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March 2016

**Further Education Means Success:**  
A Programme for Implementation



# **Further Education Means Success:**

A Programme for Implementation

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## Foreword

*Further Education Means Success*, the Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education which was published in January 2016, provides a unique opportunity for the forthcoming Department for the Economy (hereafter referred to as the Department), further education colleges, employers and other partners to work together to transform the professional and technical education and training system in Northern Ireland, in order to provide the most effective support for the growth of our economy, and to provide learning pathways that enable our citizens to reach their full potential.

This document outlines how the policy commitments in *Further Education Means Success* will be implemented jointly by the Department and the further education sector through a programme of eight separate, but related, projects. The Department will establish formal programme and project management governance arrangements in line with government procedures, to drive, monitor and evaluate implementation.

The further education system sits at the centre of the professional and technical education system. Alongside mainstream further education provision, colleges will continue to be key deliverers of higher education provision, and of the new approaches to apprenticeships at levels 3 - 8 and youth training at level 2.

It will be important for further education to have an identity which is distinct and sets it apart from the other education sectors, characterised by promoting professional and technical learning pathways and skills development which the sector is uniquely placed to provide. This can be achieved through further education's passion for learning and ambition for its learners.

The further education sector goes beyond providing a skilled workforce. It also leaves a significant footprint on our economy as an industry in its own right in terms of job creation and wealth generation. With campuses located across this region, colleges are embedded in local communities and their role as employers and generators of economic activity is particularly important at a local level.

Research indicates that the sector (the colleges together with non-Northern Ireland students) contributes additional benefits to the economy, generating over £524 million of output in Northern Ireland, and providing 7,139 full time equivalent jobs.

Excellence and quality will continue to be at the heart of everything that colleges do. Therefore, colleges are extremely well placed to deliver the challenging and ambitious policy commitments that are set out in the *Further Education Means Success* strategy. However, the successful implementation of this strategy will require the involvement of employers, other educational institutions, and key partners in the wider public sector and in the voluntary and community sectors.

It is against this wider background that further education will be recognised as an equal and valuable pillar of the education system in Northern Ireland, alongside higher education and the statutory school system, and will provide the sector with huge opportunities to become the world class sector that I know it can be.

**Dr Stephen Farry MLA**  
**Minister for Employment and Learning**

# 1



## Introduction

The new strategy, *Further Education Means Success*, articulates the policy for the future of further education in Northern Ireland. It is the result of a review of the further education sector in Northern Ireland, instigated by the Minister for Employment and Learning. The review has been wide ranging in its approach and has considered regional, national and international policies and best practice.

Within the strategy there is a commitment to produce an implementation plan within three months of its publication. As a result of that commitment, this document has been produced and it contains a programme for implementation of the strategy, with key milestones outlined for its delivery.

The Northern Ireland economy has changed considerably in recent years with current and future jobs requiring increasingly high levels of skills and a breadth of knowledge across many occupational areas. Over the next ten

years, the pace of change will accelerate, driven by globalisation, advances in technology, new business models and rapidly changing consumer needs. The planned introduction of a reduced rate of corporation tax also has the potential to invigorate our economy. These developments will lead to substantial changes to the world of work. As a result, the development of the new strategy for further education in Northern Ireland is timely, and the further education sector has a clear and unrivalled role to respond to these changes to the working environment.



This ambition will be informed by the skills barometer, which has been established as part of the new apprenticeship system. The skills barometer will continue to forecast both supply and demand for skills, and will identify areas where gaps are likely to occur. Further education opens up pathways to skills needed by the economy, and provides clear progression routes for learners to higher levels of provision.

The new further education strategy complements the pioneering work that the Department is implementing to create a new system of apprenticeships<sup>1</sup> at level 3 and above, and youth training<sup>2</sup> at level 2 in Northern Ireland. Colleges, with key partners, will be major deliverers of this innovative system of professional and technical education and training. They will also continue to be the sole deliverers of higher education at levels 4 and 5, including apprenticeships at these levels. The new apprenticeship and youth training systems will be instrumental in determining the nature and content of a significant proportion of the provision to be delivered by colleges in the future; therefore, the curriculum project within the strategy will be informed by, and implemented alongside, this work.

The strategy will be implemented jointly by the Department and the further education sector, and through its implementation the further education sector will:

- ▶ develop innovative, flexible and economically beneficial provision that will meet both the requirements for new ways of learning and the need for adaptable skills;
- ▶ lead the development of a 'learning to learn' culture in Northern Ireland;
- ▶ be represented on the Strategic Advisory Forum and the Sectoral Partnerships, which are being set up as part of the new apprenticeship and youth training systems;
- ▶ have a prominent role, working with employers and other key stakeholders, to design and develop high quality and economically relevant qualifications and curriculum that meet the needs of employers and individual learners; and
- ▶ deliver qualifications to the highest standards of quality that are valued by employers, learners, and other educational institutions.

