

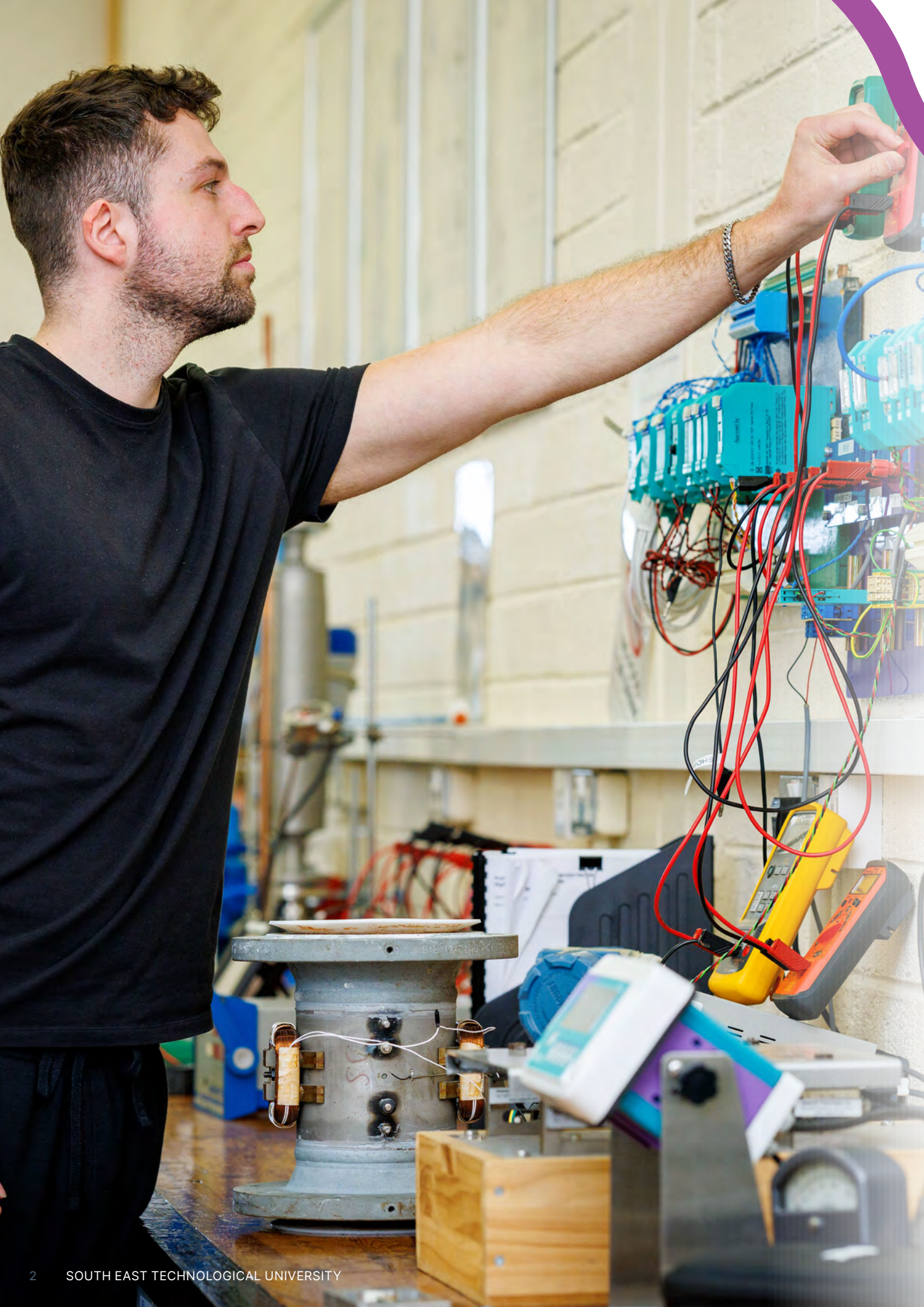
APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2028

South East Technological University



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Vision Statement	4
1 Introduction	5
2 Defining the Apprenticeship Model	9
3 Apprenticeship at SETU.....	19
4 Strategic Objectives	33
5 Our Teaching and Learning	35
6 Our Learners	39
7 Our Engagement	45
8 Our Staff	49
9 Enablers	53
10 Conclusion	65
11 Testimonials.....	67
References	68



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South East Technological University (SETU) is advancing a strategic approach to developing and delivering apprenticeship programmes that respond to Ireland's evolving education policies, the South East region's economic priorities, and global workforce trends. This plan outlines SETU's vision for an expanded, future-focused apprenticeship offering that is governed effectively, grounded in academic excellence, and aligned with national and regional skills agendas. It is also aligned with the other current and emerging SETU strategic plans, including Lifelong Learning, Regional Engagement and Sustainability.

This strategy is intentionally agile, supporting SETU's growth while anticipating outcomes from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) review of the National Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2021–2025 and the development of the National Action Plan for 2026–2030. SETU aims to contribute actively to a more integrated, inclusive, and responsive national apprenticeship system. This strategy is designed to remain responsive to evolving national apprenticeship policy and future action plans.

SETU currently delivers nine traditional Craft Apprenticeships and four sector-specific Consortia-Led Apprenticeships (CLA). The university intends to broaden this portfolio further, informed by labour market intelligence and emerging regional skills needs. Investment in pedagogical innovation, including hybrid learning, digital platforms, and enhanced facilities, will

support high-quality, future-ready learning experiences.

A central priority is the Apprentice. SETU is committed to improving the learner experience through inclusive programme design, clear progression pathways, and strengthened career supports that enhance employability. Equally, deepening engagement with employers and industry bodies will ensure programmes remain relevant and agile. To support this, an SETU Apprenticeship Advisory Board will be established to maintain strategic alignment with workforce requirements.

Recognising the vital role of Teaching and Technical Support Staff, the strategy includes targeted professional development and advocacy initiatives to build institutional capacity and celebrate excellence. Organisational and infrastructural improvements will further support the sustainability and scalability of apprenticeship provision, ensuring effective alignment with national governance frameworks.

Through this strategy, SETU aims to reinforce its position as a leader in apprenticeship education. By strengthening existing cross-sector partnerships, establishing new strategic collaborations, and working closely with Education and Training Boards (ETB) within and around the South East region, SETU will deliver a sustainable, high-impact apprenticeship system that supports economic growth, social inclusion, and long-term regional resilience.

VISION STATEMENT

SETU's strategy is to deliver transformative impact for the South East and beyond through inclusive education, research, and innovation. Apprenticeship education is central to this vision, celebrated as a powerful model of learning that combines academic excellence with hands-on experience. Through strong partnerships with employers, ETBs, and industry consortia, SETU will deliver high-quality programmes that meet critical skills needs, strengthen industry, and create inclusive opportunities. Apprenticeships will stand as a flagship of SETU's mission, driving sustainable, inclusive and innovation-led economic growth and shaping a skilled, agile workforce for the future.

1 INTRODUCTION

SETU recognises the central role of apprenticeships in advancing social, economic, and educational goals at both regional and national levels. This strategic plan articulates SETU’s vision to strengthen and expand its apprenticeship provision through an integrated, future-focused approach grounded in institutional strengths and aligned with workforce demands. It is developed in the context of evolving policy frameworks, changing labour market needs, and growing recognition of apprenticeships as a high-impact mode of learning.

Apprenticeships in Ireland have a deep historical foundation, having evolved over decades from informal trade practices to a formally regulated system. This evolution was marked by key legislative milestones, including the Apprenticeship Acts enacted in 1931 and 1959 and the Industrial Training Act of 1967, which introduced national frameworks to support apprenticeships in traditional sectors such as construction, engineering, and manufacturing. Subsequent institutional reforms further shaped the system, most notably the establishment of An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) in 1988, which centralised the governance of vocational training. In 2013, the creation of An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS) marked a new phase in modernising apprenticeship provision, focusing on quality, inclusivity, and alignment with economic needs.

In 2016, Ireland launched the “New Apprenticeship” model under the leadership of the Apprenticeship Council, introducing the CLA framework. This initiative broadened the scope of apprenticeship beyond craft trades to emerging sectors such as Information and communications technology (ICT), finance, and healthcare. It also established a model of co-design and co-delivery between education providers and employer groups, offering increased responsiveness and adaptability to industry needs.



1 INTRODUCTION

Apprenticeships in Ireland today are structured programmes that blend workplace-based learning with formal academic instruction, leading to qualifications recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). These programmes must span at least two years and comprise more than fifty percent on-the-job training, with apprentices employed under a formal Contract of Apprenticeship for the full duration. The current landscape includes two key types: traditional Craft Apprenticeships, typically four years in duration and focused on skilled trades, and CLAs, which offer more flexible and sector-specific pathways developed in collaboration with industry consortia.

A wide range of national bodies support the effective governance of the apprenticeship system. The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) is responsible for overarching policy and funding. SOLAS coordinates traditional apprenticeships and collaborates with consortia on programme development. The National Apprenticeship Office (NAO), a body set up jointly by SOLAS and the Higher Education

Authority (HEA), oversees implementation of the national strategy. QQI ensures that programmes align with national qualifications standards, while the HEA supports higher education institutions in delivering and expanding apprenticeship provision.

ETBs play a vital role in regional delivery, especially in providing the off-the-job component of apprenticeship training. Advisory bodies such as the National Apprenticeship Alliance (NAA) and the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee provide strategic input and system-wide guidance.

At the policy level, the DFHERIS outlined a national strategy through its Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021–2025. While a core objective of the 2021–2025 plan was the unification of all programmes under a single model, SETU acknowledges the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development emphasis, in its evaluation of the action plan, on clearer governance, coordination, and accountability as a priority for the 2026–2030 period. SETU will proactively contribute to these national discussions.

As the university serving the South East, SETU is uniquely placed to respond to regional labour market needs through its partnerships with ETBs, employer consortia, and other stakeholders. The South East region, characterised by strengths in ICT, biopharma, manufacturing, construction and agriculture along with tourism, hospitality and public services provides strong opportunities for targeted apprenticeship development.



SETU's approach is informed by both regional priorities and broader European and international developments, particularly the growing emphasis on apprenticeship mobility, qualification recognition, and the integration of work-based learning within tertiary education.

This strategy sets out the institutional priorities and actions necessary to navigate the transition toward an integrated apprenticeship system within SETU. It reflects SETU's commitment to educational excellence, industry collaboration, and

inclusive participation, and aims to position the university as a national leader in the design and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships. Through this plan, SETU will support the creation of a resilient, skilled workforce that contributes to sustainable regional and national development.



2 DEFINING THE APPRENTICESHIP MODEL



Apprenticeships in Ireland are founded on a dual-learning model that integrates practical, on-the-job training with formal academic instruction. These programmes are designed to prepare individuals for defined occupational roles, combining experiential learning with rigorous curriculum standards. Apprentices are employed throughout their training and are governed by a formal Contract of Apprenticeship, culminating in a qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Apprenticeships are situated firmly within SETU's broader commitment to Work-Based Learning (WBL), recognising that meaningful learning is enhanced through authentic workplace engagement. Apprenticeships represent the most formalised expression of WBL at SETU, underpinned by a Contract of Apprenticeship and co-designed with industry partners to ensure programmes remain responsive to evolving sectoral needs.

Apprenticeships also connect directly to SETU's Tertiary Education agenda. Through partnership with ETBs, SETU is developing seamless pathways that allow learners to progress from further education into higher education apprenticeship programmes and beyond. This tertiary model ensures that apprenticeships are not stand-alone provision but are integrated into a coherent, lifelong learning continuum

that supports social mobility and regional workforce development.

At the national level, this definition aligns with the priorities of Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, which positions apprenticeship as a central mechanism for addressing critical skills gaps, supporting economic competitiveness, and enabling individuals to acquire qualifications that are valued by employers across high-growth sectors. SETU's apprenticeship provision is explicitly designed to advance these national objectives while reflecting the specific workforce needs of the South East region.

