.

Students who live at home in Dublin but attend a publicly funded institution should budget at least €6,160 for the year with their biggest single expenditure after the €3,000 student charge being food, transport, books and class materials, an energy contribution, mobile phone and social life.

Students living on campus or in purpose built private student accommodation can expect to pay at least €1,000 a month for their ensuite rooms and shared living space. At time of writing many such facilities in Dublin are either sold out, have waiting lists for cancellations, or accommodation only for the second semester - December to June 2023.

## PAYING FOR COLLEGE

A typical €5,000 student loan, secured by a parent guarantor, will carry a variable rate interest of c5.5%.

Last year, about 75,000 qualified for full or partial maintenance and tuition fees or student contribution charges with the assistance of means tested Student Universal Support

Ireland grants.

Qualifying for the SUSI grants depends entirely on family income, including that of the student, the number of other children at home and whether the student is seeking a full or partial grant. How far the student has to travel to attend college will also determine the size of the grant. Being 'disadvantaged' will also be taken into account.

There are a number of threshold bands for all the grants: a full 100% maintenance grant for this academic year for a family with less than four dependent children is just €40,875 but rises in stages to €48,575 if there are eight or more children in the household. The income thresholds are much higher to qualify for a 50% tuition fee and a 100% student contribution grant.

SUSI grants are also available for independent mature students, postgraduates and Asylum Seekers living in direct provision or are in the international protection system.

The SUSI renewal application process has closed, but the final application date for the 2022-

23 academic year has yet been confirmed; it was in November last year.

SUSI is not the only state financial assistance for college going students. Back to Education Allowances are also available to people in receipt of unemployment benefits, one parent family or disability payments. There is also a separate Fund for Students with Disabilities.

A Student Assistance Fund for students who find themselves in financial difficulty once in college is also available that can help expenses like rent and energy costs, food, essential travel, and even child-care costs for students who are parents.

To qualify for a Student Assistance Fund payment, the student must be a full or part-time student in a university, institute of technology or other approved college and on a course leading to a higher education award with a qualification level 6-10. (See Student Grants, [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) and [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) for a list of participating colleges.)

## TAX RELIEF

A limited amount of Tax relief for third level fees/student contribution charge is available but it is capped at €7,000 per year and only for Revenue approved courses in Revenue approved public and private institutions. No relief is available for student levies or capitation fees.

The rate of tax relief is at the 20% rate, subject to a disregard amount of €3,000 for a full-time course and €1,500 for a part-time course.

Tax relief is a valuable benefit for anyone who pays the fees/charges for either public or private where these costs exceed the disregard amount.

## COST EFFECTIVE OPTION

In contrast the cost of attending a Further Education and Training College is very reasonable. Dunboyne College, featured in this supplement, charges €200 for its courses, which includes examination fees and course materials. Students are also entitled to apply for a Susi grant. The college also offers a number of scholarships funded by local businesses.

# Grant supports and maintenance grants at DCFE

## BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) allows qualifying persons to return to full-time education in approved courses while continuing to get income support.

The BTEA allows people in receipt of certain social welfare payments to retain those payments whilst participating in approved full-time courses in further

and higher education.

Check [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) for more information or talk to your local Social Welfare Office.

## MAINTENANCE GRANTS

Students who are entering an approved full-time Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course for the first time in 2023/2024 or who are already attending approved PLC courses are eligible to apply for a maintenance grant. This grant does not cover the cost

of registration or examination fees. It is a maintenance grant paid each month directly into the student's bank account.

Students apply for the PLC Maintenance Grant at [www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie). It is not necessary for students to know the exact course they will be attending in September in order to apply for a PLC Maintenance Grant. The initial decision regarding the grant is based solely on income. The PLC Maintenance Grant is a means tested

grant. This involves an assessment of the earnings in the family (parents and candidate). Students over 23 years of age in the year of entry to the course who are living outside the family home will be assessed on their income and that of their spouse (if applicable). Please check with the following web address for the final dates for grant applications.

All information on [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) or on [www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie)



# Life on Campus and Student Facilities

## CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Getting involved in clubs and societies during your time in college is a great way of getting to know new people and developing your interests.

The clubs and societies offered in Dunboyne College are student led and dynamic, changing year on year to meet the needs and trends of each year's intake of students.

## EVENTS & FUNDRAISING

DCFE's Student Union and Youth Club organise many different charity events and social initiatives throughout the college year such as; GOAL Jersey Day, Trick 'R Treat for Temple Street, Charity Christmas Appeal, Green Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Daffodil Day and more.

Keep up to date with what's going on through the Student Noticeboard on Moodle and take part!

## GRADUATION

The graduation ceremony takes at the end of May. Maynooth University, DCU, TU Dublin and Dundalk Institute of Technology present an academic award and achievement certificates to various programmes within the college as well as student of the year awards nominated by course tutors.

## ART EXHIBITION

The Art students host an exhibition each year in May to celebrate and demonstrate the pieces of work they have created throughout the year.

## MUSIC

The music students organise gigs throughout the year and also perform at the annual graduation.

## CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

Students from Animal Care run a Christmas Jumper day in December, where much needed funds are raised for animal charities, including, the DSPCA.

## WOMEN'S WEEK

Women's Week takes place each year on campus in early March, celebrating women and influential women in society with various events such as the grand social concert, speakers and information stands, culminating in a book with contributions from influential female figures and students of DCFE.

## GREEN CAMPUS COMMITTEE

Staff and students work actively throughout the year to raise awareness and create a more ecofriendly campus. Activities include photo competitions, informative podcasts and cookery demonstrations. DCFE was awarded An Taisce's Green Campus Flag in 2022 highlighting changes brought into effect over three years on campus.

