STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2015 - 2017

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Foreword by the Minister

I welcome the publication of the Statement of Strategy which sets out the Department's high level goals and objectives for the next three years.

During this time, significant progress will be made in implementing extensive reforms of the education and training system. Improving the quality of our education and training system is key to the Government's commitment to building a knowledge society and driving sustainable economic growth. It is also a central element of the social recovery which the Government is committed to delivering.

The priorities in this Strategy are centred on the four main themes of Learning for Life, Improving quality and accountability, Supporting inclusion and diversity and Building the right systems and infrastructure.

Overall, our ambition is to transform each sector of education system, from early years education right through to higher education and further education and training.

The realisation of the goals in this ambitious Strategy will result in many benefits for our society and all of those involved in education and training. A well-educated, skilled and motivated population will contribute to economic progress, promote greater equality and social inclusion in our society, as well as enhancing Ireland's international reputation.

We still face many challenges as a nation. These include accommodating the rapid demographic growth in Ireland, targeting investment as our economic recovery continues to yield social dividends, serving the ever the evolving needs of our society, promoting sustainable job creation and meeting the skills needs of the economy.

This Strategy sets out to address all of these challenges, and together with Minister of State Damien English T.D., I look forward to working with the Department, our agencies and all of the education partners in its delivery.

Education is first and foremost about people. The objectives put forward in this report are not ends in themselves. Their value lies in the benefit they can bring to the educational experience of our citizens, from the very youngest minds right through to those engaging in education later in life.

Jan O'Sullivan T.D.
Minister for Education and Skills

Introduction by Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the Department's Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017 which sets out the mission, vision, values and goals that will underpin the Department's high level work programme for the next three years. This Strategy aims to ensure the provision of the infrastructure required for a high quality education and training system that will support Ireland's social, employment and economic recovery.

I acknowledge the significant work that will be undertaken by staff of the Department and our colleagues throughout the education and training sector to achieve its high level goals and objectives. From an internal Department perspective this will require flexibility, openness to change and a continued focus on business process improvement, while ensuring the on-going provision of a quality service. On a wider public service level, experience and progress on the implementation of public service reform in recent years has highlighted the willingness and commitment of Ireland's public servants to implement change and contribute to economic recovery. For the Department and our colleagues throughout the education sector, the period covered by the Strategy will be one of significant change and I have every confidence in our commitment and ability to deliver it.

Our progress on the implementation of this Strategy will be measured against the achievement of expected outcomes. This progress will be reported on through a variety of mechanisms including the Department's annual report.

I would like to thank the staff of the Department and all of those who engaged in the consultation process for their valuable input and assistance in developing this Strategy. I now look forward to working with you in its implementation.

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2015-2017

The Key Challenges and Opportunities in our Operating Environment are:

Economic Environment: The delivery of quality services with reduced resources continues to present challenges; however, economic recovery should result in opportunities for the education and training sector

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 provides the framework for renewing the Civil Service over the next three years. The Plan outlines a vision for the Civil Service and practical changes that will create a more unified, professional, responsive and open and accountable Civil Service, providing a world-class service to the State and to the people of Ireland. Strong leadership and active participation in the implementation of this programme of change will be a key focus over the period.

Managing Education and Training Sector Reform: We will work in partnership with key stakeholders to implement the significant changes that are being planned across the continuum of Education and Training

New Ways of Working and Shared Services: We will continue to consider the re-organisation of the Department and efficiencies to be gained from the implementation of shared services in the education sector to allow education providers to concentrate on the core functions of teaching and learning

Increasing Demographic Pressures: 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

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 to access the labour market and to increase Ireland's competitiveness by addressing areas of strategic skills demands and deepening collaboration between industry and education
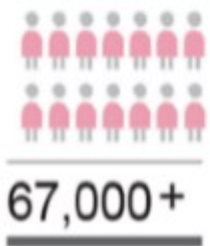
Skills and Capacity: The on-going development of the skills and capacities of staff of the Department to address skills gaps will be required to ensure that we can deliver on our goals

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2015-2017

An overview of the Education and Training Sector in Ireland

full-time learners across the system

1,060,000+

pre-school children

67,000+

children & young people in schools

860,000+

teachers

56,000+

schools

4,009

special needs assistants in schools

10,600+
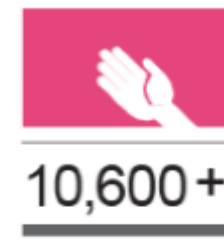
further education and training places

270,000

education and training boards

16

unemployed people for whom training is provided

72,000+
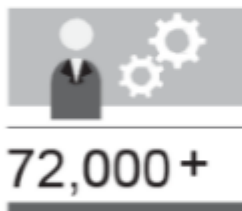
full-time 3rd level students

164,000+
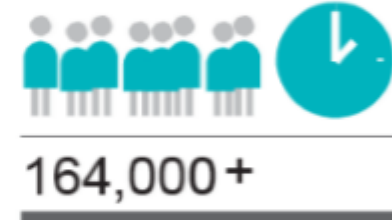
part-time 3rd level students

35,000+

staff in higher education institutions

23,000+

state funded higher education institutions

31

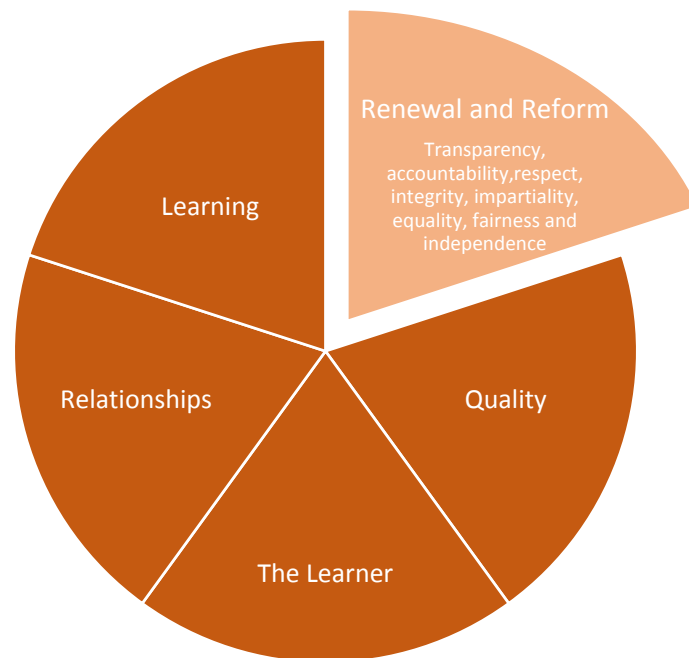DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2015-2017

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

An internationally recognised education and training system based on evidence informed policies designed to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of learners, society and the economy

Our Values

Renewal and Reform

Transparency, accountability, respect, integrity, impartiality, equality, fairness and independence

Learning

Quality

The Learner

Relationships

- ➜ We value **learning** as a public good and recognise its role in the development, cohesion and wellbeing of society

- ➜ We value **quality** and are committed to the principle of continuous improvement and being open to external ideas, challenges and debate

- ➜ We recognised **the learner's** place at the centre of policy development

- ➜ We value **relationships** and working in collaboration within the education sector and with the wider community

- ➜ We are committed to the implementation of the civil service **renewal** plan and the public sector **reform** plan

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2015-2017

Our Approach

We are taking 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, in particular our school system.

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:

→ Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 – 2020
→ Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019
→ National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
→ Intercultural Education Strategy 2010 – 2015
→ Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010 -2015
→ National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020

In addition we are committed to working collaboratively with other Departments and Agencies to maximise the impact that education and training can have in delivering on their strategies and implementation plans. In particular we have a range of commitments under the following initiatives@

→ Public Service Reform Plan 2014 to 2016
→ The Civil Service Renewal Plan
→ The Programme for Government
→ Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for children and Young People (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
→ Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
→ Pathways to Work: Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation (Department of Social Protection)
→ Action Plan for Jobs (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
→ National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship 2014 (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
→ Policy Statement on Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
→ Healthy Ireland: A framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025 (Department of Health)
→ 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030
→ Doing More with Digital: National Digital Strategy for Ireland - Phase I Digital Engagement
→ National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013 – 2015 (Department of Justice and Equality)
→ National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016 (Department of Social Protection)

Our Goals

Goal 1 - Learning for Life

We want an education and training system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy

Goal 2 - Improving Quality and Accountability

We want to provide for the delivery of a high quality education and training experience for everyone and improve accountability for educational outcomes across the system

Goal 3 - Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

We want an education and training system that welcomes and meaningfully includes learners with disabilities and special educational needs, learners from disadvantaged communities/backgrounds, and those with language, cultural and social differences

Goal 4 - Building the right systems and infrastructure

We want a modern, flexible education and training system which makes the best use of available resources

Goal 1: Learning for Life

We want an education and training system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy

Strategies

➔ In early years settings, primary and second level schools, we will oversee the implementation of a programme of reform focused on curriculum, assessment and teaching practices to underpin a high quality, relevant learner experience and to enhance learning outcomes.

➔ We will support the day-to-day provision of education and training services to learners.

➔ We will focus on ensuring learners are provided with more flexible learning options and removing barriers to progression between levels of education and training to meet the needs of the individual learner and the requirements of the modern workplace.

➔ We will drive the implementation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019 to ensure the systematic delivery of high quality programmes which are integrated, flexible, value for money and responsive to the needs of learners and ensure the labour market relevance of FET provision nationally, regionally and locally.

➔ Through implementation of the Higher Education Strategy to 2030, we aim to develop the higher education system to equip learners with the necessary knowledge and skills.

➔ We will provide for targeted programmes across both the further and higher education sectors to ensure the flexible provision of education and training which is highly relevant to labour market needs.

➔ We will improve opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market.

Outputs

➔ Development of a new National Skills Strategy
➔ Enhanced national, regional and local employer engagement structures and support for the provision of quality national and local labour market intelligence
➔ Development of a new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy
➔ Maximise the contribution of the European Social Fund 2014-2020 and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund 2014-2020 to further education, training and higher education programmes by drawing down available EU co-financing through the ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020 and the EGF Programmes 2014-2020.
➔ Provision of funding and services to the education and training sector stakeholders

➔ Education elements of the National Early Years Strategy will be implemented including the publication of inspection reports resulting from early years educational inspections
➔ Rollout of *Aistear* (the national curriculum framework for early years education) in settings where early learners are present
➔ Reform of the Primary School Curriculum including an integrated language curriculum for the first four years of school and a new maths curriculum
➔ Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2020) will be implemented
➔ Rollout of Junior Cycle Reform, following agreement with educational partners
➔ The implementation of the National Induction Programme for Teachers and the implementation of the National Induction Programme for Teachers and new probationary arrangements for newly qualified teachers will be completed
➔ A professional standard framework in place for teaching which will drive initiatives in the areas of academic professional development and flexible provision

➔ Rollout of annual Further Education and Training Services Plans
➔ The Apprenticeship Implementation Plan will be rolled out and legislation enacted to establish the Apprenticeship Council on a statutory basis
➔ A review of the effectiveness and delivery of Post Leaving Certificate Programmes will be completed
➔ Continued rollout of targeted skills initiatives including Momentum
➔ Continued development of the work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning
➔ Enhancement of content and pedagogical approaches included in Initial Teacher Education programmes
➔ Development & implementation of Employer Engagement Strategy for Higher Education
➔ Continued rollout of targeted skills initiatives including Springboard and ICT Action Plan as part of the skills to Work Programme and the Action Plan for jobs

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Goal 2 - Improving Quality and Accountability

We want to provide for the delivery of a high quality education and training experiences for everyone and improve accountability for educational outcomes across the system

Strategies

➔ We will support quality improvements in Early Years settings

➔ We will drive improvements in standards by the introduction of new systems of governance accountability and quality assurance which will include reporting to school communities, empowering parents and children and improving autonomy and accountability where they support school effectiveness

➔ We will support the teaching profession in the pursuit of quality teaching and learning standards

➔ We will promote quality assurance in Further and Higher Education to underpin a high quality learner experience

➔ We will introduce new systems of accountability and performance related funding in both further education and training and higher education

➔ We will support quality improvements in international education

➔ We will continue to Implement Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-2015, complete a review of the Strategy and update the Strategy to 2020

