

# SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2026





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# Foreword

## Prof. Tor Hervig

In the ever-evolving landscape of Irish healthcare, the critical role played by the IBTS cannot be overstated. As the National Blood Establishment, it is paramount that we nurture a culture of education and continuous development among our workforce. This foreword marks the initiation of the first dedicated IBTS education strategy tailored to the unique needs of our employees, students and healthcare partners.

At the heart of this strategy lies our unwavering commitment to elevating the quality of education already provided by our blood establishment. We aim to design and deliver educational experiences that are student-led and reflective of the latest breakthroughs in blood transfusion and cellular therapies.

This strategy will strengthen our organisational culture of continued professional development. By fostering an environment that encourages continued learning and collaboration, we are enabling our employees to deliver the best outcomes for those who rely on our services and blood products.

Furthermore, our focus on innovation propels us to offer new bespoke IBTS courses. Our innovative courses will be designed to cater to a diverse healthcare audience, spanning from seasoned professionals seeking to enhance their expertise, to new graduates eager to embark on a fulfilling career in this exciting field.

In embracing this new educational strategy we reaffirm our commitment to not only expanding our organisation's capabilities but also to providing the highest knowledge and expertise to our healthcare and educational partners.

Let us remember that every drop of knowledge we share has the potential to save lives.

**Prof. Tor Hervig | Medical & Scientific Director**

# Foreword

## Louise Breslin

On behalf of the IBTS, I am pleased to present our strategy statement for 2024–2026. This inaugural education strategy aims to strengthen our existing educational offerings, expand avenues for continuous professional development (CPD), and innovate in course design and delivery.

Launching this initiative in a post-pandemic era fills us with immense optimism and enthusiasm. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have persevered, adapted, and emerged stronger. Now, as we look to the future, we are eager to harness this momentum to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in this strategy.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution from a number of stakeholders in the development of this strategy. This strategy is a programme of work that aligns with the IBTS Transfusion Medicine Model of Care and will align with the outputs from the IBTS Laboratory Services Model Review.

In embarking on this education strategy, the Irish Blood Transfusion Service reaffirms its dedication to excellence in transfusion education. Through collaboration, innovative programming, and a commitment to continuous improvement, we aspire to strengthen our position as a global leader in transfusion education.

**Louise Breslin | Training and Education Officer**

# Executive Summary

**This strategy statement represents the output of a consultative and developmental process to consider the department's overall direction for a two year period, in keeping with the IBTS strategy "Connections that Count" for 2021 to 2025. The education strategy aligns with the organisational strategy pillar of "supporting better healthcare" by providing advice and guidance to promote best practice in transfusion medicine. The objectives of this strategic plan harmonises with pillar 3 of the overall organisational strategy ('improving customer experience' in particular developing a knowledge exchange programme of work to share ideas and build relationships.**

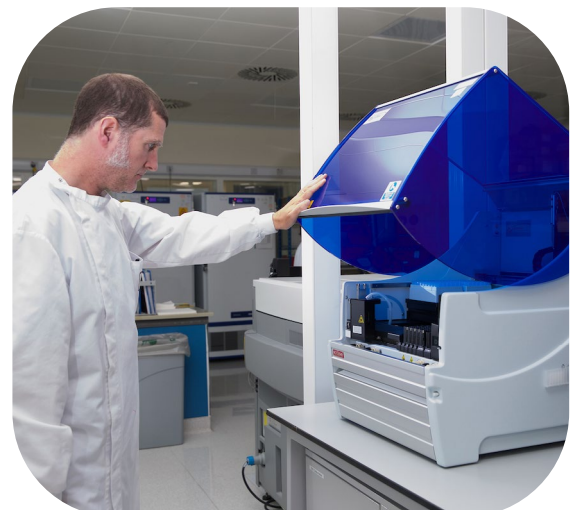
The IBTS organisational strategy cites 'partnerships' as a key enabler.. Collaboration and partnership are also key enablers of this strategy to ensure we have the resources needed to successfully deliver this ambitious programme. We aim to leverage our shared expertise and resources to expand the reach and impact of this education strategy. A prominent theme of the education strategy is strengthening current relationships and fostering new collaborations through bidirectional learning and sharing expertise.

