



# COISTE GHAIMOIDEACHAIS CHO. LAOISE COUNTY LAOIS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A PROVIDER OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



LIFELONG LEARNING IN LAOIS

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## Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome you to 'Lifelong Learning in Laois'. The aim of this booklet is to make you aware of the wide range of services Co. Laois VEC provides in Adult and Continuing education. Through our Adult Education services we strive to continually develop and provide a wide range of quality learning opportunities that will enable adults to realise their full potential. These programmes are provided at centres throughout the county and have been developed in co-operation with a wide range of partners for the benefit of the learner.

I invite you now to read through our booklet and see for yourself the many wonderful opportunities in Adult Education that are available to you in Co. Laois VEC.

**Anne O'Keeffe**  
(Chief Executive Officer)

## Adult Education

The aim of the Adult Education service is to encourage, enable, and support adults who wish to return to education. We provide a range of educational opportunities at our centres and every effort is made to ensure that the courses on offer meet the needs of learners. We offer the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert, and a variety of Post Leaving Cert courses. We also offer programmes that help learners develop skills in disciplines such as woodcraft, ceramics, art, horticulture, and computers to mention but a few. Classes to improve literacy and numeracy skills are available in all our centres and we also have an excellent adult education guidance and information service. Furthermore, a comprehensive range of evening classes are offered in autumn and spring which are designed to cater for both personal interest and professional development. In essence, our adult education service is dedicated to providing you with the opportunity to up-skill and re-train on both a full-time and part-time basis. Financial support is available for many of the programmes and details of the funding available is provided throughout the booklet. I am confident that we can provide you with the educational opportunity that best suits your needs and circumstances. It's up to you to take the next step!

**Joe Cunningham**  
(Adult Education Officer)

# Abbeyleix Further Education Centre

This Centre is dedicated to providing adult learners with the opportunity to re-train and up-skill on both a full-time and part-time basis.

## What full-time courses are offered?

1. **Leaving Certificate (1 or 2 year course)**  
Subjects on curriculum include Maths, Irish, English, French, Business, Biology, Art and History
2. **Junior Certificate (1 Year course)**  
Subjects on curriculum include English, Maths, Irish, History, CSPE and Art
3. **Vocational Skills Programme (2 Year Programme)**  
Subjects: Woodwork, Pottery, Painting and Decorating, Drawing, Interior Design, Upholstery, Wood Carving, Computer Studies

Post Leaving Certificate Courses offered at FETAC Level 5 include

4. Business Studies Administration
5. Business Studies Secretarial
6. Nursing Studies
7. Community Care
8. Art, Craft, Design
9. Fashion Design
10. Media Production

## When do courses take place?

Courses take place from September to June

Monday – Thursday	9.00am – 3.30pm
Friday	9.00am – 1.00pm

### Business Studies Secretarial timetable

Monday – Thursday	10.00am – 2.30pm
Friday	9.00am – 1.00pm

## What will the course cost?

### VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme)

This scheme makes it possible for adults in receipt of social welfare to retain payments while attending any of the full-time courses i.e. courses listed 1 - 10 above. For further information please contact the Centre.

## PLC Grants:

Students attending full-time approved PLC courses for the academic year are eligible to apply for a maintenance grant to Co. Laois VEC.

## What part-time courses are offered?

Through the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) a range of courses are offered on a flexible part-time basis in order to cater for students who have other commitments.

### Leaving Certificate

English and Maths

### Vocational Skills

Woodcraft, Ceramics, Upholstery, Art, Horticulture and Computers

## What will the course cost?

Under the BTEI those in receipt of unemployment payments or means-tested social welfare benefits, and holders of medical cards, and their dependants, are entitled to free tuition. Free tuition is also available to those with a Junior Certificate or less.

## Extra Curricular Activities

A number of excursions take place from the Centre throughout the year to places of interest e.g. a visit to the Dail, the Botanic gardens, Birr Outdoor Pursuits Centre, The National Museum of Ireland, and the NCAD Fashion Show.

