

The Green Cert: the benefits to students are more than financial

These graduates describe the huge amount of personal development and explosion of opportunities that occurred as a result of completing the Green Cert.

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A wide range of agricultural, equine, horticulture and forestry courses are available in Teagasc colleges at Kildalton (Kilkenny), Ballyhaise (Cavan), Clonakilty (Cork) and at the National Botanic Gardens/Ashtown (Dublin), as well as in three private agriculture colleges, Mountbellew (Galway), Gurteen (Tipperary) and Pallaskenry (Limerick).

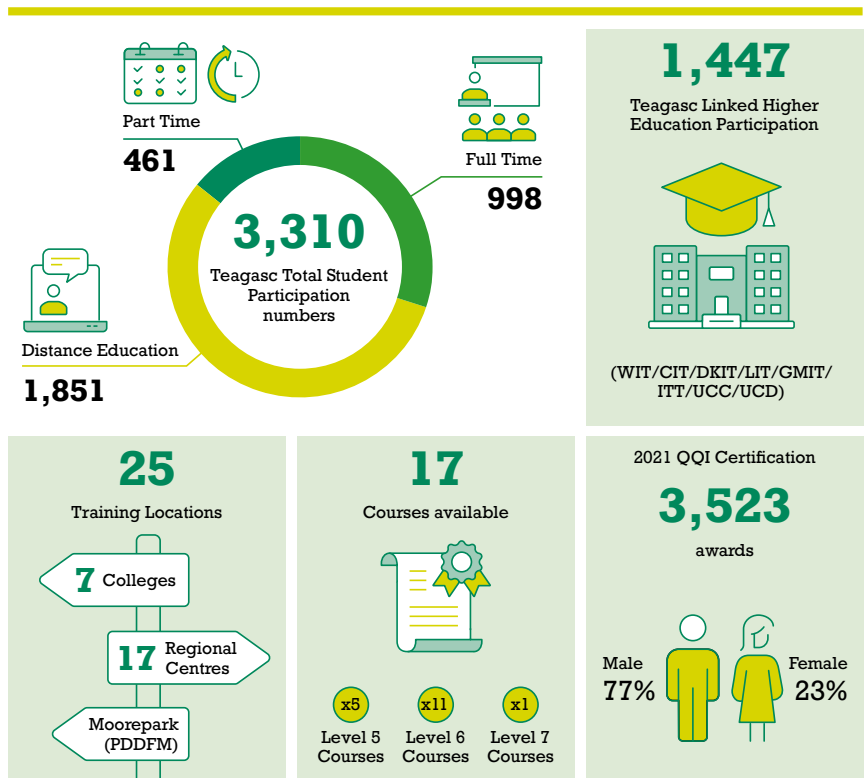
Both part-time and distance education courses are available at Teagasc regional centres, Teagasc colleges and at the aforementioned private colleges.

The majority of students who join these courses do so, at least partly, to attain the Green Cert, which provides them with 'qualified farmer' status.

This means they are entitled to exemptions on Stamp Duty and Capital Acquisitions Tax and have access to Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine schemes (always check the most up-to-date terms and conditions). So, there are many compelling financial reasons to get your Green Cert.

But in this article, we want to highlight some of the non-financial

Education



reasons for getting your Green Cert, by meeting recent graduates in their home environment. All describe the personal growth they experienced. Many describe their increase in self-confidence as a result of completing the course.

Others point to the fact that the Green Cert opened a whole range of

options, not only in the workforce but also in further education, where there are links from the colleges to universities and technical colleges allowing students to progress to other courses.

All describe a learning environment where educators are informal and dedicated to helping all students succeed.



Dave Moloney with his dad Tim and mother Nellie. *Mark Moore*

Student: Dave Moloney, Kilanetig West, Ballinadee, Bandon, Co Cork.

Course: L6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming (part-time).

Dave says he was surprised to win the 2021 Teagasc Student of the Year Competition.* All of the students featured were finalists in the prestigious event, which is sponsored by FBD.

"I'll admit that when I was younger I was not a fan of the books at all," he says. "I left school at 16 and it was only when I started getting interested in the farm that I realised the Green Cert is a must."

