



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

Higher Education in Ireland – Key Themes

Latvian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) Virtual Visit to Ireland 19 January 2021



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Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

Presentation Content

- Overview of Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science
- Modernisation of the Legislative Framework
- HE System Performance Framework
- Developing a more integrated Tertiary Education System
- Skills and Enterprise Engagement



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Education 4.0?

- Internationally very significant innovations and change taking place in Tertiary Education environment and pace of change accelerating e.g.:-
 - “Mega-Trends” (i.e. climate change, demography, digitalisation & AI)
 - Reduced reliance on formal qualifications as signal of employability
 - Shift in balance from emphasis on subject / technical knowledge to ‘essential’ transversal
 - Emergence of ‘boot camp’ type (i.e. short, intensive) programmes (even in traditional universities)
 - Students shifting towards more occupationally focused programmes of shorter duration
 - Rise of alternative credentials demonstrating specific skills and competencies
 - Growth of online and competency-based education (i.e. “tech-ed”)
- Impact and implications for the Tertiary Education System - HE and FET?



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Standalone Department

DFHERIS created in July 2020 by new Government to:-

- more strongly recognise critical role of HE and FE to economic growth, social inclusion, regional development and sustainability;
- secure intensified focus on and more integrated approach to research and innovation;
- enhance and further develop future policy direction in key areas (e.g, Future Funding, reform, balanced between HE and FET)

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DFEHRIS Overview

Annual budget of €3 billion - responsible for well over half of Government's total expenditure on research and development

23 Higher Education Institutions including 9 Universities & a network of further education and training facilities across the country providing learning opportunities to more than 360,000 people every year.

Full-time enrolments in higher education institutions have grown by almost a third over the past 10 years.

Significant demographic pressures projected over the next 10 years.



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DFHERIS Priorities

Island of Talent: The contribution of HE and FE to human capital and lifelong learning; Colleges of the Future, FET and HE linkages, Future Skills Planning, etc.

Innovation Island: providing direction on strategy, funding and structural reform for the research and innovation ecosystem and regional and national linkage with enterprise, in particular SMEs

International Island: Promoting Ireland as a leader in Higher Education and Research; Developing Partnerships with other Higher Ed and Research systems

Island of Inclusion & Engagement: Equity of Educational Outcomes, Student Experience and Engagement; Societal Engagement and Contribution to Societal Challenges.



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Governance of the Higher Education System

19th January 2021

Overview of Governance



Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

- Sets policy,
- Identifies objectives and outcomes
- Determines funding

HEA
Higher Education Authority

- Provides funding to HEIs and ensures accountability for funding
- Oversees compliance with governance requirements
- Works with HEIs to resolve governance issues

HEI
Higher Education Institution

- Institutional autonomy with accountability requirements
- Governing Bodies responsible for governance
- Contribution to national objectives

QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

- Oversees Quality Assurance

Overview of Higher Education Sector



Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 public universities• 1 private university
Technological Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Technological Universities
Institutes of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9 Institutes of Technology
Other Public Sector Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Public Sector Colleges
Private and Not for Profit Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 30 colleges

Current Good Practices



Sectoral Codes of Practice

- Codes of Practice in place for Universities, Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities
- Complement broader public sector code of governance and updated accordingly
- Intended to be generally applicable regarding practices, external relations and accountabilities
- Assists higher education institutions in ensuring good and proper management and ensuring appropriate procedures and controls are implemented

HEA Rolling Reviews

- Managed by the Higher Education Authority in consultation with the Department
- With a purpose of considering governance themes in greater depth
- With a view to examining and strengthening processes in relation to oversight, governance and statements of internal control
- Each rolling review focuses on a particular aspect of governance compliance. Three reviews carried out to date
 - Procurement
 - Intellectual Property in HEIs
 - Staff Remuneration & Benefits

Drivers HEA Legislation Reform



- Nearly 50 years since legislation was enacted
- Change in Higher Education landscape
- Increase in number of students
- New priorities and new ways of learning
- Provide statutory basis for new Higher Education Authority
- Governance reform
- Clarification of roles between Minister and Higher Education Authority



Development of New Legislation



- Goal to strengthen legislation
- Ongoing Consultation since 2018 with stakeholders
 - *Written submissions July to September 2018*
 - *Consultation Forum November 2018*
 - *Publication of Consultation Document and Outline proposals in July 2019*
 - *Consultation Process July to September 2019*
- Importance of consultation to ensure “buy in” from the sector and identify problematic issues at an early stage (e.g. original registration proposal)
- Further consultation underway in preparing Finalisation of Heads of Bill and seek approval of Government



