

ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2016-2019



OIDEACHAIS
AGUS SCILEANNA

DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
AND SKILLS

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
STRATEGY STATEMENT**

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VISION

TO PROVIDE THE
BEST EDUCATION
AND TRAINING
SYSTEM IN
EUROPE

Executive Summary

Education is central to many of our ambitions as a nation whether they be

- To break the cycles of disadvantage that can prevent some from fulfilling their full potential
- To excel in fields of human endeavour
- To create sustainable jobs with good prospects

Excellent and innovative education and training are the pivot around which personal fulfilment, a fair society and a successful nation should revolve. It is central to sustaining economic success and in converting economic success into building a strong community.

The Programme for Government states that “Education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life. No child should be left behind in economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and skills.”

Our Vision

The central vision of our Statement of Strategy and Action Plan for Education is that the Irish Education and Training System should become the best in Europe over the next decade. This is achievable as we are already a high performer in many fields, but it is also a challenge towards which the many stakeholders in education and training can work together.

Education has been central to Ireland’s transformation over recent decades. It has played a very significant role in helping Ireland to successfully weather the exceptional economic crash. It will be central to our ambitions as a nation (economic, cultural, scientific and social) over the coming years. It will allow us to lead in innovation. It will help us to achieve social inclusion.

Being the lead in Europe means an ambition to be the best at:

- Harnessing Education to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion
- Delivering a learning experience to highest international standards
- Equipping learners of all ages and capacities to participate and succeed in a changing world
- Allowing Ireland to be a leader across a broad range of fields, scientific, cultural, enterprise and public service

This is a realistic ambition. Ireland already has a top 5 position in Europe in several important spheres (for example, post-primary literacy, third level participation, take-up of STEM at third level) and a top 10 position in others (educational attainment, innovation, low dropout from school).

However, there are other areas where there is significant ground to make up. These include the achievement levels in science, take-up of gateway subjects and the availability of apprenticeships and traineeships in emerging areas of skills. The key to achieving our ambition are the people who deliver day in day out, adapting to the learning needs of those they help.

Ireland is fortunate to attract high calibre people to the fields of teaching and training who deliver to high standards and who have established a strong international reputation. However, as new challenges place new demands on the education and training system we must ensure that we have the capacity to develop and adopt best practices. Education institutions must themselves be learning organisations continually improving and evolving and learning from best practice.

Success in education is built on the quality of leadership, the ingenuity in teaching, the support in the community for learning and this Action Plan aims to harness those human resources. To be the best we need to ensure that leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training are all operating to the highest standards. We need to promote Innovation and Excellence, recognise high achievement and seek to mainstream successful approaches.

The pursuit of this goal will always be constrained by the availability of financial resources. However, it is the clear articulation of the scope for Education and Training to impact on major national priorities which will help Education and Training prove the case for extra investment.

At the heart of the plan is the aim to improve the impact of the education and training experience on the lives of each and every learner, and particularly those who are likely to face greater obstacles because of disadvantage or special needs.

Our Goals

Education and training services support people throughout their lives. They play a huge part in developing their mental resilience and personal wellbeing. They equip people with the ability to adapt, to work with others, to think critically and to be creative. They give people the skills and knowledge to fulfil their personal goals.

The education and training services set out in this Strategy and Action Plan are based on the core values that inspire those who work in education and training. They recognise fundamental roles, which the individual school or institution, the leaders, teachers and support staff have within them, and seeks to strengthen practitioners' capacity to deliver for learners. They also seek to build strong two-way bridges from Education and Training to the wider community to the benefit of each. These principles are equally valid in every realm of Education and Training sector.

The Plan is summarised in five high level goals:

- 1 Improve the learning experience and the success of learners
- 2 Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs
- 3 Help those delivering education services to continuously improve
- 4 Build stronger bridges between education and wider community
- 5 Improve national planning and support services

In each of these areas we aim to deliver systematic progress so we can realise our vision of being the best Education and Training service in Europe.

Objectives and Outcomes

Reflecting on our high level goals, we have identified key ambitions for the coming years which will represent important milestones of progress.

- Significantly reducing the gap with the top European performers in areas of numeracy and science
- Significantly reducing the gap between low achieving students in literacy and numeracy in DEIS and those in non-DEIS schools
- Increasing the take up of gateway subjects: Physics, Chemistry, Higher Level Mathematics and increasing opportunities for learning in the areas of coding and computer science
- Enriching teaching and learning with new curricula, new assessment methods, and technology assisted learning
- Promoting wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life
- Continuing to improve retention rates at second-level in DEIS schools, from their current rate of 82.7% to the national norm, currently 90.2%, by 2025
- Increasing by 7 points (equivalent to 30%) the proportion of students at risk of disadvantaged who proceed to Higher Education
- Systematically reducing the skills gap in areas of critical skill need in Higher Education by providing for 50,000 upskilling and reskilling places
- Increasing by a quarter the number of students undertaking a work placement or work project as part of their third level qualification by 2021
- Developing a strong stream of employer supported apprenticeships and traineeships, providing places for 13,000 young people in 2020, in 100 career areas
- Broadening the choice of schools available each year in line with the target of 400 multi/non-denominational by 2030
- Contributing to the delivery of the cross-departmental research targets in Innovation 2020 to enable Ireland become a Global Innovation Leader, such as through an increase of 500 funded postgraduate students, an increase in the number of funded post-doctoral researcher and the initiation of a new programme of funding for Frontier Research across all disciplines
- Increasing upskilling and reskilling opportunities in education and training for those in work (places in Higher Education including mature students, as well as Further Education and Training and Skillnets places)

Some Key Actions

Achieving these outcomes will require concerted action across all sectors of education and training in respect of each goal. Amongst the actions are:

- Increasing the take up of Mental Health Programmes, strengthening Guidance Counselling and strengthening NEPS with a new focus on whole-school policies
- Implementing the new Framework for Junior Cycle with its new short courses, group projects and Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement

- Extending coding and ICT options in schools
- Putting a new plan in place for DEIS schools to help achieve higher skills, better progression and clear pathways
- Implementing an improved model for allocating teaching resources for children with special educational needs that defines pathways and outcomes to be achieved
- Mapping out a plan to deliver more multi-/non- denominational schools and work with the Oireachtas to improve the legislation around Admissions, Parents and Learners Charter and adjudication on complaints/ Ombudsman
- Reforming the funding model for Higher Education to support the growth ambitions and the capacity to meet specific targets on skill gaps, access for disadvantaged groups and stronger impact on Innovation
- Providing additional teachers to support our goals
- Strengthening school leadership and middle management
- Making time available for teachers to develop new learning methods with top-class professional support
- Implementing a new quality framework for schools with a new emphasis on self-evaluation, improvement plans and peer collaboration
- Supporting the new Quality Framework with new inspection models
- Developing funds to promote Excellence and Innovation throughout Education and Training
- Reviewing the capacity of the various support services funded centrally by the Department to integrate with the needs of schools delivering improvement plans
- Publishing a detailed implementation plan for Apprenticeships and Traineeships
- Establishing a framework that helps schools reduce costs bearing on parents
- Developing Regional Skills Plans to respond to local needs
- Expanding Skillnets to reach more employers with new options for upgrading skills
- Increasing the availability of quality entrepreneurship programmes and modules in schools, Higher and Further Education
- Establishing a new competitive fund to build Ireland's research base
- Within the Department, improving strategic policy capability, oversight, governance of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures to deliver on Government-wide public service reform commitments, with reporting on the IRDP and A Programme for a Partnership Government commitments, in line with best international practice.
- Benchmarking all services delivered centrally in terms of effectiveness and efficiency and enhancing Service Level Agreements with all agencies of the Department

The Action Plan Process

The Action Plan is the start of a process. It is not an exhaustive list of everything that will be done to deliver our ambitions in education over the next 3 years. Updated annual Action Plans will be published in December each year, covering the actions that will be implemented during the subsequent 12 months. As part of this process:

- Actions will be monitored against published timelines
- Each year a new Action Plan will be developed and published to further our goals in consultation with stakeholders
- Responsibility for actions will be clearly assigned.

Furthermore, the Department will publish progress reports each quarter that will evolve and improve from the experience of implementation.

Foreword by the Minister



The basic aim of this Government is to use our economic success to build a fair and compassionate society.

Few areas are more pivotal than education to our ambitions as a nation. The quality of the service we provide through our education system will determine whether we can deliver our most important goals:

- To break cycles of disadvantage and ensure that every person has an opportunity to fulfil their potential
- To create sustainable well-paying jobs and strong economic growth
- To solve the great problems through research and innovation, and excel in culture, art and every other field of human endeavour

That is why I believe it is crucial that we set the highest ambitions for our education and training service, because the quality of the service we deliver will directly determine whether we achieve these ambitions for our citizens. In this strategy we are aiming to achieve the best education and training system in Europe over the next decade.

If we can do that, this will mean that we are providing better opportunities for more people from disadvantaged groups. By delivering the best training service in Europe, we will ensure that we can create more of the sustainable well-paying jobs that we so badly require.

We are lucky of course to already have a world-class education system, and no factor is more pivotal to that than the quality of the people who work in it and our actions must always be informed by that.

In this plan, our high ambitions are matched by specific actions to deliver on them, across all parts of the education service. Actions are aimed at improving outcomes for the learners who depend on the service, at breaking cycles of disadvantage, at supporting teachers and institutions to continually improve, at building better links between education and the broader community, and at improving our systems on which we depend to deliver all this.

I want to thank all the people who contributed to creating this strategy, including the 600 individuals and groups who made submissions or held meetings with me, my Oireachtas colleagues from across the House who contributed, and to the people within my Department who did tireless work on putting the document together.

Too often in previous Governments, ambitious plans like this were published but then little achieved. Following the successful model pioneered in the Action Plan for Jobs, we are putting mechanisms in place to ensure that delivery takes place. Each of the hundreds of actions and sub-actions are given clear timelines and lead responsibility for delivery is assigned. We will publish quarterly reports showing how many of the actions stated for delivery in that quarter were achieved. We will publish an annual action plan each year, with more ambitious and more specific actions to be delivered.

In this way I believe we can work together with all the people who work in and depend on the education and training service to, collectively, make it into the best in Europe and deliver on the goals that we have set ourselves as a country.

**Richard Bruton TD,
Minister for Education and Skills**

Statement by the Secretary General



I am pleased to introduce the Department's Statement of Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2019 which articulates our ambition, values and goals that will serve as the basis for the Department's high level work programme for the next three years.

The Department is driving the implementation of an ambitious sector-wide reform programme based on the key principles of access, excellence, transparency and innovation. Our aim is to provide an education and training system that equips learners with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their potential, and to participate fully in society and the economy through the delivery of high quality education and training experiences, which will make the best use of resources. It will work towards improving accountability for educational outcomes across the system. It will take particular account of the needs and requirements of learners with disabilities or with special educational needs and learners impacted by disadvantage. Our Action Plan sets out ambitious targets for each goal and it is our intention to meet these targets as resources permit.

This will require the support from all of the education partners. The response to the public consultation process in the development of this Strategy and Action Plan underlined the impact that education and training has on so many lives. Over 600 interested parties took the time to share their vision and experience, and I would like to thank everyone who took part in this. While resources remain challenging, I am confident that this interest will be sustained, and that we will all work together over the next few years to deliver high quality services to achieve our ambition to provide the best education and training system in Europe.

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

Our ambition:

To provide the best education and training system in Europe

Our mission:

To facilitate individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

Our values:

As a Department of State, we foster a culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money which is rooted in a public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, openness and respect.

As Civil Servants we espouse the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, objectivity and quality, which are central to fulfilling our roles in supporting the democratic process and serving the citizen.

We value learning as a public good and recognise its role in the development, cohesion and wellbeing of society. We recognise the learner's place at the centre of policy development

We value quality and are committed to the principle of continuous improvement and being open to external ideas, challenges and debate. We value relationships and working in collaboration within the education sector and with the wider community

OUR GOALS

GOAL 01

Improve the learning experience and the success of learners



GOAL 02

Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs



GOAL 03

Help those delivering education services to continuously improve



GOAL 04

Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community



GOAL 05

Improve national planning and support services



THE KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) operates in a challenging and complex environment, shaped in particular by economic, social, technological, cultural and demographic changes. There is a general recognition amongst external stakeholders that the Department's main strengths are our strong values and commitment to education, the high calibre of our management and staff, and our dedication in dealing with a very challenging agenda.

The Department adopts a consultative approach with key partners in the education system in the development and implementation of its policies. This is enshrined in much of the legislation dealing with educational matters and has helped to achieve a high level of shared understanding and commitment across the system as a whole. While there remains scope for improvement, the general consensus across diverse groups of stakeholders and observers, both domestic and international, is that the Irish education system is a good and cost effective model.

Political Environment: The new Partnership Government's ambition is to combine their different talents to build a strong economy and to deliver a fair society. The priorities for education as articulated by the Government in the 'A Programme for a Partnership Government' are to ensure that no child should be left behind in the economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and skills and to improves people's lives.

Economic Environment: The Irish economy is now firmly in recovery mode. GDP is growing strongly, exports are at historic highs, employment is expanding and there has been considerable improvement in the public finances. The short to medium term outlook is strong, with estimated annual growth of around 3%, although risks to recovery remain. Continued economic growth in the coming years will permit modest growth in public expenditure, which will allow targeted improvements in public services, including education and training.

Labour Market: In collaboration with key stakeholders, we will ensure that our education and training system provides flexible opportunities for learners to acquire the skills needed, so that they can access the labour market and increase Ireland's competitiveness by addressing areas of strategic skills demands and deepening collaboration between industry and the education and training sector.

Increasing Demographic Pressures: The Department has calculated a number of demographic scenarios and considers the figures below, encompassing a medium migration assumption and an assumption of gradually declining fertility, as the most likely scenario for the future. A continuing increase in enrolments is expected at both first and second level. At first level, increases in births in recent years (up to 2010) are reflected in the corresponding continuing increase in enrolments up to 2017. Enrolments will continue to rise to a peak of over 574,000 in 2018 before beginning to reduce. This peak figure is reflective of primary enrolment levels last seen in Ireland in the early 1980s. There will be a continuous decline thereafter, to an anticipated level of 493,000 in 2026.

At second level there is also a year-on-year increase projected up to 2025 to a peak of 411,000 followed by a continuous decline. The second level projection follows directly from the trend seen at primary level in recent years of consistent year-on-year increases in enrolments, as the increased numbers of pupils at primary level in recent years begin to transition to post-primary education.

The numbers enrolled in higher education have been steadily increasing in recent years. The chosen assumption suggests that demand for third-level full time education is expected to continue to rise every year over the period 2015-2029, reaching over 176,000 by 2018 and 195,000 by 2026.

Growing numbers of students at primary, second and third-level will present many challenges across the education and training system, including the requirement for a significant programme of capital expenditure.

Managing Education and Training Sector Reform: The Department is engaged in an extensive reform programme and continues to take a “whole-of-system” approach to strategic planning and implementation across the education and training sector. This “joined up” approach enables us to plan and implement an extensive programme of reform and to balance this with the demands of supporting and sustaining the operation of our education and training system. We will continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to implement the significant changes that are planned across the continuum of education and training, such as implementing shared services in the sector to allow providers to concentrate on the core functions of teaching and learning, and increasing efficiencies.

Civil Service Renewal Plan: We are fully committed to the ongoing programme of change in the Civil Service which seeks to build capacity to respond to existing and future challenges, and improve the performance of the Civil Service and its staff. The Civil Service Renewal Plan, launched in 2014, provides the framework for renewing the Civil Service over a period of three years. It outlines a vision for the Civil Service, as well as practical changes to create a more unified, professional, responsive, open and accountable Civil Service, providing a world-class service to the State. It requires strong leadership and active participation

Skills and Capacity: The Department is engaged in on-going development of the skills and capacities of DES staff, in accordance with the Civil Service Renewal Plan and Strategic Workforce Planning objectives, to ensure that we can deliver on our goals.

Over the term of the Strategy Statement the Department will engage with the Civil Service Learning & Development Centre to access common learning and development interventions it has developed, which are scheduled to be available from 2017.

In addition, the Department will continue to address training needs identified by staff in conjunction with line managers on PMDS forms, to ensure that stated training needs are addressed and that staff are equipped with the essential skills to deliver their duties in an effective manner.

The Department will also continue to encourage staff who wish to pursue third level qualifications that are relevant to their duties as a Civil Servant through the Advanced Payment of Fees and the Refunds of Fees schemes.

Ensuring equity: As part of their public sector duty, public bodies are required to consider human rights and equality issues relevant to them. In preparing this document, such issues were considered, and individual actions address matters specific to the education and training sector. Ensuring access to an equitable system is a driving force throughout the Department’s work.

