JOINT IRISH PRISON SERVICE/EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS IRELAND
PRISON EDUCATION STRATEGY
2019 – 2022
Prison Education in Ireland is delivered in partnership between the Irish Prison Service and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). This strategy statement details the strategic objectives for the prison education service and the high level actions that will be undertaken to deliver on the objectives over the 2019-2022 period.

The Department of Education and Skills provides an allocation of whole-time equivalent teachers to the prisons through the ETBs (220 in the current academic year).

The aim of the Prison Education Service is to deliver a high quality, broad, flexible programme of education that helps people in custody cope with their sentence, achieve personal development, prepare for life after release and establish an appetite and capacity for life-long learning. The Service seeks to deliver relevant programmes that cater for holistic needs, ensures broad access and high participation and prioritises those with basic education needs. It supports a multi-disciplinary approach within the prison system.

The provision of a broad-based, flexible, relevant education service is designed to cater for the complex educational needs of persons in custody, covering a wide spectrum from Basic Education to Third Level programmes. It balances the need for practical, up-to-date accredited learning and learning for personal development within a philosophy of Second Chance, Continuing or Adult Education.

Programmes are adapted to take account of the diversity of the prisoner population and the complex nature of prison life, including segregation requirements and high levels of prisoner turnover. Educational courses and curricula which are based on individuals participating in one or more subject areas for an academic year and then sitting examinations are only appropriate for a small number of prisoners. The state second-level (Junior and Leaving Certificate) courses are made available but increasing numbers of people in custody require a more flexible curriculum which has multiple entry and exit points that take account of prior educational attainment. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) - formerly FETAC - accreditation is therefore widely used with assessment by portfolio compilation. All Prison Education Centres meet the quality assurance standards demanded by QQI.

Expenditure through the Irish Prison Service Vote covers the incidental day-to-day costs of running the education centres, including educational equipment purchase and repair, course resource materials and educational software.
MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

EDUCATION MISSION
The provision of a programme that is quality assured, learner-centred and that facilitates lifelong learning, while helping persons in custody to respond to their sentence through personal development and positive renewal.

EDUCATION VISION
A prison education service based on self-respect and respect for others, within a safe, supportive learning environment.

OUR VALUES
- TEAM WORK: We achieve more by working together than we can as individuals working alone
- INTEGRITY: We must always have the courage to do the right thing, the decent thing even when no one else is watching
- POTENTIAL: Everyone has the potential to be a better person and we actively seek to provide staff and those in custody with opportunities to realise and achieve this
- SAFETY: We actively contribute to maintaining an environment in which staff and those in our custody feel emotionally and physically safe and ultimately, contribute to a safer community
- SUPPORT: We actively seek to provide supports to staff and support rehabilitation of those in custody

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES


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The legal basis for the provision of Prison Education is in accordance with the Prison Rules 2007, which state that a broad and flexible programme of education shall be provided in each prison to meet the needs of prisoners, through helping them (a) cope with their imprisonment, (b) achieve personal development, (c) prepare for life after their release from prison, and (d) establish the appetite and capacity for lifelong learning. In particular, the education programme “shall encourage prisoners to participate in educational activities organised in the prison, and give special attention to prisoners with basic educational needs, including literacy and numeracy needs.”

The Prison Rules also provide that, “subject to the maintenance of good order and safe and secure custody, each prisoner shall, in so far as is practicable, be permitted to participate in education as provided in the prison; and the Governor, Prison Officers and all persons employed or engaged in the provision of services to prisoners shall actively encourage and facilitate participation in education as provided in the prison.”

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 includes in section 10, the planning, provision and co-ordination of education and training in prisons, as a defined function of the ETBs, including education and training for the purpose of employment.

Drawing upon UN standards and conventions, Irish and European Prison Rules and the Council of Europe Recommendations on Prison Education, the Inspector of Prisons (2009) has published 11 standards for prison education, which are taken account of in this joint strategy.

