

# ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

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2018



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland





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# **ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018**

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## Foreword by the Minister



Today we are launching the Action Plan for Education 2018, the second annual plan, which sets out our aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe by 2026. This means better prospects for all those who are taking part in our many programmes, and we are seeing those prospects steadily improving.

The many who work in our education service, including teachers and principals, can be proud that Irish ten year olds are the best in Europe at reading. These results show that the Government's plan to make the Irish education and training service the best in Europe is both realistic and achievable. They can also be proud to see how the number of people staying in school is high and improving, and to see the improving progression of students who come to education at a disadvantage who are fulfilling pathways in higher education. It is welcome to see more people starting an apprenticeship or a traineeship, and we have plans to further expand growth in this area.

There is so much more we have to do. The Action Plan for Education provides a roadmap to achieve our ambition and to transform people's lives and to help everyone to achieve their potential in life.

But it does much more than that also. It has got all the many agencies who are working with my Department to make commitments that are stretched, and to encourage innovation and promote excellence.

I am acutely aware that we work with almost 5,000 different schools, colleges and agencies with well over 100,000 staff. They are the people who can bring opportunities alive for learners. I hope this plan will make it easier for them to fulfil their potential.

**Richard Bruton TD,  
Minister for Education and Skills**

## Statement by the Secretary General



The Action Plan for 2018 is the second annual plan produced under the Action Plan for Education Framework 2016-2019. The three year framework articulates the ambition, values and goals that are the basis for the high-level work programme of the Department, its agencies and the education and training sector. The 2018 Plan is derived from this and sets out in detail the actions which we aim to deliver this year. In this way, we will be progressing towards our overall ambition of making Ireland's education and training system the best in Europe by 2026.

Action Plan 2018 links our achievements in 2017 to this ambition. It is a further step along the path to improving what we offer learners, and their needs remain at the centre of what we have planned for 2018.

We face challenges in the year ahead, as Brexit negotiations continue and discussions take place about the future direction of key policy areas at EU and international level. This will impact on us as a nation. In response, we are working to ensure that we can provide the right skills offering, to secure the economic recovery and to increase opportunities for all learners.

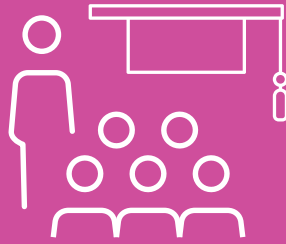
During 2018, our focus will be on embedding the systemic reforms we have already begun. These are taking place across the entire continuum of education and training services, in order to ensure that we equip learners with the skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy. Delivering on our 2018 actions means that we are shaping our education and training services so that they are best placed to respond to broader political and economic uncertainty. Quality enhancing measures are being further embedded across the system, professional development is being enhanced, our capital programme is expanding, and we are continuing to progress our legislative programme in order to provide a solid foundation to the sector.

I would like to acknowledge the high level of engagement we have had with our partners in the development of the Action Plan for Education 2018. This underlines the fact that almost one quarter of the population are learners; there is a huge level of interest in our work due to its wide-spread impact. I am confident that in delivering our 2018 actions, we are helping to create a better future for everyone.

**Seán Ó Foghlú**  
**Secretary General**



**64,000**  
TEACHERS



EDUCATING  
**934,000**  
YOUNG PEOPLE



IN **4,000**  
SCHOOLS



**181,000**  
STUDENTS IN  
FULL-TIME  
THIRD-LEVEL  
EDUCATION



**338,000**  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING PLACES  
AVAILABLE



**121,000**  
PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN  
IN THE EARLY  
CHILDHOOD CARE AND  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAMME



**5,500 +**  
INSPECTIONS  
IN SCHOOLS  
AND PLACES  
OF EDUCATION



# INTRODUCTION

Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 including the Statement of Strategy was launched in September 2016. It sets out our ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe by 2026. It recognises that learning as a public good has a critical role in the development, cohesion and Wellbeing of society. Education is at the heart of all of our ambitions as a nation. No other area of Government activity has greater capacity to change our country for the better. It supports the development of a strong growing economy while sustaining a fair and compassionate society.

The Programme for Government recognises this, noting that “Education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life. No child should be left behind in economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and skills.”

An excellent and innovative education and training system is pivotal to personal fulfilment, the building of a fair society and a successful nation. It is central to sustaining economic success and in building strong communities. Our central vision is that, through adopting a “whole-of-system” approach, the Irish education and training system should lead in innovation and a broad range of endeavours and that we will harness education and training to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion and set the benchmark for social inclusion. Through this approach our ambition is that we will deliver to the highest international standards, and prepare learners of all ages to participate and succeed in a changing world.


Since the launch of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and Statement of Strategy, we have made real progress towards achieving our goals and objectives. 86% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2017 have been achieved.

Action Plan 2018 is derived from the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, it builds on progress made to date and incorporates feedback from the consultation process. It reaffirms our ambition and reflects the goals of the Government’s civil and public service reform programmes. It reiterates our key goals and objectives and contains over 370 actions and subactions to be achieved before the end of 2018.

The Action Plan for Education 2018 highlights the significant strategic reform programme under way in education and training. It recognises the importance of critical business functions to ensure business continuity and quality of service. The publication of an annual plan within a broader strategic framework enables us to respond in an agile way to the demands of the challenging and complex environment in which we operate while maintaining a strategic focus on sustainable reform. In 2018, we are faced with challenges of national and international political change, including Brexit and America’s new policy direction on trade and taxation, identified skills gaps, the growing demand for upskilling and reskilling opportunities for employees, innovations in technology, and changing demographics.

Our key focus for 2018 includes: promoting and encouraging quality, excellence and innovation, meeting critical skills gaps, leading in key enabling technologies, championing inclusion and increasing participation in lifelong learning. Policy emphasis across the continuum of education from early years to higher education includes: taking action to strengthen STEM; using digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment; increasing competence in foreign languages; initiating a review of senior cycle programmes; tackling disadvantage, strengthening inclusion and supporting transitions; building leadership capacity and actively supporting a professional workforce; continuously improving quality including embedding a new model of inspections and a review of higher education; strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation; focused engagement with enterprise; and enhancing career opportunities and developing strong alternative pathways including Further Education and Training (FET), traineeships and apprenticeships.





We remain committed to the partnership and consultative approach which underpinned the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. In developing the Strategy and Action Plan, we received over 600 submissions from interested parties, containing a wealth of ideas. In developing the Action Plan for Education (AP-Ed) 2018 we conducted a public and interdepartmental consultation process and engaged closely with our agencies and aegis bodies. We examined progress to-date and combined this with feedback received through the broader consultation process to identify appropriate actions for inclusion to ensure that we progress towards the achievement of our goals.

The three year process associated with the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 involves the publication of updated annual plans, outlining more specific and ambitious actions for each 12 month period within the longer term strategic framework. These actions are monitored against their published timelines, with quarterly reports published to ensure an informative and transparent process. Reports are published and available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

We will continue to publish progress reports against the actions in AP-Ed 2018 every quarter and we will publish an end of year review of 2018 and a plan for 2019. This will allow us to build and consolidate progress towards our ambition of having the best education and training system in Europe by 2026.

## Our Strategy

### GOAL 1

Improve the learning experience and the success of learners



### GOAL 2

Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs



### GOAL 3

Help those delivering services to continuously improve



### GOAL 4

Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community



### GOAL 5

Improve national planning and support services



## Themes for 2018

### GOAL 1

Wellbeing  
Critical skills  
Better subject choices  
Transitions  
Embracing digital technologies

### GOAL 2

Inclusion  
Engaging learners  
Special Education needs  
Improving Access  
Tackling disadvantage

### GOAL 3

Quality assurance  
Leadership and professional development  
Excellence and Innovation  
Inspection and Support

### GOAL 4

Enterprise  
Skills Capacity  
Career opportunities and Choice  
Entrepreneurship  
Vibrant Research Communities

### GOAL 5

Strategic policy capability  
Legislation  
Infrastructure  
New ways of working  
Brexit

## Continuity and Change

The Action Plan for Education 2018 is one step in a cohesive and holistic approach to change in a complex and dynamic environment. It forms a bridge between the significant achievements of 2017 and our ambitions into the future. This Action Plan, and the ones that have preceded it, have had at their heart quality and continuous improvement, inclusion and skills as seen through the lens of the learner.

The quality provision of education from early years to fourth level continues to be a driver of activity in 2018. Action Plan for Education 2018 sees a continued focus on, not only, how learning happens, but how it is delivered and how it can be improved at all levels. This focus on quality is allied to a continued effort to ensure that all citizens can access and participate in education regardless of the barriers they face. Recognising education as an engine of social and economic growth, the Action Plan builds on previous work to provide learners with the skills they need to prosper not just now but also into the future.

These themes of quality, inclusion and skills impact across the range of the Department's activities from school buildings, leadership training and apprenticeships to attracting international students, interfacing with industry and third-level research. The diverse and challenging goals and objectives in the Action Plan are tied together by a collective focus on these themes. This continuity of focus is essential if we are to meet the goal of having the best education and training system in Europe by 2026.

Alongside continuity there must be change. Innovation will continue to mark how we do our business and how we measure success. We will continue to garner and refine the evidence we need to ensure our strategy and policy development and implementation are strongly informed by evaluation, review and benchmarked against international practice. We will rigorously pursue the resources we require to achieve our goals and we will endeavour to ensure the effective and efficient use of available resources across the sector.

This Action Plan is a further articulation of our ambitions for a system that meets the need of citizens across a range of activities, builds on and towards success, and forms a chapter in an ongoing narrative of improvement.

## Whole of Government commitments

In progressing towards our overall ambition, and in supporting Government wide reform and strategy, we work with a range of other Government Departments and their agencies. Drawing on the underlying principles of the Programme for a Partnership Government, we will continue to deepen this engagement in order to deliver in priority areas during 2018.

This includes working with:

- **Department of Children and Youth Affairs** to improve the quality of education provision and develop the workforce within the Early Childhood Care and Education sector by implementing "Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures-The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020", and to improve the school engagement, participation and retention levels of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, through the delivery of TUSLA's integrated delivery model for educational welfare.
- **Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment** to improve schools connectivity, service delivery and learner outcomes (and other relevant National Broadband Plan actions). We will work collaboratively to implement the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020 which is linked to "Our Sustainable Future" Policy Framework.

- **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** to advance the International Trade Strategy, the Global Footprint Initiative, the Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education agenda.
- **Department of Rural and Community Development** to progress the literacy and numeracy agenda through collaboration with library services, and to implement this Department's commitments in "Realising our Rural Potential: The Action Plan for Rural Development".
- **Department of Health (and other departments and agencies)** to develop a new in-school speech and language service, and continue work on the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health.
- **Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation** in order to meet identified skills needs, through increasing enterprise engagement, developing a new skills architecture, and implementing the Action Plan for Jobs framework, Innovation 2020 and the ICT Action Plan 2014-2018, and co-operating on progressing key actions in the Department's STEM Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan.
- **Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht** to advance the education elements of the "20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010-2030" and Creative Ireland's "Creative Youth" plan.
- **Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government** to implement the student housing aspects of the Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, and plan school infrastructure, building on existing co-operation through the statutory land use plan processes.
- **Department of Public Expenditure and Reform** to implement relevant reforms associated with the civil and public service reform programmes in the Civil Service Renewal Plan and Our Public Service 2010 and actions set out in the Build to Share Strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy (including ePerformance Questions, eSubmissions, and eCorrespondence).

## Goal 1 Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

It is crucial that learners experience learning environments which support them to reach their full potential. This means addressing their wellbeing needs, providing curricula and learning outcomes appropriate for current and predicted future skills requirements, and embracing the power of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver learning in an innovative way, so that students are fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities they will face in the future.

**As a result of the successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal participation rates, retention rates and the performance of Irish students at all levels of the system should be ranked amongst the best in Europe.**

Irish students are already performing well. The latest results from both the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2016) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2015) show that Ireland's primary and post-primary students are amongst some of the best internationally ranked students when it comes to Reading, Mathematics and Science.

