

ECO-UNESCO

'conserving the environment; empowering young people'

...is Ireland's Environmental Education and youth Organisation



ECO-UNESCO's Green Youth Employability Programme

covers a number of upskilling opportunities and workplace experiences including Green Skills, Green Steps and Green Options, all of which aim to increase the career prospects of young people under 25 who are not currently in education, employment or training.

Are you:

- *Under 25?*
- *Looking for employment?*
- *Interested in gaining new skills?*
- *Looking for an inclusive*

Each programme is designed as an integrated employability programme which comprises QQI/FETAC accredited training courses, one-to-one mentoring, work experience, and ongoing support. These courses are run free of charge and open to all interested people aged 18-25 looking to increase their knowledge and understanding of the green sector, get support in making or changing decisions about their future education and/or careers, and 'get their foot in in the door' to companies and organisations they may not have otherwise had access to.

ECO-UNESCO has been running workshops for over 30 years and has been a registered QQI/FETAC accreditation centre since 2005. The Green Youth Employability Programme has been running since 2012 and is supported under a number of funders including Momentum, Accenture, the Irish Environmental Network, the Dormant Accounts Fund, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). In 2016, over 110 people signed up to participate in our green youth employability

programmes. Of those who participated, over 90% reported a high rate of satisfaction and enjoyment of the course.

OUR APPROACH:

ECO-UNESCO uses its specialised expertise in sustainable development, community, gardening and horticulture to develop specialist skills for employment. The approach is to work with young people to develop their confidence, their self-esteem and their motivation and to help them identify their strengths, their likes and ultimately the career path that they want to take. ECO-UNESCO then uses its networks to place each participant in a preferential workplace to help them gain the skills they need to succeed. ECO-UNESCO uses a combination of training and work placements along with ongoing weekly support throughout the duration of the course and post-employment to build the skills and confidence needed to progress young people on to further education, training or employment.

ECO-UNESCO offers a tailored experience using a unique combination of non-formal facilitative teaching methods which encompasses auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles. This means the learning is activity-based, with an emphasis on outdoor education.

How it meets the needs of participants

ECO-UNESCO uses a range of teachers, facilitators, youth workers and social workers for this programme to make sure the young people involved have the support network they need to succeed on the course. The Programme prides itself on being open to a diversity of backgrounds including refugees, asylum seekers, young people engaged with probation service, LGBTQAI+, lone parents, the travelling community, disabled, those in long term homeless accommodation and more.

How it meets the needs of employers?

The Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2017 flags a project known as the 'circular economy' which heavily emphasises reducing overconsumption of fossil fuels and products. All businesses, regardless of sector, will begin to be pressured in the coming months and years to consider corporate social responsibility with a heavy focus on methods of reducing their energy waste and water consumption. Our QQI 5 in Sustainable Development teaches easy to implement water, waste and energy audits for any building, making graduates of our courses highly desirable.

TRAINING:

Under the Green Youth Employability Programme, participants get to choose from an exciting list of training courses including QQI Level 3 ECO-Community Development, QQI Level 3 Outdoor Vegetable and Crop Production, QQI Level 4 Growing Vegetables, QQI Level 5 Sustainable Development and QQI Level 5 Work Experience. The Programme can range from short 10 week courses to longer-term 6-9 month courses. All programmes are considered full-time. A selection of the courses available is described as follows:

Induction

The induction module is designed to build candidate's self-confidence, self-esteem, their awareness of environmental issues and their motivation to participate in and complete the programme. It includes many outdoor education sessions including hiking and a Green Business Trail of Dublin city as well as other tailored field trips. In 2016, 100% of participants self-reported a high degree of readiness to complete the course / seek a job after their induction week.

QQI Level 3 in Community Participation / ECO-Community Development

This course explores community development principles including empowerment, participation & sustainability in theory and in practise. Community issues & responses are elaborated in a thought provoking manner utilising class room, experiential & inquiry based learning techniques. In doing so this course promotes active citizenship through community participation in environmental protection, education & conservation. As such the programme facilitates learners to channel their energy into positive action, empowering/motivating them to participate in improving and protecting themselves, their community and their environment.

QQI 3 in Outdoor Vegetable Crop Production

Outdoor Vegetable Crop Production gives each young person the relevant knowledge and skill to plant, grow and maintain a plot for basic vegetable growing. Using a mixture of methods, the learner will develop the skills necessary for preparing, growing, maintaining and harvesting vegetables, including assessing soil suitability and weed/pest/disease protection and control.

QQI 4 in Growing Vegetables

This course equips the learner with the relevant knowledge, skill and competencies to plant, grow and maintain a range of vegetables. Young people will have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for preparing, growing, establishing and harvesting vegetables, including crop rotation and assessing soil suitability for vegetable production; preparing the ground for growing vegetables; different growing conditions for a range of vegetables; how to maintain crops and weed/pest/disease protection and control. Identification of weeds will include how to recognise the most common invasive species and responsible gardening (disposing of weeds and invasive species without harming the natural environment).

QQI 5 in Sustainable Development:

This course provides an understanding of the interaction between the environment, society and the economy. Sustainable development issues and responses are elaborated through case studies in a thought provoking manner. The course promotes

active citizenship, environmental awareness & conservation, through active project planning on creating and developing a sustainable community. The course is targeted to develop the skills of critical thinking, problem solving, environmental auditing, community assessment and education for sustainable development.

QQI 5 in Work Experience

This course supports each learner with their work placement, through an accompanying diary to reflect on their progress each week, and to set improvement targets which will support them on their journey to employment.

MENTORING:

Each candidate will be assigned their own mentor for the duration of the programme who they will meet as often as requested, or once every two weeks. During the meetings, participants will develop an Individual Learner Plan (ILP) to help guide their personal progression and what they would like to gain from the course. The Individual Learner Plan is personalized to each learner to best suit their own needs, and to ensure that the learner has their voice heard on their future. At each meeting, aspects of the work experience module will be discussed, such as reviewing pre-existing CVs and cover letters or creating new ones, running any simulations required such as public speaking, presentations, job interviews, and more. There is also the option of supported job searches, where company know-how on the best sites for your specific goals will be shared. ECO-UNESCO's priority is that each young person feels happy that they have been supported in their opportunities to reach their individual goals.

WORK PLACEMENT:

Candidates will undertake a 4-12 week work placement (course choice dependent) in an appropriate organisation/business, and attend a support session once per week. This valuable placement gives each young person the opportunity to showcase the range of skills they have acquired throughout the duration of the course, as well as build networks. Networks are of vital importance to securing long term employment, which is why ECO-UNESCO ensures participants are matched with organisations that closely match their interests and aspirations. ECO-UNESCO has a strong relationship with local businesses and in 2016 has placed participants with over 30 different work placement companies in the Dublin and Galway areas.

PROGRESSION:

ECO-UNESCO's ultimate goal is to support each young person in progressing to the next step in their future, whether that is returning to education, training or moving on to employment.

