

Circular Number: FE 03/25

Date of Issue: 11th April 2025

Subject: SKILLS FOCUS

Target Audience:

- Principals of Further Education Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies
- FE College Finance Officers
- FE College MIS
- Members of Economic Engagement Working Group
- Members of Skills Focus and InnovateUs Steering Group

Summary of Contents:

This circular provides guidance and funding arrangements for the Skills Focus Programme covering the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Enquiries:

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Related Documents: FE 03/24 - Skills Focus Coding Guidance Circular

Superseded Documents: FE 01/24 – Skills Focus Circular
FE 01/24 – Skills Focus Circular (Addendum 1)
FE 01/24 – Skills Focus Circular (Addendum 2)

Expiry Date: 31 March 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of the Skills Focus programme is to provide tailored skills provision to small to medium sized enterprises with fewer than 250 employees, in order to help meet business needs and increase the skills levels of the existing workforce to level 2 and above.
- 1.2 The six Further Education (FE) colleges in Northern Ireland, as Non-Departmental Public Bodies of the Department, (NDPBs) act as the sole delivery arm for the programme.
- 1.3 This circular establishes guidance on the eligibility criteria, funding arrangements, and operation of the Skills Focus programme with effect from the 1st of April 2025.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Economic Vision

The Minister has outlined four key objectives as part of her Economic Vision:

- To increase the proportion of working-age people in Good Jobs
- To promote Regional Balance so that everyone, no matter where they live, should have the same opportunity to earn a living;
- To raise Productivity because productivity is a fundamental driver of overall living standards; and
- To reduce Carbon Emissions as this is both a legal requirement and moral obligation to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

Skills Focus contributes to these aims and objectives by upskilling employees, and providing qualifications which have real labour market relevance and provide access to high-quality jobs, creating a culture of lifelong learning. Skills Focus aims to deliver projects in each of the priority sectors including the Green Sector, which plays a role in the reduction of carbon emissions in order to meet the Net Zero target. The Skills Focus Programme is delivered by each of the six FE Colleges to ensure that regional balance and an inclusive economy is achieved across Northern Ireland.

[DfE website – Minister’s Economic Vision](#)

2.2 The Programme for Government draft Outcomes Framework

On 3 March 2025, the Executive agreed a Programme for Government (PfG) for 2024-2027 entitled ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’.

One of the nine immediate priorities identified in the PfG is the need to “Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy” underpinned by skills and technology. The PfG aims to tackle low productivity, help businesses to thrive, and boost employee wages through trade, innovation, and our key sector strengths. Vital to harnessing economic potential will be supporting employers and workers to build the skills needed both now, and in the future. Skills Focus will contribute to

this identified priority by continuing to offer upskilling opportunities for small to medium sized enterprises to increase the skills levels of the existing workforce to level 2 and above.

[TEO website - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most](#)

2.3 Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland

In March 2022 the Department published the new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. It sets the strategic direction for the development of a flexible skills system for the next decade. This includes the need to invest in the skills that will drive key strategic clusters, boosting the research and innovation potential of our workforce.

[DfE website – Northern Ireland Skills Strategy](#)

2.4 The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer 2025 Update

This iteration marks the fifth NI Skills Barometer publication from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) since 2015, and provides a detailed understanding of the skill requirements for the Northern Ireland Economy up to 2033 with the aim of ensuring that skills gaps are identified and addressed. The barometer identifies that skills should remain at the core of economic development policy and highlights how lifelong learning can play an important part in the ‘good jobs’ agenda, driving innovation and supporting sustainable economic growth. Skills Focus directly supports the lifelong learning mechanism by contributing to tackling the identified deficit in in-employment training, and ensuring that employees remain competitive and capable of meeting new challenges. Skills Focus also plays a role in offering sub-degree level qualifications to the existing workforce, identified by the Barometer as a particular challenge facing Northern Ireland’s labour supply.

[DfE Website - Skills Barometer 2023 - 2033](#)

3. SKILLS FOCUS PROGRAMME AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Skills Focus aims:

- To provide tailored skills provision to small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), increasing the skills levels of their workforce to level 2 and above, with an increasing emphasis on qualifications at level 3 and above: and
- To support, promote, and facilitate collaborative working between businesses and FE colleges, increasing the role of the FE sector in economic development.

3.2 All projects delivered under Skills Focus must link and contribute to the government policies/strategies outlined above with regard to skills.

3.3 All agreed training interventions delivered through the programme, must include clear evidence of an identified skills need through consultation with businesses and the completion of a skills audit. This information will be captured through a Baseline Audit (**Annex A**) and entered, along with all employer engagement information, to the college's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

3.4 NI Executive resources and DfE priorities have a focus on the delivery of regulated qualifications. In light of this, a ceiling of 20% of each college's financial allocation has been set for non-regulated provision. This non-regulated provision should consist of recognised and accredited industry standard qualifications. A minimum of 80% of each college allocation should therefore be focused on regulated qualifications, which are defined within the college enrolment system as those at either level 3 or below on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), or at level 4 and above, regardless of whether they appear on the Framework.

3.5 The findings of the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer 2025 provide a detailed understanding of the skill requirements for the Northern Ireland Economy up to 2033 with the aim of ensuring that any skills gaps are identified and addressed. One main finding of the report is the oversupply of qualifications at level 2 and

below, along with an under-supply of mid-tier qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and an undersupply of graduates at levels 6 and above. To help address this skills gap, a restriction of 30% of total spend has been set on the delivery of qualifications at level 2, and this target will remain in the 2025/26 financial year. It is envisaged that this restriction will be increased further in future years.