No country in Europe is better than Ireland for reading skills at primary level, for example. In terms of attainment, Ireland is 2nd in EU28 for the percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-secondary education, at 94%. Our school retention rates show that our Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate school completion rates are among the highest in Europe, and Ireland ranks 7th best in the EU28 in terms of early leavers from education and training overall.

### A number of key strategies and initiatives provide direction under this goal, they include:

**Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020:** Updated and ambitious targets for literacy and numeracy in schools were identified in the interim review (2016), with a particular focus on numeracy. For the first time, specific targets for disadvantaged schools have been included. There is also an increased emphasis on higher-achieving students and on embedding achievements in literacy, in particular literacy for and through the Irish language, and also on enhancing the digital literacy skills of learners.

**STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026:** The Plan is aimed at making Ireland a European leader in STEM education by 2026. Learners must be equipped with analytical, creativity and critical thinking skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The Plan includes an increased focus on encouraging traditionally under-represented groups to participate in STEM activities, increasing links between the education system and industry, and reviewing, with a view to enhancing, the supports in place to ensure our teachers feel confident to embrace STEM.

**Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020: Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment:** The Strategy sets out a clear vision focused on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experience of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens able to participate fully in society and the economy. It is organised around four themes; Teaching, learning and assessment using ICT; Teacher professional development; Leadership, research and policy; ICT Infrastructure. Schools are supported as they move to embed digital technologies into their teaching and learning practices, and funding is being provided to allow for infrastructural development.

**Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) in Further Education and Training 2016-2019:** The Strategy aims to establish TEL as an intrinsic element of FET. Implementation will improve access to further education and training, equip learners with the skills and confidence to use technology as part of their work, study and home life and will enhance learner engagement in further education and training overall.

**Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026:** This strategy sets out an ambitious roadmap and targets to put Ireland in the top ten countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, through a number of measures targeted at improving proficiency, diversity and immersion. A key element is not only increasing the numbers of children taking up a foreign language, but also diversifying the range of languages available to schools and increasing students' depth of knowledge in a language.

The implementation plans and review structures which accompany these strategies emphasise the cross-cutting nature of the activities required to succeed, and actions scheduled for 2018 will continue this approach.

## Under this strategic framework in 2018, we will:

In 2018 we will take concrete actions to embed and support the new **Wellbeing initiatives** in schools; expand NEPS and deliver a coherent suite of supports to schools; publish a Wellbeing Practice Framework to inform Planning and Evaluation in schools; Expand Student Support Teams as a best practice model and develop a framework to evaluate the impact of programmes of CPD for wellbeing.

Continue with our programme of **curricular reform and increasing subject choice**. In 2018 we will commence Leaving Certificate Computer Science in 40 schools and PE as a Leaving Certificate examination subject and non-examinable framework in 80 schools, with full availability to all schools in September 2020; we will continue the development the new primary maths curriculum and we will strengthen Senior Cycle options, trial new assessment methods and commence work on reviewing Senior Cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways, with a view to recommending areas for development. We will continue to build on our strong improvements under "Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020".

**Critical Skills Development:** Focussed actions will be taken to build momentum behind our ambition for STEM, foreign languages, closing the gap in literacy and numeracy, and adopting the transformation of learning made possible by digital technology. In 2018 we will promote student take up and develop teaching resources in STEM and foreign languages; expand learner access to STEM co-curricular and out-of-school learning opportunities; support schools to plan for rapid progression in the adoption of the Digital Learning Framework; develop partnership initiatives to give better career information and give students a chance to be exposed to the world of work; introduce the new Junior Cycle Curriculum and assessments for Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography.

In 2018 we will take action to plan deliver better **transitions for learners** across the continuum of education and training. We will improve information transfer from pre-school to primary to facilitate early interventions where appropriate; ensure strong alternative career options and pathways; continue to improve retention rates and decrease the number of early leavers and review the impact of the change to the Leaving Certificate grading system and monitor the number of entry routes to higher education.

Increase the use of **ICT in teaching, learning and assessment** to help our young people develop 21st century skills and become global citizens able to participate fully in society and the economy. Through continuing to implement the “Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020” and the “Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019”, teaching and learning will be transformed in education settings. There will be new assessment opportunities and learners’ skills will be more suited to modern requirements.

Work to **improve proficiency in, and increase the diversity of take-up of, languages**, in order to provide greater opportunities to learners and meet skills needs. We will publish the new Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile for senior classes, continue the roll out of the “Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022”, and implement “Languages Connect: Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026”. The Foreign Languages Strategy is a major new development which builds on the bilingualism developed through learning Irish and English at primary level, and aims to improve language proficiency, diversify and increase the uptake of languages, increase awareness of the importance of language learning, and enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages.

Further develop the Department’s response to the potential impact of **Brexit** on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019. This will allow us to respond to the evolving negotiations around the process in a considered way. In the context of Brexit we will publish and commence implementation of a strategy developed to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland.

## Strengthening critical skills for growth and sustainability

As a small island nation, we must be able to attract inward investment. This requires us to look at what we offer in critical skills areas, such as STEM and languages. “Languages Connect: Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026” and “STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026” both aim to make Ireland a European leader in their respective areas. The Languages Strategy contains measures targeted at improving proficiency, diversity and immersion. Delivering the Strategy is crucial to ensuring Ireland is prepared for a changed European dynamic following Brexit and the increasing importance of non-English speaking countries globally. The STEM Strategy will help to equip learners with analytical, creativity and critical thinking skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. It includes an increased focus on encouraging participation by traditionally under-represented groups, such as females; it looks at increasing links between the education system and industry and enhancing supports to ensure our teachers feel confident to embrace STEM.





# GOAL 1

## To achieve this we will implement the following actions:

Objective 1.1 Improve services and resources to promote Wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life			
Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
1	To foster and promote the Wellbeing of all children and young people in schools by ensuring that Wellbeing is at the core of every schools' ethos.		
	1.1 Finalise and publish the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Wellbeing Policy Statement for schools.	Q1	
	1.2 Issue revised circulars, providing more comprehensive and strengthened guidance to schools on the effective use of external programmes and facilitators relating to Wellbeing.	Q1	
	1.3 Following consultation with relevant partners, finalise and make available the DES Wellbeing Framework for Practice for schools, including indicators of which will be the basis for improvement planning and advice from NEPS and the Inspectorate in their work in schools.	Q2	
	1.4 Develop a process through which schools will be supported in the embedding of the Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice.	Q3	
2	To further the objective that all post-primary schools will have effective structures in place to support student Wellbeing, expand the Student Support Team project to Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) post-primary schools.		
	2.1 Commence the delivery of training to the 20 project DEIS post-primary schools in the development of effective student support teams.	Q2	
	2.2 Commence the ongoing evaluation and refinement of the training materials for Student Support Team development.	Q3	
3	Implement the new Junior Cycle area of learning entitled Wellbeing, which will build on work to date in post-primary schools to support students' Wellbeing.		
	3.1 Offer all post-primary schools Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support in the area of Wellbeing through the Junior Cycle for Teachers support service and monitor take-up and impact through a framework that will be developed to evaluate the impact of programmes of CPD for Wellbeing.	Q4	JCT



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Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
4	Extend the rollout of teacher programmes to DEIS schools that build capacity to promote social and emotional competence, resilience and school connectedness in all learners.		
	4.1 Continue the rollout of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme to all DEIS primary schools. Specifically, complete the final 3 modules of the 6-module programme with 463 teachers and commence continued delivery of the programme targeting an additional 735 teachers.	Q4	
	4.2 Provide training for teachers in the delivery of resilience-building programmes that reduce anxiety and promote coping skills and school connectedness in learners, targeting 500 teachers in DEIS primary and post-primary schools.	Q4	
5	Commence recruitment of a further 10 NEPS psychologists for the academic year 2018/19 to enhance access to the NEPS service and increase the range of NEPS in-school supports, to build school capacity to support the wellbeing and the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education.	Q3	
6	Deliver training to 600 teachers in 300 post-primary schools on the revised NEPS Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for schools, by end of 2018.	Q4	
7	Work closely with the Department of Health and other Departments to implement the recommendations of the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project and the Connecting for Life Strategy (2015-2020).	Q4	
8	Work with the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) to support learners to manage their educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential, through the implementation of an enhanced Guidance Counselling Framework to maximise the benefits from the restoration of 500 guidance posts.		
	8.1 Commence the implementation of the DES Programme Recognition Framework-Guidance Counselling (2016).	Q1	NCGE
	8.2 Introduce the 3 areas of learning presented in the NCGE A Whole School Guidance Framework (WSGF), (developing myself, developing my learning, developing my career path), to support students' participation in work and society.	Q3	NCGE
9	Complete a review of the Life skills Survey and its function, with a view to providing recommendations on future direction.	Q2	

# GOAL 1

Objective 1.2 Deliver a “Step-Change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society			
Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
10	Support actions to deliver the revised and new literacy and numeracy targets to 2020 to improve the standards of literacy and numeracy for the general cohort of learners with particular focus on our lowest and highest achieving students and closing the gap in DEIS schools. This will be achieved through actions including numbers 12, 16.1, 22, 25, 36 and 41.	Q4	
11	Review the structure of, and the time allocation in, the Primary School Curriculum to ensure that the allocation reflects learners' requirements in new foundation skills that they will need for a changing society.		
11.1	Initiate a new longitudinal study on children's experience of primary school.	Q2	
11.2	Conclude work with a network of primary schools on gathering and sharing examples of good practice in intercultural, religious and ethical education, culminating in an event for stakeholders showcasing the work of schools.	Q2	NCCA
11.3	Develop an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum taking account of the findings from the consultations on curriculum structure and time and Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics.	Q4	NCCA
12	Introduce and implement new subjects and courses on a phased basis to provide learners with greater subject choices.		
12.1	Publish examples of teaching and learning in intercultural, religious and ethical education in the junior and senior classes of primary school.	Q2	NCCA
12.2	Publish guidelines for Level 1 National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Learning Programmes (and their Priority Learning Units) at Junior Cycle, following completion of trialling of guidelines.	Q3	NCCA
12.3	Implement phase 4 of Junior Cycle subjects (Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography).	Q3	NCCA, JCT
12.4	Continue the development the new primary maths curriculum.	Q4	NCCA
12.5	Publish short research papers, commence work with schools and share examples of coding in a primary curriculum.	Q4	
12.6	Publish specifications for phase 5 Junior Cycle subjects (Technology Subjects, Religious Education, Jewish Studies and Classics).	Q4	NCCA

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Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
<b>13</b>	Progress delivery of the STEM Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan to achieve a step-change improvement in the STEM education experience and outcomes for learners from early years to post-primary.		
	<b>13.1</b> Establish baseline STEM data on participation, attainment, attitudes to STEM, graduate outcomes and STEM related skills needs.	Q1	HEIs, ERC
	<b>13.2</b> Undertake baseline data collection and analysis, in conjunction with relevant bodies, to inform policy on the supply of STEM teachers and the current employment situations of newly qualified teachers in STEM subjects.	Q1	DES, Teaching Council, HEA, HEIs
	<b>13.3</b> Develop a policy for the provision of STEM curricular materials for teachers, in consultation with support services and other relevant parties.	Q2	NCCA, Support Services
	<b>13.4</b> Providers will be encouraged to develop new summer courses in STEM through the approval criteria published by the Department.	Q2	
	<b>13.5</b> Conduct an audit of current initiatives both within school and out-of-school to promote STEM subjects and STEM careers in partnership with SFI Smart Futures and publish a guide and audit of what is available.	Q2	SFI (DBEI)
	<b>13.6</b> Examples of existing best practice in STEM activities in Transition Year to be posted on Scoilnet.	Q2	Support Services
	<b>13.7</b> Work with schools to promote the use of the “Other areas of learning” section in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) to recognise the importance of participation in STEM. This will be promoted by the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service as part of its engagement with science teachers during 2018 and in the JCPA handbook.	Q2	JCT
	<b>13.8</b> Explore the potential of STEM research placements in business and industry to enhance both the student Initial Teacher Education (ITE) experience and STEM teacher learning/professional development.	Q2	Teaching Council, HEIs, IBEC
	<b>13.9</b> Introduce measures to support the supply of STEM teachers, having regard to the outcomes of the baseline data collection, analysis and prioritising the immediate gaps identified in certain disciplines.	Q2	
	<b>13.10</b> Engage with business and industry and education stakeholders to : to agree measures to support implementation of the STEM Education Policy Statement, such as robust and sustainable partnerships between schools and business and industry, with the aim of achieving a 20% increase in extra-curricular activities in STEM by 2026.	Q2	
<b>13.11</b> Review the capital implication of STEM ambition in the context of the 10 year capital plan.	Q2		