Transfusion education is an integral part of the IBTS which requires competent trained staff in every aspect of the transfusion vein to vein pathway. This strategy also aligns with all three aspects of the pillar "Shaping our Future Workforce" set out in the current IBTS "Transforming Together; People: Culture: Connections" strategy document.

This is the first IBTS education strategy and it builds on previous work performed in developing the IBTS Education and Training Department. This document outlines the educational vision, mission, values and priority objectives of the IBTS as the national organisation responsible for collecting, processing, testing and distributing blood, and blood products in Ireland.

Our education strategy provides the direction for the development of our Scientific and Medical educational offering at the IBTS to fulfil our three core educational goals. Key to all the objectives set out is that the quality of learning experiences for all learners will continuously improve and expand. Through the implementation of the strategy statement, the IBTS is committed to working with our partners and stakeholders over the two year period to enhance the delivery of education and training provision.

This strategy is tailored to meet the needs of the IBTS and our partners as well as benefiting the organisation through alignment with key organisational plans.



# Context for our Strategic Plan

## Global Pandemic

The provision of workplace learning and education has changed significantly over recent years. The disruptive arrival of the global pandemic and immediate closure of educational institutes accelerated the need for education providers to adjust their learning environments with a swift pivot from traditional classroom methods to online learning.

In the IBTS these changes were made almost immediately as the prevailing circumstances demanded. The crisis accelerated the uptake of platforms such as TEAMS and ZOOM in order to protect the blood supply and IBTS staff from further risk of infection. Online contingency plans were designed to provide teaching and assessment via ZOOM so that students from Munster Technological University (MTU), Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Technological University Dublin (TUD) and Royal College of Physicians Ireland (RCPI) could continue studying.

A reflection on lessons learned during this challenging period highlighted the need for an IBTS Education strategy in order to better prepare for subsequent disruptions to teaching and to understand how COVID-19 has shaped our learning.

## Future of Learning

The pandemic has forced us to rethink traditional ways of both teaching and learning. A resilient and sustainable education programme is one that is flexible in the face of unexpected challenges. This strategy considers that planning for post pandemic education requires creative solutions and problem-solving techniques.

We need to ensure education delivery in the IBTS is well equipped to transition to unexpected circumstances.

Recognizing the transformative potential of technology in education, we will leverage HeLM Learning Management system and [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie) website to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and interactivity. By embracing digital innovation, we will reach a wider audience, and facilitate self-paced learning.

**Overall, the priority of The IBTS educational strategy is to engender excellence, inclusion and promote equal access and sustainability.**





# IBTS Scientific and Medical Educational Services

The Training and Education (T&E) department co-ordinates and acts as a central point of contact and oversight for all generic scientific and education related issues, particularly from an educational governance perspective.

The Training and Education Officer (TEO) leads the design, implementation and evaluation of scientific education and continuing professional development to the IBTS, our healthcare partners and third level institutions.





# Current Educational Offerings

## Clinical Practice Placement Programme

A key activity of the department is to design, coordinate and oversee the accredited IBTS Clinical Practice Placement Programme for undergraduate and post graduate CORU approved degrees in Medical Science.

In 2019 the responsibilities of the TEO changed with the opening of the CORU Medical Scientists Register under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (amended) to regulate the profession of Medical Scientists. The IBTS TEO became a “Practice Educator” which is a statutory position and requires appropriate qualifications and experience. A practice educator (PE) is a named person with direct responsibility for the design, integration and assessment of the core professional elements of the programme criteria set out by the Medical Scientists Registration Board, CORU.

The IBTS practice educator is a specialised and unique role that coordinates blood establishment practice placement training for all trainee Medical Scientists in Ireland.