A Programme for a Partnership Government Commitments: Under the Programme for A Partnership Government, the Department has a range of commitments, some of which involve collaboration with other Government Departments and state agencies. These have been taken into account, and are reflected in the actions outlined in this document. Additional commitments arising from Cabinet Committee decisions and overarching budgetary and policy frameworks will also be considered as they arise.

Our Strategies

A number of key national education and training strategies underpin our work and drive the significant changes that are being planned and implemented across the continuum of education. Our “whole-of-system” approach enables us to integrate these strategies and monitor their progress as they each contribute towards our vision for education and training. These include:

- National Skills Strategy 2025
- National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020
- Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019
- National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
- Framework for Junior Cycle
- National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020
- 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030

Strategies Pending Publication:

- Ireland’s International Education Strategy
- Foreign Languages in Education Strategy
- Gaeltacht Education Strategy
- DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Review

Work with other Government Departments

The Department works with a number of other Departments to advance cross-cutting priority areas including areas outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

These include:

Department of Children and Youth Affairs:

- Improving the quality of education provision, and developing the workforce in the Early Years sector, through, for example, working to deliver the second free ECCE year.
- Improving the school engagement, participation and retention levels of learners from disadvantaged background, through the delivery of TUSLA’s integrated delivery model for educational welfare.

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment:

- Improving broadband connectivity for schools and other relevant actions under the National Broadband Plan.
- Implementing the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020 which is linked to Our Sustainable Future Policy Framework.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Advancing the Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education Agendas

Department of Health, and other departments, agencies and stakeholders:

- Working on the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, to improve:

- 1 Emotional literacy around talking about mental health and reduce stigma
- 2 Awareness of services and supports
- 3 Accessibility to services and supports at different times and in different areas
- 4 Alignment of services and supports across different providers (public, private, community, and voluntary)

Department of Housing Planning, Community and Local Government:

- Implementing the Action Plan on Housing, specifically in relation to student housing
- Collaboration with library services to progress the literacy and numeracy agenda
- Planning school infrastructure, building on existing cooperation (through the statutory land use plan processes)

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation:

- Implementation of Innovation 2020.
- Enterprise engagement.
- Implementing a new skills architecture, as outlined in the National Skills Strategy.
- Implementation of the ICT Action Plan 2014 – 2018.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and other departments/agencies:

- Implementing relevant actions set out in the Build to Share Strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy, such as ePQs, eSubmissions, and eCorrespondence.

Department of the Taoiseach and Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs:

- Advancing the education elements of the “20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010- 2030”.

OUR AMBITION

TO PROVIDE THE BEST EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM IN EUROPE

Education and training has been central to Ireland's transformation over recent decades. They have played a very significant role in helping Ireland weather the exceptional economic crash. They will be central to our ambitions as a nation (economic, cultural, scientific and social) over the coming years. They will allow us to lead in innovation. They will help us to achieve social inclusion.

Our central vision is that, through adopting a "whole-of system" approach, the Irish education and training system should become the best in Europe: delivering to the highest international standards; equipping learners of all ages to participate and succeed in a changing world; allowing Ireland be a leader across a broad range of endeavours; and harnessing education and training to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion. This is a realistic ambition as Ireland already ranks highly in international benchmarks.

In each of the five high level goals which underpin this Strategy and Action Plan, we aim to deliver systematic improvement so that we can fulfil this central ambition.

Our Strategy

GOAL 01	GOAL 02	GOAL 03	GOAL 04	GOAL 05
IMPROVE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND THE SUCCESS OF LEARNERS	IMPROVE THE PROGRESS OF LEARNERS AT RISK OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE OR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	HELP THOSE DELIVERING SERVICES TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE	BUILD STRONGER BRIDGES BETWEEN EDUCATION & THE WIDER COMMUNITY	IMPROVE NATIONAL PLANNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES
Wellbeing	Designated- DEIS schools	Early Years	Support local communities	Ensuring adoption of best practice
Critical Skills, Knowledge and Competences	Learners with Special Education Needs	Quality, excellence, innovation & autonomy for schools	Parents & learners	Strategic direction & delivery of results
Greater Subject Choice	Learning experience	School leaders & teachers	Meet national & regional skills needs	Appropriate quality infrastructure
Transitions	Progress and Access	Access to support services	Lifelong learning	Shared services & ICT for improved services
Information Technology	Pathways	Teaching methods	Informed career choices	
Languages		Quality and Accountability of FET & HE	Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation	
			Research	

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Ireland's education and training system is already performing well in a range of benchmarks related to learning experiences and outcomes, but we want to do better.

Fostering health, wellbeing and personal development enables learners to fully participate in school and prepares them effectively for active and responsible citizenship and the world of work. The effectiveness of new policies and programmes to better equip young people will be benchmarked against best practice elsewhere.

Through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme we have succeeded in making participation in pre-school education and care much more accessible. This is an area where we shall work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to deliver a high quality learning experience. Over 95% of four year olds are enrolled in education, in either preschools or infant classes in primary schools. However, only 46% of Irish 3-year olds are enrolled in ECCE provision while, on average, over 70% of this age cohort are in early childhood education and care in other EU and OECD countries. We also know that there is scope for improvement in the quality of provision within the ECCE scheme can vary.

At primary level, Irish students scored significantly above the international average in reading and maths in benchmarks in PIRLS (Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study) and TIMSS (Trends in International Maths and Science Study) carried out in 2011, although performance in maths was well below that of students in the top performing countries. While also above international averages, Ireland's primary level science performance is further behind that of other countries, compared to reading and maths.

At second level, in the latest round of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), Irish students have performed well in reading (digital and print), maths, and science. However, further improvements are required in maths and science to match the best performers internationally.

There is a wide range of subject choice in Ireland reflecting a broad based curriculum but there are areas where we need to widen and deepen the choices and mastery of key competencies. A particular focus will be placed on developing greater diversity and take-up of foreign languages. There will also be a focus on increasing take-up of "gateway subjects" including Chemistry, Physics and ICT, with coding at primary level and strong curricula right through second level, further education and training and higher education.

Retention rates at second level have improved significantly in recent years and early school leaving is low by European standards. We also compare favourably with other EU countries in terms of progression in higher education with 84% of full-time undergraduate new entrants in 2012/13 progressed to their second year of study in 2013/14. However, progression rates do vary across the sector and between disciplines and further work will be done to see how students can best be supported to continue on their course or transfer to another programme.

In seeking to deliver the best possible learning experience for students in all its dimensions, we shall actively benchmark ourselves against best practice overseas and seek to continually adapt our approach to incorporate successful methods that will work in the Irish context.

Goal 1: OUR OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

Enhance wellbeing in our school communities

Fostering the personal development, health and wellbeing of learners and the wider school community helps to ensure that our children and young people develop resilience, have respect for diversity, learn to create and maintain supportive relationships and become active and responsible citizens in society. Schools will be assisted in embedding wellbeing guidelines. A mandatory area of learning entitled Wellbeing will be introduced in Junior Cycle in 2017. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be expanded.

Delivering a “Step Change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences

The National Skills Strategy recognises the role of all levels of education and training in developing critical skills, knowledge and competences. Implementation of this Strategy will include further development and rollout of the national curriculum framework for Early Years, Aistear, redevelopment of the primary school curriculum, work on coding as part of the maths curriculum and the broader primary curriculum, and the introduction of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, rollout of the new junior cycle, new specifications for Leaving Certificate subjects and a review of senior cycle programmes and locational pathways in senior cycle.

Increase subject choice for students in senior cycle

Increasing subject choice for students is important for student motivation and engagement and for ensuring curriculum development continues to respond to the changing needs of learners, society and the economy. We are developing new specifications for a range of subjects in order to enhance competencies developed and assessed including in STEM subjects, and to increase student take-up of these critical subjects. Another significant development will be the work on developing a subject specification for Leaving Certificate computer science which will help to harness and develop student interest in this strategically important discipline. It is both significant and appropriate that a new Leaving Certificate Politics and Society syllabus will commence roll-out this Autumn in the centenary year of the Easter Rising.

Improve transitions in order to support children and young people

Research shows that it is important to support children and young people as they make transitions between levels of the education and training system. As part of the implementation of this Strategy there will be significant developments to improve the transition between pre-school and primary schools, with more information being provided to parents on their childrens’ achievements and progress. We will also see the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement awarded to the first cohort of students in 2017, a major milestone in the rollout of the new Framework for Junior Cycle.

A new grading system and common points scheme will be implemented from 2017 as part of improvements to the transition from second level to higher education.

Further work continues on the broader Transitions Reform agenda. One of the key areas being examined is to broaden undergraduate entry. The aim is to reduce the number of undergraduate entry routes, while maintaining the number of student places, to the minimum number necessary for academically appropriate and efficient allocation of places to applicants. This had been signalled not only as a means to reduce the complexity of choice for second-level students and the level of competitiveness driving the system, but also as an opportunity to offer a much broader experience for undergraduates with specialisation to follow later in their degree. These developments align with the modernisation of undergraduate curricula and assessment that is underway in institutions across the higher education system.

GOAL 01

Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment

A key objective of this Strategy is to create a “step-change” in the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment, at all levels of the education and training system, so that learners are equipped with the skills to live in an increasingly digitally connected world. Actions include investment in infrastructure including high speed broadband for primary schools, professional development for teachers and lecturers, increased technology-enhanced and blended learning opportunities.

Improve the development of language competence

Being able to communicate effectively through reading, listening, writing and speaking are fundamental life skills and there will be a particular focus on increasing competence in languages through the implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan. In particular the implementation of revised curricula at primary level and the rollout of the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy will support increased levels of participation and competence in language learning.

Many of these themes are further explored under Goal 3.

Goal 1: TARGETS AND INDICATORS

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
IMPROVE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND THE SUCCESS OF LEARNERS	WELLBEING	
	EXTENSION OF INCREDIBLE YEARS TEACHER PROGRAMME IN DEIS PRIMARY SCHOOLS	INCREASE REACH FROM C. 20,000 LEARNERS IN 130 SCHOOLS TO 104,000 LEARNERS IN 646 SCHOOLS (2019)
	EXTENSION OF FRIENDS PROGRAMME IN DEIS SCHOOLS	INCREASE REACH FROM C. 25,000 LEARNERS IN 275 SCHOOLS TO 172,000 LEARNERS IN 831 SCHOOLS (2019). 172,000 STUDENTS IN 831 SCHOOLS (2019)
	LITERACY AND NUMERACY	ADDITIONAL REVISED/NEW TARGETS FOR IMPROVEMENT, BUILDING ON THE EXISTING TARGETS SET OUT BELOW, WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE INTERIM REVIEW OF THE LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY
		INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING HIGHER LEVEL MATHEMATICS EXAMINATION AT THE END OF JUNIOR CYCLE TO 60% BY 2020, FROM 55% IN 2015
		INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING THE HIGHER LEVEL MATHEMATICS EXAMINATION IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE TO 30% BY 2020, FROM 27% IN 2015
	PISA PERFORMANCE IN READING	INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS AT LEVEL 5 OR ABOVE FROM 11.4% (OECD AVERAGE 8.5%) TO 13% BY 2025
		CONSOLIDATE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS PERFORMING BELOW LEVEL 2 AT LESS THAN 10% (CURRENTLY 9.6%, WITH AN OECD AVERAGE OF 18%)
		CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION IN THE TOP 10 PERFORMING OECD COUNTRIES
	PISA PERFORMANCE IN SCIENCE	INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS AT LEVEL 5 OR ABOVE FROM 10.8% (OECD AVERAGE 8.4%) TO 13% BY 2025
		DECREASE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS PERFORMING BELOW LEVEL 2 (CURRENTLY 11.1%, WITH AN OECD AVERAGE OF 17.8%) TO LESS THAN 10% BY 2025
		CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION IN THE TOP 10 PERFORMING OECD COUNTRIES
	PISA PERFORMANCE MATHS	INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS AT LEVEL 5 OR ABOVE FROM 11% (OECD AVERAGE 13%) TO ABOVE THE OECD AVERAGE BY 2025
		DECREASE THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS PERFORMING BELOW LEVEL 2 (CURRENTLY 16.9%, WITH AN OECD AVERAGE OF 23.1%) TO LESS THAN 10% BY 2025
		REACH AND CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION IN THE TOP 10 PERFORMING OECD COUNTRIES

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
IMPROVE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND THE SUCCESS OF LEARNERS	WELLBEING	
	STEM	NEW TARGETS FOR STEM WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE POLICY STATEMENT ON STEM
	AWARDING OF JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT	JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT (JCPA) AWARDED TO THE FIRST COHORT OF LEARNERS - APPROXIMATELY 60,000 STUDENTS – IN 2017
		FIRST NEW JUNIOR CYCLE SUBJECT SPECIFICATION ASSESSED IN 2017
		ALL NEW JUNIOR CYCLE SUBJECT SPECIFICATIONS ASSESSED IN 2022
	TAKE-UP OF POLITICS AND SOCIETY	41 SCHOOLS IN 2016
		AVAILABLE TO ALL SCHOOLS BY 2018
	LANGUAGES	NEW TARGETS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION STRATEGY
		CONTINUED ROLL-OUT, ON A PHASED BASIS, OF THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE CURRICULUM
	HIGH SPEED BROADBAND FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS	FROM A STARTING POINT OF APPROXIMATELY 600 PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 800 UPGRADED BY END 2016
		1,100 TOTAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS UPGRADED BY END 2017

Objective 1.1: Improve services and resources to promote wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life

OBJECTIVE 1.1				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
1	SUPPORT ALL SCHOOLS IN IMPLEMENTING THE “WELLBEING IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS GUIDELINES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION” (2013) AND THE “WELLBEING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS GUIDELINES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION” (2015).		ONGOING	DES
	■ COMMENCE AND ROLL-OUT, AS RESOURCES PERMIT, A NATIONAL PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELLBEING GUIDELINES TO ALL PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS. THE GUIDELINES WILL PROVIDE A CLEAR AND RATIONAL STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE PROMOTION OF POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN ALL SCHOOLS		Q1 2017 – Q4 2018	
2	IMPLEMENT THE NEW JUNIOR CYCLE AREA OF LEARNING ENTITLED WELLBEING WHICH WILL BUILD ON WORK TO DATE IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS’ WELLBEING.			DES
	■ WELLBEING PROGRAMMES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS		Q3 2017	
	■ FIRST REPORTS AVAILABLE, AT THE END OF FIRST THREE-YEAR CYCLE, WITH KEY LEARNING IN THE AREA OF WELLBEING INCLUDED IN JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT (JCPA)		Q4 2020	

GOAL 01

OBJECTIVE 1.1			
No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
3	PUBLISH THE 2015 LIFESKILLS SURVEY, PROVIDING INFORMATION ON HOW PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS CATER FOR THE WELLBEING OF THEIR STUDENTS. THE DATA, ON TOPICS SUCH AS HEALTHY EATING, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SUBSTANCE MISUSE, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE), BULLYING, ENTERPRISE IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, WILL INFORM FUTURE PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ON WELLBEING.	Q4 2016 ONWARDS	DES
4	ROLL-OUT OF THE INCREDIBLE YEARS TEACHER PROGRAMME AND THE FRIENDS PROGRAMMES TO ALL DEIS SCHOOLS, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		DES
	■ EXTEND THE INCREDIBLE YEARS TEACHER PROGRAMME TO ALL DEIS PRIMARY SCHOOLS. THIS IS AN EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS, PARTNERING WITH PARENTS, WHICH REDUCES BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES AND STRENGTHENS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE EARLY PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN	Q1 2017- Q4 2019	
	■ EXTEND THE FRIENDS PROGRAMMES TO ALL DEIS SCHOOLS. THESE PROGRAMMES REDUCE ANXIETY AND PROMOTE COPING, RESILIENCE AND SCHOOL-CONNECTEDNESS IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM 4-18 YEARS	Q1 2017- Q4 2019	
5	SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF ALL STUDENTS, BY INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF NEPS TO PROVIDE AN ENHANCED EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE, INCLUDING THOSE ACTIONS AT 1 AND 4, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		DES
	■ COMMENCE THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL 65 EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS AS RESOURCES PERMIT	Q1 2017	
6	UNDERTAKE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROVISION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPPORTS TO SCHOOLS IN THE AREAS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING AN ENHANCED AND BETTER INTEGRATED SERVICE.	Q4 2016	DES
7	WORK CLOSELY WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS ON THE NATIONAL TASKFORCE ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH WHICH WILL CONSIDER HOW BEST TO INTRODUCE AND TEACH RESILIENCE, COPING MECHANISMS, GREATER AWARENESS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, AND HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICES VOLUNTARILY AT A YOUNG AGE.	Q3 2017	D/HEALTH, DES, DCYA
8	WE WILL ENHANCE GUIDANCE COUNSELLING AT SECOND LEVEL, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.	TO BE CONSIDERED IN BUDGET 2017	DES
9	CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND ROLL-OUT OF ANTI-BULLYING TRAINING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUE TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON BULLYING, AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ANTI-BULLYING AWARENESS INITIATIVES.	ONGOING	DES
10	WORK WITH DCYA TO DEVELOP THE LGBT YOUTH STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT ACTIONS.		DYCA, DES
11	COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT OF SENIOR CYCLE PHYSICAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SPECIFICATIONS FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION.	Q4 2016	NCCA, DES