One of the key features and strengths of the further education sector over the years is its accessibility to a wide variety of learners; for example, in terms of the level and type of learning required (from those with no, or very few, qualifications, to those who are following higher education provision), and in terms of age. Further education students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a range of learning, work, and life experiences. This diversity strengthens and enhances the learning experience.

1 Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships  
2 Generating our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training

It is the Department's ambition for the further education sector that colleges will be the engine room of our economy, sharing best practice with each other and with others around the world, using technology to enthuse learners, increasing flexibility in delivery, and striving for excellence in all that they do. But above all else, colleges will offer economically relevant provision to provide a pipeline of suitably qualified individuals at all levels to meet employer needs, while supporting employers to be more innovative and competitive. Colleges, as anchor institutions in local and regional economies, will also encourage and support the economic participation of those furthest from the labour market, and those who have barriers to learning.

Successful implementation of this strategy will require the full commitment of the Department, further education colleges, employers and other partners, to work together to transform the professional and technical education and training system in Northern Ireland.

The strategy, which is structured around nine themes, and which contains 21 policy commitments, will be taken forward through the following eight projects:

**Project 1 Curriculum Content and Delivery;**

**Project 2 Economic Development;**

**Project 3 Social Inclusion;**

**Project 4 Excellence – Quality and Performance;**

**Project 5 College Partnerships;**

**Project 6 Governance/Leadership;**

**Project 7 Funding Model and College Sustainability; and**

**Project 8 Promoting the Further Education Sector.**

The new further education strategy complements the pioneering work that the Department is implementing to create a new system of apprenticeships at level 3 and above, and youth training at level 2 in Northern Ireland.



# 2



## Vision for Further Education in Northern Ireland

### Vision

The vision is that further education colleges will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for high quality and economically relevant education and training provision. Colleges will be focussed on achieving excellence in delivering the skills needed for the economy of today and tomorrow, and will be ambitious for their learners and for the contribution they make to improving the competitiveness of the economy of Northern Ireland. Colleges also have an important responsibility to help fight poverty and support social inclusion by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications they need to find employment.

The further education sector is a key economic driver for Northern Ireland and plays a central role in the implementation of key elements of the Programme for Government, of which growing a sustainable economy has been a top priority. Colleges are engines of economic and societal transformation. They make a significant and high quality contribution to addressing the current and future skills needs of Northern Ireland, and have an increasingly important role in attracting inward investment companies. Colleges develop skilled individuals, to the benefit and satisfaction of their students and

employers, enabled by well qualified lecturers and modern physical resources. Alongside economic growth, there is a need to support social inclusion by ensuring that those who have barriers to learning or who are unemployed or economically inactive are encouraged to participate in education and training that will help them to secure employment and to improve their life chances. The economic downturn has had a detrimental social impact in Northern Ireland in areas such as health, crime, social mobility, and youth unemployment. Furthermore, rates of economic inactivity have been

stubbornly higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom over a prolonged period of time. Further education colleges have a strong track record of engaging with those who are furthest from the labour market.

Therefore, the further education system has a dual role:

- ▶ taking a pivotal role in developing a strong and vibrant economy through the development of professional and technical skills, increasingly at higher levels, and by helping employers to innovate; and
- ▶ supporting social inclusion by providing those who have low or no qualifications, or who have barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications needed to find employment and to become economically active.

To achieve the vision and associated dual role, the key objectives that set the future direction for further education are:

- ▶ ensuring high quality provision for learner education and training;
- ▶ developing the talents of those already in work and those seeking to enter employment in order to provide a pipeline of suitably skilled and qualified individuals at all levels to meet employers' needs, including indigenous companies and inward investment projects;
- ▶ supporting employers to become more innovative and competitive, and to source new markets; and

- ▶ encouraging and supporting the economic participation of those who have barriers to learning and who are furthest from the labour market, to the benefit of individuals, the economy and wider society.

The importance of colleges balancing this dual role in the design and delivery of their curriculum was emphasised in the responses to the consultation on *Further Education Means Success*, and is reflected in the themes and policy commitments in the strategy. It is recognised that further education opens doors to the hardest to reach communities, and its ability to transform lives of those furthest from the labour market is central to the core purpose of social inclusion.

## Themes

The themes around which the further education strategy is built, and which aim to deliver the vision and the key objectives outlined above, are:

- ▶ **economic development;**
- ▶ **social inclusion;**
- ▶ **curriculum delivery;**
- ▶ **excellence;**
- ▶ **college partnerships;**
- ▶ **governance;**
- ▶ **funding model and college sustainability;**
- ▶ **international dimension;** and
- ▶ **promoting the further education sector.**

The 21 policy commitments, and how they are distributed across the nine themes, are provided at Annex A.

The following section describes the eight projects, including key milestones, through which the strategy will be implemented.

# 3



## Delivering the Vision: A Programme for Implementation

The policy commitments outlined in *Further Education Means Success* will be implemented jointly by the Department and the further education sector through a programme of eight individual projects, and the Department and the sector will establish formal programme and project management governance arrangements. The projects have been developed to reflect all major aspects of the strategy and take account of responses received during the consultation exercise.