Two principal models define the current apprenticeship system:

- **Craft Apprenticeships** remain a cornerstone of skilled trade education in Ireland. Typically spanning four years, these programmes are concentrated in sectors such as construction, electrical, and mechanical trades. They lead to NFQ Level 6 qualifications and are coordinated nationally by SOLAS.
- **Consortium-Led Apprenticeships** emerged in the wake of the 2016 reform to offer greater adaptability to sector-specific skills demand. Developed collaboratively by employer groups and educational providers, CLAs span NFQ Levels 6 to 10 and encompass a broadening range of disciplines, including finance, ICT, logistics, and biopharma.

2 DEFINING THE CONTEMPORARY APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

STRATEGIC REFORM: TOWARD A UNIFIED GOVERNANCE MODEL

Apprenticeship in Ireland is currently managed through two distinct governance mechanisms. The traditional Craft Apprenticeship programmes are centrally coordinated by SOLAS, which acts as the lead agency responsible for quality assurance, funding allocation, and national oversight. In contrast, post-2016 programmes operate under the CLA model, where responsibility for programme design, delivery, and industry alignment rests with consortia comprised of employers, employee representatives, education providers, and other stakeholders.

DFHERIS, through its Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021–2025, proposed a transition from this dual system toward a single, integrated governance model. The plan envisioned that all apprenticeship programmes will be managed by consortia, promoting decentralisation, industry ownership, and increased responsiveness to sectoral needs.

Ireland's current apprenticeship governance structure involves multiple key actors. For example:

- **DFHERIS** sets national apprenticeship policy and determines funding priorities.
- **SOLAS** manages the delivery and quality assurance of Craft Apprenticeships and supports CLA development.
- **The Apprenticeship Council** serves as an advisory body supporting expansion and innovation across sectors.
- **The NAO** jointly operated by SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), oversees implementation of the national strategy.
- **QQI** ensures that all apprenticeship qualifications meet standards aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- **ETBs** play a central role in apprenticeship programme delivery, particularly for the off-the-job training components.
- **Universities, Technological Universities and Institutes of Technology** deliver academic content and maintain quality standards.



- **Employer engagement bodies**, such as trade associations, help ensure that training remains relevant and impactful.
- **NAA** provides strategic oversight and sectoral representation.
- **The Approved Provider Network (APN)**, ensures that apprenticeship training is consistent, high-quality, and nationally recognised, acting as a bridge between education providers, industry, and regulatory bodies.
- **Technological University Association (TUA)**, is the representative body for Ireland's technological higher education sector, promoting the unique attributes of technological higher education, influencing policy, and supporting initiatives that enhance teaching, research, and regional engagement.
- National Craft Apprenticeship committee such as **ITAC** which provides national oversight.
- National Craft Apprenticeship committees representing family of trades (**IFOT**) and national apprenticeship specific Programme Advisory Boards (**PABs**).

Ireland's apprenticeship system is proposed to evolve under the emerging Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2026–2030. This transformation offers strategic opportunities but also requires strong coordination, effective quality assurance, and ongoing support for stakeholders.



SETU has a vital role to play in shaping this future. By aligning its governance and academic structures, engaging in national policy dialogue, and building capacity to participate in consortia, the university can strengthen its leadership in applied education and regional workforce development.

2 DEFINING THE CONTEMPORARY APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Ireland's apprenticeship system is a cornerstone of national strategies for skills development, economic growth, and social inclusion. The Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021–2025 set ambitious targets to transform apprenticeship provision, including expanding annual registrations to 10,000 by 2025 and broadening participation beyond traditional craft trades into high-growth sectors such as ICT, advanced manufacturing, biopharma, financial services, and health. These sectors are identified in Future Jobs Ireland, the National Skills Strategy, and the National Development Plan (NDP) as critical for competitiveness, innovation, and resilience in a rapidly changing economy.

The National Skills Council, established to provide strategic oversight of skills planning in Ireland, and the National Skills Strategy 2025 further reinforce these priorities, identifying apprenticeship as a key mechanism for enabling career transitions, supporting productivity, and addressing skills shortages across sectors undergoing rapid technological and environmental change.

National policy also prioritises:

- Green skills and sustainability, supporting the Climate Action Plan and Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy. Apprenticeships in renewable energy, retrofitting, and sustainable construction are highlighted as essential to meeting climate targets.
- Digital transformation, with programmes in software development, cybersecurity, and data analytics aligned to the

National Digital Strategy and the Digital Ireland Framework.

- Public sector apprenticeships, as outlined in the Public Service Apprenticeship Plan, to build capacity in health, social care, emergency services, and administrative roles.
- Inclusive access, as set out in the National Access Plan, targeting women, mature learners, people with disabilities, and underrepresented communities, ensuring apprenticeships contribute to equity and social mobility.
- Employer engagement and regional delivery, leveraging ETBs and regional skills fora to ensure programmes meet local labour market needs and support balanced regional development.

The National Skills Strategy 2025 reinforced these priorities by promoting lifelong learning, employer-driven responses, and flexible pathways to meet evolving labour market needs. Apprenticeships are positioned as a key mechanism for enabling career transitions, supporting productivity, and addressing skills shortages in sectors experiencing rapid technological and environmental change.

The NDP and Future Jobs Ireland further emphasise apprenticeships as a driver of sustainable economic growth, linking skills development to infrastructure investment, housing, and the green economy. These frameworks recognise apprenticeships as essential for building capacity in construction, engineering, and emerging



technologies, ensuring Ireland remains competitive in global markets.

SETU is uniquely positioned to advance these objectives. As the anchor higher education institution in the South East, SETU's strategy aligns with national goals by embedding accessibility, flexibility, and innovation, ensuring apprenticeships provide not only employment but sustainable career pathways that

strengthen regional and national prosperity. SETU's commitment to enhancing regional impact through innovation and industry collaboration, as outlined in its Strategic Plan, reinforces its role in shaping Ireland's future workforce and supporting inclusive economic development.

2 DEFINING THE CONTEMPORARY APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Apprenticeships are increasingly recognised internationally as essential tools for workforce development. Countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have long-established dual-education systems that integrate vocational and academic learning. Ireland's evolving apprenticeship system can benefit from understanding these international models, particularly as national policy moves toward greater integration, flexibility, and inclusivity.

Recent European policy initiatives, including the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Council of Europe Recommendation on vocational education and training, call for increased mobility and harmonisation of apprenticeship systems. Targets include ensuring at least 12% of vocational learners experience mobility by 2030, supported by frameworks for credit transfer, recognition of learning periods abroad, and inclusive access. Guidance documents such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships Mobility Toolkit and projects such as APP-Mobility provide practical steps for integrating transnational mobility into apprenticeship programmes, emphasising quality standards, learner protection, and employer engagement.

Reports from the OECD and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training stress the importance of adaptability in apprenticeship design to address global trends such as digitalisation, green skills, and demographic change. International best practice prioritises:

- Quality assurance frameworks ensuring consistent standards across borders.
- Employer-led governance models to maintain relevance and responsiveness.
- Social inclusion measures to widen participation among underrepresented groups.
- Recognition of mobility achievements within national qualification systems.

Ireland's evolving apprenticeship strategy reflects these global trends by promoting integration, flexibility, and inclusivity, while exploring opportunities for international collaboration and mobility through initiatives such as Erasmus+ for apprenticeships.

This approach aligns with the SETU Strategic Plan, which commits to enhancing regional impact through innovation and industry collaboration, fostering lifelong learning, and creating inclusive pathways that strengthen workforce development across the South East and beyond.

SETU is a member of EU Conexus, the European University a European University and strategic alliance of nine European higher education institutions committed to advancing technological education, applied research, and regional innovation. This membership provides a unique platform for developing apprenticeship collaboration at European scale. Through EU Conexus, SETU engages with partner universities across Europe to share best practice in work-based learning design and promote the mobility of students and staff. This

international dimension strengthens the quality and relevance of SETU's apprenticeship provision and supports Ireland's ambitions to participate in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and achieve the previously referenced vocational learner mobility target by 2030.

SETU is also aligned with the EU Pact for Skills, a flagship initiative of the European Skills Agenda that brings together public and private stakeholders to invest in upskilling and reskilling the European workforce. The Pact for Skills emphasises large-scale skills partnerships as a mechanism for addressing labour market challenges, with a particular focus on green and digital transitions. SETU's apprenticeship strategy directly supports these objectives by expanding provision in areas such as renewable energy, digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing, sectors identified as priorities under the Pact. By engaging with Pact-aligned partnerships, SETU can leverage European resources and networks to strengthen the quality, relevance, and reach of its apprenticeship programmes.



2 DEFINING THE CONTEMPORARY APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR SETU

Ireland's apprenticeship system is entering a period of significant transformation, driven by national priorities for integration, expansion, and inclusivity. The potential move towards a unified governance model, presents both opportunities and responsibilities for the university. SETU must position itself as a proactive leader in shaping the next phase of apprenticeship development, ensuring its provision reflects national priorities and regional needs.

This requires active participation in national consortia, engagement in quality assurance development, and representation in strategic forums to influence policy and ensure SETU's apprenticeship programmes remain responsive, innovative, and resilient.

The Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021–2025, the National Skills Strategy, and related frameworks emphasised apprenticeships as a key driver of economic growth, digital transformation, and sustainability. SETU is aligning its approach with these priorities by:

- Expanding provision into high-growth sectors such as ICT, advanced manufacturing, biopharma, health, and financial services.
- Supporting green skills development to meet Climate Action Plan targets.
- Embedding digital skills and innovation to address the demands of Industry 4.0.
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in line with the National Access Plan, ensuring equitable participation for women, mature learners, and underrepresented groups.

Internally, this transformation will require:

- Enhanced cross-departmental collaboration to integrate apprenticeship provision across faculties.
- Robust governance frameworks to manage programme design, delivery, and compliance with national quality standards.
- Employer engagement structures that deepen partnerships with industry and ETBs, ensuring programmes reflect real-world needs.
- Capacity building in staff development, infrastructure, and digital learning environments to support scale and quality.





These actions align with the SETU Strategic Plan's commitment to regional impact, lifelong learning, and industry collaboration. By embedding apprenticeships as a flagship of its mission, SETU will not only respond to national policy but also strengthen its role as a driver of inclusive economic development and workforce resilience in the South East and beyond.

The strategic implications for SETU are directly informed by the South East Regional Skills and Training Needs Assessment, published by the South East Regional Skills Forum in 2024. This assessment identifies persistent and emerging skills gaps across the region, with particular demand in areas such as ICT, biopharma, construction, engineering, and health and social care. It highlights the need for flexible, employer-responsive education and training pathways that can be delivered at scale across the region. SETU's apprenticeship strategy draws explicitly on this evidence base, ensuring that programme development, consortium engagement, and portfolio expansion are grounded in verified regional labour market intelligence. By anchoring apprenticeship provision to the priorities identified in the Regional Skills Assessment, SETU ensures its investment in apprenticeship education delivers measurable impact for employers, learners, and communities across the South East.

Apprenticeships are fundamentally employer-led, and the quality and relevance of SETU's provision depends on deep, sustained engagement with industry partners across the South East and beyond. SETU's approach to employer engagement in the context of apprenticeships is aligned with, and supported by, the SETU Regional Engagement Strategy, which sets out the university's commitment to building meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships with employers, industry bodies, and communities across the region. The Engagement Strategy provides a framework through which SETU systematically identifies employer skills needs, co-designs curriculum with industry, and builds the trust relationships that underpin successful apprenticeship delivery. In practice, this means working closely with individual employers, particularly SMEs, to support them in understanding the apprenticeship model, fulfilling their obligations under a Contract of Apprenticeship, and accessing the mentoring and supervisory supports they need. The SETU Apprenticeship Advisory Board, proposed in this strategy, will further strengthen this connection by providing a structured forum through which industry perspectives can shape SETU's apprenticeship development priorities.



