



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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SKILLS
TO SUCCEED



New Further Education Strategy for Northern Ireland

Supporting Document

July 2015



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1



Overview

In recognition of the considerable changes to the Northern Ireland economy and the landscape in which the further education colleges operate, the Minister for Employment and Learning decided it was timely to refresh 'Further Education Means Business' which was introduced in 2004.

The development of the new further education strategy for Northern Ireland has been based on a programme of comprehensive research examining best practice both locally and internationally, and a number of stakeholder engagement meetings. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses in current further education performance and delivery were examined, and this included the collection and analysis of comprehensive data and statistics in areas such as college enrolments, and performance in terms of learner retention, achievement, and success.

This document supports the main consultation document and should be read in conjunction with it. It outlines achievements which the sector made under 'Further Education Means Business', and sets out the strategic context, related strategies, and recent reforms and developments which impact on the work of the colleges. It also presents a wide range of information, including international policies, practices and case studies, case studies of best practice in the Northern Ireland further education colleges, and statistical information.



2



Achievements under FE Means Business

The further education system in Northern Ireland has been in operation for over one hundred years, and during that period colleges have made a significant contribution to our economic and social life.

The last major review of further education in Northern Ireland culminated in the publication of “Further Education Means Business” in 2004. This section summarises the main achievements of the further education sector over the lifetime of that strategy.

Restructuring: the re-structuring of the further education sector from 16 colleges to the current six colleges has enabled the effective implementation of “Further Education Means Business”. In particular, colleges play an increased leadership role in local and regional planning and in the delivery of economically relevant qualifications and skills at all levels across Northern Ireland.

Economically focused curriculum: around 97% of the funding provided by the Department to further education is now directed at provision that is on the regulated qualifications frameworks, offering an economically focused curriculum with clear pathways to professional and technical qualifications and progression to higher levels of learning.

Learner retention, achievement and success: between 2010/11 and 2013/14 retention has improved from 87.7% to 89.1%, achievement from 80.3% to 87.1%, and success from 70.4% to 77.6%.^{1,2}

1 Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2009/10 to 2013/14 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/annex-a-fe-activity-statistical-bulletin-0910-to-1314-december-2014-revised-as-at-24th-april-2015.pdf>

2 For definitions of retention, achievement and success, see Annex C.

The Entitlement Framework: further education colleges have worked in strong and effective partnerships with many post primary schools across Northern Ireland in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework, which requires school pupils from year 11 upwards to have access to a mixed curriculum of academic and professional and technical subjects. Over the past five years, an average of around 13,000 school pupils per year availed of a wide variety of courses leading to economically relevant professional and technical qualifications, delivered by college lecturers with in depth industrial knowledge using colleges' modern state of the art facilities and equipment. This provision was extremely stimulating to pupils, and there was strong evidence of increased educational outcomes for participating pupils with retention and achievement rates of 97.8% and 93.5% respectively in the 2013/14 academic year.

Take the example of Martin, who studied with North West Regional College. Martin has made great strides in his career within the floor and wall tiling industry. He completed a CCEA Occupational Studies course in Engineering, Brickwork and Land Based Technology, and progressed to the highest echelons in this field when he won the gold medal at the 2013 UK Skills Show and in the 2013 Skill Build Finals. Martin has also been selected for the UK squad for the 2015 World Skills Finals to be held in Brazil.

Such provision affords young people the opportunity to learn new skills in a work related environment.

Supporting business and innovation: the further education sector has responded positively and very effectively to the strategic priority within "Further Education Means Business" to strengthen economic development by supporting business and innovation, and colleges are now the Department's providers of choice to support inward investment and local employers. The new six college structure, with leading edge facilities and equipment, has helped colleges to become a driving force for economic and workforce development across Northern Ireland.

Promoting social inclusion and social cohesion: colleges have provided access to further education to those with barriers to learning, those with no or low qualifications, those who are furthest from the labour market, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Colleges also have a proud and often unrecognised tradition of attracting students from all sections of our society, for example in terms of gender, age, religion and disability, and educating them in a genuinely shared educational environment.

International activity: the further education sector has also developed extensive experience of international activity. Examples include Belfast Metropolitan College's links with China,

South Eastern Regional College's partnership agreement with Toyama National Technical College in Japan, South West College's links with Pittsburgh, USA, and North West Regional College/ Northern Regional College links with India. In addition to this cross-continent cooperation, the sector has also established an excellent track record in securing funding from the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme to support learner and staff mobility and to establish partnerships with other learning organisations and employers across borders.

Excellence and quality: over the past number of years, the drive by colleges to further improve the excellence and quality of provision they deliver has continued, and this is shown through the increased levels of learner retention, achievement and success referred to above. A strong contributory factor in the drive to improve standards is the quality of teaching in our colleges in terms of pedagogy and up to date industrial knowledge.

Efficiency: the further education sector has been operating with increasing efficiency over recent years. For example, the main unit of resource through which colleges are funded has not been increased in value since 2007, despite an increase of around 21.0% in the consumer price index for pay and prices. In addition, colleges have been required by the Department to deliver additional provision to the value of £4million per year over the past number of years as part of agreed efficiency measures.

Shared services: the extremely difficult fiscal environment in which the public sector is currently operating requires public bodies, such as further education colleges, to consider afresh how they operate to ensure that the maximum amount of resource can be directed towards front line services so that they can be maintained and improved. Early work on collaborative working has focused on colleges' procurement activity, college advertising, and on the development of a new management information system for use by colleges.

Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)

Status: from October 2010, the six Northern Ireland further education colleges were reclassified as NDPBs, following a determination by the Office of National Statistics. This reclassification resulted in the Department having to realign the administrative relationship with colleges and the wider further education sector, as well as enacting changes to governance controls. Colleges have responded positively to these changes, and have worked closely with the Department to implement the necessary change. The most significant challenge is to maximise the extent to which colleges, as NDPBs, can retain the income they create outside of that provided by government, and this is one of the recommendations in the new further education strategy.

The further education system in Northern Ireland has been in operation for over one hundred years, and during that period colleges have made a significant contribution to our economic and social life.



3

Extract from the Chief Inspector's Report 2012-2014

This section is an extract on the quality of provision in further education from the Chief Inspector for Education and Training's Report 2012-2014. The Chief Inspector's Report is a biennial report which summarises inspection findings across the education and training sectors: the latest report covers the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2014.³

Going well

- ▶ *Examples of sector-leading, high quality provision were identified in two out of the four colleges inspected in leadership and management, economic engagement and curriculum planning and innovation.*
- ▶ *Provision was good or better across 90% of the further education professional and technical courses inspected.*
- ▶ *Good or better quality of learning and teaching was evident in 84% of the lessons evaluated, with 47% being either very good or outstanding.*
- ▶ *There was high quality discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the sector.*

³ Chief Inspector's Report 2012-2014 <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/the-chief-inspectors-report/ci-report-2012-2014.pdf>.

Going forward

- ▶ *Colleges need to give greater strategic attention to improving the quality of provision in the essential skills, with a particular focus on the quality of learning and teaching.*
- ▶ *Most of the colleges inspected need to implement coherent strategies for the more effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) in learning and teaching, to meet the differing needs of learners.*

Context

There are six further education colleges in Northern Ireland. Based on the most current data available, (2011-12 to 2012-13)⁴, total enrolments on further education professional and technical regulated courses up to level 3 increased slightly from 141,760 to 145,353.

For 2012-13, enrolments at level 2 accounted for 47% of the total provision, entry level and level 1 for 23% and level 3 for 30% of the provision. Part-time provision is significant and accounts for 82% of the total enrolments.

Inspection evidence

▶ <i>Number of whole-college further education inspections</i>	<i>4</i>
▶ <i>Number of district inspector scrutiny inspections</i>	<i>12</i>
▶ <i>Number of follow-up inspections</i>	<i>1</i>
▶ <i>Number of lessons/sessions evaluated</i>	<i>742</i>

⁴ Source: The Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Statistical Record (FE Recurrent provision plus other Department funded programmes and cost recovery courses).
Note: statistical information has been updated since the publication of this report to include academic year 2013/14.

Overall Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the further education provision⁵ was very good or outstanding in two of the colleges inspected; it was good in one college and satisfactory in the other. Over the past three years, all six further education colleges have been subject to a whole-college inspection. Overall effectiveness was evaluated as outstanding in one college, very good in one, good in three and satisfactory in one.

In the four colleges inspected during this period, the overall quality of the provision for further education courses was mostly good or very good. Excluding the provision in the essential skills, in over 90% of the professional and technical areas inspected the quality of the provision was good or better, and in just over 60% of them it was very good or outstanding.

Achievements and standards

Across the four colleges inspected, achievements and standards were very good in two, good in one and satisfactory in one. Achievements and standards were consistently good or better in applied science, art and design and media, childcare, computing and information technology, engineering, hospitality and catering, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and sports studies. In the essential skills, achievements and standards were good or better in two of the colleges and satisfactory in the other two.

According to DEL's data⁶, over the period 2011-13, overall outcomes on further education programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 have improved significantly across the sector. The improvements are due to more effective tackling of underperformance by senior managers in most of the colleges, leading to ongoing improvements in retention and achievement rates over the period; average retention rates, for example, improved from 88% to 92% and average achievement rates improved from 79% to 87%.

While there are clear ongoing challenges in the management and delivery of the essential skills, there have been significant and sustained improvements in success rates in further education. For the mainstream funded provision, average success rates have improved from 60% in 2010-11 to 71% in 2012-13. Success rates have improved significantly for each essential skill. It is noteworthy that success rates in the ICT essential skill have improved from a low base of 57%, to 69%.

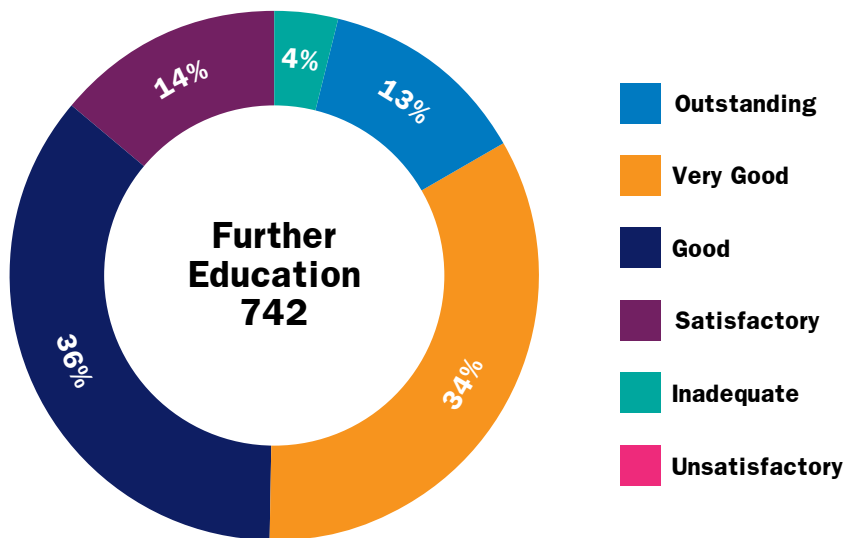
Quality of provision for learning

The quality of learning and teaching was good or better in 84% of the lessons evaluated in the colleges inspected. This represents a slight improvement on the previous reporting period. Around 47% of the lessons observed were very good or outstanding.

5 The four whole-college inspections carried out in this period included an evaluation of their provision for work-based learning. The main findings from these inspections are included in the work-based learning section of this report.

6 Source: The Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Leavers Survey 2010-2011. Retention is the percentage of enrolments that complete their programme of study. In the case of 2-year courses, it is the percentage of final year enrolments that complete their programme of study. Achievement is the percentage of completers who gain a qualification. In the case of 2-year courses, it is the percentage of final year completers who gain a qualification

Lessons Evaluated



Effective practice

Where the learning and teaching was effective and of a high standard, the key features included good planning, practical work to embed theoretical learning, rigorous and well-organised assessment, contextualised learning experiences, appropriate pace and challenge and high expectations of the learners.

Provision was good or better across 90% of the further education professional and technical courses inspected.

There have been significant advances in the functionality and capacity of online learning platforms and assessment tools, including e-portfolios. In the best practice ILT is used to support, challenge and motivate learners to work better independently and achieve higher standards.

However, with the exception of one college, the effective use of ILT in teaching, learning and assessment varies considerably. This is due, in the main, to a lack of coherent and inclusive whole-college strategies for the effective use of ILT to support the main aims of the college development plan.

The quality of care, guidance and support was good or better in the colleges inspected; it was outstanding in two of them. The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provision is improving; it was good or better in all of the colleges inspected, with one college having outstanding provision.

The overall quality of the essential skills provision in the colleges inspected varied; it was good in two and satisfactory in

two. In the better practice, the senior management team has a clear strategic vision for the essential skills and plays a proactive role in the implementation, underpinned by effective monitoring, of the essential skills provision. The main areas for improvement include, for example, ineffective monitoring of the progress of learners, and the need to improve learning and teaching, as 36% was evaluated as less than good.

It is appropriate that DEL raised the requirements to teach the essential skills both in terms of the tutor's subject expertise and pedagogic development. It is also timely and appropriate that DEL has developed a continuous professional development module with the University of Ulster with the aim of improving the quality of learning and teaching in the essential skills.

Three of the colleges inspected have engaged to good effect with community and disadvantaged groups, as part of their community and economic engagement strategies, to meet the needs of adult learners with essential skills and other employability needs.