In recent years the IBTS has experienced a 207% increase in student numbers participating in this programme compared to pre-pandemic figures. This figure is expected to rise due to the accreditation of new post graduate Medical Science pathway courses. Therefore, it is critical that this strategy addresses the need to collaborate with our third level partners, identify gaps and additional resources needed to optimise our current offerings.



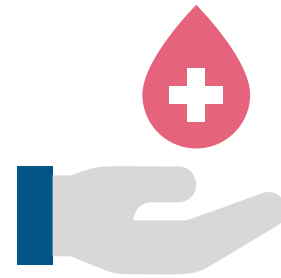
## Transition Year Programme

One of the strategic objectives outlined in “Connections that Count” is to promote research, new technologies and specialist learning with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and others. This objective inspired the design and development of the first structured Transition Year (TY) programme in the IBTS.

The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) Transition Year Course is a comprehensive educational programme designed to provide secondary school students in their Transition Year a unique opportunity to learn about the “vein to vein” chain of blood transfusion. The course is designed to provide students with a foundational understanding of the anatomy and physiology of blood, the principles of transfusion medicine and the importance of blood donation in saving lives.

Through this tailored TY initiative, we recognise the significance of engaging with students during this formative stage to highlight the diverse career opportunities available within our organization.

Beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills, students emerge from the course as informed advocates for blood donation, equipped to educate their peers and families about the critical need for voluntary blood donors and the life-saving impact of blood transfusion.





## National Donor Screening Lab Cross-training Project

The IBTS donor testing laboratories play an integral part in ensuring the quality and safety of the blood and blood products issued to patients in Irish hospitals. Following a laboratory review it was agreed that the Donor Testing Laboratories namely Automated Donor Grouping, Nucleic Acid Testing and Virology would operate as one department called the “National Donor Screening Laboratory” (NDSL). This was identified as a “high priority” programme with the potential benefits deemed to be high also.

The NDSL cross-training project commenced in 2020. The main goal of the project was to identify expertise gaps and provide staff with the scientific knowledge and training required to work competently across all three departments.

This strategy aims to gather all educational outputs generated throughout the duration of the project and consolidate them into HeLM learning management system (LMS) to serve as a central repository accessible to all IBTS employees.

## Educational Events

### Leading Lights Seminar Series

The Seminar series was launched in March 2021 with a view to invite subject matter experts to deliver inspirational talks on innovation and advancement in their area of work. The aim was to build connections outside of the organisation, promote collaboration and to effect positive change.

Through this strategy we aim to increase attendance, attract influential speakers and to enhance knowledge which benefits both the IBTS and the wider transfusion community.

## Continued Professional Development (CPD)

The field of blood transfusion is continuously evolving with new research, technologies and best practice. CPD is a vital component of delivering high quality services and staying at the forefront of best practice. By engaging in lifelong learning, we can expand expertise, explore new areas of interest and advance careers. From an organisational perspective, CPD demonstrates a commitment to professional excellence.

Since CPD became a statutory requirement for Medical Scientists, the IBTS has provided additional support to all scientific staff. This guidance included delivering organisational talks to the IBTS on the CPD process, participated in the updating of the overall IBTS CPD policy as well as provided one-to-one mentoring. It is important that this strategy strengthens CPD guidance and provides support to all IBTS employees.

## IBTS Summer Locum Programme

In 2019 the IBTS introduced the Summer Locum Programme for Student Medical Scientists. This is a paid structured internship for students about to enter their penultimate year. Successful applicants are assigned to one of our fast paced laboratories. Under the supervision of an experienced trainer, the student receives comprehensive on the job training to build on the knowledge acquired in their undergraduate degree.