This joint strategy reflects and acknowledges:

- The unique nature of prison education in terms of the target population and the environment in which education is delivered. The IPS plays a critical role in facilitating the effective delivery of education in Irish prisons by the ETBs.
- The significant role education has to play in helping persons in custody cope with their sentences, in improving their employability and their life chances. Education helps to prepare persons in custody for release by providing them with accredited and non-accredited education and personal development.
- The aim of ETB teachers to support persons in custody to develop a desire for lifelong learning.
- The particular features of Education Centres in providing a relatively normalized environment within prisons. Education Centres contribute to a positive living and working environment in prisons for both persons in custody and prison staff.

3.1 How Education is Delivered in Prisons

The ETBs provide a programme of education that is quality-assured. This programme includes accredited courses and personal development. It caters for a wide range of education needs from basic education to third level. It balances the need for practical, up-to-date certification and personal learning, within a philosophy of Second Chance, Continuing or Adult Education.

The education service provided by the ETBs aims to assist persons in custody to cope with their sentences, to prepare for life after release, to develop an appetite and capacity for lifelong learning and to achieve their full potential as learners. It also aims to promote the importance of prison education.

3.2 The Policy Context


One of the key objectives of the current Action Plan¹ for Education 2016-2019 is to promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training. Improving the quality and relevance

of provision across the Further Education and Training sector is a key priority. The Action Plan also aims to provide a broader range of flexible opportunities for learners and to support an increase in lifelong learning.

This is also supported by the Further Education and Training Strategy\(^2\) 2014-2019. This strategy recognises that Further Education and Training learners come from a variety of backgrounds and from different life experiences, including offenders in prison or ex-offenders.

The IPS and the ETBs accept and support the two overall themes of The Council of Europe Report “Education in Prison” (1990) in that:

“Firstly, the education of prisoners must, in its philosophy, methods and content, be brought as close as possible to the best Adult Education in society outside; and secondly, education should be constantly seeking ways to link prisoners to the outside community and to enable both groups to interact with each other as fully and as constructively as possible” (Council of Europe, 1990, p.14).

The provision of education in prisons contributes to the national and EU social inclusion policy objectives of tackling educational disadvantage and increasing individuals' capacity to obtain and sustain suitable employment opportunities.

### 3.3 The Prison Context

The IPS and ETBs acknowledge that delivering education in the secure custodial environment that is prison, presents a unique set of challenges. The vital importance of security in prisons means that this imposes restrictive conditions on how education is delivered in prisons. Where possible, the IPS will seek to make these restrictive conditions less severe.

A reduction in overall numbers imprisoned in recent years, combined with the success of the Community Return and Community Support Schemes, has resulted in a residual population in prison with specific and resource intensive needs. For instance:

- Persons in custody with mental health and addiction issues find themselves in a custodial rather than a therapeutic environment and there has been a significant rise in such committals in recent years.
- Persons in custody who do not speak English as a native language and who make up a significant proportion of the population in Cloverhill Prison and in the Dochas Centre.
- Persons in custody on restricted regimes present significant challenges, in the context of timetabling and scheduling of education.
- Women in custody, young people, learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), Travellers and other distinct groups have needs which demand that general services are tailored to meet those needs.

Citizens with a history of educational disadvantage face significant challenges in getting work. Those with a history of imprisonment and educational disadvantage face even greater challenges.

Poor literacy skills, a history of previous educational failure and/or negative educational experience often combine to create powerful barriers to engaging with education centres in prisons. As such, the IPS believes that the curriculum offered in prisons must be broad, flexible and at the same time attractive enough to counteract the previous negative experiences of those in custody.

The Department of Education and Skills stresses the role of non-accredited learning in enabling adults to return to the learning process at their own pace and in facilitating them to explore their full potential. The IPS also acknowledges the value of non-accredited programmes and their inclusion in the prison education curriculum.

### 3.4 International Context

To support and maintain the quality of prison education and to promote progressive developments in policy and practice, the IPS and ETBs will continue to foster links with international organisations such as the European Prison Education Association and Europris. Similarly, the IPS and ETBs aim to bolster the professional development of prison teachers, where resources allow, through relevant, appropriate and approved cross national partnerships and project involvement.

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Joint Irish Prison Service/Education and Training Boards Ireland

4 STRATEGIC ACTIONS

4.1 Supporting the Prison Education Service
4.2 Making effective use of Digital Systems for Teaching and Learning
4.3 Broad-based Education Provision
4.4 Integration and Sentence Planning
4.5 Delivery and Support of the Prison Library Service
4.6 Quality Assurance and Reviews
4.7 Compliances

1. Supporting the Prison Education Service

1.1 IPS Staff Support
The IPS will facilitate the Prison Education Service through the appointment, training and support of IPS Employees assigned to the role of School Officers. This will facilitate the efficient movement of students to and from the school areas and the safe and secure provision of education services.

1.2 ETB Support
The Education and Training Boards will support the Prison Education Service through the appointment, training and support of suitable and qualified teaching staff.

1.3 Facilities and Supplies
The Irish Prison Service will liaise with Head Teachers to maintain and where possible upgrade facilities to ensure an adequate standard of school facilities. IPS will procure and manage the tendering for supplies such as stationery, arts and pottery materials, and education books and will provide support and advice, where required.

1.4 Promotion of Education
The IPS, Prison Management and staff, along with ETB staff will promote the value of education to all in prison.

1.5 Education Directory
The IPS and ETBs will compile a Directory of Prison Education to set out the provision of education in Irish Prisons and in post-release education centres.

1.6 Staff Training
The IPS and ETBs will facilitate and support relevant induction training for new teachers and relevant in-service training and conference attendances for prison education staff, subject to available funding.

1.7 Communications
The Irish Prison Service and ETBs will communicate the role and activities of the Prison Education Service including the provision of responses to FOI requests, Parliamentary Questions, Ministerial briefings and press queries.
## 2. Making effective use of Digital Systems for Teaching and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 PEMS</th>
<th>Full utilisation of the Prison Education Management System (PEMS) to record education interviews, school and student timetables, scheduled and unscheduled attendances and academic achievements and provision of relevant statistics.</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 IT Resources in support of teaching and learning</td>
<td>IPS will progress the replacement of standalone PCs to SPAN or prison-networked PCs for both teachers and students and will continue to provide in-cell notebooks for students to support distance learning.</td>
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<td>2.3 SPAN Upgrade</td>
<td>IPS will fund an upgrade of the SPAN technical infrastructure, including expanding storage and back-up capacity.</td>
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<td>2.4 PLSS</td>
<td>IPS will explore the electronic sharing of data with the SOLAS PLSS system to minimise the need for duplicate recording of learner details.</td>
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<td>2.5 Blended Learning</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will harness digital technologies to support blended learning opportunities (digital and conventional learning), subject to compliance with IPS IT security and computer usage policies.</td>
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## 3. Broad-based Education Provision

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1 Accredited programmes</th>
<th>The Prison Education Service will provide a range of learner-centred, quality-assured accredited programmes and an opportunity for learners to undertake a range of examinations and assessments.</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Non-accredited Programmes</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will provide a range of non-accredited programmes and activities and external programmes such as theatre/drama and invited speakers</td>
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<td>3.3 Targeted initiatives</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will support targeted initiatives such as basic literacy and numeracy education and English as a Second Operating Language (ESOL) for students with learning, language and mental health issues</td>
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<td>3.4 Culturally Appropriate</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will provide culturally-appropriate education programmes, including programmes for the traveller community and will support relevant prison initiatives such as Ethnic Identity Audits.</td>
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<td>3.5 Diverse Prison Population</td>
<td>The Prison Education service will meet the needs of a diverse prison population including younger offenders, older persons, foreign nationals, and LGBT students.</td>
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<td>3.6 Arts and Creativity</td>
<td>Promotion of creative arts, writing and other creative initiatives, including the Arts Council co-funded Artist in Prison and Writers in Prison programmes, biennial creative arts exhibition and the Listowel Writers Competition.</td>
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<td>3.7 Holistic Education</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will offer adult guidance services, soft skills, environmental awareness, personal development and pre-release support programmes and referrals to post-release further education programmes in the community.</td>
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<td>3.8 Restricted Regimes</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will provide education materials and services to students on restricted regimes where possible</td>
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<td>3.9 Higher Education</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will support participation in higher education programmes, such as Open University and other external course provided, where applicable and in compliance with Guidelines</td>
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<td>3.10 Post-Release education programmes</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will maintain linkages with providers of post-release education and training supports, including Pathways.</td>
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4. Integration and Sentence Planning

