



# ECVET Stories

## Introduction

The ECVET Community of Practice is a group of VET practitioners experienced in using ECVET to support recognition of learning and achievement obtained in mobility programmes. They agreed to be interviewed to tell us about their organisations' ECVET journeys.

The following stories tell how they use ECVET, their achievements, their ambitions, and sometimes their frustrations. There are also some tips for new and existing users and interesting practices. They continue to strive to develop and improve ECVET implementation within their organisations. By sharing these stories, they demonstrate that ECVET adds real and measurable value to the mobility process.

Our thanks go to all contributors.

# 1. REY Europe



## When did you first hear about ECVET?

Rey Europe supports a number of colleges with mobility placements, including South Gloucestershire and Stroud, Bristol, and Leicester. We started using ECVET several years ago when it became a more prominent feature within KA1 applications.

## How are you using ECVET?

The colleges use the ECVET tools to support their learners and ensure sound evidencing of learning outcomes achieved on the work placements they undertake. ECVET supports the identification of learning outcomes related to the tasks and duties that are part of the learners' work placements.

For example, at Leicester College, learning agreements have been used for several years, and the college has always had an informal agreement with the host company in Spain. That has now evolved to a more formal Memorandum of Understanding. This ensures the host partner is clear on the requirements for the tasks and duties that the students should undertake. The workbooks that the learners complete have been amended to facilitate the clear evidencing of learning outcomes. The lead tutor usually accompanies the learners on the first and last week of the placement to make sure everything runs smoothly.

## What benefits of ECVET have you seen?

Having the MoU and Learning Agreements helps to structure the placements and ensures the learners know what they are setting out to achieve. The MoU also helps to ensure that the employers hosting the placements are very clear about the tasks and responsibilities the learners should undertake.

## Any top tips?

Have a clear understanding of what is needed to evidence assessment in order for validation to occur; communicate this clearly with the host partner. Be realistic about what sort of evidence partners can provide. Remember that learners can work towards evidencing some learning outcomes in a unit, if the placement is too short to make achieving a full unit practical.

## How would you like to use ECVET in the future?

There are different levels of engagement with ECVET, primarily due to differences in experience and the volume of learners undertaking mobility placements from different colleges. We hope to support a deeper use of ECVET, and a greater degree of consistency in its use across colleges we work with.

## How to make this happen?

Tutors need to have the time and resources to engage fully in order to understand how to use ECVET to its full potential.

## 2. North West Regional College



### When did you first use ECVET?

North West Regional College (NWRC) is one of six FE colleges in Northern Ireland that provides programmes and qualifications for a wide range of learners. It has been using ECVET principles in many of its mobility projects for many years and the number of mobility programmes has increased over the years.

NWRC currently has project partners in Germany, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands, some of which are two-year projects. All partners involved are both sending and receiving partners. Accompanying persons are the assessors in the receiving country.

### How has ECVET helped your organisation and your learners?

Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) (signed agreements with all of receiving partners) are used to outline the lines of communication, design of training programmes, identification of appropriate placement and practical support (accommodation, transfers etc.). Learning Agreements are also used by both sending and receiving partners. These help to shape the content of the training programmes for mobility programmes. NWRC uses an evaluation grid to review its projects and improve future projects. ECVET gives each partner a better understanding of what is expected. It gives a clear focus to the receiving organisation in terms of structuring a training programme. Learners also benefit from using ECVET as they feel it contributes to their qualifications. Learners complete preparatory work before undertaking the mobility, then complete a log book during the mobility, which can be used on return for assessment of their portfolio.

### Where do you see your organisation's ECVET journey going in future?

In 2018 and onwards, all mobility projects will use ECVET principles as a standard. As the accompanying persons are assessors in the receiving country, they will be further encouraged to use more time for assessment in the receiving country.