## HEALTH WEEK

DCFE runs an annual health week focusing on various areas of health and well-being, including nutrition, physical, mental and spiritual health. The week consists of guest speakers, workshops and activities for all students and staff while also raising funds for various charities.

## COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

The college administration office is open between 8:00am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday. Students' queries are dealt with during these hours. Documents which require the college stamp may be left in the office and will usually be ready for collection the following day.

## LIBRARY

The college library is open every day from 8:00am to 4:00pm. The library is equipped with both module specific books and a collection of eBooks for further study. The library provides computers and desk space for independent study as well as a colour printer for student use.

## THE ROSE COFFEE SHOP

Open from 8:30am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday the coffee shop supplies soup, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, snacks, and fresh sandwiches.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

All students in Dunboyne College must complete a placement in their chosen area of study as part of their course. Work Experience is a subject on each student's timetable and students must pass it in order to get their full award.

The college works closely with students to prepare them for their placement, helping them to draft CVs, complete application forms, write letters of application and practise interview skills. These documents form part of a collection of work that students submit to get a grade for the subject. An employer's report also contributes to the overall mark.

Placements are scheduled for a day a week for the majority of courses, thus allowing the students apply their learning from class in their placement on a weekly basis. Healthcare students including the Pre-Nursing students complete their placements in block weeks in hospitals or nursing homes.

Employers interested in taking students on placement normally contact the college and this year they will be invited to take in a placement fair (see page 4). Students who wish to work with

children and minors in any capacity or vulnerable adults as part of their placement need to be Garda vetted before undertaking work experience. This applies to those on healthcare courses e.g. Nursing, Healthcare Assistant, Pre-Paramedic, Childcare, Youthwork, Applied Social Studies. This can also apply to students on a sports course or a pre-arts teaching courses.

Details on the Garda Vetting process is provided by the college at the start of the year. Specific requirements for placement also apply to those studying on the new Early Learning and Care course (formerly Childcare). (see page 12 for details on the new course).





## Applying to study at Dunboyne College couldn't be easier

1. Applications can be made online at [www.dunboynecollege.ie](http://www.dunboynecollege.ie).
2. After registering online, students will receive an email to notify them that they have pre-registered and can log in to view and track their application.
3. Applicants will be notified by email of a request to upload further information for their application:
  - (i). Copy of most recent school report or examination results (ii). Reference from teacher, employer or coach. (iv). 100-word personal statement on, "Why this course is right for me," which should outline reasons for choosing the course. (v)

4. Applications will be processed and a decision issued by email.
5. Successful applicants will then be invited to pay fees online at [www.dunboynecollege.ie](http://www.dunboynecollege.ie).
6. Late applicants can apply online for vacant places at any time before September 2023.
7. A grant can be applied for from [www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie).

### FEES

All course fees are €200. This includes exam fees, student service fees, all course materials, equipment, educational trips.



## Study by night at Dunboyne College

Dunboyne College is not just for full-time students.

The college also offers part-time courses -in the evenings.

"We offer a range of both hobby and accredited courses at night that cater for all ages and abilities," says Shauna O'Brien, Director of Adult Education Night Classes (pictured right).

Courses include Special Needs Assistant at Level 5 and 6, Medical Terminology for Secretaries, Business Administration, Human Resources, Computer courses, Care Skills and Care of the Older Person, Hair Styling, Makeup and Skincare, Yoga, Interior Design and Photography.

"The timetable is designed to accommodate people's busy schedules, classes don't start until 6.30pm and all classes finish by 9.30pm. The hobby courses usually run for 6 weeks or so while the QQI accredited courses run for 12 or 13 weeks.

"We do recognize it is hard to juggle work and study so class sizes are small and students are encouraged to keep in touch with their teacher." A full list of classes available is listed on page 5.

Fees for night classes range from €90 to €270 depending on whether it is a short course or an accredited QQI module. Enrolment for courses starting in Sept 2022 is now open and applications can be made by emailing [nightschool.dbc@lmetb.ie](mailto:nightschool.dbc@lmetb.ie)



Dunboyne College staff



# 'When I'm finished c on and teach in a set

Rather than enrol on a third level degree in teaching **HANNAH DOWDALL** decided to spend a year in DCFE and the Navan native says it was the best decision she ever made

### MICHAEL KEAVENY

Having been accepted on to a place in primary school teaching after doing her Leaving Cert in Loreto, Navan, Hannah Dowdall decided that the course wasn't for her.

"I achieved the points in my Leaving Certificate to go on and study for a teaching degree in DCU," she said. "But even though I had gotten the points I needed, I kind of panicked and felt I wasn't ready or prepared enough to start college. I also wasn't sure if the course was for me."

Rather than start a course she wasn't sure about doing, Hannah decided to enrol with Dunboyne College, a decision she says was the best one she ever made.

"I'm really glad I decided to go to Dunboyne, I was able to do a bit of placement and quickly found out that primary school teaching wasn't for me. After that I looked at second level



Hannah Dowdall photographed at her home in Navan, County Meath.

teaching and found it wasn't for me either, but I wouldn't have been able to test them out if I had gone down the CAO route."

The relaxed atmosphere in Dunboyne College was a welcome change of pace which Hannah says helped her to explore other avenues that she may have had an interest in.

"Compared to the stress of the Leaving Cert which can be very overwhelming, Dunboyne was a very calm environment. Everyone who attended was there because they wanted to be there doing subjects that they handpicked themselves. The lecturers were very approachable. At one stage I considered doing Art as a subject. I went to the lecturer and they were able to explain to me what was involved, even though I wasn't in the course and didn't end up doing it in the end. A friend of mine was doing the nursing course and they also





# College I hope to go attending like Dunboyne'

“Compared to the stress of the Leaving Cert which can be very overwhelming, Dunboyne was a very calm environment.

arranged for me to talk to the lecturer about that as well. It was a like a little community, everyone wanted to help each other, including the lecturers.”