Dave, who is now 34, contacted local Macroom Teagasc education officer Patrick Flannery and started the course, which involved one day per week and one evening in 2019.

"The group of 15 students got on really well together," says Dave. "If you have a passion for agriculture and farming, you're going to be interested, but the course deliverers do make the content interesting."

"I was always picking up something to use on the beef farm at home. I loved the practical work at the college – weighing and assessing the

weights of cattle." Dave says he buys in calves, yearlings and stores. Once finished, they go to the ABP factory in Bandon.

"We have everything from Belgian Blue to Speckled Parks, though Hereford and Angus are the most common. We aim to change to a system where some animals are ready to go to the factory each month."

"It wasn't anything like school," says Dave. "I never thought exams and paperwork were my strongest suit, but I really like the Business

Course and the Communications in the Green Cert. The teachers were not pushy, but explained things really well."

Dave says he finally decided to join the course when his fiancé said she would do a course in her profession at the same time. "I'd say if you have an interest in farming definitely do it," says Dave. "My only regret is that I didn't do it years ago!"

*A huge number of Teagasc education staff and Therese Dempsey of Teagasc PR are involved.



Dave says that the Green Cert course really fed his interest in farming. *Mark Moore*

Course coordinator: Teagasc education officer Pat Flannery, Macroom.

"There is great support for students on the part-time course from both West Cork advisory/administration colleagues and staff at Teagasc Clonakilty Agricultural College," says Pat. "On the part-time course, you tend to have smaller groups, which allows for rich learning from each other and a good support network."

"It's a hands on course for hands on people, coupled with a good grounding in what's needed to farm. A feature of the part-time course is regular interaction with front-line advisors."

Maria Keane and her husband Padraig (below) place strong emphasis on work/life balance and operate a once-a-day milking system. \Mark Moore



Student: Maria Keane, Kilcormac, Offaly.

Course: L6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming (distance).

Maria says that despite coming from a dairy farm in Limerick, agriculture was never really on her radar.

"I studied psychology and music at the University of Limerick and then gained a post graduate qualification in accountancy."

Now married to husband Padraig, the couple are also in a business partnership and run their dairy herd in Co Offaly.

"The Green Cert gives you a great

foundation in agriculture," says Maria.

"I did the course by distance learning at Gurteen College and I found the course was flexible and accommodating. A lot of other students on the course had full-time jobs while they were doing the course.

"We would go in every month for skills training etc, which meant there was a good chance to chat and, of course due to Covid, there was a lot of teaching on Zoom."

Maria developed a great interest in the breeding side of the business.

"I love working with figures and

spread sheets," she says.

"I like studying the traits of the various bulls and how they complement our herd."

In collaboration with Padraig, Maria chooses Norwegian red bulls and others to use on their herd. Their breeding company supplies straws for bulls that may be less well known in Ireland. "I thought the course was brilliant," concludes Maria. "As well as technical teaching, we did a lot on the business side and we try and balance our activities so that we can reduce stress for all our stakeholders and achieve a good work/life balance."

Course coordinator: Melissa White

"Students must already have a Level 6 Major Award to apply for the course. Learning is a blended mix of online and typically one day per month onsite, with a focus on practical skills. There is

less contact time on this version of the Green Cert. The student is expected to carry out self-directed learning in their own time.

"Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which adds to the learner

experience. There is a good support network and as with all education, active engagement is key to success on the course. We aspire to build students' confidence and encourage each student to reach their full potential."



Dominic White with his dad, also Dominic, run a business trading Connemara ponies in Ireland and abroad. **Mark Moore**

Student: Dominic White, Rathkeale Co Limerick.

Course: L6 Advanced Certificate in Equine Breeding (Stud Management).

Following his Leaving Cert, Dominic joined the Level 5 course in Stud Management at Teagasc Kildalton College in 2019.

“I always wanted to have a career which wasn’t heavily office based and I had a strong interest in horses and getting the Green Cert, so the Stud Management course at Kildalton seemed ideal,” says Dominic.

