Guidelines for VECs

Aligning further education provision with the skills needs of enterprise

2013 Update
Introduction
Vocational Education Committees (VECs) are the main providers of further education in Ireland. These guidelines aim to assist VECs in responding to current and future skills needs in the economy. This document should be seen as firstly, an update on the February 2012 paper commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills and published by Forfas, and secondly, should be used alongside the operational guidelines for part-time further education and the terms and conditions for full-time further education.

It is a time of great change in the further education and training (FET) sector. The plans for the establishment of a new network of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and a new further education and training authority – SOLAS – are well advanced. It is planned that with the passage of the relevant legislation that the ETBs and SOLAS will be established this year.

At the same time that these major reforms are being undertaken in the education and training sector, the new public employment service – Intreo – is being rolled out across the country. Intreo is a new one stop shop for unemployed people aimed at ensuring they can access all the relevant activation options available.

The focus for the FET sector will be on providing opportunities for learners, in particular the unemployed and long-term unemployed, that are relevant to the needs of enterprise as well as individual needs. As stated above, this document is designed to assist VECs – and in the future, ETBs – to align their further education provision with the ongoing needs of enterprise to help ensure that all learners have opportunities to reskill and upskill for the labour market as well as for society.

These updated guidelines were edited by the Department of Education and Skills. All the updated data was supplied by the Strategic Labour Market Research Unit of FÁS. VECs should refer to the accompanying national further education statistics which outline participant numbers and profile, as well as certification and progression data (where available), broken down by gender and programme.

### 2012 Further Education provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>€m</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-Time places</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)</td>
<td>32,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>3,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total full time</strong></td>
<td>41,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-Time Participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy</td>
<td>49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Education</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total part time</strong></td>
<td>127,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supports</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI)</td>
<td>38,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Education and Training Support Scheme (CETS)</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>168,064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 VTOS, Youthreach and STTC allocation figures include provision for participant allowances. Such allowances are not provided for in any of the other programmes. The PLC figure includes provision for student maintenance grants. The STTC programme was phased out in June 2012.

2 Administered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
There are many factors, internal and external, impacting on skills and labour requirements of enterprise and a representation of these dynamics is set out below.

Skills and Labour Market Needs – Drivers of Change

Notwithstanding the significant changes in the composition of the live register, the further education sector has a role in addressing skills and labour market needs in the following areas:

- Skills and labour market requirements arising from current vacancies and replacement demand;
- Specific skills shortages identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs including provision of educational pathways throughout further education and to higher education to address these shortages;
- Skills for employability that are required across enterprises including generic or soft skills in addition to skills that promote entrepreneurship.
- Skills requirements arising from minimum levels/mandatory qualifications e.g. due to regulation

The further education sector can enhance and improve its provision by taking the following steps:

- Working more closely with local enterprises and existing public employment services in the development of courses to meet needs at a local level;
- With enterprises, enhancing workplace learning (work placements; internships) within programme provision and articulating modular provision with work placements, like Jobbridge;
- Monitor, along with relevant local stakeholders, the provision of regulation-required awards;
- Improving and enhancing data collection, in particular in relation to progression outcomes;
- Building on the good basis of core and generic skills provision, seeking to develop that provision as part of individual progression or career development plans; and
• Within basic education provision (primarily, adult literacy and community education), seeking to build progression from non-accredited provision to accredited provision, and expanding the offering of accredited options.

Background
While the overall unemployment rate in quarter 2 2012 was 15%, in general, those with greater levels of education attainment had a lower incidence of unemployment (Figure 1.1).

All Further Education programmes can assist in developing skills for employability across all NFQ levels and this message should be communicated to learners. However, VECs should not endeavour to address all skills needs through further education – it is more about building and expanding upon existing strengths and only moving in to new areas where a labour market demand is not being already met. The advent of SOLAS – and the new responsibilities that the new ETBs will have for all publicly funded FET – need to be taken into account as well, in terms of decisions around course provision. However, the summary below identifies some areas in which VECs might consider adjusting or adapting FE provision.
## Summary of where VECs might address FE provision

### Enterprise Skills Needs
- Selling, Marketing, Innovation, Mathematical Proficiency
- Supply chain management; Purchasing; Procurement; Logistics
- Management (middle management/supervisory type roles)
- Foreign Language Skills aligned with enterprise needs (e.g. introductory courses with progression links to third level).
- Generic/Soft Skills (should be integrated with specific vocational programmes and/or within career guidance).
- Accreditation opportunities for Literacy and Numeracy participants, including integration of literacy/numeracy supports

### Specific Current/Future Skills Needs
- Green Economy, Food and Beverages Sector, Wholesale and Retail Sector (see relevant EGFSN reports).
- ICT; Science; Engineering; Financial Services; Transport; Marketing; Sales
- STEM disciplines and how they can be linked with higher education.

### Areas of high turnover/high vacancy rates
- Sales (e.g. retail assistants, technical sales; online sales, multilingual sales)
- Clerical (financial administration, customer service, fund administration; multilingual customer service);
- Personal services (Childcare; Healthcare; Security; Catering)

### Areas where FE providers should strongly monitor provision to avoid over and/or undersupply of skills
- Healthcare (particularly care assistant roles)
- Education (particularly special needs)
- Childcare
- Minimum qualifications (e.g. related to licensing; health and safety; regulations)

### Areas where FE providers should consider appropriateness of current provision and ensure labour market need is demonstrated
- Arts and crafts
- Planning and Design
- Housing/building construction

### Where FE providers should review distribution of provision
- Ensure Core Skills provision (especially above level 3) is aligned with specific occupational needs or more explicitly linked to progression pathways/skills for employability
- Ensure progression pathways are working as intended
- Review level of progression at Level 6 with a view to enhancing offerings to school leavers particularly in the

### Where FE providers could prioritise provision
- Courses with a substantial workplace component
- Courses that actively target the unemployed (in conjunction with local employment services), particularly the long term unemployed.
- Courses developed with enterprise sector at a local level
- Courses with demonstrated labour market and skills need attached.
- Courses that facilitate access and progression to further/higher education, particularly areas of skills shortages.
- Courses that can demonstrate they are meeting the needs of hard-to-reach or minority groups
**Strategic Guidelines**

As outlined in the February 2012 document, VECs should consider the following:

**Improving the quality of survey and evaluative data**

While good progress has been made (such as the virtual portal for BTEI statistics), there are still considerable variations in the quality and type of information reported by different programmes. Improving the quality of data could have a significant positive impact by allowing for resources to be targeted to better effect, on how career guidance and information resources are delivered and how programmes can be evaluated.