Deliver a “Step-Change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society

OBJECTIVE 1.2			
No.	Actions	Timelines	Delivered by
12	DELIVER CURRICULAR RESOURCES IN EARLY YEARS’ SETTINGS TO ENCOURAGE THE ROLL OUT OF AISTEAR, A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK DESIGNED TO ENGAGE CHILDREN IN LEARNING ABOUT IDENTITY AND BELONGING, EXPLORING AND THINKING, WELLBEING AND COMMUNICATING IN AN ENJOYABLE AND CHALLENGING WAY. THE FRAMEWORK ALSO PROVIDES GUIDELINES ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S LEARNING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS.	ONGOING	DES, DCYA, NCCA
13	BUILD ON SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY ACHIEVED SINCE THE NATIONAL STRATEGY WAS ADOPTED IN 2011.		DES
	■ PUBLISH INTERIM REVIEW, AND SET REVISED/NEW TARGETS TO 2020	Q4 2016	
	■ IMPLEMENT ACTIONS TO DELIVER THESE TARGETS	Q4 2016-Q4 2020	
14	REVIEW THE STRUCTURE OF, AND TIME ALLOCATION IN, THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM TO ENSURE THAT THE ALLOCATION REFLECTS LEARNERS’ REQUIREMENTS IN NEW FOUNDATION SKILLS THAT THEY WILL NEED IN A CHANGING SOCIETY.	Q4 2016-2017	NCCA DES
	■ PUBLISH A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT AND CONDUCT A CONSULTATION PROCESS, WITH THE PUBLIC AND EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS. FINDINGS WILL FEED INTO THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM	Q4 2016 -2017	
15	INTRODUCE AND IMPLEMENT NEW SUBJECTS AND COURSES ON A PHASED BASIS.		DES, NCCA
	■ PRIMARY MATHS (INCLUDING CODING)		
	■ JUNIOR INFANTS TO 2ND CLASS- NEW CURRICULUM READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION		
	■ 3RD – 6TH CLASS- NEW CURRICULUM READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION		
	■ <i>EDUCATION ABOUT RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS (ERB) AND ETHICS</i>		
	■ POLICY ADVICE, AS PROVIDED BY THE NCCA, WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND WILL INFORM IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS		
16	IMPLEMENT NEW JUNIOR CYCLE SUBJECT SPECIFICATIONS ON A PHASED BASIS, UP TO 2019.		DES, NCCA, SCHOOLS
	■ IMPLEMENT PHASE 2 OF JUNIOR CYCLE (SCIENCE AND BUSINESS STUDIES)		
	■ FIRST EXAMINATION OF THE NEW SPECIFICATIONS IN ENGLISH TO TAKE PLACE		
	■ IMPLEMENT PHASE 3 IRISH, MODERN LANGUAGES (FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH, ITALIAN) AND VISUAL ART		
	■ IMPLEMENT PHASE 4 OF MATHEMATICS, HOME ECONOMICS, HISTORY, MUSIC AND GEOGRAPHY		
	■ IMPLEMENT PHASE 5 OF TECHNOLOGY SUBJECTS (MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY/WOOD, TECHNICAL GRAPHICS, METALWORK, TECHNOLOGY), RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, JEWISH STUDIES AND CLASSICS		
	■ DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR LEVEL 1 (NFQ) LEARNING PROGRAMMES (AND THEIR PRIORITY LEARNING UNITS) AT JUNIOR CYCLE, TO COMPLEMENT THE LEVEL 2 LEARNING PROGRAMMES ALREADY INTRODUCED		

GOAL 01

OBJECTIVE 1.2				
No.	Actions		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
17	DEVELOP NEW OPTIONS INCLUDING SHORT COURSES AND OTHER LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT JUNIOR CYCLE. NINE SHORT COURSES HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE NCCA FOR USE BY SCHOOLS, AND SCHOOLS CAN ALSO DEVELOP SHORT COURSES LOCALLY, TO MEET THE INTERESTS OF THEIR LEARNERS.		ONGOING	NCCA,
	■ COMPLETE ADDITIONAL SHORT COURSE ON PHILOSOPHY		Q4 2016	SCHOOLS
18	UNDERTAKE TRIALLING OF NEW SPECIFICATIONS FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATE BIOLOGY, PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING TAKE-UP.			NCCA, SEC, SCHOOLS
	■ COMMENCE TRIALLING LEAVING CERTIFICATE SCIENCES IN A SELECTION OF SCHOOLS (APPROXIMATELY 24)		Q4 2016	
	■ INTRODUCE REVISED LEAVING CERTIFICATE SCIENCES TO ALL SCHOOLS, DEPENDING ON OUTCOME OF TRIALLING, AUDIT OF FACILITIES AND SCHEDULING OF ROLLOUT OF OTHER LEAVING CERTIFICATE SPECIFICATIONS, AS RESOURCES PERMIT		Q3 2019	
19	FINALISE AND IMPLEMENT NEW SPECIFICATIONS FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATE SUBJECTS: ECONOMICS, ART, APPLIED MATHS, AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.			DES, NCCA
	■ COMPLETE SENIOR CYCLE PHYSICAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK SPECIFICATION (NON-EXAMINATION SUBJECT)		Q1-Q4 2017	
	■ COMPLETE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SPECIFICATION (EXAM SUBJECT).		Q4 2016	
	■ COMPLETE SPECIFICATION FOR AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE.		Q4 2016	
	■ COMPLETE CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SPECIFICATIONS FOR APPLIED MATHS AND ECONOMICS AND PROVIDE SUBJECT SPECIFICATIONS FOR DEPARTMENT APPROVAL, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		Q1-Q4 2017	
	■ NCCA WILL ADVISE DEPARTMENT ON ACTIONS RELATING TO ART, WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES		Q4 2016	
20	REVIEW SENIOR CYCLE PROGRAMMES (INCLUDING LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED) AND VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN SENIOR CYCLE WITH A VIEW TO RECOMMENDING AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		Q1 2017	NCCA
	■ PRODUCE ISSUES PAPER, FOLLOWED BY CONSULTATION PROCESS		2017	
	■ COMMENCE POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF POST-PRIMARY MATHS		Q4 2016	
21	IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PROGRAMME FOR A PARTNERSHIP GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT, SEEK INPUT FROM THE RELEVANT OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FORTHCOMING STEM REPORT AND TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE COMPETENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHS AND SET TARGETS FOR TAKE-UP.			DES
	■ DEVELOP STEM EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT		Q2 2017	
	■ IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS IN STEM EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT, AS RESOURCES PERMIT		Q3 2017 ONWARDS	

Objective 1.3: Increase subject choice for learners in Senior Cycle to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate in a changing world

OBJECTIVE 1.3			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
22	IMPLEMENT, ON A PHASED BASIS, NEW SPECIFICATION FOR NEW SUBJECT - POLITICS AND SOCIETY FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATE.		DES
	■ PHASE 1 - ROLL-OUT TO 41 SCHOOLS	Q3 2016	
	■ PHASE 2 - ROLL-OUT OUT TO ALL SCHOOLS	Q3 2018	
23	CONDUCT A SCOPING EXERCISE ON INTRODUCTION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE SUBJECT AT SENIOR CYCLE, PRIOR TO INTRODUCTION.		NCCA
	■ COMPLETE FIRST PHASE OF RESEARCH	Q4 2016	
	■ DEVELOP DRAFT SPECIFICATIONS	Q1 2017	
	■ FINALISED SUBJECT SPECIFICATION FORWARDED TO DES FOR APPROVAL	Q2 2018	
	■ SUBJECT SPECIFICATION ISSUED TO SCHOOLS FOR TEACHER CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)	Q4 2018	
	■ READY FOR INTRODUCTION IN SCHOOLS, AS RESOURCES PERMIT	Q4 2019	
24	PROVIDE SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS WITH ADDITIONAL TEACHER POSTS TO ENABLE SCHOOLS PROVIDE WIDER SUBJECT OPTIONS THROUGH THE RESTORATION OVER TIME OF THE REDUCTION OF 1,300 POSTS THAT HAS OCCURRED SINCE 2009.	CONSIDERED ANNUALLY IN BUDGETARY PROCESS	DES

GOAL 01

Objective 1.4: Improve the transition of learners at critical stages in the education and training system

OBJECTIVE 1.4			
No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
25	IMPLEMENT ONLINE REPORTING TEMPLATES TO SUPPORT PRE-SCHOOLS, PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND PARENTS, BY IMPROVING THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNERS BETWEEN ALL SCHOOLS AND STATE-FUNDED ECCE SETTINGS.		DES, NCCA
	■ PREPARE REPORTING TEMPLATES BASED ON RESEARCH AND TRIALLING	2017	
	■ ONLINE REPORTING TEMPLATES AVAILABLE FOR USE BY PRACTITIONERS	Q3 2018	
26	ROLL OUT THE JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT (JCPA), ENSURING THAT A WIDER RANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND COMPETENCIES OF LEARNERS ARE NURTURED AND RECOGNISED IN THE JUNIOR CYCLE PROGRAMME. THE JCPA WILL HIGHLIGHT FOR LEARNERS AND THEIR PARENTS WHERE THEIR PARTICULAR STRENGTHS LIE AND SUPPORT THEM IN MAKING INFORMED SUBJECT CHOICES FOR SENIOR CYCLE.		DES
	■ JCPA AWARDED TO THE FIRST COHORT OF LEARNERS- APPROXIMATELY 60,000 STUDENTS	Q4 2017	
	■ ALL SUBJECTS WILL BE RECORDED ON THE JCPA AND AVAILABLE TO LEARNERS	Q4 2022	
27	IMPLEMENT REFORMS TO IMPROVE TRANSITIONS AND REMOVE BARRIERS TO PROGRESSION TO THE LEVELS OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM. THE SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR HE WILL BE REVIEWED AND A REVISED FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED- IT IS INTENDED THAT THIS WILL ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF BROADENING UNDERGRADUATE ENTRY, AS PART OF THIS NEXT SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL BE PUT IN PLACE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS LATER THIS YEAR. (SEE GOAL 4, OBJECTIVE 4, ACTION 98.)		DES
	■ INFORMATION CAMPAIGN PRIOR TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW GRADING SYSTEM AND COMMON POINTS SCHEME TO INFORM LEARNERS OF THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE	Q4 2016	
	■ NEW GRADING SYSTEM AND NEW COMMON POINTS SCHEME IN PLACE	Q3 2017	

Objective 1.5: Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment

Objective 1.5			
No.	Actions	Timelines	Delivered by
28	Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. The Strategy aims to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy.		DES, Support Services, Schools and other Education Stakeholders
	■ Establish Steering Committee to guide implementation and agree implementation plan	Q4 2016	
	■ Identify key priorities adapt the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers for the Irish context update eLearning Planning Resource and bring remote learning into the classroom through the use of new technologies	Q4 2016	
	■ Pilot UNESCO ICT Competency Framework and ensure that the eLearning Planning Resource reflects the Framework's requirements	Q3 2017	
	■ Finalise UNESCO ICT Competency Framework and eLearning Planning Resource documentation, ready for dissemination for schools	Q2 2018	
	■ Improve broadband services to schools, allocate grants for ICT equipment and make available advice and support materials for schools	Q4 2016 – Q4 2020	
29	800 primary schools upgraded to higher broadband speeds	Q4 2016	
30	Subject to the availability of resources, work with SOLAS to implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in FET 2016-2019, through the actions outlined below. The Strategy sets out 18 practical actions, associated timelines and performance indicators to build on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate FET provision.	Q4 2016-2019	DES, SOLAS, ETBs
	■ Establishing a baseline of provision and an action plan within each of the 16 Education and Training Boards nationally	Q4 2017	
	■ Investing in the infrastructure necessary (Wi-Fi, broadband, equipment, learning resources)	Q1 2018	
	■ Investing in professional development of teachers	Q1 2017 onwards	
	■ Expanding learner access to TEL	Q2 2017	
	■ Using a framework of innovation, excellence and evaluation to underpin progress	Q4 2017 onwards	

GOAL 01

Objective 1.5

No.	Actions	Timelines	Delivered by
31	Implement the recommendations of Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017 through the following actions:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ HEIs develop strategies to support the development and embedding of digital capacity in their teaching and learning activities. and national policy and quality frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact 	Q4 2017	HEIs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen and support collaboration within and between institutions 	Q4 2017	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, HEA, HEIs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a consistent digital experience for students and engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge 	Q4 2017	HEIs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a strong evidence base for enhanced pedagogy through targeted research and development projects 	Q4 2017	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, HEA, DES

Objective 1.6: Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages

Objective 1.6			
No.	Actions	Timelines	Delivered by
32	Roll out Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) across all primary schools.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Junior Infants to 2nd Class, on a phased basis 	Q3 2016, 2017, 2018	DES, NCCA, Schools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3rd – 6th Class, on a phased basis 	Q3 2019 onwards	

Objective 1.6				
No.	Actions		Timelines	Delivered by
33	Strengthen Irish language learning in Gaeltacht areas.			DES
	■ Publish Strategy	Q4 2016	DES	
	■ Implement Strategy on a phased basis, as resources permit	Q3 2017		
34	A new Framework for Modern Foreign Languages at Junior Cycle will be available to schools to increase the range and quality of languages which can be taught.	Q3 2017	DES, NCCA	
35	Implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the diversity and provision of foreign language learning opportunities, including languages like Mandarin which are of relevance to rapidly growing economies of the future. • Enhance the quality of teaching and learning and ensure a supply of skilled teachers and educators of foreign languages in schools and in the higher education sector. • New Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education will include indicators and targets to drive the provision of a diversity of language learning opportunities as a national priority. Progress will be monitored through the strategic dialogue process with HEIs. • Improve awareness of the benefits of language learning for career opportunities and for opportunities for studying abroad. • A language advisory group will be established to oversee implementation of the foreign languages strategy. Membership will include representatives of the primary sector as well as post primary, further and higher education, employers and government Departments. 		DES, NCCA, HEA, SOLAS Education and Training Providers	
	■ Publish the Strategy	Q4 2016		
	■ Commence implementation of the 1st wave of initiatives, as resources permit	Q1 2017		

GOAL 02

Goal 2: Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of our education and training system and Ireland has had measures in place to support the diverse needs of students of all ages for many years. While we have made considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity, this Strategy recognises that significant challenges remain if we are to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds are adequately supported so that they can experience success in the education system.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

Our main policy initiative to combat educational disadvantage, DEIS, is currently under review and we are seeking to incorporate best practice into a new programme.

There has been a significant improvement in the number of students in DEIS schools who have remained in school until their Leaving Certificate examination. This proportion has grown from 68.2% ten years ago to 82.7% for those students who began second-level school in 2009. The retention rate for non-DEIS schools is 92%. Literacy and numeracy outcomes have improved in DEIS schools, however, achievement data shows that outcomes are below the national norm.

Participation and Access

As part of the EU2020 Strategy, Ireland aimed to reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%. This target has now been exceeded with a current rate of 6.9%.

There are few relevant international benchmarks for participation or retention in Further Education and Training type programmes. Improving the quality and relevance of provision across the Further Education and Training sector will continue to be a key priority in the coming years and will be informed by best practice elsewhere. Pathways to progression will be examined to ensure that they are fit for purpose and serving those who need them- actions in Goal 4 are relevant in this regard.

Overall participation by students with special educational needs in higher education has grown from less than 1,000 students in 1993 to nearly 10,000 in 2013. The new access plan contains a number of targets for specific categories of students that are currently under-represented, including students from lower socio-economic groupings, students with special educational needs, mature students, and members of the Travelling community. Improving access by under-represented groups was referred to in the report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education (2016), and the Department is also considering these findings in its work on access. In this way, progress to higher education should become more representative of the population in general.