Hannah feels that a lot of people may turn their noses up at the prospect of doing a PLC, something that she feels isn't fair.

“There is a lot of negative connotations associated with doing PLC courses. People turn their noses up at the idea of it. I did ok in school and was able to get a good Leaving Cert so the idea of doing a PLC course was never mentioned by teachers or guidance counsellors. There is a feeling out there that they're only for people who struggled

with the Leaving Cert. But they're not recommended for people who get average grades or above.”

Hannah isn't the first member of her family to do a PLC course as her father Martin also completed a PLC nursing course twenty years ago.

“My dad's experience with PLC course played a big part in helping me to decide to do the course. He did a nursing course and is now working as healthcare assistant. He had dropped out of primary school and got a job. He worked as a carpenter and upholsterer but decided to go back and do the course after working in the Special Olympics in 2003 when they were in Ireland. He found the transition back into education to be relatively easy.”

Hannah has a part time job working in the Newgrange Hotel in Navan, where she is keen to share her positive experiences with other staff members who are undecided on what the next move of their career is.

“Some of the other staff members I've been chatting to in the Newgrange weren't sure about what to do after the Leaving Cert, so I advised them

to go to Dunboyne so they might get a better feel for what they want to do after school. All of them who took me up in the advice came back to say I was right and Dunboyne gave them the right platform to go forward with their education.

Having finished her Pre-University Teaching course in 2020, Hannah went on to Maynooth to do an Arts Degree where she is currently in her final year of studying English and Criminology and she hopes to go on to teach the subjects in further education colleges such as Dunboyne.

“I did English and Psychology so I had to pick two more subjects to do. I settled on philosophy and criminology. I really liked Criminology and decided to keep it up. When I'm finished college I hope to go on and teach in a setting like Dunboyne. I enjoyed the pace and the environment of life there and it's something that I'd like to be part of. I am not a very strict person and I don't like stress. So I'd like to work in an educational setting that passes on those values.”

## Why study at Dunboyne College of Further Education?

- We are a rapidly expanding college ideally located to serve the Meath, Dublin and Kildare and wider areas in close proximity to Maynooth University and Dublin City University (DCU) and Technological University of Dublin (TUD).

- We have close links with all three institutions and many of our students progress to certificate and degree courses on their third level programmes. We continue to develop close links with many other Irish colleges and universities.

- Our students receive excellent results. Over 90% of those who achieve a full award with us get an offer to progress to third level. Students learn research methods, referencing and self-directed learning.

- Our courses are constantly being revised to ensure they meet the needs of students in terms of personal development and job opportunities.

- We have a dedicated staff who are highly qualified in their fields, concerned for learner welfare and interested in seeing our students progress.

- Courses are designed to enhance your career prospects, with strong links to local business/industry/commerce.

- There are excellent progression opportunities to a wide variety of third level courses at institutions across the country through the Higher Education Links Scheme. New links are developed every year.

- We have links with partner colleges in the UK which give students opportunities to complete their degrees in nursing, law, sports science and many other areas if a place cannot be accessed in Ireland.

These colleges include South Bank University, University of Bradford, University of Greenwich, Edge Hill University, Bangor University, and many Scottish universities, particularly for Nursing.

- We have a very good track record catering for students of all ages and supporting mature applicants with the transition involved in returning to study.

- Our college has a friendly atmosphere, with relatively small class groups providing a unique learning experience.

- A guidance counsellor service is available to support you in your learning and future career choices, or progression to further studies. Personal counselling is also available.

- We have a full disability and access service as well as mature student support and a comprehensive learning support service.

- Students can apply for maintenance grants and anyone in receipt of social welfare payments can avail of financial assistance through the Back to Education Scheme (BES).

- Our quality-assured courses lead to nationally and internationally recognised certification.

## Using your DCFE course to progress to a degree

All students attending the college are advised to consult with the Career Guidance Team of Derek Ball and Meabh Nimmo (pictured below).

Students who want to use the “points” from their DCFE course instead of their Leaving Certificate points can get helping in completing the CAO application form. The team also assists in making applications to UK universities through the UCAS process.

A certain number of places are reserved on Level 8 courses for students completing a QQI qualification.

Normally students who apply for these places received their CAO offer in Round Zero, which happens before those applying using Leaving Certificate results. Other students with Level 5 or 6 awards from Dunboyne College who apply for Level 7 degree courses receive their CAO offers alongside the Leaving Certificate students in Round 1.





## Green Cert and bursary on offer for Equine students

"I absolutely loved my time in Dunboyne," says Ciara Quaid, a graduate of the Equine courses offered by DCFE.

"I struggled a lot with the theory side of things but the teachers were brilliant and helped me get through my two years with full certificates. I did half practical and half theory and I absolutely loved it, as it gave me a chance to be confident in the practical classes and then I got to advance my learning in theory."

Dunboyne College is one of the few FE colleges in the country that offers FET courses in Horsemanship and Equine Breeding according to Catherine Joyce, Course Coordinator.

"Students complete their practical training in Pelletstown Equestrian Center and attend theory class on campus in Dunboyne. The equine industry is very strong in the area from which we draw our students so we find that there is a lot of competition for places on the course each year especially given that students can also get their Green Cert by completing both Year 1 and year 2."

"By completing both the first year course which was a Level 5 Horsemanship and then going on to do the Level 6 in Equine Breeding in Dunboyne I was able to apply to apply to Teagasc for recognition for the Green Cert. and that is a real bonus."

