

2024 Conference on “Micro-credentials: What, Why, Who and How?”

FET Micro-Qualifications – an agile response to future proof skills

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FET Micro-Qualifications – an agile response to future proof skills

- Introduction to SOLAS, The Further Education and Training Authority of Ireland
- Growth of Further Education and Training (FET)
- Skills to Advance Policy Initiative
- FET Micro-Qualifications
- Strategic Priorities for FET 2025-2029

SOLAS

The Further Education & Training Authority in Ireland



- **SOLAS's** mission is to plan, fund and co-ordinate further education and training in Ireland.
- Over 423,000 people in 2023 – 1 in 10 of the population avail of FET.
- Our ambition is to grow this further to half-a-million people by 2026
- The FET sector has experienced unprecedented growth and demand for FET in 2023, with the learner base growing by some 17% from 2022 to 2023.

- FET is delivered by 16 **Education and Training Boards (ETBs)** nationally

- **2019** SOLAS initiated Skills to Advance, a workforce development initiative.
- **2024** FET Micro-Qualifications, a new FET offer to target critical upskilling needs.
- Strategically positioning FET as a key **business resource** delivering flexible, accredited and future proofed upskilling for SMEs
- **Driving change and reform across the FET system** – providing easier access; simplified pathways; a consistent learner experience; and a stronger identity.



The Role of SOLAS

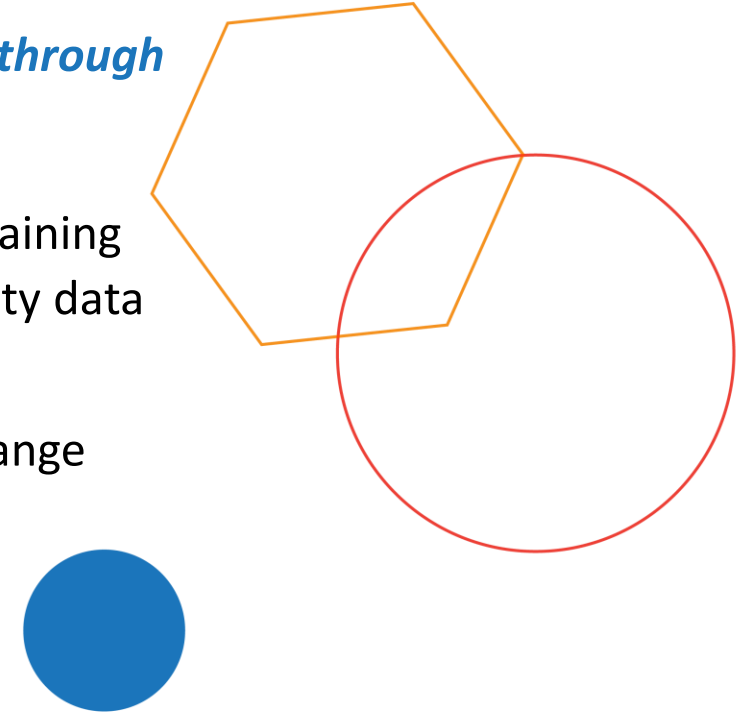
SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland.

Our vision is to power the potential of individuals, communities and enterprise through lifelong learning and workforce transformation.