As indicated previously, there is considerable synergy between the further education strategy and the new apprenticeships and youth training strategies for Northern Ireland. In particular, colleges will be involved in the design of qualifications and curriculum for all three strategies and will be key deliverers of the strategies. Consequently, the implementation of the strategy will be integrated as appropriate with the projects in the apprenticeships and youth training strategies.

### Key Objectives

As indicated in section 2 above, the key objectives of the implementation programme are:

- ▶ ensuring high quality provision for learner education and training;
- ▶ developing the talents of those already in work and those seeking to enter employment in order to provide a pipeline of suitably skilled and qualified individuals at all levels to meet employers' needs, including indigenous companies and inward investment projects;

- ▶ supporting employers to become more innovative and competitive, and to source new markets; and
- ▶ encouraging and supporting the economic participation of those who have barriers to learning and who are furthest from the labour market, to the benefit of individuals, the economy and wider society.

Over the period of the strategy, aspects of the strategic and operating environment will change; for example, globalisation, a reduced rate of corporation tax for Northern Ireland, new technologies and rapidly changing consumer needs. Consequently, flexibility will be required during the implementation process to accommodate relevant changes that may occur.

## Timescale

*Further Education Means Success* will be the strategy for further education in Northern Ireland for the next five to ten years. The strategy builds on the considerable success of the further education sector in recent years through the implementation of the previous strategy, *Further Education Means Business*. The projects outlined below have been planned over a five year period, but the speed at which some of the milestones can be delivered will be dependent upon the availability of resources.

The projects have been developed to reflect all major aspects of the strategy and take account of responses received during the consultation exercise.

## Individual Projects

### PROJECT 1 – CURRICULUM CONTENT AND DELIVERY

This project will focus on ensuring that colleges develop and deliver provision that meets the current and future needs of employers and the Northern Ireland economy in the context of mainstream further education and the new apprenticeship and youth training systems. The project will also include improving levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the Northern Ireland population, taking account of the reviews of Essential Skills qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics. This project will also consider how colleges will deliver provision in stimulating and engaging ways, for example through the adoption of project based learning approaches and the innovative and effective use of technology. Colleges will also seek to develop enterprising learners who have the confidence, attitude and employability

skills to make them attractive to employers, or to enable them to consider starting their own businesses.

There will be strong linkages between this project and curriculum and qualifications projects in the apprenticeships and youth training systems. So much so, that during much of the implementation the new approach to curriculum development and key aspects of curriculum delivery will be taken forward primarily through the relevant apprenticeship and youth training projects. However, as and when curriculum is developed for the apprenticeship and youth training systems, it will be assessed to ensure that it is also appropriate for mainstream further education delivery. This approach is reflected in the key milestones for this project.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 20.



### Key Milestones:

- 1.1 Colleges will develop and introduce a common methodology for the diagnostic assessment of Essential Skills (September 2016).
- 1.2 The Department will introduce for first teaching from September 2016, refreshed Essential Skills in Literacy and Numeracy comprising new content, revised standards and assessment (September 2016).
- 1.3 The Department, supported by colleges, will work closely with the Northern Ireland Regulator for vocational qualifications to ensure that existing and new professional and technical qualifications are fit for purpose, initially in relation to the implementation of the new apprenticeships and youth training arrangements and in respect of all qualifications offered by the further education sector (December 2017).
- 1.4 The Department will work with the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment to revise GCSEs in English and Mathematics in time for first teaching from September 2017 with the objective of improving the literacy and numeracy of school leavers (September 2017).
- 1.5 As curriculum is developed by colleges for the Apprenticeships and Youth Training systems, colleges will review the extent to which it is also appropriate for mainstream further education delivery (September 2020).
- 1.6 Colleges will examine how delivery methods, such as project based learning, the use of work placements and the innovative and effective use of technology, that are being developed for delivery of Apprenticeships and Youth Training systems, can also be used in mainstream further education delivery (September 2020).
- 1.7 Colleges will develop and deliver continual professional development for staff in line with the new methodologies in delivering the curriculum (September 2020).

## PROJECT 2 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Colleges will have key strategic and operational roles to play in delivering a strong and vibrant economy in Northern Ireland. This project will explore the respective roles and responsibilities of colleges, the Department and its arms length bodies, the new District Councils and others, in providing support to employers, both indigenous companies and inward investment projects, to up-skill their workforce, and to support innovation

and product development. It will also consider the current range of interventions and funding streams available to support this work, and how colleges, in partnership with universities, can increase their research and development and knowledge transfer activities, particularly with smaller employers. The project will also ensure that, through increased collaboration, colleges provide a more co-ordinated approach to how they engage with, and support, employers.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 3, 4, 5 and 17.

### Key Milestones:

2.1 Within the context of the new Department for the Economy, the Department will audit, map and review the current offer and interventions available to employers, including, but not exclusively, within the Department for the Economy, the Department for Communities, Invest Northern Ireland, District Councils, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, and associated funding streams (September 2016).

