

Department of Education and Skills – Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014  
Draft Action Plan – V2 – January 2011

Description of the Change Proposed	Paragraph of Agreement	Benefits Arising from the Change	Timeframe for Implementation
<b>Reduction in Public Service Numbers</b>			
<p>Over the course of the last 2 years the Departments numbers have dropped significantly owing to various incentivised schemes and the moratorium on recruitment. Numbers will continue to reduce in accordance with the Employment Control Framework.</p> <p>The maintenance of existing levels of service within this context will be a dominant consideration for the Department.</p> <p>In the light of the recently notified required reductions in numbers for the Department and its Agencies, the Department has notified all Agencies under its remit of their revised allocations and sought proposals for the achievement of the reduced numbers.</p> <p>The Department itself in meeting its targets under the ECF has initiated a review of its various business activities in order to achieve the required reductions.</p>	1.5	Continuation of existing levels of service with reduced resources to the greatest degree possible.	<p>Present - 2014</p> <p>Over the course of the plan the Department and its Agencies will be working to ensure it achieves its ECF obligations.</p> <p>The Departments ECF numbers are as follows:</p> <p>2010 - 1107</p> <p>2011 – 1057</p> <p>2012 – 1042</p> <p>2013 - 1029</p> <p>2014 - 1017</p>
<b>Reconfiguring the Design and Delivery of Public Services</b>			
<p>The Department is committed to actively participate in cross departmental initiatives to identify and implement shared services.</p> <p>This action also applies to Agencies of the Department including for example, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).</p>	1.11 & 4.15	Greater use of services in activities such as HR, Pensions, Payroll & Financial Management	Present – 2014
Change the orientation of the Departments Regional Office Structure	1.9 , 4.3	More effective use of	Completed

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The objective here is to use more effectively the existing resources of the Departments Regional Office Service in the delivery of mainstream services		existing resources, increased efficiencies, and avoidance of duplication.	
Reorganisation of the Department's Inspectorate Following a high level of retirement in the Inspectorate, the Department is reorganising this Service to ensure effective delivery of all core functions in this area.	1.9	Maintenance of essential core services to first and second level schools with a reduced resource	Present – end 2011
Reorganisation of the Department's existing regional configuration of National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS). Number of Regions have been rationalised from 10 to 8, reducing number of RD (PO level) required to 8 in agreement with the relevant staff Unions.  NEPS will continue to effect efficiencies in both the prioritising/ increase of direct contact time afforded by NEPS Psychologists to schools and the use of the existing Private Panellist service under the SCPA.	1.9	More efficient use of existing resources to provide critical services to schools throughout the country in the face of increasing demand	Completed
The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) will be amalgamated. The amalgamated agency will also take on responsibility for external quality assurance of universities, a role currently undertaken by the Irish Universities Quality Board and the Higher Education Authority. The amalgamation will build a more coherent approach to qualifications, award making and quality assurance throughout further and higher education and streamline and improve service to learners, institutions and other stakeholders. Plans for the amalgamation are well advanced. The	1.9	More effective use of existing resources	The amalgamated body will be established in 2011.

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enabling legislation is due for publication in the near future and an interim board and chief executive officer of the amalgamated body are progressing the work of administrative planning.			
Review of HR policies, procedures and practices, and working practices, to identify and remove impediments to efficient and effective service delivery (State Examinations Commission /SEC)	1.9	Improved capacity to contain costs and manage work volumes in the context of numbers reductions	Ongoing to end of 2014.
The Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme are being integrated under the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) to provide a more effective service for children who may have difficulties fully participating in school	1.9	More effective delivery of services	Ongoing to end of 2014.
Following a Government Decision, the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers is being discontinued. The Department and the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) will now implement this decision. This will involve dealing with a Range of issues including redeployment where appropriate.	1.9	Financial benefit.	Present to end of September 2011.
<b>Better Business Processes</b>			
The Department has significantly enhanced its payroll systems by putting in place an on-line facility for schools. We will maintain and where appropriate enhance this significant ICT Development.	4.13	Enhanced customer service	Ongoing to end of 2014.
Web based services The Department will continue to improve its web-based services such as the distribution of circulars to schools and the On-line completion of school returns In this context, IT enhancements have recently been put in place to provide the facility for online transmission of Annual Primary Census to Special Schools	1.10 & 4.13	Enhanced customer services Reduced costs and avoidance of duplication.	Ongoing to end of 2014
Consolidation of the Departments Web Site	4.13	Enhanced customer	Ongoing to end of