**Engage with local employers**

The VECs have a vital role in local economies as providers of skills. As such, VECs should seek to identify and service local skills needs in conjunction with local employers - this is a primary step that VECs can take in aligning provision. Systematic engagement with employers can be achieved successfully at local level through networks and organisations like County Development Boards or Chambers of Commerce.

Similarly, the VECs should seek to develop more structured links with local employment services to ensure that the referral process for those that are unemployed is directing individuals to the most appropriate education and training support available, as envisaged under Circular 76/2011 issued by this Department.

**Develop much greater availability of workplace learning**

Workplace learning (e.g. work placements, internships) has enormous benefits, most critically for the prospects of the learner in potentially gaining employment upon completing the programme, but employers too can benefit significantly through screening potential candidates before making the greater investment of recruitment. Where appropriate, in terms of the programme’s target cohort, and the level and intensity of the programme, VECs should seek to develop the availability of workplace learning. This can be achieved through engagement, as above, with local employers.

**Balance career guidance and career information**

The OECD review of vocational education and training in Ireland recommended that an effective career guidance and information support is a combination of both career counselling and guidance, where the student bases their choices on both their own strengths and aptitudes aligned with labour market opportunities. In this context, guidance supports could make use of labour market information sources such as the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and adapt them to a career guidance context and communicated to prospective and current learners. This would include EGFSN reports such as the National Skills Bulletin, the Vacancy Survey, and EGFSN Sector Reports.

**Ensure adequate provision of generic and core skills**

VECs already provide a range of courses that address generic and core skills. The Programme for Government commits the Government to integrating literacy – and other core skills – into all vocational education programmes. Therefore, VEC provision should ensure that ‘employability’ is at the centre of vocational programmes as well as seeking to integrate literacy into all courses. VECs have an important role to play in terms of literacy as they are the largest provider of such courses.

**Ensure appropriate monitoring of regulation oriented awards**

The balance of mandatory/regulation oriented awards in relation to overall provision needs to be monitored. Labour market demand for regulation oriented qualifications may fall off sharply in certain sectors (e.g. Childcare, Special Needs Assistants, Healthcare assistants) as supply converges with demand, or in response to public expenditure reductions. In this context, the further education and training sector may need to react promptly to a sudden drop off in demand for provision in
certain sectors. VECs should ensure that in the provision of these types of programmes, the labour market demand is identified.

**Profile of Participation**

It is clear that Further Education caters for a wide range of interests and learner needs through various programme provision. In examining the relationship between provision and enterprise skills needs, the nature of various programmes and the different learner needs that they target must be taken into account. In this context, it is about how various programmes could better address enterprise skills needs, building upon their existing relative strengths and in consideration of their different emphases on learner needs.
Guidelines for VECs in aligning further education provision with the skills needs of enterprise
2013 Update

Summary of 2011 VEC returns on further education participation

Participants by Gender

Notes on the gender profile of VEC FE participants

- There are more female than male learners on all Further Education programmes apart from Youthreach.
- Adding all learners across the programmes, the total female to male ratio is almost 2:1.
- The higher proportion of males in Youthreach reflects the higher rate of early school leaving amongst young males (European Commission Education and Training Monitor 2012).
- VTOS learners are also split evenly amongst male and female.
- The highest proportion of female learners is in Community Education, where three quarters of learners are female.
Notes on the age profile of VEC FE participants

- VTOS learners are concentrated mainly in the 25-54 year old age cohort.
- Similarly, BTEI covers a wide range of ages, with most learners within the 25-54 year old cohort.
- Community Education has a relatively older profile. Disregarding unreported/missing values, almost half of learners are over 55 years of age.
- Adult literacy programmes cover a wide range of ages. 64 percent of learners are in the 25 to 54 year old cohort and a further 28 percent are over 55 years of age.
- ESOL has a relatively young age profile, with almost 80 percent of learners under 45 years of age.
Notes on the educational attainment of VEC FE participants

- As to be expected, Youthreach learners are almost entirely at NFQ Level 3 and below upon entry to the programme.
- VTOS participants are quite evenly split between those with NFQ levels 3 and below (45%) and those with NFQ level 4-5 (48%). As most VTOS certification occurs at levels 4 and particularly 5, this indicates that while a significant proportion are upskilling to these levels, many are also reskilling at the same level and/or acquiring additional competencies.
- Approximately 60 percent of BTEI participants have lower secondary and below, indicating a strong targeting at this cohort.
- Approximately one-third of those participating in adult literacy programmes have no formal qualifications of NFQ levels 1-2, however almost 40 percent are at NFQ level 3 and over 8,500 participants in 2011 were at levels 4/5 and 6. This is reflective of the tendency of adult literacy problems to be often masked within education and training, however, one must question whether this might also reflect some ‘mission drift’ amongst providers.
Certification Achieved by NFQ Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FETAC Level 1</th>
<th>FETAC Level 2</th>
<th>FETAC Level 3</th>
<th>FETAC Level 4</th>
<th>FETAC Level 5</th>
<th>Junior Certificate</th>
<th>Leaving Certificate</th>
<th>Non-FETAC/Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td>1,314</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,106</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,722</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes on the certification achieved by VEC FE participants

- Over half of certification within Youthreach is at NFQ level 3 or Junior Certificate, with the remainder of certification mostly at level 4, non-FETAC and Leaving Certificate (Applied). Given that over 90 percent of entrants are at NFQ level 3 and below, this represents a combination of up-skill or broadening of skills at existing NFQ level depending on learner needs.
- VTOS certification is heavily focussed at level 5 (56%).
- PLC programmes as expected are primarily at level 5 with some level 6.
- BTEI programmes have quite a broad range of certification, with approximately 27 percent at level 3, 20 percent at level 4 and a strong focus on level 5 (49%). Relevant to educational attainment upon programme entry (60 percent at NFQ level 3 and below), this is indicative of quite a strong focus on up-skill in BTEI programmes to levels 4 and 5.
- The great majority of Adult Literacy certification is at NFQ level 3, although recently introduced programmes at levels 1 and 2 are growing as a proportion of the total.
- Certificates attained under community education programmes have quite a range across levels 3, 4 and 5.
### Progression of learners from Further Education programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youthreach</th>
<th>VTOS</th>
<th>PLC*</th>
<th>BTEI</th>
<th>Adult Literacy</th>
<th>ESOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>3675</td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>3758</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTOS</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other further education or training</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1402</td>
<td>3338</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>3865</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FÁS</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td>268</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment/Live Register</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>2695</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5038</td>
<td>608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy/Group literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2508</td>
<td>5903</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained at current level</td>
<td>338</td>
<td></td>
<td>7375</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>16329</td>
<td>3818</td>
<td>8458</td>
<td>2792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>3131</td>
<td>31724</td>
<td>8624</td>
<td>25327</td>
<td>11143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Regarding information available on progression from Youthreach, there appears to be quite significant mobility to further education and training programmes. 197 (21%) of those completing their programmes went into unemployment/live register, compared to 137 (15%) that exited to employment. This is reflective of the very challenging labour market conditions that currently exist for younger age cohorts. The 478 participants (52%) that progressed to further education and training programmes is particularly noteworthy indicating strong progression opportunities and good linkages between Youthreach and other further education and training avenues.