2.2 The Department, supported by colleges, will identify synergies and engage stakeholders on the best delivery profile for any revised portfolio of programmes and schemes, including the roles and responsibilities of key delivery partners(December 2016).

2.3 The Department will work with colleges, other agencies and stakeholders to assess the need for, and if required deliver, additional future skills training in key economic

areas to support further inward investment (December 2016).

2.4 Colleges will develop further the early work undertaken within the further education sector on the SPICE portal, and consider how best this can be aligned to new departmental structures and arms length bodies, exploring synergies with key stakeholders, including Invest Northern Ireland. Colleges, supported by the Department, will develop a system to identify and subsequently externally validate those specialisms on an ongoing basis (June 2017).

2.5 In the context of the establishment of the new Department for the Economy, the Department and colleges will consider how colleges, in partnership with universities, can increase their research and development and knowledge transfer activities, in particular with smaller employers (December 2017).

## PROJECT 3 – SOCIAL INCLUSION

This project will identify the barriers that inhibit different groups of learners from participating in further education provision, and explore ways to overcome these barriers. Exploring how colleges

can work in effective partnerships with others, to identify and overcome barriers to individuals' participation in learning, will be a key element of this project. There will be linkages with the Curriculum project, in particular the importance of the Essential Skills of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 6, 13, 17 and 20.

### Key Milestones:

- 3.1 The Department and colleges will conduct an analysis of provision delivered by colleges in terms of volume of enrolments, types of provision and learner profile (December 2016).
- 3.2 The Department and colleges will conduct an analysis of provision that is delivered by colleges in partnership with other organisations (December 2016).
- 3.3 Colleges and the Department, supported by key partners, will conduct an analysis of key demographic information, and will identify the main barriers which inhibit different groups of learners (for example age and levels of learning) from participating in provision. They will also identify provision and support currently in place that are designed to address barriers faced by those groups of learners (March 2017).
- 3.4 Based on the analyses conducted, the Department and colleges will develop policy proposals on the most appropriate role for colleges to play in the delivery of provision with key partners in order to widen participation and to encourage and facilitate progression to further education provision at higher levels (June 2017).

## PROJECT 4 – EXCELLENCE: QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

This project will further strengthen colleges' performance in a number of key areas, including pedagogy, teacher qualifications, industrial placements for lecturers, including lecturer exchanges with other countries, leadership and management in colleges, research, quality aspects of flexible delivery, and the quality improvement and inspection processes. The project will also explore all aspects of performance measurement, including obtaining meaningful feedback

from learners and employers, tracking learner progression and destinations, and identifying appropriate output measures. It will consider how this information is used to inform quality improvement and to inform learner choices. This information could also be used to raise the profile of the further education sector and, more generally, of the value of professional and technical qualifications; therefore, there will be linkages with the project to promote the further education sector.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 10, 11, 12, 13 and 20.

### Key Milestones:

- 4.1 The Department, supported by colleges, will identify and collect meaningful information on learner progression, and learner destinations after leaving college. Colleges will consider how this information could be used as part of the wider quality improvement process (December 2016).
- 4.2 Colleges will develop a standardised approach to receiving and analysing feedback from learners and employers on the services provided to them by colleges (March 2017).
- 4.3 The Department, supported by colleges, will review the college inspection model, including its appropriateness and frequency, and the quality improvement regimes to ensure that they are appropriate for all aspects of delivery in colleges (March 2017)

- 4.4 As part of continuing professional development, the Department and colleges will examine how best to ensure that lecturers' industrial knowledge is kept up to date through the use of initiatives such as the 'Lecturers into Industry' scheme, and through placements and exchanges with similar institutions in other countries (December 2017).
- 4.5 The Department, in conjunction with colleges, will establish a new framework for teaching qualifications, including specialist subject qualifications, initial teacher education and continuing professional development (June 2018).
- 4.6 Jointly with the Department of Education, the Department will establish the General Teaching Council as the independent regulator and professional voice of further education lecturers (December 2018).

## PROJECT 5 – COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

This project will establish a governance process and structure to stimulate, manage and oversee collaborative and partnership working between colleges to ensure that efficiencies are achieved through shared services, particularly in key infrastructure and systems areas, and to ensure that colleges share best practice in all aspects of delivery to learners and employers to increase their effectiveness. The project will also ensure that the concept of college specialisms is applied to key areas of colleges' activity including support to employers, qualification and curriculum design, the development or procurement of on-line materials, and the use of technology, to the benefit of the further education sector as a whole and of colleges' customers.

A Collaboration Steering Committee has been established to drive this work forward. There are two main dimensions to this project.

- (i) To champion and support the delivery of the specific project that has been established to build on the work carried out to date under the 'Shared Services' initiative, and which will have a strong focus on the implementation of a new

IT system for the further education sector, along with a number of other corporate services and associated business processes. A collaboration manager has been appointed to focus on the implementation of this business critical area of activity across the further education sector.