Leadership and management

The strategic management of the curriculum was good or better in three of the colleges inspected; in two of them it was very good or outstanding. In both of these colleges, along with a strong commitment to meet the needs of all learners, the curriculum offer is outward-looking and relevant to the demands of the wider economy, but also

addresses social exclusion. The high quality discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is characterised by a curriculum provision which meets well the personal, social and employability skills of the learners; they acquire and apply good team-working skills, along with effective communication and social skills. In one college, however, the curriculum planning lacks appropriate coherence and is insufficiently aligned with the emerging skills needs of the local and regional economy.

The senior curriculum management teams in three of the colleges inspected have developed robust data management systems to inform curriculum planning, and to track the progress of learners and underpin the self-evaluation and quality improvement strategies. The availability of benchmarked data from DEL, along with the econometric analysis of this performance data, has focused and helped colleges and the sector considerably in this regard.

There is good evidence in three of the colleges inspected of effective action being taken by senior management teams to address underperformance. This has led to a significant improvement in course planning, timetabling and overall outcomes for the learners.

The levels and impact of economic engagement were good or better in all of the colleges; it is noteworthy that they were outstanding in two of the

colleges inspected. It is evident that the colleges are now becoming key strategic hubs in supporting industry, particularly in the new priority skills⁷ and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related areas; they are making a significant contribution in the efforts to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy.

The colleges inspected provide mostly high quality educational and training programmes to pupils in post-primary and special schools as part of the Entitlement Framework. With the exception of one college, the provision at key stage 4 and post-16 is broad and balanced and supports well the career aspirations of the pupils, particularly in STEM-related areas.

Most lecturing staff in the colleges inspected are well-qualified and experienced and have opportunities to enhance their professional and technical skills. The DEL has piloted a teaching module for part-time lecturers, through the University of Ulster. The ETI evaluation of this pilot identified key strengths in the management of the module and its impact on developing the pedagogic practice and wider skills of the participating lecturers.

With the exception of one college inspected, the quality of the accommodation, specialist resources and ICT infrastructure were at least good; in two colleges, it was very good, with some facilities being outstanding.

⁷ The sectors identified to rebalance the economy are: business services/ICT; financial services; food and drink processing and manufacturing; advanced manufacturing; advanced engineering. The sectors identified to rebuild the economy are: hospitality and catering/tourism; retail.

4



Related Strategies and Strategic Context

Programme for Government

The Northern Ireland Executive has made the economy the top priority in its Programme for Government⁸ for 2011-2015. The key strategic priorities of the Programme for Government are:

- ▶ growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future;
- ▶ creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and wellbeing;
- ▶ protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities;
- ▶ building a strong and shared community; and
- ▶ delivering high quality and efficient public services.

The Programme for Government highlights the importance of recognising the inter-relationships that exist between these priorities.

Economic Strategy

The overarching goal of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy⁹ is to improve the economic performance of the local economy, with the key drivers being innovation, research and development (R&D) and the skills of our workforce. The strategy recognises the need to improve the skills and employability of the entire workforce so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion.

The strategy also recognises the need to target areas which have the greatest potential for growth including: Telecommunications and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Life and Health Sciences, Agri-Food, Advanced Materials and Advanced Engineering. It focuses on developing export-led economic growth as the best means of increasing employment and wealth in Northern Ireland and improving the overall level of competitiveness.

⁸ Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015 www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg.

⁹ Northern Ireland Executive Economic Strategy (2012) www.northernireland.gov.uk/economic-strategy.

Innovation Strategy

Innovation is one of the primary drivers of economic growth, underpinning the growth of the best performing regional and national economies across the world. Innovation enables firms to stay ahead of competitors, and with global economic conditions remaining challenging the focus on innovation is now more important than ever. The Northern Ireland Executive has placed innovation at the heart of its efforts to transform our economy into one that is truly knowledge based and export focused.

The Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland, ‘InnovateNI’¹⁰, sets out the key actions necessary to support businesses in all areas of the economy to become more innovative. The strategy aims to stimulate a step change in innovation across the economy, and, in so doing to deliver a vision that Northern Ireland, by 2025, will be recognised as an innovation hub and will be one of the UK’s leading high-growth, knowledge-based regions which embraces creativity and innovation at all levels of society.

Northern Ireland Skills Profile

Skills are central to economic prosperity; the skills profile is heavily correlated with economic prosperity, at both the macro and the individual-level. This is recognised in the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy. While skill levels in

Northern Ireland have been improving over the last decade (as the Executive has adopted a more strategic focus on skills), other countries have been improving at a faster rate, leaving Northern Ireland some distance behind the best performing countries. We know the levels and types of skills that will be required if Northern Ireland is to meet the Executive’s economic vision. The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, ‘*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*’¹¹ provides the overarching framework for delivery in this important area.

Skills Strategy

The Skills Strategy, ‘*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*’¹² highlights that the skills of the local workforce have a key role to play in helping Northern Ireland to reach its full economic potential. The strategy aims to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder in order to:

- ▶ raise the skills level of the whole workforce;
- ▶ raise productivity;
- ▶ increase levels of social inclusion by enhancing the employability of those currently excluded from the labour market; and
- ▶ help to secure Northern Ireland’s future in a global marketplace.

¹⁰ <http://www.detini.gov.uk/innovation-strategy-2014-2025.pdf>.

¹¹ Department for Employment and Learning, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland “Success through Skills – Transforming Futures”, 2011 www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.

¹² Department for Employment and Learning, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland “Success through Skills – Transforming Futures”, 2011 www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.

The Skills Strategy examines the current skills base, considers the skills we will need in the future to grow the local economy and highlights a number of challenges which must be addressed if we are to have a workforce equipped with the skills needed by employers to rebalance and rebuild the economy. In particular, there will be an increased need:

- ▶ for people with higher level skills;
- ▶ for people with skills in STEM;
- ▶ for people with better management and leadership skills;
- ▶ to up-skill those people already in work; and
- ▶ to attract certain skills into the workforce, as the economy grows.

Priority Sectors

Following the direction set within the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and the Skills Strategy, priority sectors were identified for the focus of employment and skills provision.

The sectors identified to **rebalance** the economy are:

- ▶ business services (specifically ICT);
- ▶ financial services;
- ▶ food and drink processing and manufacturing;

- ▶ advanced manufacturing; and
- ▶ advanced engineering.

The sectors identified to **rebuild** the economy are:

- ▶ hospitality and catering (in support of tourism); and
- ▶ retail.

A commitment has also been given to support the following new and emerging sectors:

- ▶ life and health sciences;
- ▶ creative industries; and
- ▶ sustainable construction.

STEM Strategy

The Stem Strategy ‘*Success through STEM*’¹³, produced by the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, aims to promote STEM, and was endorsed by the Executive in March 2011. The STEM strategy outlines how the government intends to encourage more of our young people to study and pursue a career in STEM.

13 The STEM Strategy, Success through STEM, 2011 www.delni.gov.uk/government-stem-strategy.

Qualifications

The need to ensure that programmes of learning lead to qualifications that meet the needs of, and are valued by, employers and learners is a paramount consideration. Therefore, irrespective of whether it is in respect of apprenticeships, youth training programmes or mainstream further education provision, further education colleges will need to take account of the outcomes of the qualifications strategy that is being developed for Northern Ireland. As outlined in ‘Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships (June 2014)’, colleges will, with employers and universities, have a key role in the design and development of the professional and technical qualifications that are used here.

Refresh of Essential Skills, and Review of GCSEs in English and Mathematics

Further education colleges are primary providers of Essential Skills courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT to adults and to 16 to 18 year olds in order to raise the standard of the Northern Ireland population in these important skill areas. To a lesser extent, colleges also provide GCSE courses in English and mathematics. The Department for Employment and Learning is currently undertaking a refresh of its Essential Skills provision which is expected to be in place by September 2016. The Department of Education is also carrying out a review of GCSEs in English and mathematics, and this will help inform the nature of the future educational landscape for those in schools

as well as those undertaking Essential Skills provision. Both reviews will also inform literacy, numeracy and ICT provision as part of apprenticeship, youth training and further education programmes.

Higher Education

Colleges are major providers of higher education (HE) provision in Northern Ireland. Colleges’ role in raising participation in higher education is, therefore, important, and new approaches, including the use of technology, are being piloted in two colleges as part of the implementation of the Higher Education Strategy. With the need to increase the proportion of the workforce that is qualified to level 4 and above, and with the introduction of higher level apprenticeships, colleges will continue to have a strong contribution to make to the delivery of the Department’s Higher Education Strategy.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

The new further education strategy consultation document, and the recent consultations on apprenticeships and youth training, all emphasise the importance of reliable, well informed and independent careers advice being available to individuals as they progress through the various stages of the education and training system. Colleges also offer advice and guidance to individuals enrolling on their courses. This will have to take account of ‘Careers Review 2014 (October 2014)’, and to complement the careers advice provided by the Department’s Careers Service and by other parts of the education system.

Economic Inactivity Strategy

As part of the Programme for Government 2011 – 2015, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in conjunction with a number of other departments, have developed a strategy to reduce economic inactivity in Northern Ireland through skills, training, incentives and job creation. This is in direct response to the historically high levels of economic inactivity experienced in Northern Ireland and is a reflection of the significance placed by the Executive in seeking to tackle the issue in a progressive and sustainable basis. Further education colleges will have a key delivery role in this area.

Disability Employment and Skills Strategy

The Department is currently developing a new Disability Employment and Skills Strategy, to ensure that disability support, and the associated resources, are focused on those people with more significant disability-related barriers to work, and who, therefore, need additional specialist, flexible and personalised support. The strategy is being produced in conjunction with the local disability sector, which has a significant role to play in helping to achieve the key objective of the proposed strategy, which is to assist as many disabled people as possible to find, sustain and retain paid employment, or to start up their own business. The strategy will focus on young disabled people who are participating in the range of transition services that

the department has lead responsibility for, including professional and technical education and training, employability skills training programmes, and further and higher education. The proposed strategy presents an opportunity to take a collaborative and cohesive approach to creating a clear pathway from education through to sustained employment for those young people who have significant disability-related barriers, but who want to work and are capable of doing so. Further education colleges will continue to be key providers for this important group of learners.

Economic and Labour Market Operating Context

It is clear that the global economic downturn has impacted significantly on the Northern Ireland economy. The downturn in Northern Ireland was the deepest and most prolonged within the UK, with the economy estimated to have shrunk by 15.0% (compared to UK – 7.0%)¹⁴. This has compounded long-standing structural challenges; for example, a high inactivity rate, low productivity, a low employment rate, a weak private sector etc. However, the economy is now in a period of transition with more positive indicators suggesting recovery is taking root, albeit tentatively and with significant risks still present. The Executive is focused on promoting well balanced, outward-looking growth, centred around exports and key growth sectors.

Youth Unemployment

¹⁴ Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Review – Background Evidence Presentation, February 2015.

In Northern Ireland, unemployment rates are high amongst young people, having doubled since 2007.¹⁵ Youth unemployment has significant short term and long term costs to the economy,¹⁶ and periods of unemployment at a young age can have a permanent impact on an individual when it comes to future employment prospects and earnings.

Social Context

The economic downturn has had a detrimental social impact in Northern Ireland, for example in terms of health, crime, social mobility etc. However, this is very difficult to quantify. Rising (relative) poverty and income inequality have been aspects of the recession across the UK as real incomes have fallen, particularly so in Northern Ireland and within the younger age cohort. The further education sector has a strong track record of engaging with individuals from the most deprived backgrounds, often individuals with multiple barriers to learning and those who are furthest from the labour market.

Earnings and Returns to Education

Across the board, professional and technical qualifications are strongly associated with improved labour market outcomes, in terms of the likelihood of being in employment and the wage premium in employment. Higher skilled

occupations such as ‘professional roles’ are associated with higher earning whilst sales and elementary occupations are associated with lower earnings. The impact of education and training on earnings increases over time, and increases with higher levels of qualifications achieved. The same holds true for the impact of education and training on employment prospects.

Demographics

Northern Ireland has a young population (0-14 years); younger than the UK average and second only to the Republic of Ireland within the European Union. This represents a potential economic strength for the future if harnessed fully. Despite having proportionately more young people, the demographic in this age is in transition. The population of 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland has fallen from just under 52,000 in 2007 to an estimated 49,000 in 2012, a fall of 5.8%. The fall in the number of young people is expected to continue until about 2018, when it is expected to bottom out at around 45,000. After that, it is expected to rise again and recover to 50,000 by the end of the next decade (around 2030).¹⁷

15 DFP, Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, January-March 2014, 28 May 2014, http://www.detini.gov.uk/ifs_quarterly_supplement_january-march_2014.pdf?rev=0.

16 The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), Commission on Youth Unemployment, Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford, February 2012, http://cesi.org.uk/sites/default/files/event_downloads/ACEVO_report.pdf page 4.

17 Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Review – Background Evidence Presentation, February 2015, Source: NISRA

5



Recent Reforms Impacting the Sector

Apprenticeships Strategy and Review of Youth Training

The new apprenticeships system and the youth training system at level 2 will form a significant proportion of the provision to be delivered by the further education colleges in the future.

The skills barometer, the Strategic Advisory Forum and the Sector Partnerships that will be established as part of the implementation of the apprenticeship programme and the youth training system will be instrumental in identifying skills demand and in ensuring that professional and technical qualifications meet the needs of employers and the economy. These qualifications will not only form the basis for apprenticeships by occupation, but will also be the basis for professional and technical qualifications that are delivered at level 3 through mainstream further education provision.

Further education college staff will have a critical role to play in working with employers and other key stakeholders with regards to qualifications and programmes of learning. They will be representatives on the Strategic Advisory Forum, and will have a particularly prominent role in working with employers and other stakeholders on the strategic partnerships to design and develop high quality and economically relevant qualifications and curriculum.