Outputs

➔ The Workforce Development Plan, the education elements of the National Early Years Strategy including education focussed inspections implemented and *Síolta* the national quality framework for early years education rolled out

➔ Continued implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) including publication by schools of School Self-Evaluation Reports and School Improvement Plans

➔ New models of school inspections rolled out to increase the efficiency, frequency and effectiveness of inspections

➔ A statutory parent and student charter rolled out in all schools

➔ Consultation paper published on increasing the autonomy and accountability of our schools

➔ Consultation by the Teaching Council on a Continuing Professional Development framework for teachers completed

➔ Fitness to practice procedures for teachers commenced

➔ Establish a new Centre of School Leadership to strengthen and develop the continuum of professional development for school leaders.

➔ Work on staff development, integrated guidance and quality programme development in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector progressed

➔ Report provided by the Expert Group on future funding policy for higher education

➔ A National Framework for PhD Education to enhance the quality of education developed

➔ Quality assurance systems consistent with funding, structural and other policies for higher education rolled out

➔ Strategic dialogue implemented and annual System Performance Reports for the Higher Education sector produced

➔ Performance funding implemented in further education and training and higher education sectors

➔ International Education Mark (IEM) introduced

➔ Quality Assurance system for providers of English language courses strengthened

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2015-2017

Goal 3 - Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

We want an education and training system that welcomes and meaningfully includes learners with disabilities and special educational needs, learners from disadvantaged communities/backgrounds, and those with language, cultural and social differences

Strategies

➔ We will support the operation of the early years and school system to provide for high quality inclusive education with improved learning outcomes

➔ We will further develop policy and programmes to support learners with special educational needs and disabilities in participating and progressing across the continuum of education

➔ We will provide additional, targeted supports to tackle educational disadvantage in the school system and support learners from migrant communities and other minority groups

➔ We will provide for greater diversity of school type and a greater emphasis on parental preferences by implementing actions arising from the recommendations of the Forum on Patronage and through the work of the New Schools Advisory Group

➔ We will promote access to higher education for disadvantaged groups and put in place coherent pathways from second level education, from further education and training and other non-traditional entry routes

➔ We will make best use of new and existing sources of data to inform policy on equity of access to higher education, including grants policy

➔ We will deliver a broad range of programmes aimed at supporting the active inclusion of disadvantaged groups in accordance with annual Further Education and Training Services Plans

Outputs

➔ Development of a policy on social inclusion covering the entire education continuum

➔ Provision of targeted supports for learners with special educational needs and disabilities including additional teaching resources, special needs assistants, assistive technology, psychological services and special transport

➔ Evaluating and reporting on the quality of education provision for marginalised learners and learners with special education needs through the development of inspection models

➔ Provision of targeted supports for learners at risk of educational disadvantage through implementation of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme

➔ Education (Admission to Schools) Bill enacted to improve access and inclusion to schools for all learners

➔ Continued implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying with anti-bullying procedures in place in all schools and key stakeholders provided with anti-bullying training

➔ Progress on the divestment of schools and establishment of new schools to provide a greater diversity of school type.

➔ High quality and relevant Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for teachers that support a fully inclusive education system

➔ Work progressed in relation to the proposed amendment to Section 37 of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2011 to protect increased diversity amongst teachers in our schools

➔ Provision for means-tested grants for further and higher education courses which includes a special rate of maintenance grant for students from welfare-dependent families

➔ Development and implementation of a new National Access Plan aligned with national priorities and system indicators

➔ Programmes supporting active inclusion are delivered against annual Further Education and Training Service Plan targets

Goal 4 – Building the right systems and infrastructure

We want a modern, flexible education and training system which makes the best use of available resources.