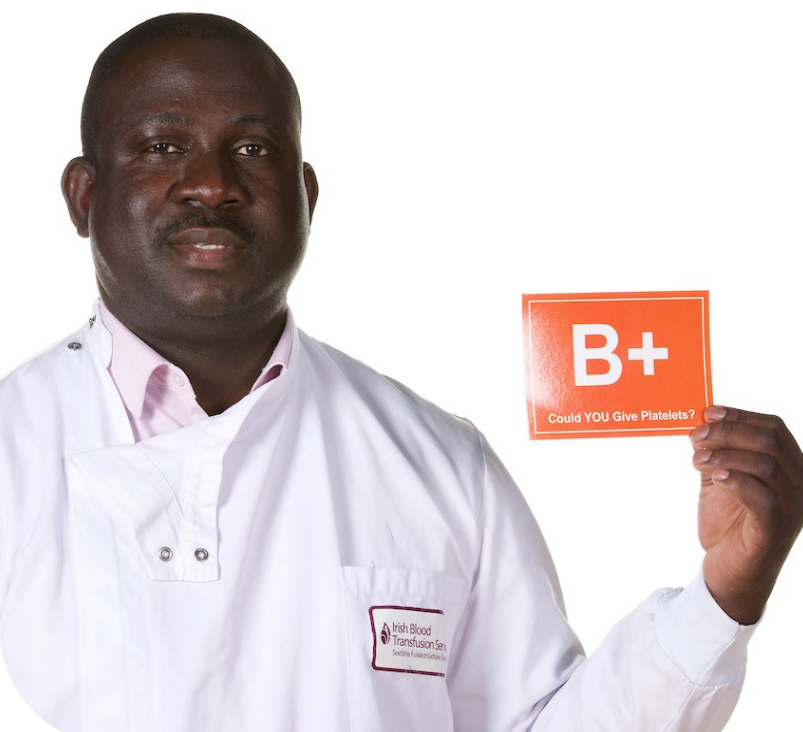
This programme provides students with a taste of professional life while accelerating their personal and professional skills. This initiative has proven to be a successful avenue for the recruitment of early talent for the IBTS. This strategy aims to develop a recognised national programme to incorporate summer positions and part time positions at both our Dublin and Cork Centres.

