



NSETS PROGRESS REPORT

September 2022 - August 2024

Date Published:
October 2024

CO-CHAIRPERSONS FOREWORD

The landscape of Youth Work in Ireland remains an ever-changing environment which seeks to respond to challenges both locally and in a more global environment. With the rising cost of living limiting opportunities for young people, environmental challenges such as climate change and a world in which war and conflict is claiming the lives of innocent people globally it is incumbent on Youth workers to support young people to understand this complex and multifaceted world and their place in it and how they can shape a more hopeful future.

Over these past two years the NSETS committee has continued to work diligently to enhance and uphold the standards in the education and training of Youth Workers on the island of Ireland in order to ensure that they are equipped to respond to the needs of young people. We continue to review and seek to improve the endorsement process and provide support to educational institutions in meeting the highest standards in the professional formation of Youth Workers.

We express our thanks and gratitude for the drive, hard work and knowledge of our Development Officer, Olive Ring, in continuing to progress and develop the work of NSETS. We also recognise and thank the committee members, past and present, for their commitment to the youth work sector, who give of their time and expertise selflessly to promote excellence in youth work education.

NSETS Co – Chairs Shirley Donegan and Anne Marie McClure.

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INTRODUCTION

History of NSETS

The North/South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) was launched in January 2006. The launch was the culmination of several years of discussion between the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) and the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC), in consultation with the Departments of Education north and south, and with other relevant interests in the youth work sector. All were agreed on the need for an all-Ireland framework for the professional endorsement of youth work education and training which would ensure and support best practice and facilitate professional mobility and exchange both on a north/south and east/west basis.

Responsibilities of NSETS

NSETS is responsible for the professional endorsement of youth work programmes on the island of Ireland. NSETS works to ensure and promote quality standards in the education and training of youth workers through an endorsement process based on a rigorous assessment of all aspects of programme content and delivery.

NSETS professional endorsement represents a formal recognition by the youth work sector that programmes of study in youth work have met prescribed criteria and are fit-for-purpose.

Structure and Membership of NSETS

Membership of the NSETS committee is comprised of representatives, north and south, who represent a range of stakeholders in the education and professional formation of youth workers including youth work employers, practitioners, statutory bodies, educators etc...

The work of NSETS is supported by the Departments north and south with responsibility for youth work, DCEDIY and DENI. These Departments support NSETS through the provision of funding to employ a part time Development Officer, who is currently funded by DCEDIY and contracted by the National Youth Council of Ireland to carry out this role.

Aim of this report

This report captures the progress made on the key objectives of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) in two parts.

Part One of this report describes the actions as outlined in the previous NSETS Progress Report 2020-2022 and indicates whether these actions have been achieved.

Part Two of this report outlines the progress made by NSETS during the period 2022-2024 under two headings – 1) Governance and Operational Matters 2) Endorsement and Quality Assurance Work.

PART

1

UPDATE ON PROGRESS RE ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE PREVIOUS NSETS PROGRESS REPORT 2020-2022

In the previous NSETS Progress Report 2020-2022, which can be found at [North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work Progress Report - National Youth Council of Ireland](#), each work area identified a future action to be achieved. The table below contains these actions and indicates whether these actions were achieved, or not. Table 1 outlines the work areas in relation to governance and operational matters. Table 2 outlines the work areas in relation to endorsement and quality assurance work

Table 1.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS:

Area of Work	Future Action Identified	Achieved / Not Achieved
Financial Management	Ongoing monitoring of the financial situation of NSETS.	Achieved
Communication and Website Development	Increased efforts to communicate and promote the work of NSETS are required going forward	Partially Achieved.
NSETS Committee and subgroup Meetings	Continue the provision of support to the NSETS committee, sub committees and working groups.	Achieved
Reconstitution of Membership	The reconstitution of northern and southern membership will be continued, as per NSETS Terms of Reference.	Achieved
Appeals Process	The Appeals Procedure and Appeal Committee Membership will be reviewed every five years.	n/a

Table 2.