Colleges, together with universities, will be the primary providers of the new apprenticeships system. The requirements of that system will inform the nature of much of the provision delivered by colleges at level 3 and above, and will determine how that provision is funded.

Colleges will, with partners, be key providers of the new youth training system at level 2. As that programme will prepare 16 to 24 year olds to progress into level 3 apprenticeships or level 3 further education provision, the programmes of learning and qualifications offered through the new youth training system will have to facilitate that progression. The review of youth training envisages that the mechanisms described above to design and develop qualifications and curriculum for apprenticeships will also be used for provision at level 2, again with vital involvement of further education colleges. The review has also introduced the concept of a baccalaureate with a number of core components including a relevant professional and technical qualification, literacy and numeracy where required and the development of employability and enterprise skills through mandatory work placements. Significantly, the review of youth training also proposes that the new youth training system will, effectively, replace further education provision at level 2 for young people, and Training for Success at level 2.

The development of qualifications for use in the new apprenticeships and youth training systems will be part of a new qualifications strategy that is currently being developed. This will ensure that further education colleges and other training organisations deliver qualifications that are valued by employers and learners, and other users of qualifications, particularly in terms of their high economic relevance.

Working with the New District Councils

With effect from 1st April 2015, the existing district councils in Northern Ireland were reduced in number from 26 to 11 under the programme of local government reform. The restructured councils are taking responsibility for a number of new functions and powers which were delivered previously by the NI Executive, including local economic development and community development through the Northern Ireland Community Planning Foundation Programme. The new councils also aim to develop effective partnerships between organisations delivering public services in the council area and the communities they serve. Colleges have been proactive in developing working relationships with the current councils, but there will be a need for these relationships to be built upon and developed further in light of the new roles and powers that have been delegated to the new councils. There are considerable opportunities for colleges and councils to work together to the benefit of citizens in their respective catchment areas.

6



Current Practice within the Sector

This section of the report sets out information gathered from a range of sources to identify current practice within the further education sector in Northern Ireland and internationally. The evidence was gathered from internet research, policy papers, stakeholder engagement and liaison with staff in the further education colleges in Northern Ireland.

A range of case studies have been included to support the background material. Some of the case studies have been taken from research and policy papers, whilst others have been provided by the six Northern Ireland further education colleges to highlight and showcase best practice across the sector.

The evidence presented in this section does not cover all of the themes within the main further education strategy consultation document (for example college partnerships and funding model and college sustainability) due to background on these themes being covered within the main consultation document.

Current Practice: Economic Development

Supporting economic and workforce development has never been more critical and will be the primary objective for the further education sector. Using the new skills barometer that is being developed as part of the apprenticeships and youth training reviews, colleges have a key role to play in identifying the skills and qualification needs of individual employers, with a particular focus on those sectors which are important to rebalancing and rebuilding the economy of Northern Ireland. Colleges also provide direct support to employers, for example, upskilling their employees and supporting them to become more competitive, to innovate and to source new markets.

Working alongside Invest Northern Ireland, colleges also have a crucial role to play in ensuring a pipeline of highly skilled individuals to support inward investment. They are also key partners with government and others in the delivery of Northern Ireland's Innovation Strategy.

Identifying Future Skills and Qualifications Needs of Employers

The Department's reviews of apprenticeships, and youth training at level 2, have provided detailed evidence for the benefits of a robust professional and technical education and training system to employers, learners and the economy. In particular, they have emphasised the need for the involvement of employers in the process of identifying skills needs both now and in the future.

The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships: 'Securing Our Success' includes a project in relation to developing a Northern Ireland skills barometer, which will identify where further skills development will be required. The barometer will be relevant not only to informing the apprenticeship model but also in shaping all other areas of skills provision including, further education, higher education and youth training. It will act as a driver for the further development and delivery of careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Ultimately, a regular high quality skills barometer will act in strong support of the delivery of Northern Ireland's Economic Strategy. It is anticipated that a tool of

this nature will provide the Department with a clear indication of where the skills gaps/shortages are currently (by occupation/sector/business, by size and by skills level), where they are emerging and where they are likely to emerge over the longer term. Further, based on the assessment of skills supply, the barometer should identify clearly where further skills development will be required (by level and skill type). This assessment will identify the likely scale of skills development needs and whether interventions are required immediately, over the medium term and/or over the longer term.

Qualifications and Curriculum Design and Development

In addition to providing mainstream further education provision, colleges will, with universities, be primary providers of the new apprenticeship programme in Northern Ireland, and, along with training organisations, will also be key providers of the new youth training system at level 2.

The Department's new approach to apprenticeships, and youth training at level 2, and the strategy for qualifications in Northern Ireland all point to a changing qualifications landscape. In essence, the qualifications system needs to be much clearer, and the complexity and duplication that exists in the current system needs to be removed. In addition, employers need to be more involved than at present in the content and design of professional and technical qualifications to ensure that their needs are met effectively.

This approach mirrors many of the recommendations in the OECD's Skills beyond Schools review of postsecondary vocational education and training; for example, that vocational qualifications stand the best chance of relevance to employers and value to students when they are developed, updated and delivered with the full engagement of all relevant labour market stakeholders. The qualification system itself should, ideally, deliver a manageable number of qualifications, avoiding proliferation and overlaps, and the content should be nationally consistent, with any local flexibility in design and delivery being limited in scope.¹⁸ Where the qualifications system fails to respond to the needs of stakeholders, common issues are a lack of industry engagement, weak assessment practices and an over-proliferation of similar qualifications.

In addition to qualifications development, there is compelling evidence to show that curriculum development and design should be a collaborative process so that colleges, training providers and employers are directly involved in shaping programmes that reflect up to date needs of occupations and workplaces, and which are based on a broader, more aspirational concept of competence.¹⁹ This, in turn, provides a clear line of sight to work on all vocational programmes for learners, employers and providers.²⁰ Such engagement with employers sends

a signal to the learner (and his/her parents who often have an important role in the learner's choice of pathways) that the VET programme has value in the labour market. Such signals affect in a positive way the image of VET.²¹

International best practice confirms that the partnership approach to curriculum design with employers groups, sector skill councils and colleges, as outlined above, is required. Finland, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands all place emphasis on the accreditation of prior learning, competence based qualifications and work based learning. In Switzerland, the involvement of professional organisations is required by law. These organisations draft the core curricula for college programmes and the examination rules (covering admission requirements, occupational profiles, and knowledge and skills to be acquired) for approval by Swiss authorities at national level. These organisations also take a role in supervising examinations.²²

In the Netherlands, employers drive the vocational education and training system, primarily through a national, sectorally based group of knowledge centres. Each knowledge centre has a strategic board with employer, trade union and training provider representation.²³ These are similar to UK Sector Skills Councils, in that their remit is to promote skills development in a specific economic sector. Employers'

18 OECD, Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, April 2014, Page 59

19 Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning: It's About Work – Excellent Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning 2013, Page 14. <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/26611>

20 Ibid Page 15.

21 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, Page 10. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf

22 OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: Skills Beyond School Synthesis Report <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/Skills-Beyond-School-Synthesis-Report.pdf>

23 UKCES The Vocational Education and Training System in the Netherlands, Briefing Paper 2013. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18241/1/briefing-paper-vocational-education-system-netherlands.pdf>

interests are established in legislation, and employer influence appears strongest in the design of qualifications.²⁴

In Finland qualification requirements are drawn up by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) in tripartite co-operation between employers, employees and the educational sector. Independent self employed people are also represented. Co-operation with other stakeholders is carried out in order to ensure that qualifications support flexible and efficient transition to the labour market as well as occupational development and career change.²⁵

Case Study – South Eastern Regional College

In order to professionalise its current workforce, Templeton Robinson wanted to upskill existing staff members to ensure they were up to date with external legislation and regulations affecting the property market. With no such qualification in Northern Ireland, Templeton Robinson collaborated with South Eastern Regional College to develop and introduce a level 3 Diploma in the Sale of Residential Property, which became recognised by the National Association of Estate Agents. As a result of the course, 12 Templeton Robinson employees were upskilled and have gained formal qualifications to support their existing experience, which has led to improved customer service and business performance.²⁶

Priority Skills Areas

As discussed in section four (Related Strategies and Strategic Context), in order to support the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy’s aim both to rebuild and rebalance the economy, the Minister for Employment and Learning has identified a number of economic sectors upon which the Department will focus its employment and skills provision. This approach is advocated within the new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, ‘Success through Skills – Transforming Futures’.

STEM

The growing sectors of the economy will require an increasing number of skilled workers with qualifications in STEM subjects. Therefore, a local workforce equipped with these skills is hugely important in terms of attracting foreign direct investment to Northern Ireland and driving future competitiveness and economic growth. At the very time that job opportunities in the STEM sector are expected to increase, we face the challenge of encouraging more young people to study in STEM areas - in 2009/10 there were 44,321 regulated ‘broad’ STEM enrolments and 27,630 regulated ‘narrow STEM in our colleges, but in 2013/14 this had decreased to 37,466 and 25,577 respectively.^{27 28}

24 Cedefop Report, Netherlands, VET in Europe – Country Report. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/netherlands-vet-europe-country-report-2012>

25 Cedefop Report, Finland, VET in Europe – Country Report. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/finland-vet-europe-country-report-2012>

26 SERC publication: Services for Employers

27 Further Education in Northern Ireland: 2009/10 to 2013/14 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/annex-a-fe-activity-statistical-bulletin-0910-to-1314-december-2014-revised-as-at-24th-april-2015.pdf>

28 For definitions of ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ STEM and ‘regulated’ enrolments see Annex C

It is recognised in the STEM Strategy, 'Success through STEM' that the colleges are key players in addressing the challenges presented in increasing the number of skilled workers with STEM skills and qualifications, and delivering on the recommendations set out in the strategy. Colleges provide a range of courses up to degree level in STEM subjects, and are instrumental in promoting STEM careers pathways through events and activities delivered to school pupils. South West

College has a dedicated STEM Centre which has been designed to capture and attract the imagination of young people and promote interest in the vast range of career paths and options available to scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians. Other activities include the Business & Education through Skills and Training (BEST) Awards which celebrate the creative and innovative talent within the colleges in the area of STEM.

Case Study – South West College, STEM Centre

The STEM Centre is a specially designed state-of-the-art teaching facility which is focused exclusively on delivering educational and interactive activities in the area of STEM. The STEM Centre is designed to bring a 'wow' factor to STEM education and generate impactful learning experiences through hi-tech interaction and collaboration. Activities within the Centre are offered to school pupils (Key Stage 3&4) and college students.

Located in South West College, the 350 square metre facility is the first dedicated, purpose-built STEM Centre of its kind in the UK and Ireland. The STEM Centre is designed to capture and attract the imagination of young people and promote interest in the vast range of career paths and options available. Feedback from participants indicates that 96.0% are more likely to select STEM subjects for further study following a visit to the STEM Centre.



Higher Level Skills

As the Northern Ireland economy develops there will be an increasing need for higher level skills and a reduced need for lower level skills. As highlighted in the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy, the proportion of those in employment with qualifications at level 4 to level 8 will need to rise to 52% in 2020 from 33% in 2008²⁹. Conversely, the proportion of those in employment with low qualifications is forecast to fall to 10% by 2020. Colleges will need to focus provision at levels four and above in order to supply industry with the level of skills needed to grow the economy. Between 2003/04 and 2013/14 there was a 394% increase in regulated enrolments at level 5 indicating that the colleges are already focussing on higher level provision.

In Northern Ireland, colleges deliver the vast majority of intermediate level HE provision including Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. Intermediate level HE is essential to the future development of the economy, as there is good evidence to suggest that the current skills gaps are most acute at a level that is represented by HE qualifications below degree level, particularly the two-year work-focused provision.

Colleges will have a major role in the delivery of apprenticeships at level 3 and at higher levels. At present, South West College, Southern Regional College, Northern Regional College and Belfast Metropolitan College are delivering pilot higher level apprenticeships in five occupational areas covering professional services, ICT, engineering, accountancy and life sciences. In total, there are now over 120 higher level apprentices working with 46 different employers across Northern Ireland.

The Department intends to take forward further higher level apprenticeship pilots over the next 12 months - with approximately 400 new higher level apprenticeship places being available from September 2015 in sectors including Renewable Technologies and Agri-Food. It is anticipated that further education delivery of higher level apprenticeships will continue to expand significantly over the coming months and years as employers see the value in this system of training their workforce for the future, and as young people experience the benefits associated with learning while earning.

²⁹ The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland "Success through Skills – Transforming Futures", 2011 www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures

Case Study: Southern Regional College and Norbrook Laboratories Ltd

Norbrook Technologies engaged with Southern Regional College to develop a pilot two-year Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) programme in Applied Industrial Science, equivalent to a Foundation Degree. This programme allows Norbrook to “grow their own” and shape these new employees to fit in with the company’s strategic aims and objectives. Norbrook set the entry criteria and SRC facilitated the recruitment process by advertising the positions on the college Job Hub as well as local media, shortlisting the applications and presenting the successful applicants to Norbrook for interview.

Benefits: This programme provides learners with clear, achievable ladders of progression to train to the highest level whilst also gaining a professional qualification. The paid Apprenticeship consists of four days working at Norbrook and one day off-the-job training at Southern Regional College so participants really can earn while they learn. This Higher Level Apprenticeship provides a real alternative to a more traditional university route.

