**Grange Community College – Further Education**

**Guidance and Student Support Policy**

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**Introduction**

This plan will outline roles and will detail the activities and responsibilities related to student support within the College. This plan is inclusive of all students attending the further education section of Grange Community College.

**Scope**

Grange Community College Further Education Guidance and Student Support Plan covers activities within the school and refers to a range of activities and learning experiences. These learning experiences can be categorised within four main headings.

* Educational Guidance
* Personal Guidance and appropriate referral
* Career Guidance
* Academic support

These are carried out through a range of mediums and programmes including classroom, group and individual activities.

**Rationale**

The need for development of this plan was identified by the teachers, guidance counsellor, FE co-ordinator and school management and has been highlighted by other staff members, during Staff Council meetings. The legislative change in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector has brought about many changes and the FE co-ordinator has highlighted the need to provide support to adult students to ensure the school meets the following obligations:

1. The reporting requirements of SOLAS and DDLETB, through the various management information systems (MIS) including, Personal Learner Support System (PLSS), Funding Allocation Request and Reporting (FARR), National Learner Database (NLD), Salespulse databases and any other such systems.
2. Contributes to the academic success of adult students and promotes inclusivity
3. Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Ireland (QQI) Quality Assurance (QA) agreement with Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education & Training Board (DDLETB), which is, underpinned by principals in relation to: Teaching and Learning, Access, transfer and progression, Equality, Self-evaluation

**Relationship to the School’s Mission Statement**

Grange Community College seeks to encourage students to develop their talents and reach their full potential by providing a balanced, challenging curriculum which fosters intellectual, emotional, personal and professional development in an inclusive environment.

**Goals and Aims**

The aim of the Grange Community College Further Education Guidance Policy and Student Support Plan is to provide further education students with opportunities to:

* Develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities.
* Facilitate the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning.
* Provide advice on educational, personal, social and career opportunities.
* Assist the learner to develop academic and vocational language.
* Grow into self-motivated, self-directed learners.
* Make informed decisions about their vocational choices and to follow through on those selections.
* Explore further academic opportunities
* Engage with the college experience
1. **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Management – Principal/Deputy Principal DLP/Deputy DLP DDLET**

Management have a primary role in the running of the guidance service through the identification of suitable personnel for roles, their provision of guidance hours.

The role of DLP and Deputy DLP are held by the Principal and Deputy Principal respectively. This may be relevant to Further Education students on the premises who are under 18 years of age.

**Co-ordinator**

The FE co-ordinator and other co-ordinators look after the academic progress of adult students, for example a student wishing to withdraw from a course module. The will inform their class teacher and arrange to follow the College procedure by arranging a meeting with the co-ordinator. This procedure is intended to help the student to carefully examine their issues/reasons for wishing to withdraw. A form must be filled with their course co-ordinator, this is in order to record the process and protect the student’s interests in terms of funding for future courses.

The co-ordinators also organise induction processes, self-evaluation processes and graduation.

**Link teacher**

Each class is assigned one member of the teaching staff whose role is to act as liaison between the co-ordinator of his/her class and the class itself. If an adult student has a question or need any assistance the first person they approach is the link teacher.

**Subject Teachers**

Subject teachers look after the day to day needs of the students. Because students may have a high level of contact with a particular teacher, they are usually the first point of contact and support, where a student is experiencing difficulty. Teachers may direct the student to the guidance counsellor or course co-ordinator, if they feel the student requires more support e.g. inclusion in supports from HEA fund, guidance counselling support, discussion about withdrawing from the course or subjects.

**Guidance Counsellor**

The Guidance Counsellor provides individual assistance to students in relation to:

* Career development – progression to higher education and/or employment
* Applications to CAO, PLC, UCAS etc.
* CV and interview skills
* Study skills and examination skills through group workshops
* Stress management, self management, decision making etc
* Referral to Counselling Services if desired/appropriate

Group events may be organised as appropriate in areas such as the following, these may also be organised by teachers or course co-ordinators.

* FE/HE Topics QQI/NQF
* Guest Speakers:
* Visit to career exhibitions

This is not an exhaustive list.