3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

SETU offers a comprehensive portfolio of Craft Apprenticeship programmes, and three CLAs that are aligned with national policy priorities. In recent years, the university has solidified its position within Ireland's national apprenticeship ecosystem, accounting for 1,657 registered apprentices, representing approximately 5.6% of the national total of 29,772 in 2024. This registration volume underscores SETU's critical role as a regional economic engine, bridging the gap between traditional craft trades and emerging high-tech disciplines. The university's strategic expansion of training capacity at the Carlow and Waterford campuses in recent years has been vital in addressing national backlog challenges, particularly within the electrical and electrical instrumentation disciplinary areas.

Delivered across the Carlow and Waterford campuses at SETU and supported by close industry collaboration, SETU's provision ensures it delivers a pipeline of talent to fuel regional and national economic development. However, now is an opportune time to also explore opportunities to design, develop and deliver apprenticeships in the new SETU Wexford campus.

Designed to cultivate skilled, adaptable professionals, apprenticeships combine academic instruction with applied workplace experience. Apprentices benefit from a dual learning environment that promotes technical proficiency, nurtures critical thinking, and supports continuous professional development. However, learners on CLAs are often adult learners with different learning needs that will require programme structures that reflect a high degree of work-based learning, employer involvement in mentoring and flexible modes of study. This is supported by the SETU Lifelong Learning strategy that supports approaches to teaching and learning aligned to the particular needs of adult learners.

SETU's commitment to academic quality, programme adaptability, and real-world relevance makes it a central force in supporting both regional workforce growth and national skills advancement.

3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

TRENDS AND STATISTICS

SETU has experienced steady growth in year-on-year apprenticeship enrolments, the primary driver being national economic growth. The comparative

analysis of enrolment patterns for Craft Apprenticeships below underscores this trajectory.

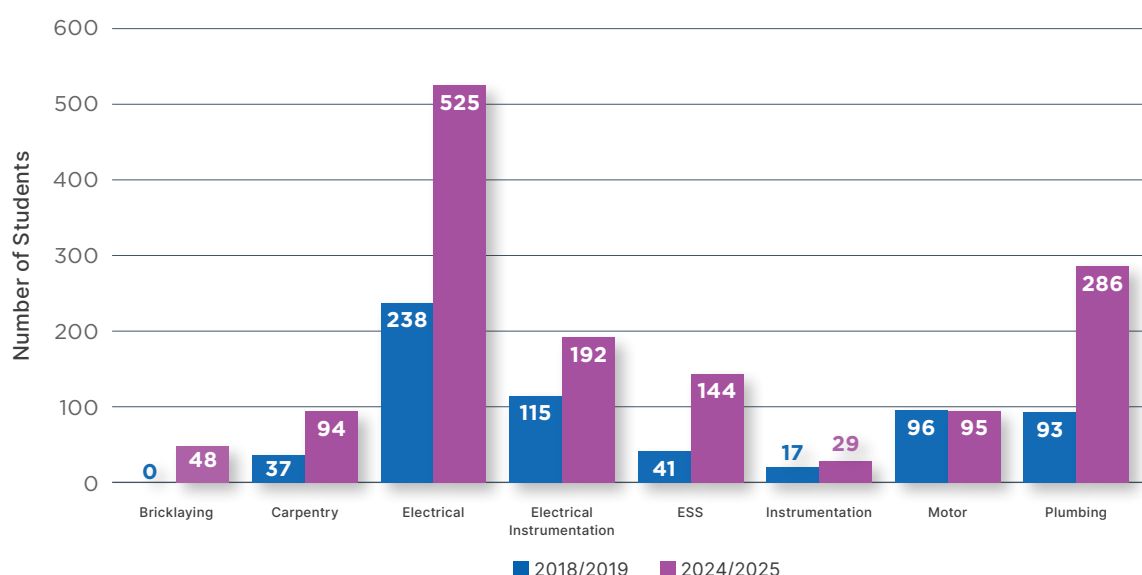


Figure 1: SETU Craft Apprenticeship Enrolment by Discipline (2018/19 v 2024/25)

Additionally, Figure 2 provides an illustration of CLA enrolment patterns over a six-year period to 2024/25 and highlights SETU's proactive engagement with industry partners and investment in programme development. As a proportion

of the university's total student population of 18,350 in the 2024/25 academic year, 1,413 students, from 797 employers, were registered as craft-based apprentices, representing approximately 8% of the overall SETU population.

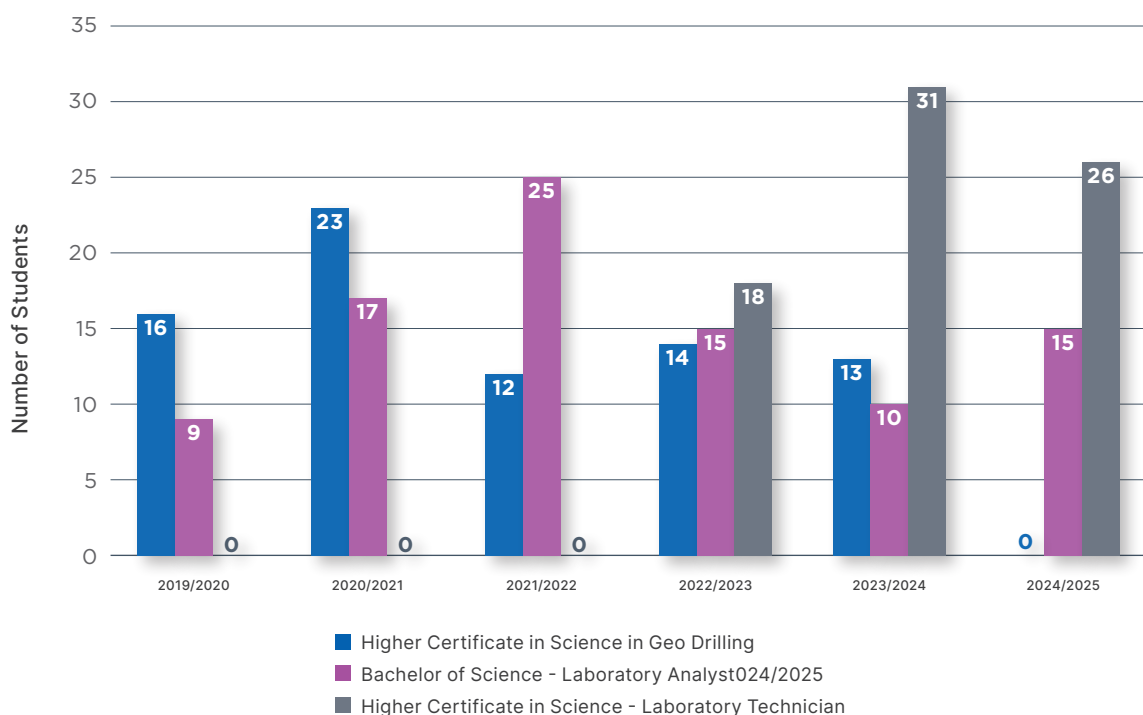


Figure 2: SETU CLA Apprenticeship Enrolment (2019/20 to 2024/25)

The current apprenticeship programmes supported by SETU, each representing a sustained commitment to educational quality, are identified below. These apprenticeship programmes are delivered across multiple campuses, and all fulfil the

earlier definition of an apprenticeship by integrating practical on-the-job training with academic learning. A description of the roles fulfilled by qualifying apprentices from each of the trades supported by SETU is also provided.

3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

CRAFT APPRENTICESHIPS OFFERED AT SETU



AIRCRAFT MECHANIC

NFQ Level 6

Maintains and troubleshoots aircraft systems to ensure airworthiness. Apprentices develop diagnostic skills and gain hands-on experience working on a variety of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft.



BRICK AND STONE LAYING

NFQ Level 6

Constructs and restores masonry structures, interpreting architectural plans. Apprentices gain expertise in using traditional and modern materials across residential, commercial, and heritage projects.



CARPENTRY AND JOINERY

NFQ Level 6

Crafts and installs wooden frameworks and finished joinery components. Apprentices hone precision skills in construction, renovation, and bespoke woodwork applications.



ELECTRICAL

NFQ Level 6

Installs and maintains electrical systems in residential, commercial, and industrial contexts. Apprentices acquire in-depth knowledge of electrical theory, systems testing, and regulatory compliance.



ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENTATION

NFQ Level 6

Calibrates and maintains control systems for industrial automation. Apprentices are trained to work with advanced control systems, PLCs, and instrumentation technologies.



ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEMS

NFQ Level 6

Installs and commissions advanced surveillance and access control technologies. Apprentices gain technical proficiency in integrated systems and regulatory standards in security technology.



INSTRUMENTATION

NFQ Level 6

Manages and monitors sensors and systems for industrial process control. Apprentices learn to interpret complex technical data and support critical manufacturing and processing operations.



MOTOR MECHANIC

NFQ Level 6

Diagnoses and repairs mechanical and electrical faults in vehicles. Apprentices develop a comprehensive understanding of automotive systems, from diagnostics to hybrid technologies.



PLUMBING

NFQ Level 6

Installs and maintains mechanical services across a wide range of buildings and facilities. Apprentices are equipped to work on heating, sanitation, and sustainable plumbing systems in diverse environments.

3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

CONSORTIUM-LED APPRENTICESHIPS (CLA) AT SETU



LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

NFQ Level 6

Performs scientific testing and lab-based analysis in sectors including biopharma and food. Apprentices gain core competencies in laboratory instrumentation, documentation, and industry-specific quality systems.



LABORATORY ANALYST

NFQ Level 7

Builds on Level 6 training to undertake advanced quality control and testing procedures. Apprentices deepen their knowledge of analytical chemistry, regulatory frameworks, and laboratory management.



GEO DRILLING

NFQ Level 6

Conducts geological drilling to support geotechnical and environmental investigations. Apprentices receive specialised training in drilling techniques, safety procedures, and subsurface data interpretation.



FIREFIGHTER AND EMS PRACTITIONER

NFQ Level 8

SETU has partnered with Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) and Dublin Fire Brigade in the development of a new public sector apprenticeship due for commencement in September 2027.



SETU's apprenticeship programmes are intentionally designed to create flexible and clearly defined progression pathways.

Current examples include the following:

- Qualified Laboratory Technicians can progress from NFQ Level 6 to Level 7 as a Laboratory Analyst, with further opportunities to advance to Level 8 or higher qualifications.
- Qualified apprentices in an Electrical or Mechanical disciplinary area with two years' post qualification industrial experience are qualified for entry onto the Level 7 BSc in Industrial Measurement and Control programme.
- Qualified Carpentry and Joinery apprentices are eligible for advanced entry onto Stage 2 of the Level 7 BSc in Construction Management programme.

These progression frameworks illustrate how apprenticeships not only offer immediate employment outcomes but also sustained academic and professional development. The integration of real-world industry experience with academic learning ensures that graduates are both work-ready and capable of contributing to innovation and leadership across a range of sectors.

By scaling its apprenticeship portfolio and deepening institutional expertise, SETU reaffirms its leadership role in regional skills development and its contribution to national apprenticeship reform.

Despite the progress made in CLA delivery, SETU has encountered a number of structural and operational barriers that require strategic attention. These include the complexity and length of the consortium formation process, which can limit SETU's agility in responding to emerging skills demands; challenges in securing and sustaining sufficient employer commitments, particularly among smaller enterprises with limited capacity to release staff for off-the-job training; and resource constraints in developing the specialist academic content and delivery infrastructure required for newer disciplinary areas.

In response, SETU's strategic direction for CLAs is to be selective and evidence-driven, prioritising expansion into areas where there is demonstrated employer demand, strong regional skills need, and clear institutional capacity to deliver. Rather than pursuing volume, SETU will focus on building deep, well-resourced partnerships within existing and new consortia, ensuring each CLA programme is sustainable, high-quality, and aligned to both learner and employer needs.