- 3.6 Skills Focus activity should be delivered across all curricular areas, as defined in each College Development Plan (CDP). Best practice dissemination via curriculum hubs, should support this aim and will further support increased delivery and reporting against priority sectoral areas particularly in relation to the Economic Vision.
- 3.7 All colleges must be fully operational on the CRM system. The CRM will be used to extract monthly reports for Skills Focus to allow the Department to report on delivery of the programme during the 2025/26 financial year.
- 3.8 In recognition of the fact that many social enterprises operate a recognised commercial/business model, the eligibility criteria for the Skills Focus programme enables eligible social enterprises (with fewer than 250 employees) to apply for support.
- 3.9 The criteria to be used when determining social enterprise eligibility for the Skills Focus programme, will include a signed declaration by the organisation (Annex C) confirming that it is a social enterprise within the following definition:

'A social enterprise is a business whose primary purpose is based on social objectives. Any surpluses generated are principally reinvested in the business to further advance that purpose, or in the wider community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. A social enterprise does however have a business focus and operates as a commercial enterprise'.

Note: It is the social enterprises' sole responsibility to ensure that participation in the Department for Economy's Skills Focus programme

does not negatively impact on eligibility for other public sector initiatives, funding or support.

3.10 Community groups, charities, and their charitable activities, are not commercial undertakings and therefore will continue to be ineligible for support through the business-focused Skills Focus programme.

3.11 All other eligibility criteria as set out in FE 03/25 will still apply.

3.12 The Eligibility Checklist for the programme which appears at Section One of the Skills Focus Baseline Audit, has been updated accordingly and is attached in this circular at **Annex A**. The declaration to be signed for Social Enterprises can be found at **Annex C**.

4. FUNDING

- 4.1 The Department is currently awaiting confirmation of the budget to cover the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Colleges will be notified once this has been confirmed.
- 4.2 An employer contribution of 10% towards programme delivery costs will remain in place for the 2025-26 financial year with the Department again funding the remaining 90%. Colleges must therefore invoice employers for 10% of programme delivery costs as calculated using the Skills focus Ready Reckoners which accompany this circular. As before, where Skills Focus learners are embarking on a further year of a multi-year course, where the course was initially fully funded under the post-pandemic funding policy, full funding will continue until the course is complete.
- 4.3 In accordance with the FE NDPB planning and funding model, Grant in Aid payments for Skills Focus will be incorporated within the overall monthly resource block grant payment made to each college. In line with this model, each college agrees an annual College Development Plan (CDP) with the Department, which includes targets in relation to Skills Focus delivery. Performance against CDPs is discussed at college accountability meetings. Performance against agreed work commissioned by the Department will be assessed during the year and at the end of the year, with Partnership Agreements setting out the partnership arrangements between a college and the Department. In particular, they explain the overall governance framework within which colleges operate, including the framework through which the necessary assurances are provided to stakeholders. Roles/responsibilities of partners within overall governance frameworks are also outlined. The link to the Partnership Agreements can be found below.

[DfE Website - Partnership Agreements with FE Colleges](#)

- 4.4 College CRM systems provide the Department with details of planned activity within the Skills Focus programme. These details are extracted monthly and are used for monitoring purposes, as well as a guide for programme spend.
- 4.5 Learners at FE colleges are enrolled on college Learner Management Systems, with Consolidated Data Returns (CDRs) regularly supplied to the Department, as per the existing CDR Schedule. These extracts are used for a variety of reasons within the Department. For the purpose of verifying actual Skills Focus activity within the college in the 2025-26 financial year, the CDR extracts scheduled for the 25th of July and the 17th of October 2025, and on dates in November 2025, January 2026 and March 2026 (yet to be confirmed), will be used in the Skills Focus funding calculation.
- 4.6 Information available within the CDR enables calculation of programme spend, using the methodology outlined in the Skills Focus Funding Calculators/Ready Reckoners. Basic funding is calculated via a formula which, for actual rather than planned spend, is based on timetabled hours for each learner (recorded as Total Student Hours on the Learner Management System). Level and economic weightings are applied based on the level and regulated status of the course and multiplied by a unit value to determine cost per learner. To help address the demand for higher level qualifications as identified in the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer (Update 2021), learners undertaking regulated qualifications at level 3 or all qualifications at level 4 and above, will receive a higher economic weighting.
- 4.7 With regard to increased delivery costs reported by colleges, an uplift in funding to the existing economic weightings within the funding methodology will be implemented in the 2025/26 academic year. During 2025-26 therefore, the weighting for enrolments on all courses at level 4 and above and for regulated courses at level 3 will increase from 2.35 to 2.75. For enrolments on all other courses (courses at level 2 and non-regulated courses at level 3), the weighting will increase from 2.00 to 2.40. It should be noted however that although this change is introduced within this policy circular (which covers the 2025-26 financial year), the new weightings will only apply to costing/funding of courses

starting in the new academic year (from September 2025), due to the complexity of introducing a new process into a funding system that operates within competing date parameters. Ready Reckoners to cover both sets of weightings that apply during the 2025-26 financial year will issue with this circular and will be available alongside the circular on the Departmental website.