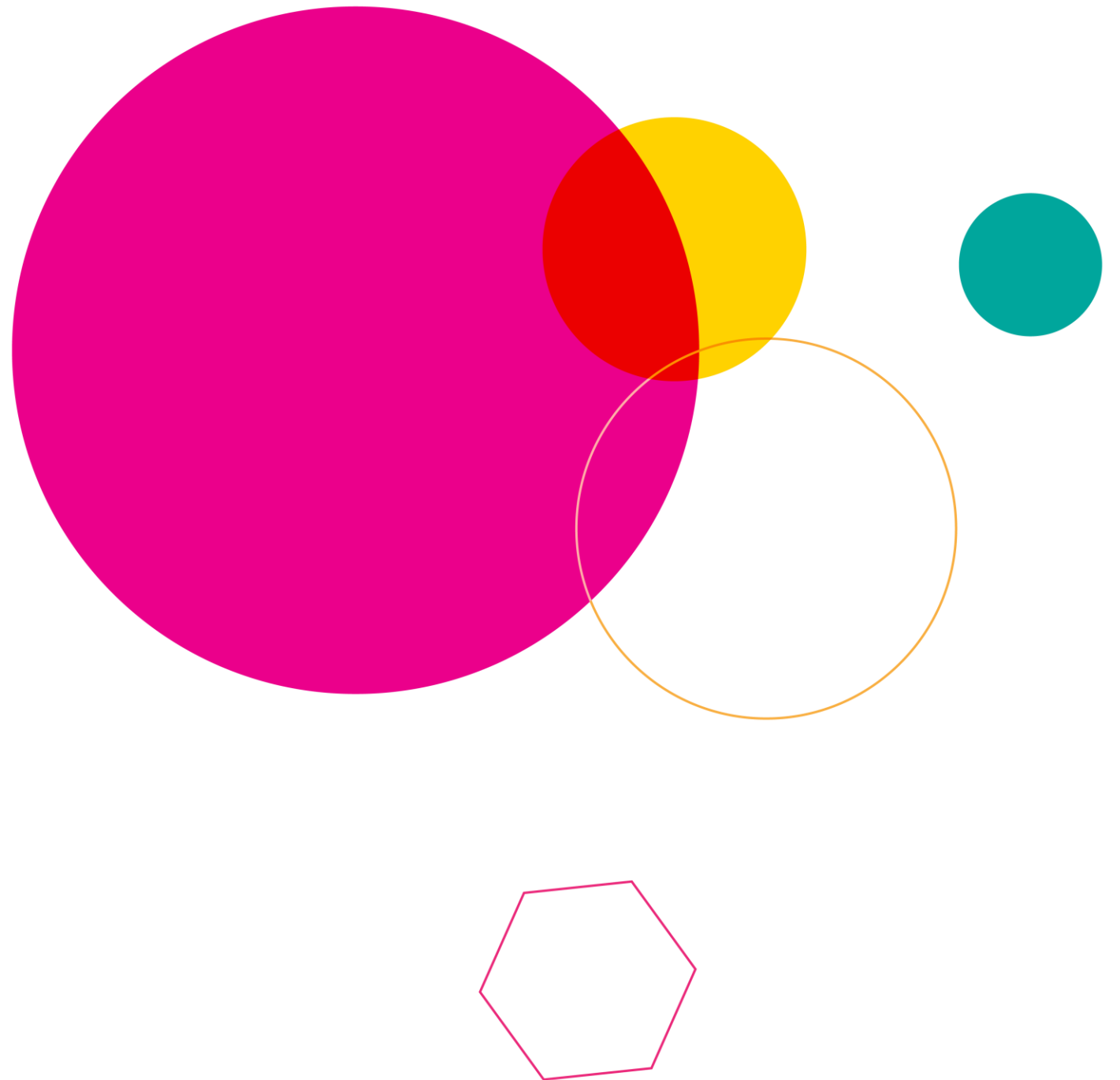
We manage, co-ordinate and support the delivery of FET by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), monitoring its delivery and providing funding based on good quality data and positive outcomes.

We are leading an ambitious **FET Strategy Transforming Learning** and driving change across the FET system:

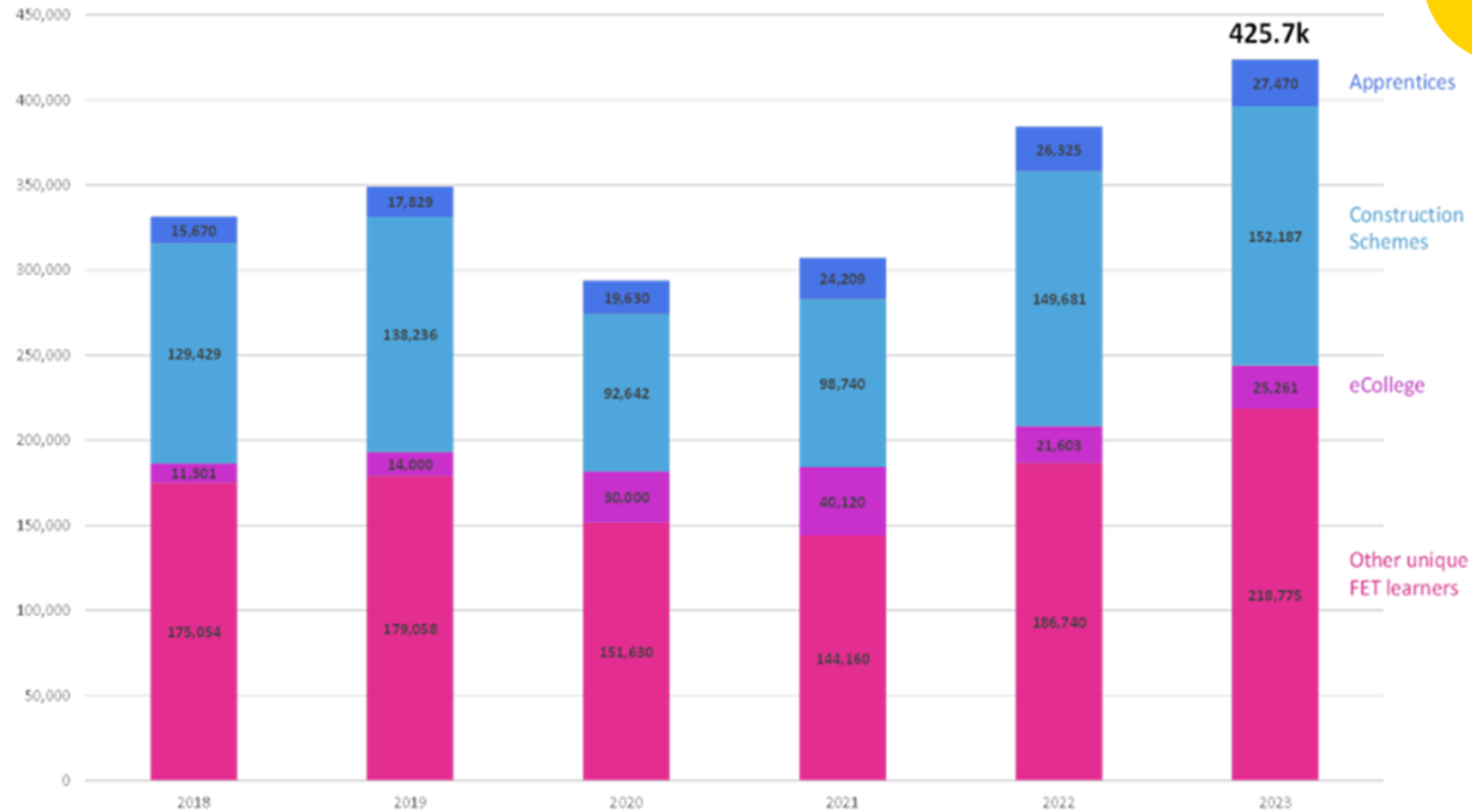
- providing easier access
- simplified pathways
- a consistent learner experience
- and a stronger identity