## Digital Presence

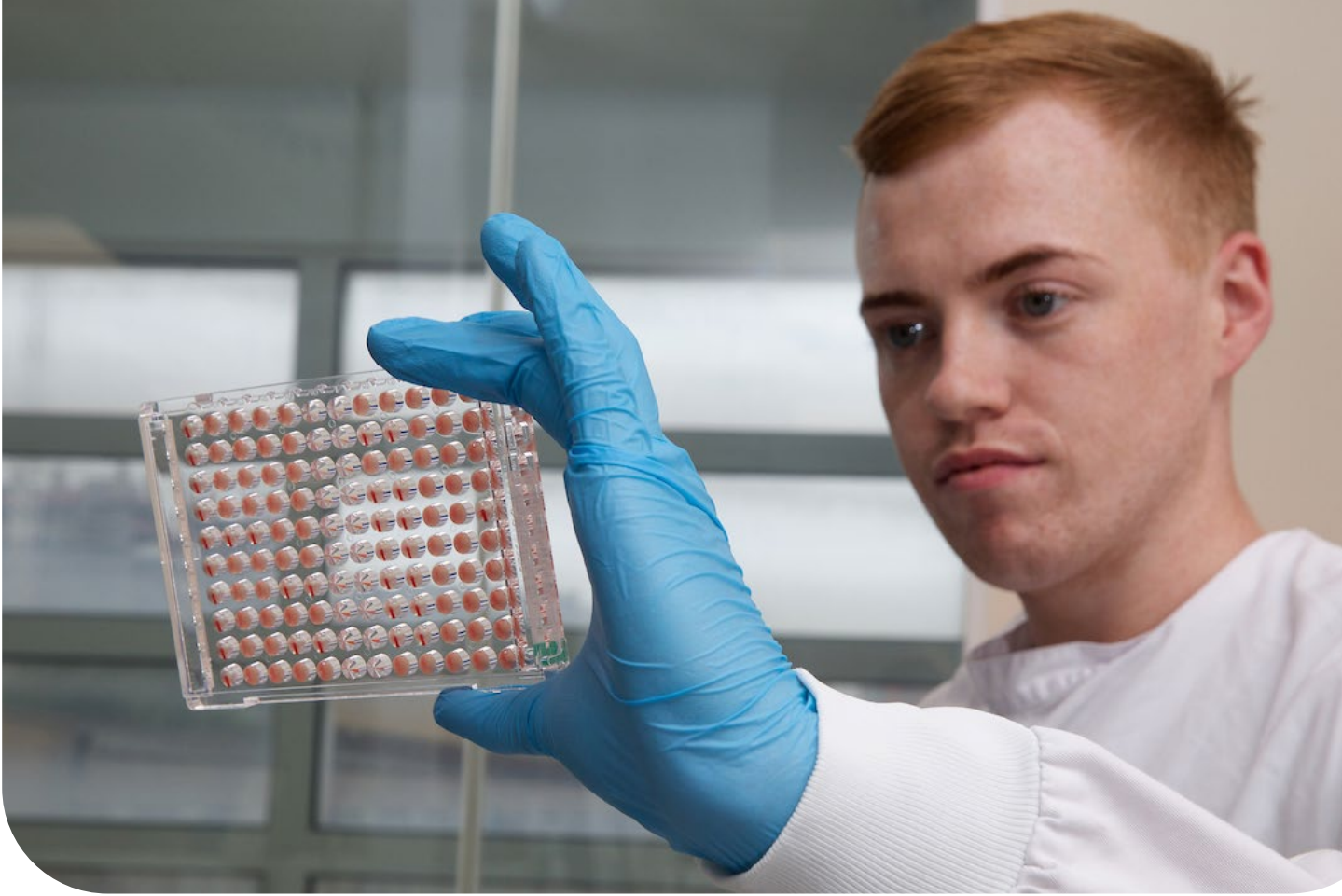
Our digital presence aligns with our organisational strategic pillar of supporting better healthcare by **“providing advice and guidance to promote best practice in transfusion medicine.”**

The IBTS healthcare professional's portal at [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie) offers a voice to share educational opportunities with our healthcare partners as well as showcase our education and research activities. We aim to build on this by harnessing the capabilities of HeLM to develop communities of practice (CoP) with our healthcare partners.

We will continue to represent the IBTS to the highest professional standard online, provide evidence based data and answer queries in a timely and professional manner.