- 4.8 Learners who have transferred from one course to another, will only be counted for funding once, against their new course. Their original enrolment and its associated hours (coded on the Learner Management System as Student Status 4 – “Transferred”) will therefore be excluded from the funding calculation. In addition, where a Skills Focus learner has withdrawn from their course, the Total Student Hours used in the calculation will have automatically been reduced by the Learner Management System to reflect non-completion. Because of this, it is acknowledged that discrepancies may exist between costs calculated and recorded on CRM systems, and those calculated against CDR data that have been adjusted to reflect actual delivery. It should be noted however, that programme spend is measured using the CDR figures, and it is therefore imperative that Skills Focus enrolments are recorded on the system and updated in a timely manner.
- 4.9 Colleges are required to complete a monthly budget forecast for the Department. Ongoing monitoring of actual budget spend is expected, and early identification and reporting of realistic and potential overspend and/or underspend should be notified to the Department as early as possible.
- 4.10 The 2025/26 financial year’s final outturn and performance against targets may inform and influence decisions on the funding levels for the 2026/27 programme.

5. SKILLS AUDIT

- 5.1 Funding for completion of the Baseline Audit equates to £600, where engagement leads to a Skills Focus intervention. Where it is clear from the initial engagement that Skills Focus is not the most appropriate route for the business, then a Baseline Audit should not be completed, and the business immediately advised of or signposted to other relevant provision.
- 5.2 Following completion of the Eligibility Checklist, the College must carry out a Baseline Audit with the business (**Annex A**). **It is imperative that colleges complete the Baseline Audit with the business in person, or alternatively via a video call. Businesses should not unilaterally complete it themselves. The Baseline Audit must be signed by the business owner, or a designated representative of the business with the authority to do so. It should not be signed by the course participant unless that happens to be the owner/representative.**
- 5.3 **Colleges must also save to the relevant area in CRM, evidence that the Baseline Audit has been completed and signed by both the college and the business. This could take the form of a scanned copy of the completed document (or at least a scanned copy or image of the signature page), or screenshots of an e-mail communication between the business and the college (including the e-mail address of the sender) confirming that the document has been signed.**
- 5.4 For three years following the completion and payment of a Baseline Audit (for either Skills Focus or the InnovateUs programme) any subsequent Baseline Audits completed for either programme with the same business, will not attract a further £600 payment. College staff must therefore sufficiently question the business to determine if they have previously worked with other colleges on either InnovateUs or Skills Focus, as a Baseline Audit payment may have been made to another college within that three-year period. The Department will periodically check throughout the year for ineligible payments, notify colleges and adjust spend figures where required.

5.5 The purpose of the Baseline Audit is to:

- Establish detailed background regarding the business and the context within which the business is operating;
- Identify skills gaps and agree a project plan including aims and expected impact of the qualification;
- Identify the skills requirement including an assessment of current skills levels and experience;
- Identify college delivery for the Skills Focus project;
- Identify the appropriate level of qualification required; and
- Identify future progression routes.

5.6 Baseline Audits will be monitored monthly by the department. Claims will be generated automatically on the CRM system when:

- The college completes all relevant sections of the Skills Focus Baseline Audit,
- The appropriate indicator is selected at the end of the Client & Author Agreement, to confirm the Baseline Audit has been completed, and
- Details of each training intervention are updated on the system (there is no need for the College to use the generated invoice function).

5.7 The Department will extract the claim data from the CRM system after the last day of each month.

- 5.8 Following compliance checks, details of the monthly claim, along with a list of the projects funded will be sent to the College Accounting Officer and Business Engagement Team for information.
- 5.9 In circumstances where the College identifies discrepancies in the claim information provided by the Department, it is the responsibility of the College to investigate and update/amend CRM accordingly.
- 5.10 As a result of the recommendations of the 2023 review of the programme, a post-training impact evaluation now needs to be conducted by the College with employers, 12 months following completion of training. This is to enable the Department to assess the effect that participation in the programme has had on businesses. An Impact Assessment template is attached to this document at **Annex B**. This survey will only need to be completed for courses that started from the 1st of April 2024 onwards when the baseline audit questionnaire was amended to accommodate additional questions in anticipation of the impact analysis.
- 5.11 Due to the large number of projects undertaken through Skills Focus, a sample size of 20% has been set for each college meaning that assessments need only be conducted for this proportion of completing projects. Each completed survey will attract a payment of £250 which will be claimed through the CRM system in the same way as other elements of project costs. Changes have now been made to the CRM system to accommodate this process.

6. STATE AID / SUBSIDY CONTROL

- 6.1 Now that the United Kingdom has left the European Union, the subsidy control rules that apply depend on whether the enterprise¹ being supported falls within the scope of the Windsor Framework. Since 4 January 2023, all subsidies² provided by public authorities in Northern Ireland must comply with either the European Union's State aid rules³ or the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022⁴.

Note: The Windsor Framework details that the European Union State aid rules still apply when financial assistance measures have a material effect on trade between NI and the European Union. UK Government and European Commission guidance on Article 10 of the Windsor Framework can be accessed via the links below.

[UK Government Guidance on the scope and application of Article 10 of the Windsor Framework](#)

[European Commission Notice to stakeholders on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and EU rules in the field of state aid 2023/C 202/04](#)

- 6.2 If the enterprise engages in manufacturing or trades goods into the European Single Market, including the production of and trade in agricultural products, or is involved in the production of electricity for the wholesale market, the EU's State aid rules will apply. The UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 applies to all other subsidies to enterprises that provide services on a market.

¹ An enterprise (which also known as an 'undertaking' in EU State aid law) is defined in [Section 7 of the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 - UK legislation website](#) and is a person (or group of persons) who is engaged in an economic activity that entails offering goods or services on a market, to the extent that the person (or group of persons) is engaged in such an activity.

