

STUDENT HANDBOOK



The ICOS Skillnet is funded by member companies and the Training Networks Programme, an initiative of Skillnets Ltd. funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills.



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Welcome:

Welcome to the ICOS Skillnet. The co-operative sector is changing with the economic climate and market demands. In order for the sector to sustain competitiveness, many co-operatives are diversifying and therefore require up-skilling and training. The ICOS Skillnet aims to facilitate this up- skilling process and enhance the skills of co-op staff and management through structured training.

The network offers a wide range of uncertified courses and a number of certified courses. The benefits of certification are many including allowing participants opportunities to further their education and employment progression prospects.

The courses and programmes are delivered in various forms. Most are classroom based and some are mixed learning, distance learning and on-the-job learning. The locations are selected by identifying where there is most demand for the training.

The training delivery allows participants to meet with employees of other co-operatives thereby creating opportunities to develop relationships where they may not otherwise exist. It also gives participants the opportunity for an exchange of views in relation to best practice and new and innovative ways of doing business. Such networking opportunities are vital to the success of the network.

The proposed outcomes from the ICOS Skillnet Training Networks' Programme are as follows:

Increase number of staff being trained

- Create loyalty and satisfaction amongst staff
- Up-skilling staff thereby creating confidence in staff members
- Contribute to customer satisfaction
- Increase productivity
- To create and sustain employment in rural areas
- Reduction of risk both physical and legal for network members
- Upgraded qualifications under the National Frame of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Educational achievements and change to further education through recognized certified training.
- To expand and develop sound business models
- Increased profitability for network members
- To create awareness of best practice and aim to achieve and surpass it
- To contribute to sustainable business in the future
- To help to create better focused businesses

About ICOS Skillnet:

The ICOS Skillnet is a network of member co-operatives nationwide. Members use the network to avail of grant-assisted training and networking opportunities for their owners, managers and staff. We believe that members need to improve the skills of their workforce if they are to grow and be successful in today's business environment.

The network's long term strategy is to continue in supporting the co-op and agri-business sectors in meeting their training & development needs to sustain competitiveness and growth for the sectors.

The aims of the programme are:

1. To provide industry specific, customised and most relevant training to the member companies in order to improve their competitiveness.
2. To promote training as a viable strategic tool.
3. To improve the quality of training and development activities and provide real opportunities to employees of the member companies.
4. To assist in creating a long term future for co-operative businesses in rural areas.
5. To contribute to the up-skilling of the unemployed.

We provide training in the following areas: Co-Operative & Industrial Provident Society Director Training; People Management; Planning & Strategy; Management Development; Communication Skills; Sales & Marketing; Finance; Technical Skills; Health & Safety and Information Technology.

The Training Networks Programme also provides training to job-seekers, who train with those in employment. By training with those in employment, job-seekers have access to networking opportunities and can keep up to date with their sector while participating in relevant industry-specific training programmes.

For further information on ICOS Skillnet, please contact (01) 613-1348 or by email: icosskillnet@icos.ie

About Skillnets:

Skillnets is a state funded, enterprise-led support body dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of training and upskilling as key elements in sustaining Ireland's national competitiveness.

They support and fund networks of enterprises to engage in training under the Training Networks Programme (TNP). These networks, now referred to as 'Skillnets', are led and managed by the enterprises themselves to design, manage and deliver specific training programmes across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide.

Since 1999, Skillnets has facilitated over 60,000 Irish enterprises, in over 350 networks to improve the range, scope and quality of training and allowed over 275,000 employees to upskill and meet their work related training needs.

For further information on Skillnets please visit:

www.skillnets.ie

ICOS Skillnet Policies and Guidelines:

ICOS Skillnet is committed to supporting you as a learner. We have policies in Communications, Transfer and Progression, Equality, Programme Delivery and Review and we provide a fair and consistent assessment of learner's progress.

1. Communications (3 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to communicate effectively with learners, staff and all stakeholders of our training programmes. The organisation believes in the importance of all- inclusive two-way processes, to achieve our objectives.

2. Equality (2 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to conduct every programme activity in accordance with best practice and the principles of all relevant Equality legislation.

3. Staff recruitment and development (3 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to staff all our services with appropriately trained and competent people. Management, Support and Tutoring staff at all levels, are selected, recruited and supported in their roles using fair and transparent procedures.

