



7 July 2016

Mr Richard Bruton,
Minister for Education and Skills,
Marlborough St.,
Dublin 1.

Dear Richard,

I refer to the consultation process on your Department's new Statement of Strategy 2016-2018 and I welcome the opportunity to provide my own input to this process. Both of our Departments have collaborated well on the Action Plan for Jobs, the National Skills Strategy, Innovation 2020 and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, amongst other initiatives, and I look forward to continued engagement with you on issues of mutual interest.

The education and training system is a fundamental driver of our economic progress. As identified in the Government's enterprise policy, *Enterprise 2025*, the availability of a well-skilled, adaptable and innovative labour force is key to future economic prosperity. Talent is a key competitiveness issue and the availability of a skilled labour force is one of the most significant differentiators in the global competition to attract Foreign Direct Investment and to support the growth and expansion of our indigenous enterprise base.


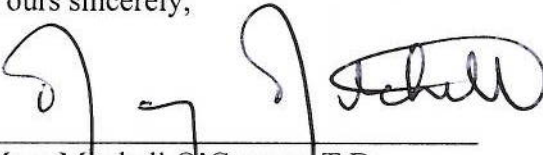
In the attached Appendix, I have set out in some detail my thoughts on the priorities you might consider in your Department's new Statement of Strategy. Structured around the questions in your consultation paper, I have focussed on those areas which are a priority for my Department.

The National Skills Strategy, published earlier this year, has a wide focus on the whole education continuum from early pre-school years, through to Further Education and Training (including Apprenticeship), Higher Education, Career Guidance, Transversal Skills and Lifelong Learning. The development of the Department's new Statement of Strategy presents an opportunity to embed the focus on skills development of our people and to expressly show the link between education and other related objectives of the Programme for Government, such as Improving the Lives of People with Disabilities and addressing Children and Youth Affairs.

If we are to meet the increasing demands for a range of skills for employers and to enable citizens to take an active part in society, we will need an education and training system which

is both student-centric and responsive and flexible to the changing needs of the marketplace and our society. Enterprise has a role to play in this and I would welcome the opportunity for our two Departments to work together to establish closer links and collaboration between enterprise and the education and training system over the period of the strategy.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Mitchell O'Connor, T.D.,
Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation