

Opportunities update

Up to date information on employment, training and progression opportunities for holders of the Leaving Certificate Applied



Pictured at the NCCA Leaving Certificate Applied graduation ceremony in December 2000 at the Alexander Hotel Dublin are, from left to right: James Kearney, Mean Scoil Naomh Colm, Crumlin, James O'Rourke, Christian Brothers Secondary School, Midleton, Co. Cork, Sharon Lane, Presentation Secondary School, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork and Elaine O'Leary, Youthreach, New Ross Co. Wexford.

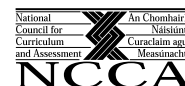
The Leaving Certificate Applied is in its sixth year of implementation and as a programme continues to go from strength to strength. It is now being offered in 263 schools and centres. Annual destination studies, commissioned by the NCCA, of Leaving Certificate Applied graduates for the years 1997-2000 show that on average 89% of graduates are employed or attending further education courses in the year immediately following completion of the course.

This edition of *Opportunities update* brings together testimonies of Leaving Certificate Applied graduates from different parts of the country to give a sample of the wide variety of employment and further education opportunities they are taking. It also includes testimonies from a number of graduates who have successfully started their own businesses.

Together these graduates describe the very positive experiences they have had of the Leaving Certificate and they highlight in particular the Student Tasks, the credit system of assessment and group work as important elements of the programme that helped to prepare them for the adult world they now find themselves in. They also acknowledge that their experience of the Leaving Certificate Applied gave them the confidence, the skills, and the responsibility to successfully pursue their chosen career.

We are delighted to publish these testimonies, as the success of the Leaving Certificate Applied will be measured by the education and employment opportunities it offers its graduates. We also acknowledge that the best ambassadors and promoters of the Leaving Certificate Applied are the participants and graduates themselves. We are proud of their achievements and wish them every success for the future.

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Apprenticeships



FAS accept Leaving Certificate Applied with a minimum of 25% of credits as a qualification for entry to standards-based apprenticeships. Most companies which operate a selection system with higher than minimum entry standards also accept LCA , and this includes ESB and CIE.

ESB 'recognises Leaving Certificate Applied as an acceptable qualification for applying for ESB apprenticeships'
CIE/Iarnrod Eireann has issued the following statement:

'Iarnrod Eireann plans to advertise in March 2001 its annual recruitment of apprentice electricians, fitters, metal fabricators and body vehicle repairers. The company will accept applications from holders of Leaving Certificate Applied for entry into the Apprenticeship Selection Process. Students preparing to complete the Leaving Certificate Applied this year may also apply and will be considered pending their achievement of at least a Pass level Leaving Certificate Applied.'

Leaving Certificate Applied is a good step to take on the route to a trade apprenticeship. In 2000, 15% of LCA graduates took up apprenticeships all around the country. Here are a few of these apprentices -



Jamie O'Rourke,

Apprentice Electrician

Jamie thought he wanted to be a carpenter; but thanks to his work experience on the Leaving Certificate Applied in CBS Midleton, he realised

he would prefer a career in the electrical trade and is very pleased with this choice. He will continue his education and training with FÁS and hopes to do courses in Industrial Electronics. *"The Leaving Certificate Applied gave me the incentive to work in school and the way we were encouraged gave me the right frame of mind to succeed"*



Marcus Kirwan,

Apprentice Fitter

After Leaving Certificate Applied in Moyne Community School in Longford, Marcus is now doing a four-year FAS apprenticeship in

Fitting/Maintenance. *'Leaving Certificate Applied prepared me very well for this career.'*



Billy Moran,

Apprentice Plasterer

Billy chose Leaving Certificate Applied in St Joseph's CBS Nenagh because *'I like work rather than study'*. At first the time

constraints were difficult but having to submit tasks in time taught him all about time management. He focused on work in the building trade and has secured an apprenticeship in plastering.