4.1 Integrated Planning
The Prison Education Service will contribute to integrated planning by the following - recording relevant details on engagement with services and pre-release alerts, creating and updating education referrals to and from other services. This is in addition to, where relevant, contributing to individual sentence plans.

4.2 Complementary programmes
The Prison Education Service will support and co-operate with in-reach services and prison-based programmes, including:
- Parenting programmes, including Family Links
- Red Cross Community-Based Health and First Aid
- GAISCE Presidents Awards
- Alternatives to Violence (AVP)
- Travellers Initiatives
- Pre-release Programmes
- Psychology Service
- Chaplaincy Service
- Probation Service
- Healthcare, Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Citizens Information and MABS information and training services
- Storybook Moms and Dads

4.3 Multi-disciplinary working
The Prison Education Service will participate fully on the multi-disciplinary teams and will contribute to sentence planning, review meetings and release planning, including informing re upcoming student exam dates.

4.4 Work and Training
There will be ongoing co-operation between the Prison Education Service and Work and Training to maximise the opportunities for education, skills acquisition, accredited and non-accredited learning and enhanced employability.

5. Delivery and Support of the Prison Library Service

5.1 Support of the Prison Library Service
The IPS will facilitate the Prison Library Service through the appointment, training and support of Library Officers, funding of library services and acquisition of library books.

5.2 Access to Library Facilities
The IPS will facilitate the Prison Library Service through the provision of suitable facilities and will liaise with and support the public library service to provide regular access to a wide range of current informational, educational and recreational resources

5.3 Promote use of Libraries
The Prison Education Service will co-operate with and promote the use of the library services in each prison
6. Quality Assurance and Reviews

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<th>6.1 Quality Assurance</th>
<th>The IPS and ETB will introduce an agreed, objective quality assurance framework for the Prison Education Service.</th>
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<td>6.2 Competency Audits</td>
<td>IPS and ETB staff will facilitate the completion of literacy/language, digital literacy and numeracy competency audits of the prison population.</td>
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<td>6.3 Statistics</td>
<td>The IPS and ETBs will collate and retain records including attendances, participation rates, and school open/closure data.</td>
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7. Compliances

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<th>7.1 GDPR</th>
<th>The IPS and ETBs will co-operate to ensure full compliance with their respective obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), including reporting any breaches/potential breaches.</th>
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<td>7.2 Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will operate in full compliance with the Children First Act 2015 including reporting procedures and training of relevant staff. Teachers are mandated persons for reporting child protection issues and will report in co-operation with prison management as per safeguarding statements.</td>
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<td>7.3 Health and Safety</td>
<td>The Prison Education Service will operate in full compliance with all applicable health and safety policies and fire regulations.</td>
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<td>7.4 Public Procurement</td>
<td>In order to ensure value for money, goods and services shall be procured in accordance with Public Procurement rules.</td>
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<td>7.5 Prison Rules</td>
<td>ETB staff working in prisons shall at all times comply with the Prison Rules (2007) and security clearance processes.</td>
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5 REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION AND ONGOING CONSULTATION

The Irish Prison Service will meet annually with the Chief Executives and Head Teachers to review the implementation of the joint strategy.

Meetings will take place three times per year between the Education section of the Irish Prison Service and the Head Teachers to plan and review all education-related activities in prisons.

The IPS commits to ongoing consultation on relevant policy developments and other developments that may impact on education provision, through the Care and Rehabilitation Directorate.
CREATING A BETTER ENVIRONMENT