PRESS RELEASE

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee welcomes new graduates at the Recruit Prison Officer Graduation Ceremony in Dublin Castle

April 3rd, 2024

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee today welcomed the graduation of 133 Recruit Prison Officers at the Print Works, Dublin Castle.

The new officers have now completed their Higher Certificate of Arts in Custodial Care (HCCC) and have already been placed in prisons throughout the State, including the Operational Support Group and the Prison Service Escort Corp.

The HCCC is developed and delivered jointly by the Irish Prison Service and South East Technological University (SETU).

The graduating class form part of the Irish Prison Service's latest recruitment drive.

Minister McEntee said:

"I am honoured to congratulate our graduates for reaching this milestone and to thank them for their commitment. Over the course of their training, they will have gained the knowledge and skills to carry out their work in a professional and meaningful way, and to show patience, compassion, and strength under challenging circumstances.

"Because they work within the walls of our prisons, the wider community don't get to see first-hand the vital job prison officers do. But they are the front line of a system that makes our communities safer, not just through providing secure custody in our prisons, but also by providing the care and rehabilitation that often vulnerable people in custody need to be able to make the right choices and lead meaningful lives when they are released.

"I wish them all the best in what I'm sure will be a long and rewarding career in the Irish Prison Service."

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service Caron McCaffrey said:

"Prison officers play a vital security role while also serving as catalysts for positive change, guiding individuals in custody towards rehabilitation. Together, we envision a safer community through excellence in a prison service built on respect for human dignity."

Recognising the crucial role played by prison officers in delivering an important public service, **President of SETU, Professor Veronica Campbell** emphasised the need to provide a high standard of training and education to support them.

Professor Campbell said:

“The Higher Certificate of Arts in Custodial Care develops the character and competence of recruit prison officers so that they can effectively contribute to the safe, secure, and humane custody of the people in their care.”

She told the graduates: “You are all leaving with a university-level qualification that will allow you to continue to pursue your Irish Prison Service career with the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies.”

The Higher Certificate in Custodial Care is a two-year part-time programme designed to develop the professional competencies of Prison Service staff in working with prisoners. The HCCC is intended to facilitate a greater understanding of how officers can confront challenges through the exploration of different subjects including, Resilience, Mental Health, Social Psychology and Human Rights.

After initial training RPOs are assigned to a prison, with assignments based on the security and operational needs of each individual prison.

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