Inward Investment

Northern Ireland is successful in attracting Foreign Direct Investment, and it has been reported that companies that have located in Northern Ireland have been attracted by the skills system.³⁰

The Assured Skills programme delivers a range of activities and interventions guaranteeing potential inward investment companies, or existing investment companies wishing to expand, that Northern Ireland has the ability to satisfy their future skills and training needs. The further education colleges sit at the heart of the programme by demonstrating the agility, flexibility and innovation to respond quickly and deliver the skilled workforce needed for those potential investors.

Assured Skills also enhances the capability of Northern Ireland to respond to the needs of potential investors by upskilling lecturers to anticipate future skills needs, and create pools of talent by upskilling unemployed graduates through the Academy model. This is a short term intervention to help companies and sectors meet specific needs. Further education colleges are key deliverers of this initiative, ensuring that appropriately skilled people are available when they are needed.

³⁰ NI Executive, Economic Strategy – Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity, SWOT Analysis, 2012: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

Since 2011/12, there have been 18 Assured Skills projects supporting the creation of almost 5,000 jobs, with a commitment of £6.54million from the Department for Employment and Learning. These projects will add £112million per year to the Northern Ireland economy when all of the jobs are created. In the 2014/15 financial year alone, eight Assured Skills projects were announced, supporting the creation of 2,073 jobs.

Assured Skills projects have included: Caterpillar Materials Handler project (Northern Regional College/Belfast Metropolitan College), ICT Software Testers academy (South Eastern Regional College/Belfast Metropolitan College), Data Analytics Academy and Cloud Academy (Belfast Metropolitan College), and a Software Professionals Academy (Belfast Metropolitan College, Southern Regional College, Northern Regional College, North West Regional College, and South Eastern Regional College).

Case Study – Belfast Metropolitan College

The growing demand for software skills to support Northern Ireland's burgeoning ICT sector has prompted Belfast Metropolitan College to develop, in partnership, a new style curriculum which is reaping benefits in terms of expanding access to skilled ICT graduates. The Academy Model, supported with funding from DEL's Assured Skills programme and connected to the pipeline of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) clients with Invest Northern Ireland, presents a unique solution to meeting the needs of employers. It consists of intensive 15 week programmes with 95%+ progression into employment.

The college has also worked with Deloitte to establish the Data Analytics Training Academy. This bespoke programme gives learners a unique opportunity to gain highly sought after skills in the exciting and cutting edge field of data analytics which ensures that companies and organisations make the best business decisions. In a similar way the college has also collaborated with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in developing and delivering a new bespoke qualification for trainee developers who will help design and implement IT-enabled research programmes as part of PwC's global centre of excellence for research. The Software Testers Academy is another innovative approach developed by the college to provide non-ICT graduates with the skills and experience required to take up exciting new opportunities in the ICT industry. Software testing and quality assurance is increasingly a key growth area in this internationally focused sector.

Case Study – South Eastern Regional College and Magellan Aerospace

South Eastern Regional College in conjunction with Magellan Aerospace, Greyabbey, runs the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining Academy. The Academy is funded jointly by Magellan and the Department for Employment and Learning under the Assured Skills programme and saw 12 existing Magellan Aerospace staff being up-skilled in the area of CNC Machining.

Magellan Human Resources Manager, Jennifer McFarland said: “The specialist training was designed to advance the knowledge and capabilities of our team and was tailored to suit our needs. The competencies achieved by the course will increase efficiency by reducing cost, minimizing waste and improving productivity. We are confident the course will have a direct impact on the productivity and competitiveness of the company in the global marketplace.”

Direct Support to Employers

In addition to providing training and skills to individuals and employees, colleges provide direct support to industry in a number of ways including product design, research and development, business mentoring, business improvement techniques, innovation, business incubation, and knowledge transfer.

Northern Ireland is a small business economy. Figures show that small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) account for 98.2% of all businesses, with medium businesses (50-249) accounting for 1.5%, and large businesses (250+) accounting for 0.3% of total business within Northern Ireland. Micro businesses (fewer than 10 employees) account for 89.1% of the total business in Northern Ireland. The role of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) is, therefore, vital in improving the economic competitiveness of Northern Ireland, and it is important that the colleges work with them to deliver the support they need.

Colleges are the recognised skills provider for a range of DEL and Invest Northern Ireland initiatives and programmes including the Employer Support Programme which consists of two main strands: ‘Skills Focus’ through which colleges deliver a unique tailored training solution to businesses to meet their identified skills needs; and ‘Innovate Us’ which promotes, encourages and facilitates collaborative working between business and further education in order to provide small businesses with the skills and capacity they need to engage in innovation activities and research and development across the business.

This programme has made it possible for many SMEs and micro businesses to access expertise and innovation know-how for the first time.

Case Study: Northern Regional College and Chieftain Trailers

Chieftain Trailers, a family run business specialising in the production of tractor drawn low loaders and dump trailers identified that a lack of knowledge in the operation of robotic cells had led to an under utilisation of equipment. As a result, Chieftain noted a slower turn-around on some of their products, an issue which would continue to hinder the company unless addressed. Due to the complexity of this type of equipment there was a need for expert knowledge in how to best use and setup cells to maximise their benefit, develop the product range, increase the OEE (Overall Equipment Efficiency) of these pieces of expensive capital spend and also to improve productivity.

The company approached Northern Regional College which worked with them to develop a programme of upskilling in the area of robotic welding, and specifically in looking at the configuration of robotic cells in relation to tooling and fixturing within the existing welding cells. This programme gave Chieftain the opportunity to better utilise the Robotic equipment and maximise its potential and versatility by looking at jiggging and selection of which parts are best suited for this process. As a result of the upskilling, Northern Regional College has enabled Chieftain to include substantial robotic welding as a service and led them in the development of this as a desirable manufacturing process.

Innovation

Innovation, research and development, and knowledge exchange may once have been thought of as the domain of the higher education sector, but this is certainly no longer the case.

There are many examples of where higher and further education have come together to develop, design and deliver innovative projects for employers, and to develop employers' ability to innovate.

'Connected' is the first and only knowledge exchange programme in the UK to be delivered across both the higher and further education sectors. Funded by the

Department, Connected is delivered by Queen's University, Ulster University and the six further education colleges. It helps businesses improve their performance by providing a one-stop-shop access to a broad portfolio of knowledge and technology support services, from problem definition through to solution identification and implementation.

Colleges are also delivery partners of the Invest Northern Ireland 'Innovation Vouchers' programme, along with the universities and other research bodies. The vouchers enable SMEs to tap into specialist knowledge to develop forward-thinking solutions or ideas to expand, and to improve or create new products,

services and processes that help them to compete more effectively. Importantly, the vouchers encourage collaboration and are of critical importance in encouraging firms

to engage in innovation, because they minimize the risk for businesses in taking the first step to becoming innovative.

Case Study: South West College

South West College has a number of specialist Innovation Centres which aim to enhance the college curriculum and introduce students to the very latest technology, and also to enhance the college's ability to deliver solutions to industry. For example, the Image Creative Technologies Studio, at the college's Enniskillen campus, offers resources to support both curriculum and industry in 3D animation, digital composition, "app" development, motion capture, video game development, interactive marketing and "promo creation". The college's Innotech Centre at the Cookstown campus aims to nurture and grow innovation and technology through three key concepts; broaden the international reach of the college; develop capacity to deliver high quality industrial knowledge transfer and technology development; and extend the capability of the college to deliver bespoke training and technical mentoring to industry in priority skills areas.

Case Study: South Eastern Regional College

Takker, a manufacturing company which won investment on the Irish 'Dragon's Den', produces a picture hanging tool which replaces the use of hammer and nails. The company wanted to grow their global market share through new product development, and after securing an Innovation Voucher from Invest Northern Ireland, they chose South Eastern Regional College as their preferred delivery partner to produce prototypes which give designers an understanding of how the product would look and feel. By using the latest CAD techniques South Eastern Regional College created 3D designs and also carried out testing on materials which would be used in the manufacturing process. Before moving to volume production the college used Rapid Prototyping to produce a prototype of the new product. This was the first opportunity to see what the final product looked like, a vital process to identify any areas for improvement in design. Takker were able to successfully launch a new product into the market. Development costs and the risk normally associated with new product development were reduced thanks to an improved process supported by South Eastern Regional College.

Current Practice: Social Inclusion

Colleges' primary and distinctive role in social inclusion is to provide individuals with the skills and qualifications they need to gain employment and to become economically active, with all the benefits that brings to individuals, the economy and society. Getting a job can support the life chances and well-being of individuals and their families. According to research undertaken by organisations such as the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), education is a strong predictor of attitudes and wellbeing. Education results in higher levels of active citizenship and promotes social cohesion. People who have attained higher levels of education are more likely to engage actively in civic activities and have improved social status.

In supporting social inclusion in this way, further education is not only a driver of *economic* change and prosperity but also *social* change and prosperity.

Who is Further Education for?

A key feature and strength of the further education sector is that it is accessible to all, both in terms of reaching all levels, types and age of learners, and also the fact that further education colleges are based locally and their reach extends into both urban and rural communities.

Further education students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of learning, work, and life experiences. For many people further education provides a second chance to obtain the education, skills and qualifications that they did not obtain through their formal education.

The further education sector has a strong record in attracting learners with multiple barriers to learning and those furthest from the labour market, including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young people from a care background, young parents, prisoners and ex-offenders, and those disengaged from education and economic activity.

Further education students may be early school leavers, or school-leavers with no qualifications, as well as those school leavers studying 'A' Levels or undertaking apprenticeships. Other further education students may be adults wishing to improve their skills either for personal development and lifelong learning reasons, or to retrain/reskill in order to change career or gain promotion. Further education learners can also be in employment and undertaking upskilling courses, or unemployed and trying to improve their prospects of finding work.

The diversity of the further education student population is a strength in terms of being accessible to all, but also a challenge in terms of meeting the different needs of diverse learner groups.

Further education and Economic Participation

Research shows that labour productivity in Northern Ireland remains well below the UK average³¹, with low productivity seen across a number of key sectors, including financial services, agriculture, ICT, and construction. Higher skills levels are associated with higher productivity, higher wage levels and higher employment rates and economic growth. Wealthier economies with higher living standards tend to have a strong skills base. Targeting socially excluded groups and widening participation to further education will assist with the ambition to achieve high skills levels, full employment and increased economic competitiveness. A wider impact of participation in further education is social integration and interaction, developing independence and self esteem.

As part of the Programme for Government 2011 – 2015, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in conjunction with a number of other departments, has developed a strategy to reduce economic inactivity in Northern Ireland through skills, training, incentives and job creation. This is in direct response to the historically high levels of economic inactivity experienced in Northern Ireland and is a reflection of the significance placed by the Executive in seeking to tackle the issue in a progressive and sustainable basis. The strategy seeks

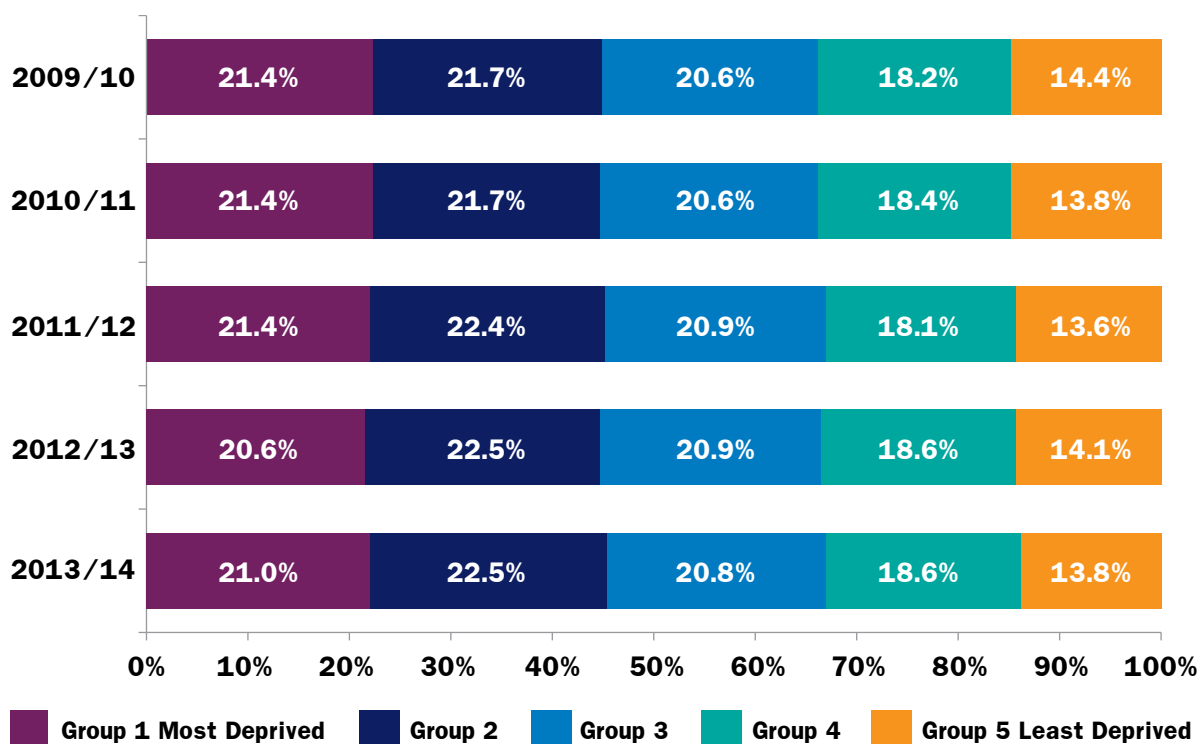
to help a number of specific economically inactive groups to make the transition towards, and into, the labour market by providing tailored support, incentives and solutions on a purely voluntary basis.