# GOAL 1

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
13.12	Use baseline STEM data on participation, attainment, attitudes to STEM, graduate outcomes and STEM related skills needs to set informed targets and establish processes for ongoing analysis and review.	Q3	ERC
13.13	Develop a Framework for STEM professional development programmes and teaching and learning resources.	Q3	Support Services
13.14	All new CPD being developed for primary and post-primary teachers of STEM education will incorporate the key principles underpinning the STEM Education Policy Statement.	Q3	
13.15	Work in partnership with business/industry, cultural and educational institutions to promote innovative STEM CPD.	Q4	Support Services
13.16	Commence implementation of a 3 year STEM education awareness campaign, building on an audit of current awareness raising initiatives, aimed at achieving the goals of the STEM Education Policy Statement such as 20% increased uptake of Leaving Certificate Chemistry, Physics, Technology and Engineering and 40% increased uptake of STEM subjects by females by 2026.	Q4	
13.17	Support cluster innovation in STEM involving outside partners enhancing partnership between schools and business and industry and the research community.	Q4	
13.18	As part of the partnership with business and industry explore the potential for Transition Year related programmes to be contributed to by business and industry, the development of Transition Units and better placement opportunities.	Q4	
13.19	Increase learner access to co-curricular and out-of-school learning opportunities through engagement with providers of STEM activities and supports for schools.	Q4	
13.20	Identify good practice activity in schools (e.g. role models) for increasing female participation in STEM with a view to an increase of 40% female participation in STEM by 2026.	Q4	
13.21	Create a digital repository of learning resources and curricular materials to support STEM teaching and learning, based on guidance developed.	Q4	Support Services
13.22	Develop guidance to support the establishment of online communities of practice, following the outcome of the Digital Learning Framework Trial.	Q4	Support Services
13.23	Review options for the provision of ICT technical support in schools.	Q4	

<b>Objective 1.3 Increase subject choice for learners in Senior Cycle to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate in a changing world</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/partner</b>
<b>14</b>	Progress development and implementation of Leaving Certificate subject specifications.		
	<b>14.1</b> Complete report on trialling of practical assessment component of Leaving Certificate Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) specifications, to inform decision on introduction of revised Leaving Certificate Sciences to all schools from 2019/20 year.	Q1	SEC
	<b>14.2</b> Publish Leaving Certificate Economics specification.	Q2	
	<b>14.3</b> Implement specification for new subject Computer Science for Leaving Certificate, commencing with Phase 1 roll out to 40 participating schools.	Q3	NCCA, PDST
	<b>14.4</b> Implement new curriculums for Senior Cycle Physical Education: Leaving Certificate Physical Education (an exam subject) and the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (a non-exam subject), commencing with Phase 1 rollout to 80 participating schools.	Q3	NCCA, PDST
	<b>14.5</b> Finalise new specifications for Leaving Certificate Art, Applied Mathematics and Classical Studies.	Q3	NCCA, PDST
<b>15</b>	Review senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) in order to strengthen vocational pathways in senior cycle to create a senior cycle that places the learner at the centre of the educational experience. That experience will enable learners to be resourceful, to be confident, to participate actively in society, and to build an interest in and ability to learn throughout their future lives.		
	<b>15.1</b> Deliver conference on Senior Cycle Review, with publication of report on International Developments in Upper Secondary Education.	Q1	NCCA
	<b>15.2</b> Commence review of work experience at post-primary level with a view to increasing access and quality of work experience for students.	Q2	
	<b>15.3</b> Commence consultation on the Senior Cycle Review Discussion Paper following its publication.	Q4	NCCA

# GOAL 1

## Objective 1.4 Improve the transition of learners at critical stages in the education and training system

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
16	Implement online reporting templates to support pre-schools, primary schools and parents, by improving the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of learners between all schools and state-funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings.		
16.1	Online reporting templates available for use by practitioners to improve the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of learners between all schools and state-funded ECCE settings.	Q3	NCCA
17	Assess how the pre-enrolment module on POD works in order to enhance our understanding of the transition to primary school.	Q4	
18	Advance work on the transitions process to support students in the transition from second-level into Higher Education and Further Education and Training.		
18.1	Publish research on impact in schools of changes to the Leaving Certificate Grading System.	Q3	NCCA, IUA, HEA, THEA, QQI, SEC
18.2	Monitor and report on the progress of HEIs in reducing the number of entry routes into Higher Education.	Q4	HEA, HEIs

## Objective 1.5 Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
19	Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy.		
19.1	Implement a scheme, as part of the Schools Excellence Fund Initiative, to support the Innovative Use of Digital Technologies in Teaching, Learning and Assessment, through school clusters, and will help schools deliver change, which will assist in enabling self-reflection, evaluation and improvement.	Q1	PDST-TiE, Inspectorate
19.2	Complete a protocol to guide the development of strategic partnerships with relevant cultural, educational and/or sporting bodies in order to adapt relevant content into useful learning and teaching resources for schools.	Q2	Support Services

# ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
19.3	Disseminate an updated Digital Learning Framework for Schools (previously known as UNESCO ICT Competency Framework) to all schools, following an evaluation, which will guide schools in embedding digital technologies in teaching and learning and leadership and management, from September 2018.	Q3	PDST-TiE, Inspectorate, ERC
19.4	Scope a set of actions for the review of the Digital Strategy for Schools.	Q3	
19.5	Support ICT in schools through improved broadband services (in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment), grants for ICT equipment, and advice and support materials (primarily through the Professional Development Service for Teachers - Technology in Education (PDST- TiE) and other support services).	Q4	PDST-TiE
20	Implement the 2018 actions in the Technology-Enhanced Learning in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2016-2019.	Q4	ETBs, ETBI, SOLAS
21	Advance actions in Goal 3 to strengthen the use of ICT in teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), to deliver better outcomes for students.	Q4	
22	Advance language curriculum (Irish and English) developments across primary and post-primary schools.		
22.1	Publish Assessment Guidelines for Junior Cycle Gaeilge.	Q1	NCCA
22.2	Publish review of Junior Cycle English specification.	Q1	
22.3	Consult on the draft Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile for senior classes.	Q2	NCCA
22.4	Publish the new Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile for senior classes online.	Q4	NCCA
23	Implement the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 on a phased basis.		
23.1	Issue a circular regarding the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme for 2018/19 outlining additional resources and supports (including additional advisory visits and CPD for schools participating in Scheme in 2018/19).	Q2	COGG
23.2	Assess improvement plans for the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme, issue grants following approval of plans as appropriate and allocate additional teaching resources to schools.	Q2	
23.3	Award tender and oversee the commencement of an MEd programme for serving teachers in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools in order to provide a specialist upskilling opportunity for teachers and ensure that the required teaching standards are available in these schools.	Q3	OGP



# GOAL 1

## Objective 1.6 Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
23.4	Award tender and oversee planning for Irish-medium initial teacher education programme (BEd) scheduled to commence in September 2019.	Q3	OGP
23.5	Commence pilot work on e-hub facility in sample of post-primary schools to extend the range of subject choices through the medium of Irish to digitally connected Gaeltacht schools.	Q4	
23.6	Develop proposals to support the introduction of a pilot bilingual bridging programme in a Gaeltacht post-primary schools.	Q4	
23.7	Develop proposals for the introduction of measures to address the challenges faced by island schools to support and improve their educational provision.	Q4	
24	Implement Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 to promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy.		
24.1	Establish Foreign Languages Advisory Group to oversee implementation of Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education.	Q1	
24.2	Complete the audit of foreign languages provision in post-primary schools.	Q1	PPLI
24.3	Commence the development of draft Leaving Certificate specifications in Mandarin, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese.	Q3	
24.4	Identify options to expand and increase participation short-term post - primary language teacher exchanges, including wider promotion of the scheme.	Q3	
24.5	Increase in Erasmus uptake in 2018/19 academic year.	Q4	
24.6	Implement a new short course in Lithuanian and increase the number of schools providing a Chinese short course.	Q3	
24.7	Explore options to upskill teachers with capacity to teach foreign languages due to be introduced into the system in 2020, based on the outcome of the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) audit.	Q3	
24.8	Increase the number of Language Assistants in order to give greater support to the teaching and learning of Foreign Languages.	Q3	
24.9	Develop subject modules and classroom resources which will be used as part of the Transition Year (TY) Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) pilot due to take place in 2019.	Q4	



## INDICATORS

To measure our progress and success we will use the following indicators and measures:

### Goal 1 Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>1.1 Improve services and resources to promote Wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life</b>	Extend the reach of the Incredible Years programme in DEIS primary schools	Complete the final 3 modules of the 6-module programme with 463 teachers; commence the delivery of the programme to a further 735 teachers (2018)
	Extend the reach of resilience-building programmes in DEIS primary and post-primary schools	Continue the provision of training for teachers in the delivery of resilience-building programmes that reduce anxiety and promote coping skills and school connectedness in learners, targeting 500 teachers in DEIS primary and post-primary schools (2018)
	Commence the expansion of the Student Support Team project	Commence the delivery of training to the project's 20 DEIS post-primary schools (2018)
	Build school capacity to respond to critical incidents and adopt proactive approaches that promote mental health.	Commence the delivery of training, targeting 600 teachers in 300 post-primary schools, on the revised 'NEPS Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for schools', by end of 2018
<b>1.2 Deliver a "Step-Change" in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society</b>	Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Junior Cycle	60% (2020)
	Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Senior Cycle	30% (2020)

# GOAL 1

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for Reading in PISA	12% (2020)
	Consolidate the proportion of students performing below Level 2 for Reading in PISA	8.5% (2020)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for Science in PISA	10% (2025)
	Decrease the proportion of students performing below Level 2 for science in PISA	<10% (2025)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for maths in PISA	13% (2020)
<b>1.2 Deliver a “Step-Change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society</b>	Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Junior Cycle	60% (2020)
	Maintain the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Senior Cycle	30% (2020)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for reading in PISA	12% (2020)
	Consolidate the proportion of students performing below Level 2 for reading in PISA	8.5% (2020)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for science in PISA	10% (2025)
	Decrease the proportion of students performing below Level 2 for science in PISA	<10% (2025)
	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for maths in PISA	13% (2020)
	Decrease the proportion of students performing below Level 2 for maths in PISA	10.5% (2020)
	Increased uptake of Leaving Certificate Chemistry, Physics, Technology and Engineering	20% (2026)
	Increased uptake of STEM subjects by females	40% (2026)
Increased learner access to co-curricular and out-of-school learning opportunities through engagement with providers of STEM activities and supports for schools	20% (2026), 5% (2019)	

# ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>1.4 Improve the transition of learners at critical stages in the education and training system</b>	Increase the progression to higher education by holders of further education qualifications (percentage of new entrants to HE whose basis for admission is a FE qualification)	10% (2019)
	Decrease the number of Higher Education entry routes	941 CAO offerings or less (2018)
<b>1.5 Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment</b>	School clusters developed to support the innovative use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment	Between 10-20 clusters, involving at least 40 schools (2018)
	Number of primary schools with 30Mbps (as defined as baseline in National Broadband Plan) broadband	Up to 400 additional schools (2018)
<b>1.6 Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages</b>	Percentage of candidates presenting for a foreign language for Junior Certificate/ Cycle Examination	100% (2026), 92% (2022)
	Percentage of candidates presenting for a foreign language for Junior Certificate/ Cycle Examination	79% (2026), 74% (2022)
	Students studying a foreign language as part of their higher education course	Support 20% of all HE students to study a foreign language as part of their course (2026)
	Students doing Erasmus+	4,100 HE Students (2018/19)

## Goal 2 Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of our education and training system. It is vital that all learners have the opportunity to reach their potential. Those that need extra assistance in order to do so must be offered appropriate supports. Education and training are key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Ireland has had measures in place to support the diverse needs of students of all ages for many years. Actions under Goal 2 have been designed to improve the educational outcomes of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs (SEN).