## Contact Details

Helen Kavanagh (Director)  
Abbeyleix Further Education Centre  
Mountrath Road  
Abbeyleix, Co. Laois

Tel: 057 8731127

Fax: 057 8731864

Email: [hkavanagh@abbeyleixfec.ie](mailto:hkavanagh@abbeyleixfec.ie)

Web: [www.abbeyleixfec.ie](http://www.abbeyleixfec.ie)

## Student Testimony

Eleven years ago I was a single mother of one. I was not working at the time and any job I had before I had my son was thankless with no sense of fulfilment. So I decided to do something for me, something that would give me a feeling of self worth. I decided to go back to school and try for my leaving cert. I studied three subjects that year but decided to only sit the exam for two of them. Thanks to the tutors I got great results.

Several years and three jobs later I needed to go back to school again. I knew Abbeyleix Further Education Centre was running a Nursing Studies course that would give me the qualifications I needed but I was put off by the fact that part of the course was Anatomy and Physiology (which I knew nothing about and had never studied!). To make things easier on myself I went back to study more Leaving Cert subjects, this time studying Maths, Irish and Biology. The following year I went on to the PLC Nursing Studies course.

I will always be grateful to the wonderful staff of Abbeyleix FEC, who time and time again went above and beyond the call of duty to help me. It is thanks to this great team that I now have a very rewarding fulfilling job as a care attendant in the District Hospital. Not to mention a Leaving Cert made up of A's and B's. They have given me the confidence to be who I want to be. I hope to start a course in Palliative care soon. And so the journey continues...

# Adult Educational Guidance & Information Service (AEGIS)

AEGIS provides guidance and information to adults seeking support in making decisions regarding learning, training and career options. We provide advice and information on a variety of education and training courses in Laois as well as the wider area.

## Who is it for?

AEGIS is for any adult who is considering returning education or who is participating in VTOS, Literacy, Adult and Community Education and to people in receipt of funding from the Education Finance Board.

## Where does it take place?

This service is available at our office at 2, Meehan Court, Portlaoise and is also available in an outreach basis in Abbeyleix, Portarlinton and Mountmellick.

To find out what's available to suit you, please contact us on the number below. The Guidance Counsellor works with students of Abbeyleix Further Education Centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays and appointments are available by request in Portlaoise, Portarlinton and Mountmellick.

## How much does it cost?

This is a **free and confidential** service available to any adult who considering returning to VTOS, Literacy or Adult and Community Education.

## Contact details

Carmel Hoolan  
(Guidance Co-ordinator)

Mary Connell  
(Information Officer)

AEGIS  
2, Meehan Court  
Portlaoise  
Co. Laois

Tel: 057 8672963  
Fax: 057 8672963  
Email: [laoisaegis@eircom.net](mailto:laoisaegis@eircom.net)  
Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

# Adult Educational Guidance & Information Service (AEGIS)

## Student Testimony

We all have dreams and one of mine was to be formally educated. I used to envy those lucky enough to have their Leaving Cert, degrees and masters. These kinds of achievements were definitely out of my reach, being 40 years of age. Or so I thought.

In 1978, I left school at 15 years old and got a job. In those days a job was a job even at the expense of education. I was always lucky enough in gaining employment as I was could turn my hand to a variety of jobs. But the one barrier for many jobs was my lack of formal education and qualifications. In some respects I felt alienated in the job market and therefore in my earning potential. I constantly wished that I was properly educated.

My entrance into adult education came in 2002, while working on a community employment scheme. Co. Laois VEC offered an opportunity on a Return to Education programme, to study two junior cert subjects. I jumped at the chance and the following summer I successfully sat my two junior cert subjects.

While on the programme I came into contact with AEGIS, who paid a visit to our centre.

