

**Enterprise Ireland  
response**

to the

**DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION & SKILLS  
STATEMENT OF STRATEGY  
2016-2018**

June 10, 2016

## **1. Introduction**

Enterprise Ireland (EI) welcomes the opportunity to input to the Department of Education & Skills (DES) 2016-2018 strategy. The education system and the availability skills to meet the needs of industry are critical to enterprise development and job creation.

Enterprise Ireland supported companies created 21,118 new jobs in 2015, resulting in a net increase of 10,169 in the number of people employed. Overall direct employment in Enterprise Ireland client companies reached 192,223, of which 165,630 were full-time jobs and 26,593 other jobs. Exports by Enterprise Ireland client companies totalled €18.6 billion in 2014 and export results for 2015 will be released in the coming weeks.

Enterprise Ireland provides supports across all stages of company development - entrepreneurs, start-up companies, SMEs, large companies - as they scale their businesses in Ireland and internationally to create jobs in Ireland. Enterprise Ireland also has responsibility for foreign direct investment in the food and beverage sector where the availability of appropriate skills is also critical to winning mobile investment.

Consultations and surveys of Enterprise Ireland clients suggest the availability of skills is a key concern for Irish companies across all stages of the developmental lifecycle.

Enterprise Ireland is very aware of the key role the education system plays in providing a framework for entrepreneurs of the future, and supporting an economy focused on innovation.

The skills agenda (recruitment and training) is integral to EI's client advocacy role. It is a priority for our clients that they have:

- access talent.
- the skills to support innovation and internationalisation.
- the in-house management capabilities to scale.

## **2. Enterprise Ireland Activities**

Enterprise Ireland works in partnership with companies to develop their capability through management development programmes. These programmes span strategic leadership, capability development and management development. A list of the courses developed and in many cases provided by Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) providers nationally & internationally is provided in Appendix 1.

Separately, Enterprise Ireland runs a series of programs for graduates – International Graduate Programme<sup>1</sup>, Graduates for Growth (G4G)<sup>2</sup>, Graduates for International Growth G4iG<sup>3</sup> to build the cohort of internationally business aware skills within Ireland's industry groups. These programmes facilitate Irish companies and recent graduates linking together on a company growth program in Ireland or overseas market development support. In addition Enterprise Ireland provides training for international exporting skills to client companies.

Our Client Skills Unit works with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Department of Education and Skills and other governmental stakeholders to articulate the skills needs of our clients.

Enterprise Ireland is also working with our clients and the education and training system through the Regional Skills Fora, launched in 2015 to identify and build the supply of skills to support job creation and the growth in each region. This is an important process bringing education and training providers together with companies of all sizes to unlock growth potential and support job creation.

Strengthening the linkages between companies and the Higher Education Sector through the agency's collaborative research and innovation supports is central to Enterprise Ireland's mandate. The objectives of these activities is to maximise the benefits of the State's investment in research and development and support company growth through innovation.

In recent years Enterprise Ireland has also piloted a Regional SME Innovation Programme. This programme focussed on building linkages between industry and educational institutes to promote the wider innovation agenda.

Enterprise Ireland also funded the Finance for Growth Programme (F4G) which was delivered via Skillsnet.

These activities make an important contribution to developing company capability. The education system however is the foundation of national competitiveness. The importance of an innovative, flexible and internationally competitive education sector is vital if Irish companies are to have the skills to win business abroad and create jobs in Ireland.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-People/International-Graduate-Programme.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/Eestablish-SME-Funding/Graduate-Business-Growth-Initiative.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/Eestablish-SME-Funding/Graduates-4-International-Growth-G4iG-.html>

### 3. Enterprise Ireland's Strategy

The Education Strategy is very important context to the implementation of Enterprise Ireland's Strategy 2014-16 and beyond. EI's strategy is based on the following four pillars:-

**START** – *Entrepreneurship agenda.*

Encouraging and prioritising a focus on enterprise skills within second and third level education is critical to supporting a vibrant entrepreneurial eco-system.