² A subsidy provided by a UK public authority (which is commonly referred to as State aid under EU law) is financial assistance that satisfies all four 'limbs' of the UK's or the EU's subsidy test. See [Section 2 of the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 - UK legislation website](#)

³ [The Windsor Framework - GOV.UK website](#)

⁴ [UK subsidy control regime - GOV.UK website](#)

- 6.3 When a participating business is within the scope of the Windsor Framework (i.e., the business manufactures goods or potentially could trade goods into the EU's Single Market), Skills Focus support must comply with the applicable EU 'de minimis' aid Regulation⁵. It is expected that most of the Skills Focus projects which are within the scope of the Framework will fall within the scope of the general / industrial (i.e. €300k per enterprise per 3 years) de minimis Regulation - [European Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023](#).
- 6.4 When a participating business is not within the scope of the Windsor Framework, legal cover for the Skills Focus support is provided by a subsidy scheme that has been registered on the UK's subsidy database. This scheme (Reference Number SC10888⁶) complies with all the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022⁷.
- 6.5 To ensure compliance with UK and EU subsidy control requirements, Colleges must first determine which regime applies, by determining whether the business:
- manufactures or trades in goods that might be traded into the EU Single Market (if so, the EU State aid rules and the de minimis regulation applies); or
 - is operating in the service sector (then the UK Subsidy control regime applies).
- 6.6 If the EU State aid rules apply the College must:
- Write to the business and inform it that the Skills Focus offer is EU de minimis aid (and detail the applicable European Union de minimis Regulation Number and date of publication) and detail the value of the de minimis aid that is being offered⁸.

⁵ The EU has four de minimis Regulations. A [general \(€300k\) de minimis Regulation - EU law website](#), a [primary agriculture de minimis Regulation](#), a [fisheries and aquaculture de minimis Regulation](#) and a [Services of General Economic Interest de minimis Regulation](#).

⁶ BEIS website - UK transparency database - scheme [SC10888](#)

⁷ [UK legislation website - Subsidy Control Act 2022](#)

⁸ De minimis aid must be offered as a gross grant equivalent - see Article 4 of the industrial de minimis regulation - [EU law website - Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023](#)

- Ask the business to inform the college (in writing*) how much other de minimis aid⁹ it has received in the last three years.
- Check that, in granting the business this new de minimis aid, that it will not exceed the applicable three-year aid threshold – which in the case of the ‘general / industrial’ de minimis regulation is currently €300,000.
- Once the de minimis aid has been awarded, the College should write to the business to advise it that, if required, within the next three years, it must declare this de minimis aid to any public authority that considering awarding it further de minimis aid.
- Also, from 1 January 2026, as detailed in [Article 6 of the de minimis Regulation](#), specified information on de minimis aid granted must be registered in a central register at national or Union level, within 20 working days following the grant of the aid. This register is currently being developed by the European Commission and DfE Subsidy Control Advice Unit will provide further information on how to upload de minimis aid awards to the Register, as these become available.
- If the business is engaged in primary agricultural activities, fisheries, or aquaculture, the general / industrial de minimis Regulation does not apply and the Colleges will need to comply instead with the relevant agricultural or fisheries/aquaculture de minimis Regulation. For example, the business is also a farmer or connected to a family farm or a fish farmer or operated a trawling boat. If so, the Colleges should be aware that the de minimis rules for primary agriculture and fisheries have lower maximum ceilings¹⁰ and, to complicate

⁹ Note, as de minimis aid, only cumulates with other de minimis aid, the business only needs to inform the College about de minimis aid it has been awarded in the three-year period. This should be clear from the aid award documentation. Other types of State aid, that are not de minimis, should be identifiable by their State Aid scheme or EU decision reference number (e.g. SA.123456). These other types of State aid do not cumulate with de minimis aid. If the business is not sure whether the other aid awards are de minimis, it should start by asking the public authority that provided the aid.

¹⁰ €50,000 for companies involved in primary agricultural production, and €30,000 if they are involved in the fisheries or aquaculture sectors which can be increased to €40,000 if the Member State has in place a national central register in accordance with Article 6(2).

matters further, the fisheries de minimis Regulation has a different (3 fiscal year) cumulation period. Skills Focus support can still be provided, but this must be provided in accordance with the applicable de minimis Regulation for primary agriculture¹¹ or fisheries and aquaculture¹². If this situation occurs, as the de minimis rules for primary agriculture and fisheries differ from the industrial rules, the College may wish to contact the Department for further advice.

***Note** - A de minimis declaration to record how much de minimis aid the business has received in the last three years is included with Annex A and should be completed as part of the Baseline Audit. Both that declaration provided by the business and the written advice from the college to the business about the type/value of the aid they will receive in relation to this Skills Focus participation should be retained by each College for 10 years for audit purposes, from the last date of payment of Skills Focus grant support.

6.7 When the UK Subsidy control regime applies (i.e., the business operates in the services sector only), if the business is eligible, no further subsidy control checks should be required. The Skills Focus scheme has been assessed against the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 and has been found to comply with Part 2 of the Act and, in particular, the seven principles in Schedule 1 of the Act. The scheme has been registered on the UK's transparency database and its reference number is SC10888¹³.

6.8 The Skills Focus support to services sector businesses is NOT being provided on the basis of the Act's Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption. Consequently, there is no requirement to check what other de minimis or MFA

¹¹ [EU law website - De Minimis in Agriculture Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 1408/2013](#)

¹² [EU law website - De Minimis in Fisheries and Aquaculture - Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 717/2014](#)

¹³ BEIS website - UK transparency database - scheme [SC10888](#)

subsidies have been received by the company previously, unless these are seen as being related subsidies¹⁴.