- VTOS also appears to provide good progression opportunities to other further and/or higher education and training programmes, particularly PLC and higher education. Approximately 22% of exits were to unemployment/Live register.

- Information on progression regarding those that completed PLC programmes in 2010 is lacking, with 51% classified as ‘unknown’. From the information that is available, over 12% progressed to higher education and 12% to employment. 8.5% were unemployed. There also appears to be good progression to other further education and training programmes including PLC, with 16% of participants for which information is available heading in this direction.

- Information on progression from BTEI also has very high levels of ‘unknown’ (44%). There seems to be very strong progression from BTEI into further education and training programmes, with 44% of those completing programmes progressing to either further education, higher education or FÁS programmes. 12% progressed to employment. It is unknown the proportion of those progressing to unemployment from the available data. Nonetheless, BTEI appears to have very strong rates of progression to further education.

- In relation to Adult Literacy, much of the information on progression is quite general, with the numbers mostly concentrated in ‘other’, ‘unknown’, and ‘remained at current level’. There seems some level of progression in to BTEI and VTOS (1,611 persons for which data is available). For those completing ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), there is very high progression (53%) to Adult Literacy, indicating very strong links between these programmes.
Analysis of VEC Centre FETAC Awards

Note on Data
It is important to note that number of awards reported does not equate to number of learners. Many learners achieve one or more awards within the same year; therefore, the number of learners will be significantly less than the number of awards issued.

FETAC data is gathered according to assessment centre type. In most cases the assessment centre is also the education and training provider. The data in this section is based on total awards data made through the following VEC centre types:

- VEC Adult Education Centre
- VEC Further Education College
- VEC Literacy Service
- VEC Prison Education Service
- VEC School
- VEC Traveller Education Centre
- VEC VTOS Centre
- VEC Youthreach Centre

VEC FETAC Awards in Proportion to Total FETAC Awards
VEC centres accounted for 146,000 (42 percent) of total FETAC awards in 2010, up from 84,000 in 2007 (a 73% increase). In 2011, almost one half of all FETAC awards were made to learners in VEC centres (Figure 4.1); this is an increase on the 41.8% share observed in 2010.

![Figure 4.1 FETAC Awards 2011 by Broad Provider Centre Type](image)

Fields of Learning
FETAC data is categorised by FETAC fields of learning. Figure 4.2 compares the share of awards, by field of learning, for VEC and other (i.e. non-VEC) centre types. Relative to other centre types, VEC

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3 However, there are some exceptions. For instance, a FÁS programme which is funded and delivered through the VECs would be captured in the FETAC data under VEC centres, and certain VEC programmes (e.g. VTOS) which take place in a VEC further education college would be captured in the VEC further education college data rather than in VEC VTOS Centre data.

centres provide a larger share of awards in visual arts, craft and design (75% of awards in this category were made through VEC centres), media (74%), language (73%), arts (72%), and general studies (70%).

Figure 4.2 VEC FETAC as a % of Total FETAC Awards 2011 by Field of Learning

VEC FETAC Awards by NFQ Level 2007-2011
Figure 4.3 shows the total number of FETAC awards made to learners at VEC centres between 2007 and 2011. In 2011, there were 146,469 VEC FETAC awards, up from 84,313 in 2007, with increases each year observed at each NFQ level, except level 5 (which declined by 11% in 2010-2011). The most pronounced increases occurred between 2008 and 2009, with further increases, albeit on a smaller scale, in both 2010 and 2011. The growth at level 6 was particularly strong, with more than a 4.5 fold increase in the number of awards made over the period.

In addition, all awards in the restoration, tradition and heritage field of learning were made in the VEC sector, although in absolute terms, the number was very small (six awards). The number of awards made in VEC centres in each of the other categories mentioned here was between 1,500 and 9,200.
VEC FETAC Awards by Award Type 2007-2011

The distribution of VEC FETAC awards by award type is shown in Figure 4.4. In 2011, the vast majority (85%) of awards were minor awards, with the remaining 15% being major awards. A small number of special purpose awards were made to learners at VEC centres in 2008 and 2010.

While in absolute terms the greatest increase between 2007 and 2011 was for minor awards (+51,000 awards), in relative terms, major awards made greater gains, with a 111% increase (compared to a 69% rise for minor awards).
Source: FETAC

**VEC FETAC Awards by Type and Level 2011**

VEC FETAC awards are concentrated at NFQ level 5 (Figure 4.5). In excess of one half (58%) of the total 146,469 VEC FETAC awards in 2011 were at this level. While level 5 minor awards made up between 53% and 55% of awards between 2008 and 2010, the share fell considerably to 46% in 2011. Level 5 major awards, as a share of the overall total, remained broadly stable at 11%-12% each year.

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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Agriculture</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>2084</td>
<td>3,172</td>
<td>3,254</td>
<td>132%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1,854</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning**

As detailed in Table 4.1, just over a half of all VEC FETAC awards in 2011 was in one of four fields of learning: core skills (42,443 awards), administration (almost 17,000 awards), education and training (over 16,000 awards) and health and welfare (12,000 awards).

With the exception of restoration, traditional and heritage awards, there were increases in the number of awards in each field of learning over the period 2007-2011. In absolute terms, the largest increase by far was for core skills which grew by over 20,000 awards, reaching 42,443 awards in 2011. Smaller increases were observed for health & welfare (+8,000) and business (+8,000).