Noel Conneely,

Apprentice Mechanic

"I was not gone on school but wanted a good apprenticeship, preferably in the motor trade, and so I picked the Leaving Certificate Applied as my best

option after Junior Certificate". Noel found Leaving Certificate Applied in Moneenageisha Community College interesting and practical. He is now a third year motor apprentice with Bradley Motors in Galway.



Pat Brosnan,

Apprentice Welder/Fabricator

'I picked Leaving Certificate Applied in my school, Drumcollogher Community College, because I wanted to

do a trade apprenticeship. After my first work experience placement I knew what I wanted and what I needed and the rest of my two years had real meaning'. Pat is now in his 3rd. year as an apprentice.

Local Authorities



The Department of the Environment has advised all City and County Managers and Directors of Regional Authorities that those with a Pass in Leaving Certificate Applied are eligible to apply for Clerical Officer positions. The Department of Health and Children has similarly notified Regional Health Authorities and hospitals.



Pamela Bagnall,

Clerical Officer

Pamela was attracted to Leaving Certificate Applied because she would have more opportunity to work on computers. Work

experience and mini-company also proved very interesting. After Leaving Certificate Applied, Pamela did a PLC course in Secretarial Skills in her school, St Farnan's in Prosperous, and now has a permanent job as Clerical Officer in Kildare County Council.

Further Education



Leaving Certificate Applied graduates may proceed to Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLC's), which are usually of one year's duration. After obtaining a NCVA Level 2 award on a PLC, it is possible for students to progress to third level certificate courses in the Institutes of Technology through the Higher Education Links scheme. Our annual survey shows that about 25% of Leaving Certificate Applied Graduates go on to Post Leaving Certificate courses each year. Most students go into employment after their PLC course, but we have come across a number of young people who are availing of the Higher Education Links scheme and are working their way up the educational ladder:



Mary Enright,
Business Studies student
After LCA in Carndonagh community School and a PLC course in Secretarial & Business Studies, Mary is now studying for a

Certificate in Business Studies in the Institute of Technology, Dundalk. She says that if it had not been for Leaving Certificate Applied she might not have continued after Junior Cert. *"You do the work and you get the results."*



Ciaran Guckian,
Business Studies student
Ciaran really enjoyed the Leaving Certificate Applied which he did in Bailieboro Community School Cavan. He was particularly happy

with the marking system. *"You could see how you were doing and each unit was part of the Leaving Cert."* Ciaran followed this up with a PLC and is now doing a Certificate in Business Studies in Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Brian Carney,

Computer Applications student

Brian left school after his Junior Certificate and spent six years working in a chip shop in his home town of Ennis. He grew more and more dissatisfied – *"I was going nowhere and didn't want to be stuck there for the rest of my life"*. He decided to return to full-time education in Ennis Youth Service, where he undertook the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. *"This was not always easy as most of my classmates were younger than me but I was determined. I liked the accumulation of credits in Leaving Certificate Applied and the feeling of achievement as I completed each task."* He obtained a place as a mature student in Waterford Institute of Technology, where he is starting with a Certificate in Computer Applications and hopes to go on to study for a degree.



Martin McCabe,
Computer Studies student

Martin was attracted to Leaving Certificate Applied in Mullingar Community College by the work experience dimension. He thoroughly enjoyed the course and says that whilst without it he would have left school after Junior Cert, his experience of the programme motivated him to go to college. He went on to do a PLC in Computers and is now on track for a degree in Computer Applications in Dundalk Institute of Technology.



Denise Corcoran,
Health & Leisure Studies student

When Denise started LCA in Gortnor Abbey Crossmolina, she had no intention of going on to further education afterwards. Through the Vocational Preparation course and particularly work experience placements, Denise became interested in a career in Leisure Activities. Now she is in the second year of a third level course in Tralee Institute of Technology - having first completed a PLC in Sport and Leisure - and is planning to continue her studies to diploma level and then proceed to train as a PE teacher in a UK college. Denise says: *"But for Leaving Certificate Applied, I would not be where I am or have had the success I've had so far"*.



