



## **Submission to the Joint Commission on Education and Skills from**

### **Shannon College of Hotel Management, NUI Galway, on the Low Uptake of Apprenticeships and Traineeships.**

#### **Opening Statement**

##### **1. Why a Contribution from Shannon College?**

Shannon College is very successful in educating leaders for the hotel and hospitality sectors. It recruits high calibre candidates to Level 8 programmes, retains them, equips them with professional, business and life skills, places them in the workplace, leading to employment when they graduate. Shannon College has been a School of NUI Galway for three years, where its vocational approach is highly valued. It now has over 500 students. The Founder Dr Brendan O' Regan was told in 1951, when he sought support, "that there were not jobs for 12 qualified hoteliers in Ireland".

Shannon College Alumni have been very influential in hospitality and tourism in Ireland and worldwide.

Its comprehensive placement programmes promote strong links with the employer and a deep understanding of skills requirements.

Shannon College attracts significant numbers of quality applicants for the hospitality sector which traditionally is not well regarded by such influencers as career guidance counsellors and parents, who have negative perceptions about work life balance and abilities required.

Shannon College is also strongly involved in IrelandSkills and WorldSkills.

## **2. Reasons for Low Uptake.**

### **2.1 Hospitality and Tourism.**

The availability of labour for tourism tends to be countercyclical in developed countries. While we are very hospitable and friendly our history makes us uncomfortable with service and therefore there is a widespread underestimation of the level and range of skills required in hospitality and more importantly the opportunities.

During the recession tourism, for the first time, was recognised as a pillar of the economy. Public perception improved though such initiatives as The Gathering and the Wild Atlantic Way. Irish people, who previously would not have considered tourism as a career, started to work in hospitality. Unfortunately this is now being reversed with admissions to all hospitality programmes declining. There will be at least 60,000 additional jobs in the next ten years and industry practitioners are pessimistic about filling them domestically. Exacerbating this outlook is the fact that provision for apprenticeships in hospitality is weak.

### **2.2 Irish and International Perceptions of Apprenticeship.**

In Ireland the prestige of apprenticeships has definitely declined. There is still great respect for the tradesperson, the expert, the artisan but it has been overwhelmed by the ever present media, public and private discourse on “points”, CAO deadlines, College places, change of mind dates, accommodation, and so on.

In Switzerland two thirds of 15 year olds enter apprenticeships which are highly valued in their society. If a Shannon College graduate wants to be a Manager in Switzerland they must go back to the beginning of the Apprenticeship System, despite their qualification.

## **3. Recommendations for Discussion**

### **3.1 Research.**

State funded research is required into attitudes to apprenticeships and traineeships, to inform a long term marketing strategy.

### **3.2 Marketing.**

A focussed long term marketing strategy with a strong message around words such as “expert”, “professional”, “artisan” and initiatives such as the use of School Liaison Officers, is required. The opportunity to progress to higher NQF Levels should be stressed.

### **3.3 Level 8 Apprenticeships.**

Consideration should be given to Level 8 apprenticeships to address negative educational perceptions.

### **3.4 Ireland to Host World Skills.**

This would boost the image of apprenticeships.

### **3.5 Leaving Certificate Subjects and Curricula.**

Curricula should be evaluated to see to what extent they can lead to apprenticeships both in terms of motivation but also content. It is strongly recommended that a separate subject in Tourism and Hospitality be offered at Leaving Certificate level.

### **3.6 Apprenticeships in Hospitality.**

There is an urgent need for the development of a comprehensive suite of apprenticeships in hospitality to cover all professional areas.