The full-time courses are not the only link between the college and the equine industry. Horse Racing Ireland (HRI), the governing body of horse racing on the island of Ireland, awards a €3,000 bursary to students on each course each year.

According to the HRI the Irish breeding and racing industry supports 28,900 direct and indirect jobs in Ireland, and generates €1.84bn in total expenditure, in towns and villages all over Ireland.



The inclusive and welcoming nature of Dunboyne College is clear in its approach to supporting all students, from application to graduation and career progression.

Nowhere is it more evident than in the college Learning Hub, a centre designed to offer additional services to students.

The Hub offers access to a wide variety of supports from tailored learning supports for students with additional needs, to academic support for any student who feels they need additional guidance on completing assignments or managing their workload.

Additionally the Guidance Team is available throughout the entire year to advise students on their future progression options, support them with college applications, and provide personal counselling on request.

"Going to college can be a daunting step for many students but especially for those who need that bit of extra support, and this is where the Student Services Service Team and the Learning Hub can help," according to Emer Cloak, Deputy Principal, Dunboyne College.

Students who have been previously formally assessed (through Educational Psychologists, Consultants, Occupational Therapists, Neurologists or Specialist Registrars etc.) are automatically registered with the Learning Hub for tailored supports. Learning Support at Dunboyne College is provided by a team of Personal Assistants and teaching staff, co-ordinated by Catherine Joyce.

The services of the Learning Hub are also available to those who need academic support. A team of teaching staff from all subject areas provide support for all students through workshops and one-to-one sessions. Academic support is available for students to book at a time that suits their



Student Support Services Team (left to right), Emer Cloak, Deputy Principal, Meabh Nimmo and Derek Ball, Guidance Counsellors, Aoife O'Dwyer, Academic Support Coordinator, Sinead Rooney, personal assistant, Gemma Finn, personal assistant, Catherine Joyce, Learning Support Coordinator and (below), the newest member of staff at Dunboyne College - Ulreeka, DCFE's community dog.

## Support services for students with DCFE's Learning Hub

timetable and is co-ordinated by Aoife O'Dwyer.

A new development in the past year is the College Sensory Room, a designated area which a student can retreat to when feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed. It provides a safe quiet space, supporting students' self-care, resilience-building and recovery.

This therapeutic space has been

developed with a wide variety of specialised equipment to provide stimuli to help students develop, engage or calm their senses.

This September, the Learning Hub welcomes a new member of staff - Ulreeka, a Community Dog who is already having a calming influence as the new term commences.



Pictured at the announcement of the partnership between Meath GAA and Dunboyne College are Paddy Kelly, Vice Chairperson Meath GAA, College Principal Denis Leonard and Christine O'Brien, Meath GAA.

## Sports Partnerships

Sports is a key part of the curriculum and college life in Dunboyne.

Students can enrol on courses in Sports Management and Coaching, Pre-University Sports Science or Sports Injury Prevention and Massage Therapy but all students are encouraged to participate in college sports teams.

In unique partnership Meath GAA has now linked up with Dunboyne College to provide placements for students studying on the sports courses at the college.

The agreement with Meath GAA means that students will be able to accompany and learn from the GAA Games Promotions Officers while also completing a key component of their studies.

Meath GAA staff also run a number of short courses for students throughout the year leading to GAA qualifications. The college is also working with Meath GAA to offer support and advise to members on options for further study and training on a full-time and part-time basis in the college.



# ‘Our first port of call for employees is through colleges and Dunboyne is at the top of that list’

**Marymount Nursing Home in Lucan has built a strong partnership with Dunboyne College, providing placements and employment**

**MICHAEL KEAVENY**

Conor McNulty is the CEO of Marymount Nursing Home in Lucan, who have partnered with Dunboyne College on a number of fronts over the last few years.

“We have a family-run nursing in Lucan and been partnering up with Dunboyne for the last number of years. In the past we had students from the QQI level 5 for health care workers on work experience.”

However, the shortage of healthcare workers in Ireland over the last few years emphasised the importance of the college as a way of attaining new staff for Marymount.

“When Covid kicked in and things went quiet, it crystallised our opinion that DCFE was the best way to get staff. You have people who entered into a course who feel that healthcare is their calling and when they come to us to do a placement with us, it’s like a long running interview. It gives us an opportunity to see if they’re suitable to come work with us but also lets them figure out if they want to do it.

“When Covid settled down we made contact with the college who were very supportive and they said they’d like to build up a relationship with us as they were struggling to find places for their students to go and we told them we’d take on 10 students to begin with.”

Since then DCFE has become one of the



DCF Nursing course graduates and (right) Conor McNulty of Marymount Nursing Home in Lucan.

“You have people who entered into a course who feel that healthcare is their calling and when they come to us to do a placement with us, it’s like a long running interview



main sources of employment for Marymount according to Conor.

“Our first port of call for employees is through colleges and Dunboyne is at the top of that list. Their classroom-based students are at an advantage over those who do online courses. I think the ethos of the college and their selection process has been very positive. Since we’ve engaged with Dunboyne we’ve had 25 employees coming directly from the college.”

With Covid people reevaluated where they were in life and many left the healthcare industry because it was emotionally and physically exhausting. We had vacancies and we were really happy to offer those positions to

graduates from the college. We have around 70-75 care staff in the nursing home.”

Conor says that Dunboyne’s interactive setting allows students to learn more from each other which in turn makes them better students.

“The beauty of classroom based is that they go out on placement, come back and discuss their experiences, it’s a much more interactive experience. We’ve noticed a difference in the online students so we stopped accepting them because they don’t have the same preparation done to hit the ground running in a nursing home environment. We have clear understanding that Dunboyne offers superior

students. Some doing online courses may login and not pay attention. In Dunboyne attendance is a crucial part of it.”

Conor is always very impressed by all elements of the college.