Despite the overall growth in the number of awards between 2010 and 2011, the increases were confined to fewer than half of the fields of learning outlined in Table 4.1. The largest increases were for core skills and health and welfare awards while the largest declines (of over 2,000 awards each) were for administration and business awards.
While concentrated in core skills, Level 1 VEC FETAC awards were made in one of four fields of learning, as detailed in Figure 4.6.1. The major awards (all within core skills) were for awards in Communications and General Learning. For minor awards, the most prominent included Computer Skills (133), followed by Listening and Speaking, Writing, and Non Verbal Communication, which each had between 20 and 30 awards. This profile of awards at level 1 remains largely similar to that of 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Core Skills</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>General Studies</th>
<th>Education &amp; Training</th>
<th>Health &amp; Welfare</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Manufacturing &amp; Processing</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Logistics</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Hospitality</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Science</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>2308</td>
<td>3796</td>
<td>3454</td>
<td>154%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>2,094</td>
<td>-342</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Computing</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>1693</td>
<td>2679</td>
<td>4081</td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>132%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>-221</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Arts</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>1,581</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>-96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Visual Arts, Crafts, Design</td>
<td>6769</td>
<td>6395</td>
<td>8221</td>
<td>9,289</td>
<td>9,190</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>2,421</td>
<td>-99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Media</td>
<td>2596</td>
<td>2278</td>
<td>3333</td>
<td>4,716</td>
<td>5,048</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2,452</td>
<td>332</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>146,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Business</td>
<td>6037</td>
<td>6730</td>
<td>8492</td>
<td>13,372</td>
<td>10,967</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>-18%</td>
<td>4,930</td>
<td>-2,405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Administration</td>
<td>13274</td>
<td>11878</td>
<td>16258</td>
<td>18,877</td>
<td>16,584</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>3,310</td>
<td>-2,293</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>146,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Social Science</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>-100%</td>
<td>-712</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Planning and Design</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>1,003</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>-22%</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>-222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Housing / Building Construction</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Restoration / Traditional / Heritage</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Core Skills</td>
<td>22072</td>
<td>20595</td>
<td>29916</td>
<td>36,854</td>
<td>42,443</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20,371</td>
<td>5,589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Language</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>2876</td>
<td>3,749</td>
<td>3,924</td>
<td>123%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2,166</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 General Studies</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>-33%</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>-295</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Education &amp; Training</td>
<td>12327</td>
<td>10757</td>
<td>14587</td>
<td>15,388</td>
<td>16,141</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3,814</td>
<td>753</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Health &amp; Welfare</td>
<td>4206</td>
<td>5720</td>
<td>9258</td>
<td>11,051</td>
<td>12,282</td>
<td>192%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8,076</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Engineering</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>124%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>-73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Manufacturing &amp; Processing</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>125%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Personal</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>1,865</td>
<td>116%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Logistics</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>-28%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Security</td>
<td>2795</td>
<td>3259</td>
<td>4555</td>
<td>6,229</td>
<td>6,362</td>
<td>128%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3,567</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Tourism</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>-30%</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>-237</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Hospitality</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>2,644</td>
<td>2,269</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>-375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Sport</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1820</td>
<td>2616</td>
<td>4522</td>
<td>3674</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>-19%</td>
<td>1,681</td>
<td>-848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>146,469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 1**

While concentrated in core skills, Level 1 VEC FETAC awards were made in one of four fields of learning, as detailed in Figure 4.6.1. The major awards (all within core skills) were for awards in Communications and General Learning. For minor awards, the most prominent included Computer Skills (133), followed by Listening and Speaking, Writing, and Non Verbal Communication, which each had between 20 and 30 awards. This profile of awards at level 1 remains largely similar to that of 2010.
VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 2
Minor awards at level 2 were made across a limited range of fields with the largest share in core skills (Figure 4.6.2). In a pattern similar to 2010, the highest number of awards was for Computer Skills (174), Setting Learning Goals (142), Reading (141), Writing (129), Using Technology (113) and Listening and Speaking (107). As in 2010, major awards were all for General Learning (179 awards).

VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 3
While awards at level 3 were made across a much broader range of fields (Figure 4.6.3), the greatest concentration was nonetheless for core skills. The most common award titles were: Computer Literacy (2,351), Communications (2,332), Mathematics (2,092), Personal Effectiveness (2,074), Introduction to Internet (1,636) and English as a Second Language (1,545). All major awards at NFQ 3 were for General Learning (1,372 awards).

Although the overall number of VEC FETAC awards (levels 1-6) grew by 1% between 2010 and 2011, growth at level 3 was particularly strong (at over 8,000 awards or 32%); the rise in the number of awards at this level was due mainly to an increase in minor awards (+7,300), especially for award titles such as Computer Literacy, Introduction to the Internet, General Learning, Communications and
Mathematics (these four award titles alone accounted for almost one half of the increase in minor awards at this level).

![VEC FETAC Awards Level 3, 2011](image)

Source: FETAC

**VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 4**

Unlike most other NFQ levels, where core skills dominate, the administration field of learning had the highest number of level 4 awards (Figure 4.6.4). The top four award titles at level 4, with in excess of 1,000 awards each, were: IT Skills (4,514), Computer Applications (2,847), Communications (1,283) and English as a Second Language (1,099). There were 461 major awards, all for General Vocational Learning. Of the 17,553 level 4 awards made in VEC centres in 2011, the vast majority (97%) were minor awards.

The distribution of level 4 awards by type and field in 2011 was broadly in line with that of 2010.

![VEC FETAC Awards Level 4, 2011](image)
VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 5

VEC FETAC level 5 awards were made across a wide range of fields of learning (Figure 4.6.5). The highest number of awards was in core skills (over 14,200 awards), followed by health and welfare (almost 12,000 awards), education and training (approximately 11,400 awards) and business (over 9,000 awards). While there were awards made in almost all fields of learning, more than one half (46,548, or 55%) are concentrated in these four fields.

While level 5 awards were predominantly minor awards, with just 20% being major awards; however, this distribution of awards by type does not hold across all fields of learning, i.e. in education and training, 34% were major awards, in business, 32% were major awards, and in health and welfare 23% were major awards. The highest number of level 5 major awards was for Childcare (2,422), followed by Business Studies (2,218), Nursing Studies (1,022), Health Service Skills (961), Community & Health Services (927), and Healthcare Support (770).

For minor awards, there were 7,588 awards in Communications, 5,944 in Work Experience, 3,958 in Occupational First Aid, and 2,935 in Word Processing. Awards in security were mostly in Occupational First Aid or Safety and Health at Work (1,781). Awards in education & training were mostly child-care related (e.g. Caring for Children, Early Childhood Education, etc.).

When compared to 2010, the overall pattern of awards by field and type is broadly similar with the exception that Childcare awards have overtaken Business Studies as the highest ranking major award.
**VEC FETAC Awards by Field of Learning NFQ 6**

Level 6 awards were made across a wide range of fields, with both major and minor awards in most, although not all, fields (Figure 4.6.6). Level 6 and level 4 awards are the only levels where core skills was not the field with the highest number of awards. The highest share of awards at this level was concentrated in education and training which, at 3,672 awards, made up 36% of the total (10,134). This was followed by awards in the business (15%, or 1,488 awards), and computing (10%, or 976 awards). As in the case of all other levels, the majority of level 6 awards were minor awards (7,555 or 75%).