With information and advice from them I decided to continue in education by studying my leaving cert. I applied to the local education centre and was lucky enough to be accepted. Through the VTOS, I studied eight subjects over two years in Abbeyleix Further Education Centre. Studying subjects like English, Biology, History, Irish and Maths, gave me a real sense that I could go forward with my education. The experience in the centre was both enjoyable and fulfilling. It made me realise that a degree could be achieved and was not out of my reach.

Again through AEGIS, I decided to apply for a place in St. Patrick's, Carlow to study an honours degree in humanities. My CAO application was successful and I am now in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year studying. With guidance and support from AEGIS and the DFSA I receive funding under the Back to Education Allowance. Life in 3<sup>rd</sup> level is very fulfilling for me and I feel lucky to have this opportunity.

Who knows what the future holds for any of us but through adult education my dreams have become goals. My journey through education continues...

Laois Adult Learning Centre offers a service for adults who need help with their reading, writing and numeracy skills.

## What courses are offered?

- One-to-one tuition
- Intensive Tuition for Adult Basic Education
- Small group tuition
- Junior Certificate English
- Junior Certificate Maths
- Family Learning
- Workplace Literacy
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Initial Tutor Training for new voluntary tutors

This service is free and confidential

## Where will the courses take place?

Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Rathdowney, Portarlington

## When will the courses take place?

Mornings, Afternoons, Evenings

## Extra Curricular Activities

### Summer School

A summer school is held each year for students. Topics in the past have included Interview Techniques, Communication Skills, Personal Development, Confidence Building, Digital Photography, Art and Drama.

### Day Trips

Day trips are organised throughout the year for various groups. These have included trips to Dáil Éireann, Japanese Gardens and National Stud, as well as more local attractions such as Emo Court and Laois Heritage Trail.

## Contact Details

Adult Literacy Organiser  
Laois Adult Learning Centre  
Co. Laois VEC  
Ridge Road  
Portlaoise  
Co. Laois

Tel: 057 8661338  
Fax: 057 8661801  
Email: [adlit@eircom.net](mailto:adlit@eircom.net)  
Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

## Student Testimonies

"At my stage in life, this was the most wonderful experience ever."

"Tak, teraz moge mowic po Angielsku!"

"I am happy. It helped me to get a job. It helped my family."

"I am pleased and proud."

"Se comhlíonadh bríongloide, mo thuras san oideachas aosadh."

"It continues to give me higher self esteem and opens up a variety of otherwise unachievable options in life."

Community Education provides training and support for community groups throughout Co. Laois.

## What is Community Education?

Community education is an opportunity for collective learning and development of a community. It aims to build confidence and self-esteem to enable participants to participate more fully in their community and address their educational needs. One of the reasons adults are attracted to community education is that it is a completely different way of learning. This is done, primarily, with non-academic activities, which help the group to associate learning with enjoyment. Classes generally run for 8 to 10 weeks and are organised at times and locations which are suited to the participants.

## Who is this service for?

Any Community group can avail of this service. Previous groups that have availed of the service include community arts groups, people with disabilities, retirement groups etc.

## What services does it offer?

Co. Laois VEC Community Education offers the following services to community groups

- Develops and promotes partnerships between community education and other providers both nationally and locally
- Assistance and support to new and existing groups in terms of
  - Identifying educational needs
  - Designing programmes
  - Sourcing tutors
- Provides funding which is used towards the cost of tuition hours

## When do courses take place?

Times of courses are arranged in consultation with the local group.

## Contact Details

Teresa McEvoy  
Community Education  
Co. Laois VEC  
Ridge Road  
Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Tel: (057) 8661890  
Fax: (057) 8661801  
Email: [termc@eircom.net](mailto:termc@eircom.net)  
Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

## Student Testimony

Five years ago I had recently moved to a new area and thought that attending the local art class would help me to get to know my neighbours. I found the class both relaxing and enjoyable. The class not alone helped me to develop new creative skills but it also helped to settle into my new community. The group continued to get support from the Community Education Facilitator for a variety of other classes all of which increased my confidence and belief in my ability to take on new topics. In Sept '06 I began the Office Technology Retraining Programme in the Portlaoise College. As a result of this I am working part-time in Portlaoise. Consequently I have greater self confidence and work part-time! I would like to express my gratitude to Co. Laois VEC for the support given to me in this process.