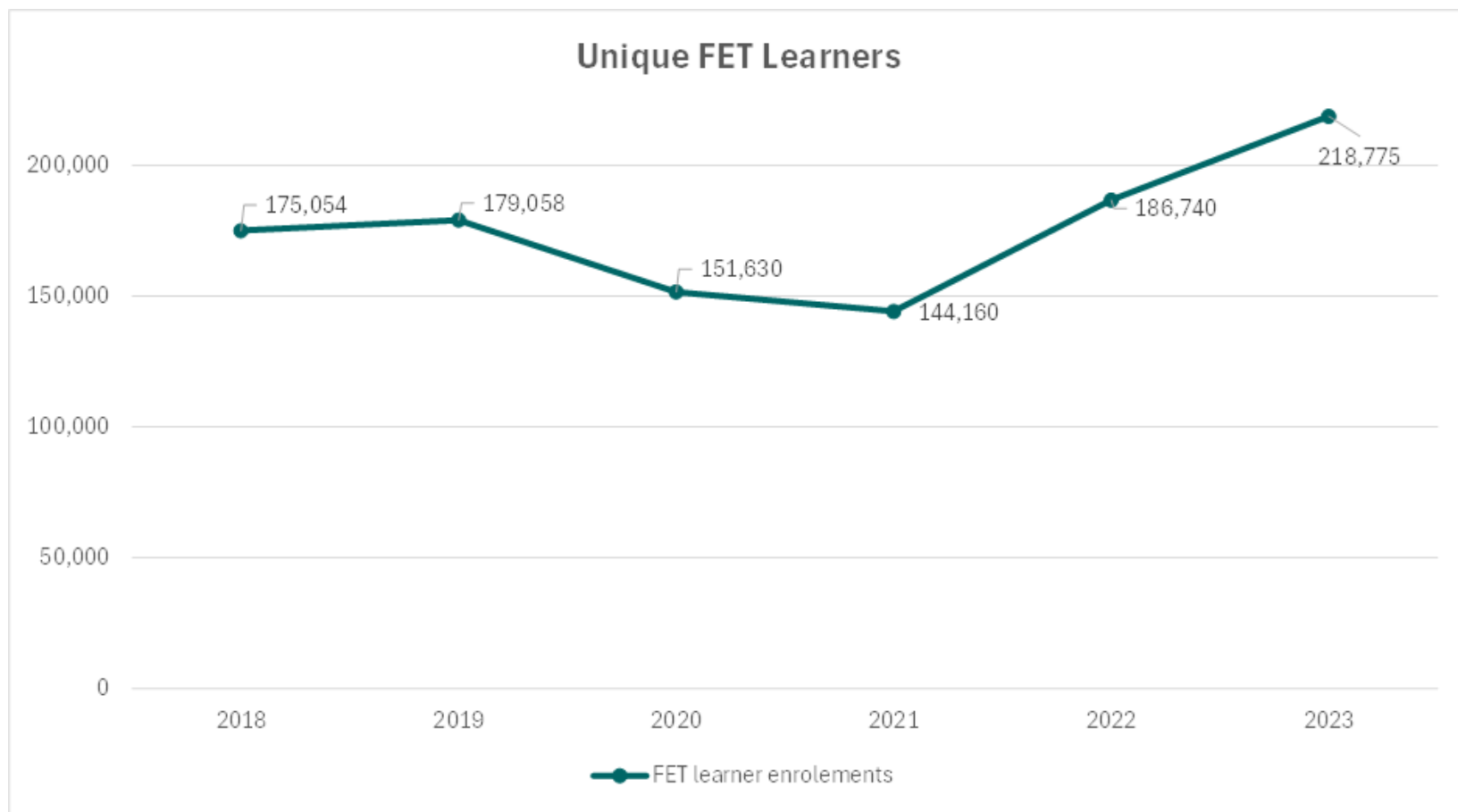
Growth of Further Education and Training (FET) - 2023



Further Education and Training in Ireland growing like never before..



Further Education and Training in Ireland growing like never before..



Flexible FET options are available in every community and offer a broad range of valuable and recognised learning pathways

A recent Report from the CSO on Further Education and Training Outcomes showed that:

- More than **90%** of graduates of further education in 2021 were either **employed or still accessing either further or higher education** — or both — a year after graduation.
- **74%** were in substantial employment in the first year after graduation.
- The largest **employment sectors for 2021 graduates** one year after graduation were Wholesale & Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Service Activities and Health & Welfare with 60% of graduates in substantial employment working in one of these sectors.
- Close to **35% of the 2021 graduation cohort enrolled in higher education** and roughly **30% re-enrolled in further education one year after graduation**.
- The median weekly income one year after graduation for males graduating in 2021 was €375, while for female graduates it was €345.



Skills to Advance

2018-2021 FET policy framework for skills development of people in employment

- Skills level below Level 5/ Level 6 on the NFQ (in terms of the programme applied for)
- Vulnerable workers:
 - In lower skilled jobs and/or
 - 50+ years and/or
 - In sectors/occupations at risk of economic displacement
- Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Sectors/regions with particular skills arising from changes in work practices, technology or markets

