

The Challenges Higher Education Now Faces.



From 2025-2030,
an additional
8,500 jobs will
require higher
skills levels.

Higher level skills range from sub-degree qualifications at levels 4-5, such as Foundation Degrees, through to postgraduate qualifications at levels 7-8. Up to 2020, **an additional 7,200 jobs per annum will require higher level skills. From 2025-2030, this increases to 8,500 jobs per annum.**

Skills shortages are constantly raised as one of the biggest issues facing local businesses. **Northern Ireland's skills base ranking**, where Northern Ireland's skills base is benchmarked against a number of international economies to monitor performance and to assess if policies are sufficient to improve the skills base, **has remained unchanged over the last decade, ranking 20th of 26 countries.**



Based on forecasts up to 2025, **Northern Ireland needs to ensure a greater supply of individuals being educated and trained at levels 4 and 5 to meet the needs of the economy.** At degree level and above, according to forecasts, supply is "broadly in balance" however, **there is an imbalance between subject areas with not enough individuals undertaking subjects in specific subject areas, and too many in others.** Under a lower corporation tax environment, the demand for higher level skilled individuals continues to increase, especially in the period from 2025 to 2030.

Qualifications alone will not ensure a graduate's employment prospects and **many employers believe that graduates are inadequately equipped with the employability skills and knowledge needed to make a smooth transition from higher education into the work place.**



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SKILLS
TO SUCCEED



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Northern Ireland’s higher education sector is more reliant on public funding than any other part of the UK. **In 2013/14, 37% of the income of Northern Ireland’s higher education institutions came from public funding.** Like Northern Ireland, many countries, attempt to fund higher education through a **roughly equal balance between public and private investment.** However this model is strained when public investment is reduced **having drastic consequences for both the quality of provision and the size of countries’ higher education sectors.**

Lack of investment will have drastic consequences...

In the current academic year, 2015/16, the **public funding** made available for Northern Ireland’s higher education institutions for teaching and research **has reduced by over £16 million.** In this academic year 540 undergraduate places for Northern Ireland students and 446 staff posts have been lost across the sector. **Over the next three years over 1900 undergraduate places will be lost.**

In comparison, in countries with little or no tuition fees the **costs of higher education are typically met instead by the wider taxpayer** such as the Nordic countries. Germany has also recently abolished tuition fees as have others such as Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Slovenia and Turkey.

Some countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, the Netherlands and England, charge relatively high tuition fees. **At £9,000 per year, tuition fees in England are now the highest in the European Union.** In some countries where high tuition fees are charged, governments do not provide any direct funding to the **universities as they are private organisations.**

Without a renewed focus on public investment in higher education in Northern Ireland, the existing funding model is not sustainable and the sector will likely continue to contract unless an alternative funding model can be developed.