**As a result of the successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the profile of learners progressing through the education system should become more representative of the population in general.**

While we have made considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity, we recognise that significant challenges remain if we are to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds and with different needs are adequately supported so that they can experience success in the education system. Progress has included a narrowing of the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in areas including standards of literacy and numeracy, retention rates and attendance patterns. Participation rates in Higher Education for people with disabilities and for people from disadvantaged groups have also increased.

### A number of key strategies and initiatives provide direction under this goal, they include:

**Revised DEIS Plan:** The Plan, an update on the original 2005 Plan, sets out new goals for improved outcomes, including narrowing the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in attendance, achievement and retention, and in developing better progression pathways for learners in DEIS schools. A new data based model will be used to assess levels of disadvantage to identify schools needing additional supports.

**Revised model for allocating Special Education Teachers to schools:** This is designed to be a fairer and better way to allocate resources to support children with Special Educational Needs, and provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile. Schools will deploy resources based on each pupil's individual learning needs, to end the unfairness which existed in the previous system, whereby many parents were unable to access the assessments needed to qualify for educational resources.

**National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019:** Equity of access to higher education is a key objective of Irish education policy, and the Plan aims to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

## Under this strategic framework in 2018, we will:

In 2018 we will accelerate the good progress made to date in opening up **opportunities for learners at risk of disadvantage**. We will improve the quality of pre-school and strengthen the linkage to primary school, with a particular focus on disadvantaged areas; support the new DEIS schools to optimise the use of available supports to improve student outcomes; develop a career progression initiative within DEIS schools to increase the take up of the various access programmes and career pathways; work with HEIs to deliver the targets for increased enrolment among disadvantaged learners.

In 2018 we will drive on the steadily **increasing inclusion** of children in the education system. We will develop an evaluation model to assess the impact of the new model for resource teacher allocation and review the new model, which is designed to facilitate earlier intervention and more integrated supports, and develop revised allocations for schools for September 2019. We will complete the review of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme and develop proposals for future implementation; commence the pilot for in-school Speech and Language therapeutic supports and introduce a new model of SEN inspection in post-primary schools with the aim of embedding best practice models in teaching and learning.

**Access to higher education:** Measures will continue to improve access to Higher Education for under-represented groups, and the National Access Plan will be reviewed.

## Excellence and Innovation for schools

The School Excellence Fund (SEF) initiative, targeted primarily at DEIS schools, was introduced in 2017 to support and reward innovative practice in schools. The SEF aims to encourage schools to work in clusters to explore and apply new, innovative solutions to tackle educational disadvantage and to improve learning outcomes for students. In 2018, the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project will be piloted in main stream schools to advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, the Inspectorate and JCT support service that will encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas. A new Digital stream of the Fund has recently been added. The SEF-Digital supports clusters of schools to collaborate and work together in exciting ways on projects related to teaching and learning using digital.



## GOAL 2

### To achieve this we will implement the following actions:

<b>Objective 2.1 Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/partner</b>
<b>25</b>	Implement the DEIS Plan in order to close the gap in performance between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, increase retention rates of DEIS students, and increase the progression rates of DEIS students into HE and FET.		
<b>25.1</b>	Conduct further analysis to examine other variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage in the context of resource allocation under the DEIS Plan.	Q2	
<b>25.2</b>	Evaluate the level of teaching resources for schools participating in the SSP, to inform future policy in this area within the overall DEIS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.	Q2	
<b>25.3</b>	Undertake a new identification process for all schools nationally, taking into account CSO data from Census 2016, combined with updated POD and Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) returns.	Q2	
<b>25.4</b>	Develop a new resource allocation model for application to all SSP schools, to include a more tailored system of resource allocation, within which there are more grades of disadvantage identified and resources allocated accordingly in response to the needs of individual schools.	Q3	
<b>25.5</b>	Issue updated guidelines to schools in relation to the appropriate use of additional funds provided under the SSP to ensure that inputs are linked to outputs and outcomes, to generate data on resource allocation and to share knowledge and successful initiatives to support better practice. In addition, schools included in DEIS for the first time in the 2017/18 school year will be provided with information resources to support planning.	Q3	
<b>25.6</b>	Commence piloting of innovative practices including a careers initiative to promote progression by strengthening links between DEIS schools, local enterprise, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and higher education institutions; and enhancing school leadership and better equipping teachers in meeting the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.	Q3	
<b>25.7</b>	Collaborate with Tusla and Traveller Representative Groups on measures to improve Traveller engagement with education in the context of the National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy.	Q4	

<b>Objective 2.1 Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/partner</b>
<b>25.8</b>	Enhance guidance on school plans to improve arrangements by schools to support successful transitions at key stages throughout the education continuum (Early Years to Primary; Primary to Post-Primary; Post-Primary to Further and Higher Education). Restate the role of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) Co-ordinator to reference role in supporting transitions between ECCE settings and the formal school environment.	Q4	
	Consider existing School Support Programme supports having regard to learning to date from the Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC) sites, where relevant to the pupil cohort identified, with a view to the incorporation of that learning into current teaching and learning in schools.	Q4	
<b>26</b>	Implement the DEIS Strand of the Schools Excellence Fund in participating DEIS schools.		
<b>26.1</b>	Approve improvement plans for schools in Tranche 1 and issue initial grants to lead school in each cluster.	Q1	
	Undertake advisory/challenge visits from Inspectorate to monitor and support implementation of improvement plans in Tranche 1 schools (to ensure commencement of improvement actions).	Q2	
	Invite participation of further clusters of schools in Tranche 2 of the DEIS Strand of the Schools Excellence Fund.	Q2	
	Provide challenge visits to Tranche 1 and 2 DEIS schools participating in the DEIS Strand of the Schools Excellence Fund.	Q4	
<b>27</b>	Implement strands of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, and oversee the delivery of the targets for HEIs so that Higher Education becomes more representative of the population in general.		
	Allocate funding to Regional Clusters of higher education institutions for Bursaries under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH ) Stand 2 to enable the delivery of a key element of the National Access Plan.	Q1	HEA
	Finalise the development of the Report on a Data Plan to support implementation of the National Access Plan.	Q2	HEA
	Allocate funding to higher education institutions for projects under PATH Strand 3 Higher Education Access Fund which supports Regional and Community Approach to Access.	Q2	HEA



## GOAL 2

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner	
27	27.4	Begin to implement (steering group) the recommendations of the Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities working with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to develop a new model of allocating funding.	Q3	HEA
	27.5	Progress the mid-term review of National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education including reviewing targets set out in that Plan.	Q3	HEA
28		Address the barriers to Lone Parents' participation in Higher Education to increase their participation levels.		
	28.1	Begin work on implementation of the recommendations in "An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education" and examine measures to increase participation.	Q1	
29	Develop a national policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning.	Q4		
30		Develop a cohesive life-course approach to tackling educational disadvantage to coordinate the interaction between measures to tackle educational disadvantage across the education continuum.		
	30.1	Publish a policy statement on interaction between measures to tackle educational disadvantage across the education continuum.	Q4	
31	Assist Department Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and TUSLA to examine the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to increase the mandatory schooling age to 17.	Q4		

### Objective 2.2 Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner	
32		Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options. This will help to enable students with special educational needs to fulfil their potential.		
	32.1	Complete comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme.	Q1	NCSE
	32.2	Complete the Three Year Review of SNA Allocations in accordance with Section 14 of Circular 0030/2014.	Q2	NCSE
	32.3	Consider outcomes of the Comprehensive Assessment of the SNA scheme.	Q3	NCSE
	32.4	Inform schools of their SNA allocation National Council for Special Education (NCSE) before the end of the school year. All appeals will be resolved as soon as practicable following their receipt by the NCSE.	Q4	NCSE



## ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
33	Develop the In-School Speech and Language Therapy Service to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy supports, to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.		
	33.1 Develop the pilot of the In-School Speech and Language Therapy Service to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy supports, to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.	Q3	HSE, NCSE
	33.2 Develop an evaluative framework for the pilot of a new In-School Speech and Language Therapy Service, which is to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy supports, to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.	Q4	NCSE
	33.3 Monitor the pilot being implemented in a number of schools of a new In-School Speech and Language Therapy Service, which is to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy supports, to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.	Q4	NCSE
34	Embed the Special Education Teacher model which provides a unified allocation model for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on the school's educational profile, to ensure support is available for all pupils who require it.		
	34.1 Develop an evaluation framework for the Model for Allocating SEN Teaching Resources to mainstream schools, which assesses outcomes for children with SEN, to ensure that the resources that are being provided will secure the best possible outcomes.	Q4	ERC
	34.2 Review the model for allocating Special Education Teachers to schools, to ensure that school profiles can be updated in 2018, to enable new allocations for 2019, to ensure that the resources that are being provided will secure the best possible outcomes.	Q4	NCSE, ERC
35	Revise the SEN model of inspection for post-primary schools with the aim of embedding best practice models in teaching and learning.		
	35.1 Complete development and consultation work on SEN inspection model for post-primary schools.	Q3	
	35.2 Trial use of SEN inspection model in post-primary schools with a view to mainstreaming use of the model in 2019.	Q4	

## INDICATORS

To measure our progress and success we will use the following indicators and measures:

**Goal 2** Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>2.1 Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage</b>	Continue to improve retention rates at second-level DEIS schools	90% (2025)
	Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at Level 3 or above for reading literacy in National Assessments of English Reading & Mathematics	27% (2020)
	Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at Level 1 or below for reading in National Assessments of English Reading & Mathematics	40% (2020)
	Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at Level 1 or below for maths in National Assessments of English Reading & Mathematics	42% (2020)
	Increase the percentage of 15 years olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at Level 5 or above for reading literacy in PISA	10% (2020)
	Reduce the percentage of 15 years olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at Level 1 or below for reading literacy in PISA	12% (2020)
	Increase the percentage of 15 years olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at Level 5 or above for maths in PISA	10% (2020)
	Reduce the percentage of 15 years olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at Level 1 or below for maths in PISA	16% (2020)

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
	Increase participation in higher education by those from the non-manual worker group (percentage of 18-20 age cohort)	30% (2019)
	Increase participation in higher education by those from the semi/unskilled manual worker group (including the agricultural worker group) (percentage of 18-20 age cohort)	35% (2019)
	Increase participation in higher education of mature students, as measured by the number of full and part-time/flexible (combined) mature entrants as a percentage of all new entrants	24% (2019)
	Increase participation in higher education by people with disabilities (percentage of all new entrants to higher education)	8% (2019)
	Increase the number of Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants)	80 (2019)
	Increase the progression to higher education by holders of further education qualifications (percentage of new entrants to HE whose basis for admission is a FE qualification)	10% (2019)
<b>2.2 Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education</b>	Special Education Teaching Posts	Over 13,400 Special Education Teacher posts in place (2018)
	Special Needs Assistants	Over 14,850 SNAs in place (2018)

## Goal 3 Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Quality of provision is the cornerstone to the success of the education and training system. We recognise the fundamental roles that leaders, teachers and support staff play and we seek to strengthen the system's capacity as a whole to continuously improve and to deliver the highest quality education and training services for learners.

The quality of teaching is the single most critical factor in sustaining and enhancing the quality of education outcomes in our system. It is the crucial foundation of a strong education and training system. Ireland is fortunate to have a highly skilled and dedicated teaching and training profession. Those involved deliver to high standards and have established a strong international reputation.

**As a result of the successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training will be operating to the highest standards across the continuum of education and training provision. Innovation and excellence will be recognized and experiences shared and celebrated.**

The quality of Ireland's education system is recognised internationally, but to be the best we need to continuously improve. Progress to-date includes changes to the inspection and reporting models and an increase in the number of Early Years inspections; reforms to initial teacher training; initial work on examining teacher supply; workforce planning developments for early years and FET; strengthening leadership through a range of supports through the Centre of School Leadership and the publication of a new System Performance Framework 2018-2020 to provide a quality framework and set of measurable indicators for Higher Education.

