Budget 2021 - Ministers Harris and Collins announce a range of measures including €50 million fund to provide financial assistance for full-time students, new reskilling and retraining package and extension of Apprenticeship scheme

From Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

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Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD and Minister of State for Skills and Further Education Niall Collins TD have today announced a series of new measures as part of Budget 2021.

The package includes:

- a €50 million fund to provide financial assistance to full time third level students in recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this group
- €120 million to reskill and upskill people affected by the pandemic
- supporting a green recovery by rolling out a new retrofitting training scheme and a new climate action upskilling scheme
- 50,000 further education and training places in 2020/2021
- extension of the Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme
- nearly €30 million will be invested in research to support researchers, build capacity, support COVID-19 research, and strengthen north-south research links
- enhanced SUSI grant supports for post-grads and increased support for the PATH access initiative to increase participation in Higher Education from the most economically disadvantaged students
- a review of SUSI to guide the future strategic direction of the scheme
- funding will be provided to sustain additional places in higher education and further increase Springboard places
- infrastructure investments to expand student places, upgrade existing infrastructure, modernise apprenticeship provision and progress the digital agenda
- €15 million is being provided for minor capital works and equipment for higher education institutions

Speaking today, Minister Harris said:
"COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges for the economy and for people across the country. My department will help people who have lost their job get back on their feet.

"Budget 2021 will see a total investment of €118.5 million to upskill and reskill people who have been affected by the impacts of the current pandemic and train in the skills of the future, particularly the climate agenda. The investment will be aimed at those that require it the most, whether that is to assist with seeking employment or to upskill in their current jobs.

"For students, this year has been like no other. The majority of college will be online for this semester and we will provide financial assistance through a €50 million fund. Detailed work will be undertaken on how this once-off fund will operate for submission to Government prior to commencement.

"We will also carry out a review of student supports in line with the Programme for Government commitment but as a first step, will reform post graduate supports.

"Investment in education, research, and science will help to support a more sustainable, resilient and fair recovery across Ireland."

Minister Collins said:

"Now more than ever, we need to ensure there are no barriers to people accessing education or the workforce.

"This year, we will have 50,000 further education and training places and will launch a range of skills initiatives to help people get back on their feet.

"Minister Harris and I will later this year launch an Apprenticeship Action Plan but in the meantime, we will extend the incentive for businesses to take on apprentices."