6.9 However, the College must still advise the company that the support they are receiving is a subsidy, as defined in section 2 of the Subsidy Control Act, and that should detail that the Skills Focus subsidy scheme reference number is SC10888.

6.10 Finally, in determining whether a business is eligible for Skills Focus support, the colleges must also check that none of the prohibitions and other requirements in Chapter 2 of Part 2 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 apply to the subsidy¹⁵. In particular, the College must check and confirm that:

- The Skills Focus scheme is not providing support to ailing or insolvent enterprises (see Sections 19 to 26 of the Act);
- The Skills Focus scheme has no conditions that relate to 'export performance' as detailed in Section 16 of the Act and paras 5.10 – 5.12 of the Statutory Guidance¹⁶);
- The Skills Focus scheme does not have any conditions that require the businesses to use domestic over imported goods or services (Section 17 of the Act).

¹⁴ See Section 5 of [the Subsidy Control \(Subsidies and Schemes of Interest or Particular Interest\) Regulations 2022](#)

¹⁵ [UK Legislation website - Subsidy Control Act 2022](#)

¹⁶ [Department for Business and Trade Guidance for UK Subsidy Control Regime](#)

7. SKILLS FOCUS PARAMETERS

7.1 Colleges must ensure that:

- 100% of qualifications delivered through the Skills Focus programme fall within one of the priority and emerging sectors as listed in the baseline audit;
- the programme is only available to businesses with fewer than 250 employees;
- provision should align with the Departments' strategic aims as detailed in section 2 of this circular. To this end, only employees and businesses based in Northern Ireland are considered eligible to participate in the programme, as Departmental strategies apply only within the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland;
- delivery is at level 2 and above, with an expectation that a minimum of 70% of each college's funding allocation is for upskilling or re-skilling at qualification level 3 and above; This will be monitored throughout the year;
- there is an expectation that an individual upskilled or reskilled through Skills Focus on e.g. level 2, will progress to level 3 if they are undertaking a second skills focus intervention, however this is not essential and multiple interventions at the same level are eligible for funding. It is however expected that interventions at the same level relate to different courses and do not constitute repeat enrolments on the same course for those learners who failed to complete their course and/or achieve their target qualification;
- A minimum of 80% of each college allocation should be focused on regulated qualifications, defined within the college enrolment system as those at either level 3 and below on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), or at level 4 and above, regardless of whether they

appear on the Framework. The remaining 20% should be on recognised and accredited industry standard qualifications;

- Skills Focus activity should be delivered across all curricular areas, as defined in each College Development Plan (CDP). Best practice dissemination via curriculum hubs, should support this aim and will further support increased delivery and reporting against the priority sectoral areas particularly in relation to the Economic Vision;
- in line with Ofqual regulations, a participant enrolled on a Skills Focus course at an FE college, must have reached the official school leaving age on the first day of the start date of the Skills Focus qualification;
- training must not be delivered under the programme where such training relates to an employer's statutory or legal requirement, and any compliance training including a renewal of a qualification. This includes training which displaces an employer's modus operandi and any internal staff training;
- charities and community groups are not eligible for Skills Focus funding;
- activity generating funding through this programme should not displace or be a substitute for any other public or private funded programme; and
- Skills Focus should be determined to be the most suitable option for the company before proceeding.

8. AUDIT TRAIL AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 8.1 As a requirement of delivering the programme, colleges will need to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to capture ongoing progress against the aims, objectives and targets of the programme. This will be facilitated through the capture of all employer engagement activity on CRM. All enrolments will be recorded on the college Learner Management System, and all procedures relating to student enrolments, retention, achievement, and withdrawals should be applied in line with existing guidance.
- 8.2 The Department will use reporting mechanisms from the CRM system. This will entail the ability to count and analyse the number and nature of employer engagements across sectors, and the identified skills needs. The reporting from CRM will provide management information across a range of variables as reflected in the Baseline Audit. The Department requires a standardised approach to CRM reporting across the sector and compliance with the system is essential.
- 8.3 In respect of projects delivered, the Consolidated Data Return will include all Skills Focus enrolment records to allow for full analysis of Skills Focus activity and performance against targets. Skills Focus will continue to be coded on EBS as either Source of Funding 63 for any remaining fully funded enrolments, or 23 for part funded enrolments, as set out in Skills Focus Coding Guidance Circular FE 03/24.

9. COMPLIANCE PROCESS

- 9.1 Claim data held on the CRM system will be lifted after the end of each calendar month to assess the volume of activity, and the breakdown of planned spend on the programme that month. Data will be subject to 100% compliance checks to detect information that is incomplete or missing, specifically those data items that confirm a project's eligibility, or inform delivery costs.
- 9.2 Delivery costs stated for each project will also be subject to 100% compliance checks against the programme funding calculation, as set out in the Ready Reckoners which accompany this circular. Discrepancies outside a 10% tolerance (to account for any rounding) will be notified to colleges for further investigation.
- 9.3 In addition, a sample of 30% of projects will be checked for compliance in relation to the satisfactory completion of the Baseline Audit, in particular the provision of evidence that the audit questionnaire has been signed and dated by the business. If a college does not pass this sample check, an immediate compliance check of all Skills Focus Baseline Audits carried out by the College that month, will be performed. The Department will consider implementing 100% compliance checks for all further Baseline Audits carried out by the College until it is satisfied that a return to 30% compliance is justified.
- 9.4 When the Department is content that the programme information provided via the claims data sheet is complete and that the compliance checks for the calculation of programme costs and completion of baseline audits have been satisfactorily addressed, a letter will issue to each College Principal, reflecting the monthly activity.
- 9.5 The Department has the right to make further changes to the programme, if it deems appropriate, throughout the period of the agreed circular. The Department will consult with the College Accounting Officer if any issues arise and if further changes to the programme are required.

