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DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Consultation Paper

Department of Education and Skills

Statement of Strategy 2016-2018

Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise:

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Trinity College Dublin

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1. How well does the Education Service meet the needs of children and students? What improvements can be made for
 - a. within existing resources
 - or
 - b. through new provision

NB. As well as completing this form, Trinity College Dublin plans to make a separate submission on desirable reforms to the education sector with a particular focus on the university sector, funding shortfalls and how best to optimise research and industry liaison. These areas are some of the major issues within the university sector, but it is not possible to discuss them in a detailed way in the consultation paper below.

No consultation response would make sense without noting that the totally inadequate level of both current and capital funding for the third-level sector is short-changing school children when they move to university. By starving the third-level sector of funding at a time when the number of children approaching college age is rising, the State risks failing to confront one of the biggest, and most predictable, challenges in education.

(a) Improvements can be made within existing resources by granting universities more autonomy – something that has been identified by the European Universities' Association as an important predictor of quality. It is currently difficult to exploit the cost savings offered by new technologies due to restrictive rules set down by the Government. Universities require more flexibility to right-size their organisations. Other improvements would include new tax incentives to increase donations.

(b) New resources would enable universities to create new places and courses relevant to the rapidly changing needs of society, teach in new and better ways, and bring world class academics to Ireland (and retain those who are being attracted away) who would ensure that students have the best education and the best opportunities. New resources would also create a fairer system which would in turn allow the country to benefit from the talents of the entire population.

2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?

- (i) The Department has sensibly commissioned several important reports on the future of education, notably the report by the Expert Group chaired by Peter Cassels. It is vital for

	<p>the sector that the findings are implemented within the next two years in a manner which places university funding on a sustainable trajectory and restores funding to somewhere close to previous levels.</p> <p>(ii) Universities operate in a highly competitive environment and need new mechanisms to earn research funding eg under a revised version of the successful Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions system. DES should study the highly successful German model where selected universities get focussed funding after rigorous competition.</p>
3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?	
	<p>(1) Universities would be able to plan better if there were multi-annual funding agreements similar to those proposed for the HSE.</p> <p>(2) DES should consider working together with other departments to fund educational projects which have educational and economic benefits. It is Government policy to encourage Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects because shortages are an economic threat. This is difficult for DES given the financial constraints but there is no obvious reason why money from other departments cannot be used to fund new STEM students.</p> <p>(3) Consideration should be given to a standard national survey at both second and third levels with a particular focus on the quality of teaching received and the relevance of subjects. In the absence of common performance management across second and third level, this would enable the development of a common set of Key Performance Indicators. That would give all students a voice and enable the education sector to raise its standards based on an objective assessment of its students' needs.</p> <p>(4) Consideration should be given to a single, shared storage and retrieval facility which would be accessible to all users to house Ireland's legacy print collections and cultural assets. This would free up space which could be used for additional student facilities and create new opportunities to promote cultural tourism, offer ongoing savings on storage costs and avoid duplication. Legislation is also needed to prevent the so-called digital blackhole, or loss of valuable digital resources eg websites, from getting bigger.</p> <p>(5) Tax breaks to encourage leading researchers with an international reputation to move to Ireland. This would bring teams of more junior staff to the country as well and boost R&D in the country. DES should also look at incentives to encourage philanthropy; matching funds for example. Policies such as these and tax breaks ensure that philanthropy constitutes a much larger part of university budgets overseas.</p> <p>(6) Explore a separate funding model for student accommodation together with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government which would free up social housing, especially for the homeless.</p> <p>(7) Treat the provision of education for students from outside the EU in a more joined-up manner. This means changing the visa structure to allow students to work in Ireland for 24 months after graduation and speeding up the issue of visas to prospective students.</p>
4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured?	
	<p>In higher education, the success of DES strategies can be measured through:</p> <p>(i) The position of Irish universities in global rankings. Ireland should aim to have at least one university in the Top 50 worldwide once again.</p> <p>(ii) An increase in the number of students who complete their third level education.</p> <p>(iii) The percentage of Leaving Certificate students with maximum and very high points who stay to study in Ireland; the percentage of post graduate students who complete their studies here.</p> <p>(iv) The degree to which foreign universities collaborate with Irish universities.</p> <p>(v) Student and employer satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>(vi) Social equality.</p>

(vii)	The amount of research funding awarded from independent organisations such as the EU Horizon 2020 Programme.
(viii)	Introduce incentive-based element into the funding model based on important normalised quality metrics, for example institutional competitively won research income per UG student, or non-exchequer income per UG student.
(ix)	Allow non-exchequer funds to be used to offer increased salaries to internationally competitive levels for certain high performers. We are simply not competitive for the best talent as evidenced by the poor take up of SFI Research Professor Awards.
5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise	
NA	
6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 – 2018	
(i)	DES should work to bolster the position of universities within civil society. In many countries, the success of universities is a source of civic pride. A system that benchmarked Irish universities against rivals overseas would help to inform the debate and engender pride in our system.
(ii)	DES should work with other departments and research funding agencies to have a single submission system for all research applications, co-ordinate their call dates and develop a common set of research outputs/metrics so as to enable benchmarking nationally and internationally.
(iii)	The HEA should review student services across higher education with particular emphasis on how they can address substance abuse, promote resilience and support student mental health. Research indicates that high performing student service programmes shape students' satisfaction, college experience, well-being and the development of attributes such as communication, leadership etc.
(iv)	DES should encourage the CAO and HEIs to facilitate transgender and non-binary identities.