The highest number of level 6 major awards was for Supervision in Childcare (918), Administration (340), Business Management (115), Animal Science (111) and Networks and Software Systems (103). The highest number of minor awards at this level was for Supervision in Childcare (514), Early Childhood Programmes (488), Social and Legal Issues in Childcare (443), Child Development (428), and Communications (369).

There was little change between 2010 and 2011 in the field and type of level 6 awards; however, in absolute terms, there was a substantial increase in the number of education and training awards which went from over 2,000 in 2010 to in excess of 3,500 in 2011; the increase was due in part to rises in the number of childcare-related awards: for example, the number Supervision in Childcare awards increased by 80%, or almost 700 additional awards.
Matching Further Education Supply to Demand

Specific Future Skills Shortages Identified by the EGFSN relevant to the FET Sector

The following specific future skills needs relevant to NFQ level 1-6 have been identified in recent sectoral reports of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Future Skills Needs of Enterprise of the Biopharma-Pharmachem Sector

In its 2010 report ‘Future Skills Requirements for the Biopharma-pharmachem Sector’, the EGFSN highlighted the importance of an appropriately skilled workforce for the Irish biopharma-pharmachem sector in order to meet the changing needs of companies engaging in new, higher value added activities (e.g. process and product development) and services (e.g. supply-chain management).

While many of the skills challenges identified relate to higher skills areas (e.g. graduate and postgraduate level), the report also identifies the skills developed in the further education and training sector as an important step in the progression route to higher qualifications (e.g. level 7 on the NFQ). The need for training programmes to be aligned with industry’s needs was emphasised and such needs, relevant for the FET sector, include training for operatives, current and future, in areas such as: information technology, analytical offline testing, mechanical changing of equipment, chemical engineering and chemistry.

Future Skills Needs of Enterprise to Trade Internationally

The EGFSN Report ‘Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally’ (2012) makes recommendations on ensuring that education and training provision and continuing professional development is fully aligned with the skills necessary for Ireland to trade internationally. Among such skills are: global management, international marketing, international sales, project management, overseas customer support & service, product design & development, and foreign languages & cultural awareness. Computing and engineering design skills are also recognised as important for manufacturing and production.

The report recognises that there is a need to improve international sales education and training and that boosting the domestic supply of foreign language skills - at the scale and proficiency level required by enterprise – should be a priority.

VECs should also have regard to the range of other EGFSN reports referred to in the previous edition of these guidelines, e.g. Future Skills Needs of Enterprise within the Green Economy, Future Skills Needs of Enterprise of the Food and Beverages Sector and Future Skills Needs of Enterprise of the Wholesale and Retail Sector.
## Current Vacancies and Replacement Demand
### Occupational Skills Shortages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number Employed (2011 Annual Average - '000s)</th>
<th>% Third Level Graduates</th>
<th>Average Annual Employment Growth Rate, 2007-2011 (%)</th>
<th>Replacement Rate (%)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountants &amp; tax experts</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>96.40%</td>
<td>-0.60%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actuaries, economists &amp; statisticians; other business professionals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>91.20%</td>
<td>-2.60%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business sales executives</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.40%</td>
<td>-5.40%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual, niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical, biological &amp; physical scientists</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>98.00%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical &amp; electronic engineers</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>86.10%</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical, electronic &amp; engineering technicians</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>52.10%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering professionals n.e.c.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>-2.20%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; investment analysts</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>88.50%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; accounting technicians</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>77.30%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial accounts managers</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>72.80%</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial admin. occupations</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>46.00%</td>
<td>-0.90%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>Multilingual, niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT professionals n.e.c.</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>88.40%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT specialist &amp; project managers</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT business analysts &amp; systems designers</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>90.90%</td>
<td>-4.30%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT operations technicians</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67.30%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual, niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT user support technicians</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>76.90%</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual, niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing associate professionals</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>87.90%</td>
<td>-3.50%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>Multilingual, niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical practitioners</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>99.10%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal machining, fitting &amp; instrument making trades</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>31.90%</td>
<td>-9.30%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>Niche area (i.e. tool making)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgt. consultants, business analysts &amp; project managers</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses &amp; midwives</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>95.30%</td>
<td>-0.20%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health professionals n.e.c.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>97.20%</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>Niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other natural &amp; social scientists; R&amp;D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>93.60%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>High level niche areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guidelines for VECs in aligning further education provision with the skills needs of enterprise
2013 Update

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>managers</th>
<th>Other technicians</th>
<th>-1.80%</th>
<th>2.60%</th>
<th>Niche areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process &amp; quality assurance technicians</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>82.30%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>Niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, process, design &amp; development engineers</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>91.10%</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmers &amp; software developers</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>93.30%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality control engineers; other regulatory professionals</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>95.80%</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales accounts &amp; bus. dev. managers</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>72.40%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web designers &amp; developers</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>72.00%</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Vacancies and Replacement Demand

FÁS vacancy data, the EGFSN Vacancy Overview and the EGFSN National Skills Bulletin data are useful sources in identifying the sectors and occupations relevant to further education and training provision.

Figure 5.5 shows the number of job vacancies notified to FÁS (FÁS jobs Ireland) in 2011. The number of job vacancies was highest for workers in health/care services, sales, and clerical workers; combined these vacancies accounted for over one half of the 96,000 vacancies advertised through FÁS in 2011. These occupations are mainly associated with sectors with relatively high rates of turnover (retail, temping activities, and hospitality) and may also have varying seasonal demands. In this context, employment opportunities may be frequent but not always permanent.

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\^ FÁS Jobs Ireland is a collection of all vacancies advertised by employers through the National Contact Centre in FÁS; the FÁS vacancy data excludes vacancies advertised as part of the Work Placement and JobBridge schemes.
2012 National Skills Bulletin and Vacancy Overview

The table below (based on the data outlined in the National Skills Bulletin 2012) shows occupational categories which may be considered most relevant to the further education and training sector in the short term. The occupations were selected on the basis that the occupation had:

- at most, a 60% share of those employed holding a third level qualification
- an employment growth rate that was above average for the period 2007-2011 (i.e. greater than 3.9%)
- an unemployment rate that was below average.

Based on the above criteria, the selection is concentrated in sales and customer service (including retail), caring, clerical/admin, and hospitality occupations. The 2011 Vacancy Overview report which is still relevant now but due to be updated in January 2013 set out summaries of skills needs in sales and customer service, administrative and secretarial and caring, leisure and other/elementary service roles.