“I’ve dealt with lot of colleges and I can’t emphasise how impressed I was with what they had to offer in terms of staff, students and the facilities. They’re so committed to the students, I’ve seen the plans for their new building and I’m very excited for their future.”

Conor says that Dunboyne is the perfect place for kids to continue their education.

“A lot of people that come out of secondary and they are in a quandary, they end up doing

courses their not suited to. Dunboyne is one of the biggest colleges of its kind, I’m looking forward to where they’re going. There’s a huge hub. The amount of choice is incredible. I was at their open day, we were very impressed at their facilities and plans for the future and I was sorry it wasn’t available when I was leaving school because the level of choice there is incredibly vast and broad.”

The open day also made Conor realise that Marymount can use some of the college’s other facilities

It made us realise we can do more for the education of our employees from the point of view of leadership, to English courses because we have 192 staff from different backgrounds we felt there was an opportunity to build on the relationship”

Conor is eager to grow the connection between DCFE and Marymount in the future.

“We’re keen to develop our relationship with the college even further. We’re going to sponsor four students on the students fees. We had 10 students on placement with us and we offered a sponsorship to four of them, we let the college pick two and we picked the other two.”

## Meta funds new digital hub

A new portable digital hub at Dunboyne College has been funded through a grant from Meta, the operator of the new data centre in Clonlee and owner of Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram.

The Digital Hub includes a mobile digital unit with laptops. It can be used across the campus and will help support students to develop skills in using new technology and enhance the digital skills programmes across the colleges.

The funding also covered the purchase of interactive whiteboards for those on the childcare and pre-teaching courses and virtual reality headsets for a range of creative media and computer courses.



Pictured at the announcement by Meta Ireland of funding of a mobile digital unit for Dunboyne College are Kelvin Harvey, LMETB, Natasha Haveron, Meta Ireland, Abbie Foely, Dunboyne College, Denis Leonard, Dunboyne College, Minister Helen McEntee, Catherine Fox, Dunboyne College, Will Carty, Dunboyne College, Sadie Ward-McDermott, LMETB, Aisling Sheridan, LMETB

Dunboyne gave Abbie the self-belief to develop her interests in an area she didn't know she liked beforehand

# 'I'm so grateful to Dunboyne for my time there and the world of possibilities that they introduced me to'

Abbie Foley talks to  
MICHAEL KEAVENY

During her secondary school years, Abbie Foley from Dunshaughlin never believed she was intelligent enough to do well as her skills lay outside the traditional school syllabus.

"At school in Dunshaughlin Community College I always thought I was dumb. I wasn't academically oriented, I didn't thrive throughout my years in secondary school; and I definitely didn't flourish to the level that I have now. This was because I was talented in other, more practical areas."

As a result of her lack of self-belief, Abbie dropped out of school in fifth year. "Due to the negative attitude I developed towards education, I left in 5th year convinced I wasn't academically talented in any sense whatsoever, she said". "I didn't see it at the time but I based my self-worth on my ability to remember things in subjects I didn't like."

However, before dropping out of school she discussed going to Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE) with her guidance counsellor Catherine Gannon who advised her to look at the journalism course in Dunboyne, a move which changed Abbie's outlook on education and her future completely change.

"Dunboyne was amazing with the opportunities it presented to me. Initially I hadn't expected the experience nor the outcome my single year there offered – but going from a student that left school early

with very little motivation and a lot of doubt, to graduating and receiving her first choice, I can say that one year there has given me more than I ever imagined, in more ways than one."

Before attending she was unsure of the benefits that attending a college such as Dunboyne could hold.

"I didn't know what paths you could take doing a PLC. I didn't know that third-level education was achievable through the results of your course exams rather than Leaving Cert points, or that you could gain so much knowledge with the freedom, responsibilities,

and a chance to figure yourself out without that intense pressure university naturally has to offer. Although it was a significant step up from secondary school, Dunboyne prepared Abbie perfectly for the next step of her education.

"The environment is a serious step up from the walls of a secondary school classroom, leaving you with decisions and commitments that ultimately result in a better understanding of where you want to go, and what plans you're going to make to get there." She also found the college has fantastic support in place for students, no matter what the circumstances.

"DCFE is a brilliant college with fantastic support, surrounding you with students eager to put in the effort to succeed and tutors that will turn themselves inside out to make sure you get through the year, no matter what hardships arise.

"Assistance and reassurance is always nearby, with excellent guidance counsellors to help you navigate your progression routes, personal assistance for anything you need, resources for opportunities you mightn't have known about, and an overall friendly, welcoming atmosphere that allows every student to feel heard, encouraged, and confident in their future."

Dunboyne gave Abbie the self-belief to develop her interests in an area she didn't know she liked beforehand.

"Doing this PLC highlighted other strengths I didn't know I had. Studying in Dunboyne emphasised the skills buried somewhere in me that never had the chance to shine. I graduated with a full QQI Level 5 award in Journalism and an offer to study Creative Writing in NUI Galway, feeling proud, prepared and pretty positive that I'm going to continue to flourish in an area that I love."

She is forever grateful for the opportunities that Dunboyne presented her with.

"Now I'm going to my dream college. I'm very grateful to Dunboyne for my time there and the world of possibilities that they introduced me to.

"They made me realise that nobody is stupid, all it takes is the right environment like Dunboyne and a chance to explore your passions to realise just how much you have to offer".



Abbie Foley attending the announcement by Meta of a total of €250,000 in grants to support digital skills across communities in Meath and (inset) Abbie after her graduation from Dunboyne College.

## Changes ahead for childcare courses

Childcare has always been one of the most popular courses in Dunboyne College.

As one of the first courses to be offered in the college it has produced a large number of graduates over the years.