3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

Case study: Laboratory Analyst Apprenticeship – Developing Scientific Talent for Industry

SETU delivers the Laboratory Analyst Apprenticeship in partnership with IBEC and leading employers such as Sanofi, Pfizer, and MSD, supporting Ireland's pharmaceutical, biopharmaceutical, and chemical sectors. This three-year, Level 7 programme blends academic study with workplace experience, preparing apprentices for careers in regulated laboratory environments.

Apprentices spend two days per week with SETU and three days in industry, gaining skills in sample preparation, equipment calibration, microbiological testing, and quality systems. The curriculum is designed to meet industry standards and ensure graduates are work-ready, with a strong foundation in analytical techniques such as chromatography and water analysis.

SETU's Laboratory Analyst Apprenticeship is supported by a growing network of industry partners who host apprentices in real-world laboratory settings. These collaborations ensure learners gain practical experience with advanced equipment and processes, while adhering to strict regulatory standards. The programme's success is reflected in strong employer demand and positive

feedback from industry, positioning SETU as a key contributor to Ireland's life sciences talent pipeline.



BROADENING THE APPRENTICESHIP PORTFOLIO

As the university advances its strategic goal of enhancing regional impact through innovation and industry collaboration, there are clear opportunities to expand into new and emerging areas. Programmes such as the Aircraft Mechanic Apprenticeship, delivered under SETU's EASA Part-147 approval, demonstrates SETU's capacity

to respond to specialised industry demand and deliver regulated apprenticeships.

Case study: Aircraft Mechanic Apprenticeship

In September 2025, SETU launched its Aircraft Mechanic Apprenticeship, marking a significant advancement in its commitment to high-quality, industry-aligned education. Delivered under European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Part-147 regulation and approved by the Irish Aviation Authority, this programme places SETU among a select group of institutions in Ireland authorised to train aircraft mechanics to European aviation standards.

Drawing on its long-standing expertise in aerospace education, SETU has built a robust foundation of programmes, from avionics and aircraft systems to pilot studies and flight test engineering. The Aircraft Mechanic Apprenticeship builds on this legacy, offering learners hands-on, regulated training that meets the evolving needs of Ireland's aviation sector. SETU's strong academic infrastructure, experienced faculty, and industry partnerships ensure that apprentices graduate with the skills, confidence, and certification required to thrive in a global aviation environment.

This apprenticeship exemplifies SETU's strategic approach to workforce development, combining regulatory excellence, academic innovation, and industry collaboration to deliver future-ready talent for one of Ireland's most dynamic sectors.



SETU will continue to explore opportunities to develop CLAs across established disciplines such as engineering, built environment, science, and technology, while also identifying opportunities in emerging sectors. One such area is Offshore Wind and the broader blue economy, where significant growth in skills is anticipated nationally and regionally. The renewable energy sector and in particular, Offshore Wind is tasked with ambitious targets to achieve 5GW of renewable energy by 2030 for grid purposes, and another 2 GW for non-grid uses. The scale of this challenge will require investment

in infrastructure on a national scale both in the development, construction and maintenance of offshore wind farms, as well as grid infrastructural upgrades and significant terrestrial construction projects. In-demand skills as witnessed in other advanced offshore development countries, require apprenticeship programmes in relevant disciplinary areas. Current apprenticeship offerings in SETU in disciplinary areas such as electrical, electrical instrumentation and electronic security systems partially fulfil this demand. Additionally, the potential to develop further offerings, in collaboration

3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

with industry partners, and focused on the maritime sector, in areas such as seafaring and port operations will be explored. With campuses located in Waterford and Wexford, SETU is uniquely positioned to support the development of coastal-focused apprenticeships that align with Ireland's renewable energy ambitions and marine innovation strategies.

In addition to these areas, SETU will actively seek new opportunities to expand its apprenticeship portfolio into socially impactful and service-oriented disciplines. Potential programmes include Youth and Community Development, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Social Work, Play/Art Therapy, Social Pedagogy, Addiction Studies, and Managing Human Services. These areas reflect growing demand for skilled professionals in health, education, and social care, and align with SETU's strategic commitment to regional inclusion, wellbeing, and lifelong learning. To support

this expansion, SETU will also explore further collaborative opportunities with ETBs under the Tertiary Education Plan. This partnership model offers a pathway to co-develop and deliver programmes that are flexible, scalable, and rooted in community and employer needs. By leveraging SETU's academic expertise and the ETBs' strong regional networks, these programmes can provide meaningful career pathways while addressing critical skills gaps across the South East.

To identify opportunities for further scaling our impact and diversifying our portfolio, we will also conduct a strategic review of joining within existing apprenticeship consortia. Engaging with established networks offers the possibility to further extend SETU's reach into high-growth sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering, Infrastructure, Finance and ICT.

RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT & EXCELLENCE



SETU's engagement with WorldSkills Ireland is a strategic initiative that goes far beyond celebrating individual success. It is a deliberate effort to connect in with a competition of a calibre that provides a benchmark for training quality and an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of apprenticeships.

WorldSkills Ireland serves as a gateway to international collaboration. Through active involvement in judging, mentoring, and knowledge exchange, SETU strengthens its ties with industry and educational partners, both nationally and globally.

This engagement enhances the credibility of our apprenticeship provision and reinforces SETU's role in shaping Ireland's future workforce.

Recent achievements, including national wins in Mechanical Computer-Aided Design (CAD), Digital Construction, Plumbing and Bricklaying, demonstrate the calibre of SETU's training and the dedication of its staff. These successes

are not isolated events; they reflect a culture of excellence embedded across our apprenticeship programmes. By leveraging WorldSkills as a catalyst for innovation and reputation-building, SETU ensures that apprenticeships are recognised not only for individual achievement but for their contribution to Ireland's economic priorities, including housing, sustainability, and advanced manufacturing.

Case study: Excellence in Bricklaying – Supporting National Priorities

SETU's bricklaying apprenticeship programme exemplifies how skills-based education can directly support Ireland's national development goals. At WorldSkills Ireland 2025, an SETU apprentice secured a national win in the Bricklaying category, showcasing the strength of the programme and the commitment of its lecturers.

Bricklaying is a critical skill underpinning the Housing for All strategy, which aims to deliver thousands of new homes annually to address Ireland's housing crisis. This apprenticeship equips apprentices with technical precision and practical expertise, ensuring graduates can contribute effectively to the construction sector and accelerate housing delivery. This is not just about winning competitions—it is about demonstrating that SETU produces work-ready professionals who can meet urgent national priorities.



3 APPRENTICESHIP AT SETU

INVESTING FOR SUCCESS

Supported by HEA capital allocations, SETU has made significant capital investments in apprenticeship infrastructure over recent years, creating modern, industry-aligned learning environments across its campuses. Supported by the HEA, these developments ensure that facilities meet the evolving needs of apprenticeship programmes and reflect the latest updates in curricula, technologies, and industry standards. From specialist workshops to advanced simulation labs, SETU's physical environment is designed to support hands-on, high-quality training.

This investment reflects SETU's strategic commitment to excellence in applied education and workforce development. By aligning facilities with programme

requirements and industry expectations, the university ensures apprentices gain practical experience in settings that mirror real-world conditions. These environments also foster collaboration, innovation, and confidence among learners.

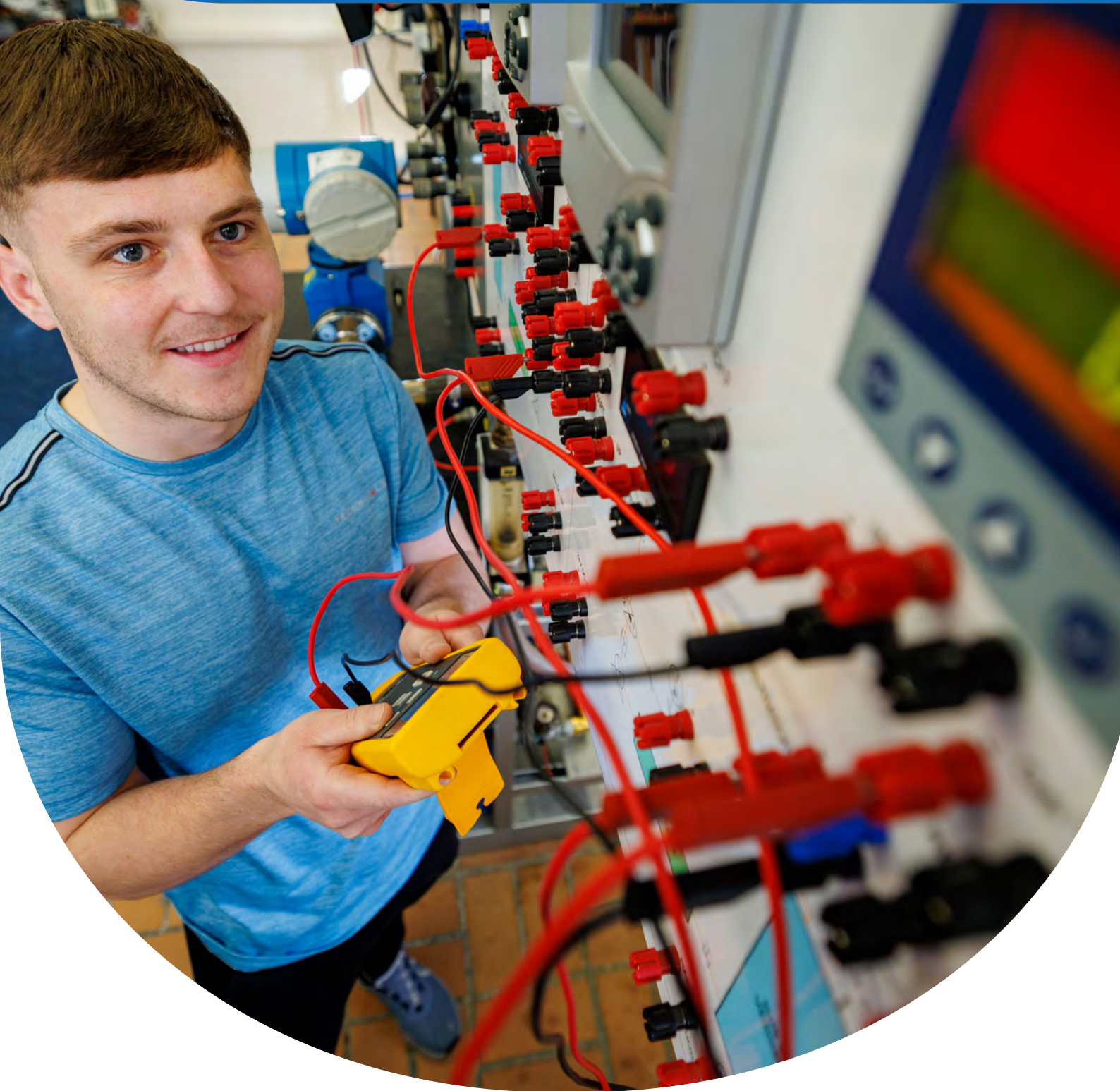
Looking ahead, SETU will continue to prioritise capital investment and facility enhancement as a core pillar of its apprenticeship strategy. This includes ongoing upgrades, expansion of specialist equipment, and the development of new spaces to support emerging sectors and technologies—ensuring SETU remains at the forefront of apprenticeship delivery in Ireland.

Case study: Investment in Electrical Apprenticeship Facilities

As part of the HEA capital allocation exceeding €1million for apprenticeship provision, investment of more than €700,000 was made in 2025 in the development of its Electrical and Electronic Security Systems (ESS) apprenticeship facilities in Waterford. This targeted investment was strategically aligned with current industry standards and with anticipated national reforms to apprenticeship curricula. It was explicitly intended to future-proof teaching and practical training workshops in advance of forthcoming national syllabus revalidation, thereby ensuring continued relevance, regulatory compliance, and the capacity to respond effectively to evolving sectoral requirements.