4. Access transfer and progression (4 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to inform, facilitate and accommodate all learners on our training programmes in line with best practice in access, transfer and progression to other programmes/ providers. Any entry requirements will be sensitively applied. Programmes are advertised as appropriate. Options should be discussed on or before entry and opportunities given to Learners to explore further Training and Education opportunities

5. Programme development delivery and review (9procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to develop, deliver and review its training provision in line with best practice and its mission.

6. Fair and consistent assessment of learners (11 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to be fair and consistent in the assessment of Learners. Assessment will be appropriate to the learning outcomes and sensitive to the needs of the learner. Assessment practice includes secure record keeping, standardised practices, appeals, use of evaluation instruments and consistency across tutors and programmes thereby enabling Learners achieve national standards.

7. Protection for learners (1 procedure):

This Organisation will apply protection for learners in the event of the organisation ceasing to exist during the running of a programme

8. Sub Contracting/ procuring programme delivery (4 procedures):

Programmes are usually provided from this Organisations own resources. If this Organisation does sub-contract its Training Provision, all procedures in this manual will apply OR the provider will be a registered FETAC centre in its own right.

9. Self evaluation of programmes and services (6 procedures):

It is the policy of this Organisation to self evaluate its programmes and services in order to continuously improve its provision. It is intended that this policy advises all those involved with the programme – including our member stakeholders, management, deliverers, and learners.

Safety & Security:

ICOS Skillnet is dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of all our learners, staff and materials. It is vital that all learners follow any instructions given by tutors.

Health & Safety

We recognise that we have health and safety obligations as a training provider, among them being the provision of a safe environment, safe work equipment, safe systems of work, and safe personnel / trainees.

ICOS Skillnet is committed to our objective, which is to provide a safe and healthy work/ training environment for all our employees/ learners and to meet our duties to contractors, and to members of the public who may be affected by our operations. In order to ensure the success of our health and safety programme, ICOS Skillnet is committed to allocating adequate resources to health and safety.

The success of this policy will depend on your co-operation.

Under Section 13 of the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005, you as a trainee have a responsibility to ensure not only your own safety, but also the safety of others around you and those that may be affected by your actions or omissions.

Failure to comply with Health & Safety legislation or any reasonable instructions that may have an impact on health and safety may result in a trainee being turned away from a training course permanently.

Your co-operation is appreciated.

Security

Whilst ICOS Skillnet endeavors to ensure the security of our facilities, it is the responsibility of individual learners to ensure the security of their own personal property. Valuables should not be left unattended.

Disclaimer:

ICOS Skillnet will not accept liability for loss, damage or theft of personal property however caused.

Assessment & Evaluation:

Work must be submitted to your tutor for assessment by stated deadlines. Your assignments, portfolio, exam etc., (as required for each module) are assessed by your tutor. Following completion of your course, an external assessor will visit the centre to examine portfolios and confirm results.

An Assessment Brief is the set of instructions given to you by your tutor informing you of:

- ▣ What you are required to do for the assessment of the module
- ▣ How the assessment will be marked and
- ▣ When it must be submitted

Assessment can take different forms, depending on the course. There are six possible assessment techniques:

- ▣ Collection of Work
- ▣ Learner Record
- ▣ Project
- ▣ Assignment
- ▣ Examination
- ▣ Skills Demonstration

Collection of Work

A collection of work is a portfolio of some or all of the work a student has produced. This collection of work is evidence which proves students have achieved Specific Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

Assignment

An assignment can take a number of forms; it can be research based, a practical task or an evaluation of a particular subject. Students are issued with a brief from their tutor, stating the specific guidelines and deadlines.

Learner Record

A learner record is a student's review of their learning experiences, tasks they have completed and the new skills gained over a specific amount of time. There are different types of learner records, for example, structured logbook, diary, learning journal, science or laboratory notebook, sketch book

Examination

An exam is used to test a student's ability to remember information, to prove they have knowledge of the topic. An exam also shows that students understand the information and have the ability to discuss a topic in detail, for example, the advantages or disadvantages of a topic or comparing and contrasting information. Exams can be written or oral in format.

Project

Projects may involve research, investigating a topic, performing an activity or organizing an event. A number of students may be involved in an event and each student must clearly state what they are responsible for. When students are undertaking a project they may be required to keep a personal diary as it will record learning gained and achievements of specific learning outcomes.

Skills Demonstration

Skills Demonstration allows the student to show their ability to achieve a wide range of practical skills. A skills demonstration may be assessed while students are on work placement there are different types of skills demonstrations: practical, observation and oral.

Assessment Procedure

The centre must hold all assessed work until the official statement of result arrives. Certificates are issued by FETAC at a later date.