- (ii) More generally, to stimulate and encourage, where appropriate, the corporate delivery and sharing of best practice between colleges. In this regard, there will be linkages with other projects in the further education strategy, where the Collaboration Steering Committee can champion and facilitate partnership working between colleges - for example, in areas such as qualifications and curriculum design and delivery (Project 1), and the provision of support to employers (Project 2).

The key milestones that follow relate specifically to (i) above. The work of the Collaboration Steering Committee as outlined at (ii) above will be taken forward through other projects in the implementation plan as indicated in (ii) above.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 14, 15, 16 and 17.

### Key Milestones:

- 5.1 Colleges and the department will establish a governance structure and arrangements to stimulate, manage and oversee partnership/ collaborative working, including colleges agreeing a memorandum of collaboration for systems, technology and services (June 2016).
- 5.2 Colleges will review areas of activity that will be delivered using a shared services approach (areas could include human resources, payroll, IT support, finance, curriculum coding, etc.) (December 2016).
- 5.3 Based on the outcome of the review, colleges will design and agree common business processes for the areas identified (December 2017).
- 5.4 Colleges will establish a single technology platform to support joint working and sharing of best practice, including support for the delivery of e-learning (December 2017).
- 5.5 Colleges will develop a new e-learning strategy and implementation plan to support all aspects of using technology to deliver professional and technical education in innovative and effective ways (December 2017).
- 5.6 Colleges will specify, develop and implement a new college information system to support a range of student activities and corporate college functions (December 2018).

## PROJECT 6 – GOVERNANCE/LEADERSHIP

This project will consider how colleges' NDPB status can be exploited to the benefit of the effective organisation and delivery of education and training in Northern Ireland. This will include

procurement approaches to the delivery of the Department's programmes, exploring the issues associated with colleges generating income beyond that which is provided by the Department, including in an international context, and working with Department for Finance and Personnel to ensure that colleges can retain income generated in this way.

This project will address the following policy commitments: 18 and 20.

### Key Milestones:

6.1 The Department will explore utilising the charitable foundations model, as adopted by the Scottish Government, as a potential means to enable colleges, as Non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) to access existing cash reserves and to retain income generated from other sources, for educational purposes (March 2017).

6.2 The Department will work with colleges and key stakeholders to investigate the potential scope for colleges, as NDPBs, to exploit commercial opportunities by selling their expertise in the international market for education and training services, without exposing colleges or the Department to risk or additional financial burden (March 2017).

Over the period of the strategy, aspects of the strategic and operating environment will change; for example, globalisation, a reduced rate of corporation tax for Northern Ireland, new technologies and rapidly changing consumer needs. Consequently, flexibility will be required during the implementation process to accommodate relevant changes that may occur.

## PROJECT 7 – FUNDING MODEL AND COLLEGE SUSTAINABILITY

This project will review the current funding model, Funded Learning Unit (FLU), to ensure that it supports the strategic

priorities for the sector as set out in this strategy, that it aligns with funding models for other major departmental programmes that colleges deliver, and that it supports colleges' financial sustainability.

This project will address the following policy commitment: 19.

### Key Milestones:

- 7.1 The Department and colleges will carry out a detailed analysis of the current FLU model to identify strengths and weaknesses in line with current policies (June 2016).
- 7.2 Based on the analysis, the Department will draft a funding options paper, setting out detailed options and the proposed preferred option (August 2016).
- 7.3 The Department will model the agreed option against previous four year finalised data to ascertain the impact of the agreed option (August 2016).
- 7.4 The Department will present finalised options to senior management and college Directors to agree the way forward (September 2016).



## PROJECT 8 – PROMOTING THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Colleges have a key role in developing a strong and vibrant economy in Northern Ireland and in supporting social inclusion. This project will consider ways to promote to learners, parents, schools and employers the benefits of participation in further education provision. More generally, the project will also explore how to promote the benefits of professional and technical education and training.

There will be strong links with promotional aspects of the new apprenticeships and youth training systems. The opportunity will also be taken to ensure that strategies that may be produced by the new Department for the Economy, for example economic and innovation strategies, reflect appropriately the prominent role of further education colleges.

This project will address the following policy commitment: 21.

### Key Milestones:

- 8.1 The Department and the further education sector will consider ways to promote to learners, parents, schools and employers the crucial role that colleges have in developing a strong and vibrant economy, and the benefits to learners of participation in further education provision (March 2017).
- 8.2 The Department and the further education sector will consider how to promote, more generally, the benefits to individuals and the economy of professional and technical education and training (March 2017).
- 8.3 Colleges will publish information on learner achievements, learner progression and learner destinations on their web sites (September 2017).

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## Monitoring Progress

The implementation programme will be overseen by a Programme Board which will include representation at a senior level from the Department, the further education sector, other government departments as appropriate and other key stakeholders. The projects will have identified project managers from the Department and the further education sector, and a Programme Office has been established to drive forward the implementation process in line with recognised programme management and governance arrangements.