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The Department has provided additional resources to web development and will continue to improve and consolidate its web-site in order to maximise efficiency and reduce duplication		services. Reduced costs and avoidance of Duplication	2014
Organisational Review Programme The Department is and will continue to participate fully in the Organisational Review Programme and will act on the reports findings as appropriate.	1.10	Enhanced effectiveness.	Report due early 2011.
The Department will commission an independent organisational review of the Higher Education Authority (HEA).	1.10	To ensure the HEA has the necessary capacity and skills set for its new role arising from the Higher Education Strategy.	Ongoing.
Continued improvements in On-line services including recruitment of contract examination personnel, claim processing and payment (State Examinations Commission/ SEC)  Extended usage of e-mail and electronic communications among examination personnel, schools and the SEC, subject to capacity to implement system and technical changes (State Examinations Commission /SEC)  The Higher Education Authority (HEA) will introduce on-line systems for HR processes and procurement.	1.10 & 4.13	Faster communication and processing times. Reduction in administration burden for SEC, schools and examination personnel.	Mid 2011  Phased through 2011 & 2012  Ongoing
Outsource remaining in-house elements of exam paper printing and finishing (State Examinations Commission /SEC)  Outsource exam stationery packing and distribution (State Examinations Commission /SEC)	1.10	Contain costs, manage workloads in the context of numbers reductions	Mid 2011  Phased in for 2012 and 2013 exam cycles

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Examine and adopt shared services, giving priority attention to HR and pensions administration and ICT infrastructure (State Examinations Commission /SEC)	1.10	Staff and cost savings. Reduced administrative burden	Ongoing to end of 2014
Further streamlining and administrative improvements to the current teacher allocation process.	1.10	Reduce administrative burden on schools and the department and increase efficiency.	Ongoing to end of 2014
Consolidate and streamline the provision of circulars and regulations relating to Personnel matters in schools	1.10	Reduce administrative burden on schools and the Department and increase efficiency	Ongoing to end of 2014
The Planning and Building Unit (PBU) will continue to review ways of doing business and implement changes This will include devolving the procurement and management of an increasing proportion of major projects to appropriate external entities.	1.10	To ensure that the PBU provides high quality educational infrastructure and value for money in the most effective way possible with a reduced time commitment.	Ongoing to end of 2014
The transfer of FÁS Employment Services and Employment Programmes to the Department of Social Protection will integrate frontline benefits payments and job search services into a single entity. (FÁS) Discussions between the two Departments and FÁS are in an advanced stage in relation to the implementation of this decision.	1.9	Increase efficiency and maximise resources	Ongoing to end of 2011
Following the impending finalisation of proposals for reconfiguring the training	1.10	Increase efficiency	Ongoing to end of

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services of FAS in to a new skills agency it is envisaged that it will be necessary to revisit work practices and change the structure of the organisation in order to provide it with the flexibility to operate effectively in the changing economic situation. The outsourcing of non-core business activities will be a key consideration and also a greater use of IT in the context of better use of shared services. The co-operation and flexibility of staff will be required to implement the new approach to skills provision. (FÁS)			2014
<b>Performance and Skills</b>			
Promotions Competitive/ merit based promotion is the norm in the Department and it is intended that this will be maintained and strengthened.	1.13 & 4.11	To ensure maximum efficiency of staff resources	Present – end 2014
FAS Work Placement Programme The Department expects to avail of a substantial number of placements within its approved allocation.	4.18	Benefits to individuals placed and existing staff in transfer of appropriate skills	Interviews currently in progress for two placements and a further eight placements are currently advertised with FÁS.
Multi disciplinary team-working and cross-stream reporting are used routinely in the Department where warranted by the business needs. This approach will be maintained and enhanced as required.	1.9 & 4.4	Enhanced flexibility and efficiency ensuring no duplication of services	Present – end 2014
The Department have fully implement new sick leave arrangements, enhancing current procedures in accordance with new Department of Finance circular on sick leave to enable us meet a 10% reduction in sick leave. This action also applies to Agencies of the Department including the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).	4.10	Reduction in instances of sick leave	Implemented Target for reaching reduction - 2011.
PMDS Will participate fully in the PMDS review process and will implement its agreed findings.	1.13 & 4.12	Improved staff performance	Ongoing to end 2014.

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In addition, the Department has updated its PMDS forms and also intends moving from an increment date review to an annual review at the end of each year for all staff.			2011 - 2012
<p><b>Skills Audit</b> The Department will commence an audit of qualifications and skills of its staff members. This will be an on-line survey supported by a database and its findings will support the optimum assignment of staff within the Department.</p> <p>There will also be a review of skills and capacity of HEA staff as part of the review of HEA capacity to be delivered under the Strategy for Higher Education.</p>	1.13 & 4.12	Appropriate assignment of staff and effective succession planning	Audit complete mid 2011.