Louise Byrne,
Business Studies student

Louise did Leaving Certificate Applied in St Mary's School for Deaf Girls Cabra in Dublin. *"I had to work hard, use my own initiative, meet deadlines and push myself all the*

time. It helped me to organise my ideas, to keep records, to communicate better and to work with others in a team... I was very lucky the Leaving Certificate Applied was there for me." After Leaving Certificate Applied, Louise obtained an NCVA Level 2 qualification in Business Studies in a PLC course and through this secured a place on the Business Studies Certificate / Diploma in Galway Mayo Institute of Technology.

"I would recommend the Leaving Certificate Applied to others provided they understand the route through the PLC and the hard work involved"

Many more Leaving Certificate Applied graduates currently studying on Post Leaving Certificate courses aspire to go on to third level studies:



Alan Gregory,
Electronic Servicing and Computer Maintenance student

Alan left school after his Junior Certificate and Transition Year to take up an apprenticeship as a carpenter. The company ceased trading within a year of Alan starting and he then worked for a further two years with a roofing contractor and then two years in a factory. At this time he came to the conclusion that he was not getting to where he felt he should be and that he needed to get back to education. He had the option of returning to the traditional or Applied Leaving Certificate. He chose the Applied, in St Laurence Community College Drogheda, because he felt it had more to offer to someone who was out of the system for five years and he was also attracted to its practical nature. *"The best career decision I ever made"* Alan is at present completing a Level 2 NCVA Certificate in Electronic Servicing and Computer Maintenance in Colaiste Dhulaigh in Dublin. Next September he is heading for the Galway Institute of Technology for further advancement in Computer Maintenance and Networking. *"Teachers, schools and the education system could learn a lot from the Leaving Certificate Applied"*.

Maura Dunne,

Co-ordinator of Child Care and Nursing Studies courses, Cavan College of Further Studies:

"I find that Leaving Certificate Applied graduates do very well on NCVA courses. The method of learning and working on these courses is assignment-based with continuous assessment and reflection on learning. Students from Leaving Certificate Applied are familiar with this way of working and know how to go about sourcing, referencing and assimilating information. They have been extremely successful."

Banking



Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank accept applications from those with distinction in Leaving Certificate Applied. National Irish Bank accepts Merit or Distinction. Holders of Leaving Certificate Applied may apply to AIB after obtaining a Level 2 NCVA qualification through a Post Leaving Certificate course in Business Studies.



Marianne Fanning,

Bank official

After her Leaving Certificate Applied in Dunshaughlin Community College, a career in the travel business was

Marianne's ambition and she secured a place on a PLC in Travel and Tourism. As part of her work experience on the course, she worked in the AIB and initially was offered some summer work there. She was later employed as a Bank Official with AIB and remained there for almost two years. She has recently moved to a similar position with Woodchester Bank and now feels that banking is where her career lies. Looking back on Leaving Certificate Applied, Marianne says 'I grew up on the programme and gained in confidence. I learned how to use initiative and how to work in a team and I began to take responsibility.'



Melissa Lynch

Finance Officer

Thanks to an introduction to the company through a Leaving Certificate Applied work experience placement,

Melissa got her first job with Deutsche International by way of a 6 month contract to start with. 'I hope to stay with this company for the foreseeable future and progress through the ranks. The company will assist with continuing education – I have completed a course on Excel and I am down to start a six month Mutual Funds course soon. There are opportunities to progress and they reward solid workers who show initiative, quality and dependability – the kind of qualities that I feel I learned a lot about on my Leaving Certificate Applied'. Melissa loved the interaction with teachers and other students during Leaving Certificate Applied in Liberties College. 'The class worked so well together, helping and encouraging each other and sharing ideas. I had to produce quality work and yes there was plenty of pressure all the time but none of the stress which I knew from previous exams - it was a brilliant way to be assessed.'