### Any interesting practice you wish to highlight?

NWRC operates an in-house CPD programme for all staff called Academy of Excellence. The project manager uses this vehicle to showcase the mobility projects in order to encourage best quality and further mobility projects. Experienced participants are also asked to share their experiences with staff in this dissemination. The project manager intends to train activity co-ordinators across the college so that more mobilities are identified and ECVET is used.

The Project Manager also reports to a Project Steering Committee every six to eight weeks on the mobilities that have taken place and that are ongoing. This ensures that a high profile is given to mobilities.

# 3. Glasgow Clyde College



## When did you first hear about ECVET?

Glasgow Clyde College is a relatively new college, created after a merger of three FE colleges. We were actively involved in mobilities up until 2013 but during the merger period mobility activity ceased for five years due to large scale structural and staffing changes.

Although we have been aware of ECVET since the beginning, and had ambitions to introduce it, it was always difficult to implement it in practice as staff always had other priorities.

As the College is settling down to its new identity, mobility activity is just starting again with support from the highest level of the organisation.

## How are you using ECVET?

Our current KA1 project is providing mobility opportunities for 66 students in the curriculum areas of Dance, Business Administration, Travel and Tourism and Sports. We have also included engineering apprentices from Rolls Royce, BAE and Aggreko, with the support of their employers, for the first time. That number of placement opportunities is expected to double next year. We are at the stage of communicating with staff across the College to tell them about mobility and ECVET.

Previously, when we hosted incoming students, we had Memoranda of Understanding but the mobilities have been less about certification and were more outcome based. But things are changing, we have recently acted as a receiving partner for a group of students from Cyprus, specialising in Electronics, Mechatronics, CNC and Energy. They spent three weeks with us and under the terms of our Memoranda of Understanding, they brought their own assessors to assess their students on-the-spot and accredit their learning on their return home.

We are currently using ECVET within our two KA2 Projects: “Pop-up Restaurants” and “In Life”. Using the ECVT structure, we will create detailed Learning Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding. We have cooperated with our project partners to create a series of small 12-hour units of learning, written as learning outcomes, levelled at EQF level 3.

## How would you like to use ECVET in the future?

We want to get our College staff and partners to understand the concept and the necessity to implement ECVET and to increase the number of Scottish students participating in mobility. Currently in Scotland the number of VET students accessing mobility is very low, approximately 5-7% compared to 55% of students from Higher Education.

## How will you make this happen?

If we can get staff to realise the advantages of ECVET exchanges it would go some way towards meeting our current challenges. The process needs some good promotion.

# 4. Foyle International



## When did you first use ECVET?

Foyle provides mobility programmes through the Erasmus+ European funding programme, which supports education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The Foyle programmes include work-based training programmes in local host companies across many vocational areas. Foyle has been using ECVET since 2010 in all mobility programmes, with all learners receiving assessments during their placements, progress reports and certification at the end of their mobility period. Foyle has delivered a number of KA1 and KA2 projects, using standardised Learning Outcome and Assessment templates. Foyle has developed the “Internship Management Centre” software system, which develops a learners training plan, in terms of key and technical skills to be developed.

## How has ECVET helped your organisation and your learners?

As a receiving organisation, Foyle sees using ECVET Learning Outcomes approach as essential to be able to match incoming learners with appropriate training in the host companies. Using ECVET enables Foyle to offer quality work placements and ensures learners are assessed to a standard. The Foyle “Internship Management Centre” has been developed using ECVET, and enables all learners to have individual learning outcomes including key skills, knowledge and competencies.

## Where do you see your organisation’s ECVET journey going in future?

It is planned to improve the “Internship Management Centre” system to monitor how learners progress during their work-based training programme and to incorporate the Europass template.

## Any top tips?

Sending organisations need to be realistic when dealing with working environments in a different country and the ECVET Memorandum of Understanding aids this understanding.