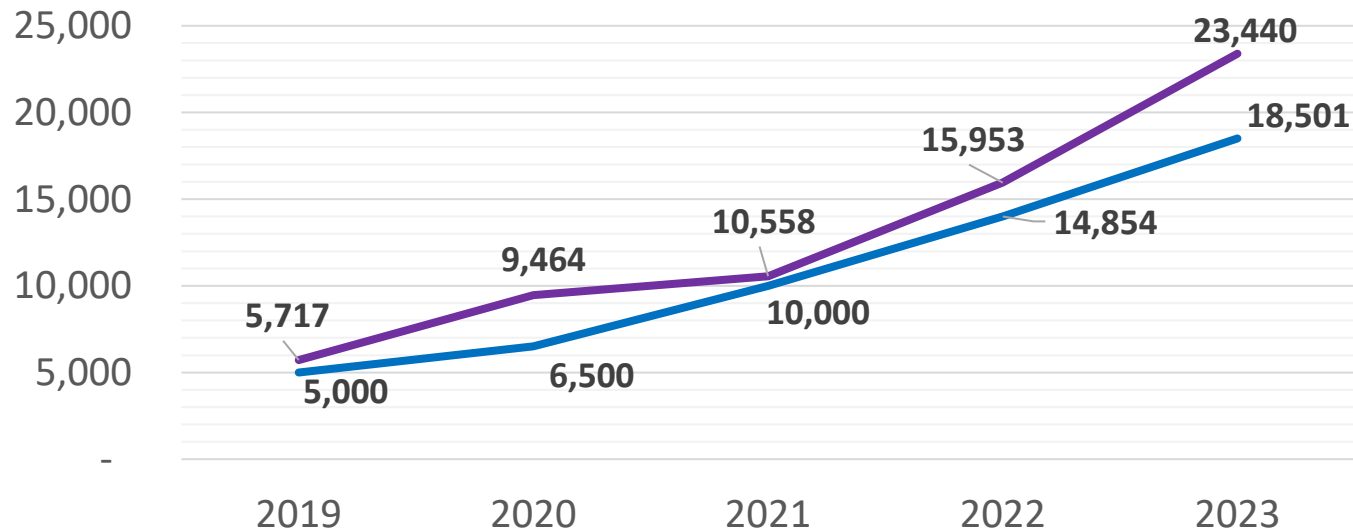
Dual Approach



Workforce Development : Skills to Advance Participation Trends

STA Actual vs Targets 2019 - 2023

— Actual — Target



- Growth 51% 2021-2022, 47% 2022-2023
- 127% achievement of Strategic Performance Agreement target for 2023.
- Over 86,000 employees from 2019 – 2024.
- Over 3,000 courses delivered in 2023

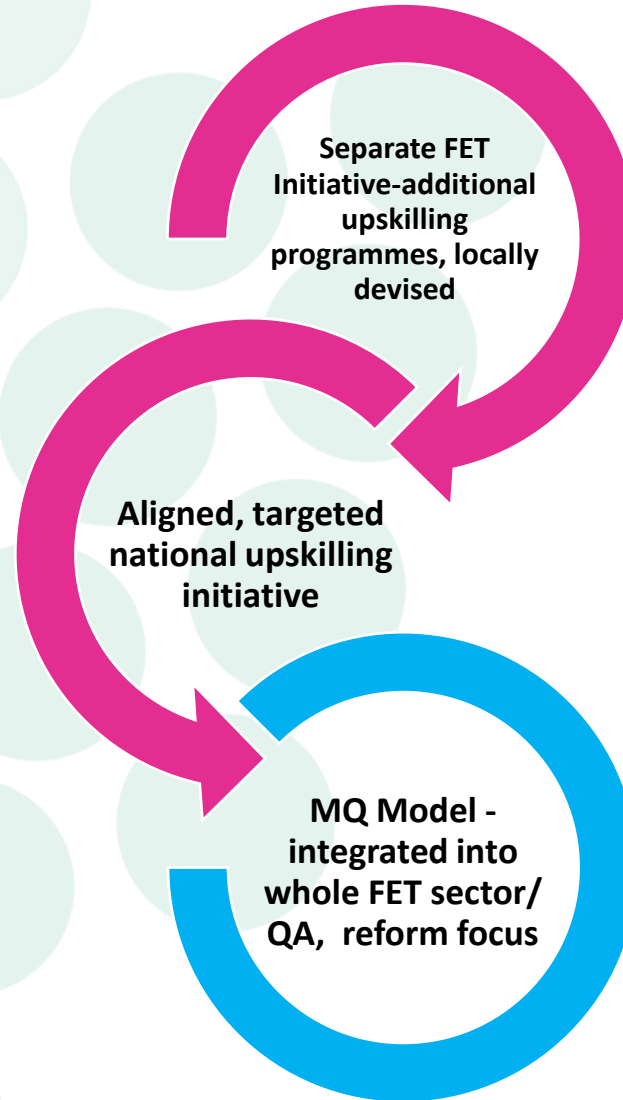
Policy Innovation: FET Micro-Qualifications - 3 options reviewed