Garda



The Garda Síochána accept applications from those holding a Merit or Distinction in Leaving Certificate Applied. We are beginning to hear of graduates who have been successful with their applications to the Garda:



Claire Sheehan,

Garda trainee

Claire always wanted to be a Garda and when she finished her Junior Certificate in St Mary's Secondary School, Mallow, she decided that the

Social Education, IT and Work Experience modules together with the emphasis on project work in the Leaving Certificate Applied would best prepare her for a life in the 'Force'. She is well on the way to fulfilling her ambition, having begun training in Templemore in January 2001. "The Leaving Certificate Applied was great. The whole programme was so adult, teachers were our friends, we were dealing with the real world and real concerns. The Social Education was a great preparation for life and in particular for my chosen career. It was definitely the right path for me.'

Nursing



Graduates of Leaving Certificate Applied now have an avenue into the nursing profession - via a Pre-Nursing Studies Post Leaving Certificate course followed by training in a UK school of nursing. Anglia University and Thames Valley University Schools of Nursing have set up links with many Pre-Nursing courses around the country. In order to apply, students must successfully complete eight designated modules at NCVA Level 2 in one of these courses. The Schools of Nursing in question send representatives to Ireland to interview candidates each Spring. Successful applicants will qualify as Registered General Nurses in three years or may go on to a fourth year to obtain a Nursing degree. In either case, the qualification is recognised internationally and the holder may return to work in Ireland as a fully qualified nurse.

Anglia University recruits students from the Pre-Nursing Studies course in St Thomas's Community College in Bray. Cavan College of Further Studies has links with Thames Valley University, who have selected a Leaving Certificate Applied graduate for their School of Nursing (see story below). Many other colleges have similar links, including O'Fiach College Dundalk, Central Technical Institute Waterford and School of Commerce Cork, which hopes to have a link with Kingston University London Faculty of Nursing from next Autumn.



Anne Marie McGuire,
Student Nurse

Anne Marie did Leaving Certificate Applied in St. Joseph's Secondary School Spanish Point, and found the programme 'brilliant... I liked

gaining credits through tasks'. This and the fact that 'you learn to work on your own and in groups' were very useful in her Post Leaving Certificate course - Pre-Nursing Studies in Cavan College of Further Studies. Towards the end of that course, Anne Marie was interviewed by Thames Valley University School of Nursing and was successful in obtaining a place in their school of nursing. Anne Marie is feeling very excited about taking up her place there in March 2001 and hopes to come back to work in Ireland in three years' time as a Registered General Nurse.

Catering



CERT training courses are open to students who have completed their Leaving Certificate Applied.



Celine McDonnell,
Professional Cookery student

Celine chose to do Leaving Certificate Applied in her school, Caritas College Ballyfermot, because she had always enjoyed doing projects and had a good idea that she wanted to have a career in catering. Overall, she found the course demanding but very rewarding. "Having to meet deadlines really focuses the mind on what you have to do". Celine particularly enjoyed the task which enabled her to research her career. Having completed it she knew the direction in which she wanted to go – Professional Cookery. Celine is doing a PLC in Catering in Crumlin College and she is looking forward to going to DIT Cathal Brugha Street next year.



Sinead Carey
Chef

Sinead did Leaving Certificate Applied in Colaiste Mhuire, Ennis. 'I liked the active learning...The Hotel Catering and Tourism and the Work Experience helped so much with my career choice. We invited parents and teachers to an evening meal and I had full responsibility for the main course and running the kitchen.' Sinead obtained a place in CERT's Professional Cookery course, and is now a trainee chef in the Park Hotel, Galway.

Other routes taken by LCA Graduates



James Gallagher,
Farm Management Apprentice

James is from an agricultural background but did not want to "just go into it" without trying other occupations. He found the varied work experience on the Leaving Certificate Applied programme in Mulroy College Milford very interesting and through it he became focused. He went on to Agricultural College in Ballyhaise and proceeded from there to a farm apprenticeship.