Evaluation:

ICOS Skillnet is committed to giving you feedback on your performance. We ask that you support us by completing the feedback forms within your student handbook. Time tables for your classes and exams are available from your course coordinator.

Authentication and Results Approval Process:

FETAC published its policy on Quality Assuring Assessment in March 2009. This policy provides guidelines to ensure that the correct mark has been issued to the student, in line with requirements of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

ICOS Skillnet is committed to an efficient and fair authentication process. Your assignments/portfolios are put through the following procedures to ensure fair and consistent marking.

- Stage 1: Tutor marks assignments/portfolios
- Stage 2: Internal Verification
- Stage 3: External Verification
- Stage 4: Provisional results are returned from FETAC and at this stage you have the right to appeal your results if you feel your assignments/portfolios have been marked unfairly
- Stage 5: FETAC Certificates are issued

Appeals :

A Candidate may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a grade awarded or feel that they have been unfairly assessed. All appeals **must** be lodged in writing.

Timeframe for Appeals:

Appeals must be lodged before the close of the second Fetac assessment period following assessment. In other words, if they are assessed during a winter assessment period, or prior to the Winter Assessment period, they must lodge the appeal before the close of the following Summer Assessment Period. This gives the candidate roughly six months in which to appeal.

After this, all records will be archived.

Upon receipt of an appeal:

- The appeal is acknowledged, in writing (by email or letter).
- The appeal is photocopied and distributed to the members of the board.
- There are 3 members, usually consisting of the Training Manager, an independent trainer and a member of the Board.
- The 3 appeal board members individually examine the provided information and evidence and make their own recommendations on the case.
- Once the board have made their decision, the verdict is delivered to the applicant in writing (again by email or letter).

If the candidate is unsatisfied with the outcome of an appeal, then a further appeal can be made directly to Fetac: East Point Plaza East Point Business Park Dublin 3.

Records of appeals will be kept in the candidate file and will be archived with the respective coursework.

If appropriate at this time, the candidate's new grade is entered on Fetac for certification. In the event of the candidate failing to qualify for certification, they are advised of options for further or repeat training, should they so wish.

Appeals should be made in

writing to: Billy Goodburn
Co-Operative Development Manager
ICOS
The Plunkett House
84 Merrion Square
Dublin 2

Some useful exam tips:

BEFORE THE EXAM:

- Check what time your exam starts and make sure you are on time. The exam will end at a specific time regardless of whether you were late.
- Bring spare pens, pencils, etc in case you need them. Better to be looking at them than for them! Remember, you cannot borrow equipment from other people during an exam.
- Eat a light meal before the exam – you don't want to be hungry but you don't want to be falling asleep either.
- Bring a watch into the exam and use it to keep a close eye on the time you spend at each question.
- Before the exam, work out how much time you can spend on each question. Allow time according to the marks per question.

DURING THE EXAM:

- Allow 5 minutes at the start to read the paper and 5 minutes at the end to go back over it. When reading the exam paper, write down any points that come to mind.
- Answer your best questions first - this will give you confidence. It will also give a good impression to the person correcting your exam.
- Read each individual question thoroughly before you answer it to make sure that you understand the question and what you need to do.
- Try to write neatly. Examiners prefer reading that is easy to read.
- You can generally answer questions in any order but make sure you number answers correctly, for example, Q.2 (b), Q.3 (a).
- Tick off each question as you answer it.
- As you start each question, write down on the exam paper what time you are starting the question. This will help you to keep track of when you need to finish it.
- If you are not finished the question in the time allocated, move on to the next question. You can always go back if there is enough time.
- Try to answer all questions that must be answered. You won't get marks for questions that are not attempted.
- Leave blank lines at the end of each question in case you need to add points. Keep answers to the point. Don't repeat points.
- Focus on the exam – don't get distracted by those around you. Read over your answers.
- Check your answers against the exam paper to ensure that you haven't left any questions out.
- Make sure that your name or exam number is on each page of your answer sheet. Don't leave the exam before the time is up – you may think of something else to add.

VIOLATION OF THE RULES:

Anyone who tries to obtain aid from or copy from another person or who tries to aid another person during an examination will be liable to lose certification or module credit.

A list of useful websites and contacts:

Your tutor/coordinator for advice, materials and books etc.

www.fetac.ie

Directory of FETAC awards

List of major awards, components, module
description www.nfq.ie

National Framework of Qualifications

www.cityandguilds.com

City & Guilds (International)

www.icos.ie

Irish Co-Operative Society Ltd.

www.skillnets.ie

Skillnets Ltd.