ENDORSEMENT AND QUALITY WORK:

Area of Work	Future Action Identified	Achieved / Not Achieved
Endorsement of Youth Work Programmes	Endorsement of new programmes and continuing programmes	Achieved
Annual Monitoring and Mid way Reviews of Endorsed Programmes	The Annual Monitoring Survey and Report to be completed in each quarter four going forward. Mid-way reviews to be carried out during the five-year endorsement period for each endorsed programme.	Achieved
Review of NSETS Endorsement Criteria/Guidance Notes	The working group is to complete work on drafting the guidance notes and the Committee to review and approve.	Achieved
Individual Recognition Protocol – Statement of Recognition of Experienced Practitioners	This process will remain open to applicants until 1st of January 2023 and all applications received will be reviewed as per the procedure outlined above.	Achieved
Impact of Covid 19 or other disruptive events	Any future impacts of Covid-19 (or other disruptive events) to be monitored if impacting on adherence to criteria.	n/a
Modifications to existing endorsed programmes, both minor and major, to be assessed by NSETS	DkIT and UCC modifications to be completed before the end of 2022. Any future modifications to programmes of education will be reviewed by NSETS.	Achieved
Joint Education and Training Standards (JETS)	The continued coordination of mutual and individual recognition protocols and shared learning.	Achieved

PART 2

THIS SECTION OUTLINES THE PROGRESS MADE BY NSETS DURING THE PERIOD SEPT 2022-AUG 2024 UNDER THE FOLLOWING HEADINGS:

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

In order to carry out its role effectively, a number of governance and operational issues were identified for action by NSETS.

NSETS Committee Meetings

During the period of September 2022 to August 2024, NSETS held eight committee meetings. Six of these meetings were hosted online and with two held in person.

The agenda, action minutes and accompanying papers and reports were prepared and circulated in advance of each meeting to committee members.

A number of sub-committees and a working group also progressed some specific areas of work, including the statement of recognition of experienced practitioners, workforce development issues and the development of the new Guidance Notes.

Future Action Required:

Continue the provision of support to the NSETS committee, sub committees and working groups.

Financial Management

The operational running costs of NSETS are funded through an agreed 'cost recovery model' from HEI's. Programme Providers were invoiced by NSETS on an annual basis across their five-year endorsement period.

Throughout this two-year period the Development Officer has ensured monitoring of finances by presenting a quarterly budget report to the NSETS Committee outlining all incoming and outgoing financial activity against projected and estimated income and expenditure.

Future Action Required:

Ongoing monitoring of the financial situation of NSETS.

Reconstitution of Membership

The NSETS committee recognise the importance of reconstituting its membership of the committee in line with its Terms of Reference. Due to retirements and terms ending a number of new members joined the NSETS committee during this two-year period.

In the South, a new Co-Chair was appointed, following the retirement of the founding Co-Chair. In the North, there was a new employer, practitioner and union representative nominated through a variety of agreed pathways, in accordance with NSETS terms of reference. There was also a number of alternates appointed to ensure full representation at meetings. Induction sessions were held with each incoming committee member and alternate.

Future Action Required:

The reconstitution of northern and southern membership will be continued, as per NSETS Terms of Reference.

Development of Guidance Notes to accompany revised NSETS Criteria and Procedures

Throughout the review process of the NSETS Criteria and Procedures in 2021, it was recognised that

additional guidance was needed on two specific areas, placement selection and youth work content. A working group was formed (from committee members and HEI representatives) to draft these two guidance notes.

This working group produced several drafts of this guidance and the committee agreed final content and approved the notes in 2023. They were then circulated widely and helped to inform the two endorsement processes which were undertaken in 2024.

Future Action Required:

The NSETS Criteria and Procedures and accompanying Guidance Notes are to be reviewed regularly and in line with any significant changes in policy or practice.

Communication

Website - www.youth.ie/nsets The NSETS website, which went live in 2019, contains information on NSETS, the endorsement process and a list of currently endorsed programmes, and list of all historic programmes which have been endorsed by NSETS. Minor amendments and updates were made to website content during this two-year period.