## Impact Assessments

As part of the implementation of the strategy, all projects will conduct a Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening, with a full Equality Impact Assessment and/or consultation being carried out where appropriate.



Further Education Means Success will be the strategy for further education in Northern Ireland for the next five to ten years.

# 4



## Summary of Key Milestones

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>(1) Curriculum Content and Delivery</b>	1.1 Colleges will develop and introduce a common methodology for the diagnostic assessment of Essential Skills.	<b>September 2016</b>
	1.2 The Department will introduce for first teaching from September 2016, refreshed Essential Skills in Literacy and Numeracy comprising new content, revised standards and assessment.	<b>September 2016</b>
	1.3 The Department, supported by colleges, will work closely with the Northern Ireland Regulator for vocational qualifications to ensure that existing and new professional and technical qualifications are fit for purpose, initially in relation to the implementation of the new apprenticeships and youth training arrangements and in respect of all qualifications offered by the further education sector.	<b>December 2017</b>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
	<p>1.4 The Department will work with the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment to revise GCSEs in English and Mathematics in time for first teaching from September 2017 with the objective of improving the literacy and numeracy of school leavers.</p>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p>
	<p>1.5 As curriculum is developed by colleges for the Apprenticeships and Youth Training systems, colleges will review the extent to which it is also appropriate for mainstream further education delivery.</p>	<p><b>September 2020</b></p>
	<p>1.6 Colleges will examine how delivery methods, such as project based learning, the use of work placements and the innovative and effective use of technology, that are being developed for delivery of Apprenticeships and Youth Training systems, can also be used in mainstream further education delivery.</p>	<p><b>September 2020</b></p>
	<p>1.7 Colleges will develop and deliver continual professional development for staff in line with the new methodologies in delivering the curriculum.</p>	<p><b>September 2020</b></p>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>2) Economic Development</b>	2.1 Within the context of the new Department for the Economy, the Department will audit, map and review the current offer and interventions available to employers, including, but not exclusively, within the Department for the Economy, the Department for Communities, Invest Northern Ireland, District Councils, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, and associated funding streams.	<b>September 2016</b>
	2.2 The Department, supported by colleges, will identify synergies and engage stakeholders on the best delivery profile for any revised portfolio of programmes and schemes, including the roles and responsibilities of key delivery partners.	<b>December 2016</b>
	2.3 The Department will work with colleges, other agencies and stakeholders to assess the need for, and if required deliver, additional future skills training in key economic areas to support further inward investment.	<b>December 2016</b>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
	<p>2.4 Colleges will develop further the early work undertaken within the further education sector on the SPICE portal, and consider how best this can be aligned to new departmental structures and arms length bodies, exploring synergies with key stakeholders, including Invest Northern Ireland. Colleges, supported by the Department, will develop a system to identify and subsequently externally validate those specialisms on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p><b>June 2017</b></p>
	<p>2.5 In the context of the establishment of the new Department for the Economy, the Department and colleges will consider how colleges, in partnership with universities, can increase their research and development and knowledge transfer activities, in particular with smaller employers.</p>	<p><b>December 2017</b></p>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>(3) Social Inclusion</b>	3.1 The Department and colleges will conduct an analysis of provision delivered by colleges in terms of volume of enrolments, types of provision and learner profile.	<b>December 2016</b>
	3.2 The Department and colleges will conduct an analysis of provision that is delivered by colleges in partnership with other organisations.	<b>December 2016</b>
	3.3 Colleges and the Department, supported by key partners, will conduct an analysis of key demographic information, and will identify the main barriers which inhibit different groups of learners (for example age and level of learning) from participating in provision. They will also identify provision and support currently in place that are designed to address barriers faced by those groups of learners.	<b>March 2017</b>
	3.4 Based on the analyses conducted, the Department and colleges will develop policy proposals on the most appropriate role for colleges to play in the delivery of provision with key partners in order to widen participation and to encourage and facilitate progression to further education provision at higher levels.	<b>June 2017</b>



PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>(4) Excellence – Quality and Performance</b>	4.1 The Department, supported by colleges, will identify and collect meaningful information on learner progression, and learner destinations after leaving college. Colleges will consider how this information could be used as part of the wider quality improvement process.	<b>December 2016</b>
	4.2 Colleges will develop a standardised approach to receiving and analysing feedback from learners and employers on the services provided to them by colleges.	<b>March 2017</b>
	4.3 The Department, supported by colleges, will review the college inspection model, including its appropriateness and frequency, and the quality improvement regimes to ensure that they are appropriate for all aspects of delivery in colleges.	<b>March 2017</b>
	4.4 As part of continuing professional development, the Department and colleges will examine how best to ensure that lecturers' industrial knowledge is kept up to date through the use of initiatives such as the 'Lecturers into Industry' scheme, and through placements and exchanges with similar institutions in other countries.	<b>December 2017</b>
	4.5 The Department, in conjunction with colleges, will establish a new framework for teaching qualifications, including specialist subject qualifications, initial teacher education and continuing professional development.	<b>June 2018</b>
	4.6 Jointly with the Department of Education, the Department will establish the General Teaching Council as the independent regulator and professional voice of further education lecturers.	<b>December 2018</b>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>(5) College Partnerships</b>	5.1 Colleges and the department will establish a governance structure and arrangements to stimulate, manage and oversee partnership/collaborative working, including colleges agreeing a memorandum of collaboration for systems, technology and services.	<b>June 2016</b>
	5.2 Colleges will review areas of activity that will be delivered using a shared services approach (areas could include human resources, payroll, IT support, finance, curriculum coding, etc.).	<b>December 2016</b>
	5.3 Based on the outcome of the review, colleges will design and agree common business processes for the areas identified.	<b>December 2017</b>
	5.4 Colleges will establish a single technology platform to support joint working and sharing of best practice, including support for the delivery of e-learning.	<b>December 2017</b>
	5.5 Colleges will develop a new e-learning strategy and implementation plan to support all aspects of using technology to deliver professional and technical education in innovative and effective ways.	<b>December 2017</b>
	5.6 Colleges will specify, develop and implement a new college information system to support a range of student activities and corporate college functions.	<b>December 2018</b>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<p><b>(6) Governance / Leadership</b></p>	<p>6.1 The Department will explore utilising the charitable foundations model, as adopted by the Scottish Government, as a potential means to enable colleges, as NDPBs, to access existing cash reserves and to retain income generated from other sources, for educational purposes.</p>	<p><b>March 2017</b></p>
	<p>6.2 The Department will work with colleges and key stakeholders to investigate the potential scope for colleges, as NDPBs, to exploit commercial opportunities by selling their expertise in the international market for education and training services, without exposing colleges or the Department to risk or additional financial burden.</p>	<p><b>March 2017</b></p>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<b>(7) Funding Model and College Sustainability</b>	7.1 The Department and colleges will carry out a detailed analysis of the current FLU model to identify strengths and weaknesses in line with current policies.	<b>June 2016</b>
	7.2 Based on the analysis, the Department will draft a funding options paper, setting out detailed options and the proposed preferred option.	<b>August 2016</b>
	7.3 The Department will model the agreed option against previous four year finalised data to ascertain the impact of the agreed option.	<b>August 2016</b>
	7.4 The Department will present finalised options to senior management and college Directors to agree the way forward.	<b>September 2016</b>

PROJECT	MILESTONES	COMPLETION DATE
<p><b>(8) Promoting the Further Education Sector</b></p>	<p>8.1 The Department and the further education sector will consider ways to promote to learners, parents, schools and employers the crucial role that colleges have in developing a strong and vibrant economy, and the benefits to learners of participation in further education provision.</p>	<p><b>March 2017</b></p>
	<p>8.2 The Department and the further education sector will consider how to promote, more generally, the benefits to individuals and the economy of professional and technical education and training.</p>	<p><b>March 2017</b></p>
	<p>8.3 Colleges will publish information on learner achievements, learner progression and learner destinations on their web sites.</p>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p>

## THEME 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### **Policy Commitment 1 – Priority Skills**

Colleges will have a crucial role working with employers and other key stakeholders to ensure that the professional and technical qualifications and curriculum they provide support the rebalancing and rebuilding of the Northern Ireland economy.

### **Policy Commitment 2 – Levels of College Provision**

Further education colleges will have a particular focus on further developing provision at level 3 (A level equivalent) and above in areas that will support the rebalancing and rebuilding of the Northern Ireland economy. Progression for learners who wish to study at higher levels will be encouraged and facilitated through the qualifications system, and through innovative delivery and clear pathways.

### **Policy Commitment 3 – Up-skilling the Existing Workforce**

Colleges will support indigenous companies and new companies which are being established in Northern Ireland, to ensure that employees have the required knowledge, skills and qualifications. In doing this,

colleges will operate in flexible ways in terms of where, when, and over what period of time up-skilling activities are provided, so that the needs of employers can be met effectively and in a manner which suits business needs.

### **Policy Commitment 4 – Support to Employers**

Colleges will be at the forefront of providing support to employers to enable them to innovate, grow, operate more effectively and efficiently, develop new products and to identify new markets for their products.

### **Policy Commitment 5 – College Specialism and Regional Capacity**

Centres of specialism and expertise will be developed in each college to enable the further education sector as a whole to deliver high quality professional and technical provision to employers. Through a collaborative approach, individual colleges will have identified sectors where they will be recognised for their expertise and specialism. As well as identifying specialisms, all colleges will develop networks of experts who will share the latest developments in curriculum and skills training across Northern Ireland.

## THEME 2: SOCIAL INCLUSION

### **Policy Commitment 6 – Increasing Economic Participation through Engagement**

Colleges' distinctive contribution to social inclusion will be to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and qualifications required to find, or progress within employment, in order to avail of the benefits of economic participation. Working in partnership with others, colleges will support diversity and social inclusion through widening access to provision for those with low or no skills or other social barriers to learning. They will work with other organisations in the voluntary, community, public and private sectors to strengthen pathways for learners that can open up their ambition and develop their talents.