FET Micro-Qualifications strategic ambition

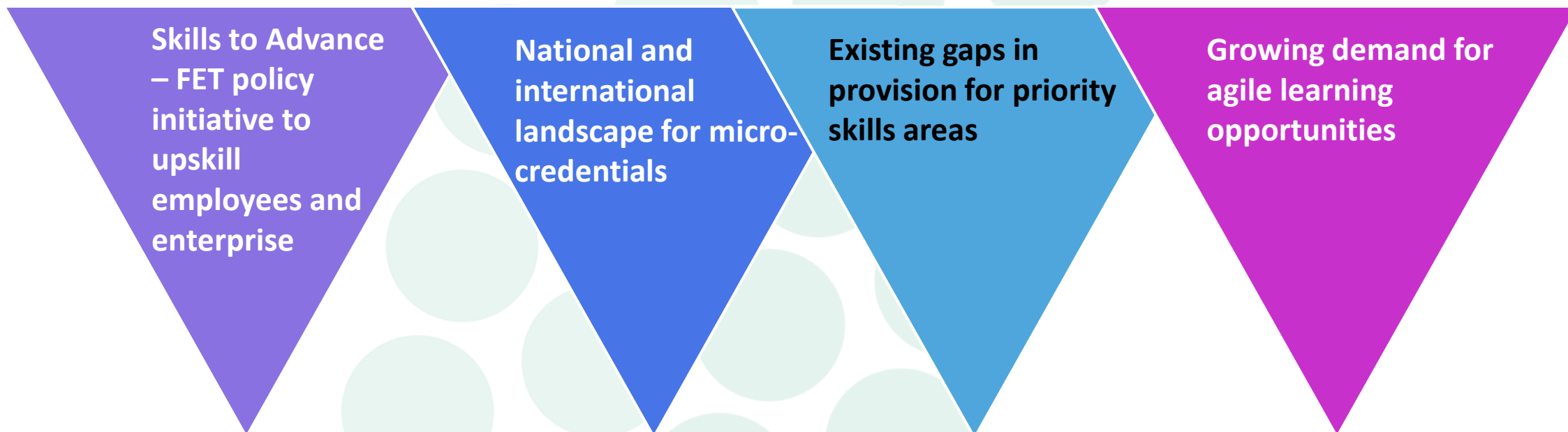
1. European context
2. Irish context



Strategic ambition to develop
FET Micro-Qualifications



Drivers of FET *Micro-Qualifications* Model



- Strategic Partnership of SOLAS and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) with Stakeholders

Strategic approach to FET MQ Model

Guiding Principles

Value

Collaboration

- Strategic partnership with QQI
- MQs within NFQ
- Co-creation by SOLAS, ETBs, enterprise agencies, companies-
- Shared programmes across ETBs, available nationally

Agility

Flexibility

- Bite sized training and qualifications, 50 hours
- Incremental learning opportunities
- Flexible delivery in person or blended