Participation by deprivation level

In 2013/14, further education enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the five groupings of deprivation. 43.5% of regulated enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. Just over a fifth of regulated enrolments, 21.0%, came from the most deprived quintile, compared to 13.8% from the least deprived or most affluent quintile.

31 Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Review – Background Evidence Presentation, February 2015

Figure 1; Regulated enrolments by deprivation quintiles 2013/14³²



Bars will not total 100% as the proportion of unknown postcodes are not presented here.

Students with Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities (SLDD)

The Disability Employment and Skills Strategy is being produced in conjunction with the local disability sector, which has a significant role to play in helping to achieve the key objective of the proposed strategy, which is to assist as many disabled people as possible to find, sustain and retain paid employment, or to start up their own business. The strategy will focus on young disabled people who are participating in the range of transition services that the department has lead responsibility for, including vocational, professional and employability skills training programmes, and further and higher education. The

proposed strategy presents an opportunity to take a collaborative and cohesive approach to creating a clear pathway from education through to sustained employment for those young people who have significant disability-related barriers, but who want to work and are capable of doing so. Further education colleges will be key providers for this important group of learners.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDI) makes it unlawful for institutions of further and higher education to treat students with disabilities less favourably, without justification, for a reason which relates to their disability. It also places a

32 Table derived from Further Education in Northern Ireland: 2009/10 to 2013/14 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/annex-a-fe-activity-statistical-bulletin-0910-to-1314-december-2014-revised-as-at-24th-april-2015.pdf>

duty on institutions to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people who have a disability are not put at a substantial disadvantage (compared to people who do not have a disability) in accessing further and higher education. Colleges are required to provide accessibility both to their premises and to the curriculum to all disabled students, or prospective students with disabilities. The Department assists the six colleges to fulfil this obligation by making £4.5 million funding available per year to support students with disabilities through the Additional Support Fund (ASF).

This funding provides ring-fenced financial assistance to colleges to help provide additional support to students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Around £2.5 million per annum of this funding helps further education colleges to provide technical and personal support for these students. Technical support includes specialised enabling equipment, such as brailers, Reading Edge equipment, IT adaptations, specialist software and related licences and IT hardware, hearing loops and conference folders. Personal support includes specialist tutors/advisers, such as hearing or visual impairment tutors, speech therapists, IT advisers, interpreters (for students with a hearing impairment), support workers/classroom assistants and note-takers. The Department has increased this element of the fund from £1.5 million to £2.5 million per year over the past two years.

Case Study – Belfast Metropolitan College

Belfast Metropolitan College's Centre for Supported Learning delivers high quality specialist further education and training opportunities to young people with moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties. The Centre is a recognised leader in its field and has a highly qualified and experienced staff team who tailor and deliver an extensive range of bespoke educational and vocational skills programmes in an integrated and meaningful way.

The Centre offers special schools the opportunity to tailor and develop a range of bespoke courses that will meet the requirements of the entitlement framework. The courses offered include: Steps Towards Enabling Progression; Access Belfast – Developing Independent Living Skills; Essential Skills; Introduction to College Programme; ASDAN Personal Skills Profile Entry Level 3.

The Centre has been working successfully in partnership with Hillcroft Special School for the last six years to develop and deliver a Transition to Adulthood programme to school leavers.

Essential Skills

In the 2013/14 academic year almost 70% of Essential Skills enrolments came through further education colleges. The vision for the Essential Skills strategy is “to provide opportunities for adults to update their Essential Skills to assist them in improving their overall quality of life, personal development and their employment opportunities and by so doing to promote greater economic development, social inclusion and cohesion”.

English Language Skills

Colleges also play a key role in the delivery of English language courses for those whose first language is not English. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses provide the skills which are needed to enable migrants and other foreign nationals living in Northern Ireland to participate fully in society, including gaining employment and availing of further education opportunities.

Support Services

Widening participation within further education does not stop at attracting learners into the system. It is also about providing appropriate support systems to retain those students, and give them the best chance of successful completion of courses, qualification attainment, and progression into further study or employment. Colleges provide the following services to support students:

- ▶ one-to-one mentoring;
- ▶ student counselling services;
- ▶ childcare and crèche facilities;
- ▶ safeguarding for vulnerable students;
- ▶ study skills, including planning, organisation and time management, and revision and exam techniques;
- ▶ financial advice and support; and
- ▶ careers advice.

Partnerships

It is recognised that the sector is effective at collaborating with a range of partners to promote social inclusion and widen participation. Colleges are committed to their work in this area, and they partner with numerous external bodies, including statutory agencies, private training organisations and the voluntary and community sector to target and deliver training to those learners who are hardest to reach. There are many examples of high quality provision within the voluntary and community sectors, and many courses are provided in response to requests from local groups, and are provided in informal venues which are close to home for the students.

Case Study – South West College

South West College, in association with local community centres, offers the ‘Step Up to Sustainable Employment’ (SUSE) programme for young people not in employment, education or training, and disadvantaged adults. This flexible programme includes personal and social development, essential (basic) skills, employability skills within a vocational context, specific tailored training, work sampling, and nationally recognised qualifications. Each SUSE participant has his/her own mentor who works with him/her on a one to one basis to identify all the barriers which are preventing him/her from progressing to work or training and to plan how best to address these barriers. The mentor will remain in close contact with all participants to support and guide them as they progress towards training or employment. The mentor will continue to support the participant even after they have progressed to training or obtained employment provided the participants wants their support.

Further education students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of learning, work, and life experiences. For many people further education provides a second chance to obtain the education, skills and qualifications that they did not obtain through their formal education.

Case Study – Partnership between Northern Ireland Prison Service and further education colleges to deliver learning and skills in prisons

In May 2015 Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) and North West Regional College (NWRC) entered into a partnership arrangement with the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) to provide learning and skills to prisoners in the three prison establishments, Magilligan, Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood College. BMC will provide training at Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood College and NWRC will deliver at Magilligan.

The partnership arrangement is a core part of the Reform of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and will offer a comprehensive education and professional and technical curriculum that will focus on prisoners' individual needs. The range of subjects available in each facility will include Essential Skills, literacy, numeracy and ICT, bricklaying, joinery, painting and decorating, as well as horticulture, hospitality and catering.

The partnership between the NIPS and the colleges will ensure that prisoners will now be able to access a range of high quality accredited training opportunities that will equip them with the skills they need to enhance their employment prospects upon release. It will also provide opportunities for prisoners to continue and progress their learning at their local further education college when they are released. The new arrangements will not only present opportunities to make a positive change in the lives of prisoners but to the lives of their families, and in turn help them to make a positive contribution to both the economy and wider society.

The partnership also demonstrates the colleges' commitment to social inclusion and improving the life chances for all students in building their self-confidence through learning. The total value of the service level agreement to be divided between NWRC and BMC will be in the region of £2.8 million.

Current Practice: Curriculum

As the world of work changes and adapts to change, colleges have a central role in reflecting this new learning with an increasing focus on giving individuals the skill of learning to learn. The curriculum for professional and technical subjects provided to learners is crucial. The content offered by colleges will be distinctive in its focus on economic relevance, on skills determined by employers and on ensuring that its learners are ready for the world of work by providing them with the employability skills and the competence in literacy and numeracy that are especially valued by employers. Delivery will be flexible and imaginative, and will make full use of technology to engage learners and enhance the teaching and learning experience. The use of technology in transforming professional and technical education and the manner in which it is accessed will create value for employers and individuals. Colleges, with universities, will be key deliverers of the new apprenticeships system and, with training providers, the youth training system at level 2. These systems will have a considerable impact on the nature of the curriculum delivered by colleges.

Technology Enhanced Learning

The Further Education Learning Technology Action Group was set up in January 2013 by BIS in England as a sector group to make practical recommendations aimed at ensuring the effective use of digital technology in learning, teaching and assessment in further education and skills. Members identified and developed six key themes: building capacity and capability of further education staff; the role of employers; the funding system; role of learners; regulatory bodies; and investment.³³

The Further Education Learning Technology Action Group report and City and Guild reports emphasise the requirement for an increased role of technology in teaching and learning. The Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning warn that the challenge for vocational teachers is that the speed at which businesses and learners adapt to and adopt new technologies is outstripping the way that teaching and learning changes.

³³ Further Education Learning Technology Action group (FELTAG) Recommendations <http://feltag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/FELTAG-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

Case Studies

South West College has successfully delivered level 3 blended learning to students in Zambia and a large part of their college development plan focuses on virtualisation. They also have “virtual” days where the majority of staff and students work totally remotely online for a day. Northern Regional College delivers foundation degrees in retailing entirely online in collaboration with all six colleges in Northern Ireland. South Eastern Regional College has developed through its MOODLE Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform, a range of online resources for all full-time courses across all campuses. This provides a range of stimulating resources for students to learn and helps support students with different learning styles across all levels.

Countries differ greatly in the extent to which they use workplace training to develop the vocational skills of young people.³⁶ In the Netherlands, getting experience in the workplace is fundamental to vocational training. Irrespective of whether a student takes a work based or school based pathway they must receive training in the workplace with an employer – this can range from 20% to 80% of their time depending on the pathway.³⁷

The European Commission has developed a framework of benefits from work-based learning for all stakeholders involved in its delivery, highlighted overleaf in Figure 2. As highlighted in the table, some of the benefits of workplace learning cannot be developed through short, taster periods and require a structured approach. Equally, while simulation of workplace environments can play a role in developing skills, especially when placed in an entrepreneurial context in co-operation with local businesses, the development of craftsmanship and of deep expertise highlighted in Figure 2 cannot be achieved in a purely school-based environment.³⁸

Work Based Learning/Work Placements

Work based learning (WBL) contributes to the quality of further education and ensures that the skills young people acquire are those needed in the labour market.³⁴ The OECD recommends that all professional education and training programmes should involve WBL as a mandatory condition of receiving government funding, and that it should be systematic, quality assured and credit-bearing.³⁵

34 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf page 10.

35 OECD, Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, April 2014, page 7.

36 OECD Skills Beyond School <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/43898338.pdf>

37 Cedefop Report, Netherlands VET in Europe – Country Report, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>

38 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf Pages 6 and 9.

Figure 2: Benefits of work-based learning (European Commission)³⁹

Benefits of work-based learning (Benefits in italics require substantial duration and a structured approach)	
Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Development of craftsmanship and deep professional expertise</i> ▶ Builds skills and competences required to operate in a workplace including transversal ones: such as communication, team work and problem solving ▶ More informed careers choices ▶ Develops career management skills ▶ Improved self-confidence and motivation ▶ First working experience which facilitates entry to the labour market
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Positive impact on supply of qualified labour ▶ <i>Addresses skills gaps through tailor made training</i> ▶ Positive effect on recruitment and retention ▶ <i>Improved productivity and performance</i> ▶ Positive effects on employed staff development
VET provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improved attractiveness of VET programmes ▶ Better quality of VET programmes and of learning outcomes ▶ Enhancement of relevance and responsiveness of VET ▶ Positive effect on teaching staff competences and development ▶ Better cooperation between VET schools and businesses
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Skilled labour force which responds better to the labour market needs ▶ <i>Positive contribution to youth employment</i> ▶ Cost-sharing of VET between the State and employers ▶ <i>Combined governance of VET</i> ▶ Contribution to innovation and creativity ▶ Has the potential to strengthen social inclusion and improve equal opportunities

Employers who offer VET have the opportunity to train young people in line with their exact requirements, addressing any skills shortages or gaps, thereby improving overall performance and productivity and increasing customer satisfaction. It is not only the young person and those directly involved in their training who benefit, but also other employees across the organisation through knowledge transfer.⁴⁰ In addition, VET contributes to innovation within businesses, since young people bring with them ‘new ideas and fresh thinking’.⁴¹

39 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf page 8.

40 Ibid., page 25.

41 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, page 112.

Case Study: the Flemish Government's Guideline on WBL

The Flemish Government in Belgium has recently published a document called 'Guidelines on high quality work-based learning'. This is a handbook that can be used by training providers to assist young people and employers to plan for and implement work placements, including clear and practical guidance in relation to preparing for the work placement, managing the implementation and providing opportunities for constructive feedback.⁴²

Case Study: underpinning work placements through legislation and contractual agreements in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Adult Education and Vocational Training Act, which came into force in 1997, provides a legislative framework for work placements delivered through the school-based learning pathways of the secondary vocational education system. This legislation defines the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, the necessary quality assurance procedures and the agreements required.

There is a standard "traineeship agreement" (Praktijkovereenkomst) which employers are required to sign when taking on trainees as part of an educational programme. This agreement specifies the aims and objectives of the traineeship as well as its scope, focus and learning content, including the tasks to be undertaken by the trainee, the supervision and evaluation mechanisms, the trainee's social security and insurance coverage and rights for compensation in terms of expenses.⁴³

42 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf page 13.

43 European Commission, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717> pages 4-5.

A key method of ensuring that work experience placements deliver on the terms of an agreement is through registration of participating employers. Accreditation and registration acts as a check on quality of provision, but also bestows a benefit to those employers who are recognised through this process, highlighting both their investment in training young people and their standards as high quality employers in their own right. The UKCES notes that this public acknowledgement can lead to increased brand loyalty and profile,⁴⁴ and in turn greater profits.⁴⁵ While careful screening of host organisations is becoming increasingly widespread as a quality assurance tool for apprenticeship and traineeship schemes,⁴⁶ the Netherlands, once again, provides the key case study in this respect, as accreditation is required through the Dutch Adult Education and Vocational Training Act, and is achieved with a minimal additional burden on employers.