Focus for 2018 will be on expanding initiatives to promote innovation and excellence in schools. This will be achieved through the Excellence Fund; further strengthening and supporting school leadership planning and implementation of improvements and working to create a robust framework for the delivery, through CPD, of improvements in school identified through School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and professional learning opportunities for teachers.

### A number of key strategies and initiatives provide direction under this goal, they include:

**Síolta and Aistear in the Early Years sector:** Síolta (2006), the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, is designed to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education settings, for children aged birth to six years. Aistear (2009) is the National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to six years. It provides information and guidance to help adults plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners. It describes the types of learning that are important for children in their early years. The Aistear-Síolta Practice Guide offers online resources as to how this learning might be nurtured.

**Striking the Balance: Teacher Supply in Ireland; Technical Working Group (TWG) Report:** The Department is taking forward recommendations from the TWG on development of a teacher supply model which seeks to ensure sufficient supply to meet anticipated demand in the system and support the

implementation of Department strategies including the STEM Education Policy Statement and the Foreign Languages Strategy.

**Provision of dedicated professional support to teachers:** The Department's Support Services (including the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Junior Cycle for Teachers, National Induction Programme for Teachers and National Council for Special Education Support Service) provide a continuum of support to help schools and teachers at all stages of their careers to meet the needs of an evolving curriculum and to build capacity in areas where they have identified room for improvement through School Self Evaluation.

**Inspections:** The Department's Inspectorate conducts an annual programme of inspection and advisory visits in schools and education settings, in order to provide an external view of the quality of provision. The programme, which incorporates a range of inspection types for different settings, will include child protection and safeguarding from 2018 onwards.

**Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019:** The Strategy aims to ensure that professional development is planned, delivered and reviewed as an integrated process throughout the FET sector. It recognises the extent of change underway in the sector, and seeks to support the growth of the quality and professionalism of practitioners during this time.

**National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education:** The Forum seeks to enhance teaching and learning for all students in higher education. By engaging with leaders, managers, teachers and students, the Forum mobilises expertise and inputs from across the sector to extend and shape best practice in all HEIs.

**Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018–2020:** The second Framework, as with the first which covered the period 2014-2017, sets out the Government's national priorities and key objectives for Higher Education, as well as the context for activity within the sector. The performance of HEIs is then monitored against the Framework.

## Under this strategic framework in 2018, we will:

**Encourage Clusters.** The Excellence Fund will see the expansion of immersion Gaeltacht schools, DEIS Clusters, Digital Learning Clusters and the start of the initiative for Step-Up schools; Clusters will also be developed for Creative Schools and under the Higher Education Innovation Fund

**Improve teacher education and school leadership.** In 2018, we will see significant strides in building a strong leadership team in our schools and across the sector. This will include 2600 new middle management posts with responsibilities designed to deliver on the school's plan; systematic engagement by the Support Services with the new distributed leadership to enhance the capacity for self-evaluation, planning and implementation; the development by the Department of non-integrated suite of leadership supports for piloting which integrate advisory visits mentoring support in collecting relevant data and access to relevant resources, including CPD, for delivering change.

Develop a more strategic approach to the provision of **CPD** which will be evidence based and will align more closely with the school's own Self-Evaluation Plan. A proportion of the CPD budget will be dedicated to delivering on strategic priorities such as innovation and leadership.

**Improve quality and promote excellence in schools** to embed quality planning processes, advance collaborative working in priority areas, and to encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning. During 2018, we will implement the planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in schools and education settings, manage the monitoring of, and interventions in, poorly performing schools, and pilot the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project.

## GOAL 3

Undertake a range of actions in the **Higher Education and Further Education and Training sectors**, to ensure that the quality of teaching and leadership is fit for purpose. Under the Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020, all HEIs will implement a CPD Framework for all academic staff. We will support HEIs build capacity (including digital capacity) in teaching and learning activities, and review the quality of Higher Education. We will continue to implement the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019, enhance quality assurance in the ETBs, and continue to carry out the schedule of independent evaluations of FET programmes to ensure relevance to the labour market and effective progression for learners.

### Innovative Leaders

The quality of leadership in education settings is hugely influential on learners' experiences and outcomes. The Centre for School Leadership plays an important part in strengthening leadership and embedding innovation as an integral leadership skill. In 2018 the Centre will offer an expanded range of supports, including a quality assurance framework for leadership CPD provision, and we will finalise a continuum of professional learning for leadership, to meet the needs of teachers at all stages of their careers. This will all build on other developments, such as the postgraduate diploma in school leadership, mentoring for newly appointed principals, coaching for school leaders, and changes to assistant principal responsibilities in schools. Within higher education, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning's new Professional Development Framework provides guidance for teachers and gives direction to institutions and higher education networks in planning, developing and engaging in their professional development activities. Within the FET sector, the "Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019" identifies the need for national structures to ensure that professional development activities are coordinated, quality assured and strategically focused in a consistent manner throughout the sector. SOLAS, ETBI and the ETBs are collaborating to collectively renew and further embed a strong professional development culture across the ETB network



To achieve this we will implement the following actions:

<b>Objective 3.1 Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/partner</b>
<b>36</b>	Support the implementation of Síolta (the national quality framework) and Aistear (the early childhood curriculum framework) through implementation of the National Síolta Aistear Initiative, in partnership with DCYA and the NCCA, to improve quality within the Early Years sector.		
<b>36.1</b>	Develop a quality roadmap identifying supports available to the early years sector in conjunction with the Better Start Quality Development service.	Q2	NCCA, Better Start Early Years Specialist Services (EYSS)
<b>36.2</b>	Conduct a review of the current national Síolta Aistear initiative model of delivery to inform planning from September 2018.	Q3	DCYA, NCCA
<b>36.3</b>	Develop relevant Síolta resources: Síolta research digests, information for parents/carers and other resources as required.	Q3	
<b>36.4</b>	Coordinate the implementation of the central information system for registration and tracking of engagement with Síolta and Aistear in conjunction with National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCO) and City and County Childcare Committee partner organisations.	Q4	
<b>36.5</b>	Coordinate the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme validation process for settings which have completed the Síolta Quality Assurance programme.	Q4	
<b>36.6</b>	Develop and maintain aistearsiolta.ie a resource for implementation of the Aistear and Síolta frameworks.	Q4	NCCA
<b>37</b>	Coordinate national, regional and other CPD opportunities for Síolta Aistear Mentors.		
<b>37.1</b>	Establish a developmental working group, chaired by the DES, to review and develop the Aistear CPD structure and content as piloted in 2017, to finalise by end Q2.	Q2	NCCA, Better Start EYSS, Inspectorate



## GOAL 3

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
37.2	Establish and coordinate specific CPD opportunities for Síolta Validators.	Q4	
	Coordinate the provision of training, mentoring and coaching supports delivered by Síolta Aistear Mentors to support implementation of both national frameworks within early years settings.	Q4	
	Work with DCYA to develop national CPD infrastructure for early years practitioners.	Q4	DCYA
38	Support the further enhancement of professional qualifications and standards within the ECCE sector.		
	38.1 Publish results of Consultation on draft Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education in undergraduate programmes for Early Years Practitioners.	Q1	
	38.2 Complete review of standards and guidelines for higher education programmes for the Early Years workforce.	Q2	
	38.3 Agree implementation approach for adoption of higher education qualifications guidelines for Early Years practitioners with higher education sector and DCYA.	Q3	DCYA, IUA, THEA, CHOICE
39	Implement a national programme of Early Years Education-focussed inspections to provide advice and to support a progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies.		
	39.1 Publish revised guide to Early Years Education-focussed Inspections following statutory consultation.	Q1	
	39.2 Publish national report on quality of early years provision.	Q1	
	39.3 Commence expanded range of EYE inspections in larger Early Years (EY) settings.	Q2	



<b>Objective 3.2 Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve school leadership</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/ partner</b>
<b>40</b>	Develop a policy on teacher supply to support the availability of relevant teaching resources across the system in the short-medium and long term.		
	<b>40.1</b> Undertake baseline data collection and analysis to inform policy on teacher supply.	Q1	HEA, Teaching Council
	<b>40.2</b> Develop initiatives to support teacher supply, including consideration of financial supports, with a focus on the immediate gaps in availability in certain disciplines and having regard to the outcomes of a baseline data collection and analysis exercise, and to the STEM Policy Statement and Foreign Languages Strategy.	Q2	
<b>41</b>	Continue the reform of ITE and teacher induction to ensure teachers are equipped with the right skills for 21st century teaching, learning and assessment.		
	<b>41.1</b> Consider advice from the Teaching Council on entry requirements to ITE programmes and take any appropriate actions.	Q1	
	<b>41.2</b> Teaching Council to take account of current national policies in progressing (a) its review of the impact of the reconfigured ITE programmes and (b) its review of the criteria and guidelines for ITE programme providers.	Q1	Teaching Council
	<b>41.3</b> Support the growth phase of “Droichead”, the national induction process for all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in collaboration with the Teaching Council.	Q4	Teaching Council
	<b>41.4</b> Make recommendations for the next phase of reform in Initial Teacher Education Provision following a review of progress to-date by an International Panel.	Q4	HEA
<b>42</b>	Change the leadership and middle management structure and the functions carried out in schools by the holders of posts of responsibility.		
	<b>42.1</b> Provide guidance for post-primary schools on agreed changes to the leadership and middle management structure of schools.	Q4	
	<b>42.2</b> Work with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) to develop a project which will encourage ETBs to adopt a more flexible and targeted approach to the deployment of principals and deputy-principals, in order to bring about agreed changes to the leadership and middle management structure of schools.	Q4	

## GOAL 3

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
43	Provide dedicated professional support to teachers to support the implementation of curricular change and Department policy.		
	43.1 Commence the roll out of a comprehensive programme of CPD to support the implementation of the revised Children First Guidelines.	Q1	PDST
	43.2 Provide CPD to support the Primary Languages curriculum, new and revised senior cycle subject specifications (including Leaving Certificate PE and Computer Science), and Junior Cycle reform.	Q4	PDST, JCT
44	Continue to expand the range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership.		
	44.1 Implement a quality assurance framework for leadership CPD provision.	Q1	CSL, IPPN, NAPD
	44.2 Publish an evaluation of the pilot of Centre for School Leadership.	Q1	CSL
	44.3 Finalise a continuum of professional learning for leadership which will be populated by quality assured supports and programmes to meet the needs of teachers at all stages of their careers.	Q2	CSL
	44.4 Establish a group mentoring programme for principals in year two of their appointment.	Q3	IPPN, NAPD
45	Continue to develop programmes for teacher professional learning to further enhance the teaching profession.		
	45.1 Progress the making of further regulations in relation to Education Support Centres.	Q1	
	45.2 Commence development of a new evidence-based strategic policy framework for the provision of a continuum of quality CPD and supports for teachers and schools that will enable targeting of funding towards priorities to be set by the Department in key areas such as excellence and innovation, leadership, disadvantage, digital transformation and STEM, by establishing a dedicated project team.	Q3	
	45.3 Implement a programme of work to enhance the governance of Education Centres.	Q4	Education Centres

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
46	Evaluate the impacts of CPD.		
	46.1 Develop a research based framework for the evaluation of CPD for teachers in the area of student Wellbeing.	Q2	
47	Regulate the teaching profession to further enhance the profession.		
	47.1 Develop regulations and primary legislation, to regulate the teaching profession as required.	Q4	Teaching Council
	47.2 Scope the policy implications of the proposals of the Teaching Council for the development of Cosán, as required.	Q4	Teaching Council
48	Review the provision of SafeTalk suicide training programmes for teachers through the Education Centre network in advance of the 2018/19 school year.	Q3	DoH

### Objective 3.3 Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
49	Undertake a planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in schools and education settings, and publish inspection reports in accordance with agreed arrangements for the various inspection models.	Q4	
50	Manage the monitoring of, and interventions in, poorly performing schools, through the School Improvement Group.	Q4	
51	Develop new forms of School self-evaluation (SSE), advisory visits and collaborative working to support leadership development.	Q4	
52	Develop and commence implementation on a pilot basis of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project to advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, Inspectorate and JCT support service that will encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas.		
	52.1 Develop proposals for collaborative working between post-primary schools, Inspectorate and JCT support service in selected priority areas, as part of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project.	Q1	JCT
	52.2 Identify possible schools for inclusion in initial Phase 1 of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up pilot project.	Q2	JCT

## GOAL 3

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
52.3	Commence Phase 1 advisory visits by the Inspectorate and delivery of dedicated CPD for teachers by JCT in schools, under the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up pilot project.	Q4	Support Services
53	Develop and implement a range of inspection arrangements to monitor the compliance of schools with the enhanced child protection and safeguarding requirements of the Department's "Revised Child Protection Guidelines 2017".		
53.1	Develop and publish details of initial inspection requirements in schools to monitor implementation of child protection and safeguarding arrangements.	Q1	
53.2	Commence initial inspection arrangements in schools to monitor implementation of child protection and safeguarding arrangements.	Q1	
53.3	Publish draft arrangements for additional specialised Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (CPSIs) for consultation as required under Section 13(8) of the Education Act 1998.	Q2	
53.4	Conclude consultation on specialised CPSIs and publish Guide to CPSIs.	Q3	
53.5	Commence trial implementation of CPSIs in schools (to complement initial inspection arrangements commenced in Q1).	Q4	

### Objective 3.4 Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
54	Initiate review of quality in Higher Education.		
54.1	Launch a public consultation process, as the first phase of the review of quality in Higher Education.	Q1	QQI
54.2	Finalise the Terms of Reference for Review of quality in Higher Education.	Q2	QQI
54.3	Review of quality in Higher Education commenced.	Q3	QQI
55	Support the development and embedding of digital capacity in the teaching and learning activities of HEIs, and in national policy and quality frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact.		
55.1	Develop a consistent digital experience for third-level students and engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge.	Q4	NFETL, HEIs

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
	<b>55.2</b> Develop a strong evidence base for enhanced third-level pedagogy through targeted research and development projects.	Q4	NFETL, HEIs
<b>56</b>	Support HEIs in building capacity in teaching and learning activities.		
	<b>56.1</b> Publish review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education with implementation plan setting out timelines and targets for agreed actions.	Q2	NFETL, DES
	<b>56.2</b> Make initial TRACE+ Awards recognising higher education disciplines in their commitment to the development of excellence in teaching and learning.	Q2	NFETL
<b>57</b>	Develop a management and leadership capability framework and upskilling programme for the Higher Education sector, starting with Institutes of Technology (IoTs) in 2018.	Q4	HEA
<b>58</b>	Develop a pilot performance fund to incentivise higher education institutions to excel in key policy areas.	Q4	HEA
<b>59</b>	Implement the 2018 actions in the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019 (SOLAS).	Q4	ETBs, ETBI, SOLAS
<b>60</b>	Enhance quality assurance in ETBs.		
	<b>60.1</b> Complete an ETB Executive Self-Evaluation Process and QA Improvement Plan (ETBs).	Q1	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs
	<b>60.2</b> Develop a new ETB sectoral approach and model for curriculum and programme development, assessment and validation.	Q4	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs
	<b>60.3</b> Complete the pilot of the new ETB sectoral Model and Process of External Moderation/Authentication.	Q4	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs
<b>61</b>	Complete the Mid-Term Review of the Further Education and Training Strategy.	Q3	SOLAS
<b>62</b>	Improve the impact of the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC), Youthreach, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Specific Skills Training (SST) schemes to ensure relevance to the labour market and effective progression for learners.		SOLAS
	<b>62.1</b> Conduct and complete evaluation of the Youthreach programme.	Q4	SOLAS
	<b>62.2</b> Commence evaluation of the VTOS/SST programmes.	Q4	SOLAS
	<b>62.3</b> Implement the 2018 components of the PLC work programme under the oversight of the PLC Programme improvement Advisory Committee including actions identified to commence implementation in the 2018/19 academic year (September 2018).	Q4	
<b>63</b>	Develop further arrangements for access to administrative data systems to support the evaluation of outcomes from FET with a priority focus on full time programmes.	Q2	

## GOAL 3

### INDICATORS

To measure our progress and success we will use the following indicators and measures:

#### Goal 3 Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>3.1 Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children</b>	Support the development of quality early education in preschool services delivering the early childhood care and education programme through the annual implementation of early years education-focused inspection	600 inspections conducted (2018)
	Increase reach of Early years inspections through publication of inspection reports on the Department's website	500 additional inspection reports published on the Department's website (2018)
<b>3.2 Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve school leadership</b>	Support principals through enabling them to access professional coaching	400 principals (2018)
	Support future school leaders through post-graduate qualifications	200 aspiring school leaders (2018)
	Support teachers through the delivery of CPD programmes	183,000 CPD units (2018)
<b>3.3 Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools</b>	Support schools through the annual school inspection programme	3,000 inspections conducted (2018)
	Increase impact of school inspections through publication of composite inspection reports on the Department's website and regional seminars	1,000 inspection reports published (2018) 800 advisory visits (2018) Commence regional seminars to support school self-evaluation
	Support schools in implementing the School Self-Evaluation process	800 advisory visits (2018)

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>3.4 Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education</b>	Higher education: Implementation of the Continuous Professional Development Framework for academic staff in HEIs	Commence Implementation of the Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs (2018)
	Numbers of HEIs engaged in international benchmarking	All HEIs to engage in international benchmarking (2020)
	HEIs with policies for digital learning and teaching in place	All HEIs to have in place policies for digital learning and teaching (2020)
	Further Education and Training: Implementation of the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-19	All ETBs are implementing professional development based on the 8 priority areas identified in the Strategy
	Implementation of the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in Further education and Training 2016-19	All ETBs are implementing their individual action plans for TEL developed in 2017 in alignment with the overall strategy



## Goal 4 Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

There is huge potential for mutual enrichment by building stronger links between Education and Training and the wider world. Ireland attracts some of the most ambitious companies in the world to locate here and is increasingly becoming known for the quality of our Start-Up enterprise and their capacity to innovate and internationalise. Education and Training has become and will continue to be at the heart of that success. However the pace of technological change requires a major step-up of the engagement between Education and Enterprise. It is not just in the Enterprise sphere that the benefits of collaboration can be created. Huge opportunities also exist for collaboration in developing Creative Ireland, Sustainable Ireland and an Ireland with balanced regional development.

Research, development and innovation are seen as critical to Ireland's economic and social development in the years ahead. We want to attract talent from around the world to our education institutions, engage in world-class research and collaborations and we want to ensure quality standards and best international practice for learners in Ireland.

**As a result of the successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal there will be stronger linkages between education and the wider community particularly parents, employers and the international community to the benefit of learners, society and the economy. There will be increased choice of school type and parents and students will have a stronger voice in the system. There will be stronger links with industry resulting in an enhanced talent base and learners will be equipped to meet skills gaps in critical areas. Our HEIs will be attracting talent from around the world and will be engaged in world-class research.**

Progress made towards the achievement of this goal includes: new schools opened using protocols to work towards sufficient diversity in the number and range of primary schools to cater for all religions and none and the agreement of a new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process; transformation of the skills landscape including the establishment of the National Skills Council, and nine Regional Skills Fora; development of strong enterprise engagement to respond to skills needs; Springboard+, ICT skills conversion courses, redesigning apprenticeships and traineeships; world-class research projects and collaborations help us improve our international reach through education and training services.

During 2018, we will continue to progress relevant legislation, improve post-school education choices, and work with enterprise to strengthen linkages to optimise mutual benefit.

### A number of key strategies and initiatives provide direction under this goal, they include:

**National Skills Strategy 2025 (NSS):** The NSS sets an ambitious trajectory for skills development and is an important step in the evolution of our education and training system to one which fully supports lifelong learning and is more responsive than ever to the changing needs of participants, enterprise and the community.

**Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020:** The Plan proposes targets for apprenticeship and traineeship participation and provision from 2016-2020, accompanied by key elements of implementation and a time-based set of actions. Key partners and areas for support and

investment are identified, involving strong partnerships between employers, higher education and further education and training providers.

**Education for Sustainable Development: The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020:** The Strategy aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, the key dispositions and skills, and the values that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future in accordance with the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Creative Ireland programme:** The Creative Youth pillar sets out measures to deliver on a key goal of the extensive Creative Ireland Programme: to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. At this plan's core is a firm belief that creativity and culture should be at the heart of education for all our young people.

**Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026:** The Strategy aims to promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy. One of the goals in the Strategy is to enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages in order to provide the skills required by our indigenous companies to enable them to trade internationally both in existing and emerging export markets.

**Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020:** This Strategy aims to support the development of global citizens through Ireland's high-quality international education system, by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions, equipping Irish learners with the skills and experience they need to compete internationally, engaging in world-class research and international collaborations, and addressing global challenges.

### Under this strategic framework in 2018, we will:

Advance the Admissions Bill and the Education (Parent and Student) Charter Bill, in order to **strengthen the role of parents and students and provide greater fairness and transparency to the admission process**. These actions will give parents and learners a greater voice in the education system and help to strengthen a real partnership between schools and parents and learners. We will also advance the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process in order to make progress towards offering **greater school choice for parents**.

Rapidly expanding the programmes which respond to **changing skills needs of enterprise** will place an increasing demand for learning embedded in the experience of the workplace (offered by Apprenticeship and Traineeship programmes); upskilling for those already in work (offered by flexible and distance learning, part-time etc.) Develop the potential for Education and training to create the backbone for balanced regional development based on developing a deep pool of talent and nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship.

Create better career pathways through strengthening the apprenticeship and traineeship systems, supporting the development of an Upskilling Pathways Plan, and continuing to work with Skillnets to deliver enterprise-led training, in order to **create a greater diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school**. We will also undertake a comprehensive and independent review of the National Training Fund in order to guide strategic decisions on its structure and future direction.

## GOAL 4

Complete a review of career guidance services during 2018. FET providers and Higher Education Institutions will provide employability statements for courses and disciplines, to better inform students, parents and employers. Through these measures, we will **enhance support for learners to make informed career choices** and help them to develop their skills, in response to changing markets and industries.

Publish an Entrepreneurship Policy Statement and develop Entrepreneurship Education Guidelines for Schools. We will introduce a National Entrepreneurial Award for primary and post-primary schools, to encourage the development of entrepreneurial skills. Through the implementation of the Creative Ireland programme, we will support the Arts in Education. We will also contribute to progressing the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. Collectively, these measures will ensure that there is a **stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation**.

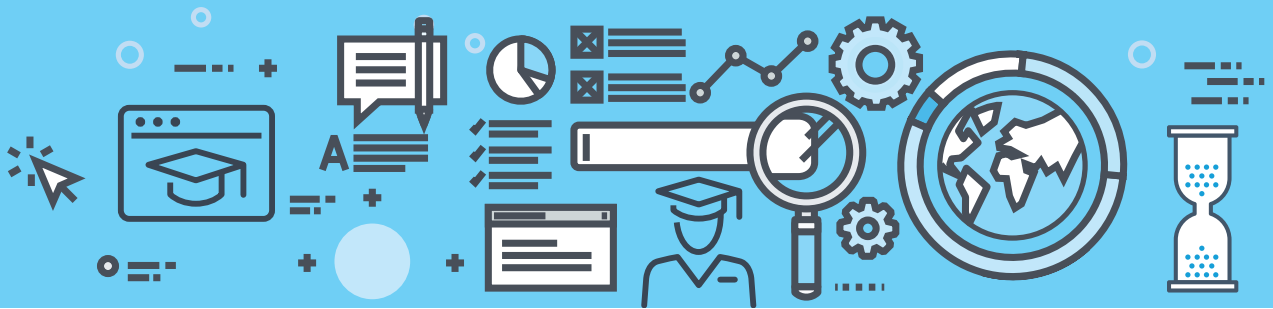
We will develop a strategy to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit. In partnership with enterprise/employers, and in line with Innovation 2020 targets, we will increase the enrolment of postgraduate researchers and grow the number of programmes to support postdoctoral researchers. In this way, we will **grow a vibrant research community** and address economic demands.