### Occupations by Replacement Rate, Employment Growth and Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number Employed (2011 Annual)</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>% Part-Time</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate (%)</th>
<th>% Third Level Graduates</th>
<th>Average Annual Employment Growth Rate, 2007-2011 (%)</th>
<th>New Employment Permits Issued, 2011 (Number)</th>
<th>Replacement Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butchers, fishmongers, etc.*</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care workers, home carers, etc.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring personal services occupations</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering &amp; bar managers</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical &amp; related process operatives</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminders, etc.</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service occupations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical, electronic &amp; engineering technicians</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary administration occupations</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial admin.</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guidelines for VECs in aligning further education provision with the skills needs of enterprise  
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>occupations</th>
<th>5.6</th>
<th>57.7%</th>
<th>25.9%</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>49.9%</th>
<th>0.0%</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>-1.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel &amp; accommodation managers</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>-1.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeepers &amp; caretakers, etc.</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; directors in other services</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; directors in retail &amp; wholesale</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery nurses &amp; assistants</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office managers &amp; supervisors admin. occupations</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>-3.0%</td>
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<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other drivers &amp; transport operatives</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective service occupations Publicans</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant managers</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine operatives</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales assistants</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales related occupations</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock control, transport &amp; distribution admin. occupations</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>-2.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although butchers/fishmongers etc. have above average unemployment, this occupation was nonetheless included as it has been identified as difficult-to-fill*
Appendix 1
Where Further Education can best match Skills and Labour Needs

Vocational education and training has a major contribution to make to economic competitiveness. Many of the unskilled jobs which existed in OECD countries a generation ago are fast disappearing, either because they have been replaced by technology or because OECD countries cannot compete with less developed countries on labour costs. Instead, OECD countries need to compete on the quality of goods and services they provide. That requires a well-skilled labour force, with a range of mid-level trade, technical and professional skills alongside those high-level skills associated with university education. More often than not, those skills are delivered through vocational programmes.

OECD (2010) Learning for Jobs

The following specific future skills needs relevant to NFQ Levels 1-6 have been identified in recent sectoral reports of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Future Skills Needs of Enterprise within the Green Economy

Recommendation: Develop Sales & Marketing Staff Skills Capability (NFQ Level 5-6)
- Provide for the upskilling requirements of marketing/sales staff around green public procurement – the requirement will be for short updating programmes
- Meet demand for technical staff to sell internationally. Technical knowledge, foreign language skills, legal awareness regarding tender/contracts and ICT skills are important requirements
- Anticipate training demand from the planned installation of domestic & commercial water meters (Polyethylene pipe laying and service laying, water meter and boundary box installation). 400 additional jobs engaged in such work.

Recommendation: Develop Operatives Skills Capability (NFQ Levels 3-4)
- Demand for operative skills linked to scaling up of manufacturing, operation & maintenance business stages of renewable energies & with investment in the retrofitting of housing and buildings
- Health and safety training within the water and waste water sub-sector & in the thermal treatment of municipal waste
- Meet demand for insulation workers to perform a variety of activities in upgrading internal and external insulation in existing and new buildings
- Retrofit techniques can be delivered through relatively short, targeted training programmes
- Anticipate demand for between 100-150 skilled operators for anaerobic digestion

Recommendation: Improve the level of mathematical and science proficiency at all levels of education.
- Incorporate ‘real life’ examples from business into curricula (similar to project maths)
- Develop mathematical knowledge skills modules to meet requirements of workers across occupations-including for electricians who qualified several years previously.
- A suite of mathematical skills modules at various NFQ levels could be developed to be drawn upon by individuals, adult education and business.

Future Skills Requirements of the Food and Beverages Sector
- The 2009 EGFSN report on Future Skills Requirements of the Food and Beverage Sector, highlighted that a key concern of many of the Irish development agencies is the upskilling of those employees who lack basic skills and providing opportunities for further training.

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7 EGFSN (2009) Future Skills Requirements of the Food and Beverages Sector
the food processing sector, particularly at an operative level, there are a significant number of employees who lack any formal qualifications, with the perception that basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are poor.

- There is a concern that low literacy levels may be an underlying barrier in the Food and Beverage sector to engaging in formalised training, leaving individuals vulnerable if they were to become unemployed. The skill sets required at operative level within food and beverage manufacturing are rising. Due to greater efficiencies arising through new technologies and improved workplace practices, operatives increasingly need a broader based skills set that includes supervisory competencies and understanding of lean manufacturing practices and supply chain management. The report recommends the introduction of an accreditation programme for food operatives, with a focus on transferable skills including numeracy, literacy, basic IT, communication & interpersonal skills, team-working and English as a foreign language. The objective of this recommendation is to give recognition to the depth of knowledge associated with food operatives’ positions through accredited qualifications such that the status of operatives becomes recognised as one of being a qualified technician.

Future Skills Requirements of the Wholesale and Retail Sector

- This report found that significant employment and career opportunities exist for those with relatively low levels of qualifications, however, there was also a need to make career paths more visible, particularly to those working outside of the sector. The report recommended developing a Skills Framework for the sector aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications, which would highlight the various career paths available and therefore identification of training needs depending on emerging gaps. The report also pointed to the potential role of recognition of prior learning within wholesale and retail. Many people working in the sector may already have developed the skills and competencies they require to meet existing qualification standards. Recognition of prior learning has the potential to establish employees’ existing competencies and their position on the National Framework of Qualifications, enhance employee mobility, and encourage workers to pursue further education and more specialist qualifications within the sector. As a relatively high turnover sector, wholesale and retail can also play an important role in labour market activation, particularly in linking skills training with on-the-job practical experience. The report identified a whole host of career paths available, particularly to those with relatively low levels of educational attainment that can lead to extremely rewarding professional careers in areas such as supply chain management, marketing, purchasing, customer relationship management and people development.

- The report also found that the educational profile of the wholesale and retail sector and interview evidence together point towards functional literacy and functional numeracy being a significant issue within the sector. Functional literacy refers to the ability to understand and use written information practically in the context of work and life, rather than an actual inability to read. This can be addressed in part through training interventions, both through the communications modules that form a part of many retail-related courses, and through “integrating literacy” throughout the course. Integrating literacy means designing and delivering education and training programmes in a way that is effective for adults who may not be confident in literacy generally and/or in the specific literacy demands of the particular programme. It involves particular methodologies on the part of the teacher or trainer, as well as whole-organisation systems that take account of literacy issues at every phase of education and training programmes and across the entire curriculum. These are outlined in the document “Integrating Literacy – Guidelines for Further Education and Training Centres” (NALA 2002).

8 EGFSN (2010) Future Skills Requirements of the Wholesale and Retail Sector
Skills for Enterprise Development

- The National Skills Strategy and other reports have pointed to the importance of Skills for Enterprise Development. These are the skills which are viewed as the basis for the survival, growth and success of enterprises in the knowledge economy that Ireland must strive for in order to compete in global markets. Many of these skills sets relate to the need to grow enterprises internationally – exports, after all, are essential to Ireland’s economic recovery and future wellbeing. Consultations indicate that entrepreneurial capacity can be stimulated at many levels. For example, Youthreach has been involved with the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) with a view to stimulating entrepreneurship among students through pro-social activities, even those with low levels of qualifications.