Relevance

Enterprise Engagement – 2 Levels

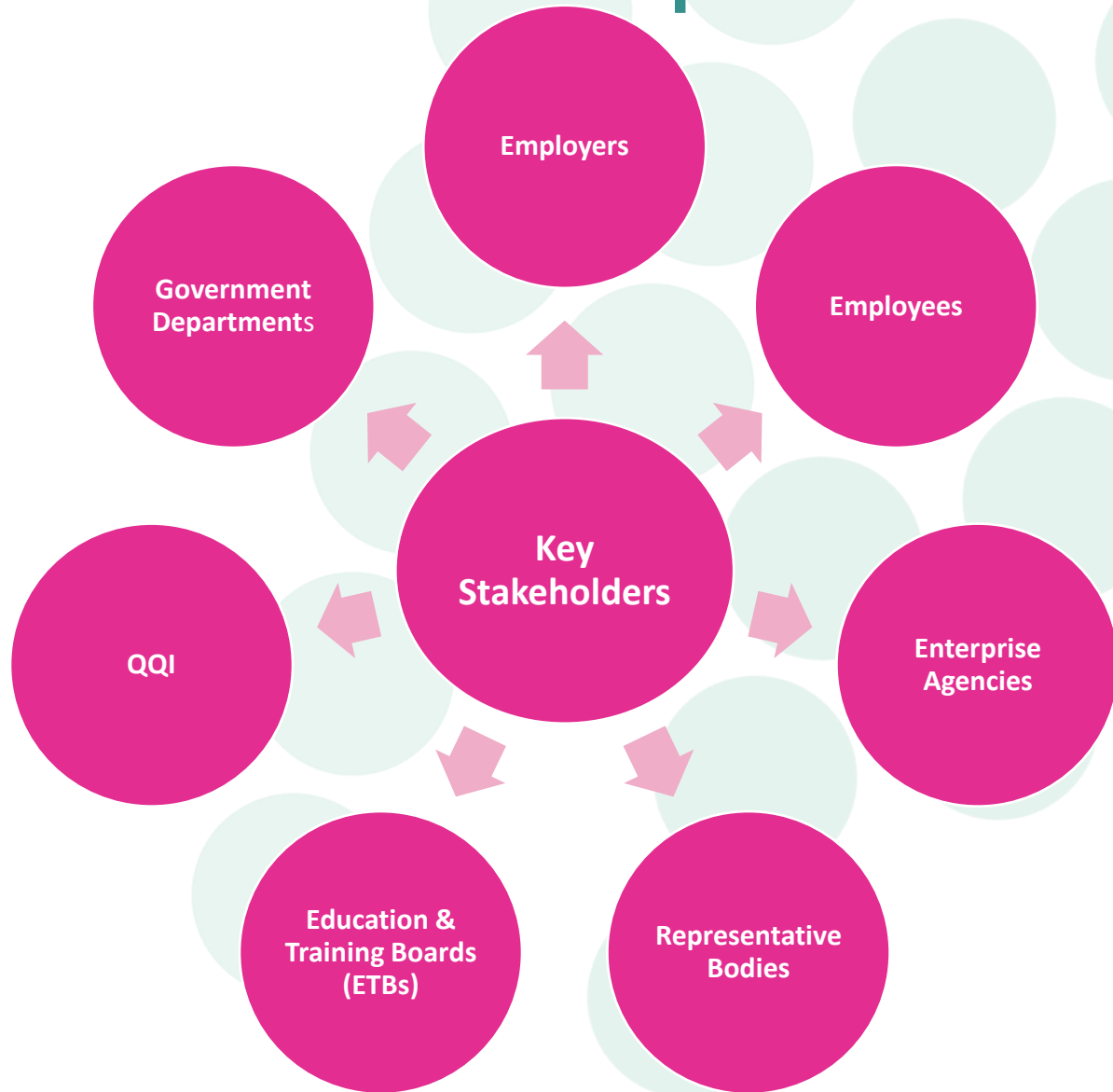
Stakeholders

- Priority Skills

Companies

- Identification of Needs
- Verification of content

Stakeholder Roles & Responsibilities





They are short, stackable
accredited programmes
delivered locally by 16 ETBs



A FET MQ is typically 25 hours
training delivery and 25 hours
self-directed learning