Case study: registration and accreditation of employers in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (SBB), in conjunction with local colleges, recruits, accredits and monitors firms in relation to the quality of the work placements delivered through VET.

Participating employers are assessed every four years on the basis of specific quality criteria relating to the safety of the working environment, the experience and competence of in-house supervisory and training staff, and the capacity of the employer to generate sufficient training opportunities. Companies achieving accreditation are advertised on a public website (Stagemarkt.nl), allowing learners to search for placements with approved employers.⁴⁷

44 Hasluck, Chris, Why Businesses Should Recruit Young People, UKCES, February 2012 page 8

45 UKCES - Not Just Making Tea - Reinventing Work Experience (February 2014) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299597/Not_just_making_tea.pdf page 8

46 Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf page 23.

47 European Commission, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf pages 22 and 23.

Case Study: Denmark – the 48 hours initiative

At the Lillebælt Academy in Denmark, teachers noticed that more extensive work placements (three months or more) tended to focus on well-defined activities that were relatively narrow in scope. The 48 hour initiative was designed to expose students to new forms of work. Students were given a practical assignment relating to a problem that the company was facing, with the level of problem matched to the skill level of the participating students. Repetition of tasks in these tasters was avoided by the college negotiating a different 48 hour ‘event’ with each employer, based on their specific needs at that time.⁴⁸

In spite of international academic consensus on the business benefits for employers from engaging with work-based learning,⁴⁹ stakeholder feedback indicates that these benefits are not always made clear to businesses, and that even where such awareness exists it is frequently outweighed by concerns over bureaucracy and added costs. These issues, while not unique to Northern Ireland,⁵⁰ are magnified by the fact that the vast majority of local companies are small and micro businesses.

The OECD⁵¹ notes that, outside of apprenticeships, work-based learning is limited in training programmes within Northern Ireland, but it is difficult to accurately quantify how many young people are currently receiving it. Part of the reason for this is that the current delivery model is largely led by supply rather than demand, with training providers playing the lead role in managing relationships with employers and training programme participants, and being solely responsible for maintaining records of employer engagement and placements.

48 Ibid, page 19.

49 Cedefop, Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4121_en.pdf , Foreword, pages 11, 23, 27 and 28.

50 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeships Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation (ILO) , November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf pages 6-7.

51 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf>

Case Study: North West Regional College

North West Regional College - enterprise and employability skills are embedded in teaching and learning at the College where enterprise initiatives such as Young Enterprise are supported. Business Launchpad, a collaborative partnership between North West Regional College, Belfast Metropolitan College, Advantage and Invest Northern Ireland was recently launched to raise awareness of self-employment as a career option and to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Case Study: South Eastern Regional College

South Eastern Regional College – a number of companies have been set up by students, for example; Dedico WebDev was established with the aim of creating websites for small to medium sized businesses with the possibility of hosting. These were created using tools such as Dreamweaver and WordPress. The company commenced in November 2014, through a group of five HND level 5 Computing and Programming students.

WorldSkills/Skills Competitions

Further education colleges in Northern Ireland have embraced skills competitions as a valuable tool to enhance the learning experience for students. Over the past number of years colleges have developed the concept of skills competitions across a number of skill areas to excellent effect, including automotive, construction, engineering, creative and professional services.

This has resulted in an excellent record of achievement for Northern Ireland in skills competitions at regional, national and world level and has placed Northern Ireland as the top UK region in relation to the number of competitors taking part and medals awarded in the last two WorldSkills competitions.

Figure 3: Northern Ireland WorldSkills success

Year	Team UK Members	Medals	Skill
2005	2	Gold (1), Medallion for Excellence (1)	Autobody repair plumbing
2007	1	Bronze (1)	Car painting
2009	1	Bronze (1)	joinery
2011	7	Gold (1), Silver (1), Bronze (1), Medallion for Excellence (2)	Bricklaying Landscape Gardening Refrigeration Mechatronics
2013	9	Bronze (1), Medallion for Excellence (6)	Autobody repair Construction/automotive/mechatronics

Northern Ireland has also performed extremely well at the annual UK Skills Show which hosts the UK finals, and the number of Northern Ireland competitors competing at the finals has increased year on year. In the 2014 Skills Show four of Northern Ireland's further education colleges were ranked in the top ten colleges across the UK based on medal count.

Current Practice: Excellence

Excellence will be at the heart of everything that colleges do. College lecturers in Northern Ireland are already well qualified, and this will be enhanced to ensure that they have strong pedagogical skills and have up to date industrial knowledge in their areas of expertise. The Department and colleges will also take steps to ensure that meaningful feedback is obtained from learners and employers on the quality and relevance of the services provided to them.

Teacher Qualifications and CPD

Northern Ireland has a robust policy regarding the qualifications of those teaching in the further education sector, which compares favourably with the requirements in the other countries which have been examined.

Over the past number of years, the Department has made significant strides in enhancing teacher education for college lecturers. In 2009, the Department extended the requirement for initial teacher education for full-time and associate college lecturers from the one year, in-service, Postgraduate Certificate in Further and Higher Education, to the two year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Further Education) (PGCE(FE) Level 7), to be completed within the first three years of appointment. The aim of the increased requirement was to align the pedagogical qualifications held by further education

lecturers with those of teachers in schools. These developments still left a significant cohort of part-time lecturers outside the required mandatory teaching qualifications, and during 2014 the Department developed and piloted very successfully, with Ulster University (UU), a module for staff who fall within this category. The aim of making teaching qualifications available to all staff is to ensure that all those delivering regulated qualifications are trained at least in basic pedagogical skills. Continuing professional development courses have also been developed in conjunction with UU, relating to industry placements and advanced essential skills teaching.

Industry Experience

Teachers and trainers are 'dual professionals'; they are both vocational/subject specialists and teaching experts, committed to maintaining and developing their expertise in both aspects of their role to ensure the best outcomes for their learners.⁵²

Teachers need to be familiar with the fast-changing requirements of the modern workplace. The knowledge and skills of teachers and trainers in further education institutions need to remain up to date. In many countries there are staff who work part-time as trainers and part-time in industry. Such arrangements offer particular benefits because these trainers remain in close touch with the changing needs of the modern workplace, and this pattern of working may also appeal to those who wish to develop a career as a trainer but retain a job in industry.⁵³

52 Taken from the introduction to The 2014 Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in the Education and Training sector http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/4991-Prof-standards-A4_4-2.pdf.

53 OECD Learning for Jobs.

Skilled workers may also be hired from companies on short-term contracts to fill trainer vacancies. Such arrangements exist in Norway, where VET institutions and local employers cooperate to ensure an adequate supply of vocational trainers. In countries where the status of the teaching profession is generally low and VET teaching positions attract few young people, partnerships between VET institutions and employers may help increase the attractiveness of the profession and thus attract well-qualified

and enthusiastic candidates.⁵⁴ To promote such arrangements, close collaboration between providers and employers is crucial.

In some countries, trainers in VET institutions work temporarily in companies to update their vocational competences. In China, teachers in vocational schools are required to spend one month a year in industry. In Australia, links between VET colleges (TAFEs) and companies have fostered mutual understanding and exchange of knowledge.⁵⁵

Case Study: Finland – co-operation between VET institutions and industry

The Telkkä programme in Finland was based on close co-operation between teachers and workplace trainers. It aimed to improve the ability of VET to respond to the needs of working life. The programme included a two-month on-the-job period for vocational teachers, during which teacher-worker pairs were formed. This offered an opportunity for teachers to update their professional skills and for workers who also work as workplace trainers to improve their pedagogical skills. The training period was preceded by a seminar and planning, and was followed by feedback from teachers and workers and dissemination to the broader community. Teachers reported a wide range of benefits, such as increased familiarity with recent work practices and requirements and the equipment used, easy access to firms for study visits, the contacts necessary to invite people from industry to give lectures at their VET institution, increased confidence, respect from students and motivation. The training period also allowed teachers and workers to discuss issues related to workplace training for students and improve training plans and assessment methods. Participants improved their skills and self esteem, and disseminated knowledge to other colleagues. This exercise was evaluated by the Economic Information Office in Finland as one of the best ways of developing teachers' professionalism.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

University lecturers have a requirement for ongoing ‘scholarly activity’ to support the quality of their teaching. The equivalent for vocational professionals to maintain and develop their occupational expertise might be about working in collaboration with employers. This could include work experience or job shadowing for a period, or working on projects that add value to employers’ businesses: developing new products, processes or markets.⁵⁶

Centres of Excellence for Vocational Education

Some countries have established national VET centres, with varying responsibilities, but often including the co-ordination of data collection, the analysis of data and research evidence and the provision of policy advice to government. They can also include the development of teaching materials as well as dissemination of educational practice and policy.⁵⁷

The Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning recommended that a National VET Centre is set up in England to include a new research and development capacity focused on vocational pedagogy and the development of VET more widely. In September 2014, BIS announced the establishment of an independent vocational education research centre to be headed up by Professor Alison Wolf.⁵⁸

The aim of the centre is to provide world class, independent research to understand the role of vocational skills. The centre will support national and individual prosperity in England. It will establish itself as the main body of independent expertise and policy advice by vocational education stakeholders. The centre will be responsible for developing and delivering its own world class independent research programme. This will be in consultation with BIS based on the centre’s agreed remit and BIS’ broad priorities. The centre will influence policy into the next decade and influence publishing in international, high quality peer reviewed journals.

It will need excellent communication and participation with policy-makers and the sector stakeholders. It will connect UK policy makers with international expertise, research, and good practice in increasing vocational skill levels and supporting economic and welfare gains through vocational training. The centre will bring together academic insight and professional expertise in impact and data analysis. The centre will receive funding from BIS of around £1 million a year for 3 years with the possible extension to 5 years.

56 Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning: It’s About Work – Excellent Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning 2013 <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/26611> page 21.

57 OECD Report: Learning for Jobs, 2010 <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/learningforjobs.htm>.

58 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vocation-education-research-centre-bid-for-funding/vocation-education-research-centre-bid-for-funding>.

The broad areas and questions which the centre may need to address include:

- ▶ the impact of vocational skills and training on economic growth and individual prosperity, and the relative value of different approaches;
- ▶ the role of training in assisting unemployed people, particularly young people, into sustainable work, and address basic skills gaps;
- ▶ the operation of the vocational education sector, both public and private;
- ▶ the approach of employers to vocational education and routes to increase employer skills investment and demand;
- ▶ approaches to advice and guidance, inspiring a culture of self-management of careers and the role of non-cognitive skills in labour market success; and
- ▶ innovation in vocational education, including through the deployment of learning technologies.⁵⁹

Employer Satisfaction

The level of satisfaction recorded amongst employers in Northern Ireland with FE leavers is amongst the highest in the UK.⁶¹ Three quarters (75%) of employers agreed that new recruits from FE colleges employed into their first jobs were very well or well prepared. ‘Lack of working world’, ‘life experience or maturity’, and ‘poor attitude, personality or lack of motivation’, were the main skills and attributes lacking in FE leavers in Northern Ireland.⁶²

Student Satisfaction

The collection and recording of data on student satisfaction within further education is not currently done in a standardised way across the further education sector in Northern Ireland, although each of the colleges has its own method for doing this. A good example of recording student satisfaction is the system used by Southern Regional College.

Case Study: Australia – The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

(NCVER) founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit organisation owned by federal, state and territory ministers responsible for VET. It employs over 80 persons. NCVER’s main tasks are: i) collecting VET statistics; ii) managing the national VET research grants; iii) managing a VET research database; iv) disseminating the results of research and data analysis; v) building links with similar organisations in other countries; and vi) undertaking commercial consultancies. These various activities are financed mainly (85%) by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, other revenues come from other state bodies and private consultancy activity.⁶⁰

59 Ibid.

60 OECD Report, 2010, Learning for Jobs. <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/learningforjobs.htm>.

61 UKCES Employer Skills Survey 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ukces-employer-skills-survey-2013>.

62 Ibid.

Case Study: Southern Regional College

Southern Regional College makes highly effective use of the independent 'QDP Student Satisfaction Survey'. During the most recent survey, over 3000 students provided independent feedback on their learning experience at the college. Over 90% of the students surveyed stated that they would recommend their programme of study to a friend or family member.

The benefits to the college of using the independent survey include the ability to benchmark student responses against similar providers and to make comparisons between over 180 different colleges from across the United Kingdom. It is a cost-effective system that helps the college improve its services for students and other key stakeholders and produces both graphical and raw data reports which allow staff to focus on strengths and areas for improvement. It gives senior and middle managers an overall view of performance, whilst reports produced at a course level inform individual course teams of their own performance. It also affords access to the largest benchmarking database in the UK with the ability to rate college performance against other providers. Easy to understand graphical reports are produced for each course, each school, each campus, and for every level of the college management structure. It allows for internal and external benchmarking and gives details of distance travelled on an annual basis to show the impact changes have made on the students' view.

Current Practice: International Dimension

Colleges have become increasingly focused on the need to operate in an international arena. Particularly important to this is maximising student and staff exchange opportunities, and continuing to develop partnerships with employers and educational institutions across the world.

There is currently a considerable amount of international activity being done in the further education colleges in Northern Ireland, ranging from curriculum delivery to staff and student exchanges.

This section of the report consists of a number of case studies to highlight the international initiatives being undertaken in the colleges.

Student Exchanges:

Case Study

Following a Ministerial visit to Massachusetts in March 2014, the Department arranged for eight students from the further education colleges to attend a two week STEM summer camp at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). The students were selected for the two week camp from the winners of the 2014 'Best Awards' which were held in May. The 'Best Awards' were created as an annual competition and showcase for college students to present their project work to senior industrialists, academics and Government. Four of the six colleges in Northern Ireland were represented.