Learners with Special Educational Needs

Our approach to special education has undergone a huge transformation with a growing proportion of children with special educational needs being educated with their peers in mainstream schools. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) leads on research in this important area of policy and has recently advised that in terms of the model for supporting children with special educational needs, international research points to the conclusion that there is no perfect approach that works in any country.

In developing advice, the NCSE takes account of practice and provision in other countries and seeks to ensure that the best practices in other countries are captured to ensure that Ireland continues to be among the leaders in terms of provision and quality.

In 2014, the NCSE provided a report recommending a new model for the allocation of resources for children with SEN in mainstream schools. The report promotes the proposed new model as a ‘better and more equitable way’ recognising that no other country has found the ‘best way’. Work on implementing this new model is now underway.

The Department’s psychological service, NEPS, while supporting the development of the academic, social and emotional competence of all students, prioritises its support for students at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs.

Goal 2: OUR OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

Improve learning experience, learning outcomes and progression for those at risk of educational disadvantage

The Department will publish and implement a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion which will include a school support programme, an assessment framework for resource allocation, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. We will expand the range of education and training programmes to better meet the needs of key target groups including the unemployed and early school leavers. We will improve access to education opportunities by ensuring that the targeted supports in place for students in higher education are fit for purpose and we will increase financial supports for post-graduate students focusing on those from low-income households.

Support learners with special educational needs to participate and progress

We will improve the participation, including participation in inclusive mainstream settings, and progress of children with special educational needs across the whole education system, and develop better whole-school approaches. We will develop and pilot a new model for the allocation of teaching resources to support children with special educational needs in schools. A new Inclusion Support Service for schools will be developed. We will carry out an assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the best way to provide better outcomes for learners with special educational needs. A new model for in-school speech and language services will be developed.

GOAL 02

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
IMPROVE THE PROGRESS OF LEARNERS AT RISK OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE OR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	NEW MODEL OF ALLOCATING TEACHING RESOURCES IMPLEMENTED
		INCLUSION SERVICE ESTABLISHED
		IN-SCHOOL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY MODEL DEVELOPED
	DEIS RETENTION RATES	CONTINUE TO IMPROVE RETENTION RATES AT SECOND-LEVEL IN DEIS SCHOOLS, FROM THEIR CURRENT RATE OF 82.7% TO THE NATIONAL NORM, CURRENTLY 90.2%, BY 2025
	DEIS LITERACY AND NUMERACY RATES	IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY REVIEW, IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN DEIS SCHOOLS, IN LINE WITH REVISED TARGETS SET UNDER THE REVIEW, BY 2025
	EU2020: REDUCE THE PERCENTAGE OF 18-24 YEAR OLDS WITH AT MOST LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION AND NOT IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO THE TARGET ADOPTED BY IRELAND OF 8%	PROGRESS ON REDUCTION CONSOLIDATED AT THE CURRENT RATE OF 6.9%
	PERCENTAGE OF THE LABOUR FORCE AT LEVELS 1-3 ON NFQ	7%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 15%
	HIGHER EDUCATION:	
	INCREASE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM NON MANUAL WORKER GROUP	30%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 23%, BY 2019
	INCREASE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM SEMI-SKILLED AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS GROUP	35%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 26%, BY 2019
	INCREASE PROPORTION OF FULL TIME AND PART-TIME MATURE ENTRANTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION	24%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 19%, BY 2019
	INCREASE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AS % OF ALL ENTRANTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION	8%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 6%, BY 2019
	INCREASE PARTICIPATION BY STUDENTS PROGRESSING FROM FURTHER EDUCATION INTO HIGHER EDUCATION	10%, FROM A CURRENT RATE OF 6.6%, BY 2019
	INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TRAVELLERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION	80 FROM A CURRENT FIGURE 35 BY 2019

Objective 2.1: Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage

OBJECTIVE 2.1				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
36	SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AIM (ACCESS AND INCLUSION) INITIATIVE LED BY DCYA IN ECCE CENTRES THROUGH DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUNDING OF A NEW NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR INCLUSION CO-ORDINATORS IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS.		Q4 2016	DES
37	PUBLISH A NEW ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION WHICH WILL INCLUDE A NEW TRANSPARENT AND ROBUST ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF SCHOOLS AND ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES UNDER A NEW SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME. THIS WILL BE SUBJECT TO A COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND WILL INCLUDE IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, CREATING NETWORKS AND CLUSTERS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS, BETTER INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE WORK OF SCHOOLS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY SUPPORTS, AND GREATER USE OF THE HOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIAISON PROGRAMME.		Q4 2016	DES
	■ DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATING THE NEW ACTION PLAN	■ DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATING THE NEW ACTION PLAN	Q4 2016	
	■ IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN AS RESOURCES ALLOW	■ IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN AS RESOURCES ALLOW	Q3 2017 ONWARDS	
38	IMPLEMENT STRANDS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION, SO THAT HIGHER EDUCATION BECOMES MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POPULATION IN GENERAL, THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:		ONGOING TO 2019	DES, HEA, HEIs
	■ PUBLISH REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND	■ PUBLISH REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND	Q3 2016	
	■ PUBLISH REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	■ PUBLISH REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	Q1 2017	
	■ DEVELOP DATA PLAN ON ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION, WITH AN AGREED SET OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE INDICATORS THAT WILL ALLOW ‘ACCESS’ STUDENTS TO BE IDENTIFIED AND SUPPORTED, AND TO MONITOR THE PERFORMANCE OF HEIs IN ENROLLING AND SUPPORTING SUCH STUDENTS. THIS WILL FACILITATE MONITORING OF PROGRESS ON THE NATIONAL TARGETS CONTAINED IN THE NATIONAL ACCESS PLAN	■ DEVELOP DATA PLAN ON ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION, WITH AN AGREED SET OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE INDICATORS THAT WILL ALLOW ‘ACCESS’ STUDENTS TO BE IDENTIFIED AND SUPPORTED, AND TO MONITOR THE PERFORMANCE OF HEIs IN ENROLLING AND SUPPORTING SUCH STUDENTS. THIS WILL FACILITATE MONITORING OF PROGRESS ON THE NATIONAL TARGETS CONTAINED IN THE NATIONAL ACCESS PLAN	Q2 2017	
39	IDENTIFY MEASURES TO REDUCE NON-COMPLETION IN HIGHER EDUCATION.			DES
	■ WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED	■ WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED	Q2 2016	
	■ MEASURES IDENTIFIED FOR CONSIDERATION	■ MEASURES IDENTIFIED FOR CONSIDERATION	Q3 2017	
40	ISSUE CALL FOR PROPOSALS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION BY ACCESS TARGET GROUPS.		Q4 2016	DES
41	ISSUE CALL FOR MEASURES TO ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES, TO PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.		Q4 2016	DES
42	PREPARE A REPORT ON THE BARRIERS TO LONE PARENTS ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION, AND PUBLISH THE REPORT’S RECOMMENDATIONS IN ADVANCE OF BUDGET 2017.		Q3 2016	DES
43	INCREASE FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THOSE FROM LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.		DEPENDENT ON BUDGET DECISIONS	
44	DEVELOP A NATIONAL POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL).		2018	DES

GOAL 02

OBJECTIVE 2.1				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
45	ENSURE FET IS MEETING THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS IMPACTED BY DISADVANTAGE.			DES
	■ ETBs WORKING CLOSELY WITH INTREO OFFICES UNDER NEW PROTOCOLS EXPANDING PROVISION TO DSP CLIENT GROUPS IN LINE WITH PATHWAYS TO WORK 2016-20	ONGOING		
	■ CONDUCT RESEARCH INTO BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN FET, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUP.	2017		
	■ RESEARCH FINDINGS DISSEMINATED TO PROVIDERS TO INFORM THE ANNUAL SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS	2018		
46	CONDUCT A REVIEW OF THE YOUTHREACH PROGRAMME.	2017	DES	
47	DEVELOP A COHESIVE LIFE-COURSE APPROACH TO TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE, WITH A POLICY STATEMENT ON INTERACTION BETWEEN MEASURES TO TACKLE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE ACROSS THE EDUCATION CONTINUUM.		DES	
48	ASSIST DCYA AND TUSLA TO DELIVER THE PROGRAMME FOR A PARTNERSHIP GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO INCREASE THE MANDATORY SCHOOLING AGE TO 17.	2018	DCYA, TUSLA, DES	

Objective 2.2: Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education

OBJECTIVE 2.2				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
49	DEVELOP AND PILOT A NEW MODEL FOR ALLOCATION OF TEACHING RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS.		Q4 2016	DES
	■ COMPLETE REVIEW OF PILOT AND PREPARE FOR IMPLEMENTATION			
50	CONSULT WITH EDUCATION PARTNERS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTIONS OF THE EPSEN ACT AND ON THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DOWNS SYNDROME.	Q4 2016	DES, NCSE	
51	UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE SNA SCHEME TO IDENTIFY THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORM OF SUPPORT OPTIONS TO PROVIDE BETTER OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.		Q4 2016	DES, NCSE
	■ FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE THE NCSE WILL COMMENCE A COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC REVIEW			
	■ COMPLETE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT AND PUBLISH OUTCOMES			
52	WORK WITH RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES TO INTRODUCE A NEW IN-SCHOOL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SERVICE CREATING STRONGER LINKAGES BETWEEN PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SLTs.		Q4 2016	DES, D/HEALTH, HSE
	■ COMMENCE DISCUSSIONS WITH D/ HEALTH AND HSE WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR NEW MODEL			
53	ESTABLISH AN INCLUSION SUPPORT SERVICE UNDER NCSE TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS	Q4 2016		

Goal 3 - Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

The quality of our teaching profession is the single most critical factor in sustaining and enhancing the quality of education outcomes in our system. Teachers, lecturers and educational practitioners deliver education services to meet the very diverse needs of learners, parents, and their local communities. We know that providing the best possible professional development and ongoing practical support to these key people in the education sector is vital if we are to realise the ambitious objectives that we have for Irish education.

We recognise that the provision of high quality professional development opportunities for early years practitioners is needed to improve the quality of the learning experience for our youngest learners in the coming years. We will work closely with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to improve initial and continuing professional development opportunities in this important sector.

Ireland is fortunate to attract high calibre people to the teaching professions and our teaching workforce has a strong reputation internationally. We will increase investment in the professional development of teachers across the continuum from initial teacher education, induction and early professional development through to advanced or expert teacher and leader as resources allow. A key theme of the ongoing reform of teacher professional development will be to develop the collegial responsibility of the teacher, not only as an expert teacher, but also a participant in the collegial work of the school – in improving standards, in developing innovations, and in assessing, monitoring and improving students' learning.

Increasingly, high performing education systems make strategic investment in the capacity of their educational leaders. We want to do that in Ireland also. In the coming years, new innovative programmes to support the professional development of school leaders will commence. This will provide for professional coaching services and the introduction of a postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders.

We also recognise that having high calibre teachers and practitioners and highly effective leaders will mean that our education and training providers can become learning organisations that are continually monitoring, evolving and learning from best practice through evaluation, benchmarking and continuous improvement based on best international practice. This is true across the spectrum of education and training, from pre-school to further and lifelong learning. At third level, for example, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education mobilises expertise and inputs from across the HE sector to extend and shape best practice.

Really effective learning organisations learn from self-reflection and self-evaluation, and we know too, that robust external evaluation combined with expert advice can help support innovation and high standards of learning in schools and other settings. We will develop school self-evaluation and ensure that the Departments Inspectorate's complementary programme of inspections and advisory visits help to support innovative and effective practice in schools and early years settings, while at the same time, providing adequate quality assurance for parents and the public.

We need to promote innovation and excellence, recognise high achievement and seek to mainstream successful approaches. The implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan will focus on:

- Developing leadership capacity
- Strengthening teaching and learning
- Promoting innovation and peer learning and peer exchange
- Delivering world class initial teacher education and in-service training
- Developing support services to help providers at all levels to successfully implement improvement plans
- Supportive evaluation and quality assurance systems

We will work in collaboration with national stakeholders and international experts in the field.

Goal 3: OUR OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Develop the continuum of teacher education

Workforce planning will be strengthened with improved planning of teacher supply. Teacher education and induction will continue to be reformed to support excellence and peer-learning and peer-exchange. School leadership supports will be expanded with a new mentoring programme for newly appointed school principals and a professional coaching service for serving principals to support 400 principals per year. A new post graduate qualification will be rolled out for aspiring school leaders; supporting teachers as lifelong learners. Improvements will be made to leadership and middle management in schools to increase leadership capacity and make best use of resources. Continuous professional development will be transformed with the creation of a centre of excellence to support in-school improvement, peer learning and peer-exchange.

Improve quality, promote innovation & excellence and increase autonomy in schools

Continuous improvement in schools will be supported through a new quality framework for external inspection and school self-improvement. A planned programme of external evaluation will be rolled out across the schools sector with a range of new inspection models. All of these models will be focussed on inspection for improvement: they will identify existing strengths in schools, they will challenge schools to reach the standards set out in *Looking at Our School 2016*, the new quality framework for schools, and they will provide sound advice for improvement. Specialised inspection models will include a model focusing on ensuring the quality of education for learners with special education needs. Inspection reports will be published on a rolling basis and made more accessible for parents and the public.

Increase quality of learning in early years

The Department will support the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to improve the quality of early years provision. The implementation of Aistear & Síolta, the early years curricular and quality frameworks, will be supported with training for mentors and trainers and upskilling of the workforce. A growing programme of early years education-focussed inspections will be used to highlight and strengthen best practice, to identify where improvements in provision are needed, and to provide a reassurance of quality in educational provision in preschools in the ECCE scheme.

Promote high quality learning experiences in further education and training and higher education

Implementation of professional development frameworks across the further education and training and higher education sectors is a key priority to ensure that teachers and lecturers continue to develop the right skills to support learners. A Programme Learner Support Service will provide data on outcomes and course impact across the further education and training sector and support planning and prioritisation of course provision. A rigorous programme of evaluation is also being rolled out for the first time across the further education and training sector to drive quality improvements.

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
HELP THOSE DELIVERING EDUCATION SERVICES TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE	EARLY YEARS INSPECTIONS	1,200 INSPECTIONS BY END 2017, FROM 500 IN 2016 1,000 INSPECTION REPORTS PUBLISHED BY END 2017, FROM 450 IN 2016
	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY YEARS	50 SIOLTA MENTORS TRAINED [IN ADDITION TO 15 EXISTING MENTORS]
		60+ MENTORS COMPLETE TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMME
		900 INCLUSION CO-ORDINATORS TRAINED
	CPD FOR TEACHERS	183,000 CPD UNITS DELIVERED IN 2017 ^[1]
	LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	400 PRINCIPALS COACHED PER ANNUM
		200 TEACHERS COMPLETE POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMME FOR ASPIRING LEADERS PER ANNUM
		RESTRUCTURING OF LEADERSHIP AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS AND ETBs AGREED AND IMPLEMENTED
	SCHOOL INSPECTION	LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL: A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS PUBLISHED SSE IN PLACE IN ALL PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS, FOCUSED ON IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING IMPROVEMENTS SSE SUPPORTED BY UP TO C.400 ADVISORY VISITS FROM INSPECTORATE ANNUALLY REVISED MODELS OF INSPECTION IMPLEMENTED FOCUSING ON SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENTS, ASSURING QUALITY, AND PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR PARENTS INSPECTIONS CONDUCTED IN C.1500 PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS ANNUALLY
	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING	PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS COMPLETE AND RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTED PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
	HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING	PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

^[1] A CPD Unit is defined as an interaction between a teacher support service and an individual teacher. Interactions range from a 2 hour session in a local education centre to a suite of sessions.