**INNOVATE** - *Innovation in products, services and business processes is required for growth.*

An adequate supply of STE(A)M<sup>4</sup> graduates is required to support the application of innovation to achieve commercial and economic objectives.

**SCALE**, *working with existing companies to drive competitiveness.*

In the past few years our clients have highlighted that the shortage of certain skills is impeding company growth. Enterprise Ireland sees that this challenge needs to be tackled on a Company and systems level to ensure that Irish enterprise remains internationally competitive. To meet this challenge, appropriate training and development needs to be available for companies at all stages of growth. Supporting the development and ambition of senior management is also critical to this agenda.

**ANTICIPATE** - *Company success is dependent on anticipating future direction of technology, customers and markets.*

The skills and talent within the HEIs and their outreach to industry are critical to this agenda. In particular, foreign language capability and cultural awareness are essential for enterprises to compete in an increasingly global market place, and in particular to access High Growth Markets.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> STE(A)M skills and capabilities – i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Manufacturing skills. The addition of Arts reflects the growing recognition globally that psychology, communications, content generation and decision-making are also vital to modern industry.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.openireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Key\\_Skills\\_for\\_Enterprise\\_to\\_Trade\\_Internationally.pdf](http://www.openireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Key_Skills_for_Enterprise_to_Trade_Internationally.pdf)

#### **4. Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students.**

##### *Entrepreneurship*

Enterprise Ireland is very aware of the key role the education system plays in providing a framework for entrepreneurs of the future and notes the important role of education and training in developing an environment where entrepreneurship skills are cultivated. It is of critical importance that at all levels the education system Entrepreneurship is prioritized and promoted. In this context, Enterprise Ireland welcomes the emphasis in the Programme for a Partnership Government on introducing new subjects like 'entrepreneurial education'. It would be important in developing any new curriculum that international best practice was reviewed and that the Irish enterprise sector was consulted.

##### *Digital and ICT*

The commitment to further accelerate the Digital and ICT agenda in schools will also be important if the system is to prepare school leavers to compete in the jobs market, take up lifelong learnings opportunities in the later stages of their careers or to maximize the learning opportunities when they enter third level.

Several new job titles now exist that did not exist 4 years ago. Many in IT and related areas including Marketing Technologist, Web Analytics Technologist, Data Analytics, Social Media Manager, Growth Hacker, Content Strategist, Data Modeler, Cloud Developer. <sup>i</sup>"The shortage of ICT talent is potentially significant for a number of sectors where ICT skills are needed (e.g. Software, Data Analytics, Financial Services, and Distribution)."

This challenge is not unique to the area of ICT. The ability of the Irish higher education system to foresee and respond to emergent trends will greatly impact the ability of the economy to growth. Emergent new areas like Economy of Things, Smart Ageing, Big Data, Aquaculture, eHealth, FinTech, Geosciences, Sharing Economy and Space, Digital Media and Marketing need specific skills and it is important that the current education system is able to provide them in a timely way.

##### *Benchmarking*

Enterprise Ireland also welcomes the Government's commitment to work with the Higher Education Authority to benchmark entrepreneurial activity in the higher education sector to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs. It would be important that any initiatives put in place continue to take into account the needs of enterprise and are

underpinned by flexibility to meet the ever evolving framework of skills required by Enterprise Ireland client companies.

## **5. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future**

Enterprise Ireland clients have stated that skills are a major challenge to business growth. A lack of skills availability has the potential to act as significant constraint on Ireland's future economic growth. As the Irish economy continues to recover, there is a need to ensure sufficient focus on emerging and future skills needs and provide the correct interventions across all educational levels to support economic growth in established and emergent sectors.

As the Irish economy continues to recover, there is a need to ensure sufficient focus on emerging and future skills needs and the need to upskill graduates, mid-career and experienced executives and ensure skills availability at the right educational levels to support economic growth in established and emergent sectors.