The Centre provides full-time and part-time year round educational programmes. Unique to the Centre is an on-site Crèche that is provided for children of learners attending courses run by Co. Laois VEC.

## **What full-time courses are offered?**

### **Post Leaving Certificate Course in Hairdressing**

This course is offered at FETAC Level 5. Students also have the opportunity to sit the Junior Trades State examinations.

### **Youthreach**

This programme is aimed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20. It operates on a full-time, year-round basis. Courses offered include Junior Cert, Leaving Cert Applied and FETAC level 3.

## **What do the courses cost?**

### **PLC Grants**

Students attending full-time approved PLC courses for the academic year are eligible to apply for a maintenance grant to Co. Laois VEC.

### **Youthreach Allowance**

A weekly allowance is paid to each student.

## **What part-time courses are offered?**

Through the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) a range of courses are offered on a flexible part-time basis in order to cater for students who have other commitments.

Childcare is available at FETAC Levels 5 & 6.

## **What will the course cost?**

Under the BTEI programme those in receipt of unemployment payments or means-tested social welfare benefits, and holders of medical cards, and their dependants, are entitled to free tuition. Free tuition is also available to those with a Junior Certificate or less.

## **When do courses take place?**

Monday and Wednesday nights from September to May.

## **Contact Details**

Mary Fitzpatrick (Director)  
Mountmellick Further Education Centre  
Harbour Street  
Mountmellick, Co. Laois

Tel: (057) 86 24196  
Fax: (057) 86 24242  
Email: [yrloais@eircom.net](mailto:yrloais@eircom.net)  
Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)



## Student Testimonies

My return to education at the VEC centre in Portarlington has been great. It has brought me up to date with courses in computers, payroll and accounts systems. Also, I am taking part in the Personal Development course which I hope will help and give me more confidence to set up my own business sometime in the future. Meeting people of my own age group is great and the help and guidance shown by all here is great.

Since coming to the centre, I found that I have a renewed interest in furthering my education and hope to be able to continue to do so now that I have started. The class tutor and the other staff I have encountered have been very encouraging and helpful. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to restart my education.

# Laois Third Level Initiative

This initiative was set up by Co. Laois VEC, Laois County Council and Laois County Enterprise Board to provide quality third level courses in the county. The goal of the centre is to provide courses that allow for progression up to degree level. The centre recognises the importance of continuing education as a driving force in the Irish “knowledge economy” and it constantly strives to provide relevant third level courses that meet the ever-changing needs of individuals and businesses.

## What courses are offered?

The courses are offered on a part-time basis and presently the centre provides a range of certificate, diploma and degree courses.

- Certificate in First Line Management, National College of Ireland
- Accounting Technician, I.T. Carlow
- Certificate in Health & Safety, U.C.D.
- B.A. in Social Care, N.U.I., Galway
- Bachelor in Business Studies, I.P.A.

## What will the course cost?

The cost of each course will reflect the fact that these courses are 3<sup>rd</sup> level courses and vary from certificate to degree level. For more detailed information contact Laois Third Level Initiative.

## Contact details

Paul Reilly (Director)  
Laois Third Level Institute  
Bracklone Street  
Portarlinton  
Co. Laois

Tel: (057) 86 23161  
Fax: (057) 86 43604  
Email: [infopaec@yahoo.com](mailto:infopaec@yahoo.com)  
Web: [www.laoisthirdlevel.ie](http://www.laoisthirdlevel.ie)

## What courses are offered?

A wide variety of Post Leaving Certificate courses are available in the following disciplines at FETAC Level 5.