Mathematical Achievement

- Ireland must raise its level of mathematical achievement to ensure it will continue to successfully compete with other economies. An adequate supply of people with mathematical, science and ICT skills is crucial to Ireland’s future social and economic development. Mathematics is important because it underpins many other disciplines such as science, technology, business and finance. It is a fundamental requirement for the growth of the knowledge economy and the development of a world-class research and innovation system in Ireland. Mathematical skills are essential for enabling people to fully participate and work in a modern society. Improving national mathematical achievement is therefore vital for all of us.

  - In December 2008, the EGFSN published its statement on Raising National Mathematical Achievement, which highlighted that the current level of our mathematical achievement is of serious concern to employers. Mathematical concepts, models and techniques are central to working in all sectors of employment and are equally important to services jobs as to manufacturing jobs. The proficiency level of students in mathematics is a key factor influencing the domestic supply of graduates for sectors with growth potential such as ICT, Life Sciences and Business, Financial and Professional Services. Boosting the level of our mathematical capability would help ensure opportunities for employment growth could be fully realised.

  - Mathematical proficiency is not limited only to high-skilled jobs. Workers in low and medium skilled level jobs also require at least basic mathematical proficiency - for example, the ability of retail workers to function effectively when engaged in tasks involving numbers e.g. sales transactions, stocktaking, and product layout. In order to foster a knowledge–based economy, business is calling for radical measures to boost the numbers of students performing well in Higher-Level Leaving Certificate Mathematics and to increase overall national mathematical proficiency. The main challenges facing Ireland becoming one of the top OECD countries in terms of mathematical performance are the need to: (i) improve the quality and level of mathematical knowledge outcomes for all; (ii) increase the number of students achieving at the highest proficiency level; and (iii) reduce the numbers of students achieving at the lowest proficiency level. (May need for upskilling of teachers in schools with more appropriate teaching methodologies in the teaching of mathematics) Further Education can play an important role in developing mathematical proficiency across NFQ Levels 1-6, whether this be through standalone provision in mathematics courses, junior certificate and leaving certificate or integrated as part of specific vocational courses. Some concern has been expressed in consultations about the relatively low level of mathematics content in further education programmes. For example, it has been highlighted that many of the new Level 4 awards to not include a mandatory maths component.

Rising importance of generic or ‘soft’ skills

9 EGFSN (2008) Statement on Raising National Mathematical Achievement
• Generic or soft skills have become vital in enhancing an individual’s employability and the VECs have a central role in the development of these skills.

• Skills such as self-directed learning, critical and creative thinking, information processing, teamwork and project management are highly relevant to the modern economy and workplace. This was underlined in both the National Skills Strategy\textsuperscript{10} and the NCC’s Statement on Education and Training\textsuperscript{11}, which highlighted that virtually all sectors of industry are becoming more knowledge-intensive. Part of this involves a change in the types of skills required, with a rise in the importance of generic or ‘soft’ skills, including the ability of individuals to work more autonomously; be self-managing, work as part of flexible teams, adapt to change, solve complex problems, think creatively and engage with innovation as a continuous process.

• Based on the national and international academic evidence available, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has identified in the National Skills Strategy the key and most widely shared elements that should be included in a generic skills portfolio as:
  o Basic Skills – such as literacy, using numbers and including technological literacy.
  o People-related skills — such as communication, interpersonal, team-working, customer-service skills; and
  o Conceptual/thinking skills — such as collecting and organising information, problem-solving, planning and organising, learning-to-learn skills, innovation and creative skills.\textsuperscript{12}

• In addition, research conducted for the National Skills Strategy on a range of different occupations found that skills requirements are rising within existing jobs. These include the importance of continual learning, reduction of routine tasks, skills for dealing with others and even less tangible characteristics such as dependability and having a good attitude.

• As pointed to previously, the VECs have a strong emphasis on Core Skills in their provision. While, core skills are of course important in enabling people to work across a variety of occupations, they should be developed in conjunction with education and training programmes designed around career paths that aim to progress learners to employment in certain sectors or occupations. In addition, career guidance supports need to communicate the importance of generic/soft skills for employability.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

• Where basic skills such as literacy and numeracy have not been developed from an early age, people can be hindered from fully accessing education and training opportunities or the labour market in later life. This inhibits individuals from realising their potential, which also has wider costs for the economy and society. Literacy and numeracy skills are important as new technologies and modes of doing business bring with them higher skills requirements, even in occupations traditionally considered ‘low skilled’. This is within the context of current high unemployment, where many people that have lost their jobs will have to upskill or reskill to other sectors in order to re-enter the labour market.

• Literacy and numeracy capabilities underpin the generic/soft skills portfolio as outlined above. The modern definition of literacy extends beyond the traditional view as the skills of reading and writing to include the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, print, broadcast media, and digital media. These skills are integral to generic skills required in the modern workplace such as reading, writing,

\textsuperscript{10} EGFSN, Towards a National Skills Strategy, 2007

\textsuperscript{11} NCC, Statement on Education and Training, Forfás, February 2011

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technological literacy, communication, interpersonal and team-working skills which cannot be
developed without developing the fundamental capabilities encompassed by the modern
definition of literacy.

- Similarly, the modern interpretation of numeracy not only includes the ability to use numbers
but the wider ability to use mathematics to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-
day living. In this context, numeracy also provides the basis for many of the generic skills
required by employers in the 21st century workplace such as using numbers, organising and
analysing information and problem-solving.

- The recurring emergence of literacy and numeracy deficits in EGFSN reports as barriers to
labour market entry and progression is of significant concern and an area where VECs can play
a central role. The OECD review of Vocational Education and Training in Ireland found that this
problem is particularly acute at present, given that many people with literacy and numeracy
difficulties were able to find employment during the boom (e.g. labourers) and are now highly
removed from the labour market given the basic literacy and numeracy requirements of
employment opportunities that currently exist. The review also provided evidence that the
degree of literacy proficiency is also a significant predictor of unemployment. It pointed to the
potential for greater integration of literacy and numeracy supports in to existing vocational
programmes, in addition to the recommendation that systematic screening for literacy and
numeracy difficulties should be used to identify people in need of support.