- 9.6 It is the responsibility of the College to ensure that the Skills Focus projects undertaken comply with the requirements of the programme as set out in this circular, Eligibility Checklist and Baseline Audit.
- 9.7 The compliance process does not require the Department to consider or approve project proposals prior to delivery or on completion.
- 9.8 In addition, the Department will carry out quarterly vouching visits on Skills Focus delivery, whether offered within colleges, on business premises, or online. The purpose of the visits is to ensure that training is being carried out as scheduled and to the declared number of learners. The Departmental representative will complete a form which the lecturer will be asked to sign for audit purposes.

10. INSPECTION

- 10.1 Colleges shall permit duly authorised staff or agents of the Department or the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), to examine the accounts, and other records, at any reasonable time, and shall furnish appropriate oral or written explanation if required. The Department reserves the right to permit such staff or agents to carry out the examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the College has used the Department resources in the performance of this Agreement. The College shall have regard to the need for economy in all expenditure.
- 10.2 The Department may also carry out inspections which will include, but are not limited to, the practical application of the Programme's aims and objectives, recording and retention of information pertaining to individual project proposals and delivery of training and project proposal to businesses engaging with the colleges throughout the course of this Programme.

11. PROVISION OF INFORMATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

11.1 As a requirement of delivering the programme, the College will need to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to capture ongoing progress against the aims, objectives and targets for the overall programme. The College is expected to achieve the targets within the overall Skills Focus Programme delivered by the College – not on a project-by-project basis.

11.3 In addition to the information required by the Department as part of this circular, and set out herein, the College shall furnish the Department, upon request, with any additional financial and other information as the Department may require.

12. OBSERVANCE OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

12.1 The College shall comply with all applicable fair employment, equality of treatment, and anti-discrimination legislation, including, in particular, the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Orders 1976 and 1988, the Equal Pay Act Northern Ireland) 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, and the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, and shall use its best endeavours to ensure that, in its employment policies and practices, and in the delivery of the services required of the College under this agreement, it has given due regard to the need to promote equality of treatment and opportunity between:

- a. persons of different religious beliefs or political opinions;
- b. men and women, or married and unmarried persons;
- c. persons with and without dependants (including women who are pregnant, or on maternity leave, and men on paternity leave);
- d. persons of different racial groups (within the meaning of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997);
- e. persons with and without a disability (within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995);
- f. persons of different ages; and
- g. persons of differing sexual orientation.

12.2 The College shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the observance of the provisions of the above clause by all servants, agents, employees, consultants and sub-contractors of the College.

12.3 Colleges must ensure that all information collected and handled in the delivery of Skills Focus is done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

Skills Focus

Client Baseline Audit

April 2025 – March 2026

Aid provided to deliver this project is granted either in compliance with European Commission regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 or in compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Business Name:

Project Title:

Project Ref:

Date Baseline Completed:

Author:

College:

The Skills Focus programme is financed by the Department for the Economy (DfE). Skills Focus activity should be delivered across all curricular areas, as defined in your College Development Plan (CDP). Best practice dissemination via curriculum hubs, should support this aim and will further support increased delivery and reporting against the priority sectoral area particularly in relation to the Economic Vision.

IMPORTANT: A College representative *must* complete this form with the business

Contents

- 1. Eligibility Checklist**
- 2. Project Summary**
- 3. Project Plan**
- 4. Subsidy Declaration**
- 5. Client and Author Agreement**

1. Eligibility Checklist

Please ensure that all questions are completed correctly.

1a. Does the company have fewer than 250 employees?

- Yes
- No (not eligible to participate in Skills Focus)

1b. Is the company in receipt of any other government funding for this upskilling activity?

- Yes (not eligible to participate in Skills Focus)
- No

1c. Has a check been made to ensure that the company is not in receipt of government funding for this activity already?

- Yes
- No (if not, do not proceed until checks have been completed.)

1d. Are alternative forms of funding available through another, more appropriate source?

- Yes (Not eligible to participate on the programme - If yes, which other source has been identified?
_____)
- No

1e. Is the company a charity or community group?

- Yes (not eligible to participate in the Skills Focus programme.)
- No

1f. Is the company a Social Enterprise?

- Yes College must ensure the business reads the definition (and signs the accompanying declaration at Annex D). Only social enterprises who meet the definition “A social enterprise is a business whose primary purpose is based on social objectives. Any surpluses generated are principally reinvested in the business to further advance that purpose, or in the wider community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. A social enterprise does however have a business focus and operates as a commercial enterprise’ are eligible to apply for support.
- No

1g. Is the planned qualification any of the following:

- Legal requirement,
- Compliance training,
- Statutory requirement, or
- Renewal.

Yes (Project is not eligible for Skills Focus Funding)

No

1h. Is the planned qualification within one of the following sectors? If so, please indicate which.

Financial, Business & Professional Services

(including: Fintech / Financial Services - developing the Fintech skills base, and working to explore any emerging training and skills requirements of the Fintech sector).

Digital & Creative Industries*

(including:

Software and Cyber - growing the numbers of people obtaining computing-related skills and qualification, including computational and coding skills.

Screen Industries - identifying skills shortages and co-ordinating skills and training opportunities for crew in Northern Ireland).