“Within several weeks of starting the course, we were out on placement two days a week. I was at the Charel Stud near Carrick-on-Suir, where I learned a huge amount from the staff and owner Vanessa Teehan-Rouzier.

“There are 54 stables with two sand turnout arenas, a covered horse walker, lunge ring and fully railed paddocks, so it is a first-class place to learn about all aspects of stud management.”

Dominic progressed on to the Level 6 Stud Management course, where he says there was a good balance of classroom work and skill development.

“At Kildalton, we could do assessments on a range of topics including identifying ailments or Stud Management (managing a stud book) or

improving your skills at handling horses,” says Dominic.

Even though Dominic had a lot of prior experience with horses, he says: “You’d know what to look out for a lot more after doing the course. Overall, I thought it was unbelievable and I’d recommend it to anyone with an interest in horses who is willing to put the work in. The lecturers were always keen to help and my confidence grew as a result of completing it.”

Since graduating, Dominic works in partnership with his father Dominic senior, buying foals for National Hunt and selling them at three years old. The biggest part of their business is buying Connemara ponies across Ireland and selling them to a range of countries, including the UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and the US.

“You’re not only evaluating horses and working with buyers and sellers,” says Dominic. “You need to have



Dominic says each pony has its own individual personality. **Mark Moore**

excellent vets and transport professionals to make the business work. The Kildalton course really gives you a solid foundation for all of that.”

Course coordinator: Rosemary Gaffney

“There are two equine specialisms on offer at Level 5 and Level 6 - Equitation (riding) and Stud Management. Students tend to have a mix of backgrounds and experience, which adds to the learner experience.

“We have a great network of top names in the industry for Stud Manage-

ment PLP, where students get hands on experience and responsibility to manage horses in different situations.

“Courses are for everybody from all backgrounds with an interest in working in the horse industry.

“Application involves an interview and a practical assessment. There is plenty of demand in the industry for good graduates.”

Student: Cliona Beirne, Hillstreet, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Roscommon.

Course: L6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture (Dairy Herd Mgt) Mountbellew College.

Cliona happily admits she wasn't sure what she wanted to do after her Leaving Cert. She enjoyed English, Ag Science and History, and even considered becoming a paramedic. She decided to go to Mountbellew and complete the Green Cert. Coming from a beef farm, she decided to focus on sheep on year one and dairying for the Level 6 in year two. She started the course in September 2019.

"Year one wasn't too heavily affected by Covid, as we were out on placement in February 2020. There was much more online teaching during the second year.

"What I loved about being in college was that you would be learning about measuring grass in the morning and you would be in the field in the afternoon putting it into practice. The combination of theory and practice made it very easy to learn. You were constantly picking up skills that you could apply on your own farm.

"I also really liked the technology and business aspects of the course, the fact that you could use tools such as the Teagasc Profit Monitor to compare your profitability and use cash flow budgets to help predict how the business would progress in any year.

"The teachers didn't just deliver a topic and move on to the next one. If a student or the class was struggling with something, they would go back over it until everyone was happy. The teachers would constantly keep in touch with students to ensure they were making progress.

"Students in the college were super-friendly and there was plenty of mixing of distance and full-time students."

Cliona decided to progress on to the BAgrSc course in UCD after finishing the Green Cert. A classmate at UCD is



Cliona Beirne says that during the Green Cert course, she gained theory/knowledge but also practical farming skills.

Mark Moore

Saoirse McGovern, who completed a Green Cert at Teagasc Kildalton College.

Even though Cliona could have gone to UCD directly after the Leaving Cert, she says she is glad she went to Mountbellew.

"Doing the Green Cert was a great experience and was a way to ensure I was interested in agriculture," she says.

"Also, it helped me to build confidence and become more outgoing than I might have been coming direct from secondary school."

Course coordinator: Rita Hughes

"On the full-time course, you have Level 5 – year one – foundation of a broad range of knowledge and skills. With Level 6 – year two – which is the Advanced Certificate in Agriculture, possible specialisms include dairy/drystock/machinery and crops or mechanisation.

"You have more contact time on the full-time course. Students tend to be school-leaving age from mixed farming backgrounds – you don't have to be from a farm – you just need an interest in farming. The Practical Learning Period is on host farms, which is a very effective learning experience."