Continue to implement the International Education Strategy 2018, to **position Ireland to attract more international students**. By growing international student numbers and the numbers of English Language Students, we will be raising global awareness of our education brand and what we can offer international markets.

In 2018, the **National Skills Council**, using the best data and evidence sources available to it, through the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS and the Regional Skills Fora, will continue its work to identify and prioritise skills demands and the manner in which the education and training sector as well as other relevant stakeholders can best respond to these identified needs. Following detailed consideration of critical areas as agreed by Council members in its annual work plan, the advice available from the Council will be used to inform decisions on allocation of funding across FET, HE and Skillnets. This prioritisation may refer to levels and discipline areas and preferred delivery mechanisms e.g. mainstream provision/targeted funds.

## Systems Performance in Higher Education

The Higher Education sector has a crucial role in helping learners to achieve their full potential and in enhancing our national skills and research offerings. Developing a culture of excellence and innovation across all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will help us to realise these outcomes. Recently announced reforms in the sector will link HEI funding to the delivery of key national priorities, including better alignment to skill needs of the economy, higher levels of performance and innovation, expansion of research (particularly with enterprise partners), better access for students at a disadvantage, and improved lifelong and flexible learning opportunities. This will be done by tying funding explicitly to delivery in these areas and by developing three year compacts with each college, designed to deliver targets under the new “System Performance Framework 2018-2020”.



To achieve this we will implement the following actions:

### 4.2 Strengthen the role of parents and students, and deliver progress in providing greater school choice

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
64	Introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents and students.		
	64.1 Progress the drafting of the Education (Parent and Student) Charter Bill in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Council.	Q2	
	64.2 Support the progress of the Education (Parent and Student) Charter Bill through the Oireachtas legislative process.	Q4	
65	Advance the legislation in relation to school admissions to make enrolment easier for children and parents.		
	65.1 Support the enactment of the Admissions Bill, subject to the Oireachtas legislative process.	Q2	
	65.2 Following enactment of the Admissions Bill commence consultation with relevant Stakeholders on the detail of regulations as regulations move to drafting stage, subject to the Bill being passed by the Oireachtas.	Q4	
66	Make progress towards increasing the diversity of school type, in order to offer parents more choice.		

## GOAL 4

4.3 Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs				
Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner	
66	66.1	Finalise drafting and consultation on protocols for the initial Identification Phase of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process.	Q1	
	66.2	Roll out first round of patronage surveys to pre-school parents through County Childcare Committees (ETBs) following consultation on survey instrument.	Q1	
	66.3	Finalise drafting and consultation on protocols for the Implementation Phase of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process.	Q2	
	66.4	Agree detailed arrangements for transfer of patronage of schools, following consultation.	Q2	
67		Enhance our response to skills needs within the Early Years sector.		
	67.1	Work with the Expert Group on Future Skills needs to finalise skills forecast model for the early years workforce to 2030.	Q1	DBEI, DCYA, EGFSN
	67.2	Develop and finalise an Early Years workforce plan to 2030, with DCYA.	Q4	DCYA
68		Develop innovative responses to skills gaps across key priority areas of the economy.		
	68.1	Complete and publish a national survey of employers to inform policy and programme development.	Q2	
	68.2	Identify appropriate new partners for the Skills for Growth initiative and agree protocols to enable increased capacity to carry out nationwide skills audits.	Q2	
	68.3	Roll out the Skills for Growth, audit tool for enterprise, nationally in 2018.	Q4	
69		Oversee the work of the Regional Skill Fora nationally and monitor their level of engagement with enterprise.		
	69.1	Carry out a survey of enterprises that have engaged with the Regional Skills Fora to establish satisfaction levels.	Q3	
	69.2	Review quarterly progress reports to be completed by each Regional Skills Forum manager.	Q4	
70		Develop compacts with individual HEIs to deliver the ambitions of the new Performance targets published in the new Systems performance framework for Higher Education 2018-2020.	Q3	HEA
71		Develop a strategy to address ICT Skills Needs in the Higher Education sector. To address the demand for ICT graduates from domestic supply, to meet the skills needs of enterprise through mainstream and targeted initiatives including Springboard+.		

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
71.1	Publish the ICT Skills 2018-2026 Action Plan and Implementation Plan for 2018 to address demand for ICT graduates	Q3	DBEI
71.2	Commence the implementation of actions from the ICT Skills 2018-2016 Action Plan	Q4	HEA, SFI

## 4.4 Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
72	Strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship systems through enhancing the range of programmes and increasing provision.		
72.1	Complete review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship.	Q2	SOLAS, Apprenticeship Council, enterprise community, education and training providers
72.2	As set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020, provide a cumulative total of 25 new apprenticeships and 10 new traineeships to offer more choice for learners.	Q4	SOLAS, HEA, QQI, Apprenticeship Council, HEIs, ETBs
73	Support the development of an Upskilling Pathways Plan – New Opportunities for Adults which aims to help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.	Q2	DEASP, SOLAS, ETBI, QQI, NALA, AONTAS, Skillnets
74	Continue to work with Skillnets to deliver enterprise-led training and continue to develop the model in accordance with the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016-2019.		
74.1	Establish and fund 4 new Skillnets Learning Networks in Sectors (and Regions) highlighted in national workforce and sectoral policy.	Q1	Skillnets
74.2	Develop innovative programmes to meet emerging/future skill needs and critical skill shortages through collaborations with industry, FE providers, HEIs and agencies including the IDA.	Q4	Skillnets
75	Support skills development for those in employment through the FET Policy Framework on Employee Development.		

## GOAL 4

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
75.1	Publish the FET Policy Framework on Employee Development in alignment with the National Skills Strategy.	Q3	SOLAS, ETBs, ETBI
75.2	Commence implementation of FET Policy Framework on Employee Development.	Q4	Enterprise community, ETBs, SOLAS
76	Review the National Training Fund in order to guide strategic decisions on its structure and future direction, so as to inform Budget 2019.		
76.1	Undertake a comprehensive and independent review of the National Training Fund in order to guide strategic decisions on its structure and future direction, so as to inform Budget 2019.	Q2	SOLAS, DEASP, HEA, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), INDECON
77	Oversee development of, and annual calls for, Springboard+.		
77.1	Issue a competitive call to HEIs for proposals for Springboard+ 2018 courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by the National Skills Council.	Q1	HEA
77.2	Roll out of Springboard+ 2018.	Q3	HEA
78	Further Education and Training providers and Higher Education Institutions to provide employability statements for courses/disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.	Q1	HEIs, FET providers
79	Develop a new mechanism for the extension of weightings for part-time learning in the new higher education funding model to incentivise flexible learning opportunities.	Q4	HEA

### 4.5 Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
80	Review existing career guidance tools and career information for post-primary/further education/higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system.		
80.1	Complete review of existing career guidance tools and career information for post-primary/further education/higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system.	Q2	



4.6 Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation				
Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner	
81	Publish new Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement.	Q3	HEA, SOLAS	
82	Supporting the Arts in Education and the implementation of Creative Ireland.			
82.1	Commence Pilot of the Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools Initiative in conjunction with the Arts Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.	Q3	Arts Council, DCHG	
82.2	Introduce pilot of 'creative clusters' in schools to promote joint creative, cultural and artistic projects under the school excellence fund.	Q3		
83	Contribute to progressing the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development as a key component of Ireland's overall national strategy to deliver on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).			
83.1	Finalise review of overall progress since 2014 of the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.	Q1	NCCA	
83.2	Participate in Ireland's first Voluntary National Review of SDG implementation.	Q3		
83.3	Contribute to Ireland's first National Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Plan 2018-2020.	Q4		
84	Introduce a new System Innovation and Transformation fund for higher education to drive innovation across the sector.	Q4	HEA	
85	Develop a mechanism for recognising a wider set of knowledge transfer metrics, to drive research and innovation, in higher education funding allocations.	Q4	HEA	
86	Convene a fourth national forum on Education for Sustainable Development.	Q4		

## GOAL 4

### 4.7 Work with enterprise to increase the number of researchers and institute a new programme of funding for Frontiers Research

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
87	Implement a strategy developed to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit. This strategy may include additional awards funded by the Irish Research Council for researchers or academics who relocate.		
	87.1 Publish strategy to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit.	Q2	
	87.2 Begin to implement actions flowing from the strategy to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit.	Q2	
88	Increase the enrolment of postgraduate researchers and grow the number of programmes to support postdoctoral researchers, in partnership with enterprise/employers and in line with Innovation 2020 targets to address economic demands.	Q4	

### 4.8 Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
89	Introduce the International Education Mark (IEM) to ensure a quality standard and best international practice for international learners in Ireland.		
	89.1 Progress the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill.	Q4	
90	Implement the International Education Strategy 2016-2020, through the responsible High Level Working group to develop a comprehensive approach to education that prepares students, academics and staff to be active and engaged participants in an interconnected global world and attracts leading international student talent.		
	90.1 Conduct a cost benefit analysis of internationalisation to both Government and HEIs, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, and to include an assessment of how best to improve the impact on the economy from international education.	Q4	HEA
	90.2 Review the data on grant holders as a proportion of Erasmus+ students (or the proportion of those who undertake non-compulsory Erasmus+ programmes) with a view to enhancing data on disadvantaged students undertaking Erasmus+ mobility.	Q4	HEA

## INDICATORS

To measure our progress and success we will use the following indicators and measures:

### Goal 4 Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>4.2 Strengthen the role of parents and students, and deliver progress in providing greater school choice</b>	Increase the number of multi-/non-denominational schools	400 (2030)
<b>4.3 Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs</b>	Provision of upskilling and reskilling opportunities on Springboard courses, as part of Springboard+	5,000 places (2018/19)
	Increase ICT skills through the provision of places on ICT skills conversion courses, as part of Springboard+	2,500 places (2018/19)
	ICT Skills Action Plan	Annual % growth in intake (female/male) Number of graduates by level of qualification / mainstream / targeted programmes Retention rates in ICT programmes
	Increase to 10% the number of those aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025 (National Skills Strategy Target 2014 baseline is 6.7%)	10% increase (2020) 15% increase (2025)
<b>4.4 Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school</b>	Increased number of in-employment upskilling, through Skillnets	20%, to 55,000 places (2018)
	Increase the number of HE entrants (overall) studying on a flexible basis	22% (2019), 25% (2021)
	As set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020, provide new apprenticeships to offer more choice for learners	A cumulative 25 new programmes (2018)
	Learners avail of the new apprenticeship opportunities	1,500 apprenticeship registrations (2018)

## GOAL 4

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
	Increase the number of new registrations on craft apprenticeships	4,697 new registrations by end-2018
	As set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020, provide new traineeships to offer more choice for learners	A cumulative 10 new programmes (2018)
	Learners avail of new/relaunched traineeship opportunities	900 trainee enrolments by end-2018
	Learners continue to avail of existing traineeship opportunities	3,000 new enrolments on existing traineeships (2018)
<b>4.5 Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices</b>	HE students availing of work placements	25% increase in the number of HE students undertaking a work placement or work based project (2021)
<b>4.6 Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation</b>	Creative Youth implemented in schools, as part of Creative Ireland	150 primary and post-primary schools take part in the pilot of the Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools Initiative (2018)
	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor rankings	Improve Ireland's performance on Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) Index
<b>4.7 Work with enterprise to increase the number of researchers and institute a new programme of funding for Frontiers Research</b>	Expand research through a new competitive Frontiers Research Programme	24 awards made (2018)
	Increase postgraduate research enrolments	475 awards (2020)
	Increase the number of funded post-doctoral places	32 enterprise partnership awards (2020)
<b>4.8 Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students</b>	Grow international student numbers	44,000 students (2020) 39,700 (2018)
	Grow the English-language teaching sector	132,500 students (2020) 122,000 (2018)

## Goal 5 Improve national planning and support services

The continuum of education and training encompasses early years education, primary and second level education, further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education. Approximately one quarter of the national population can be directly classified as a learner. Providing strategic leadership, developing policy and delivering services across the sector has a huge impact and requires cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the political system, government departments, agencies and others. We have a responsibility to implement proper planning frameworks and supports, based on relevant and appropriate data.