- Introductory Courses
- Business
- Health
- Computers/IT
- Art and Design
- Beauty Therapy
- Tourism
- Sport and Recreation

## What will the course cost?

### PLC Grants

Students attending full-time approved PLC courses for the academic year are eligible to apply for a maintenance grant to Co. Laois VEC.

## When do courses take place?

Courses take place from September to June

Monday – Thursday	9.00am – 4.00pm
Friday	9.00am – 1.30pm

## Contact details

The Principal  
Portlaoise College  
Mountrath Road  
Portlaoise  
Co. Laois

Tel: (057) 8621480  
Fax: (057) 8661801  
Email: [info@portlaoisecollege.ie](mailto:info@portlaoisecollege.ie)  
Web: [www.portlaoisecollege.ie](http://www.portlaoisecollege.ie)

# St. Canice's Traveller Training Centre

St. Canice's Traveller Training Centre first opened its doors to Travellers in Laois in May 1989. Today, it offers ten FETAC certified courses and a range of other non-exam courses.

## What courses are offered?

- Sewing, Crafts, Art
- Hairdressing, Literacy, Metalwork
- Woodwork, Catering, Computers
- Life Skills, PE, and Childcare
- A number of these courses are also available to participants on a part-time basis.

## What will the course cost?

A training allowance is available to participants on the full-time and part-time programmes.

## When do courses take place?

Courses take place from September to June

Monday – Thursday                      9.00am – 4.00pm

Friday                                         9.00am – 2.00pm

## Extra Curricular Activities

Trainees at St. Canice's participate in activities including First Aid, Swimming, Health Programmes and Sport.

## Contact Details

Bernie Moran / Michael Brennan (Directors)  
St. Canice's Travelling Training Centre  
Kealew Business Park  
Portlaoise  
Co. Laois

Tel: (057) 86 21413

Fax: (057) 86 62263

Email: [canices2@eircom.net](mailto:canices2@eircom.net)

Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

# Evening Class Programme

Co. Laois VEC organises Autumn and Spring Evening Classes in a wide variety of disciplines. Courses are designed to cater for both hobby/personal interest and also for professional development. These courses commence in September and January and are advertised in the local media and on the Co. Laois VEC website in advance.

## Areas of Interest

Art and Craft

Dancing

History

Computing

Beauty therapies

Health and Safety

Musicianship

Languages

Security

Physical well-being

Business and Accounts

Photography

Cookery

Childcare

DIY

## Venues

Abbeyleix Further Education Centre

Clonaslee Vocational School

Mountmellick Further Education Centre

Portarlinton Adult Education Centre

Portlaoise College

St. Fergal's College Rathdowney

057-8731127

057-8648329

057-8624196

057-8623161

057-8621480

0505-46357

## Additional Adult Classes

Classes may be formed in any venue provided sufficient numbers request the particular subject and a teacher is available for that subject.

## Teachers

We are always delighted to hear from instructors/tutors who would be willing to become involved in the Adult Education Programme.

## Further Information

If you have any enquiries regarding particular classes, please contact the centres listed above or the Adult Education Officer.

## New Courses

If you wish to have courses included in the Adult Education Programme, you are invited to send your ideas to

Joe Cunningham

Adult Education Officer

Co. Laois VEC

Ridge Road

Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Tel: 057 8623152

Fax: 057 8661801

Email: [jcunningham@laoisvec.ie](mailto:jcunningham@laoisvec.ie)

Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

# Funding for courses

## Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

This scheme makes it possible for adults aged 21 or over in receipt of social welfare to retain payments while attending full-time courses.

### What Benefits are available to VTOS students?

1. Students will receive a VTOS allowance in place of a social welfare payment.
2. Entitlement to secondary benefits e.g. medical card, fuel allowance will not be affected.
3. Meals, Travel and Childcare Allowances are paid on a daily attendance basis.
4. All books and materials are provided on a lending scheme.
5. No tuition/exam fees.
6. An additional allowance is paid to participants who are unemployed for over a year.