## **IBTS Collaborative Educational Activities:**

**Specialist Registrar Training  
(accredited by RCPI)**

**Corporate Orientation &  
Mandatory training**

**Scientific and Medical IBTS Tours**

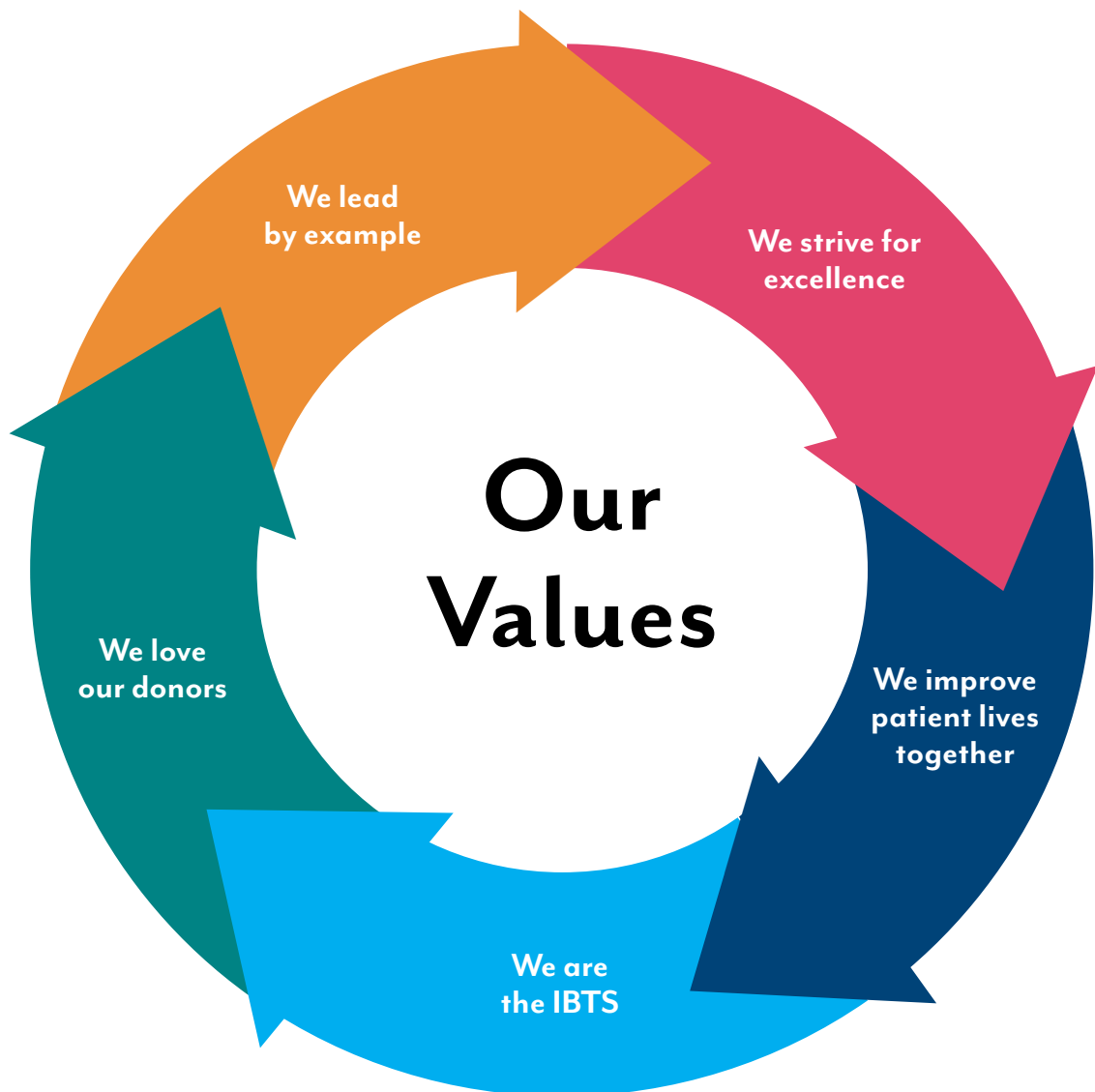
**External examination and  
guest presentations**

**Global Transfusion  
Education Advocacy**

# Our Values

The IBTS education ethos is underpinned by our core values. The overall aim of the strategy is to plan an approach to teaching and learning which is in accordance with the organisation's values.

Alongside each of these values corresponding behaviours have been mapped outlining how we can put these values into effect.



### **We love our donors:**

We value and respect our donors. We use relevant data and educational opportunities to ensure we are responsive in meeting the needs of our donors.

### **We improve patient lives together:**

We deliver the latest evidenced based knowledge ensuring our learners receive the highest standard of education and training which directly benefits patient safety and outcomes.

### **We strive for excellence:**

Promote the IBTS as a recognised centre of academic excellence in the provision of high-quality and expert-led blood transfusion and cellular therapy education. In all our endeavours we embrace a culture of continuous improvement and feedback where we challenge learners to reason, question, innovate and reflect.

### **We lead by example:**

We lead with professional integrity, communicating and collaborating in a manner that reinforces our position as a leader in transfusion science and medicine. Our education team is recognised as being highly effective in providing expertise to our healthcare partners and the international scientific community.