Access to Guidance has been highlighted by the SOLAS and DDLETB FET strategies as an area of importance. With the emergence of database reporting requirements to the DES and SOLAS through PLSS, FARR, Salespulse and others it has become an area requiring attention.

**Referral to Guidance Counsellor**: Adult students may self-refer. They will attend one to one meetings on a needs basis. The student must email for an appointment email: guidance@grangecc.ie.

**Chaplaincy**

Students may access the College Chaplaincy Service if they wish.

1. **Curriculum Support for Educational and Career Guidance**

**Work Experience Module**The work experience module is a mandatory module on all QQI Major awards. It deals with many topics related to career, education planning and vocational choices, including:

* Skills auditing and goal setting
* CV/interview preparation, job seeking skills
* Career interest research
* Diary keeping during Work Experience
* Feedback for work placement supervisor and self-reflection
* Introduction to useful tools such as Qualifax, CareersPortal, FETCH website, Intreo and other miscellaneous websites related to career areas

**Personal Development Topics**

* All QQI modules provide information to enable the learner to acquire skills and develop tools which support the achievement of personal, civic and vocational aspirations.
* Certain QQI modules including personal effectiveness and personal and professional development
* For beauty therapy students the salon provides an opportunity to move to work experience while undertaking the programme of study
* Many modules contain a requirement for self reflection.
* Computer studies students are given the opportunity to engage in work experience on-site in Grange Community College.
1. **Non Curricular Supports**

**Assignment and academic support**

At Grange Community College, each teacher provides one and a half hours additional assignment support to ensure, insofar as possible, we provide our students with the best opportunities to successfully complete their chosen programme of study.

**Educational Needs – Higher Education Assistance Fund**

The FE co-ordinator and the Guidance Counsellor meet on a regular basis to share any concerns with regard to individual students and to discuss any particular individual supports that need to be provided for students with special needs, to allow them achieve their potential and successfully complete the course.

An application for HEA funds is submitted on an annual basis for students with documented evidence of a specific learning or language need.

**Adult Student Council**

The Student Council is made up of two class representatives from each class. Early in the year each class will be asked to elect a class representative and deputy class representative. The Student Council will convene its first meeting during the month of October.

The role of the Student Council is to act as a forum for discussing issues of relevance to the students. It is also an opportunity for the students to bring any relevant matters to the attention of the College authorities. In addition, the Council has in the past organised a number of social events for the students throughout the year.

**DDLETB student society**

Grange Community College as part of DDLETB, is one of the participating colleges of the DDLETB Student Society. The society organises social events during the academic year to provide a full college experience for our students. Events include table quizzes, fun-runs and bowling events and other inter college and college activities.

1. **Quality Assurance and Self Evaluation**

Grange Community College aims to provide the best possible courses, teaching and learning experience and support services to ensure adult students are provided with the opportunity to learn, succeed and achieve.

The college under the auspice of DDLETB must adhere to the DDLETB quality assurance agreement with QQI. DDLETB is responsible for the validation of all programmes provided in their colleges. The FE coordinator reports to management on all aspects of quality assurance procedures in Grange Community College from programme development to self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process ensures that the views of other co-ordinators, teachers and adult students are sought, evaluated and included the programme evaluation report (PER) and the programme improvement plan (PIP).

1. **FIT - Fast-track to Information Technology**

FIT is an industry-led initiative which seeks to bridge the digital divide and create jobs for the long-term unemployed. The FIT initiative conviction is the future potential of the student not their past history. Many people have developed abilities and characteristics required by industry, but have not had the opportunities, confidence or encouragement to hone and market them.

Through FIT, previously long-term unemployed are working as computer professionals in large corporations and lone parents are accessing opportunities which balance and facilitate work/family commitments. Young people who may have left school early are attaining market certification and standards necessary to secure substantive employment and career opportunities. At Grange Community College we have two FIT supported courses: Computer Systems and Networking and an Introduction to IT programme. The FE co-ordinator facilitates the FIT representatives make presentations to our adult students. They are provided with the opportunity to visit workplaces such as HEAnet, IBM, Micro-soft and SAP.

The adult students are also provided with the opportunity to apply for internships with industry, subject to certain criteria.