A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

1. Prioritising Early Years
(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).
NA
(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?
NA
(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?
NA

2. Tackling Disadvantage

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Trinity has pioneered several innovative pilot schemes to tackle disadvantage and one scheme, the Trinity Access Programme, has recently been adopted by Oxford University. These pilot schemes should now be extended and offered new funding.

(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantage be measured?

By and large, universities give places to students without knowing their backgrounds. This means the solution to social disadvantage lies mainly at post-primary level. The social mix of university admissions largely reflects the success of policies before students attend higher education.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- (i) Put in place provision for SUSI grants to students participating in designated higher education-based Foundation/Access Courses which have shown excellent outcomes for low socio-economic students over the last 20 years. Despite their financial hardship status, these students cannot get a SUSI grant or access funding from the EU Student Assistance Fund.
- (ii) A proportion of places at HEIs should be allocated to displaced refugees with appropriate support and funding.
- (iii) Provide practical, accredited continuous professional development courses to post-primary teachers in partnership with HEIs, so that they can further develop their ability in technology mediated learning, coding, leading changes and building strong college-going cultures in disadvantaged areas.

3. Diversity and Choice for Parents

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

There is a danger that universities are becoming too similar. Diverse provision should be actively encouraged to give students and parents a greater choice.

(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?

Satisfaction surveys of students, parents and employers and data on the progression of students through the education system.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

The increase in the number of 18-25-year-olds as the population expands will create huge challenges for the sector. This will require more funding for universities but communication with parents and society should be improved so that the public no longer views apprenticeships and technological skills as less attractive than a university education. Some students and parents in Ireland are too focused on academic education. Significant numbers of young people end up poorly skilled and poorly educated because the Leaving Certificate is too academic for them.

4. Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Trinity and other universities teach students to be innovative thinkers, work independently and in teams and to think creatively. All these qualities are valuable in their own right and are valued by employers. The primary and post-primary system should seek to teach the same qualities.

(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?

Assessment systems within the primary and post-primary systems need to be reformed.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- (i) DES should persist with junior cycle reforms, and similar changes should be considered at Leaving Certificate level, if 'teaching to the test' is not to further diminish the quality of our second level teaching and learning environment.
- (ii) Critical thinking should be incorporated into the examination process at all levels.

5. Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Universities are hives of entrepreneurial activity. Trinity students, for example, create more businesses than any other university in Europe according to independent research by Pitchbook. Despite this, Irish universities are often told that they do not do enough. DES should create meaningful benchmarks to measure creativity and entrepreneurial capacity.

(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?

In higher education, progress can be measured through:

- (i) The number of successful start-up campus companies;
- (ii) The number of patents issued to students and staff every year;
- (iii) The numbers taking courses and modules in entrepreneurial and creative subjects;
- (iv) The number of new graduates who declare themselves self-employed.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- (i) The creation of cross-disciplinary courses combining the strengths of separate programmes.
- (ii) Identify skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs and then seek proposals for solutions to narrow these gaps in specific subject areas. Set aside money for capital programmes and use the cash to offer special funding to universities that can then build and operate high-tech and high-quality centres. Top slicing funding makes little sense but focussed additional funding to solve problems is a partial solution to the shortages.

6. Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

This is a good idea and universities will continue to explore the opportunities to expand their offerings at non-traditional times. Universities are often in an excellent position to offer services but this does require flexible rules around hiring extra staff, the use of part-time and temporary staff and new incentivisation schemes.

(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?

The percentage of university income and activity from commercial activities and outreach.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Universities have extensive facilities that can be hired out during the summer months and at weekends such as student accommodation, lecture theatres, dining halls and the like. To do this properly, these spaces need to be sold by trained sales staff, who need to be incentivised through traditional incentivisation schemes common in the private sector. We believe the public sector pay rules should be changed to allow for the payment of appropriate remuneration packages to those who meet their sales targets. This would boost revenues from non-Exchequer sources.

7. Special Needs Education

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The approach makes sense but only seems to relate to schools. Universities require support if they are to build on the success at school level.

(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?

The number of special needs students who progress through the third level system.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Greater inter-disciplinary courses should be developed using the existing model of our new Masters in Early Intervention (M.Ed.) and used to address mental health issues within school environments, for example.

8. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future

(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The best means to ensure the right skills are taught is to allow universities to compete and develop individually so they can serve the changing needs of a complicated society. Universities must be allowed to become more agile so they can respond to societal needs. Universities are in a good position to focus strongly on employer needs. They are also among the first to notice changes in the expectations of the young. This sensitivity means they are in an excellent position to respond to society's changing needs. By creating real competition among universities and funding them properly, DES will enable colleges which are capable of rapid transformation to meet the evolving requirements of society.

(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?

Seed funding could be provided to test concepts such as 'learning gain' which would measure the quality of the student experience and provide evidence of skills acquisition for employers.

(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- (i) Increased cooperation between DES, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Government immigration service (INIS) so that non-EU students who are undertaking studies in Ireland in areas where we will have a skills shortage (eg. STEM MScs and PhDs) will have easier access to the Irish labour market.
- (ii) We need to change the way permits are given to non-EU students. Special arrangements should be made for fee paying non-EU students so they can begin their studies without delay.

Submissions will be subject to the Freedom of Information Acts (details available at <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/FOI/>). Submissions may be published online, in which case particular information exempt under the Freedom of Information Acts, such as personal contact details and commercially-sensitive information, will be omitted. *By completing this consultation and submitting the information, you are indicating your consent to this approach.*