Cliona and her father Tommy. The family operate a drystock farm in Co Roscommon.

Mark Moore

Student: Francis Hewitson, Kildarragh, Dunfanaghy, Letterkenny, Co Donegal.

Course: L6 Advanced Certificate in Forestry.

“A meeting with Donegal forestry advisor Steven Meyen was where I got the idea of applying to do the Green Cert in forestry at Ballyhaise College,” says Francis.

“We have some forestry at home and Steven came out in connection with that, but I got talking to him and he said the course would give me a good mix of theory and practical skills, such as tree identification, chainsaw, and machinery work.”

Francis says he really enjoyed doing the Level 5 forestry course at Ballyhaise and decided to follow up with the Level 6 at the college. Further progression is possible.

“If you do well, there’s the possibility to continue on and do Level 7 and 8 courses at the Waterford Institute of Technology,” he says.

“You can go back to that within five years of completing the Level 6,” says Francis, who is currently working with a forestry company on all aspects of forest establishment and harvesting.

Francis had work with the contrac-



Francis Hewitson says the Green Cert in forestry, which he completed at Teagasc Ballyhaise College, opened up a range of job opportunities. \Clive Wasson

tor, Stewarts, while on placement.

“Many of the forestry students are offered jobs by companies they work with on placement,” he says.

“The forestry students at Bally-

haise are a relatively small group of about a dozen,” say Francis.

“Safety is vital in forestry and as well as following precautions, students are always looking out for one

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Francis particularly enjoys the machinery side of forestry. \Clive Wassoon

another. There's a great team spirit as a result.

"Because Ballyhaise has its own mature forestry, we got to do a lot of practical work, harvesting and mov-

ing timber. I love the machinery side and of course, and they have state-of-the-art equipment such as the John Deere forestry machinery simulator. "I'd describe doing the Green Cert

in forestry as a real gateway to a load of possibilities.

"If you want you to, you can reach almost any job you want in the industry."

Course coordinator: Linda Coughlan – Teagasc Ballyhaise

"There is a shortage of skilled workers in the industry, so graduates have no problem gaining employment," says

Linda Coughlan.

"Students gain skills such as ATV operation, planting, weeding, formative shaping, high pruning and timber measurement, which are immediately relevant to the workplace, but students

can also progress to other higher education forestry courses.

"We encourage students to travel and broaden their horizons and we have links with colleges for international exchange," she says.