## Any interesting practice you wish to highlight?

With the help of the “Internship Management Centre” Foyle worked on a KA2 project called “VET towards ECVET” with five other countries. We researched hotel reception courses at European level 4 (EQF) along with other similar accredited courses from the other countries to find common learning outcomes that we all shared. Once the relevant countries agreed on the learning outcomes, Open College Network (OCN) recognised and validated the course named “Skills for European Tourism Mobility” and we had two French students complete the course and be certificated at a local level.

# 5. New College Lanarkshire



## When did you first use ECVET?

New College Lanarkshire has been using ECVET principles in its mobility activity for many years. We have been building on our initial ECVET steps, year by year, to further enhance the employability of our students through formal recognition of the knowledge, skills and competences gained during their mobility experience. For example, accompanying tutors monitor learner progress by liaising with in-company mentors and host partners to validate the achievements and ensure the quality of placements. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), signed agreements with all of our receiving partners, outline our commitment to work in the spirit of the Erasmus+ Programme. The MoU covers all aspects of the mobility experience from our project life-cycle. This defines the lines of communication, design of training programmes, identifies appropriate placements, clarifies practical support (accommodation, transfers etc.) and linguistic training, work-place mentors, completion of contracts, Europass certificates, attendance certificates, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination.

## What benefits of ECVET have you seen?

Some students undertake additional SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) Employability Modules to prepare them for the mobility placement and ultimately the world of work. They are also observed whilst on placement carrying out learning outcomes from core vocational units of study by accompanying tutors.

In addition, students travelling to France, Spain and Italy have participated in the additional 'Life in Another Country' SQA unit accredited at SCQF level 2. The unit aims to develop awareness of lifestyles other than their own and to encourage reflection on similarities and differences while gaining limited experience of the language of the host country. This complements the participants' vocational qualifications.

ECVET has helped to greatly raise NCL's profile. In 2016 we were awarded the Erasmus+ Quality Certificate in recognition of the high quality mobility projects and strategic approach to integrating an international and cultural dimension into the teaching and service functions of the organisation.

## Where do you see your organisation's ECVET journey going in future?

Short term, we will continue to work towards the principles of ECVET through our mobility activity. In the longer term, we will work with our EU partners on the validation and recognition of materials and learning outcomes through the MoU.

We have taken some steps towards the assessment of our students in the workplace by the host partner. In 2015, a number of students undertook a French language training and work placement activity with and had their skills and competencies recognised on presentation of a certificate by the host partner, ITEC. To take this further, there is potentially a quality issue regarding assessment standards that would have to be addressed.



# 5. New College Lanarkshire (cont'd)



## **Any interesting practice you wish to highlight?**

As part of the preparatory phase of the mobility project participants are asked to complete the Europass CV for host employers to assess their skills levels and suitability for a placement. Host partners then identify suitable placements that meet their identified training needs and skills set. After mobility, participants update their Europass CV to reflect the new skills and knowledge acquired.

To validate the learning experience and ensure participants receive accreditation for the time spent on their mobility, participants are registered with Europass. The documentation is completed in conjunction with the accompanying tutor and host company to fully detail the participant's experience and is signed by all parties prior to presenting to the learner. Europass certificates are used as a tool by the students to promote themselves to prospective employers as it gives them a talking point during job interviews. As an example of this, three Chef students who returned from Lyon in 2014 used their Europass certificates to evidence their experience during job interviews. Each went on to secure employment with top restaurants in Glasgow!

Throughout the year we celebrate and disseminate the mobilities by bringing together all students and staff who participated in mobilities and present them with certificates to highlight their success.

We are currently also involved in a KA2 project under adult education VALMOPRIS (Validation and Motivation for Informal Learning in Prisons). The project has a focus on recognising informal learning in prisons, particularly the key competence of 'Learning to Learn'.

# 6. Glasgow Kelvin College



## When did you first use ECVET?

We first began using ECVET in 2010 as a partner in a project funded by the Finnish Government to explore ECVET principles. This project was developed into KA1 mobility projects for HNC Music students. Since then there have been 10 cohorts of students travelling to and coming in from partners in Finland and Estonia. Over time, we have established strong working relationships.