This funding supported the installation of state-of-the-art training equipment within practical workshops, enabling apprentices to engage with modern electrical and electronic security technologies reflective of current workplace practices. Complementing this, significant enhancements to IT infrastructure, including large interactive touchscreen displays across workshops and classrooms, have enabled technology-enhanced learning, schematic visualisation, and real-time demonstration of complex systems.

Collectively, this integrated approach to physical and digital infrastructure strengthens pedagogical quality, enhances the learner experience, and positions SETU to respond proactively to evolving national apprenticeship standards and industry expectations.



The following logic model illustrates the relationship between the strategic objectives included in the SETU Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and the objectives associated with this strategic plan:

APPRENTICESHIPS LOGIC MODEL

Our Vision to 2028

SETU's strategy is to deliver transformative impact for the South East and beyond through inclusive education, research, and innovation. Apprenticeship education is central to this vision, celebrated as a powerful model of learning that combines academic excellence with hands-on experience. Through strong partnerships with employers, Education and Training Boards, and industry consortia, SETU will deliver high-quality programmes that meet critical skills needs, strengthen industry, and create inclusive opportunities. Apprenticeships will stand as a flagship of SETU's mission, driving sustainable, inclusive and innovation-led economic growth and shaping a skilled, agile workforce for the future.

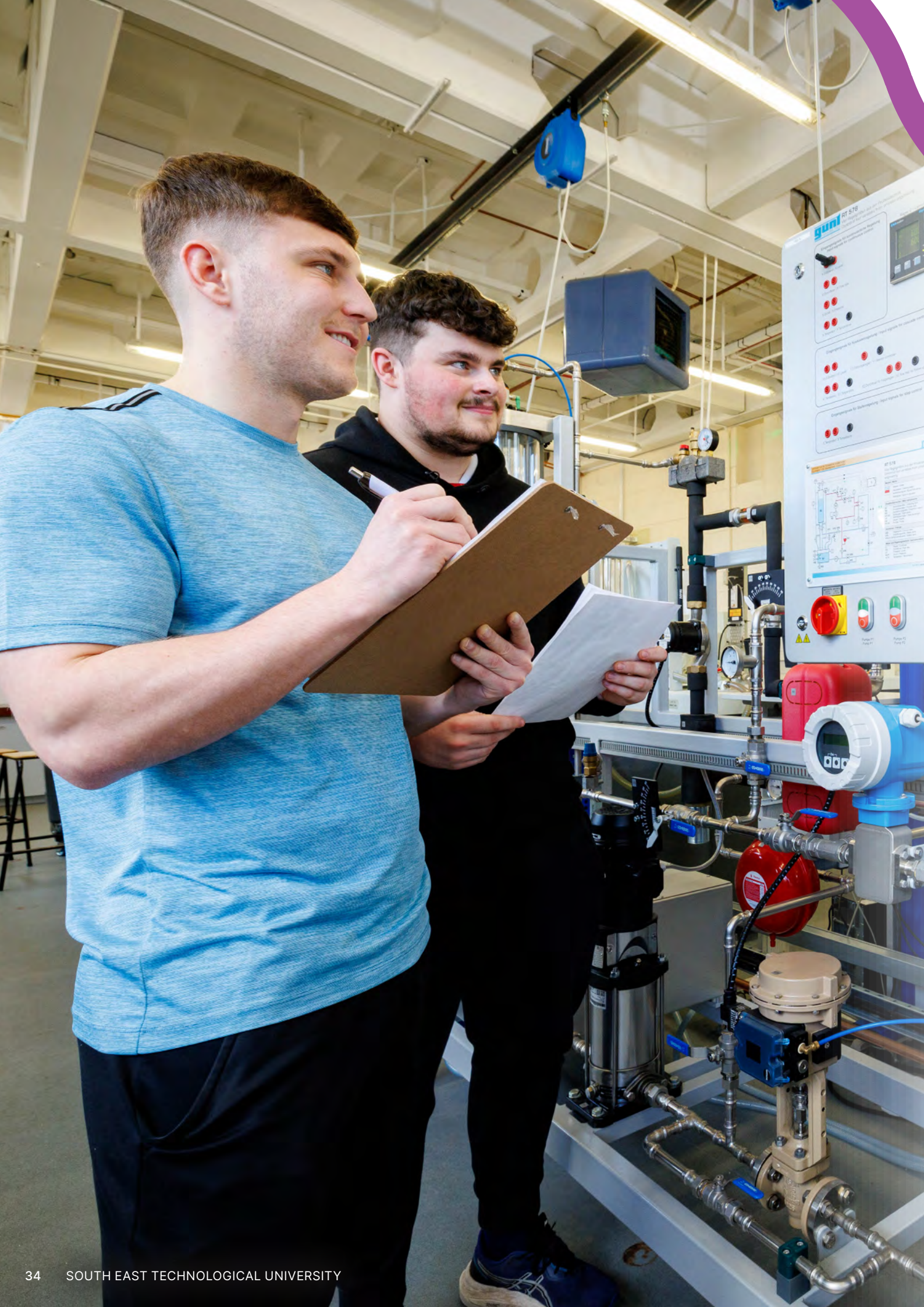
Our Strategic Priorities



4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

APPRENTICESHIPS LOGIC MODEL

Our Strategic Priorities	
A Infrastructure	Optimise the utilisation of existing infrastructure and develop new physical and digital infrastructure to accommodate growth and in support of SETU apprenticeship provision.
B Organisational Structure	Develop management structures that support the progression towards a national single integrated model, focusing on integrated data systems and shared performance indicators to enable evidence-based steering.
C Consortia and Partnerships	Drive national apprenticeship development by actively participating in external committees and supporting the formation of new consortia focused on creating industry-aligned apprenticeship programmes that deliver relevant skills and training.
D Professional Development Support	Investment in staff to focus on pedagogical innovation and peer learning to ensure consistent quality across both craft and consortia-led models, directly addressing the national priority of educator capacity as a foundation.
E Apprenticeship Promotion	Promote SETU apprenticeship programmes, as outlined in this strategy, with a strategic approach that highlights the benefits these programmes provide to both students and employers. Effectively execute the actions proposed in this strategic area with essential support from various functions within SETU.
F Financial Resources	Secure and strategically deploy the financial resources necessary to sustain and grow SETU's apprenticeship provision. Financial sustainability is a prerequisite for the delivery of all objectives in this strategy.
G Staff Resources	Ensure SETU has the right staff, in the right roles, with the right skills to deliver excellence in apprenticeship education.



5 OUR TEACHING & LEARNING

We will enhance the learning experience by introducing advanced teaching and learning approaches utilising digital tools and platforms. Where feasible, and where appropriate,

we will investigate the use of hybrid learning approaches together with on-the-job learning experience, thereby ensuring sustainability and adaptability.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

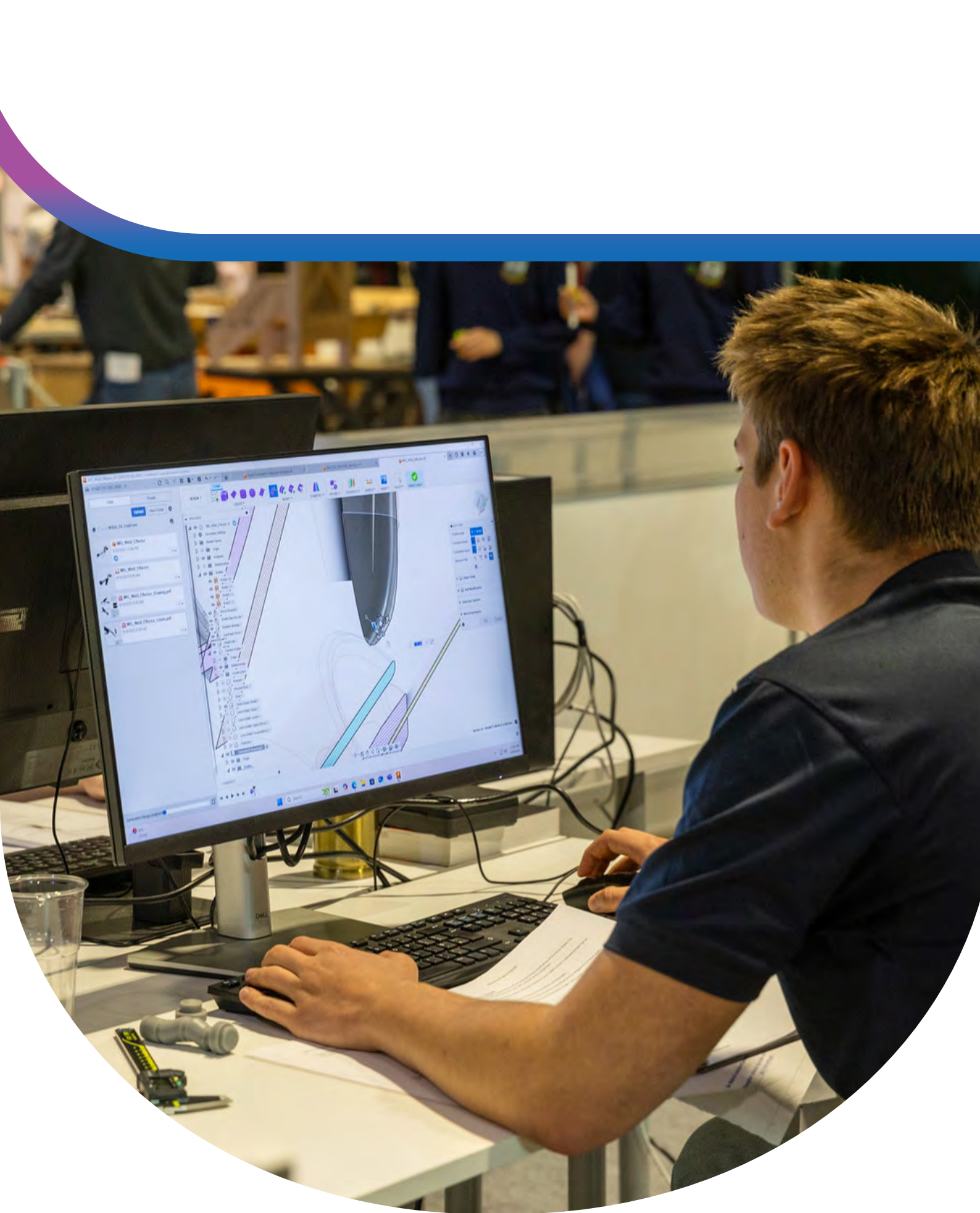
Develop, implement and evaluate innovative pedagogical approaches for enhanced apprenticeship learning.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
1.1	Conduct a review of apprenticeship programmes to identify opportunities to introduce innovative pedagogical approaches.	Track the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches across apprenticeship programmes.
1.2	Provide professional development to support staff transitioning from industry-based careers and to include train-the-trainer initiatives and pedagogical upskilling.	Monitor training participation and completion rates for staff.
1.3	Ensure the future development of apprenticeships and this strategy are aligned to the SETU Lifelong Learning strategy, Education for Sustainable Development and the SETU Programme Development Charter.	Future apprenticeship developments are aligned to these key SETU strategies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Develop, implement and evaluate a technology-enhanced apprenticeship teaching and learning ecosystem.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
2.1 Continue to invest in state-of-the-art training facilities and equipment.	Conduct facility and equipment enhancement evaluations to assess the quality, relevance, and impact of apprenticeship training facilities and equipment. Monitor to ensure that investments in physical and digital resources are utilised by staff and support a technologically enhanced learning environment.
2.2 Where feasible and appropriate, implement technology-enhanced learning (TEL), integrating interactive digital displays, video-based instruction, and schematic visualisation tools to modernise teaching methodologies and enhance learning experiences in classrooms and workshops.	Conduct a TEL resource review. Pilot TEL resources within classroom and workshop activities. Monitor the use of TEL across apprenticeship programmes. Conduct evaluation of methodologies with staff and students.
2.3 Support the use of the university Learning Management System (LMS) more widely across the SETU apprenticeship provision.	Conduct audit of staff professional development support needs relating to LMS usage. Conduct audit of learner support needs for LMS usage. Track LMS usage rates for apprenticeship staff and apprentices.