**Tutor
Supported
Learning**



**Self
Directed
Learning**

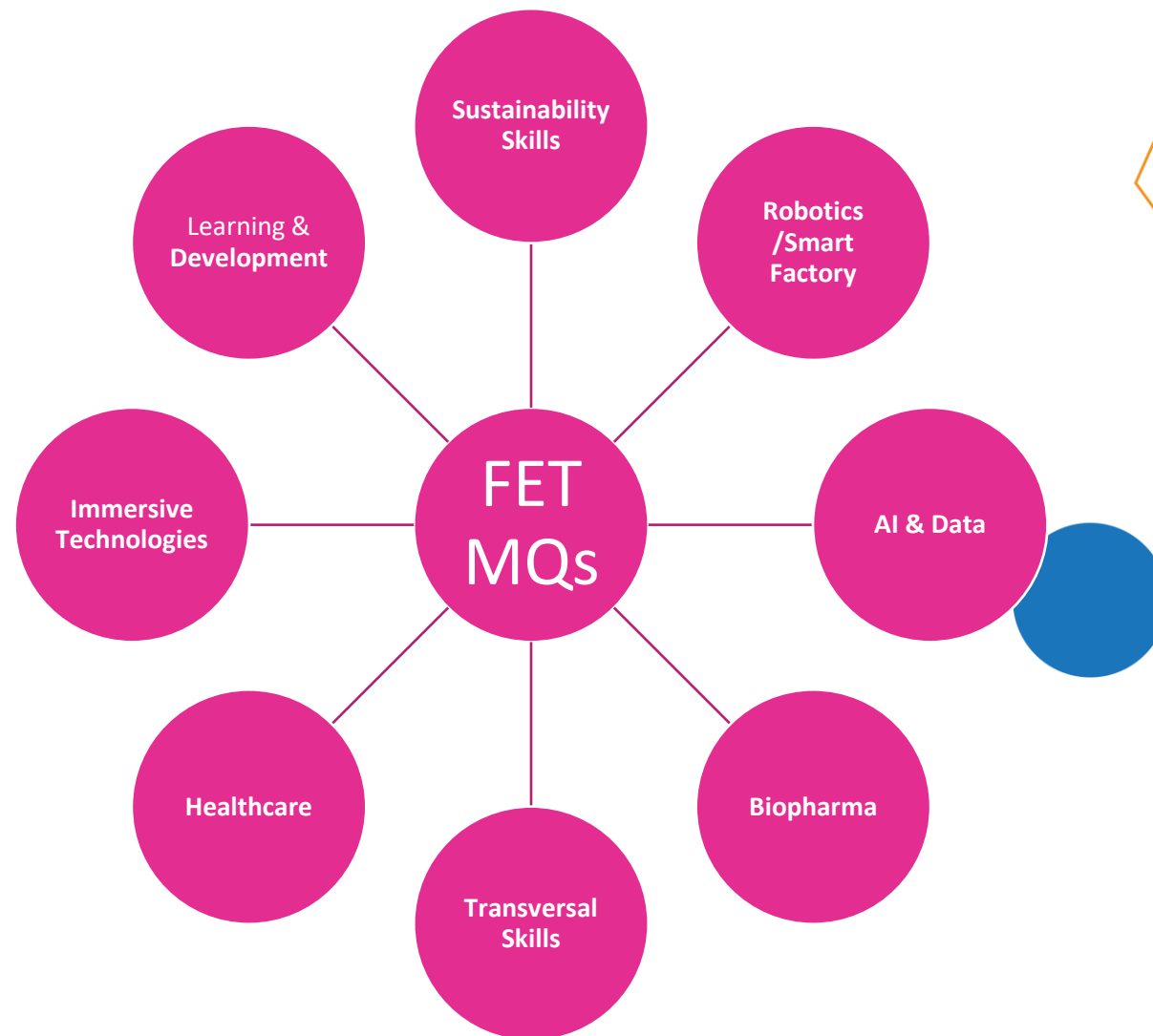


**FET
MQ**

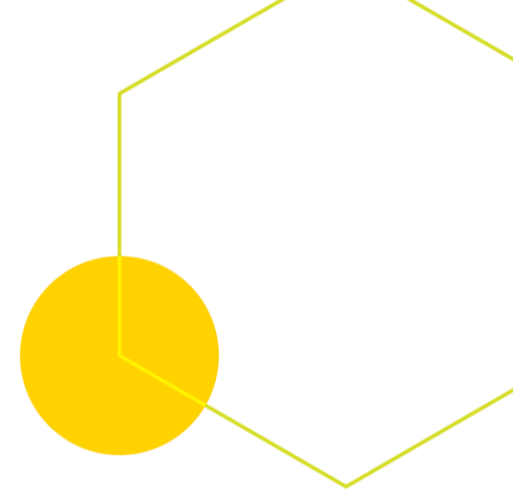
FET Micro-Qualifications

- Deliver value for the employer and employee
- 28 FET MQs co-created with companies, enterprise agencies, ETBs and QQI
- 40+ FET MQs in development
- Offer incremental, flexible, targeted upskilling at little or no cost

FET Micro-Qualifications



Priorities for FET 2025-2029



1. Expansion of Skills to Advance – agile workforce upskilling

- Strategic Partnerships
- Innovation Fund – Education & Training Boards (ETBs) with industry partners
- National roll out of FET Micro-Qualifications
- Specialist Skills Centres

1. FET for Enterprise – harnessing ETB range of services

- Position ETBs as enterprise partners
 - Skills planning, talent pipelines and tailored upskilling
- Join up skills ecosystem – key FET role at local and regional levels.
- Aligning skills with labour market needs – emerging skills priorities.

Thank you

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SOLAS
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