Agri-Food

(including Agri-Tech - developing a talented workforce with the right skills to support the Agri-Tech sector at all levels, with good jobs and increased productivity across the sector).

Construction & Materials Handling

Advanced Manufacturing, Materials & Engineering

(including Low Carbon/Net Zero: developing a Green Skills Delivery Plan to provide the skills that businesses need to deliver a net zero future).

Life & Health Sciences

Tourism & Hospitality

Other – (not eligible to participate in Skills Focus)

2. Project Summary

2a. Individual/Organisation Details

Business Name _____
Individual's Name _____
Job Title/Role _____
Date _____

2b. Company Details

Address _____ _____
Telephone _____
E-mail Address _____
Website _____

2c. Describe the business's day to day operations.

2d. What Sector does your business operate in? Tick One

- Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing
- Mining & Quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply
- Water Supply, sewerage, waste management & remediation activities
- Construction
- Wholesale & retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- Transportation & storage
- Accommodation and food service activities
- Information & Communication
- Financial & insurance activities
- Real Estate Activities
- Professional, Scientific and technical activities
- Administrative and support services activities

- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Education
- Human health and social work activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Other service activities
- Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use

2e. In which market(s) does your business currently operate?

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Northern Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| GB | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Republic of Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> | Please specify _____ |
| International | <input type="checkbox"/> | Please specify _____ |

2f. How long has the business been trading?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1-3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3-5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More than 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2g. How many employees are in your company at present?

	Number
Permanent – Full-Time	
Permanent – Part-Time	
Temporary – Full-Time	
Temporary – Part-Time	
Total	

2h. Have you previously worked with any FE College in Northern Ireland?

*Before recording this form on CRM, the College representative must check if the previous engagement included the payment of a Baseline Audit.

Yes (If Yes, please describe what the engagement was)

No

2i. Are you aware that the NI FE sector provides the following services to industry?

	Yes	No
Training courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business plan support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for R&D projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for business start	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify _____

2j. What are the skills gaps currently within your company?

	Yes	No
Technical Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail: _____		
Management Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		
Operative Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		

2k. Assessing the potential business impacts of engaging with the FE College through the Skills Focus Programme.

(i) What is your annual Business Turnover?:

£ _____

(ii) On the scale below, how would you currently rate the following aspects of your business:

1 = Poor 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Very Good 5 = Excellent

Customer Service:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership and Management:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Productivity:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

(iii) As a business, what improvements are you expecting to see following your participation on the Skills Focus programme? (please tick all that apply)

Development of New/Improved Lean Processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost Savings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing New Finance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decarbonisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Waste Reduction and Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy and Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased Sales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safeguarding Existing Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creation of New Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased exporting capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
More highly skilled staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Project Plan – Skills Focus

What is your company's skills requirement? (What specific training, skills and/or qualification is required?)

(Please specify qualification and RQF reference)

Number of staff to be trained.

Proposed mode of delivery:

Online On-Site College Clustered

Other (please specify) _____

Training start date:

Proposed end date:

Number of hours per Participant

Project Cost – DfE (90% Contribution) _____

Employer (10% Contribution) _____

4. State Aid/Subsidy Declaration

Declaration of EU 'de minimis' aid

NOTE: THIS DECLARATION IS ONLY TO BE COMPLETED BY BUSINESSES THAT MANUFACTURE OR TRADE GOODS THAT COULD BE TRADED INTO THE EU SINGLE MARKET (i.e. WHEN THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK (FORMERLY THE NI PROTOCOL) APPLIES).

IT SHOULD NOT BE COMPLETED BY BUSINESSES OPERATING IN THE SERVICES SECTOR (SEE PARA 6 OF SKILLS FOCUS FE CIRCULAR 03/25 FOR GUIDANCE)

As required by the EU's 'de minimis' Regulation your business must provide the Department with details of all other *De Minimis* aid received in the last three years. A false declaration by you, resulting in the EU 'de minimis' maximum of €300,000 being exceeded could later give rise to the aid being recovered with interest.

Please note there are lower de minimis aid ceilings for the primary agriculture sector¹⁷ and the fisheries and aquaculture sector¹⁸. There is also a different cumulation period for the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The Agricultural De Minimis Regulation¹⁹ (ADMR) applies to aid provided in favour of the primary production of agricultural products. Agricultural products refers to those products listed in [Annex 1 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union \(TFEU\)](#)²⁰. **Primary production refers to production by way of soil and livestock farming without the performance of any further operation changing the nature of resultant products.**

If you think your business may be involved in primary agricultural or primary fisheries and aquacultural activities, please discuss with the College before completing this de minimis declaration

Please provide details including the 'Name of the Grant / Aid scheme', the Awarding Body, the 'Amount(s) Received' and the 'Dates received'. Please note only EU 'de minimis' aid subsidies need to be declared. If you are not sure whether the award is EU 'de minimis' aid, please check with the Awarding Body.

Type of de minimis aid ²¹ Approved & Awarding Body	Amount £/€	Date

¹⁷ [EU legislation website - De Minimis in the agriculture sector](#)

¹⁸ [EU legislation website - De Minimis in the fisheries and aquaculture sector](#)

¹⁹ [EU legislation website - De Minimis in the agriculture sector](#)

²⁰ [EU website -Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union - Annex 1](#)

²¹ The type of de minimis aid is either (1) industrial (2) primary agriculture (3) fisheries or aquaculture or (4) Services of General Economic Interest. This should be explicit on the letter of offer from the aid awarding body.