1. **Allowances, Grants, Payments**

**Up to date information is maintained on our website** [**www.grangecc.ie/further-ed**](http://www.grangecc.ie/further-ed)

Students may be eligible to receive a variety of financial supports while studying at Grange Community College such as:

* PLC Maintenance Grant (SUSI)
* PLC Government Levy Exemption
* Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
* Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)
* Back to Education Allowance (BTEI)
* Exemptions for Medical Card Holders
* Childcare Support

There are no tuition fees for EU nationals. Non-EU nationals contact the college for details of entry requirements, which change from time to time, but presently include the requirement to have a Stamp 4 visa and to pay a fee of €3,673.

A registration fee of €50 is payable by each full time student to cover the cost of services.

Students are also liable for examination and certification fees, special course material fees etc. Full details of charges relating to each particular course are available from the college and can be seen on each course web page.

**Full-time courses**

**PLC maintenance grants (SUSI)**

Maintenance grants are available to all PLC students enrolled on a full-time course and working towards QQI Level 5/6 awards provided we are approved to deliver the course through the PLSS and FARR systems.

Students wishing to apply for a grant must apply (online only) to SUSI through www.studentfinance.ie and on facebook.com/susi support. A means test is applied to the individual students. All decisions on eligibility are made by SUSI. Students in receipt of Social Welfare payments are ineligible for PLC Grant assistance.

**PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy)**

This contribution of €200 is charged by the Government to participants on approved PLC courses. The following categories of participants are exempt from paying the contribution:

* Full Medical Card holders in their own right and their dependent children.
* Those who are eligible under the student grant (PLC Grant) scheme.
* Those in receipt of a range of social welfare payments.
* Those on VTOS payments.
* Those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).

**VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme)**

Certain applicants may be eligible to avail of the VTOS Scheme. VTOS is the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, which offers second chance education and training for adults. The FE coordinator acts as the VTOS coordinator in Grange Community College.

While in College, VTOS learners retain their social welfare payments and any secondary benefits they already have. Course charges are covered under this scheme, and essential books, course materials and exam fees are provided free of charge without the loss of any benefit. An allowance for lunch and travel may be payable in some cases. To qualify applicants must be over 21 years of age and in receipt of one of the following payments for at least six months (156 days) at the start of the chosen course:

* One Parent Family Allowance.
* Disability Allowance.
* Unemployment Benefit/Allowance.
* Signing up for credits.
* Or be a dependent of any of the above.

**Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)**

The BTEA provides financial support for learners who have been offered a place on a full-time approved PLC course, and who have been in receipt of a social welfare payment for a designated period of time.

This scheme allows learners to retain their welfare payments and any secondary benefits while in full-time education. Further information and application forms are available from the local office of the Department of Social Protection, or from www.welfare.ie

**Part-time courses**

**Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)**

BTEI provides young people and adults with an opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. BTEI courses are part-time and flexible. We offer a wide range of accredited courses in the college.

BTEI courses are free of charge to people in receipt of an eligible Social Welfare payment and for everyone with less than a Leaving Certificate qualification or equivalent. Fees are payable in certain other circumstances.

**Exemptions for medical card holders**

Holders of a current medical card are exempt from the Government PLC levy and QQI examination fees. It is the student’s responsibility to present their current medical card at registration.

**Childcare Support**

Funding for childcare costs may be available to eligible VTOS and BTEA learners under the CETS Scheme.

**Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery**

The Student support and Guidance Policy is linked with the following policies:

* FE student code of conduct
* FE Attendance Policy
* Anti-bullying
* Substance Use
* Data Protection
* Admissions policy, code of practice and admission appeals policy
* Induction policy
* Acceptable Use Policy
* Health and Safety Statement
* Critical Incident/Sudden Death Policy

**Ratification and Communication**

Staff will consider the draft and agreed amendments will be made.

The finalised draft will be ratified by the Board of Management before the end of the 2017/2018 school year.

The policy will be available on the school website.

**Monitoring Implementation of Plan**

The Principal in conjunction with the Policy Steering Committee will be responsible for the monitoring of this policy.

**Review and evaluation**

The Guidance Plan will be reviewed every three years or sooner if needed.

**Implementation Date**

This policy will come into effect after being signed by the Board of Management.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management