Promotion- The new Guidance Notes were uploaded on the website and were circulated and promoted to a wide youth work audience, both in the north and south.

Email, queries and calls from youth work practitioners, programme providers, employers, students and ETS colleagues were responded to throughout 2022-2024.

An input on NSETS was given by the Development Officer to the PALYCW Annual Conference in both 2023 and 2024.

Following recognition by NSETS committee members that more work is required in order to create and promote an understanding of NSETS among key stakeholders, a communications sub-group of NSETS was established. This group developed a communications action plan, which has not been fully implemented, due to capacity constraints.

Future Action Required:

Increased efforts to communicate and promote the work of NSETS are required going forward.

Code of Conduct

Arising from discussions in relation to the protocol for committee members sharing NSETS information with external parties, the committee decided to draw up a general Code of Conduct, which would cover a range of responsibilities for members. This was drafted by a sub-group of NSETS and approved and adopted by the committee in September 2023. The Code provides guidance to NSETS committee members as to how to adhere to and uphold the mission and values of NSETS and how to conduct their role effectively and responsibly. This Code is not applicable to Departmental representatives, who are ex officio members of the committee. The Code was shared with existing members and new incoming members at their induction.

Future Action Required:

The Code of Conduct is to be shared with new members and alternates and its content reviewed after five years.



We are very proud of the strengths that you (NSETS) have identified and will continue to build on these. We thank you for identifying recommendations and conditions and will work to ensure that all conditions are met. We appreciate all the work that has gone into the review and thank all members of the (endorsement) panel.

HEI Endorsed Programme Provider.

Engaging with NSETS has been an exceptional experience. Their clear and passionate communication of youth needs, coupled with their hands-on approach, has been truly impressive. Witnessing their dedication and the positive impact they're making in the sector has been a privilege

QQI Senior Executive Officer.

JETS is a safe space for us all to talk candidly, and a haven for mutual support, conducted with generosity of spirit, openness, passion and enthusiasm

A JETS member.

I think the process is helpful, pre-panel, panel and post-panel, and the structure is straightforward and has been developed well over the years.

NSETS Endorsement Panel Member.



ENDORSEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE WORK

In order to fulfil its functions as the body with responsibility for the professional endorsement of Youth Work Education Programmes a number of areas of work were identified for action in relation to Endorsement.

There are currently nine programmes of education endorsed by NSETS across six Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). Each endorsement covers a five-year period, during which annual monitoring and a mid-way review is carried out.

Endorsements of Youth Work Programmes

There were two endorsements carried out on four programmes in two HEI's within this two-year period:

Maynooth University – an endorsement process was carried out on both the undergraduate degree programme and postgraduate Masters programme in 2024. Endorsement, without condition, was approved by the committee in April 2024.

University College Cork - an endorsement process was carried out on both the undergraduate degree programme and postgraduate diploma programme in 2024. Endorsement, with some conditions, was approved by the committee in June 2024

For both of these endorsements a similar three stage process was followed:

- 1) The formation of a panel, individual review of the submission of evidence, collation of observations, pre-meeting establishing lines of enquiry and preparation of questions for each stakeholder group.
- 2) An in-person panel visit conducted over two days with meetings conducted with a range of stakeholder groups.
- 3) A panel report prepared detailing the summary of findings, and any conditions and recommendations. Final approval being granted by the Committee and communicated to the HEI.

Future Action Required:

Continued endorsement of new programmes and continuing programmes of youth work education.

Annual Monitoring and Mid Way Reviews of Endorsed Programmes

Annual Monitoring - NSETS monitors programmes annually in order to retain a view on whether they continue to operate in accordance with the requirements for professional

endorsement. The statistical data collected provides a clear indication of the status of a number of key matters and when analysed with data from other programmes, can also alert the NSETS Committee to overall patterns and trends in professional formation programmes Two online surveys (undergraduate and postgraduate) were developed and circulated to endorsed Programme Providers by the DO in October in 2022 and 2023 requesting information in relation to the quality assurance mechanisms of the programmes, profile of students, retention and progression of graduates etc... The summary report of findings from these questionnaires were presented to the NSETS Committee for discussion.