Changes are now afoot with the introduction of a new curriculum.

The new two year Early Learning and Care course will start in September with an increased focus on practical industry placements.

Students will be required to complete placement in each year in a range of settings including services for children

aged between 0-2 years eight months and services that provide care for children aged 2 years 8 months up to 6 years.

Employers will also have greater input into the assessment of students as part of the course.

The existing Level 5 and 6 modules will be deactivated in late 2023 and replaced with the new curriculum. Staff working in the sector who wish to complete their full level 5 or level 6 have been offered the opportunity to take classes on a part-time basis. These are subsidized training through the SOLAS Skills to Advance programme.



Holding the babies! In the DCFE Childcare Training Room are Minister Damien English TD, Ellen Holian, Childcare Teacher Dunboyne College, Minister Simon Harris, Maria Gargan, Childcare Teacher Dunboyne College and Minister Helen McEntee.



# 'One thing I noticed was the learning environment was way more relaxed'

**MICHAEL KEAVENY**

Despite putting his head down in school, Blanchardstown native Victor Kazyuka never felt his efforts bore the fruits that they deserved, which led to him developing a negative attitude towards school work.

"I felt I was never particularly good at school", he said. "I always felt like the hardest working student but never felt that I achieved what I deserved. As a result, I never really felt great about school."

With the Leaving Cert looming Victor felt he wouldn't achieve the required results to do well in the traditional points race and gain entry to a third level course via the CAO route. However his guidance counsellor was able to point him down the alternative direction of PLC (Post Leaving Cert) courses.

"Thankfully I had a good guidance counsellor in my school Luttrellstown Community College in Clonsilla, and I explained my situation to her, I felt I wasn't going to do well in the Leaving Cert or gain the CAO points I needed. Thankfully, my guidance counsellor suggested and explained the whole area of PLC



Victor Kazyuka says his experience at DCFE was hugely beneficial.

courses to me and the possibilities of progressing to 3rd level via a PLC course in a college of further education. She suggested I do some research into Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE)."

After investigating what the college had to offer Victor found it had many advantages over the some of

the more commonly used routes to university.

"Upon researching DCFE I found many benefits to pursuing a PLC course including, chances of progression to 3rd level based on your PLC results and not your leaving cert results, small class sizes, over 60 courses to choose from, affordable

fees, great transport links, both academic and learning support and great facilities."

He also discovered the pace and method of tuition was a lot more easy going and suitable to his needs than the atmosphere he had experienced at second level education, both in terms of his fellow students and the lecturers.

"Once I started the course, one of the first things I noticed was that the learning environment was quite different from secondary school, it is way more relaxed. All the students that were in my class wanted to be there and wanted to progress after the course, either into a job or on to third level. The teachers are so welcoming and helpful, nothing was too much."

DCFE also offers assistance to students to help guide them as they take their first steps into third level education.

"Another great advantage to DCFE is the supports available free to students, Academic Support, Learning Support and the Guidance Department. The learning hub and personal assistants were brilliant and always there to support students

with interpreting briefs, laying out assignments and referencing. The guidance counsellors were great at explaining all the different routes that I could take to progress after my course, whether it be on to 3rd level, employment or an apprenticeship."

Having completed his course in Dunboyne, Victor has applied for a third level course but is also keen to explore the apprenticeship route.

"I have gained a full award and am now awaiting the CAO offers to see what course I get offered in 3rd level, I hope to study cyber security. However, in the meantime on the advice of the guidance counsellor I applied for the FIT apprenticeship in Cyber Security and have been successful in gaining a place. I have currently been offered a position with Deloitte to complete my apprenticeship and am excited about this. This company will now employ me and pay for my college education. None of this is bad for someone who didn't enjoy school or feel they would succeed; it just shows the power of PLC courses and colleges of further education like Dunboyne. There is always a route to get to where you want".

## Experimenting with Science options

The growing interest in all aspects of science is reflected in the demand for places on suite of pre-university sciences courses on offer at Dunboyne College.

Courses in Agricultural and Animal Science, Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Science, Environmental Science, Food Science and Sports Science offer students the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular area.

The emphasis across all courses is on preparing students for progression to further study at Levels 7 and 8.

Students complete practical experiments in the college science laboratory. Shades of CSI are evident in Forensic Science classes where students focus on how evidence is collected and analysed for use in legal cases. Climate change and global warming feature strongly on the Environmental Science curriculum. The importance of



nutrition and the science of exercise and fitness are explored in Food Science and Sports Science.

With nine out of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies and 14 out of the top 15 med-tech companies operating in Ireland, this sector includes some of the largest employers in the country, something

that is firmly on the minds of the young career-focused students.

In fact, if they want a reminder of the importance of the sector in employment terms they only have to look at the state-of-the-art biologics plant operated by US Pharma giant MSD within a few minutes drive of the college.



Skills to Advance offers employers and employees the opportunity to complete recognised national qualifications

# Supporting employers with subsidised training courses

"It is like getting a bespoke consultant to manage your training needs," says Susan Colley Doyle, Financial Controller of Trim Castle Hotel, referring to the Skills to Advance initiative offered by Dunboyne College with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

Skills to Advance, a funded programme from the SOLAS, the state training agency, offers employers and employees the opportunity to complete recognized national qualifications. Available through Dunboyne College it includes reduced fees for level 5 and 6 courses, supports for employees and classes at a time that meets the needs of the employer and the employee.

Trim Castle worked with the college during the pandemic to ensure that its new staff were upskilled when the hotel re-opened. "We had worked with LMETB in the past so when Aoife McDaid of LMETB brought the programme to our attention we jumped at the opportunity," says Susan. "The fact that we could engage with Dunboyne College on the development of the course content, have it delivered by an experienced industry trainer meant that all our new reception staff were ready to hit the ground running when the hotel re-opened."

