



**Ballymun Whitehall Area
Partnership** opportunity : renewal : progress

Submission to the Consultation on the National Strategy for Higher Education from Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership Education Working Group

Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership Education Working Group currently has twenty five members representing a variety of education stakeholder organisations and groups from voluntary, community and statutory sectors (see Appendix One for a list of member organisations). The group meets monthly ten times a year. Membership is open to all those who wish to collaborate towards the development of education provision in the Ballymun Whitehall area and ultimately achieve improved education outcomes for all residents.

The Education Working Group facilitates opportunities for education stakeholders to meet together to share information and to debate and discuss important education issues and developments affecting Ballymun and Whitehall. The working group then provides strategic guidance to Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership informing the education work plan, including specific actions set to address education challenges and development opportunities.

We welcome the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members to the Higher Education Strategy Group.

The most significant changes we would like to see made to Irish higher education:

1- Links from Further Education to Higher Education

Define these links under the National Qualifications Framework, have a coherent links map and a clear and transparent application process and better communication between Further Education (FE) colleges and Higher Education Institutes (HEI). At the moment there is no obvious progression route from many FETAC courses into HEIs.

2 – Overhaul of the grants system

Ensure an adequate maintenance grant for all students to minimise the reliance on part time work. Have a clear, simple and centralised application process, release grant application forms when CAO forms are being completed. Students should be able to apply for grants online with preliminarily applications being completed as part of the CAO application.

3 – Flexible study options

Students should gain accreditation for course modules completed to allow them to move in and out of education as their circumstances dictate. Part-time students should be given equal treatment to full-time students as regards fees. Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) should be available for part-time study. Greater availability and choice plus increased accessibility to part time courses.

4- Community Based Access

Core funding provided for Community Based Access programmes as effective and valid mechanisms for promoting equality of access to higher education.

The barriers or obstacles which we have identified to the achievement of these objectives

1- Links from Further Education to Higher Education

- The differing application of admission policies of HEIs.
- Changing syllabi in both Further Education colleges and HEIs mean that there needs to be constant monitoring to ensure a mismatch does not occur.
- Separate reporting bodies for FE colleges (DES) and HEIs (HEA) which leads to a lack of coherence in policy.
- Maximum FETAC points achievable 400 which does not allow FETAC student to meet entry requirements points for a number of courses.

2- Overhaul of the grants system

- Time lag between CAO forms and release of grant forms.
- Differing administrative bodies (e.g. local authority and VEC)
- Cumbersome application process.
- Lack of horizontal communication between departments (e.g. Department of Social and Family Affairs, Department of Education and Science, Revenue Commission)

3- Flexible study options

- Lack of modular accreditation which makes it very difficult for students to step into and out of education.
- Inflexible system makes it difficult for some students to complete studies.
- Part time students are penalised financially due to lack of maintenance grant and not all students qualify for the Back to Education Allowance.

4- Community Based Access

- Lack of core funding for community based access.
- Lack of commonly recognised definition of community based access.

Respondent's Details

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Is this response a personal view or is it made on behalf of your organisation?

Personal _____

On behalf of organisation X _____

Information in relation to this submission may be made available to any person who makes a request under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, as amended in 2003.

Appendix One

Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership Education working Group Member Organisations:

1. Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education (BITE)
2. Dublin City University Access Service
3. Jesuit University Support and Training (JUST)
4. City of Dublin VEC Adult and Community Education
5. Ballymun Men's Centre
6. BEST School Completion Programme
7. Whitehall School Completion Programme
8. Ballymun Job Centre
9. Ballymun Youthreach
10. Ballymun Adult Read & Write Scheme
11. Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators Cluster
12. Ballymun Principals Network
13. Ballymun Regional Youth Resource
14. Trinity Comprehensive School Adult Education Programme
15. Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College
16. Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force
17. Whitehall College of Further Education
18. Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service
19. DCU in the Community
20. Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA)
21. Lifestart
22. Incredible Years, Ballymun
23. Ballymun Regeneration Limited
24. youngballymun
25. Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership