

Policy and Operational Context

The Minister for the Economy has responsibility within the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive for the NI Further Education colleges. The Minister is also accountable to the NI Assembly and Assembly's Committee for the Economy, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

The Department is currently implementing major reforms of Northern Ireland's professional and technical training system as articulated in '*Securing our Success*': *the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*, and '*Generating our Success*' *the Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training*. The aims of both strategies are key to underpinning the wider economic ambitions as articulated in the draft Programme for Government and the Northern Ireland Industrial Strategy.

The overarching goal of the reforms is to build on the current system of professional and technical training as delivered under ApprenticeshipsNI to provide Northern Ireland with a skills base capable of improving competitiveness, compelling growth and innovation in the economy and to support and meet the ambitions of our young people through high quality learning and skills provision.

The aims of the strategy '*Generating our Success*': *The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training* are to develop a new youth training system that will:

- i. provide young people with a solid foundation of skills, experience and qualifications that are recognised and valued by employers, relevant to opportunities in today's labour market; and
- ii. provide young people with broad based knowledge and skills in preparation to compete for work or continue in education.

The apprenticeship strategy provides for a reformed system of apprenticeships, responsive to employer needs and available across a wider range of levels and sectors. This includes widening apprenticeship opportunities to include further and higher education pathways through Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs). HLAs are apprenticeship opportunities at Level 4 (Foundation Degree) to Level 8 (Doctoral level), delivered through the Further Education college network and University sector in Northern Ireland.

The aims of the strategy '*Securing our Success*': *the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*, are to introduce an apprenticeship system that will:

- i. provide Northern Ireland with a skills base capable of improving competitiveness, propelling growth and innovation in our economy; and
- ii. support and meet the ambitions of our young people through high quality learning and skills provision.

For further information on the youth training or apprenticeship strategies, please click on the links below:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/generating-our-success-northern-ireland-strategy-youth-training>

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/securing-our-success-northern-ireland-strategy-apprenticeships>

This factsheet forms part of the evidence base informing the implementation of the youth training strategy, and will help shape the Department's future policies, in particular, the development of an enhanced professional and technical training system in Northern Ireland.