### *Conversion Programmes*

Graduates can only provide a certain proportion of the labour market skills demand in specific sectors. The creation of Higher Education "conversion programmes" in areas of high skills demand such as, Engineering, Biomedical Sciences, Languages and ICT, Digital Media and Marketing, FinTech for graduates and those already in employment, would greatly help boost skills supply in these important sectors. This has worked in ICT. Qualifications should be at Levels 7 to 9 in the new QQI framework.

### *Flexibility*

There is a need for enhanced flexibility in the modes and methods of programme design and development, especially when recognising the needs of adult learners who are already in employment. The traditional full or part time third level programmes are not inherently compatible with work life balance and older learners, who need to enhance or upgrade their skills, need programmes designed to give greater flexibility in delivery modes (E-learning, online learning, time fluid course delivery) and consideration to their lifestyle.

### *Graduate Readiness*

Employers often point to issues of graduate readiness in terms of transversal skills/soft skills. There needs to be a review of how these skills areas taught in a third level or further education settings. The need for work experience placement in third level is ever more important in course design. Also, simple issue like graduate ability to apply for jobs and formulate professional CVs is also another barrier to them gaining employment.

### *High Skilled R&D Researchers for Industry*

Innovation 2020, forecasts that there will be an increased demand across Europe for research personnel within the enterprise sector. Continued investment in Ireland's research capability is essential. These researchers are expected to be across all skill levels, from technicians through to PhD level research leaders. The supply of experienced R&D ready staff to meet the needs of industry remains a challenge for Irish firms. Enterprise Ireland is exploring how the number of industry ready researchers available to client companies can be increased. However, if R&D investment is to be further leveraged to support company growth further focus must be placed on increasing the supply of research personnel.

### *Apprenticeships*

Apprenticeships remain a key component of the training and career infrastructure. It will be critical to ensure apprenticeship design is aligned with the needs to industry. The format of the new Apprenticeship Scheme is welcomed. The new process challenges industry in defining 'learning objectives', funding education based training, and providing in-work formal training supervision. Cohesive process of support is required across all parties to ensure that a workable new process of apprenticeships is in place as soon as possible, to deliver on the skills deficits; to provide new career pathways, and include new entrants into the work base.

### *Cohesion between HEI's and Enterprise*

Companies and SMEs in particular engage with HEI's through a number of entry points. In most incidences there is no one point of contact is provided for industry to drive strategic collaboration. It needs to be considered whether an enterprise liaison office is required within each of our third level institutes to further facilitate linkages with in each region, and to enhance collaboration.

In conclusion, in late 2015, Enterprise Ireland made a submission to the National Skills Strategy. The main themes included, encouragement of:

1. Constant and consistent, dialogue between the Higher Education and the Irish Sector Enterprise
  - Systematically involving employers and in particular SMEs in the development, design and delivery of educational programmes.
  - Involving industry practitioners in delivering education (as adjunct lecturers and professors etc.) and employing lecturers with industry experiences.

2. Industry placements integrated into all third level education
    - Significantly increasing the provision of structured work experience, so that it becomes a default feature of all courses.
  3. Up-skilling for industry (individuals & organisations)
    - There is a role for further and higher education providers to proactively engage with industry to ensure that the appropriate skills and training required are available in the workplace.
    - Work based training is key for employers to minimise employee turnover, to build on existing skills and retain key personnel.
  4. Provision of clear career pathways for training and education.
    - The recognition of work based training within a national framework for qualifications/skills.
    - Career progression options from apprenticeships to higher education.
    - Framework for personnel to transition careers between industry and academia.
  5. Integrating business on training and education curriculum
    - Enterprise education and training should be integrated as a module to all students at all levels.
    - Distinctive graduate attributes and capabilities such as critical thinking, team-working, results-focused project management and communications should have a further explicit focus in the education system.
-