GOAL 03

Objective 3.1: Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children

OBJECTIVE 3.1			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
54	SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AISTEAR, THE EARLY YEARS CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK.		DES, NCCA
	■ DEVELOP 10 HOURS OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) RESOURCES FOR AISTEAR IN EARLY YEARS	Q3- Q4 2016	
	■ UPDATE AND MAINTAIN THE ONLINE AISTEAR SÍOLTA PRACTICE GUIDE TO SUPPORT THE EARLY YEARS' WORKFORCE IN THEIR WORK	Q4 2016	
	■ TRAIN 50 ADDITIONAL SÍOLTA MENTORS FROM CITY AND COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEES (CCCs) AND VOLUNTARY CHILDCARE ORGANISATIONS (VCOs) AND TRAIN ALL EXISTING MENTORS (15) TO DELIVER AISTEAR CPD	Q4 2016	
55	SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKFORCE WITHIN THE EARLY YEARS SECTOR.		DES
	■ DRAFT A REPORT FOR CONSULTATION ON REVISED OCCUPATIONAL ROLE PROFILES, WHICH WILL INFORM THE REVIEW OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN THE SECTOR SCHEDULED FOR 2017	Q4 2016	
	■ 900 PRESCHOOL STAFF ENROLLED ON NATIONAL LEVEL 6 PROGRAMME FOR INCLUSION CO-ORDINATOR	Q4 2016	
56	IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSSED INSPECTIONS (EYEIs) WHICH WILL PROVIDE ADVICE AND SUPPORT A PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT IN STANDARDS, LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES FOR THE OVER 4,000 EARLY YEARS SETTINGS PROVIDING THE ECCE-PROGRAMME.		DES
	■ 500 EYEIs CONDUCTED AND 450 INSPECTION REPORTS PUBLISHED	Q4 2016	
	■ 750 EYEIs CONDUCTED AND 650 INSPECTION REPORTS PUBLISHED	Q4 2017	
	■ EYEI MODEL REVIEWED, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE EY SECTOR	Q2 2017	

Objective 3.2: Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve school leadership

OBJECTIVE 3.2			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
57	CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL GROUP ON TEACHER SUPPLY AND IN THE FIRST INSTANCE SEEK TO IMPROVE THE DATA DEFICIT IDENTIFIED BY THE GROUP THAT CONSTRAINED THEIR CAPACITY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC ACTIONS, WITH PROGRESS ON THE DATA ISSUE AS RESOURCES PERMIT.	Q4 2016- REPORT TO BE CONSIDERED	DES, TEACHING COUNCIL
58	CONTINUE THE REFORM OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE) AND TEACHER INDUCTION.		DES, HEIs, TEACHING COUNCIL
	■ ALL INCOMING AND EXISTING ITE STUDENTS OF DCU, ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE DRUMCONDRA AND MATER DEI INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION REGISTERED AS DCU STUDENTS	Q4 2016	
	■ PUBLISH REVISED ENTRY CRITERIA FOR ITE PROGRAMMES	Q1 2017	
	■ BUILD UPON CONCLUDED PILOT PHASE OF DROICHEAD AND CONDUCT THE GROWTH PHASE BETWEEN 2016- 2018 OF "DROICHEAD", THE NATIONAL INDUCTION PROCESS FOR ALL NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS (NQTs)	Q3 2018	
	■ REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL ON INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROVISION	Q4 2018	
59	EXPAND THE RANGE OF SUPPORTS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE CENTRE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP.		DES, CENTRE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
	■ INTRODUCE, ON A PHASED BASIS, A MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY APPOINTED SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: 200 EXPERIENCED SCHOOL LEADERS HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO SUPPORT NEWLY APPOINTED POST-PRIMARY PRINCIPALS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND LEINSTER-BASED NEWLY APPOINTED PRIMARY PRINCIPALS. ROLL OUT THIS SERVICE TO ALL PRIMARY PRINCIPALS AS RESOURCES PERMIT.	Q3 2016	
	■ INTRODUCE A PROFESSIONAL COACHING SERVICE FOR SERVING PRINCIPALS, ALLOWING UP TO 400 PRINCIPALS PER ANNUM TO ACCESS PROFESSIONAL COACHING	Q4 2016 ONWARDS	

GOAL 03

OBJECTIVE 3.2			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
60	DEVELOP AND INTRODUCE A NEW POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATION FOR ASPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS.	Q3 2016 – Q3 2017	DES
	■ COMMENCE COURSE, FOLLOWING A TENDER PROCESS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A PROGRAMME COURSE PROVIDER, FACILITATING 200 PARTICIPANTS ANNUALLY		
61	CHANGE THE LEADERSHIP AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND THE FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SCHOOLS BY THE HOLDERS OF POSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY PARTNERS AIMED AT IMPROVING THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE POST-HOLDERS STRUCTURE, TRANSFORMING THE CURRENT SCHEDULE OF DUTIES TOWARDS A MORE FLEXIBLE, DISTRIBUTED AND ACCOUNTABLE MODEL, WHERE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE SHARED AND ADAPTED TO PARTICULAR SITUATIONS AND CONTEXTS • DISCUSSIONS WITH ETBI TO DEVELOP A PROJECT WHICH WILL ENCOURAGE ETBs TO ADOPT A MORE FLEXIBLE AND TARGETED APPROACH TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY-PRINCIPALS 	ONGOING	DES, SCHOOLS, MANAGEMENT AND PATRON BODIES
62	IDENTIFY OPTIONS AND MODALITIES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR TEACHERS THAT COULD FOSTER AN OVERARCHING CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE, IN ORDER TO SUPPORT IN-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND PEER EXCHANGE, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.	Q1 2017	DES
63	PROVIDE DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULAR CHANGE. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE FOR TEACHERS WILL PROVIDE CPD TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY LANGUAGES CURRICULUM AND TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN FIRST IN SCHOOLS ■ THE JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS SUPPORT TEAM WILL PROVIDE CPD TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM ■ NEPS WILL SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT THE “WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS” GUIDELINES ■ THE NCSE WILL SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW SEN ALLOCATION MODEL 	ONGOING	DES, PDST, NEPS, NCSE, JCT
64	REGULATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ IMPLEMENT FITNESS TO TEACHER PROVISIONS OF THE TEACHING COUNCIL ACT ■ TEACHING COUNCIL TO FINALISE DRAFT NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER CPD, FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION, AS RESOURCES PERMIT 	ONGOING	
65	FACILITATE THE DELIVERY OF SAFETALK AND ASIST SUICIDE TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR TEACHERS THROUGH THE EDUCATION CENTRE NETWORK.	ONGOING	DES, D/HEALTH

Objective 3.3: Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools

OBJECTIVE 3.3				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
66	WE WILL REDUCE CLASS SIZES AT JUNIOR AND SENIOR INFANTS AS RESOURCES PERMIT		DEPENDENT ON BUDGET DECISIONS	
67	DEVELOP PROPOSALS FOR A SCHOOLS EXCELLENCE FUND, TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION, IN THE CONTEXT OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES.		Q3 2016	DES
68	DEVELOP PROPOSALS TO INCREASE SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ENCOURAGE MORE LOCAL EDUCATION CLUSTERS TO DELIVER AN IMPROVED SERVICE THAT SUPPORTS LEARNERS.			DES
	■ DEVELOP PROPOSALS INFORMED BY FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSULTATION WITH PARTNERS		Q2 2017	
	■ IDENTIFY ANY LEGISLATIVE CHANGE THAT MAY BE REQUIRED TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE THE GOVERNANCE OF SCHOOLS THAT MIGHT WISH TO OPERATE AS A CLUSTER WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE FUNCTIONS OF BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT.		Q1 2017 - IDENTIFICATION	
69	ROLL OUT THE NEWLY-ISSUED LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016 - A NEW QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION, WITH STANDARDS FOR TEACHING, LEARNING, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, TO HELP SCHOOLS TO BETTER PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.			DES
	■ ISSUE REVISED SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION GUIDELINES TO ALL PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS, AND MANAGE A PROGRAMME OF SSE ADVISORY VISITS TO SCHOOLS		Q3 2016	
	■ ISSUE NEW SSE CIRCULARS SETTING OUT SIMPLIFIED REQUIREMENTS ON SCHOOLS FOR SELF-EVALUATION AND ANNUAL REPORTING TO PARENTS FOR PERIOD 2016-2020		Q3 2016	
70	ISSUE REVISED GUIDELINES ON INSPECTION TO ALL SCHOOLS, INCLUDING THOSE IN HIGH SUPPORT UNITS, SPECIAL CARE UNITS AND CHILDREN DETENTION CENTRES.		Q3 2016	DES
71	UNDERTAKE A PLANNED PROGRAMME OF INSPECTION AND ADVISORY VISITS IN ALL SCHOOLS, INCREASING THE FREQUENCY OF EVALUATIVE AND ADVISORY VISITS, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		ONGOING	DES
72	DELIVER A NEW INSPECTION MODEL TO EVALUATE AND REPORT ON QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN MAINSTREAM SETTINGS FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS.		Q3 2016	DES
73	PUBLISH INSPECTION REPORTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VARIOUS INSPECTION MODELS, INCLUDING NEW INSPECTION MODELS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS. THE REPORTS WILL BE MORE ACCESSIBLE TO PARENTS, WITH CLEARER EVALUATIVE JUDGEMENTS.		ONGOING	DES
74	MANAGE THE MONITORING OF, AND INTERVENTIONS IN, POORLY PERFORMING SCHOOLS, THROUGH THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND OVERSEE THE MONITORING OF THOSE REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT.		ONGOING	DES
75	ADVANCE PROPOSALS FOR THE BETTER INVOLVEMENT OF PRINCIPALS WITH INSPECTION TEAMS IN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS.		Q4 2017	DES
76	MAINSTREAM QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FOR INSPECTION WORK IN SCHOOLS.		ONGOING	DES

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Objective 3.4: Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education

OBJECTIVE 3.4				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
77	IMPLEMENT THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2016-2019, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE SKILLS OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE DELIVERY, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF FET PROGRAMMES THROUGH TARGETED AND CONSISTENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT.			DES, SOLAS, ETBI
	■ PUBLISH THE STRATEGY	Q4 2016		
	■ HAVING REGARD TO AVAILABLE RESOURCES, WORK WITH SOLAS AND OTHER PROJECT PARTNERS (ETBs AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS IRELAND) TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY	Q1 2017-2019		
78	BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN THE ETB SECTOR TO ACHIEVE THE DELIVERY OF THE FET STRATEGY GOALS, FOCUSING PARTICULARLY ON ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN, CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE.	ONGOING TO 2018/19		DES, ETBs
79	IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICE (PLSS) TO PROVIDE A FET DATABASE WHICH PROVIDES INFORMATION ON OUTCOMES AND SUPPORTS LINKAGES WITH OTHER DATA SETS, TO ALLOW FOR THE FOLLOW-UP OF LEARNERS UPON COURSE COMPLETION, MEASUREMENT OF COURSE IMPACT ON LEARNERS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, AND THE PLANNING OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES.			DES, SOLAS
	■ CONDUCT REVIEW OF THE PILOT FOR THIS DATABASE	Q3 2016		
	■ FULL IMPLEMENTATION	2017		
80	IMPROVE THE IMPACT OF PLC, VTOS AND BTEI SCHEMES, BY REVIEWING EACH PROGRAMME, PUBLISHING THE REVIEW, AND SETTING OUT TIME-BOUND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS.	Q3 2016-ONWARDS		DES, SOLAS
	■ MONITOR THE PLC EVALUATION, AND CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	Q3-Q4 2016		
	■ COMMISSION INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF VTOS	Q1 2017		
	■ COMMISSION INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF BTEI	2018		
81	COMMENCE THE PILOT ROLL-OUT OF THE NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS WITH RESULTS OF FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS. THE FRAMEWORK WILL PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GIVE DIRECTION TO OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (FOR EXAMPLE INSTITUTIONS, HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORKS, EDUCATIONAL/ACADEMIC DEVELOPERS, POLICY MAKERS AND STUDENT BODY REPRESENTATIVES) FOR PLANNING, DEVELOPING AND ENGAGING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES.	Q3 2016		DES, HEA
82	COMPLETE THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL FORUM FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION. THE FORUM MOBILISES EXPERTISE AND INPUTS FROM ACROSS THE HE SECTOR TO EXTEND AND SHAPE BEST PRACTICE IN ALL INSTITUTIONS.	Q4 2016		DES, HEA
	■ IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL FORUM FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION	Q1 2017 ONWARDS		

Goal 4: Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

As Ireland seeks to achieve strategic leadership in many chosen fields, the quality of the connections between our education and training providers and the wider community will be a formative influence. Our success in this respect will contribute significantly to our ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe. Ireland is changing and the choices and expectations of citizens are changing with it. Our education service must be able to respond to these new expectations.

While in the past, educationalists may have been wary that the narrow repetitive tasks of the workplace should not crowd out the broader agenda of education, now, the demands of the workplace are increasingly focussing on the very characteristics education nurtures – critical thinking, creativity, innovation, adaptability, collaboration. Learners gain experience from placement in real world settings, while organisations and enterprises (public and private) enhance their capacity to innovate and embrace new insights and technologies through interaction with education.

Compared to most of Europe, we already have significant strengths with high levels of higher education attainment among the population, particularly the younger cohorts. Ireland ranks 7th out of the OECD-32 for proportion of the working age population (25-64) with a third level education (2014 data): 41% in Ireland compared to 32% OECD average. The EU 21 average was 33%. However, this varies significantly with age. A lower proportion of 45-54 year olds and 55-64 year olds have attained tertiary education than the OECD average. The proportion of those who attained tertiary education was high among 25-34 year olds in Ireland where, at 51%, Ireland was above the OECD average of 41% (or EU21 at 39%).

In 2014, Ireland had the second highest percentage of students in tertiary education studying science, maths and computing in the EU. However, our system of traineeship and apprenticeship has not developed to match many of the systems across Europe and requires a continued focus in the coming years in order to provide an attractive alternative to higher education progression routes. The development of the new National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora will provide a new focus nationally and regionally for the delivery of skills needs.

In 2015 Ireland ranked 19th out of the EU-28 in lifelong learning at 6.5%, which is calculated as the percentage of persons who received education or training in the past four weeks, the EU-28 average was 10.7%.

While we are not yet an “Innovation Leader” in Europe, we stand out as one of the most effective countries in converting our investment in scientific research into practical impact. However, we need to continue to improve the take up of STEM disciplines, particularly among women, levels of research activity and measuring impact. Innovation 2020 (Ireland’s strategy for research and development, science and technology) sets out a vision for Ireland to become a global innovation leader driving a strong, sustainable, high employment economy and better society. Innovation 2020 sets the agenda for cross departmental actions to realise the potential of research and innovation. A number of agencies provide competitive research funding to the higher education sector including Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, and the Irish Research Council.

Even though the economic crash dealt a severe blow to entrepreneurship in Ireland. The recovery has shown a very healthy revival and a strong desire within the education and training system to nurture entrepreneurial thinking.

Our ambition is to become an Innovation Leader in Europe and to develop stronger entrepreneurship in education to match top performers in Europe. We also want to effectively engage enterprise to play their

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part in building the talent base through the growth of traineeships and apprenticeships, work placements and work based projects, programme design, promotion of lifelong learning and improved career guidance for students so they can make well informed choices.

We also aim to step up in our capacity to attract international students to undertake some or all of their education in Ireland.

These are all areas which we shall seek to benchmark a path of progress engaging more sectors and institutions to deliver and learn from successful models elsewhere.

Goal 4: OUR OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Bridges between education and training providers and different social and economic communities such as the employer community, the unemployed, parents, students and other stakeholders will help us to understand each other's challenges, enable people to work together to problem-solve and innovate and to deliver for local, regional and national ambition.

Support local communities

Schools are at the heart of their communities and are more successful the more they can collaborate with other organisations within the community. We will explore opportunities for the use of school buildings for afterschool care and out of hours use to support local communities and make people's lives better.

Strengthen the role of parents and students and provide greater school choice

Parents and students are key stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. We will develop a Parents and Learners Charter to give parents and students a stronger voice at school level. We will legislate for school admissions to make enrolment easier for children and their parents. We will support the establishment of 400 multi and non-denominational schools to give greater choice in the type of school available. We will revise protocols to ensure no small school closes against the wishes of parents and facilitate amalgamations where desirable.

Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs

Following on from the publication of the National Skills Strategy 2025, we will establish the National Skills Council and drive the development of the regional skills fora, two key infrastructure developments to address skills needs nationally and regionally. We will gather data from employers and graduates to evaluate performance, outcomes and inform policy and programme development. We will develop an ambitious Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021. Annual Service Plans for further education and training will be based on quality outputs and performance targets. A new ICT Skills Action Plan will be developed and published by the end of 2016.

Create a greater diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school

Working with employers, we will strengthen apprenticeship and traineeship in Ireland, increasing the range of courses and increasing the number of student places to achieve the Government targets of over 100 apprenticeship schemes and 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship registrations by 2020. We will work with further education and training and higher education providers to provide a broader range of flexible opportunities for learners and to support an increase in lifelong learning. As unemployment falls, we need to shift our focus to developing the skills of those who are in work, focussing particularly on those with lower skills. This will create opportunities for second-chance learners to up-skill and re-skill. The distribution of money from the National Training Fund will reflect this.

Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices

We will work with education and training providers, parents, employers and students themselves to make sure they are ready for the world of work and can make well informed career choices. There will be a greater focus on work placements in schools, further education and training and higher education as key part of the learning experience. We will review guidance and careers information for school goers and adult learners including learning from best practice overseas.

Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation

We will create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation across the education and training system. A new Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement will be produced along with guidelines for schools. We will work with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to implement the Arts in Education Charter.

Grow a vibrant research community in Ireland

We will work with stakeholders to position Ireland as a Global Innovation Leader. Innovation 2020 proposes that there should be an increase of 500 funded postgraduate students, an increase in the number of funded post-doctoral researchers and the initiation of a new programme of funding for Frontier Research across all disciplines. These proposals will be actioned by a number of agencies, including Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Irish Research Council (IRC).

We will work with employers to increase the number of researchers to address economic and societal demand. We will support the career development of the next generation of researchers to expand Ireland's research capacity. We will build a strong bridge from the research community to deliver innovation with the public and private sectors.

Position Ireland to attract more international students

We will implement an ambitious International Education Strategy to strengthen the quality and relevance of our education system in global terms, and to support the development of Ireland's global relationships. Educating and building relationships with the future leaders, entrepreneurs and decision-makers across the globe. We will introduce an International Education Mark to ensure quality standards and best international practice for international learners in Ireland. We will attract more international student, academics and researchers.

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Goal 4: TARGETS AND INDICATORS

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
BUILD STRONGER BRIDGES BETWEEN EDUCATION AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY	MULTI / NON-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS	400 MULTI-/ NON-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS BY 2030
	WORK PLACEMENTS	WORK PLACEMENTS FOR HE LEVELS 6 TO 8 - INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HE STUDENTS UNDERTAKING A WORK PLACEMENT OR WORK BASED PROJECT AS PART OF THEIR COURSE BY 25% BY 2021
	INNOVATION AND RESEARCH ^[2]	INCREASE OF 200 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ENROLMENTS BY 2020 (IRC)
		INCREASE (20) IN THE NUMBER OF FUNDED POST-DOCTORAL PLACES BY 2020 (IRC)
	GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MONITOR (AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES - EDUCATION IS PART OF THE OVERALL SURVEY)	IN THE 2014 SURVEY, IRELAND RANKED 12TH ON PRIMARY AND SECOND LEVEL EDUCATION AND 14TH FOR POST SECOND LEVEL OUT OF 24 EU COUNTRIES SURVEYED.
		PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY: INCREASE IRELAND'S CURRENT RATING OF 2.09 (ON A SCALE OF 1-5, WITH AN EU AVERAGE OF 2.12) TO ABOVE 2.3 BY 2025
		POST SECOND LEVEL: INCREASE IRELAND'S CURRENT RATING OF 2.95 (EU AVERAGE 2.8) TO ABOVE 3.05 BY 2025
	APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP	100 APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES BY 2020
		50,000 APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP REGISTRATIONS BY 2020
	LIFE-LONG LEARNING RATE	INCREASE TO 10% THE NUMBER OF THOSE AGED 25 - 64 ENGAGED IN LIFELONG LEARNING BY 2020 (FROM 2015 RATE OF 7.2%)
		15% BY 2025
		INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF HE ENTRANTS STUDYING ON A FLEXIBLE BASIS BY 25% BY 2021, AS RESOURCES ALLOW
	INCREASE UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING OPPORTUNITIES AS RESOURCES PERMIT	50,000 HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES PROVIDED BY 2021

^[2] Innovation 2020 sets the agenda for cross departmental actions to realise the potential of research and innovation. These figures relate to the Irish Research Council, an aegis body of the DES

Objective 4.1: Increase opportunities for schools to support their local communities through the utilisation of schools buildings and facilities out of hours

OBJECTIVE 4.1				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
83	EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR USING SCHOOL BUILDINGS FOR AFTERSCHOOL CARE, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.			DES, DCYA
	■ ESTABLISH INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP, MEET WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND PREPARE A PROPOSED MODEL OF IMPLEMENTATION		Q3 2016	
	■ PRESENT JOINT DES/ DCYA ACTION PLAN FOR AFTERSCHOOL CARE OPTIONS, THE DELIVERY OF WHICH WILL BE DEPENDENT ON AVAILABLE RESOURCES		Q3 2016	
84	EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF LINKING ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO OUT OF HOURS USE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.			DES
	■ HOLD MEETINGS WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND PREPARE A PROPOSED MODEL OF IMPLEMENTATION		Q3 2016	
	■ DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS OUT OF HOURS AND IMPLEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF POTENTIAL FUNDING TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS IN 2017, AS RESOURCES ALLOW		Q4 2016	

Objective 4.2: Strengthen the role of parents and students, and deliver progress in providing greater school choice

OBJECTIVE 4.2				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
85	INTRODUCE A STRONGER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE AND CHARTER FOR PARENTS AND LEARNERS:			DES
	■ BRING THE HEADS OF BILL TO PROVIDE FOR A PARENTS AND LEARNERS CHARTER TO THE OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION- THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION WILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN RELATION TO AN EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN		Q3 2016	
86	STRENGTHEN THE FOCUS ON REDUCING SCHOOL COSTS FOR PARENTS BY:			DES, SCHOOLS
	■ RESTORING CAPITATION FUNDING OVER A THREE- YEAR PERIOD, AS RESOURCES PERMIT		2017 ONWARDS	
	■ INCREASING THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BOOK RENTAL SCHEMES, AS RESOURCES PERMIT, IN ORDER TO REDUCE/ELIMINATE SCHOOL BOOK COSTS FOR PARENTS		2017 ONWARDS	
	■ PLACE A REQUIREMENT WITHIN A PARENTS AND LEARNERS CHARTER FOR SCHOOLS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE VIEWS OF THEIR PARENTAL COMMUNITIES WHEN MAKING DECISIONS ON MATTERS THAT HAVE A FINANCIAL IMPACT FOR PARENTS		2017 ONWARDS	
	■ WE WILL ISSUE A NEW CIRCULAR TO SCHOOL AUTHORITIES AND ETBs REGARDING SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY AND OTHER COSTS AND THE NEED TO PUT A GREATER EMPHASIS ON REDUCING THE COST OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND OTHER COSTS. THE VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL PARENT COUNCILS AND OTHER EDUCATION PARTNERS WILL BE CONSIDERED AND WILL FEED INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIRCULAR.		Q4 2016- Q1 2017	

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OBJECTIVE 4.2			
No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
87	ADVANCE THE LEGISLATION IN RELATION TO SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TO MAKE ENROLMENT EASIER FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS:		DES, PATRON BODIES, DCYA, TUSLA, NCSE
	■ ADMISSIONS BILL ENACTED, SUBJECT TO THE OIREACHTAS LEGISLATIVE PROCESS	2017	
	■ COMMENCE THE BILL ON A PHASED BASIS TO ALLOW SCHOOLS TIME TO ADJUST TO THE NEW REQUIREMENTS, SUBJECT TO THE COMPLETION OF WORK ON THE REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES	(TO BE SCHEDULED FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS)	
	■ FOLLOWING ENACTMENT COMMENCE CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS ON THE DETAIL OF REGULATIONS AS REGULATIONS MOVE TO DRAFTING STAGE	Q3 2017 AND ONGOING	
	■ WE ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLES LAID OUT IN THE EQUAL STATUS (ADMISSION TO SCHOOLS) BILL 2016, BUT BELIEVE THERE ARE ISSUES THAT REQUIRE SCRUTINY, AS LAID OUT IN THE MOTION PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PASSED BY THE DÁIL. THESE INCLUDE POSSIBLE IMPACTS ON MINORITY RELIGIONS, THE ISSUE OF MANDATORY CATCHMENT AREAS, IMPACT ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT, AND ISSUES OF COMPETING RIGHTS AND THE CONSTITUTION. WE WILL CONSIDER PROPOSALS ON THIS ISSUE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATION BY THE OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE.		
88	ESTABLISH 400 MULTI-/ NON- DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS:		DES, PATRON BODIES
	■ MAP OUT NEW APPROACHES TO REACH THIS TARGET	Q4 2016	
	■ OPEN FIVE NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS– THREE UNDER NEW SCHOOLS PATRONAGE PROCESS AND TWO UNDER RECONFIGURATION	Q3 2016	
	■ COMPLETE THE PATRONAGE PROCESSES FOR NINE NEW POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS DUE TO OPEN IN 2017 AND 2018	Q3 2016	
	■ COMMENCE THE PATRONAGE PROCESSES FOR THREE NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS DUE TO OPEN IN 2017	Q4 2016	
89	DEVELOP POLICY ON AN AMALGAMATION PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOLS RECONFIGURATION TO INCREASE DIVERSITY OF SCHOOL TYPE.		DES
	■ ESTABLISH WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP PROTOCOL	Q1 2017	
90	REVISE PROTOCOLS TO ENSURE THAT NO SMALL SCHOOL CLOSES AGAINST THE WISHES OF PARENTS AND FACILITATE AMALGAMATIONS WHERE DESIRABLE		DES, PATRON BODIES
	■ FINALISE PROTOCOL AND WRITE TO PATRONS OF ONE- TEACHER SCHOOLS, ASKING THEM TO INITIATE LOCAL DISCUSSIONS TO ADDRESS FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES	Q4 2016	

Objective 4.3: Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs

OBJECTIVE 4.3				
No	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
91	DEVELOP INNOVATIVE RESPONSES TO SKILLS GAPS ACROSS KEY PRIORITIES AREAS OF THE ECONOMY INCLUDING ICT, LANGUAGES, BIOPHARMA.		ONGOING	DES
92	ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL, WHICH WILL USE DATA ON SKILLS REQUIREMENTS TO PROACTIVELY ADDRESS EMERGING SKILLS GAPS, AND DEVELOP A REVISED MANDATE FOR THE EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE SKILLS NEED.			DES, NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL
	■ FINALISE MANDATE FOR, APPOINT MEMBERS TO, AND FORMALLY LAUNCH, THE NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL		Q4 2016	
	■ REVIEW AND FINALISE MANDATE FOR EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS		Q4 2016	
	■ MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY 2025 AND PROVIDE ANNUAL REPORTS TO THE NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL		ANNUAL	
93	OVERSEE THE WORK OF THE REGIONAL SKILLS FORA AND MEASURE PERFORMANCE. THE FORA AIM TO PROVIDE A COHESIVE EDUCATION-LED STRUCTURE FOR EMPLOYERS AND THE FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS TO WORK TOGETHER IN IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE SKILLS NEEDS OF THEIR REGIONS.			DES
	■ FORMAL LAUNCH OF THE REGIONAL SKILLS FORA		Q4 2016	
	■ DISSEMINATE THE WORK OF THE FORA, WITH THE SUPPORT OF ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE FORA AND OTHER DISSEMINATION MECHANISMS SUCH AS THE REGIONAL SKILLS FORA WEBSITE (WWW.REGIONALSKILLS.IE)		ONGOING	
94	REGIONAL SKILLS MANAGERS SERVE ON ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS COMMITTEES TO FACILITATE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE FORA AND RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN RELATION TO REGIONAL SKILLS PRIORITIES AND REGIONAL SKILLS FORA- RELATED ACTIONS IN THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR JOBS.		ONGOING	REGIONAL SKILLS MANAGERS
95	COMPLETE NATIONAL SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS TO INFORM POLICY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT.		2017	DES, HEA, SOLAS, QQI
96	ROLLOUT NEW GRADUATE SURVEY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES FROM HIGHER EDUCATION AND INFORM POLICY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT.		2018	DES, HEA
97	COMPLETE REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL TO UNDERPIN DELIVERY ACROSS THE SECTOR.		2017	DES, HEA
98	DEVELOP NEW SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PERIOD TO 2021.		Q4 2016	DES, HEA
99	AGREE ANNUAL SERVICE PLANS BETWEEN SOLAS AND ETBs AND MONITOR PROGRESS AGAINST AGREED QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS. THE PLANS WILL INCLUDE PROJECTED PROGRAMME INPUTS, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES.		ANNUAL	SOLAS, ETBs
100	COMPLETE REVIEW OF THE CURRENT NATIONAL ICT SKILLS ACTION PLAN 2014 – 2018 AND PUBLISH REVISED PLAN.		Q4 2016	DES, DJEI, INDUSTRY

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Objective 4.4: Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school

OBJECTIVE 4.4				
No	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
101	STRENGTHEN THE APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP SYSTEMS THROUGH ENHANCING THE RANGE OF COURSES AND INCREASING STUDENT PLACES, ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT TARGETS OF OVER 100 APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES, AND A CUMULATIVE TARGET OF 50,000 APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP REGISTRATIONS TO 2020. THIS IS A TOTAL OF 31,000 APPRENTICESHIP REGISTRATIONS AND 19,000 TRAINEESHIPS OVER THE PERIOD TO 2020. THIS WOULD INVOLVE AN ANNUAL AVERAGE OF 6,000 APPRENTICESHIPS AND 4,000 TRAINEESHIPS.		DES, SOLAS, APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL	
	■ DEVELOP AND FINALISE A ROADMAP TO DELIVER THE PROGRAMME FOR A PARTNERSHIP GOVERNMENT'S APPRENTICESHIP COMMITMENTS	Q3 2016		
	■ UP TO 10 NEW APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES COMMENCE	Q4 2016		
	■ ACHIEVE TARGET OF 3,390 APPRENTICES ON EXISTING PROGRAMMES	Q4 2016		
	■ NETWORKS OF EMPLOYERS HAVE BEEN CREATED TO FACILITATE ETB/ EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS TO IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDS, DESIGN TRAINING PROGRAMMES, RECRUIT LEARNERS AND DELIVER TRAINING (ON AND OFF THE JOB). BASED ON THE PILOT CAREER TRAINEESHIP SCHEME IN THE HOSPITALITY AND ENGINEERING SECTORS, INVOLVING SEVEN ETBs, FURTHER PROGRAMMES ARE BEING DEVELOPED FOR ROLL- OUT. SOLAS PLAN FORECAST THAT THAT THERE WILL BE 5,000 TRAINEESHIPS REGISTRATIONS IN 2019	Q4 2016-ONGOING	2017	
	■ NEW STANDARDS AND CURRICULA FOR EXISTING APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES INTRODUCED, FOLLOWING SOLAS REVIEW	2017		
102	CONTINUE TO WORK WITH SKILLNETS TO DELIVER ENTERPRISE-LED TRAINING AND CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE MODEL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SKILLNETS STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2016-2019. THE STRATEGY IS BEING DEVELOPED TO BE CLOSELY ALIGNED TO THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY (NSS) AND THE NEEDS OF ENTERPRISE, AND WILL BE FRAMED UPON THE FOLLOWING 3 KEY THEMES:	2016-2019	DES, SKILLNETS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INCREASED ENTERPRISE PARTICIPATION OF EMPLOYERS IN THE SKILLNETS TRAINING NETWORKS MODEL TO IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY, CAPABILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISE • ENHANCED RELEVANCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF TRAINING INCLUDING AN INCREASED FOCUS ON THE EFFECTIVE DIAGNOSIS AND PRIORITISATION OF SKILLS NEEDS AND MEASUREMENT OF IMPACT OF TRAINING ON ENTERPRISE • INCREASED SUPPLY OF NEW AND SPECIFIC SKILLS (SKILLS THAT ARE VITAL TO THE COMPETITIVENESS AND GROWTH POTENTIAL ENTERPRISE) TO THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET WHICH ADDRESS CURRENT, EMERGING AND FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS OF ENTERPRISE <p>SKILLNETS CURRENTLY PROVIDE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO 34,000 EMPLOYED PEOPLE TO ALLOW THEM TO UPSKILL OR RESKILL.</p>			

Objective 4.4: Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school

OBJECTIVE 4.4				
No	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
103	DEVELOP A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO GUIDE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITY, ALIGNING WITH THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY, AND IN CONSULTATION WITH PARTNERS.		Q4 2016-ONGOING	DES, SOLAS
104	INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF ENTRANTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION STUDYING ON A FLEXIBLE BASIS (ONLINE, PART-TIME, MODULAR) BY 25% BY 2021, AS RESOURCES ALLOW. PROGRESS WILL BE MONITORED AS PART OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FROM 2017 ONWARDS.		Q4 2021	DES, HEIs
105	OVERSEE DEVELOPMENT AND ANNUAL CALLS FOR SPRINGBOARD+.			DES
	■ A REVIEW OF SPRINGBOARD 2011-2016 WILL INFORM ANY IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAMME		Q4 2016	
	■ ANNUAL COMPETITIVE CALLS FOR PARTICIPANTS, WITH COURSES PROVIDED BASED ON THE MOST UP-TO-DATE ANALYSIS OF SKILLS GAPS		ANNUAL CALLS 2017 - 2019	