Anthony Smiddy, General Manager, Johnstown Estate says that his



Pictured at the Skills to Advance event are Catherine Fox Deputy Principal, Dunboyne College, Therese Phipps Johnstown Estate, Martin O'Brien CEO LMETB, Denis Leonard, Principal Dunboyne College, Mary Lyons, Director of Enterprise, Employees and Skills Solas, Damien English TD, Minister for Business, Employment and Retail, Deirdre Kelly RESPA Bedding, Sadie Ward McDermott, LMETB.

senior management team used the training very effectively.

"The outcome was exceptional, by completing the QQI level 6 Special Purpose Award in Training and Development we have focused on the skills development of our staff. The experience embedded a culture of training across the hotel and the management team in turn have worked with their teams to identify additional training requirements. All this has had an impact on the quality of the service delivered to guests and on the business."

Deirdre Kelly, Operations Manager with RESPA Bedding in Oldcastle believes the opportunity brought a culture of learning and development to Respa Beds. "As an employer it has allowed us to

close skills gaps in the company, but more importantly it has opened doors for employees to engage in funded further education. LMETB funded courses have upskilled our employees in Lean Manufacturing, Safety and Health, Customs Training and Microsoft. Courses in English as a second language were provided onsite via the Skills for Work funding."

Healthcare and Homecare companies have also engaged with the programme with Bluebird Care Director Gavan Kane saying that classes allow their staff to develop additional skills relevant to their roles.

"The programme allows Healthcare Assistants to develop professionally whilst working, ensuring they can

then apply the knowledge gained in their QQI Course while developing in their role. The lessons are conducted in such a way that benefits the learner."

The workplace is constantly changing to meet the economic demands and new technology according to Linda Ennis, LMETB Employer Engagement Team. "We are finding that more and more business owners understand the additional impact that investing in their workforce has on their ability to grow and unlock new opportunities."

Linda and her colleague Ann Gallagher support employers in applying for the funding. They work closely across LMETB to identify the best options available. In Meath the courses are run through Dunboyne

College and BTEI Meath.

"Dunboyne College is very eager to support businesses to meet upskilling challenges," says Catherine Fox, Deputy Principal, Dunboyne College.

"The courses that we offer complement existing qualifications or provide them with a new qualification. Often, we have employers ask for a list of courses but instead we work with them to identify a course, arrange the schedule that works for them and design the assessments to be completed. It is important that the employer and their staff are aware of both the commitment in terms of time and the need to complete assessments. The trainer works closely with the company to design assessments that are relevant and useful to the company. The courses are all QQI accredited so continuous assessment is part of the course."

Skills to Advance funding is also available to individuals says the DCFE Deputy Principal. "We have a Digital and Social Media Marketing course commencing online on Wednesday nights in September. We also run Healthcare and Childcare courses.

"These courses are designed for people in employment in these sectors who need to upskill in Care Skills, Care of the Older Person, Activities of Living Patient Care and other areas. Once they work in the sector they can enrol on the course."

## Business Community Scholarships

In response to the growing cost of going to college and in an effort to support the job needs of local employers DCFE offers a scholarship programme, supported by the business community.

The programme is in its third year and has been hugely successful in promoting education opportunities, helping students continue in their courses and developing relationships with the business community.

The programme matches up a current Dunboyne College student with an organisation as that student's sponsor. The sponsor commits to, usually, reimbursing the college fees to the student upon successful completion of the academic year. Basically, each student gets a cheque on graduation.

Fifteen companies offering twenty two scholarships in 2022. The successful students included: Shane McDonnell, Abbey Brannigan, Sophie Kelly,

Caoimhe O'Moore, Kimberly Balingit (all Healthcare students), Craig Kelly Dowling (Law), Brenda Mullins (Administration), Jack O'Sullivan (Software Development), Grainne McDonagh (Office Accounting), Abbie Foley, Aodhan Tomkins, Oisín McCourt (Journalism students), Peng Lu (Professional Cookery), Luc Garcia Louro, Caitlin Ryan (Animal Science students), Oliwisi Stasiuk (Airline), Ellen Connors (Beauty Therapy), Zilvinas Albrikas (Physiotherapy).

They were supported by Alltec Ireland, Dunboyne; Lyons Financial Services, Dunboyne; Bluebird Care, Navan; Marymount Care Centre, Lucan, Headway Security, Dunboyne, Joseph Hickey and Sons Ltd., Dunboyne, EMR, Dunboyne, Kelly O'Reilly Accounting, Enfield; Coffee Perfection, Dunboyne; Shannonside Aviation, Dunboyne; Synoptix, Celbridge; Sidewalk Café, Dunboyne, Tara Mines, Navan, Enterprise Freight, Dunboyne.

## Staying in touch

The Dunboyne College Graduate Association offers past students of the college the opportunity to continue their engagement with the college, supporting existing students, getting involved in college events and linking in with the college for further training and career development.

"Hundreds of our graduates are members of our Dunboyne College Graduate Association, where they stay engaged with the college long past graduation," says Irene Togher, Deputy Principal. "They join the association because they have enjoyed their time in the college

and want to give back in some way. They are heavily involved in the promotion of the college and like to stay informed about what's happening."

Each year the Graduate Association hosts an event. These have included: the launch of the Graduate Association Book in Dunboyne Castle Hotel; a one-woman play in the Solstice Theatre, Navan; and a free gig by renowned band the Hothouse Flowers in Dunboyne Castle Hotel. If you are a past student and would like to join the association please contact Irene for further details.