In July 2014, the students participated on the FRONTIERS programme. The programme had four separate themes of: Engineering Exploration, Robotics, Global Sustainability and Women's Leadership. The focus of the programme was on students learning current laboratory techniques and exploring unsolved problems across a wide spectrum of engineering, mathematics, science and robotics disciplines. WPI has offered additional places on the 2015. The visit has also enhanced the existing positive relationships between the Department and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. WPI has indicated a strong willingness to continue to work together over a long period of time.

Staff Exchanges:

Case Study

Thirty-four members of staff from Belfast Metropolitan College participated in one week placements to colleges in Finland, Ireland, Austria, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands from areas including journalism, childcare, sport, construction, engineering, business, fashion, hair and beauty and hospitality as part of the 'Sharing Knowledge and Training in Education' (SKATE) project. Participants reported benefits such as enhanced knowledge, skills and competences in their vocational areas through awareness of new techniques, tools, systems and resources to support their teaching and assessment in their respective professional and technical areas.

Case Study

Four members of lecturing staff from Diakonia College, Helsinki travelled to Southern Regional College in April 2014 to job shadow lecturers in the School of Early Years and Health Care and the School of General Studies. Helsinki Diakonia College is a private college with approximately 1,300 students and 200 staff. Its foremost mission is to educate professionals in the fields of social and healthcare, travel, nutrition and home economics. During their visit staff from Diakonia College had an opportunity to visit relevant external organisations including Mindwise in Lurgan and Cairnhill Care Home, Newry.

Partnerships:

Case Study

Belfast Metropolitan College is one of the founding Colleges in the UK to set up the Association of Colleges (AoC) India office as a joint venture with 33 other UK FE colleges. The purpose of AoC India is to build mutually beneficial UK and Indian partnerships that promote joint interests. The Indian Government has set itself the target of training 500 million people by 2022 through a \$30 billion budget for education and training. This investment gives colleges a unique opportunity to play an important role in helping to develop India's workforce. In January 2013, AoC set up a permanent team in Delhi to support this work. The office is entirely funded by the partner colleges, who pay an annual fee to participate and make a minimum two-year commitment.

In return, AoC India helps to promote and represent the partner colleges to key Indian and UK stakeholders. The office finds and develops business opportunities for UK colleges in the Indian skills market, including consultancy for skills training and development, industry-led programmes, higher education qualifications, bespoke training programmes for employers and English language training. The project represents an example of good collaboration across the FE sector to present their collective capability in the Indian market. AoC India now has an established presence in India and a management team in the UK. As a result of the venture, Belfast Metropolitan College has been successful in securing a UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) project working with Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce to build organisational efficiencies for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Partnerships (continued):

Case Study

In 2010, South Eastern Regional College and the National Institute of Technology, Toyama College signed a Statement of Accord to promote technical and educational collaboration. Since then, student exchanges between Toyama College and South Eastern Regional College have continued each year. Japanese students and South Eastern Regional College engineering students have worked in parallel on control engineering projects and communicated electronically to discuss and develop their work. Both colleges have worked together to identify and share best practice, which has happened through the Toyama Conference to Advance Science and Technology, staff research papers and through co-hosting the 3rd International Symposium on Expertise in Sustainable Society in 2013. This exciting partnership between two educational establishments 6,000 miles apart has been the catalyst for change and innovation within both colleges.

Case Study

South West College has developed a partnership with a school in Zambia to deliver an online Level 3 qualification in Information Technology. This project not only provides an opportunity for knowledge transfer at an international level, but also develops the college's online capability, and promotes best practice in online teaching and learning.

Case Study

Partnership arrangements go beyond institutional arrangements. Through its working partnership with Schlumberger, Northern Regional College lecturers have delivered bespoke training programmes to new graduate recruits in plants across the world, including Houston, Shanghai, Tokyo, Singapore and Monterrey.

Current Practice: Governance

The reclassification of Northern Ireland further education colleges as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) since April 2012 resulted in the Department having to realign the administrative relationship with colleges and the wider FE sector, as well as enacting changes to governance controls. Most notably the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (MS/FM), which sets out reporting arrangements and the parameters under which the sector operates, had to be reviewed.

NDPB status has presented colleges with a number of organisational issues to address; in particular, a significant shift in the way budgeting and funding arrangements work, as well as bringing colleges under the auspices of many Governmental protocols like Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. While colleges have become accustomed to these changes, there have been considerable challenges to overcome.

Colleges are increasingly innovative and successful in making income outside of the funding provided by the Department, and this is something that the Department is keen to encourage colleges to continue to do, particularly in light of the current difficult budgetary situation. NDPB status, or the outworking of being considered an arm of Government, means that colleges must comply with the existing DFP rules around earning wider market income.

Under Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), Departments are encouraged to allow their Executive Agencies and NDPBs to benefit from income generated by their own sales into wider markets. The policy applies to the commercial exploitation of physical assets, including equipment, land and premises, and non-physical assets including intellectual property, data and skills. NDPBs would normally undertake more straightforward projects themselves. MPMNI also suggests that larger, more complex projects can be taken forward in partnership with the private sector.

It is important that an entirely literal application of NDPB status does not inhibit colleges' desire and ability to be innovative and flexible in the delivery of services to learners and employers. The Department has agreed an end year flexibility scheme with the Department of Finance and Personnel which provides a mechanism to provide colleges with some flexibility to use income in different years in which it is generated.

7



Statistics and Tables

The Department for Employment and Learning recently produced a statistical bulletin presenting a range of analysis regarding enrolments (both regulated and non-regulated) in the further education sector covering academic years 2009/10 to 2013/14. The 'Further education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2009/10 to 2013/14' report provides statistics covering funding streams, enrolments by deprivation level, and performance over the five year period. This statistics report is the first of an annual series presenting information on enrolments at further education colleges in Northern Ireland.

A selection of data from the statistical bulletin is presented below, but a detailed look at further education statistical information can be found at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/fe-activity-in-fe-colleges-ni>

Figure 4: Key points for Further Education (FE) Activity

We have fewer enrolments.....	Over the past five academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges decreased by 9.4% from 199,577 in 2009/10 to 180,825 in 2013/14.
...but consistent proportions on regulated courses.	The proportion of regulated enrolments in 2009/10 was 81.8% and 78.4% in 2013/14.
The student population is getting younger....	Over the 5 year period between 2009/10 and 2013/14, the majority of regulated enrolments were aged '19 and under', with a year-on-year increase from 50.5% in 2009/10 to 58.0% in 2013/14.
... the vast majority are part time courses.....	Mode of attendance has remained fairly constant over the five year period. In 2009/10 full-time provision was 14.9% with 85.1% part-time; while in 2013/14 the split was 14.3% full-time and 85.7% part-time.
....and more studying at level 2.	Of the 141,778 regulated enrolments in 2013/14 those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 22.3% (31,597), 46.0 % (65,252) at 'Level 2', 23.0% (32,550) at 'Level 3' and 8.2% (11,576) were at 'Level 4 and above'. This indicates that over three-quarters (77.1%) of regulated provision are at 'Level 2 or above'.
More males studying full-time than females.....	It is interesting to note that upon examining regulated enrolments by mode of attendance and gender, it illustrated that in part-time provision there is a fairly even gender split, while males (56.9%) are the majority in full-time provision in 2013/14.
.....and there is variation in gender, in terms of the regulated course subject area.	In 2013/14, females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (84.3%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (77.8%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (96.8%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.3%).
At Northern Ireland level, deprivation is not a substantial factor. However, this differs at college level.	In 2013/14, regulated enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the five groupings of deprivation. NWRC had almost a third (32.6%) of enrolments from the most deprived areas, however only 2.7% from the least deprived areas. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments are quite polarised in that 56.3% are from either the most or least deprived grouping of areas. The largest proportion of regulated enrolments for SERC was from the most affluent areas (25.8%). Over 50% of SWC regulated enrolments came from the two most deprived grouping of areas.
Majority of enrolments are funded through Funded Learning Unit (FLU).	Of the 180,825 enrolments in 2013/14, over two-thirds (68.9%) were funded through the Funded Learning Unit (FLU), 12.9% were funded through government training programmes, 11.2% were cost recovery and 6.5% through the Entitlement Framework programme. There were a further 0.4% of enrolments where the funding stream was classed as 'Other'.
Increases in total qualifications are mainly due to increases in SERC and SWC.	From 2010/11 to 2013/14, there were large increases in qualifications for SERC (26.8%) and SWC (10.8%) and lower increases in NRC (0.7%) and NWRC (0.2%). In BMC there was a decrease falling from 20,175 qualifications to 19,244 qualifications (4.6%). In SRC there was a slight decrease (0.2%) from 17,852 qualifications to 17,808 qualifications, over this same period.
Performance of FE Colleges is continuously improving.	Over the period 2010/11 to 2013/14 the retention rate in FE colleges increased by 1.4 percentage points from 87.7% to 89.1%. This implies that more people are staying on and completing their course. The achievement rate of FE colleges rose 6.8 percentage points from 80.3% to 87.1% over the period 2010/11 to 2013/14. This indicates that of those who complete, more achieved their qualification in 2013/14 than in 2010/11. The success rate (i.e. the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) increased from 70.4% in 2010/11 to 77.6% in 2013/14 (almost 7.3 percentage points).