Key Features of Legislation



- Objects and Functions of the Higher Education Authority
 - *Setting Role of Minister and Role of HEA*
 - *Strengthened regulatory role for HEA*
- Balance between institutional autonomy and accountability
 - *Provision for academic freedom for HEIs and academic staff included in the sectoral legislation*
 - *Accountable for State funds*
- Performance and Governance Framework
 - *Co-regulation of Higher Education Sector – Governance primarily responsibility of HEI*
 - *Performance Framework*
 - *Codes of Practice for Governance*
 - *Monitoring Reports to HEA*
 - *Review and remedial provisions*
 - *Amendments to Sectoral legislation*

Key Features of Legislation



- 7 – 10 year Strategy for Higher Education
- Reform of the Board of Higher Education Authority
- Funding of Higher Education Institutions
- Governance aligned with standard provisions for a Government Agency
- Student Engagement
- Data collection and sharing
- Designation of institutions of higher education
 - *Reformed legislation – Designation of HEIs included on the National Framework of Qualifications*
 - *Protect the integrity of the HE system and protects students*
 - *Title of “designated institution of higher education” to be protected*



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Steering the Higher Education System

Presentation for Latvian delegation to Ireland

19th January 2020

System Performance Framework



The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 offered HEIs and the State:

- Improved system performance and accountability through a system governed and funded to support improved performance:
 - A landscape of HEIs optimally configured.
 - Autonomy, coherence, mission clarity, complementarity, consolidation, collaboration, evolution.
- **Via System Performance Framework (SPF)**
 - Articulates national priorities and strategies for the higher education system.
 - Forms the basis for a process of strategy and performance dialogue between the HEA and individual HEIs and application of Performance Funding (+/-).
 - Annual System Performance Report, including details of System Outputs.

System Performance Framework 2018-2020



Key System Objectives are:

1. Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability;
2. Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community;
3. Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe;
4. Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population;
5. Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence;
6. Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence



Strategic Dialogue process - Overview

Revised approach to governance, accountability and funding:

- SPF for 2018-2020— set by the Minister. Consists of 6 Key System Objectives (KSOs) and a series of high level targets for the system.
- HEIs prepare performance compacts, which are:
 - ✓ aligned with institutional strategies and mission;
 - ✓ indicate how the HEI will contribute to the Minister's objectives and high level targets (2 selected per KSO), with a focus on outcomes;
 - ✓ agreed with the HEA through a dialogue and review process;
 - ✓ subject to annual performance review by the HEA, with report to the Minister.
- HEA publishes the results of the process (transparency)
 - ✓ Sets out good practice
 - ✓ Provides opportunities for HEIs to improve.

