

There are no limits!

Regardless of one's starting point, if you are motivated and in a position to give it the time, today's education system allows progression, to whatever point you decide you wish to finish.

Edna Curley

Principal, Mountbellew Agricultural College, Mountbellew, Co. Galway.

Having grown up on a farm, I always knew that I wanted to be involved in agriculture in some shape or form. While taking agricultural science for my Leaving Certificate, I realised that studying the science of agriculture at third level, was what I wanted to pursue. I applied to Mountbellew after my Leaving Certificate to complete the Green Cert to begin my practical training and give me the option to return home to farm.

From Mountbellew I went to WIT and Teagasc Kildalton. The possibility to transfer from WIT/Teagasc Kildalton to UCD meant that I could continue right through to a Level 8 honours degree, getting recognition for the learning up to that point, and complete my third level agricultural training.

After finishing my degree, I realised that research was what piqued my interest at that time. I was accepted on to a Level 9 funded research project in crop science, which put me out in the fields with cereal farmers, dealing with the same challenges that they were dealing with. I learned as much listening to and chatting with farmers as I did in a classroom, and it opened my eyes to the real challenges on the ground.

A PhD (Level 10) is not for the fainthearted! I wanted to get more involved in research and to complete longer field studies, and so I applied for a PhD after completing my masters. The emphasis at Level 10 is more about scientific publications than practical learning. Having said that, I again got another view of agriculture as this research and these studies drive the farming of the future. At level 10, I also began lecturing in UCD; this gave me a new perspective on learning and how others learn.

With formal education behind me, I decided that I wished to stay in research and education and so began a six-year spell of conducting and managing research studies while also doing some lecturing.



This eventually led to returning to Mountbellew as College Principal, almost 20 years to the day after I left having completed my Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture.

So if you are starting a level 5 qualification at any agricultural college, remember you are starting a journey which will offer you lots of options along the way. If you too wish to begin your journey in Mountbellew Agricultural College, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Education history

1998-1999: Mountbellew Agricultural College
National Certificate in Agriculture (Level 5)

1999-2001: Waterford Institute of Technology & Teagasc Kildalton College
National Certificate in Science in Agricultural Science (Level 6)

2001-2004: University College Dublin
Bachelor of Agricultural Science-Animal and Crop Production (Level 8)

2005-2006: University College Dublin
Masters of Agricultural Science (Level 9)

2006-2010: University College Dublin
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Level 10)

2010-2013: University College Dublin & Oakpark Crops Research Centre
Postdoctoral Researcher

2013-2019: National University of Ireland Galway
Postdoctoral Researcher

2019: Mountbellew Agricultural College
Principal

What would I say to those thinking about entering agricultural education?

Leave yourself open to learning, don't think that you cannot learn or can only learn in a classroom, give yourself a chance. Listen and engage with those who have done it and let them be your guide. Most importantly, you can learn from anybody regardless of the time they have spent in a classroom.