Figure 5: Proportion of all enrolments by FE college in 2013/14

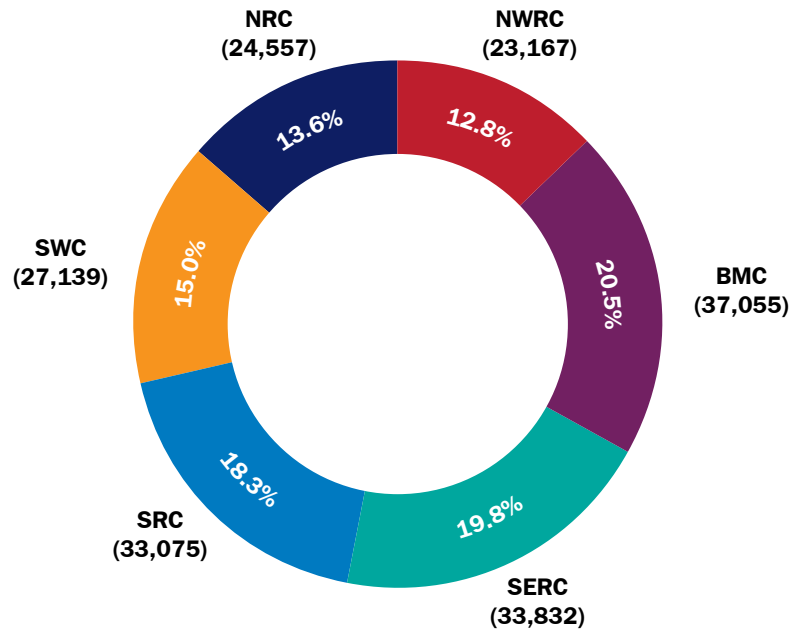


Figure 6: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2013/14

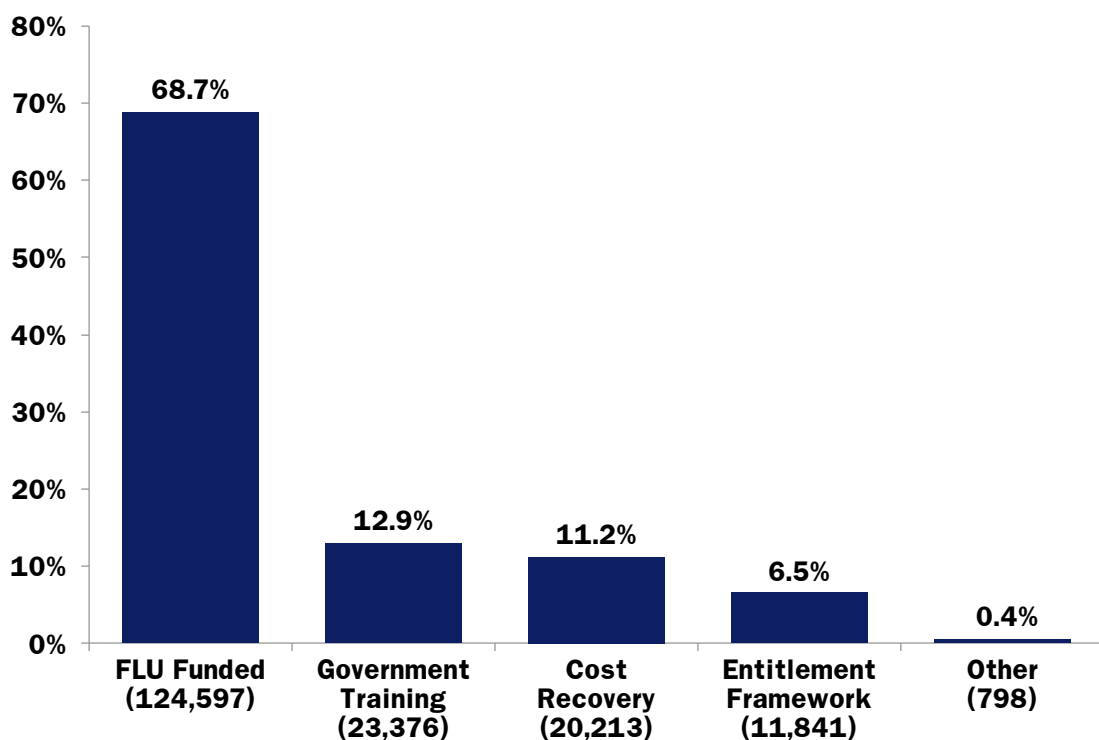


Figure 7: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2013/14

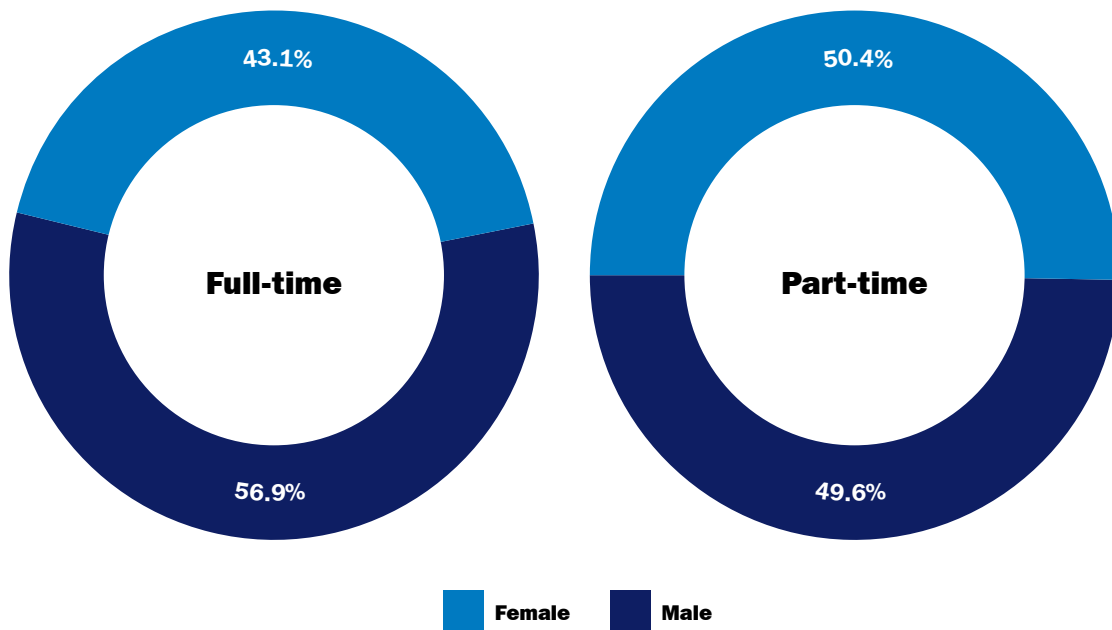


Figure 8: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2013/14

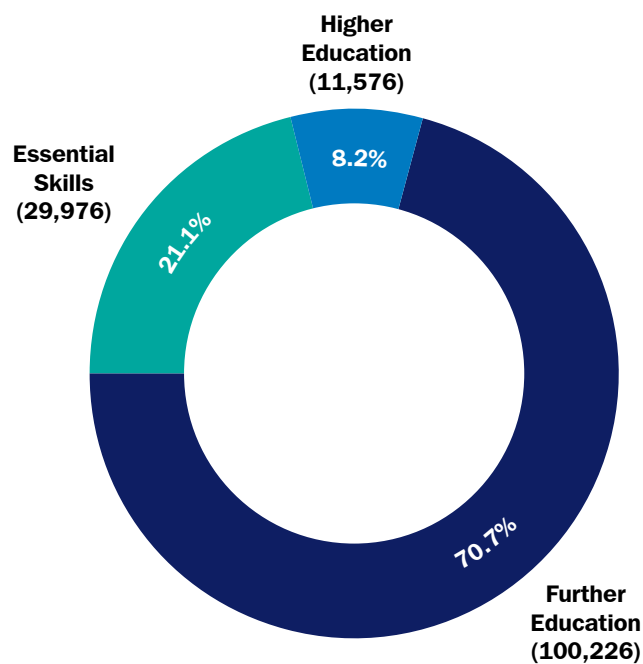


Figure 9: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2013/14

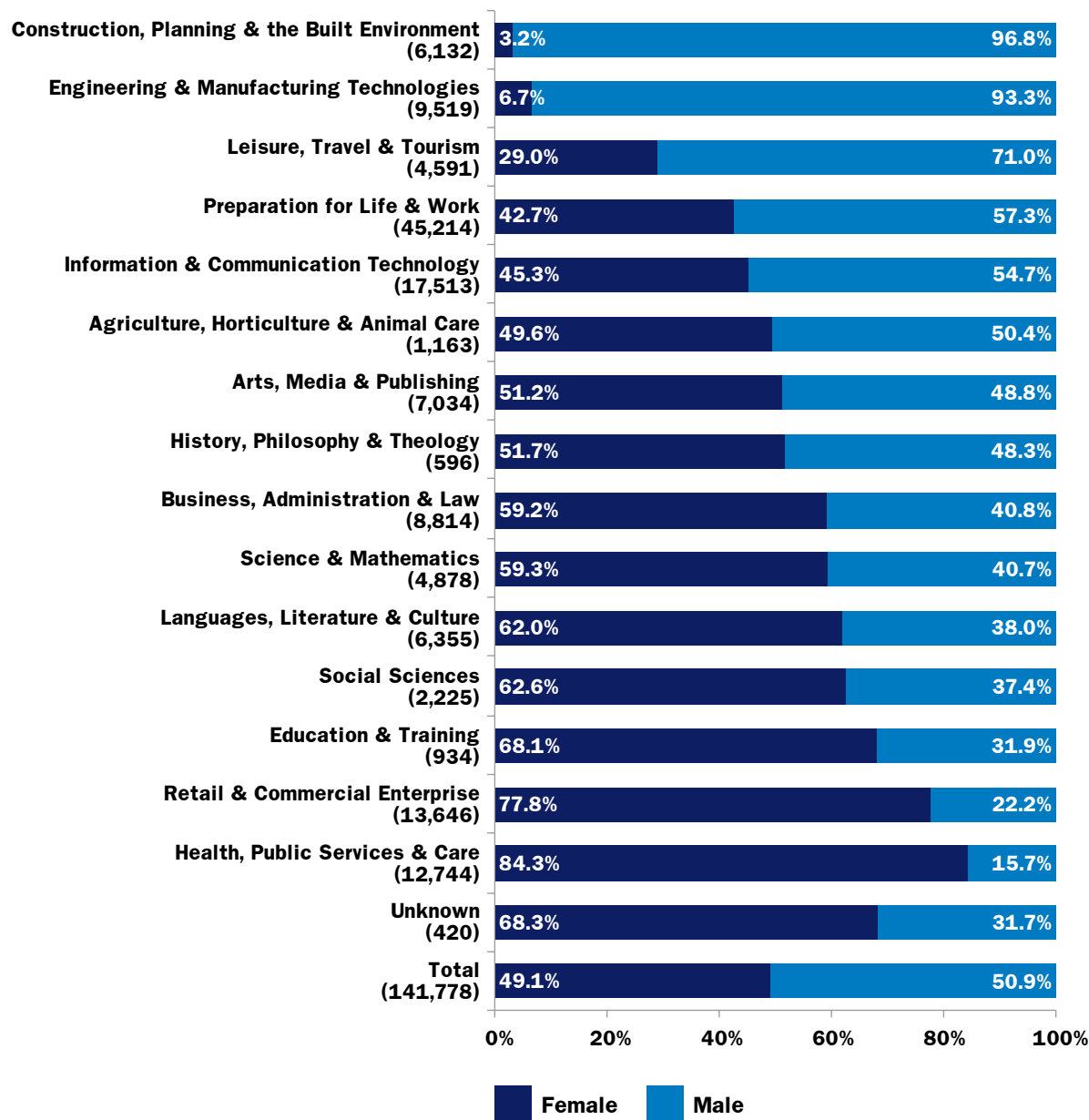
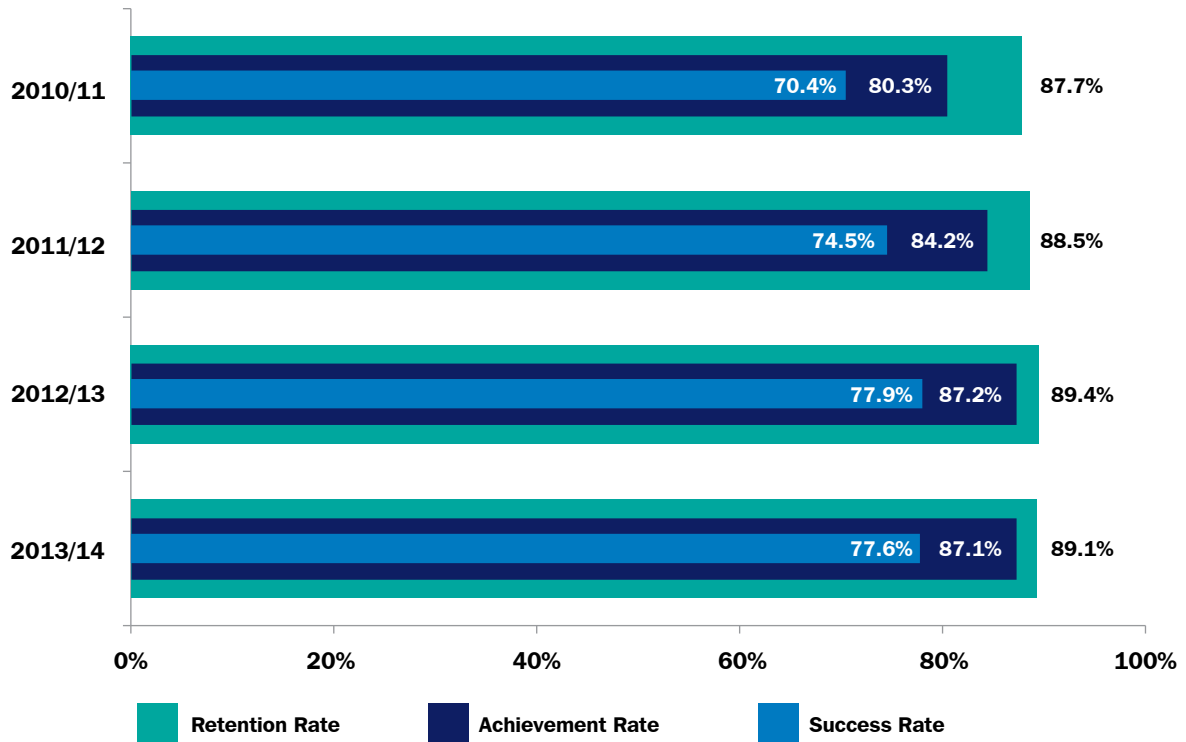


Figure 10: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year



AoC	Association of Colleges
ACEVO	Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
ASF	Additional Support Fund
BEST	Business & Education through Education and Training Awards
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
BMC	Belfast Metropolitan College
CAD	Computer-aided design
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CNC	Computer Numerical Control
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
EC	European Commission
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FE	Further Education
FELTAG	Further Education Learning Technology Action Group
FNBE	Finnish National Board Of Education

GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HLA	Higher Level Apprenticeship
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILT	Information Learning Technology
IT	Information Technology
MBO	Management by Objectives
MIS	Management information systems
MPMNI	Managing Public Money Northern Ireland
MS /FM	Management Statement / Financial Memorandum
NCVER	National Centre Vocational Education Research
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRC	Northern Regional College
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
NWRC	North West Regional College
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEE	Overall Equipment Efficiency
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PwC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
QCF	Qualifications & Credit Framework
QUB	Queens University of Belfast
R&D	Research and Development
SBB	Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (Netherlands)

SENDO	Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SKATE	Sharing Knowledge and Training in Education Project
SLDD	Special Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
SME	Small to medium-sized enterprise
SRC	Southern Regional College
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SUSE	Step Up To Sustainable Employment
SWC	South West College
TAFEs	Technical and Further Education in Australia
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
UKIERI	UK India Education and Research Initiative
UU	Ulster University
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WBL	Work based learning
WPI	Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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Professional and Technical:

Professional and Technical provision is regarded as Regulated provision without Academic provision.

Regulated:

From academic year 2013/14, only those courses which appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Non NQF/QCF Qualification (PLAQ) list (for level 3 and below) or are Higher Education (HE) in FE courses (level 4 and above), will be deemed as 'regulated' by the Department. Anything which falls outside this definition is not considered, in Departmental terms, as 'regulated' regardless of whether it is considered to produce "outcomes" e.g. internal college certification.

The term 'regulated' will be used from 2013/14 on, in regard to this type of provision within further education. This cohort of further education provision is comparable with the previous figures for Professional and Technical.

FE enrolment publications between 2003/04 and 2012/13 have used the term 'Professional and Technical' to describe this cohort of FE provision. 'Professional and Technical' were identified as any enrolment not coded as qualification aim '999', '599' or '199' i.e. recreational and KeySkills provision are excluded. In each academic year students can be enrolled in multiple course and therefore the same individual can have enrolments in regulated and non-regulated courses within the one academic year.

Academic:

Academic provision is taken to mean A Levels and GCSEs.

Retention:

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'. This may inflate the retention rate from 2012/13 onwards in comparison to earlier academic years.

Retention rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}{\text{Number of enrolments}}$$

Achievement:

Achievement rate relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study.

$$\text{Achievement rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of Withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}$$

Success:

Success rate is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.

$$\text{Success rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements OR Retention rate} \times \text{Achievement rate}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$$

STEM:

STEM provision is identified by the subject code entered by the FE college. If the subject code starts with a letter between A and K (Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture, Building and Planning) then it is regarded as '*Broad*' STEM. '*Narrow*' STEM is those enrolment records with a subject code starting with the letter C, F, G, H or J (Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology).





Department for
**Employment
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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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