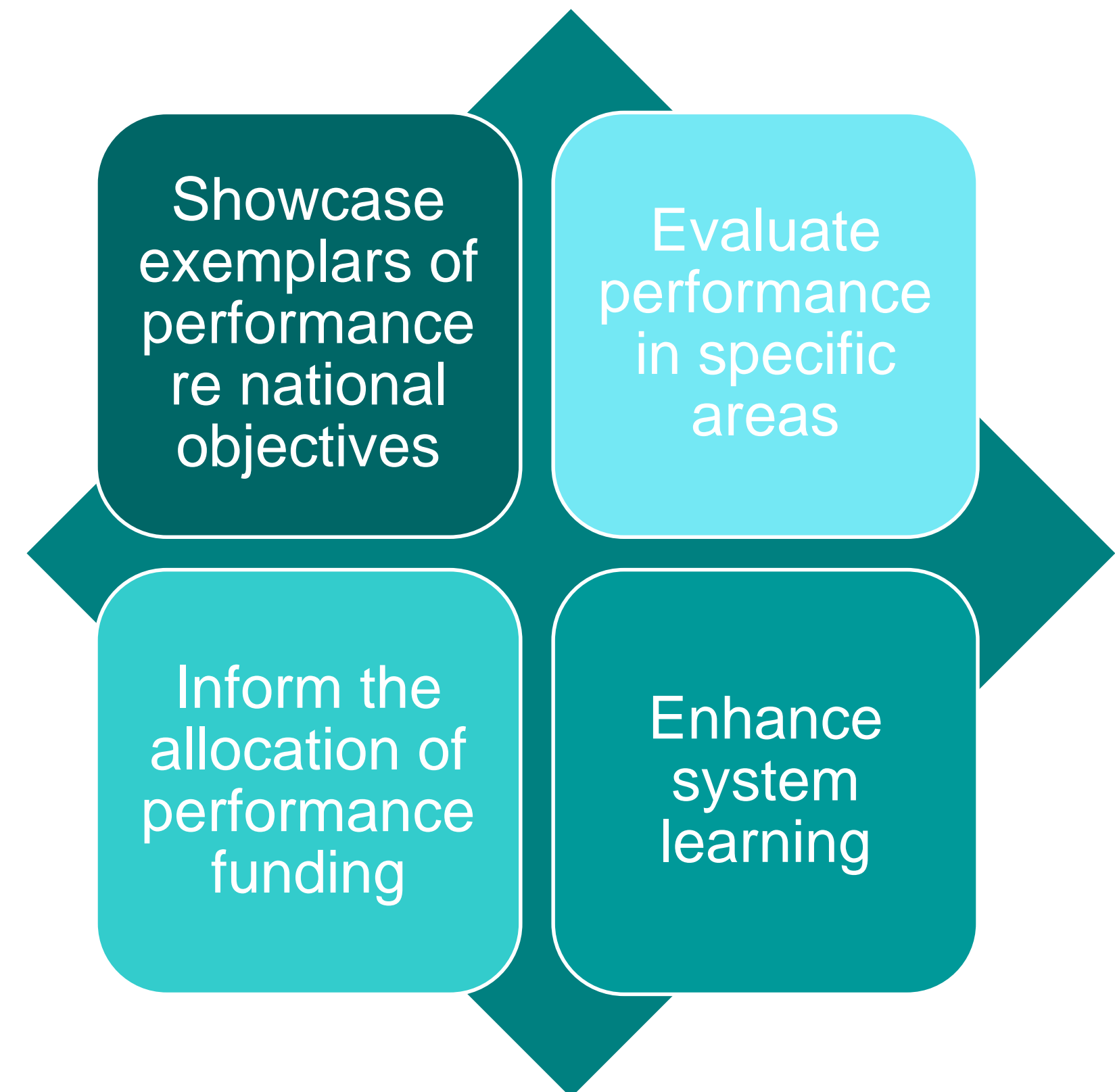
Strategic Dialogue process - overview



Performance funding:

- HEA can adjust institutional funding, based on performance if required (to max 10%).
- 2018 Higher Education System Performance Report and the Review of the Allocation Model for Funding HEIs recommended the introduction of positive performance funding.
- In 2019, government allocated €5M in performance funding, based on the review of Impact Case Studies.
- A further €5M in performance funding will be allocated in 2021.

Purpose of the Impact Case Studies



System Performance Framework - Strengths



Improves the alignment of individual HEI Strategic Plans with national priorities for the HE System, while enabling diversity.

Supports HEIs to improve performance, through better strategic planning and management.

Builds greater transparency and enhances accountability for public funds.

Informs the allocation of performance funding and investment decisions.

Enables the HEA to manage system risks.

System Performance Framework – Areas for consideration and improvement



- **Purpose of the System Performance Framework**
 - Scope of the SPF - can or should it encompass all expectations of the higher education system?
 - To what extent is the SPF and strategic dialogue process meeting the objective of holding HEIs accountable for their performance?
- **Key Performance Indicators**
 - How is the current set of metrics linked to the SPF best refined to ensure that meaningful and timely information on system performance is available to identify trends, inform decision-making and facilitate international benchmarking?
 - What is the appropriate balance of quantitative v qualitative data, to ensure the diversity and richness of the system is appropriately captured and understood?
- **Performance funding**
 - Is the operation of the performance funding mechanism working optimally and should the proportion of performance funding grow over time?



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Objectives for the development of a more integrated Tertiary Education System

Orla Lynch

19 January 2021

New Department New Impetus



- a dedicated mandate for the post-compulsory education, research, and innovation functions, along with much of the skills architecture of the State
- an economic and social Department
- an ambitious Programme for Government with a more strategic role for education and research

Key Objectives



- Delivering on the Programme for Government objectives of inclusion, national resilience, adaptation to digital and a more sustainable economy and society.
- Progressing our knowledge based economy
- Providing for demographic needs
- Enabling regional rebalancing
- Creating the environment for a new funding paradigm