DCFE course allowed Dunboyne native's airline career take off

# 'I was so prepared for the interview, I knew what to say, how to present myself for the interview'

MICHAEL KEAVENY

Having developed an interest in the aviation sector as a child Dunboyne native Ava Reddington took the chance to work as part of the cabin crew for major airlines.

"I visited an Aer Lingus hangar when I was younger, she said. "Ever since then I wanted to work for an airline."

When she saw an airlines study course being offered in Dunboyne College of Further Education she decided to take the course.

After deciding that going down the CAO route wasn't for her, Ava discovered the airlines studies course when representatives from DCFE visited her school.

"I chose the course because I felt college wasn't for me. I did my leaving cert in 2020 and all of my friends were talking about going off to university but it wasn't something that appealed to me. Dunboyne came to talk to us in school and gave out the prospectus and when I saw that they were offering airline studies as a subject, I said it was ticking all the boxes for me. I went home and applied immediately because it just ticked all the boxes for me, it was right up my alley."

Dunboyne were brilliant in how they prepared me for all the interviews, the week I graduated from Dunboyne Ryanair started recruiting so I said I'd give it a go and I got it. I moved from there to my current role in Aer Lingus".

Ava found the course content to be very helpful for preparing her to both get a job in the industry and to work in it

"The course was very beneficial, it went into a lot of detail on interview preparation, so we could be ready. They thought us all of the jargon that cabin crews use which was really helpful. There was also an element of the course which focused on the secretarial work and on how to present ourselves."

This work led to Ava being ready for the interview.

"I was so prepared for the interview, I knew what to say, I knew how to present myself for the interview. Grooming is a massive

After deciding that going down the CAO route wasn't for her, Ava Reddington discovered the airlines studies course when representatives from DCFE visited her school.



**The course was very beneficial, it went into a lot of detail on interview preparation, so we could be ready**

thing in aviation. We came into college in our formal attire, it's how we got in the door.

The main subjects we did in the college were reception and frontline skills, cabin crew operations, as well as things like word processing, which

is something everyone should have."

Although Covid interrupted her work experience Ava was still able to find valid experience. "We did work experience, but due to covid it was difficult to find places to go. I was able to find somewhere as a Covid supervisor in a secondary school which was very relatable as it involved a lot of working with people."

The college's staff were also very helpful and they did stuff like getting us set up on LinkedIn, which was where I applied for Ryanair. I would recommend it to anyone as the college has a fantastic support system in place."

## Low course fees on Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy courses

Industry and international qualifications, small class sizes and practical training combined with industry placement are at the core of the hairdressing and beauty therapy courses on offer at Dunboyne College.

Low course fees in comparison to private college means that there is a large demand for places on the courses.

Junior and Senior Trade qualifications and QQI in Hairdressing and ITEC and QQI qualifications in Beauty Therapy mean that student completing these courses can enter the world of work immediately.

Cutting, colouring and up styling practical classes take place in the college's hairdressing salon while beauty therapy students complete Manicure, Pedicure and Waxing and Skin Care, Eye Treatments and Makeup classes in a professional Beauty Salon training suite.

The course are taught by qualified hairdressing stylists and beauty therapists with industry experience who also advise students on

employment opportunities.

"Jobs are not just confined to working in Ireland or indeed setting up your own business," says Maebh Nimmo, Career Guidance Counsellor.

"Many past students have travelled and worked on cruise ships such as Steiner, in TV and Film productions or as sales representatives for industry products.

Increasingly many are setting up their own businesses and developing careers as influencers and media bloggers. We also run courses on how to setup your business for hairdressing and beauty therapy students."



## Developing the next generation of media professionals

Blogging, writing for the media, producing content for podcasts and social media, learning how to mix sound and music, and making videos are all part and parcel of the Journalism, Sound Production, Creative Media and Film and Media courses at Dunboyne College.

The influence of social media and digital marketing is explored in the Online Marketing and Digital Media course with students learning how to write and develop content on the Journalism and PR course.

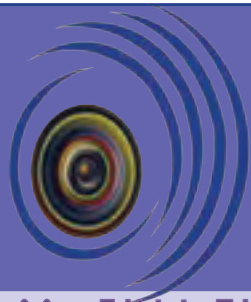
Music gigs and events are part of the coursework for those on the sound and film production courses. Students spend 2 days a week in Camelot, a professional recording studio and also use the college podcast studio.

"The rise of social media, online marketing and new ways of accessing media means that there is an increasing demand for skilled people in these industries," according to Derek Ball, College Career Guidance Counsellor. "The days of a journalist or PR expert or Marketing person writing an article or press release are now gone, they are expected to write, blog, produce video and social



media content for newspapers, radio stations, online platforms. But really these are essential skills for anyone interested in a career in the media, journalism, marketing or PR and they can be developed in a one year course. At the end of the course students will also have a portfolio of work and industry experience."

The Dunboyne College Career Guidance Counsellor also believes that the recent announcement by Hammerlake Studios that they are planning to build Ireland's largest film, television and content studio in Mullingar will add to the demand for qualified graduates. Figures produced by Screen Ireland show that in 2021 alone there was a €500 million spent on film, television drama, documentary, and animation in Ireland.



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- Physiotherapy Studies
- Occupational Therapy Studies
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- Pre-University Biomedical & Pharmaceutical Science \* NEW
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- Pre-University Environmental Science
- Pre-University Sports Science
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### Arts / Law / Teaching Department

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- Pre-University Liberal Arts
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- Pre-University Law with Politics \* NEW
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### Computers and Design Department

- Software Development & Games Design
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- Pre-University Computing, Networks & Software Systems
- Graphic Design
- Architectural Technology and Design
- Media and Film Production
- Music Performance
- Sound Production
- Art (Fine Art or Design/2D)
- Animation

### Services and Leisure Department

- Airline Studies
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- Hairdressing \*
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