Strategies

➔ We will Increase the use of good quality data, analysis, research and evaluation to inform policy development, service delivery and for the identification and management of emerging issues

➔ We will ensure an appropriate supply of education infrastructure to meet demographic demand and provide high quality replacement accommodation

➔ In line with the Public Service Reform Programme, we will support the implementation of new ways of working to improve the quality of education and training services and increase efficiency

➔ We will contribute to the development of the Irish Research and Innovation eco-system through participation in the Horizon 2020 programme

➔ We will support the provision of Broadband services to primary schools in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)

Outputs

➔ Rollout of the Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) as part of a comprehensive Learner Database with the potential to link with other data sources including Further Education and Training and Higher Education

➔ Improved capacity in relation to knowledge and data management

➔ New funding and oversight of provision embedded by SOLAS in further education and training

➔ Changed structures of ETBs and SOLAS based on their new mandates

➔ Further development of regional clusters of Higher Education Institutions and enhanced Centres of Excellence for Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

➔ Enactment of the Technological Universities Bill which provides the legal underpinning for mergers of Institutes of Technology, the establishment of Technological Universities and the reform of governing bodies in the Institutes of Technology

➔ Enactment of a Higher Education Governance Bill

➔ Assessing the feasibility of implementing new ways of working for shared services and external service delivery

➔ Delivery of the 2012-2016 building programme and the development of a building programme for 2017 – 2021

➔ Higher Education participation in and drawdown from the Horizon 2020 programme

➔ Upgraded Internet connectivity for primary and post primary schools improved and implement digital strategy for schools

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Achieving our Goals will have the following outcomes

➔ a pivotal contribution made to Ireland's economic and social development

➔ contribution made to the development of the Irish Research and Innovation eco-system

➔ improved quality of learning and teaching at all levels of the education and training sector

➔ increased parental participation in the school system

➔ an inclusive ethos in schools which promotes wellbeing and positive mental health

➔ resources targeted based on special education needs of learners

➔ learners with special education needs supported to reach their potential

➔ learners gain relevant knowledge and critical skills including literacy and numeracy, critical thinking and communication allowing them fulfil their potential and improve opportunities

➔ flexible learning options accessible and barriers to progression between levels of education and training removed

➔ successful transitions across the continuum of education and into the workplace enabled

➔ improved retention and educational attainment of learners in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

➔ Ireland's international reputation enhanced

➔ international students who make significant contributions to the local economy and who can retain social and economic links to Ireland in the future attracted

➔ Ireland's 'Talent' remains a key selling point in attracting Foreign Direct Investment ensured

➔ system wide improvement in governance, accountability and transparency

➔ teaching recognised as a high status profession

➔ a more strategic approach to meeting the needs of school leaders

➔ high quality programmes and outcomes aligned to national priorities

➔ demographic demand met through the implementation of the schools building programme

➔ contribution to a skilled workforce to enhance competitiveness of Irish companies as well as attracting Foreign Direct Investment

➔ value for money and efficiency for the taxpayer achieved

Achieving our Goals will be supported by these Enablers

People

- Build our capacity through focused recruitment, training and development
- Strengthen policy-making and implementation skills through evidence informed policy using data, information and research effectively
- Continue to develop and support a learning culture in the Department which encourages enhanced performance by staff through reflection and learning from experience
- Focus on maintaining and improving effective communications within the organisation and with our external customers
- Provide supports to those working across the boundaries of the organisation and engaging in cross cutting issues
- Continue to effectively manage industrial relations relating to the Education and Training sector external to the Department

Governance

- Implement Public Sector Reform and actions arising from the Civil Service Renewal Plan
- Ensure that organisational structures are aligned with evolving strategic priorities
- Strengthen strategic planning and business planning processes
- Focus on performance evaluation and measurement of outcomes
- Ensure high standards of financial and risk management through internal/external monitoring controls
- Ensure effective data protection, confidentiality and record management processes
- Improve governance of agencies through further development of the Service Level Agreement/ Memorandum of Understanding Protocols

Technology and Processes

- Invest in leading edge technologies and reform of business processes to drive and support excellent performance and delivery
- Better management, integration and use of knowledge, research, data and information processing systems
- Implementation of the Shared Service Plan across the Department and the Education and Training Sector
- Use of appropriate and alternative delivery models to improve efficiencies in service delivery

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Department of Education and Skills Commitments under the Statement of Government Priorities 2014 – 2016

- We will ensure that the new model of 21st century apprenticeships is implemented during 2015.

- We will publish, for the information of parents, a summary of the performance of all schools.

- In the Autumn, we will publish a consultation paper on increasing the autonomy and accountability of our schools.

- We will pass legislation to reform school admissions to make them fairer, more transparent and more inclusive.

- We will systemically publish details of all appointments to State Boards

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