Objective 4.5: Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices

OBJECTIVE 4.5				
No	ACTION		TIMELINE	DELIVERED BY
106	REVIEW WORK EXPERIENCE AT POST-PRIMARY LEVEL WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING ACCESS AND QUALITY OF WORK EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS		Q4 2017	DES, SCHOOLS
107	INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS UNDERTAKING A WORK PLACEMENT OR WORK BASED PROJECT AS PART OF THEIR COURSE BY 25% BY 2021.			EDUCATION & TRAINING PROVIDERS, INDUSTRY
108	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYABILITY STATEMENTS FOR COURSES / DISCIPLINES TO BETTER INFORM STUDENTS, PARENTS AND EMPLOYERS.		Q4 2017	EDUCATION & TRAINING PROVIDERS
109	REVIEW GUIDANCE SERVICES, TOOLS AND CAREERS INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ADULTS AND RECOMMEND CHANGES TO IMPROVE SERVICES.		2016- 2019	DES
	■ COMMENCE REVIEW OF GUIDANCE SERVICES		Q1 2017	

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Objective 4.6: Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation

OBJECTIVE 4.6			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
110	BENCHMARK ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY IN HE AND WORK WITH THE HEA TO ENSURE AN AMBITIOUS AND IMPLEMENTABLE PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SKILLS GAPS, ICT AND STEM NEEDS.		DES, HEA
	■ FINALISE AND PUBLISH HEINNOVATE REPORT ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION	Q3 2016	
	■ DEVELOP NEW SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PERIOD 2017 - 2021	Q4 2016	
111	DEVELOP NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT	Q4 2016	DES, SCHOOLS
112	DEVELOP NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS	Q2 2017	
113	IMPLEMENT THE ARTS IN EDUCATION CHARTER, SUBJECT TO THE DRAWDOWN OF DORMANT ACCOUNT FUNDING.		DES, DAHRRG, ARTS COUNCIL, HLIG, DAF, U2, IRELAND FUND
	■ 21 TEACHER/ARTIST PARTNERSHIP RESIDENCIES IN 21 PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EACH TEACHER EDUCATION CENTRE	Q4 2016	
	■ TEACHER/ARTIST PARTNERSHIP AS A MODEL FOR CPD WILL BE DELIVERED AS A SUMMER COURSE IN EACH OF THE 21 ATECI AREAS	Q3 2017	
	■ EXPANSION OF MUSIC EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS (MEPs) UNDER THE REMIT OF MUSIC GENERATION, A PROJECT CO-FUNDED BY U2/THE IRELAND FUND AND THE DES	Q4 2017	
	■ CREATE A NATIONAL DIGITAL MAP OF ARTS IN EDUCATION ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY	Q4 2017/ Q1 2018	
	■ DEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL RESEARCH REPOSITORY FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION RESEARCH IN IRELAND	Q4 2018	
114	IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	Q4 2020	DES, IRISH AID, DCCAE, STAKEHOLDERS

Objective 4.7: Work with enterprise to increase the number of researchers and institute a new programme of funding for Frontiers Research

OBJECTIVE 4.7			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
115	INCREASE ENROLMENT OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ENTERPRISE/EMPLOYERS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC DEMANDS AND ACHIEVE A TARGET OF 90 ADDITIONAL POST GRADUATE AWARDS BY 2018, IN LINE WITH INNOVATION 2020 TARGETS, AND SUBJECT TO RESOURCES. 75% OF THE AWARDS WOULD BE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ENTERPRISE EMPLOYERS.	2017/18	DES, IRC, EMPLOYERS
116	GROW PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ENTERPRISE/EMPLOYERS, TO REACH A TARGET OF 15 ADDITIONAL AWARDS BY 2018, SUBJECT TO RESOURCES.	2017/18	DES, IRC, EMPLOYERS
117	ESTABLISH A NEW COMPETITIVE FUND TO ENABLE THE NEXT GENERATION OF RESEARCHERS TRANSITION TO PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR STATUS. THE PROGRAMME WILL ENCOMPASS THREE LEVELS - STARTING GRANT (AFTER POST DOCTORATE – JUNIOR LECTURER LEVEL), CONSOLIDATOR GRANT (LECTURER/SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW LEVEL) AND ADVANCED GRANT (SENIOR LECTURER/PROFESSOR – PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR). AWARDS WILL BE UP TO FOUR YEARS IN LENGTH AND ARE SUBJECT TO RESOURCES.	2017	DES, IRC

Objective 4.8: Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students

OBJECTIVE 4.8			
No	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
118	INTRODUCE THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION MARK (IEM) TO ENSURE A QUALITY STANDARD AND BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE FOR INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS IN IRELAND. DRAFTING OF THE BILL WILL COMMENCE IN Q1 2017, WITH THE MARK SCHEDULED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN 2018.	Q1 2017 - 2018	DES
119	PUBLISH AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2016-2020, WITH A HIGH LEVEL WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED TO IMPLEMENT ALL OF THE ACTIONS.	Q4 2016- 2020	DES

Goal 5 - Improve national planning and support services

The Department and its agencies have an important role in providing strategic leadership, developing policy and delivering services. This involves coordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other governmental bodies and cross sectoral work programmes. The remit of the Department encompasses early years education, primary and second level education, further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education. We also represent education and training overseas and participate in various international fora. Education and training policy and programmes in Ireland are often of interest to other countries and many of our initiatives are recognised internationally.

The ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe places a particular demand on the Department and its national agencies – to create the right structures, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver effectively – to match this ambition.

This Strategy and Action Plan deliberately sets stretching ambitions, and covers the next three years. We shall annually publish time-lined actions and publicly monitor progress. Each year we shall invite stakeholders to work with us to learn from our success and our disappointments as we shape the next year's work. We shall work with international experts and partners to help in this process.

Goal 5: OUR OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results

We aim to provide leadership and direction for improvements across the system to provide better outcomes for all learners. We recognise the value of whole-of-system reforms that will, over time, provide improvements in achievement, with improvements at each level reinforcing the strength of the overall system of education and training.

Implementation of the Action Plan for Education and Skills will be continuously monitored and progress reported on a quarterly basis, with remedial action taken if possible where actions are not on target for delivery. Progress on implementing the Action Plan will be reported on annually with the Action Plan being refreshed each year. System performance will be measured, benchmarked and reported on. To do this effectively, the Department will enhance its strategic policy analysis capability, oversight of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures, to deliver on Government-wide public sector reform commitments, in line with best international practice. We will also enhance the indicators we use for the effectiveness of our major activities such as planning our delivery of buildings and payrolls.

The Department will provide sectoral supports to support the delivery of educational services. Such supports include the Department's payroll. We operate the largest public sector payroll in the country with in excess of 120,000 payees paid on a fortnightly basis, including teachers, special needs assistants, home tutors and retired teaching and non-teaching staff and their spouses.

Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

Over 60,000 additional, permanent school places will be delivered by 2021, over 300 extensions to existing schools and 14 new schools will be built in areas of very strong demographic demand. Funding will be provided to schools to manage minor improvements locally through the minor works grant and summer

works programme. Further progress will be made to phase out the use of prefabs in schools. An €150m investment from the State and €200m worth of Public Private Partnership projects will support the delivery of a range of projects in the higher education sector. Broadband infrastructure will be further developed with high speed broadband rolling out to 800 primary schools initially in 2016.

Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services

The Department is responsible for ensuring that the national support services and shared services are delivered to the highest standards in line with our overriding ambition to be the best education and training system in Europe.

Shared services and ICT will be used to improve a range of administrative and support services. Once operational, shared services in Finance, Payroll and other functions will enhance customer service and provide high quality management information. A focus on continuous improvement will realise benefits in process efficiency and expert knowledge creating a virtuous cycle of benefit realisation. Progress will be benchmarked against other public sector shared services and internationally where possible.

Goal 5: TARGETS AND INDICATORS

GOAL	MEASURE	TARGET / INDICATOR
IMPROVE NATIONAL PLANNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES	STRENGTHENING PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT	ANNUAL ACTION PLAN
		ANNUAL INTEGRATED REFORM DELIVERY PLAN
		QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORTS ON ACTION PLAN, PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT AND IRDP
	EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE	ADDITIONAL 19,000 PERMANENT PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES BY 2021
		ADDITIONAL 43,000 PERMANENT POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES BY 2021
		156 EXTENSION/REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS AT PRIMARY LEVEL COMPLETE BY 2021
		124 EXTENSION/REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS AT POST- PRIMARY LEVEL COMPLETE BY 2021
		10 NEW POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS
		4 NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS
		200M WORTH OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR
	PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING SHARED SERVICES	EDUCATION SHARED BUSINESS SERVICES ESTABLISHED 2017
		PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF PAYROLL SHARED SERVICE FOR ETBS COMMENCED 2017
		PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCE SHARED SERVICE COMMENCED 2018
	PAYROLL SERVICES	NUMBER OF PAYMENTS PROCESSED
	PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING ICT PROJECTS	DEPARTMENT'S ICT STRATEGY 2015 – 2019 DELIVERED BY END 2019
		Post-PRIMARY ONLINE DATABASE ALLOWS FOR THE INPUT OF SHORT COURSES AND ASSESSMENTS, AND THE GENERATION OF THE JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT BY END 2017

GOAL 05

Objective 5.1: Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results

OBJECTIVE 5.1			
No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
120	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS WILL BE MONITORED QUARTERLY WITH ANNUAL REPORTS ON PROGRESS. REFRESHED PLAN DEVELOPED ANNUALLY.	ONGOING	DES
121	IMPROVE STRATEGIC POLICY CAPABILITY, OVERSIGHT, EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES AND POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES TO DELIVER ON GOVERNMENT-WIDE PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM COMMITMENTS, WITH REPORTING ON THE IRDP AND A PROGRAMME FOR A PARTNERSHIP GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS, IN LINE WITH BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.	ONGOING	DES
	■ DEVELOP PROPOSALS TO ENHANCE DEPARTMENT STRUCTURES TO ACHIEVE THIS IMPROVEMENT	Q2 2017	
	■ DEVELOP INDICATORS TO DEMONSTRATE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACTIVITIES	Q3 2017	
122	PROVIDE GREATER STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN THE DEPARTMENT'S GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND USE OF DATA.	ONGOING	DES
	■ FINALISE THE DEPARTMENT'S DATA STRATEGY	Q4 2016	
	■ IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY, THROUGH A SERIES OF TWO-YEARLY IMPLEMENTATION PLANS, WITH SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES BASED ON AVAILABLE RESOURCES, UNTIL ALL ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY ARE DELIVERED	2017-ONWARDS	
123	PUBLISH THE SECOND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 2014 – 2016.	Q4 2016	DES, HEA
124	REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE FUNDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO BE EXAMINED BY THE OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND FEEDBACK WILL INFORM POLICY DIRECTION.	Q3 2016 ONGOING	DES
125	IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE FUNDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT RELATED TO THE REVIEW OF THE FUNDING MODEL. THIS WILL INCLUDE REFORMING THE FUNDING MODEL TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH AMBITIONS AND THE CAPACITY TO MEET SPECIFIC TARGETS ON SKILL GAPS, ACCESS FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS AND STRONGER IMPACT ON INNOVATION	Q2 2017	DES
126	PUBLISH THE SECOND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 2014 – 2016, AND DEVELOP A NEW SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PERIOD 2017 – 2021 WHICH WILL INCLUDE NEW TARGETS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL, CRITICAL SKILLS, ACCESS, TEACHING AND LEARNING, RESEARCH AND OTHER NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES.	Q4 2016	DES, HEA

Objective 5.1: Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results

OBJECTIVE 5.1				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
127	ADVANCE LEGISLATIVE REFORM IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR:			DES
	■ PUBLISH THE GENERAL SCHEME OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM BILL	Q4 2016	DES	
	■ ENACT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES BILL TO UNDERPIN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MODEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND SUPPORT APPLICANTS CONSORTIUM FOR TU STATUS AS RESOURCES PERMIT	2017		
128	SUPPORT THE OPERATION OF A HIGH QUALITY SCHOOL SYSTEM THROUGH THE ANNUAL PROVISION OF TEACHING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORTS TO SCHOOLS, BASED ON AGREED CRITERIA AND ENROLMENT DATA.	ONGOING	DES	
129	PROVIDE PAYROLL AND PENSION SERVICES TO TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ALL SCHOOLS (EXCEPT THE ETB SECTOR), ISSUING PAYMENTS TO OVER 120,000 PEOPLE ON A FORTNIGHTLY BASIS.	ONGOING	DES	
130	DEVELOP A STANDARDISED APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS THE EDUCATION SECTOR TO ENSURE CONSISTENT APPLICATION ACROSS THE EDUCATION SECTOR OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS.	ONGOING	DES, AGENCIES	
	■ UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES OF AGENCIES UNDER THE DEPARTMENT'S AEGIS AND PROVIDE REVIEW FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO EACH AGENCY	Q1 2017	DES	
	■ DEVELOP SERVICE-LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH KEY AGENCIES	Q1 2017	DES	

GOAL 05

Objective 5.2. Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

OBJECTIVE 5.2				
No.	ACTIONS		TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
131	COMPLETE 50 LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS ONGOING FROM THE 2012- 2016 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.		Q4 2016	DES
132	IMPLEMENTATION OF 2016- 2021 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.	■ PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 62,000 PERMANENT SCHOOL PLACES- 19,000 AT PRIMARY LEVEL AND 43,000 AT POST-PRIMARY LEVEL	2016-2021	DES
		■ COMPLETION/ COMMENCEMENT OF 310 NEW AND EXTENSION SCHOOL PROJECTS (156 AT PRIMARY LEVEL, 124 AT POST-PRIMARY AND 30 IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS), INCLUDING 14 NEW SCHOOLS IN AREAS WITH VERY STRONG DEMOGRAPHIC DEMAND- TEN POST-PRIMARY AND FOUR PRIMARY		
		■ PROVIDE A MINOR WORKS GRANT AND A SUMMER WORKS PROGRAMME WHERE FUNDING ALLOWS		
133	ROLL OUT THE NEXT PHASE OF THE PREFAB REPLACEMENT INITIATIVE, UNDERTAKING PREPARATORY WORK IN SCHOOLS WITH OLDER, PURCHASED PREFABS, TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION OF PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION IN 2019, AS RESOURCES ALLOW.		2016- 2019	DES
134	CONTINUE WITH CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION, AS RESOURCES PERMIT.	■ PROGRESS THE GRANGEGORMAN PPP PROJECT	Q4 2021 ONGOING	DES
		■ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2016- 2021 CAPITAL PLAN IN RESPECT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AS RESOURCES ALLOW. THIS INCLUDES THE PROVISION OF €150M EXCHEQUER FUNDING AND THE PROGRESSION OF €200M WORTH OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS FOR THE SECTOR	Q4 2016 ONWARDS	
135	IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY FOR SCHOOLS IN LINE WITH TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES.		ONGOING	DES

Objective 5.3: Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services

No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
136	STRENGTHEN DES MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS THROUGH SHARED SERVICES.	ONGOING	DES, DPER (FOR FINANCIAL SHARED SERVICES)
	■ AGREE THE DES SHARED SERVICE STRATEGY	2017	
	■ EMBED THE USE OF FINANCIAL SHARED SERVICES IN DES	Q4 2016-2019	
	■ UNDERTAKE “SHARED SERVICES READY” PROJECTS WITHIN THE DES AND PARTICIPATE IN “BUILD AND TEST” PHASES OF THE OVERALL PROJECT	Q4 2016/Q1-4 2017	
	■ COMMENCE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE DES	Q2 2018	
	■ MOVE THE DEPARTMENT’S FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING TRANSACTIONS TO THE FINANCIAL SHARED SERVICES CENTRE	Q2 2019-SCHEDULED	
	■ PREPARE BUSINESS CASE FOR THE UPGRADE OF THE DEPARTMENT’S PAYROLL AND PENSIONS FUNCTIONS TO A SHARED SERVICE STANDARD TO YIELD SIGNIFICANT EFFICIENCIES AND BETTER OUTCOMES FOR THE DEPARTMENT AND CUSTOMERS	2017	
137	IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES ACROSS THE SECTOR THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF SHARED SERVICES, SUBJECT TO RESOURCES.	ONGOING	DES, SCHOOLS, ETBS, HEIs
	■ STRENGTHEN THE AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOLS SECTOR WITH THE OPERATION AND USE OF THE CENTRAL PROCUREMENT ARRANGEMENTS SO AS TO MAXIMISE SAVINGS FOR SCHOOLS	Q4 2016	
	■ CONNECT THE ETBs’ HEAD OFFICES AND TRAINING CENTRES TO ONE NETWORK PROVIDER, GOVERNMENT NETWORKS, ALLOWING INTER-OFFICE CONNECTIVITY AND FUTURE AGREEMENTS FOR ASSOCIATED SERVICES, SUCH AS VOIP. TARGET 25 ETB HEAD OFFICE/SUB OFFICES AND 19 ETB TRAINING CENTRES CONNECTED TO GOVERNMENT NETWORKS	Q3 2016	
	■ ESTABLISH EDUCATION SHARED BUSINESS SERVICES (ESBS)	2017	
	■ BEGIN THE PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF PAYROLL SHARED SERVICE FOR ETBs	2017	
	■ UPGRADE ICT SYSTEMS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION HR/PAYROLL TO SUPPORT THE SHARED SERVICE AGENDA	2017	
	■ BEGIN THE PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCE SHARED SERVICE FOR ETBs	2018	