Mid-Way Reviews – Each endorsed programme provider is required to provide information at a mid-way point of their endorsement period, in relation to how they are implementing any conditions or recommendations made by NSETS and if there has been, or will be, any significant changes made to the programme since the endorsement process was carried out, which may affect its adherence to the NSETS Criteria.

Two mid-way reviews were successfully carried out in this time period in University College Cork and TU Dublin Blanchardstown and Maynooth university was approved.

Future Action Required:

The Annual Monitoring Survey and Report to be completed in each quarter four going forward. Mid-way reviews to be carried out during the five-year endorsement period for each endorsed programme.

Modifications to Existing programmes

In 2022, two endorsed programme providers (DkIT and UCC) underwent NSETS approval for modifications made to their programmes, arising out of new arrangements with an employer to provide in-service education and training to their employees. These modifications required the reconvening of the endorsement panels in order to scrutinise changes arising out of these new arrangements in order to be satisfied that NSETS Criteria continue to be adhered to.

The process began in June 2022 and was approved by the committee, subject to conditions, in December 2022.

Future Action Required:

Any future modifications, both major and minor, to programmes of education, will be reviewed by NSETS.

Recognition of Experienced Practitioners

In early 2021, a proposed protocol was circulated to committee members, whereby experienced youth work practitioners would be invited to apply for a 'Statement of NSETS Recognition, if they met the eligibility criteria. This criteria requires applicants to demonstrate that they worked professionally in youth work prior to the establishment of NSETS and on a continuous basis since then. This protocol was approved and applications opened in mid-2021 and ended on the 1st of January 2023.

The Workforce Development Sub-group of NSETS Committee were asked to assess suitability of each application and to put forward those deemed eligible for approval to the NSETS committee. This process involved review of anonymised applications against the eligibility criteria. Verification checks of employment details were also carried out on each application, with employers required to confirm details of employment. The Development Officer followed up on a number of applications seeking additional information or clarification.

23 applications had previously been approved, with a further 8 approved in this period, resulting in a total of thirty-one applicants who received their Statement of Recognition after being deemed eligible under the criteria.

Future Action Required:

The recognition process was closed and no future actions were identified.

Review of QQI Level 5 Youth Work Award

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is required to establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by QQI or by a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated.

Due to the ongoing professionalisation of the youth work sector, a review of the current suite of QQI standards pertaining to both community development and youth work was required. A Standards Working Group with a view of undertaking a review and development of new standards in Youth Work, was established in June 2023 with NSETS co-leading the work on this project, along with AIEB who have responsibility for community development. The Standards Working Group worked to produce these draft standards between June 2023 and August 2024, with public consultation planned for October 2024.

Future Action Required:

Following feedback from the public consultation, the draft standards will be reviewed and put forward for QQI approval. Once approved, there will be a process to inform providers on the process for implementing these new standards.

Joint Education and Training Standards (JETS)

The NSETS Development Officer and Chairs attended a total of four Joint ETS and one Development Officer meetings with colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales across this two-year period. The meetings have continued work on the 'Mutual Recognition Protocol' and provided a shared learning and coordinated approach to cross jurisdictional issues.

JETS also provided a very useful forum to discuss common issues around student recruitment, workforce and the impact of changes in youth work policy.

Future Action Required:

The continued coordination of mutual and individual recognition protocols and shared learning.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR NSETS SEPT 2022 - AUG 2024

8 Committee Meetings

8 Quarterly Budget Reports Prepared

4 Committee Members Recruited

1 Code of Conduct Approved

1 Working Group established to review level 5

1 Set of Draft Award Standards level 5 in Youth Work Produced

2 Guidance Notes Produced and Circulated

4 Programmes Endorsed in 2 HEI's

2 Annual Monitoring Reports Produced

3 Midway Reviews Completed

2 Modifications processed and approved

8 Statements of Recognition issued to Experienced Practitioners (31 in total)

4 JETS Meetings Attended

1 JETS Development Officer Meetings Attended

2 Conference presentations



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