Schedule of College Open Days

Autumn 2022		Spring 2023	
Open Day Date/Time	College	Open Day Date/Time	College
Wednesday 05 October 2022 10.00am to 12.30pm Tours on-going	Mountbellew Agricultural College, Mountbellew, Co Galway, H53 WE00 Phone: 0909 679205 Email: admissions@mountbellewagri.com	Wednesday 01 March 2023 10.00am to 12.30pm Tours on-going	Mountbellew Agricultural College, Mountbellew, Co Galway, H53 WE00 Phone: 0909 679205 Email: admissions@mountbellewagri.com
Friday 07 October 2022 10.00am to 1.00pm <i>Advanced Booking is Essential</i>	Teagasc, Ballyhaise Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, Co Cavan, H12 E393 Phone: 049 4338108 Email: ballyhaise.college@teagasc.ie	Friday 03 March 2023 Tours start at 10.00am & 11.00am	Teagasc, Kildalton College, Piltown, Co Kilkenny, E32 YW08 Phone: 051 644400 Email: kildalton.college@teagasc.ie
Friday 7 October 2022 11.00am to 1.00pm Tours on-going	Teagasc, Clonakilty Agricultural College, Darrara, Clonakilty, Co Cork, P85 EK80 Phone: 023 8832500 Email: clonakilty.college@teagasc.ie	Wednesday 08 March 2023 10.30am to 12.30pm Tours on-going	Gurteen College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, E53 TP93 Phone: 067 21282 Email: info@gurteencollege.ie
Friday 07 October 2022 Tours start at 10.00am & 11.00am	Teagasc, Kildalton College, Piltown, Co Kilkenny, E32 YW08 Phone: 051 644400 Email: kildalton.college@teagasc.ie	Thursday 09 March 2023 12 noon to 3.00pm Tours on-going	Teagasc, College of Amenity Horticulture, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, D09 VY63 Phone: 01 8040201 Email: botanic.college@teagasc.ie
Thursday 13 October 2022 12 noon to 3.00pm Tours on-going	Teagasc, College of Amenity Horticulture, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, D09 VY63 Phone: 01 8040201 Email: botanic.college@teagasc.ie	Friday 10 March 2023 10.00am to 1.00pm <i>Advanced Booking is Essential</i>	Teagasc, Ballyhaise Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, Co Cavan, H12 E393 Phone: 049 4338108 Email: ballyhaise.college@teagasc.ie
Friday 14 October 2022 10.30am to 12.30pm Tours on-going	Gurteen College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, E53 TP93 Phone: 067 21282 Email: info@gurteencollege.ie	Friday 10 March 2023 11.00am to 1.00pm Tours on-going	Teagasc, Clonakilty Agricultural College, Darrara, Clonakilty, Co Cork, P85 EK80 Phone: 023 8832500 Email: clonakilty.college@teagasc.ie
Saturday 05 November 2022 11.00am to 1.00pm Tours on-going	Salesian Agricultural College, Pallaskenry, Co Limerick, V94 V8N3 Phone: 061 393100 Email: info@pallaskenry.com	Saturday 24 June 2023 11.00am to 1.00pm Tours on-going	Salesian Agricultural College, Pallaskenry, Co Limerick, V94 V8N3 Phone: 061 393100 Email: info@pallaskenry.com

For further information please contact the college of your choice or visit our website at www.teagasc.ie

Pathways to a Green Cert.

Full-time Teagasc Course	Part-time Agriculture Green Cert	Distance education	Progression to higher education
Successfully complete the Level 5 Certificate plus the Level 6 Advanced Certificate full-time courses in Agriculture, Horticulture, Equine, or Forestry.	Successfully complete the Teagasc Part-time Green Cert programme (which consists of the Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture plus the Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming).	Successfully complete the Teagasc Distance Education Green Cert programme (For award holders) which consists of the Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture plus the Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming.	Teagasc is a delivery partner with a number of Institutes of Technology/technological universities such as MTU, ATU, DKIT, GMIT and WIT, UCC and UCD. Currently, part of these courses is delivered by Teagasc. It is possible to progress through the Education Links scheme to these higher education courses where places are available.
In the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture, students can specialise in Dairy Herd Management, Drystock Management, Machinery and Crops, and Mechanisation.			
Horticulture can specialise in Nursery, Landscape, Sports Turf Management, or Food Production.			
Equine students can specialise in Equitation or Stud Management.			
Courses begin in late August/early September and the academic year ends at the beginning of June.	Courses start at any time of the year. Contact your local college or Teagasc regional education centre.	Courses start at any time of the year.	
Full-time students tend to have recently left secondary school, with the exception of some horticulture students that may return as mature students.	Part-time students are over 23 years old. They tend to be either farming themselves or closely involved in the management of a farm. They may have an off-farm job.	Applicants need to have completed a higher Level 6 course before applying for this course. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, which adds to diversity and the student experience.	Consult with each third level college to get more detail.
The Level 5 is one academic year. The Level 6 is one academic year	The part-time courses can have a duration of two – two and half years.	The distance education Green Cert duration is around 18 months.	
Courses contain periods of Practical Learning Periods (PLP) on host farms/units (from four to 16 weeks) which are a valuable learning experience. This element of the course rates highly in student feedback surveys.	PLP for part-time students usually takes place on the home or nominated farm	PLP for Distance Education PLP usually takes place on the home or nominated farm.	These courses have an element of farm or industry PLP.

For more information, contact your local college or advisory office, www.teagasc.ie/education or the Teagasc prospectus.

How to apply

www.teagasc.ie/education/going-to-college/ (some courses such as equine and forestry require an interview as part of the application process).

Course fees

www.teagasc.ie/education/going-to-college/course-charges/