### **We are the IBTS:**

We are a learner centred inclusive organisation that empowers all of the IBTS and our partners to maximise the value of educational opportunities we provide. We promote the IBTS as an integral part of both the Irish education and healthcare systems contributing to the advancement of patient care.

## **Our Vision Statement**

**Our vision is to build on excellent foundations already laid, working together to be an exemplar in leading world-class education that is well coordinated, of high quality, sustainable and addresses the learning needs of the IBTS and our partners.**

## **Our Mission**

**The IBTS in collaboration with its partners is committed to fostering the integration and delivery of impactful evidence based transfusion education with subject matter experts in the field and excellent facilities to empower our learners to reach their full potential.**





# Education Strategy Development

At the IBTS we strive for excellence in all we do in relation to blood transfusion, transplantation and preparation of blood products. The IBTS as a specialist centre has an obligation to share knowledge in transfusion and cellular therapies both nationally and internationally. One of the functions of the IBTS as set out in Statutory Instrument No. 78 of 1965 and Statutory Instrument no 209 of 1988 are as follows: **“To organise, provide, assist or encourage research and the training and teaching of persons in matters relating to blood transfusion and preparation of blood products.”**

The development of this strategy has been informed by the overall IBTS strategic objectives.

The “Connections that Count” strategy for 2021 to 2025 provides a framework to deliver the implementation of an education strategy which aligns to the pillar of *Supporting Better Healthcare*.

This strategic plan was developed over the course of 18 months and involved consultations with the Medical and Scientific Director, Educators and HEI partners. A collaborative approach was adopted to include meetings and brainstorming events to engage with and listen to the needs of our stakeholders.

This strategy demonstrates our focus on supporting and delivering structured, inclusive and sustainable educational opportunities in alignment with the organisational strategy.



# Implementation and Governance

The Chief Executive has executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of the IBTS strategies and policies. The Training and Education Officer is responsible for providing strategic leadership for this strategy and has overall delegated authority for coordinating its design, development and implementation.

The key to successful implementation of this strategy is collaboration across the IBTS and partnership outside the organisation. Utilising this approach we can maximise expertise, share resources and address any potential challenges collectively. Close alignment with our vision, mission and values will deliver sustainable outcomes by 2026.



# Educational Objectives

Our strategy is based on three core objectives:

## 1: Strengthen Existing Educational Programmes

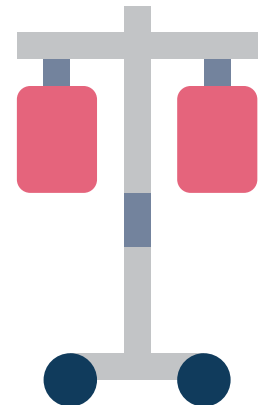
By refining curriculum content, updating materials, and incorporating feedback from learners and stakeholders, we will ensure that our educational offerings remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with evolving industry standards and best practices.

## 2: Support CPD opportunities

We aim to establish the IBTS as a leader in the provision of education by harnessing the expertise of our subject matter experts. Supporting and sharing CPD opportunities allows IBTS employees to perform their roles more effectively and enhances their knowledge skills and competencies. This ensures as an organisation we stay updated with the latest evidence based transfusion practice and advancements and we can lead by example.

## 3: Innovation and Collaboration

We aim to challenge traditional classroom learning to provide new and innovative ways of delivering education including: maximising the potential of HeLM Learning Management System, providing innovative course structures and creating a modern collaborative space for delivery.



# Strategic focus 2024-2026

Our Education will focus on:



# Goal 1: Improving and strengthening our current programmes

## Strategies

- Review of Clinical Practice Placement Programme.
- Strengthen our TY programme.
- National student Summer Locum programme.

## Clinical Practice Placement

We aim to review and improve the IBTS Medical Science Undergraduate Clinical Placement Programme. The current model while effective was designed to deliver on-site placement to a smaller student body. With an increasing student population it is necessary to engage our stakeholders and review our offering and shared learning outcomes.