Management Development

- In 2006, the EGFSN report SME Management Development in Ireland highlighted deficits
across a range of management capabilities including general management such as HR,
marketing and finance skills, strategic management skills such as inability to plan ahead,
product management skills, and functional management skills (sales, training, marketing,
supply chain management, IT and R&D. In response to this report and subsequent
endorsement by the Small Business Forum report, the Management Development Council
(MDC) was established, which defined management as the organisation and coordination of
the activities of an enterprise in accordance with certain policies and in the achievement of
clearly defined objectives. Management development, therefore, is the process by which the
management competencies of a manager or a management team are enhanced. At a global
level, the available research shows that there is a strong relationship between management
practice and business performance. The OECD has found a positive relationship between
management development, management practice and the bottom line performance of a firm.
According to the OECD study on high-growth SMEs, good management is vital for better
performance. Management skills are crucial for firms adapting their business offerings, or
moving into new markets, as well as for firms striving to be innovative. In addition, research
undertaken on behalf of the Management Development Council found that improved
management practice is associated with large increases in productivity and output.

- As noted in Section 4, VECs provide a range of occupationally specific and supervisory type
awards at NFQ Level 6, however, they are heavily related to Childcare and Education and could
perhaps have greater emphasis on wider management development for enterprise. In
addition, generally, Level 6 awards account for a relatively low proportion of total awards (6%).
There may be scope to broaden provision at Level 6 taking in to account the need for greater
management development – perhaps in a broader range of middle management/supervisory
type roles, for example, within business and administration.

Marketing, Sales, Creativity, Design and Innovation

VECs can play a highly influential role in developing sales, marketing and innovation skills in the workforce. The EGFSN Innovate, Market Sell Report (2004) highlighted the collective importance of innovation, marketing and sales capabilities for the future success of Irish exporting SME. In particular, it stressed the importance of the interrelationship between these three business functions. Successful innovation will hinge on the ability of firms to utilise customer and market knowledge in the development of products and services which meet genuine customer needs. The report identified an acute problem in relation to sales staff in SMEs recruited from technical backgrounds, who have inadequate, if any, formal training in sales.

The concepts of creativity, design and innovation as essential ingredients for economic success are well established and accepted. However, they can sometimes seem to be a bit nebulous in terms of what they actually mean in the reality of the workplace. The 2010 EGFSN report on Skills for Creativity, Design and Innovation defined the terms creativity, design and innovation specifically in the enterprise context and demonstrates how their application has potential direct relevance across the full range of enterprise and occupational activities.

Creativity is imagination applied to the purpose of creating economic value. Most creativity is about finding ways to combine existing ideas to do something new.

Design is the process of moving from an initial creative idea to developing a new or changed product, service or process that can be brought to market or implemented internally within a business.

An innovation is change that creates economic value. This is generally through creating a new or improved product or service; improving the way a business operates internally; or changing the way the business relates to the business system of which it forms a part to bring greater value to its customers.

Skills required for creativity, design and innovation, are needed in all industries and in all occupations. The report highlighted that innovation can originate at all occupational levels and in diverse ways, whether that be a retail assistant providing customer feedback to management and affecting work practices or a software engineer developing an innovative new product. While there is some variation between occupations and across industries, some universal points emerge.

Depth of skill and knowledge is important to creativity and innovation across all skill levels; Creativity relies heavily on finding new ways to combine existing ideas. In skills terms, this means that the capability to work well with people whose deep skills lie in other areas is critical; All other capabilities have to be underpinned by strong generic skills in areas including communication skills, team-working and problem solving; and Creativity and innovation are influenced heavily by the culture of the organisation, and how innovation is managed and led.

As noted previously, VECs have relatively low provision is specific sales related awards. VECs can play a central role in the development of these skills across NFQ levels 1-6 and could endeavour to link the concepts of sales, marketing, innovation and soft skills in provision.

Language Skills
VECs currently have limited provision in foreign languages, particularly those required by enterprises from an exporting perspective. This is an area where VECs could perhaps enhance provision to provide access routes for people to learn languages with sufficient proficiency to progress to higher education. The Enterprise Strategy Group’s report stressed the importance of greater understanding of international markets. In this context the ability of Irish-based enterprises to communicate effectively with other nationalities and cultures can enhance their success. International business relationships will be crucial to indigenous enterprise in the future. Success in marketing and selling Irish goods and services will be contingent on the
ability of Irish enterprise to establish and maintain close relationships with customers in global markets. In addition, partnerships and collaborations with foreign enterprises will be key drivers of innovation and growth. The importance of foreign languages from a competitiveness perspective was set out in the EGFSN 2005 report *the Supply and Demand for Foreign Languages in the Enterprise* Sector and recently reiterated in the Royal Irish Academy’s *National Language Strategy* (August 2011).

- Language skills are complementary to other skills such as business, science, engineering and technology and are not in competition with them, nor are these skills mutually exclusive. Owing mainly to historical factors, throughout the education system the provision of languages education is concentrated in a limited number of foreign languages. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has recommended that further consideration is required in how current provision of foreign languages and cultures education relates to enterprise needs and how they could be enhanced in order that enterprises can maximise opportunities in foreign-language markets. Currently, almost all of VEC FETAC language-related awards are related to English as a Second Language, with Irish, French and Spanish the most popular languages for awards. The VECs could consider playing a greater role in the provision of foreign languages, especially those linked to skills needs. Consultations have indicated some support in this area, for example, potential collaboration opportunities between trade associations (e.g. Engineers Ireland) and VECs in developing technical language programmes. Again, this is an area where expansion by the VECs in this area should ideally take place only where there is no duplication and in conjunction with a specific stakeholder or enterprise in order to maximise outcomes.

**Skills requirements arising from minimum levels/mandatory qualifications**

- As previously noted, qualifications arising from regulation or rising industry requirements are another important feature of the modern labour market, impacting particularly on those with relatively low levels of educational attainment. These qualifications (see Appendix II for list of specific qualifications provided by FETAC) can be generally categorised as:
  - Qualifications required for licence to work – these primarily relate to security; quarrying; construction; lifeguarding; driving instruction and health and safety.
  - Qualifications related to improving practice: these are related to manual handling; people handling; energy efficient technologies; and emergency lighting systems.
  - Qualifications required for employment/grant purposes – these are mainly related to childcare (early education); healthcare; waste treatment and veterinary nursing.
  - Qualifications required for grant purposes from Revenue – there is one award here for Farming required by Revenue for transfer of farms. Other Non FETAC higher awards are also used.
  - The VECs are mainly active in the areas of childcare and healthcare in relation to these types of awards, with FAS mainly responsible for those related to licensing. It is important that future provision (with SOLAS in mind) anticipates the introduction of minimum/mandatory qualifications for occupations, in addition to monitoring the current level of provision to ensure supply is meeting demand. This requires working closely with enterprise and with the public sector (particularly education, health, agencies and local authorities)