### **Policy Commitment 7 – Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

Colleges will raise the level of literacy, numeracy and ICT competence in Northern Ireland by adopting the new qualifications that are being developed through the refreshed Essential Skills strategy and the reviews of GCSEs in English and mathematics in Northern Ireland.

### **THEME 3: CURRICULUM DELIVERY**

#### **Policy Commitment 8 – Using Technology to Enhance Learning**

Colleges will adopt international best practice in the use of technology enhanced learning to support and improve their teaching and learning, and will adopt flexible approaches to learning to meet the needs of learners and employers.

#### **Policy Commitment 9 – Developing Employability and Enterprise Skills**

A distinctive element of provision delivered by colleges will be the development of employability skills, through high quality and relevant work placements and the use of virtual reality technology to simulate work placements in innovative and effective ways. Through their teaching strategies and approaches, colleges will also seek to develop enterprising learners, who are innovative and creative, and are able to adapt to change.



## **THEME 4: EXCELLENCE**

### **Policy Commitment 10 – Embedding High Quality Teaching**

Through a new teacher education framework, there will be a renewed focus on high quality initial teacher education and continual professional development for all lecturing staff, with minimum standards for pedagogy and subject qualifications put in place. The Department will support the development of research in pedagogy to inform best practice in professional and technical education and training to establish Northern Ireland as an internationally renowned centre for excellence in teacher education in professional and technical subjects.

### **Policy Commitment 11 – Ensuring Industrial Knowledge**

College staff will also have the opportunity to undertake relevant and good quality industrial placements to ensure that they understand the needs of employers and workforce development.

### **Policy Commitment 12 – Reviewing Inspection and Quality Improvement**

The quality improvement process, including the inspection regime, will be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate for all aspects of delivery in colleges.

### **Policy Commitment 13 – Improving Performance**

Standardised approaches to receiving and analysing feedback from learners and from employers will be developed and introduced. Additional performance measures will be adopted to enable colleges and the Department to monitor colleges' performance more effectively as part of quality management, including learner progression and learners' destinations after leaving further education. Colleges will publish information on learner retention, achievement, progression and destinations on their web sites in such a way as to inform learners' choice of courses on which to enrol.

## **THEME 5: COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Policy Commitment 14 – Sectoral Efficiency through Collaborative Working**

In order to ensure that their services are delivered with maximum efficiency, colleges will operate more collectively in the delivery of their corporate services through a more rigorous and comprehensive approach to collaborative (shared services) working. Where appropriate, the colleges will take advantage of their NDPB status by adopting collaborative working opportunities that are available across the public sector in Northern Ireland.

### **Policy Commitment 15 – Sectoral Effectiveness by Sharing Best Practice**

Colleges will share best practice, and learn from each other, in the innovative and imaginative delivery of services to learners and employers. In particular, colleges will work together to ensure that technology can be developed and used in the most cost efficient and effective way to support learning.

### **Policy Commitment 16 – Delivery Mechanism to Drive Efficiency and Effectiveness**

A mechanism will be established to stimulate, manage and oversee collaboration and sharing of best practice between colleges to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services, and to maximise the level of resource that is available to fund front line services.

### **Policy Commitment 17 – Working in Partnership with Others**

Colleges will strengthen their partnership working with a range of other organisations in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors in order to improve the services delivered to employers and individuals.

## THEME 6: GOVERNANCE

### **Policy Commitment 18 – Further Education Governance and Business Model**

Colleges and the Department will work together to maximise the benefits

to colleges and their customers of the NDPB status, while also addressing any challenges posed.

## THEME 7: FUNDING MODEL AND COLLEGE SUSTAINABILITY

### **Policy Commitment 19 – Reviewing the Further Education Funding Model**

In partnership with colleges, the funding model will be reviewed to ensure that it supports and incentivises colleges to deliver this strategy, that it supports a sustainable

further education sector and that it aligns with the funding models that will be developed for other departmental programmes that further education colleges will deliver, in particular apprenticeships and youth training.

## THEME 8: INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

### **Policy Commitment 20 – Operating Internationally**

Colleges will enhance the learner experience, and the professional development and industrial knowledge of their staff, through placements and exchanges with similar institutions in other countries. They will also build

on the excellent partnerships that have already been created across the world to share best practice with, and to learn from, others. In addition, colleges will, with the Department, explore commercial opportunities to deliver more services in the international market.

## THEME 9: PROMOTING THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

### **Policy Commitment 21 – Promoting Further Education Provision**

Colleges Northern Ireland, individual colleges and the Department will work together to demonstrate the distinctive role that the further education sector

has, as part of the wider education system, and the role that the sector plays in strengthening the Northern Ireland economy. More generally, the benefits and status of professional and technical qualifications will also be promoted.





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Our aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

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