6 OUR LEARNERS

We will increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities within SETU and ensure clear progression pathways are created and maintained for SETU apprenticeship learners. Achieving this will involve a

comprehensive approach, including collaboration between internal academic departments, as well as partnerships with external education organisations, employers, and the apprentices themselves.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Raise regional awareness of apprenticeship educational opportunities within SETU and expand SETU apprenticeship provision to maximise apprenticeship educational opportunities for people in the region.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
3.1	Offer one or more new apprenticeships programmes, tailored to the regional economic landscape, via the creation of new consortia or by joining existing consortia.	Monitor the identification, development, and alignment of new apprenticeship programmes with the regional economic landscape.
3.2	During this strategy period, each Faculty will conduct a feasibility assessment regarding the development of new Consortium-Led or Craft Apprenticeships.	A proposal from each participating Faculty, outlining potential opportunities and identifying specific apprenticeship pathways for further consideration.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Recognise the accomplishments of apprenticeship learners and ensure also that progression pathways are available for all apprenticeship learners within SETU.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
4.1	Create an annual SETU Apprenticeship Awards event for apprenticeship learners.	Evaluate through feedback questionnaires how well the awards contribute to recognising excellence in apprenticeship learning and strengthening the overall apprenticeship community within SETU.
4.2	Facilitate and support greater participation in national and international 'Worldskills' competitions, ensuring adequate resource allocation to support staff engagement, student preparation, and competition readiness.	Create a targeted publicity campaign for these competitions. Monitor the participation rate, preparation, and performance outcomes of SETU apprentices in national and international 'WorldSkills' competitions. Gather qualitative feedback on experiences of students and staff who participate in competitions.
4.3	Create clear and accessible progression pathways from apprenticeships to other higher education programmes within SETU.	Monitor the clarity, accessibility, and effectiveness of progression pathways from apprenticeship programmes to other higher education programmes within SETU to include an awareness survey, information accessibility review and stakeholder feedback. Monitor to number of apprentices availing of progression pathways.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
4.4 Enhance learner visibility of progression opportunities, incorporating clear signposting and visual representations of academic and career pathways in collaboration with branding and communications teams.	Monitor the quality, clarity, and accessibility of progression pathway materials. Survey apprentices to measure their awareness of progression opportunities. Conduct a pathway accessibility review.
4.5 Develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) options and mobilise apprentice alumni to encourage qualified apprentices to re-engage to support their continuous professional development.	Appraise apprentice alumni feedback on CPD awareness. Assess, using qualitative and quantitative approaches the clarity and accessibility of communication channels (e.g., newsletters, emails, alumni platforms) that share CPD opportunities with qualified tradespersons.
4.6 Provide academic and career counselling services to support apprentices in their educational and career advancement.	Conduct an apprentice awareness survey to assess awareness of available academic and career counselling services. Track the number of students engaging in career-related workshops and support sessions. Monitor the accessibility, satisfaction, long-term impact, and overall effectiveness of services to ensure that apprentices are well-equipped for successful career and educational advancement.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Promote inclusivity and diversity within our apprenticeship provision creating equitable opportunities and fostering a more inclusive workforce.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
5.1 Where feasible, provide options for different learning styles and needs, such as adaptive technology, flexible hours, or remote learning.	Audit the extent to which apprenticeships offer flexible hours, self-paced learning, or asynchronous content, allowing apprentices to access the course material when it fits their schedule. Monitor the academic progression and completion rates of apprentices using flexible learning options and adaptive technologies.
5.2 Support national priorities in promoting and advocating access to apprenticeship from hard-to-reach groups. Consider the delivery of the Access to Apprenticeships (ATA) programme.	An action plan for the future rollout of the ATA national programme.
5.3 Actively promote additional learning support to apprentices, encouraging those that require support to participate.	Conduct a survey to assess the awareness level of apprentices of the additional learning support services available to them. Evaluate whether learning support services are sufficiently available and accessible to apprentices requiring such services.
5.4 Enhance the well-being of apprentices by implementing evidence-informed supports, fostering a sense of belonging, and improving access to tailored mental health and academic resources.	Completion of a specific well-being needs assessment for all incoming apprentices. Pilot bespoke support sessions with Student Services. Track participation levels in support sessions through quantitative feedback approaches.





7 OUR ENGAGEMENT

Relating to apprenticeship provision, SETU is committed to deepening its impact through strategic engagement with key stakeholders across the university and at both regional and

national levels. We will actively support and cultivate strategic alliances that drive the growth, relevance, and sustainability of apprenticeship provision.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

Support strategic alliances for apprenticeship growth and impact.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
6.1	Work with the SETU Communications and Marketing Office to enhance the branding and marketing of apprenticeships and ensure that apprenticeship education is positioned as a key pillar of SETU's educational offerings.	Measure the effectiveness of marketing initiatives (e.g. enhanced digital presence, physical signage, and promotional materials relating to SETU apprenticeships) via a brand recognition survey and marketing analytics.
6.2	Ensure an enhanced apprenticeship alumni engagement is represented in the SETU Alumni Engagement Plan. (Action 7.4 of the SETU Strategic Plan 2023-2028).	Monitor the implementation of the SETU Alumni Engagement Plan for the inclusion of apprenticeship alumni. Evaluate participation rates by tracking the number of apprenticeship alumni involved in alumni events and related activities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6 (continued)

Recognise the accomplishments of apprenticeship learners and ensure also that progression pathways are available for all apprenticeship learners within SETU.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
6.3	Coordinate and strengthen cross-faculty engagement in developing strategic alliances that support the growth, relevance, and sustainability of the SETU apprenticeship provision.	Monitor related cross-faculty engagement initiatives.
6.4	Establish a Regional Apprenticeship Advisory Board to strategically engage with SMEs and industry bodies across the South East. Working through South East Regional Skills and related forums, this board will deepen the understanding of consortium-led apprenticeships, identify training and mentorship needs, and unlock new apprenticeship opportunities.	Delivery of an Small-Medium Enterprise (SME) Engagement Action Plan and a comprehensive report outlining viable options for future apprenticeship development.
6.5	Explore opportunities to share facilities and resources with Kilkenny Carlow ETB, Waterford Wexford ETB and other Partner ETBs in developing new tertiary collaborative opportunities.	An action plan to engage with ETBs and options for collaborative opportunities developed.
6.6	Develop a coordinated engagement plan to increase SETU's presence in second-level schools, leveraging open days, industry showcase and other targeted events to promote apprenticeships to students, parents, and career guidance professionals.	Monitor the effectiveness and reach of the SETU coordinated engagement efforts with second-level schools to include a focus on event participation data, event type breakdown and follow-up engagement.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
6.7 Engage with Engineers Ireland and other Accreditation bodies to support on the accreditation of Apprenticeship programmes.	Mapping of apprenticeship programmes against accreditation bodies and application submitted where appropriate.
6.8 Engage with EU Conexus, our European University, to develop alliances and share best practice in the future development of the apprenticeship ecosystem in SETU.	Monitor the engagement with EU Conexus partners and shared initiatives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

Play a leading role in supporting the development of a national, single integrated model for apprenticeship provision.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
7.1 Drive the development of a cohesive apprenticeship quality assurance system by contributing SETU's expertise to national discussions and strategic initiatives.	Measure the impact of SETU's contributions to national fora, ensuring our institutional insights are actively shaping the integration of craft and consortia-led models.
7.2 Review the evolving landscape of craft-based apprenticeships to identify where SETU's leadership as a Coordinating Provider could provide the greatest institutional and sectoral value.	Analyse the resource requirements and strategic opportunities of the Coordinating Provider model to ensure any potential transition supports long-term sustainability and excellence.



8 OUR STAFF

SETU is committed to the development, upskilling and support of staff in both the design and delivery of apprenticeships across the faculties in the university.

We will actively develop continuous professional development initiatives to provide staff with the confidence and tools to develop and expand the SETU apprenticeship portfolio and enhance the teaching, learning and quality assurance of the programmes for our learners.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8

Develop expertise and capacity in apprenticeship programme management and delivery.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
8.1	Identify CPD initiatives and training opportunities aligned with apprenticeship and technological developments.	Conduct a CPD needs assessment audit. Create CPD sessions, aligned with the apprenticeship programme delivery calendar, and focused on the identified developmental needs of apprenticeship staff. Monitor CPD participation rates and relevance metrics. Solicit evaluative feedback from participants.
8.2	Formalise parity for apprenticeship roles by integrating programme leadership positions and governance representation into the standard institutional framework.	Review organisational structures to ensure apprenticeship leadership and governance roles are fully aligned with, and carry the same institutional weight as, other academic programmes.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8 (continued)

Develop expertise and capacity in apprenticeship programme management and delivery.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
8.3 Ensure apprenticeship staff are fully integrated within the broader university ecosystem and are participating in university committees.	Evidence of apprenticeship staff participation in broader university activities.
8.4 Develop and roll out a training and awareness plan for SETU staff across the university on apprenticeship design, development and operations.	A plan in place with Human Resources and/or the Centre for Academic Practice.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 9

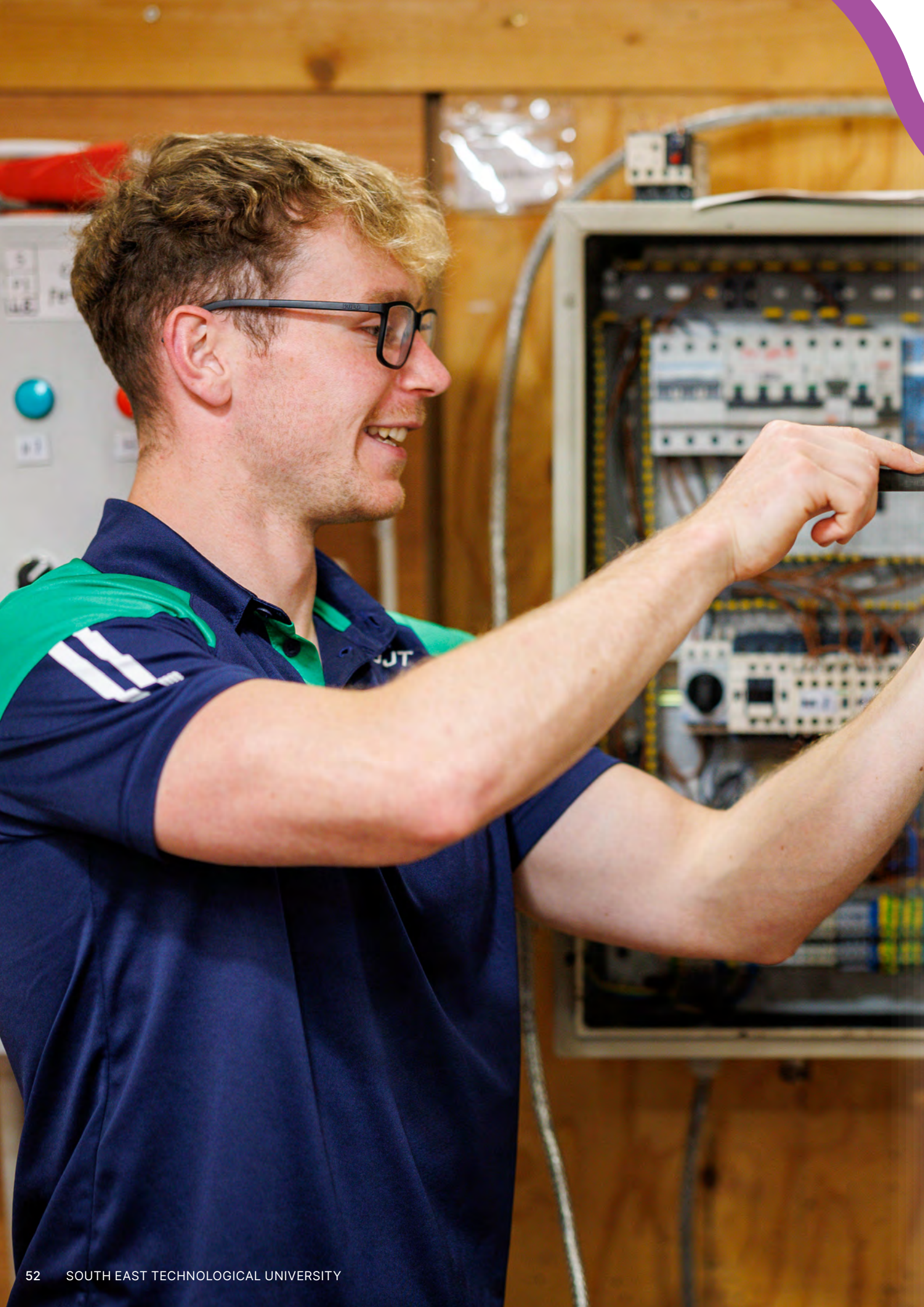
Foster a culture of apprenticeship advocacy and awareness.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
9.1 Enhance awareness and integration of apprenticeships at all levels throughout SETU, ensuring greater visibility, cross-departmental collaboration, and representation in decision-making processes.	Conduct pre- and post-implementation staff awareness and perception surveys to measure institutional awareness and attitudes toward apprenticeship education among academic and administrative staff.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 10