## Post Leaving Certificate Courses

### Who is eligible?

Participants must be 16 years of age on commencing the programme. Although these programmes cater for those who have completed second level education, adults with mature student status may not necessarily need a Leaving Cert as long as they have the necessary competencies to complete the programme. All entry is subject to interview.

### Fees

There are no tuition fees payable to the Centre by EU Nationals attending a full-time PLC course. Non-EU Nationals who do not meet the exemption requirements pay the full tuition fee as per the instructions of the Department of Education and Science.

### Grants

Students attending full-time approved PLC courses are eligible to apply for a maintenance grant to their local VEC. Forms are available from Co. Laois VEC (Tel. 057 8621352).

For further information on funding for these programmes please contact the centre offering the programme or AEGIS.

## **Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)**

The Back to Education Initiative provides opportunities to return to education for young people and adults who may have left formal education at an early age.

### **Who Can Take Part on a BTEI Programme?**

Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course being offered, but priority will be given to those with less than Leaving Certificate.

### **What Will A BTEI Course Cost?**

Individuals will have different entitlements. Those in receipt of unemployment payments or means-tested social welfare benefits, and holders of medical cards, and their dependants, are entitled to free tuition. Free tuition is also available to those with a Junior Certificate or less.

### **Will I Obtain Certification For A BTEI Course?**

All course providers are required to offer national certification. However, it is not compulsory for participants to avail of certification. They can choose to pursue certification when they are ready.

### **What Will I Get From Taking Part In A BTEI Programme?**

Participation in part-time programmes can provide opportunities to

- Continue your learning
- Develop New Skills
- Obtain National Certification
- Pursue New Employment Options

### **Will participation affect Social Welfare payments?**

Adults in receipt of Social Welfare payments will continue to receive such payments subject to approval by the Dept. of Social & Family Affairs.

For further information on funding for these programmes please contact the centre offering the programme or AEGIS.

# The Further Education and Training Awards Council

The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland. It gives people the opportunity to gain recognition for learning in education or training centres, in the work place and in the community.

FETAC is responsible for developing a new system of qualifications for the further education and training sector. This system is part of the overall development of the new 10-level National Framework of Qualifications which will, in time, include all awards available in the state from the most basic (Level 1) to the most advanced (Level 10) levels of learning. FETAC has specific responsibility for providing a range of awards at levels 1-6 in the new framework. The framework will for the first time show how education and training awards, in Ireland, relate to one another as it will clearly indicate progression pathways, and access and transfer opportunities.

## Glossary

<b>AEGIS</b>	<b>Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service</b>
<b>AEO</b>	<b>Adult Education Officer</b>
<b>ALO</b>	<b>Adult Literacy Organiser</b>
<b>BTEI</b>	<b>Back to Education Initiative</b>
<b>CAO</b>	<b>Central Application Office</b>
<b>CEF</b>	<b>Community Education Facilitator</b>
<b>CEO</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>CSPE</b>	<b>Civic, Social and Political Education</b>
<b>DSFA</b>	<b>Dept. of Social and Family Affairs</b>
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>English for Speakers of Other Languages</b>
<b>FEC</b>	<b>Further Education Centre</b>
<b>FETAC</b>	<b>Further Education and Training Awards Council</b>
<b>I.T.</b>	<b>Institute of Technology</b>
<b>I.P.A.</b>	<b>Institute of Public Administration</b>
<b>NUI</b>	<b>National University of Ireland</b>
<b>PLC</b>	<b>Post Leaving Certificate</b>
<b>UCD</b>	<b>University College Dublin</b>
<b>VEC</b>	<b>Vocational Education Committee</b>
<b>VTOS</b>	<b>Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme</b>





Tel: 057 8621352

Email: [adulteducation@laoisvec.ie](mailto:adulteducation@laoisvec.ie)

Web: [www.laoisvec.ie](http://www.laoisvec.ie)