## How has it helped your organisation and your learners?

Learners have been exposed to new experiences working internationally in Finland and Estonia. Some of their stories can be seen at <https://youtu.be/2Z8F3n5lQWQ> and [https://youtu.be/unKdKfq\\_D5s](https://youtu.be/unKdKfq_D5s)

A specially designed award, Work Experience Whilst Abroad was tested during the latter exchanges. This is an SCQF validated unit at SCQF level 7, created by Glasgow Kelvin College as a catch-all unit designed to be used for any vocational subject whilst on European mobility. It has a number of specific learning outcomes:

- work independently maintaining a productive work rate and professional manner and display a positive attitude to teamwork, showing ability to function effectively within a team at all times;
- demonstrate practical skills making effective and efficient use of equipment, tools and materials;
- work effectively within existing project structures;
- accept instruction, advice and criticism in a positive manner;
- compare professional and cultural practices;
- comply with all relevant local Health and Safety policies and procedures.

The accompanying assessors travelling on mobilities with our students, or the host country assessors whilst our students are in Finland or Estonia, on mobilities have assessed these learning outcomes.

Where do you see your organisation's ECVET journey going in future?

As the partners continue to work together, we would like to further explore how our learners can be assessed on their core qualifications whilst on mobility based in a vocational college in Finland or Estonia. At present there are uncertainties about whether the Scottish awarding body (Scottish Qualifications Authority) would accept assessment by our Finnish or Estonian colleagues. Initial discussions with the UK ECVET Experts suggest that this might be achievable and further work needs to be done in this area.

# 6. Glasgow Kelvin College (cont'd)



## Any interesting practice you wish to highlight?

Glasgow Kelvin College (GKC) work in partnership with a Finnish vocational college (Helsingin Konservatorio) to assess a range of Finnish qualifications. Assessment takes place while GKC are acting as receiving partners for Finnish students. The preferred assessment tools are vocational skills demonstration/observation forms, making them ideal for assessment on work placement. Mapping the level of the Finnish qualifications against the EQF and then in turn, the SCQF, gave me, as an assessor, a clear understanding of the level of the visiting students. This enabled me to make accurate assessment judgements which are later fully accredited in Finland.

Sometimes learning outcomes are quite broad, as in the programme Working as a Musician in an International Environment:

- work management;
- command of work methods, equipment and material;
- command of the skills necessary for the work;
- key skills for lifetime development.

The more specific the learning outcomes the easier it is to assess. For example, Learning Outcome 1 of the Finnish unit Live Performance Skills 2, consists of the following outcomes:

- prepare and submit at least two pieces for rehearsal, this will include suitable charts and lyrics for each member of the ensemble plus a pre-recorded version of the pieces to be rehearsed;
- participate in rehearsals;
- create a well-balanced sound during rehearsals;
- submit a completed risk assessment for the rehearsal process.

This method of assessment is working well for our partners and us.

# 7. Southern Regional College



## When did you first use ECVET?

Southern Regional College (SRC) and previously Armagh College mobility programmes started in 2006 using Leonardo funding, in line with the college overarching lifelong learning strategy. SRC obtained Vocational Mobility Charter status in 2015 and was the first college in Northern Ireland to do so.

## How has ECVET helped your organisation and your learners?

SRC was one of six organisation partners that took part in the project - Supporting the Transfer of Education and Mobility Strategies - which developed a “Cultural Diversity in and through Sport” course which was developed, accredited and shared across Europe. This course was piloted to 500 students and assessments were carried out by tutors in the receiving countries across Europe. The resulting handbook and course have been distributed to sporting bodies, councils and college’s across N.I The ‘Cultural Diversity in and Through Sport’ course is on the QCF in NI, England & Wales and on the SCQF and mapped to the EQFM (European Qualifications framework) at level 3. This course was commended on positive change for students in increasing their awareness and understanding of self-prejudice and stereotyping resulting in changes in attitudes and of perception.