Recognise and reward contributions to apprenticeship success.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
10.1 Empower apprenticeship staff to showcase their impact through the annual SETU Excellence Awards and proactively celebrate excellence in PMSS activities that drive apprenticeship success	Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure award criteria authentically capture the unique nature of apprenticeship and Professional, Managerial and Support Staff (PMSS) roles relating to our apprenticeship provision. Monitor engagement and success rates to ensure these contributions are fully represented and honoured.



9 ENABLERS

The objectives outlined in the previous sections will demand a transformation in organisational capacity and capability.

Additionally, delivering this strategy requires sustained investment across three core resource dimensions: financial resources, physical buildings and infrastructure, and staff. Financial sustainability underpins every enabler, from capital investment in facilities to the ongoing costs of programme development, consortium participation, and staff professional development. The enablers below reflect these resource dimensions and are designed to be mutually reinforcing.

Enabler A: Infrastructure

Optimise the utilisation of existing infrastructure and develop new physical and digital infrastructure to accommodate growth and support of SETU apprenticeship provision.

This enabler is directly resourced through capital funding from the HEA, SETU's own capital programme, and targeted bids for national infrastructure investment. Prioritisation of spending will be guided by programme demand, safety and compliance requirements, and alignment with national apprenticeship standards.

Enabler B: Organisational Structure

Develop management structures that support the progression towards a national single integrated model, focusing on integrated data systems and shared performance indicators to enable evidence-based steering.

Resource implications include investment in data management systems, governance support roles, and the potential establishment of a dedicated SETU Apprenticeship Office or Centre for Apprenticeships, which will require both financial allocation and appropriate staffing.

Enabler C: Consortia and Partnerships

Drive national apprenticeship development by actively participating in external committees and supporting the formation of new consortia focused on creating industry-aligned apprenticeship programmes that deliver relevant skills and training.

Staff time and travel for committee representation, and seed funding to support new consortium development activities, are the primary resource requirements associated with this enabler.

9 ENABLERS

Enabler D: Professional Development Support

Investment in staff will focus on pedagogical innovation and peer learning to ensure consistent quality across both craft and consortia-led models, directly addressing the national priority of educator capacity as a foundation.

This enabler is resourced primarily through the SETU staff development budget, in partnership with the Centre for Academic Practice and Human Resources (HR). Dedicated CPD funding for apprenticeship staff will be advocated for as part of SETU's annual budgetary planning process.

Enabler E: Apprenticeship Promotion

Promote SETU apprenticeship programmes, as outlined in this strategy, with a strategic approach that highlights the benefits these programmes provide to both students and employers. Effectively execute the actions proposed in this strategic area with essential support from various functions within SETU.

The primary resource requirement for this enabler is staff time from the Communications and Marketing Office, supported by a dedicated promotional budget for apprenticeship-related campaigns, events, and materials. Annual budgetary provision for apprenticeship promotion will be sought as part of SETU's planning cycle.

Enabler F: Financial Resources

Secure and strategically deploy the financial resources necessary to sustain and grow SETU's apprenticeship provision. Financial sustainability is a prerequisite for the delivery of all objectives in this strategy. A dedicated financial planning framework for apprenticeship could support mapping recurrent and capital income streams against the cost of programme delivery, staff development, infrastructure maintenance, and administration.

Enabler G: Staff Resources

Ensure SETU has the right staff, in the right roles, with the right skills to deliver excellence in apprenticeship education.

People are SETU's most important resource in the delivery of apprenticeships. This enabler encompasses strategic workforce planning for apprenticeship, including the recruitment and retention of academic and technical staff with appropriate industry expertise; the creation of dedicated programme leadership and coordination roles as apprenticeship provision grows; and the provision of structured induction and ongoing support for staff new to apprenticeship delivery.

ENABLER A: INFRASTRUCTURE

Optimise the utilisation of existing infrastructure and develop new physical and digital infrastructure to accommodate growth and in support of enhanced SETU apprenticeship provision.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
11.1 Advocate for national policies and funding that support the sustainable growth of the integrated apprenticeship model.	Monitor the number and type of advocacy campaigns, events, or initiatives led by SETU to promote policies and funding for apprenticeship programmes.
11.2 Leverage capital funding sources to continue to expand and develop apprenticeship infrastructure.	Track and document the identification of new and existing capital funding sources that can be leveraged for the development and expansion of apprenticeship infrastructure. Measure, through total annual funding received, how successful SETU has been in securing capital funding for infrastructure.
11.3 Develop and maintain an apprenticeship infrastructure investment plan, updated annually, that maps capital priorities across the Carlow, Waterford, and Wexford campuses against programme delivery requirements and projected growth in enrolments.	Review and update the infrastructure investment plan annually. Track the proportion of planned investments delivered on schedule and within budget.

ENABLER B: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Develop management structures that support the progression towards a national single integrated model, focusing on integrated data systems and shared performance indicators to enable evidence-based steering.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
12.1	Establish a framework to support the development and implementation of sustainable apprenticeship management structures and systems as outlined in this strategy.	Comprehensive cost analysis of framework conducted. Funding sources identified to support plan implementation and to include the aligning of budgetary support with strategic priorities.
12.2	Complete a comprehensive review of existing management and governance structures to determine the most optimal approach, for example, a dedicated apprenticeship office within SETU to oversee apprenticeship-related activities or a Centre for Apprenticeships.	Review completed with a proposal for a new governance structure for apprenticeships within SETU.
12.3	Develop robust governance frameworks to ensure effective management and accountability. Develop the SETU university wide Apprenticeship Forum.	Monitor the development of a comprehensive governance framework that clearly outlines the structures, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in apprenticeship management. Assess whether all key stakeholders are appropriately represented in the governance structure and decision-making processes. SETU Apprenticeship Forum in place and active with Terms of Reference.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
12.4 Align recurrent budget allocations with apprenticeship governance priorities identified through the structural review, ensuring any new office or centre established under Action 12.2 is resourced with appropriate staffing, systems, and operational funding from the outset.	Confirm budget allocation in place for apprenticeship governance structures within the annual financial planning cycle. Monitor year-on-year expenditure against plan.



ENABLER C: CONSORTIA AND PARTNERSHIPS

Drive national apprenticeship development by actively participating in external committees and supporting the formation of new consortia focused on creating industry-aligned apprenticeship programmes that deliver relevant skills and training.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
13.1	Actively participate in external committees fulfilling roles as essential drivers of apprenticeship development nationally.	Monitor the presence of SETU on relevant committees and to ensure appropriate representation at each meeting. Calculate number of citations of SETU's participation in national policy documents, including, but not limited to, national apprenticeship policies, frameworks, or practices.
13.2	Participate in or support the creation of one or more new consortia, to develop apprenticeship programmes that are aligned with industry needs and provide relevant skills and training.	Track the number of new consortia supported or facilitated by SETU. Conduct an ongoing evaluation with partners to ensure that apprenticeship programmes created are industry-driven, responsive, and sustainable.
13.3	Identify and secure the financial and staff resources required for active consortium participation, including ring-fencing budget for committee representation, travel, consortium development activities, and seed-funding contributions, where required to initiate new programme development.	Confirm annual budget allocation in place for consortium activities. Track expenditure against budget. Report annually on staff time and cost associated with consortium engagement.

ENABLER D: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Investment in staff will focus on pedagogical innovation and peer learning to ensure consistent quality across both craft and consortia-led models, directly addressing the national priority of Educator capacity as a foundation.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
14.1 Collaborate with the SETU Centre for Academic Practice to develop training support for apprenticeship staff, ensuring it reflects the practical nature of apprenticeship education. Ensure the training also includes development for the adult learner.	Track the number of co-designed training offerings specifically tailored for apprenticeship andragogy (e.g., workshops, CPD sessions, online modules). Monitor the apprenticeship staff participation and engagement rates. Gather evaluation feedback from participants in relation to CPD activities.
14.2 Identify and secure the financial resources and staff time required to deliver a structured annual CPD programme for all apprenticeship staff, including access to external training, industry placement opportunities, and attendance at relevant national and international events and conferences.	Confirm dedicated CPD budget allocation in SETU's annual planning cycle. Track annual CPD spend per apprenticeship staff member and monitor against target participation levels.

ENABLER E: APPRENTICESHIP PROMOTION

Promote SETU apprenticeship programmes, as outlined in this strategy, with a strategic approach that highlights the benefits these programmes provide to both students and employers. Effectively execute the actions proposed in this strategic area with essential support from various functions within SETU.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
15.1 Leverage the support of the Communications and Marketing team to drive the communications and marketing initiatives included in this plan.	Monitor the number of coordination meetings to plan, review, and adapt associated marketing activities. Track the number of marketing campaigns or initiatives delivered.
15.2 Work with employers to provide testimonials, case studies, and success stories that demonstrate the benefits of apprenticeships.	Track the number of employer testimonials, case studies, or success stories collected and published annually. Monitor audience engagement and impact analytics to include views, clicks, and shares on digital platforms etc.
15.3 Organise virtual or in-person promotional events to provide detailed information about the apprenticeship programmes offered by SETU.	Monitor the number and type of events organised annually (e.g. webinars, career fairs, and employer panel discussions). Track the attendance and participation metrics for the above events. Gather evaluative feedback from participants using quantitative and qualitative approaches.
15.4 Foster collaboration and ensure readiness across university faculties to support the expansion of apprenticeship provision.	Monitor opportunities provided to build a shared understanding and encourage active cross-faculty collaboration in support of expanding apprenticeship provision.



Action	Evaluation Mechanism
15.5 Identify and confirm the annual promotional budget required to deliver the marketing and events activities set out in this enabler, in partnership with the communications and marketing office and relevant faculties, as part of SETU's annual planning and budgeting process.	Promotional budget confirmed in annual plan. Track actual spend against budget. Monitor return on investment through enrolment trends, event attendance, and brand recognition metrics.

ENABLER F: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Secure and strategically deploy the financial resources necessary to sustain and grow SETU's apprenticeship provision. Financial sustainability is a prerequisite for the delivery of all objectives in this strategy. A dedicated financial planning framework for apprenticeship could support the mapping of recurrent and capital income streams against the cost of programme delivery, staff development, infrastructure maintenance, and administration.