Key lines of activity



- system-wide principles
- system and sectoral planning, objectives and strategy
- implementation of a new funding paradigm
- capital and infrastructure projects
- renewed accountability structures
- augmented learning pathways
- strategic flagship projects

Potential Principles



- An inclusive system to develop the talent of a wide range of learners
- Assuring vocational and skills learning
- Heterogenous sectors, institutions and providers
- Complementarity between imparting knowledge and skills and creating new knowledge and skills (teaching, learning and research and innovation)
- Collaboration balanced with competition



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Skills Infrastructure and Stakeholder Engagement

Stephanie O'Brien

Skills Planning and Enterprise Engagement Unit

19th January 2021



Focus:

- Skills Agenda for Ireland;
- Infrastructure underpinning the Agenda;
- Engagement with enterprise and other stakeholders to inform the Agenda.

Skills Agenda



- The skills agenda for the country, economy and society is guided by the National Skills Strategy 2016-2025.
- Purpose of the Strategy - to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade.
- At the time of developing the Strategy, it had six main objectives, which were:
 1. Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy.
 2. Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
 3. The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated.
 4. People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning.
 5. There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.
 6. We will support an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market.

Skills Agenda



- In 2021, it is expected that we will review the National Skills Strategy, with a view to ensuring it remains central in Ireland's social and economic development and the delivery of human capital, skills and talent to meet the needs of our economy and society.
- We also expect to develop a proposed *Pact for Skills* – envisaged as a call to collective action between Government, Government agencies, Enterprise and Industry, Further and Higher Education, individuals, employers, employees, workers, to each step up, to ensure Ireland is equipped with the skills, talent and agility it requires to meet skills needs of tomorrow, and will support the achievement of our lifelong learning ambitions.

Skills Agenda



- On a broader level the EU recently launched the EU Pact for Skills (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>) which is intended to:
 - set up new and upgrade existing teaching facilities, training equipment / digital education infrastructure;
 - provide image campaigns and awareness to make more attractive and inclusive key areas;
 - support skills intelligence and preparing for the future of work via collaborations; and
 - promote upskilling / reskilling good practices.

Skills Infrastructure



- The Strategy provided for the establishment of the skills architecture that we have today, the National Skills Council and the nine Regional Skills Fora.

National Skills Council

- Launched in 2017 and made up of high-level officials from both public and private organisations.
- The role of the Council is to oversee research, advise on the prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs, and the Council has a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities.



Regional Skills Fora (RSF)

- Established in 2016, to help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector.
- The Fora seek to bring people together at local and regional level, to identify, interrogate and validate skills needs, and to ensure that employers / enterprise are linked to the right places, to get responses they need.
- During the current Covid-19 crisis, the RSF Managers have been working remotely acting as a first point of contact and co-ordination point for enterprise in relation to the Covid-19 supports available to businesses and employees, and have also continued to meet and alert education and training providers to immediate enterprise requirements in their regions.
- In line with our intention to review the National Skills Strategy it is also planned to examine the Skills Infrastructure in order to refresh and revitalize the structures underpinning the delivery of the Skills Agenda.

Intelligence and Forecasting Systems



The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science acts as Secretariat for the NSC and coordinator for the RSFs. We work to ensure coordination between the bodies that gather data in relation to skills needs and the structures that make policy decisions in relation to responses to skills needs.

The intelligence and forecasting system includes:

- The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU)
 - Skills for Growth Audit Tool
 - Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN)
 - National Training Fund Advisory Group.
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- Our role includes ensuring skills policies, and associated policies on further and higher education offerings, are informed by clear evidence and analysis for correcting underutilisation of human capital, whether in vertical or horizontal skills misalignment, or skills gaps, in the labour market.
 - Collectively this system provides for rich sources of bottom-up data and analysis, which feeds into national decision making, in particular for the National Skills Council.

Stakeholder Engagement



- The structures which we have described were created to enable the department to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Although Covid-19 presented us with many challenges, it has also provided the opportunity to consider how we can better engage with our stakeholders.
- One of our challenges for the year ahead is to look at how we can further extend the range of stakeholders that have a voice at the table within the structures currently in place.
- Outside of these formal structures we regularly engage in smaller groups with enterprise representative organisations such as the Irish Small and Medium Firms Association and Chambers Ireland.
- In addition we engage with non traditional enterprise sectors, for example in the non-profit sector, such as The Wheel - Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises.
- During the course of 2021, we hope to develop a Skills Platform to allow us to better communicate with citizens in relation to how they can address their skills needs.