TOTAL:		

<p>Is the company active in any of the following industry sectors:</p> <p>Fishery and Aquaculture or Primary Production of Agricultural Products*? These sectors have specific lower ceilings of <i>de minimis</i> aid.</p> <p>*Please note: The industrial de minimis Regulation allows aid for the processing and marketing of agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products, providing the aid does not benefit a primary processor. If the company is active in the Primary production (as defined above) of agricultural or fishery products, then the college must contact the Department before proceeding with the project to ensure the ADMR limits will not be exceeded.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes / No</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(if yes please specify in the box below and indicate the end of your accounting (fiscal) year)</p>
<p>If your company is active in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, what is the date of the end of your accounting (fiscal) year (dd/mm)?</p>	

I confirm the details provided on this form are current and accurate to the best of my knowledge and I am authorised to sign on behalf of the company.			
Signed on behalf of applicant		Print Name	
Position		Date	
Company			

5. Client and Author Agreement

This project has been financed by the Department for the Economy's (DfE) Employer Skills Branch's, Skills Focus Programme. The College has been contracted by the Department to deliver the Skills Focus Programme. Please refer to the College Privacy Notice (see College website) which will explain in more detail how personal information is handled, and to the Department's Privacy Notice at [DfE-Privacy Notice](#)

By signing this document, we, the signatories, confirm that the information contained herein is an accurate representation of the project, its objectives and outcomes and that the accompanying training is proportionate to these, and has been agreed by the College and the participating business.

College Representative Signature_____
College & Position_____
Date_____

I understand that by signing this document I am providing confirmation that I am content for the Department and/or College to contact me or any participants of this project directly and use information for programme management, monitoring and evaluating purposes. I can confirm that the participants have been informed accordingly.

I understand that I may be contacted approximately 12 months after training ends to complete an Impact Assessment.

I also understand that the Department and/or College may wish to use details of the intervention in future marketing or promotional material and will liaise with me about this beforehand.

Please note – this form must be signed by the business owner or designated representative of the business with the authority to do. It should not be signed by the course participant unless that happens to be the owner/representative.

Business Representative Signature _____

Company & Position _____

Date _____

Skills Focus

12 Month Impact Assessment

Business Name:
Project Title:
Project Ref:
College:
College Representative completing the Assessment:

IMPORTANT: A College representative *must* complete this form with the business

Twelve months ago, your business completed an upskilling opportunity with this college through the Skills Focus programme. The college received funding from the Department for the Economy to run the course and the questions on this Assessment Form are designed to help the Department understand and measure the impacts this intervention has had on your business. It is also an opportunity for you to engage again with the college and raise any further skills and development needs you may have.

1. Company Contact Details

Address:
Telephone:
E-mail Address:
Website:

2. Assessment of the Business Impacts of participating in Skills Focus

2(a) Have you entered into any new markets following your participation in Skills Focus?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

If yes, please confirm the new market(s) the business now operates in.

Northern Ireland	<input type="checkbox"/>	
GB	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Republic of Ireland	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify _____
International	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify _____

2(b) Following the Skills Focus intervention, are there any remaining skills gaps within your company and if so, what type(s) of skills gaps?

	Yes	No
Technical Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail: _____		
Management Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		
Operative Skills Gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail _____		

2(c) Would you like to be contacted again by the Further Education College about other opportunities for support?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No

When answering the following questions, where required, please use a score from the following scale of 1 - 5:

1 = Poor 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Very Good 5 = Excellent

2(d) Since your participation in Skills Focus, has your business Turnover:

Remained the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decreased	<input type="checkbox"/>

2(e) How would you currently rate the following aspects of your business:

Customer Service:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership and Management:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Productivity:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

2(f) As a business, what improvements have you experienced following your participation on the Skills Focus programme? (please tick all that apply)

Development of New/Improved Lean Processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost Savings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing New Finance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decarbonisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Waste Reduction and Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy and Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased Sales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safeguarding Existing Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creation of New Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased exporting capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
More highly skilled staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

2(g) As a result of your engagement with the college, and participation on the Skills Focus programme, did your business progress to undertake any other form of upskilling, innovation, or developmental activity?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No

If yes, please tick as many as are appropriate:

- InnovateUs
- Invest NI Innovation Voucher
- Skill Up
- Connected Programme
- Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)
- Council supported programme
- Other learning/courses with the FE College
- Other Higher Education learning

2(h) Have the employees who participated in Skills Focus continued to use the skills learned during their Course?

- Yes
- No

3. General Comments

5(a) Please provide any general comments or feedback you would like to offer, on your experience of the Skills Focus programme and its impact on your business?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will assist us in our evaluation.

4. Signatures

College Representative Signature _____

College & Position _____

Date _____

Please note – this form must be signed by the business owner, or designated representative of the business with the authority to do. It should not be signed by the course participant unless that happens to be the owner/representative.

Business Representative Signature _____

Company & Position _____

Date _____

Social Enterprise Declaration

The following definition should be read by any Social Enterprises seeking Skills Focus support and, where appropriate, the declaration signed:

A social enterprise is a business whose primary purpose is based on social objectives. Any surpluses generated are principally reinvested in the business to further advance that purpose, or in the wider community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. A social enterprise does however have a business focus and operates as a commercial enterprise’.

I declare that (insert business name) is a social enterprise within the above definition.

I understand that it is the sole responsibility of (insert business name) to ensure that participation in the Skills Focus programme does not negatively impact on our eligibility for other public sector initiatives, funding or support.

Client Signature: _____

Business name & position: _____

Date: _____