	Action	Evaluation Mechanism
16.1	Consider the development of a dedicated apprenticeship financial planning framework that maps all income streams (recurrent grant, capitation, employer contributions, capital funding) against the full cost of delivery across all apprenticeship programmes, updated annually as part of SETU's institutional planning cycle.	Financial framework proposed and reviewed annually. Confirm income-to-cost ratio is tracked per programme. Identify and flag financial sustainability risks for senior management attention.
16.2	Actively advocate with DFHERIS and the HEA for enhanced core funding for apprenticeship delivery, particularly for programmes with significant equipment, facilities, or supervisory requirements, and for a funding model that better reflects the true cost of high-quality CLA provision.	Track submissions made to national policy consultations referencing funding adequacy. Monitor year-on-year changes in core funding allocation for apprenticeship and benchmark against peer institutions.
16.3	Explore and develop additional income streams to supplement core public funding, including employer co-investment models, research and innovation funding linked to apprenticeship, and where appropriate, philanthropic or commercial partnerships.	Report annually on the number and value of supplementary income streams developed. Monitor the proportion of total apprenticeship income derived from non-core sources over the strategy period.

ENABLER G: STAFF RESOURCES

Ensure SETU has the right staff, in the right roles, with the right skills to deliver excellence in apprenticeship education.

People are SETU's most important resource in the delivery of apprenticeships. This enabler encompasses strategic workforce planning for apprenticeship, including recruitment and retention of academic and technical staff with appropriate industry expertise, and ensuring workload models reflect the particular demands placed on apprenticeship staff.

Action	Evaluation Mechanism
17.1 In collaboration with HR, complete a strategic workforce planning assessment for apprenticeship delivery, identifying current and projected staffing requirements across academic, technical, and administrative roles, and developing a recruitment and succession plan aligned to portfolio growth projections.	Workforce assessment completed and reviewed annually. Monitor vacancy rates in apprenticeship roles and the required time to fill positions.
17.2 Develop and implement a structured induction programme for all staff newly engaged in apprenticeship delivery, covering the legislative and regulatory framework, the employer relationship, learner support requirements, quality assurance obligations, and SETU's apprenticeship strategy and values.	Induction programme in place and delivered to all new apprenticeship staff. Track completion rates. Gather evaluative feedback from participants to assess effectiveness and relevance. Review and update content annually.
17.3 Formalise and resource dedicated programme leadership and coordination roles as apprenticeship provision grows, ensuring each programme area has clear ownership, management accountability, and appropriate administrative support to sustain quality delivery and employer engagement.	Track the number of formal programme leadership and coordination roles established across the apprenticeship portfolio. Assess clarity of roles and responsibilities through annual staff survey. Monitor whether each programme has a named lead and adequate administrative support.



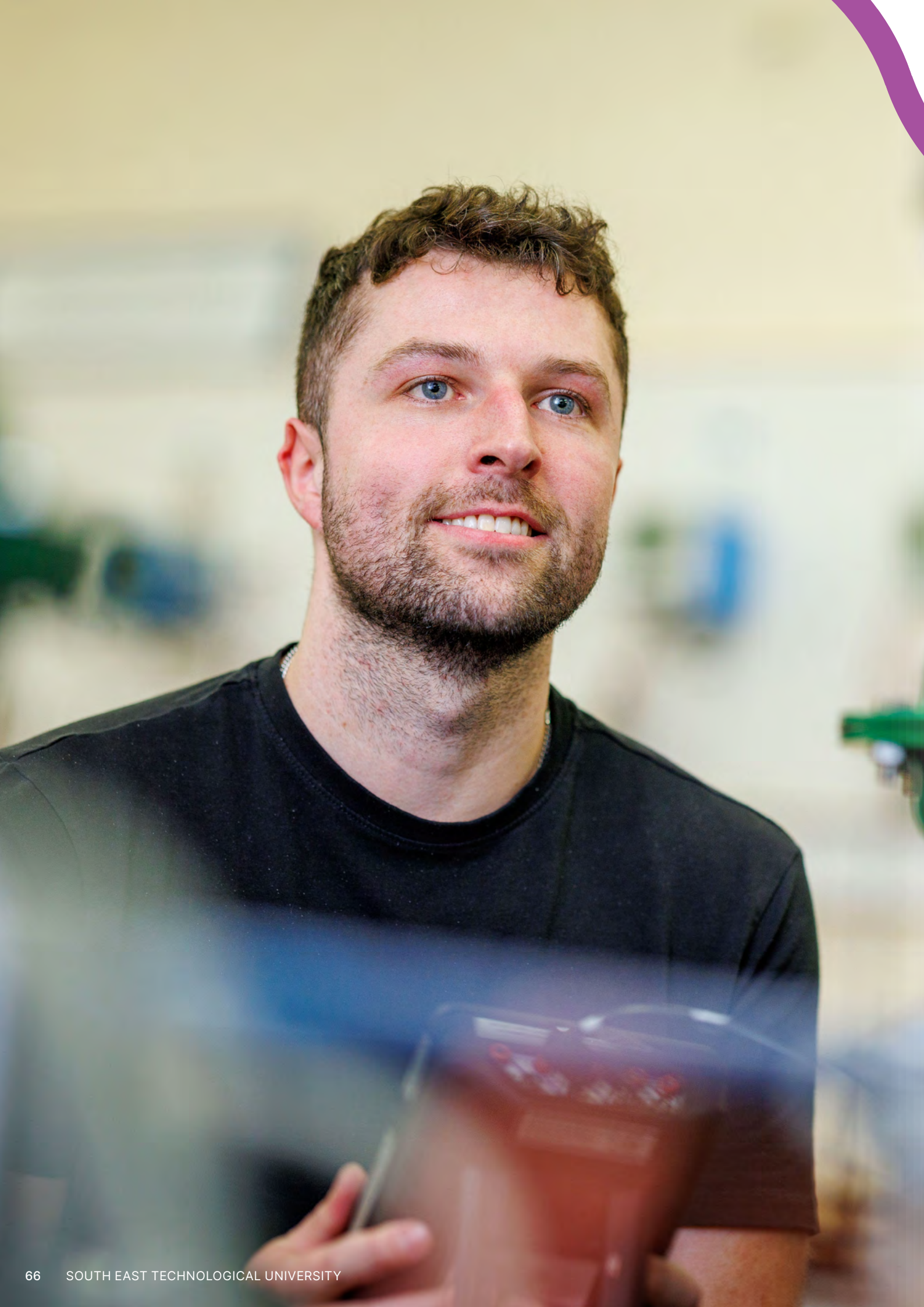
10 CONCLUSION

SETU is committed to the continued development of a responsive, sustainable, and high-quality apprenticeship portfolio that reflects the evolving needs of learners, employers, and communities across the South East. With a strong foundation in craft and technical apprenticeships, the university will continue to expand its offerings in areas where there are clear demand, capacity, and strategic alignment.

Growth will be guided by SETU's institutional priorities and informed by evidence of workforce need, employer engagement, and regional impact. The university will explore new consortium-based apprenticeship models across sectors such as engineering, sustainability, science, and human services, ensuring programmes are relevant, scalable, and aligned with national policy. Collaboration with ETBs under the Tertiary Education Plan will support this development.

SETU's investment in modern facilities, equipment, and learning environments, supported by the HEA, ensures that apprentices train in industry-standard settings that evolve with curriculum and sectoral changes. The university also recognises the importance of staff development and will continue to support academic and technical teams in delivering excellence in apprenticeship education.

Achievements such as national recognition at WorldSkills Ireland demonstrate the quality and competitiveness of SETU's apprenticeship programmes. By maintaining a learner-centred approach, fostering strong industry partnerships, and investing in infrastructure and staff, SETU is shaping an apprenticeship model that is inclusive, future-focused, and positioned for long-term success.



11 TESTIMONIALS

“At Suir Engineering we see our Craft Apprentice Programme as a vital investment in our future talent pipeline and key to supporting business growth. We want our Apprentices to receive high quality training in order that they embrace their learning journey to reach their full potential. We are proud of our relationship with SETU which plays a key role ensuring we are producing top quality trades people through delivery of a best-in-class training experience.”

Ronan Quinn, Apprentice Programme Manager
Suir Engineering

“Hanley Calibration extend our sincere gratitude to SETU staff and lecturers for their invaluable partnership in training our Instrumentation apprentices. The technical expertise and professional dedication of your department have directly contributed to building a highly skilled and capable workforce for our industry.”

Barry Glavin, Service Director
Hanley Calibration

“Winning World Skills Bricklaying is an experience I’ll never forget. I want to thank my lecturers for their help and guidance throughout my apprenticeship in SETU and at the World Skills.”

Oisín Byrne Power, World Skills Ireland 2025 Winner in Brick & Stone laying
SETU Waterford

“World Skills Ireland showcases the country’s best talent & skills every year. We are very proud to represent SETU and the South East, let alone have winners at this event.”

John Purcell, Lecturer in Brick & Stone laying
SETU Waterford

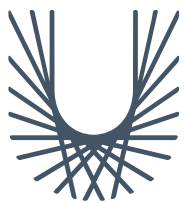
“Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) plays a pivotal role in supporting South East Technological University’s (SETU) apprenticeship strategy by acting as a regional anchor for vocational education and training. With its extensive network of schools, colleges, and training centres, KCETB helps bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs, ensuring apprenticeships are accessible, relevant, and responsive to local economic demands. This partnership between KCETB and SETU strengthens the region’s capacity to deliver high-quality apprenticeships that fuel innovation and workforce development.”

Dr Lindsay Malone, CEO
Kilkenny Carlow Education & Training Board (KCETB)

References

- Council of the European Union (2020) 'Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020/C 417/01)', Official Journal of the European Union, C 417, 2 December, pp. 1–16. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2020_417_R_0001
- Department of Education and Skills. (2020). *Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020*. Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Action-Plan-ExpandApprenticeship-Traineeship-in-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>
- DFHERIS. (2021a). *Action Plan for Apprenticeship, 2021 to 2025*. Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/publications/action-plan-for-apprenticeship-2021-to-2025/>
- DFHERIS. (2021b). *Action Plan for Apprenticeship, 2021 to 2025 FAQs*. Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/further-information-on-the-action-plan-for-apprenticeship-2021-2025.pdf>
- National Apprenticeship Office. (2017). *Developing a National Apprenticeship Handbook*. National Apprenticeship Office. Available at: <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/Developing-a-National-Apprenticeship-Handbook.pdf>
- National Apprenticeship Office. (2023). *Developing and Delivering National Apprenticeships in Ireland a Handbook*. National Apprenticeship Office. Available at: https://content.apprenticeship.ie/f/83224/x/46a5139d42/apprenticeshiphandbook_publicationjanuary2023.pdf
- OECD (2026) *Evaluation of the Action Plan for Apprenticeships: Initial stakeholder feedback analysis and considerations*. [Presentation] OECD Centre for Skills, 14 January 2026.
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland. (2016a). *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/qg-3-topic-specific-qa-guidelines-for-statutory-apprenticeship-programmes.pdf>
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland. (2016b). *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/qg-1-core-statutory-quality-assurance-guidelines.pdf>
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland. (2022). *A Review of Consortia-Led Apprenticeships in Ireland*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-11/QQI%20Insight%20A%20Review%20of%20Consortia-Led%20Apprenticeships%20in%20Ireland.pdf>
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland. (2025) *Green Paper on Intermediate Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 & 6*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2025-01/qqi-green-paper-on-intermediate-qualifications-at-nfq-levels-5-6-1.pdf>
- SOLAS. (2018). *Review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship*. SOLAS. Available at: <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/fb640012f5/pathwaysapprenticeshipreviewnov18.pdf>
- SOLAS. (2022). *Further Education and Training Funding Model Review*. SOLAS. Available at: <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/99ca806e56/fet-funding-model-review-june-2022.pdf>





**SE
TU**

Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Oirdheiscirt

South East
Technological
University

T: 0818 121212
setu.ie

Cork Road
Waterford
X91 KOEK

Kilkenny Road
Carlow
R93 V960

Summerhill Road
Wexford
Y35 KA07