Sharon Cleary and Janice McGarry,
Youth Workers

Sharon and Janice both did Leaving Certificate Applied in St Dominic's School Ballyfermot. Sharon realised during the programme that 'I had talents I never thought of before' Janice was attracted to the Leaving Certificate Applied by the fact that it seemed to offer her most opportunity to prepare for a career in youth work, which was what she wanted. After Leaving Certificate Applied, Janice and Sharon completed the Community and Health PLC course in Ballyfermot Senior College and then did a course in Addiction Studies in Maynooth. Both are now employed in Ballyfermot Youth Federation where they are involved in planning, organising and facilitating drug awareness and education programmes for young people.



Sadie Rooney,
Retail Supervisor

Sadie had a lot of difficulty throughout her school years. She attended a school for dyslexic children and had difficulty in settling into an academic system. She chose to do the Leaving Certificate Applied, in Newpark Comprehensive School, because of its practical orientation. She had to work hard at persevering – which she did with a lot of help from her friends and Guidance Counsellor. Sadie is now employed in a newsagents and has been promoted to supervisor. She hopes to apply for a course in management. 'I would recommend Leaving Certificate Applied to anyone. It is not easy but it is really worthwhile training for life in the real world'.



Michael Mulvihill,
Radio DJ

Choosing the Leaving Certificate Applied represented a new challenge for Michael – his was the first class in Carrick on Shannon Community School to do it so they felt it was up to them to get it up and running. Michael went to work straight after graduating from school and is using his Media Studies and computer skills in his radio programme. He is making great progress and feels that the variety of experiences in Leaving Certificate Applied has given him confidence and ease in communicating.



Padraig Lavin,
Clerical Student

Padraig found the Leaving Certificate Applied, which he did in Castlerea Community School, 'very beneficial and an excellent training for life'. In particular he appreciated the opportunities for team work, for building communication skills and for participating in public speaking. The Enterprise task was invaluable. He would recommend that all students be given the opportunity to gain an insight into the world of business – a world which he realised he did not wish to enter. Padraig is very happy to be studying in Maynooth for the priesthood.



Charlene Brennan,
Store Manager

Charlene's experience of the LCA in Mercy College Sligo gave a huge boost to her self-esteem. She got a job straight away and has progressed through the organisation to the position of manager of an Evelyn and Crabtree shop. She enjoys the responsibility. Charlene says that her experience of mini-company, interview preparation and meeting deadlines proved invaluable. "If you didn't meet deadlines you lost credits. If you don't meet deadlines in business you lose money."



Colette Mitchell,
Self-employed

Colette had left school early but always had wanted to do Leaving Cert so when the opportunity arose to do Leaving Certificate Applied in Limerick Youth Centre, she jumped at it. She now runs her own soft furnishing

Leaving Certificate Applied - Personal Profiles

business where she measures, makes up and fits curtains, soft covers, cushions, etc. Business is going well and she is very happy. The LCA 'gave me confidence, skills and responsibility - overall the best thing I ever did



Sinead Gallagher,
Medical Secretary

In the LCA in Loreto College Letterkenny, 'having to meet deadlines was difficult at first but it was very good preparation for the Medical Secretary Diploma in Limavady College'. Sinead is now working in Pacificare Letterkenny, processing medical claims.



Jason Lahme
Hardware Assistant
Jason completed his Leaving Certificate Applied on a Youthreach programme in Keelogue Institute Wexford.

At present working in the Electrical Department of Joyce's Hardware in Wexford, he intends seeking out some courses which will lead him to qualifications in Sound or Acoustic Engineering.



Claire Naughton
**Administrator
Property Office**
Claire chose Leaving Certificate Applied because she wanted a career where she would be working directly

with people in a front office position. The programme in her school, Presentation Listowel, offered her Office Skills & Retail Distribution and Computer Skills & IT. "The programme was excellent, the atmosphere was adult, there was real meaning to the work and study and the Enterprise module was a bonus" Claire says.



