

## Press release

---

# Minister Harris announces appointments to the board of SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority

From [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science \(/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/\)](#)

Published on 7 June 2023

Last updated on 6 June 2023

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science Simon Harris has announced the appointment of Sheila Gallagher and Niall O'Donnellan to the Board of SOLAS for a five-year term.

Sheila Gallagher is currently Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). She had been Chief Financial Officer of RCPI from 2019 to 2022 and has previously worked as Finance Director of RTE Operations, RTE Arts and Culture, and RTE Radio and as Finance Manager for RTE Radio.

Niall O'Donnellan is an Independent Strategy Advisor, focusing on industrial development, higher education, technology-based education and labour markets and skills. He was Chair of Sligo Institute of Technology from 2016 to 2022 and has previously worked in various leadership roles in industrial policy, in labour market interventions for enterprise and long-term unemployed, and in community enterprise.

Minister Harris said:

“Having consulted with my colleagues, the Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, I am delighted to announce these appointments which bring a wealth of experience and expertise to SOLAS.

“Sheila’s proven record of leadership in financial management, organisational change, collaboration, negotiation and problem solving and Niall’s extensive contribution to education and skills policy over many years are testament to the constructive role that both they will play on the SOLAS Board, and I wish them well in the important work ahead.”

The Minister thanked the outgoing members of the SOLAS Board for their commitment and contribution during their terms of office.

The recruitment process was managed by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) in 2022 and a panel for a period of a year was formed to fill any vacancies on the SOLAS Board. Both Ms. Gallagher and Mr. Donnellan are appointed from the panel.

The Minister confirmed that Catrina Sheridan was re-appointed to the SOLAS Board for a three-year term in October 2022 following consultation with the Minister for Social Protection and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Ms. Sheridan was first appointed to the SOLAS Board following a PAS competition in October 2017.

---

## Notes

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), the Further Education and Training Authority, was established in October 2013 under the Further Education and Training Act, 2013. Under the aegis of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, SOLAS is responsible for the strategic co-ordination and funding of the Further Education and Training (FET) Sector.

The legislation sets out the overall structure of SOLAS and provides for its functions including:

- the development and implementation of a national strategy for the delivery of further education and training
- consultation with key stakeholders in relation to the provision of further education and training
- coordination with the National Public Employment Service, Intreo, in the delivery of further education and training programmes to those seeking employment
- advancing monies to the Education and Training Boards and other training bodies
- assessing whether bodies engaged in the provision of further education and training programmes perform their functions in an economic, efficient, and effective manner
- developing and facilitating the development of new and existing further education and training programmes; conducting research relating to the functions of SOLAS

Section 10 of the Further Education and Training Act, 2013 provides that the Board of SOLAS shall consist of 13 members appointed by the Minister, of whom one shall be the Chairperson, one shall be the Chief Executive Officer, and one shall represent the interests of learners in the further education and training sector. Of the remaining 10 members, 2 shall be appointed following their nomination by the Minister for Social Protection, while 8 shall be appointed by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science following consultation with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Social Protection.

The Board meets regularly, and members may be required to serve on committees established by the Board.

The Act provides that members of the Board shall have experience and expertise in matters connected with the functions of SOLAS or matters connected with finance, trade, commerce, corporate governance or public administration.

The Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of SOLAS by leading and directing the Body's activities, providing strategic guidance to the organisation and monitoring the activities and effectiveness of its management.

The gender balance on the Board, following these appointments, is 6 female and 5 male; with two remaining vacancies to be filled.

## Part of

Policies

[Further and higher education \(/en/policy/33938-further-and-higher-education/\)](/en/policy/33938-further-and-higher-education/)

**BETA**

This is a prototype - your feedback will help us to improve it.

**Help us improve gov.ie**

[Leave feedback](#)

## Departments and publications

[Circulars \(/en/circulars/\)](/en/circulars/)

[Consultations \(/en/consultations/\)](/en/consultations/)

[Directory \(/en/directory/\)](/en/directory/)

[Policies \(/en/policies/\)](/en/policies/)

[Publications \(/en/publications/\)](/en/publications/)

## About gov.ie

[About gov.ie \(/en/help/about-govie/\)](/en/help/about-govie/)

[Accessibility \(/en/help/accessibility/\)](/en/help/accessibility/)

[Privacy policy \(/en/help/privacy-policy/\)](/en/help/privacy-policy/)

[Who does what \(/en/help/e170a-who-does-what/\)](/en/help/e170a-who-does-what/)



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland

# Manage cookie preferences

Manage preferences