GOAL 05

No.	ACTIONS	TIMELINES	DELIVERED BY
138	IMPROVE BUSINESS PROCESSES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM THROUGH THE USE OF ICT. ■ <i>DELIVER THE DEPARTMENT's ICT STRATEGY 2015 – 2019, WHICH PRIORITISES INNOVATION, INTEGRATED SYSTEMS, STRENGTHENED INFORMATION GOVERNANCE, IMPROVED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, COSTS OPTIMISATION, AND REUSABLE APPLICATIONS</i>	ONGOING 2016- 2019	DES
	■ IMPLEMENT THE IMIS (INSPECTIONS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM) TO ENABLE INSPECTORS TO CAPTURE DATA USING MOBILE DEVICES, TO STREAMLINE THE OVERALL INSPECTION REPORTING PROCESS, ENSURE THE PROVISION OF QUALITY DATA FOR EVALUATION PURPOSES, AND SUPPORT EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY FORMULATION	Q3 2016	
	■ USE THE PRIMARY ONLINE DATABASE TO AUTOMATE THE ANNUAL PRIMARY SCHOOL CENSUS RETURNS, TO PROVIDE MORE ROBUST DATA FOR INTERNAL BUSINESS PROCESSES, INCLUDING CAPITATION GRANTS AND TEACHER ALLOCATIONS	Q3 2016	
	■ ENHANCE THE POST-PRIMARY ONLINE DATABASE TO FACILITATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM PROGRAMME, ALLOWING FOR THE INPUT OF SHORT COURSES AND ASSESSMENTS, FOLLOWED BY THE GENERATION OF THE JUNIOR CYCLE PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT	2016-2017	
	■ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDENT GRANT APPEALS ONLINE APPLICATION, TO STREAMLINE THE OVERALL APPEALS PROCESS AND PROVIDE GREATER EFFICIENCIES	Q3 2016	
139	PROVIDE SAFE, EFFICIENT AND COST EFFECTIVE SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR ELIGIBLE CHILDREN. ■ CONDUCT A REVIEW OF THE CONCESSIONARY CHARGES AND RULES ELEMENT OF THE SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEME. REVIEW IS CONDUCTED, AND ACTIONS AGREED PRIOR TO THE 2017 BUDGET PROCESS		DES, BUS ÉIREANN
	■ REVIEW CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR THE SCHOOL TRANSPORT APPEALS BOARD	Q2 2017	

Appendix 1- Bodies under the aegis of the Department

- 1 An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
- 2 Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)
- 3 Educational Research Centre(ERC)
- 4 Grangegorman Development Agency (GGDA)
- 5 Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- 6 Irish Research Council (IRC)
- 7 Léargas - The Exchange Bureau
- 8 National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
- 9 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- 10 National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- 11 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- 12 Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)
- 13 Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)
- 14 Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF)
- 15 Skillnets Ltd
- 16 SOLAS An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
- 17 State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- 18 The Teaching Council

Appendix 2: Acronyms

AC	Arts Council
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAF	Dormant Accounts Fund
DAHRRG	Department of Arts, Heritage Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
EPSEN (Act)	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (Act)
ETB	Education and Training Board
FET	Further Education and Training
GAM	General Allocation Model
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLIG	High Level Implementation Group for Arts in Education Charter
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison Scheme
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology
IP	Intellectual Property
ISS	Integrated Support Service
IT	Information Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JC	Junior Certificate
LC	Leaving Certificate
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PE	Physical Education
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SEN	Special Education Needs
SENO	Special Education Needs Organiser
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SNE	Special Needs Education
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TU	Technological University
TY	Transition Year

Appendix 3: DES commitments arising from the Programme for a Partnership Government

Below are commitments assigned to Department of Education and Skills as the Lead Department.

Com No.	Commitment Description
3.2.3	Invest in skills and training, to allow all to benefit from new opportunities in a recovering economy
4.3.5	To protect the sustainability and viability of rural communities we will not close any small school without the consent of parents. Existing support schemes will remain open for new infrastructural investment in schools.
4.3.7	In partnership with the Apprenticeship Council and industry we will double the number of apprenticeships to provide a total of 31,000 places by 2020 through an annual call for new proposals. We will target over 100 different apprenticeship schemes spread across sectors of the economy and in every region in Ireland.
4.3.21	We will prioritise those institutions with clear ambitions and plans for the furthering of industry-relevant technological research and education. The requirement of a mandatory merger of existing institutions can be reviewed, if a case can be proven, that for geographical reasons, a merger isn't feasible.
6.3.1	An increasing concern in schools and for families, we need to promote awareness and prevention in our education system rather than reacting to incidents. In 2017, Wellbeing will be introduced as a subject in the new Junior Cert curriculum and this is a positive step in raising understanding and awareness amongst teenagers. However, a more thorough understanding of students' own emotional wellbeing is also required
6.3.3	For teaching staff also, we will invest in SafeTALK and ASIST courses
7.4.2	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome and other conditions. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
7.4.3	The Government is committed to early intervention and prevention services for children. Providing earlier access to children and adults to Speech and Language Therapy can make a vital difference to their future opportunities in life. We will introduce a new in-school speech and language service creating stronger linkages between parents, teachers and SLTs.
8.1.5	A new in-school speech and language service will be established to support young children as part of a more integrated support system. It has been shown across the OECD as the most effective way of managing and intervening with the educational and social issues consequential to speech and language difficulties in children.
8.1.6	We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers).

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- 8.2.8 We must utilise our primary school buildings for afterschool care provision for school age children to offer more options and flexibility to parents. We will link additional capitation to the provision of buildings for afterschool care, where demand exists. Community groups and private providers will be invited to tender to use school facilities (outside school hours).
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- 8.3.2 The introduction of a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus, as a full optional subject.
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- 8.3.7 For teaching staff also, we will support SafeTALK and ASIST courses.
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- 10.0.1 We are committed to investing an extra €500million in education by 2021 through measures including childcare subventions, HSE Speech and Language Therapists, to bring the number up to 1,102 (a 25% increase) additional National Educational Psychologists (NEPs) to the bring the total to 238 (a 25% increase), reducing the pupil teacher ratio in junior and senior infants, annual increases in primary and secondary capitation rates, additional teacher CPD, a new School Excellence Fund, pay increases in accordance with the Lansdowne Road Agreement and extra third level investment.
- We will also reduce primary school class sizes; reintroduce guidance counselling to secondary schools and increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households. With this investment we will pursue the below principles of access, excellence, transparency and innovation.
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- 10.0.2 We will produce a three year strategy for the Department of Education within the first 100 days and a framework for measuring its progress in consultation with stakeholders.
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- 10.1.2 Reduce the pupil-teacher ratio for junior and senior infants by providing smaller classes, which have the greatest beneficial impact on younger pupils. The gains from smaller class size in early years are shown to carry forward into future years. Research shows pupils are more likely to stay in school longer and earn better results
-
- 10.1.3 Developing a new model of In-School Speech and Language Therapy, involving collaboration between parents, schools and primary care services
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- 10.1.4 Providing additional NEPS psychologists to support new intervention strategies for staff and pupils, and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents
-
- 10.2.1 We will increase mandatory schooling to age 17.
-
- 10.2.3 School retention rates are increasing but more can be done to ensure a transition to work or further education for young school leavers. Additional supports to groups working with Early School Leavers will be examined.
-
- 10.2.4 We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
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- 10.2.5 The provision of relevant educational programmes, specifically aimed at early leavers and second chance learners should be made available throughout the year, on a modular basis. We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends.
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- 10.3.1 A road map has been agreed for a phased transfer of Catholic schools to new patrons, where the support of communities exists. We will work with all stakeholders to facilitate this process whilst also considering new approaches such as the potential of different patrons on a single site.
- 10.3.2 We will increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030.
- 10.3.3 We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation taking account of current draft proposals (publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils). We will seek to enact this legislation for the start of school year 2017-18.
- 10.3.4 The role and power of an Ombudsman for Education, to whom a parent could complain and appeal on foot of a decision by a board of management, will be examined by the relevant Oireachtas Committee to ensure its consistency with the need to ensure better local decision making and accountability to parents.
- 10.3.5 We will ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents, while also facilitating those small schools who wish to amalgamate.
- 10.3.6 Within 3 months, we will commence a review of the teacher appointment thresholds in schools with 4 or less teachers.
- 10.3.7 We will review the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme prior to Budget 2017. We will review the criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board.
- 10.3.8 We will review the options for standardised testing so that clear information is provided to teachers and parents. Parents should be able to receive annual reports on how their school is doing. Government should also be able to assess how new investments are progressing (e.g. reductions in pupil-teacher ratio, speech & language interventions).
- 10.3.9 We will introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents, and commence the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act (10 years after its enactment).
-
- 10.4.1 In promoting excellence and innovation, we will introduce greater flexibility in our schools and pursue measures to achieve this. This may include nurturing different ambitions through new subject choices, greater engagement with enterprise on future skills needs, and increased flexibility in the day to day management of schools in order to improve outcomes. School leadership will be supported in identifying and introducing reforms that drive up educational standards, particularly in the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic.
- 10.4.2 We will set out capitation rates to schools on a rolling 3-year basis, allowing for forward planning. School management will have the decision making power to allocate these resources as they deem appropriate, including to posts of responsibility.
- 10.4.3 We will establish a new Schools Excellence Fund, which rewards new approaches driven by teachers and by parents themselves to the benefit of pupils' education. Applications that seek to tackle educational disadvantage will be prioritised.
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- 10.4.4 We will establish a pool of experts (educators, employers, accountants, business leaders, IT specialists etc.) to assist school initiatives, promote innovation and enterprise engagement especially at second level.
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- 10.4.5 As part of the Digital Strategy, we will introduce new technology bringing remote learning into classrooms, ensuring all students have access to a wider range of subject choices and consistent quality education.
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- 10.4.6 We will invest in additional continuous professional development for teachers, to ensure they are supported throughout their careers, and are best placed to respond to the developing challenges that their students face. Newly appointed school principals will take a preparation course in advance of taking up their role.
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- 10.4.7 In order to improve student's outcomes and school performance, we will examine the potential for measures to assist teaching principals.
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- 10.4.8 We will also incentivise voluntary school participation in new "Local Education Clusters" that encourage schools to improve student outcomes by sharing best practice and school improvement experiences, foster collaborative in and out-of-hours initiatives, staff peer mentoring and leadership, and that allow for cost reductions through economies of scale.
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- 10.5.1 The curriculum is evolving. In 2016, we need to focus on the future needs, abilities and capacity of students. Focus must remain on literacy and maths, but new subjects should be introduced such as the arts, entrepreneurial education, and mental health awareness.
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- 10.5.2 We will further accelerate the Digital and ICT agenda in schools by including a coding course for the Junior Cycle and introducing ICT/Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject.
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- 10.5.3 We will also introduce a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus as a full subject.
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- 10.5.4 Guidance counselling at secondary level will be enhanced.
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- 10.5.5 We will evaluate transition supports available to young people at all levels of the education, with a view to promoting initiatives which support young people at critical points in their lives. Transition Year, in particular, will be used to prepare young people with key skills before they make the transition to higher education or work. We will work with industry and colleges to open up new opportunities and programmes in transition year.
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- 10.5.6 The relevant Oireachtas Committee will be requested to review the recommendations contained in the forthcoming STEM report and outline the way forward in implementing a National Strategy to develop competence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
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- 10.5.7 We will benchmark entrepreneurial activity in Irish higher education and work with the Higher Education Authority to ensure an ambitious and implementable plan to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs.
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- 10.6.1 We are committed to delivering a school capital investment programme for extensions/refurbishments, additional school places, and eliminating the use of prefabs. Significant funding has been secured as part of the Capital Plan.
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- 10.6.2 We support an annual application process for the Minor Works and Summer Works schemes.
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- 10.6.3 In addition we will introduce a new funding mechanism for low cost safety measures for primary schools such as car parks and bus lay-bys.
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- 10.6.4 Schools buildings must be utilised out of hours if they are to remain at the centre of communities into the future, both throughout the day and throughout the year, including better utilisation of information technology. Afterschool care, homework clubs and other community activities should be permissible. Additional capitation funding will be linked to the availability of afterschool care options, where demand exists.
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- 10.7.1 We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education advice on how best to address this. Where efficiencies are made as part of this review, consideration is to be given to the extension of the July Provision Programme to support families over summer months.
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- 10.7.2 We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
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- 10.7.3 A new model of In-School Speech and Language Therapy will be established.
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- 10.7.4 We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers), and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents.
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- 10.8.1 We will change the structures of the Department of Education to ensure it operates as a dynamic policy leader focused on quality education and improving outcomes for every student.
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- 10.8.2 We support the creation of Technological Universities, linked to industry and with the capacity to create and retain jobs in regions.
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- 10.8.3 We will implement the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, published in December 2015.
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- 10.8.4 We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses and opportunities available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends. We support the introduction of mid-degree “sandwich year” courses, whereby students spend their third year of university working in industry.
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- 10.8.5 Together with the Apprenticeship Council, SOLAS, the Education and Training Boards, and industry, we will double the number of apprenticeships by 2020. We will also significantly increase the number of traineeship places. We will develop a mechanism to recognise a person’s practical work experience and expertise in order to enable them to take on an apprentice.
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- 10.8.6 Create financial incentives for the third level system to respond to skills gaps
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- 10.8.7 Invite industry to partner in the delivery elements of the curricula at third and fourth levels
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- 10.8.8 Create a strong system for the delivery and renewal of skills in newly emerging technical areas (including apprenticeships, traineeships, and in service progression)
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- 10.8.9 Significant exchequer resources are invested in both current and capital spending in the Higher Education sector. Following the publication of the Expert Group report on the Future Funding of the Higher Education Sector, we will propose that the relevant cross party Oireachtas Committee review its recommendations and outline a proposed funding plan for this sector.
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- 10.8.10 We will propose an examination of the efficiency and operation of SUSI in parallel with this report, including the potential of providing SUSI liaison personnel in each region
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- 10.8.11 We support new flexibility for appropriate higher education institutions within strict budgets, transparency and new accountability agreements, to set their own staffing needs, hire the best lecturers, automate routine processes and adapt work practices to staff and student needs. By allowing universities more flexibilities and ‘earned autonomy’ they can prioritise and address issues themselves for the improvement of their institution, and the creation of a new relationship with students.
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- 10.8.12 We will do this by initiating a Review of the Further, Adult and Community Education sector by the Oireachtas Committee on Education and an implementation of reforms to ensure the effectiveness of the sector.
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- 10.8.13 We will also commission an independent examination to identify the supports and barriers to accessing higher education for lone parents, and examine measures to increase participation. The recommendations of this report are to be published in advance of Budget 2017
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- 11.14.1 We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
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- 11.14.2 We will publish an updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion to narrow the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, and examine how students outside of DEIS can be better supported.
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- 11.15.1 We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation providing families with fairer access to their local schools.
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- 11.17.2 We will review implementation of the National Action Plan on Bullying in our schools.
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- 14.1.8 The new Government will seek to increase mandatory schooling to age 17 and examine how we can further improve school completion rates, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
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- 14.1.9 We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
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- 14.1.10 We will also implement a national access programme for higher education to boost college numbers from families without a history of third-level education, as well as mature students.
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ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

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2016-2019



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
AGUS SCILEANNA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
STRATEGY STATEMENT