Tim Mulcahy
Accounts Clerk
Tim chose Leaving Certificate Applied because it was the only course offering Computers and IT as meaningful subjects at

Leaving Certificate level. 'What I liked most were the adult attitudes on the programme, the responsibilities, and the opportunities to try things out.' After Leaving Certificate Applied, Tim did a Post Leaving Certificate course in Information Processing at Limerick Senior College and in his spare time studied for and obtained a City and Guilds Advanced Diploma in Business and Office Technology and an RSA Diploma in Information Technology. He is at present doing an Accounting Technician evening course with the Mid-West Business Institute while working in accounts with the Kerry Group.



Wesley Kenny
Tele-Sales Executive
Since completing his Leaving Certificate applied in St Louis Community School in Kiltimagh, Wesley has been working with CMS

Peripherals. He loves his job, which includes giving training courses to retailers of CMS products, and sees plenty of scope for advancement. Wesley thinks the Leaving Certificate Applied was 'brilliant..... there was so much happening,there were opportunities for individuals to shine, there was lots of team work, and there was a great relationship between students and teachers'.



Christopher Pender
Media Studies student
Christopher is at present doing an NCVA Photography course and is enrolled for a three year Media Studies course for

next year. The Leaving Certificate Applied, which Christopher completed in Miltown Malbay Youthreach, 'gave me confidence, real skills and opportunities to look at a variety of career paths'.



Aideen Quinlan
Nursery Nurse
Aideen is a qualified Nursery Nurse in a Day Care Centre in Cork City. "The Leaving Certificate Applied helped me

gain confidence and it was my stepping stone to a career." After her Leaving Certificate Applied in Ard Scoil na nDeise Dungarvan, Aideen did her Diploma in Nursery Nursing in the School of Commerce in Cork. 'I would like to manage a Day Care Centre, perhaps my own, in the future'.



Veronica Nolan
**Preschool Teacher
& Nursery Nurse**
Veronica completed her Leaving Certificate Applied in St Leo's College, Carlow. 'The two years were a good

experience, different from previous learning because we seemed to be working with teachers and it was more personalised, with opportunities to try out things, to choose tasks and projects and to sample careers through work experience.' She then did a 2 year PLC in Nursery and Child Care at the Institute for Further Education in Carlow, qualifying with an NCVA Level 2 in Child Care and an NNEB Diploma in Nursery Nursing. In partnership with a friend, Veronica now runs a preschool and creche in Carlow, where she teaches in the preschool and does nursery nursing.



Ann Rowan
**Office Assistant
Insurance Brokers**
Ann says she had an exhilarating two years on the Leaving Certificate Applied in Scoil Mhuire,

Portarlington. "The Leaving Certificate Applied was a great way of learning - by doing and discovering and wanting to find out more and not just having to remember facts. There were pressures but no real stress. There were deadlines to be met, working in groups, research and reports - not the usual vision of school but great fun.' Following on from her Leaving Certificate Applied Ann did a PLC in Business Studies and Secretarial Studies and obtained an NCVA level 2 Certificate. Ann is enjoying her current job in Sweeney & Associates, Commercial Insurance Brokers, and hopes in the future to travel and work abroad.



Rory McGinty,
Car Business
Although Rory knew he wanted to go into the family car business, he didn't want to "just walk into it". He wanted to have a Leaving

Certificate and wider experience. The LCA in Abbey Vocational School Donegal was a good choice for him. "I have my qualifications, I have my chosen career. I couldn't be happier".

Some of the graduates profiled in this Opportunities update are featured in a video introducing Leaving Certificate Applied produced by NCCA in March 2001.

The video and further information on the programme can be obtained from NCCA 24 Merrion Square Dublin 2 and from the Leaving Certificate Applied Support Service Curriculum Development Unit Sundrive Road Dublin 12 or Curriculum Development Centre Shannon Co Clare.