We recognise the invaluable contributions of our current educational partners. By nurturing these relationships, we aim to deepen collaboration, leverage resources, and maximise the impact of our clinical placement. Through regular communication and joint planning, we will ensure alignment of objectives and optimize the IBTS clinical placement programme.

## Transition Year (TY)

The IBTS is committed to fostering a culture of education, innovation, and engagement among students and our TY programme serves as a cornerstone of this commitment. As we embark on our new education strategy, we are dedicated to continuously enhancing the TY programme to provide students with even more enriching and impactful experiences during their week in the IBTS.

## National Student Summer Locum Programme

We aim to establish a national approach to recruiting Summer Locum Student Medical Scientists by offering positions at both our Dublin and Cork Centres that could employ students from all three CORU accredited campuses (TUD, MTU and ATU).

Hiring Summer Locum Students in both centres would showcase the IBTS as a great place to work and strengthen our relationships with the three HEIs.



# Goal 2: Supporting CPD opportunities

## Strategies

- CPD mentoring.
- Grow Leading Lights Seminar Series.
- Maximising HeLM.

## CPD Mentoring:

Partaking in CPD activities are key requirements for our staff to continuously develop themselves and our organisation. Within an organisation as large and diverse as the IBTS, inevitably people will have different career development aspirations. We aim to share CPD opportunities in collaboration with the IBTS Learning and Development department as well support individuals who wish to develop while enhancing the delivery of our services.

This will be achieved by providing coaching sessions and sharing CPD event invites. We aim to empower individuals to take responsibility and ownership of completing and documenting their own CPD activities.

## Leading Lights Series:

We strive to promote and grow our “Leading Lights” seminar series to become an event that is valuable addition to our organisation. This will be achieved by leveraging our online presence, creating engaging marketing content and directing the wider transfusion community back to our event page on [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)

We aim to strengthen our presence in the global transfusion medicine community by developing a strong and cohesive digital presence through this series to promote a culture of shared expertise and to enhance the profile and reputation of education offered at the IBTS.

Key performance indicators of growth will include increased collaboration and participant satisfaction (surveys/feedback).

## Maximising HeLM Learning Management System

Utilising HeLM as a dynamic repository this will facilitate on-going learning and continuous improvement. Staff members can contribute feedback, insights, and suggestions for refinement, allowing us to iteratively enhance educational materials in response to emerging best practices or regulatory changes.

Streamlining access to educational resources will enhance operational efficiency by reducing the time and effort required for staff members to locate relevant information.





# Goal 3: Innovation and Collaboration



## Strategies

- Innovative learning space.
- Bespoke IBTS Course.

## Innovative learning Space

Crucial to this goal is the development of a state of the art, well resourced facility for education, research and innovation. This goal aligns with the IBTS Innovation strategy's focus on **“creating a space for innovation and create agile ways of working in the IBTS, where our people have an opportunity to think creatively about their work and working environment so that innovation can thrive.”**

This will be achieved by a modernisation of the T&E rooms to create a space available to all IBTS employees who are looking for the right environment to foster engagement, collaborate, innovate or educate their teams.

## Bespoke IBTS Course

We aim to provide a novel and scalable approach to delivering specialist Transfusion education in Ireland. We will achieve this by harnessing the wealth of expertise in the IBTS and collaborating with experts to develop an accredited course that is evidence based, sustainable and flexible in design.

The course will build on the core and fundamental knowledge of transfusion practice in the IBTS providing specialist knowledge in an innovative manner for all those wishing to advance their knowledge, providing benefits to both the IBTS and our healthcare partners.



# Strategy Objectives and Focus Summary 2024-2026



**Improve existing programmes**

- Clinical practice placement
- TY programme
- Summer Locum Programme



**Support CPD opportunities**

- Provide CPD mentoring
- Grow educational events
- HeLM repository



**Innovation and Collaboration**

- Design innovative learning space
- IBTS Bespoke Course



## Irish Blood Transfusion Service

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