SRC has sent students with learning disabilities to Malta on a two-week placement. Development of their softer skills during this placement, enables evidence to be gathered towards the completion of their OCR Diploma. Assessment was carried out by receiving country tutors.

Construction students have been able to gain valuable practical experience on two-week work placements in Sweden. The evidence gathered contributed to a Sustainable Construction unit of the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Construction.

## Any interesting practice you wish to highlight?

Learning agreements are completed for all students who take part in a mobility programme. When on mobility students complete reflective learning logs and also make use of the Europass documents. The Curriculum Heads in SRC are responsible for identifying assessment opportunities suitable for validation. SRC staff undertake the assessor role when abroad.

# 7. Southern Regional College (cont'd)



Where do you see your organisation's ECVET journey going in future?

It is planned to improve the "Internship Management Centre" system to monitor how learners progress during their work-based training programme and to incorporate the Europass template.

Any top tips?

VET mobility placements are usually two-weeks duration, thus assessment of personal development and softer skills may be more suitable for these short-term placements. Participating organisations should ensure sufficient lead-in time to plan effectively. Accompanying tutors should also know their students before they go and the relationship should be well established before undertaking any mobility.

For longer-term mobility, students should be prepared well in advance and the placement should be able to offer opportunity for gathering evidence towards the students' vocational programmes. The host organisation should be fully aware of the opportunities the placements can provide and how they may contribute to the evidence needed for the students' qualifications.

# 8. Leeds City College



## How are you using ECVET?

Our participants are drawn from courses across the College though we feel ECVET currently works most successfully in Child Care, Health and Social Care and Travel and Tourism. In these courses, work placements are integral to the qualifications, and their three weeks spent on placement in Europe contributes towards their qualification requirement. As the work content is described in Learning Outcomes, this effectively strengthens and complements their entire qualification experience and embeds it fully into the curriculum.

The vast majority of our mobility participants have Learning Agreements signed prior to starting their European experience. They focus on what learning Outcomes they are expected to achieve and how they should gather appropriate evidence. This evidence is then brought back home for our staff to assess. In the future we would like to change this, as there are issues regarding awarding bodies and how we train European assessors to satisfy their standards.

## What benefits of ECVET have you seen?

ECVET has brought more structure to our mobilities. And of course, other important personal developments are accrued when students carry out their work placements in Europe, which supports the students' future progression. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of students writing about Erasmus+ in their UCAS personal statements and talking about their experience during job and university interviews. Employers recognise their new skillsets and maturity, giving them an edge in the jobs market.

We have seen wider benefits to our strategic achievements at Leeds City College. Our European work is now more embedded into our College-wide work experience activity (every department must have a work experience plan). From 18/19 these will connect directly to the Gatsby Benchmarks around careers guidance, employer engagement and placements. In the T-Level Industry placement pilot we will be referring to elements of best practice identified in ECVET to inform aspects of our approach.

### Top tips

Get your staff on board early on in the process. Their enthusiasm and passion is essential to achieving success.

## 8. Leeds City College (cont'd)



How would you like to use ECVET in the future?

We would like to get better at how we capture the impact that ECVET mobility has on our students, in a more formal and measurable way. Perhaps we need to develop a new set of indicators to allow some sort of impacts analysis. We should follow the student journey and how interventions such as this help them towards their destination.

We would also like to expand ECVET activity to more of our mobility students. A small group of SEND participants recently returned from Finland. Not only had they acquired some language skills but they had grown in so many ways. Their achievements were quite incredible. We want to find a way to recognise this growth so we will look closely at their personal and social life skills qualifications and see if we can write them into Learning Agreements to capture and officially recognise and validate their work.

How to make this happen?

We have some very passionate tutors and Heads of Departments who will help to make these things happen. They see ECVET as integral to their mobilities and actively drive the process forward.