It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure that the planning capacity and services at national level match our ambition to have the best education and Training Service by 2016.

**As a result of the successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the Department and its agencies will be working in partnership and consultation to create the right structures, gather the right evidence, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver effectively and efficiently. We will respond appropriately to the results of evaluations and assessments and other relevant developments.**

Progress has been made towards the achievement of this goal including the achievement of 86% of the 142 actions from Action Plan for Education 2017. Achievements to enhance national planning and support included the delivery of building projects within the five year building programme; advancement towards the implementation of shared services; enhancements of central data base systems and the advancement of key legislation to underpin reform of the education and training system.

During 2018, we will strengthen strategic oversight within the Department, advance relevant legislation, deliver appropriate infrastructure for the sector, and continue to improve the quality of the national support services and shared services.

### A number of key strategies and initiatives provide direction under this goal they include:

**Action Plan for Education 2016-2019:** The Plan serves as the Department's high-level strategic framework for 2016-2019, with an overall ambition of working towards having the best education and training services in Europe by 2026. It incorporates quarterly monitoring reports and updated annual Action Plans so that we are able to clearly track our progress towards our overall goal. This will ensure that learners are supported to achieve their potential, and that our national skills offering supports enterprise and other economic growth needs.

**Our Public Service 2020:** Developed by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), the new public service reform plan emphasises delivering better services for the public, promoting a culture of innovation, and developing public organisations and staff. Emphasising outcomes for citizens through collaboration, innovation and evaluation, it seeks to build on the extensive changes which have already taken place across all public services. It aims to ensure that there is a consistent focus on reform across all sectors, and that Government strategies are co-ordinated.

## GOAL 5

**Legislative reform programme for Higher Education:** Two major pieces of legislation underpin our reform programme within this sector, and continue to be advanced. The Higher Education Reform Bill and the Technological Universities Bill will facilitate the development of a new Technological University model. Two consortia of Institutes of Technology are awaiting the enactment of the Bill in order to proceed to the application-making stage for Technological University designation in 2018.

**Data Strategy for the Department of Education and Skills 2017:** To deliver first-class data for the sector, the Strategy seeks to build data capacity and capability, strengthen data management and data-related collaboration, and maximise the use and value of data. Achieving this will greatly enhance our strategic capacity, so that our policies and strategies have a stronger evidence-base, improve our ability to evaluate outcomes and facilitate operational efficiencies.

**Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016:** Good governance in the public sector encourages better informed and longer term decision-making, and the efficient use of resources. It strengthens accountability and involves the robust examination of corporate governance practices and procedures. The Code provides a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by State bodies.

**2016-2021 School Building Programme:** This significant investment in school infrastructure will provide funding of approximately €2.4 billion which includes for the delivery of 360 major school projects, and, on average, 15,000 additional permanent school places annually, as well as 3,000 replacement school places.

**HE and FET Capital Spending:** Following the mid-term review of the Capital Plan and in the context of the forthcoming 10 Year Public Capital Investment Plan, capital investment in HE and FET will be ramped up over the years ahead. During 2018, a key priority will be to progress the higher education Public Private Partnership (PPP) Programme. This will expand capacity across 11 Institutes of Technology and support the development of Technological Universities (TUs).

**Education and Training Sector Shared Services Plan 2017-2020:** The Plan aims to deliver value and benefits to our customers through customer relationships built on a quality service, skilled and dedicated professionals, leading edge technology, optimised business processes, and a focus on results and continuous improvement. It contains a range of actions covering traditional Shared Services initiatives (such as HR, Payroll, Finance), alternative models of service delivery including external service delivery, and the development of organisational structures to ensure the successful operation of Shared Services in the sector.

**Department of Education and Skills ICT Strategy 2015 –2019:** Delivering Transformative Digital Customer Services” - ICT is a critical enabler to improve customer services and transform the day-to-day business of the Department. This Strategy articulates a vision of how we can harness prevailing technology trends to effect real business transformation by delivering new digital services to customers. Modern digital customer services can help us to achieve our overall ambition, and the Strategy is based on five themes: build to share; digital first; data as an enabler; improve governance; and increase capability.

### Under this strategic framework in 2018, we will:

In 2018 we will establish a new division with responsibility for **reform, strategic policy and evaluation**. Amongst its key work will be benchmarking Irish practice against best international practice in priority areas; supporting evaluation reviews being conducted within the Department; building the capacity to develop and analyse data on education outcomes and policy impacts so policy can be more firmly based on evidence.

Advance the **legislative programme in the Higher Education sector**, including the Higher Education Reform Bill and the Technological Universities Bill. This will help to strengthen the foundations of the sector and ultimately produce a better offering for learners.

Continue to make progress under the 2016-2021 Construction Programme during 2018. This will allow us to **increase our infrastructural capacity in order to meet demographic and other demands**. It will include rolling out the next phase of the Prefab Replacement Initiative and progressing the construction phase of the Grangegorman PPP project.

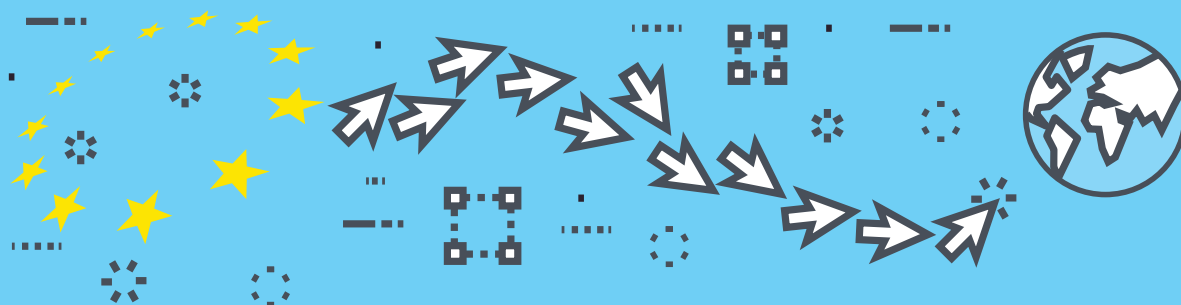
Introduce and embed shared services and centralised procurement both within the Department and across the sector. Through these **new ways of working**, we will strengthen management systems across a range of services.

Further develop the Department's response to the potential impact of **Brexit** on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. This will allow us to respond to the evolving negotiations around the process in a considered way.

Undertaking a rolling programme of **reviews of institutions and programmes** to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

## Being Brexit-ready

Brexit presents opportunities for Ireland to diversify our offerings in a changed international market. To take advantage of these opportunities, and attract increased inward investment and outward trade, it is essential that we have the right talent base. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs is examining the skills needs arising from Brexit's potential trade implications, and it is expected that the study will help with the development of talent and cross-sectoral skills that can help Irish enterprise navigate a potentially more complex and diverse trading environment post-Brexit. We will continue to provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities through Springboard+, and roll out a skills audit tool for employers under the "Skills for Growth" initiative. A new strategy will attract world-leading researchers to Ireland, in the context of Brexit and strategic growth partnerships between HEIs north and south of the border.





## GOAL 05

### To achieve this we will implement the following actions:

5.1 Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results			
Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
91	Provide strategic direction and support in the governance, management and use of the Department's data.		
	91.1 Develop corporate user guidelines for the Department's Data Life Cycle.	Q3	
	91.2 Develop data support and compliance services to assist with the governance and management of the Department's data resources.	Q4	
92	Advance legislative reform in the Higher Education sector.		
	92.1 Enact Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland.	Q1	
	92.2 Review and prioritise issues to be addressed in the Higher Education Reform Bill and finalise drafting of a general scheme.	Q4	
	92.3 Process in place to evaluate applications under the Technological Universities Act.	Q4	
	92.4 Produce a scoping paper, to inform future legislative updating of the HEA Act, 1971.	Q4	HEA
93	Commence review of the Free Fees scheme (Higher Education) as part of the reformed funding model for higher education.	Q 1	HEA
94	Monitor the implementation of the "Action Plan for Education 2016 - 2019", addressing the challenges to be faced on the road to becoming the best education and training service in Europe.		
	94.1 Publish quarterly progress reports under the "Action Plan for Education" framework.	Q4	
	94.2 Promote the use of sectoral indicators to demonstrate the effectiveness of major activities under each of the high-level goals of the Action Plan for Education.	Q4	
95	Deliver on Government-wide public service reform commitments as they relate to the education and training sector, and in line with best international practice.		
	95.1 Report in line with arrangements under "Our Public Service 2020", the new public service reform plan, and the Programme for Government.	Q4	
	95.2 Provide for project management training across the Department and introduce programme management training as appropriate.	Q4	
96	Develop a suite of guidelines and tools to build collaborative working capacity in the Department.		

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
96	96.1 Launch Collaborative Working application for Cross-Department working groups on the Intranet.	Q2	
	96.2 Initiate consultation on wider civil service use of collaborative working guidelines and tools.	Q3	
97	Establish a division within the Department to improve strategic policy capability, evaluation of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures.		
	97.1 Undertake restructuring to establish a new division to improve strategic policy capability.	Q2	
	97.2 Agree a work programme for the new division being established within the DES to improve strategic policy capability.	Q2	
98	Support the operation of a high quality school system through the annual provision of teaching and financial supports to schools, based on agreed criteria and enrolment data.	Q3	
99	Work collaboratively with the DPER as part of the Spending Review process to further enhance the evidence base on expenditure drivers in the education and training sector, including in respect of (a) higher education (b) future teacher requirements and payroll costs, including by developing an updated approach to cost demographic needs at primary and post-primary levels. Timing subject to DPER central timetable.	Q2	
100	Complete the Estimates process.	Q4	
101	Implementation of strategic dialogue and new models of resource allocation in FET and HE will take account of institutions' and ETBs' engagement with regional skills structures, support for employers in identifying and meeting their skill needs and offering of flexible and part time provision.	Q4	
102	Provide payroll and pension services to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector).	Q4	
103	Progress the work programme to enhance and standardise the alignment of sectoral governance codes in line with DPER's Code of Practice.		
	103.1 Embed a sub-committee, established under the auspices of the Management Board Committee on Sectoral Governance & Accountability to ensure further enhancement to corporate governance across the education sector.	Q1	
	103.2 Roll out corporate governance training courses, generated to enhance corporate governance skills within the DES.	Q4	

## GOAL 05

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
103.3	Commence a programme of targeted rolling reviews of significant elements of Corporate Governance across the Higher Education Sector, ETBs and the Department's aegis bodies, in order to develop robust governance practices.	Q4	
103.4	Develop a financial penalty for serious governance breaches in HEIs.	Q4	
104	In the context of guidance on Period Critical Reviews from DPER, develop protocols and schedule for systematic review of DES agencies.		
104.1	Develop protocols and schedules for reviews of DES agencies.	Q3	
104.2	Initiate Period Critical Reviews in agencies.	Q4	

### 5.2 Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
105	Support infrastructural development within the schools sector, through the rollout of the 2016-2021 Construction Programme.	Q4	
106	Roll out the next phase of the Prefab Replacement Initiative, undertaking preparatory work in schools with older, purchased prefabs, to allow commencement of construction of permanent accommodation in 2019.	Q4	
107	Implement the 2016-2021 Capital Plan in respect of Higher Education. This includes confirmation of priorities for the subsequent period and progress on the Higher Education PPP programme.		
107.1	Continue to advance preparations for procurement of the PPP Programme to expand capacity in Institutes of Technology.	Q4	GDA, NDFA, DIT
107.2	Develop a framework for ensuring that capital allocations are aligned with the Department's strategies and priorities for the HE and FET sectors, driving our national and regional ambitions.	Q4	NDFA, HEA
107.3	Develop a framework for ensuring that capital allocations are aligned with the Department's strategies and priorities for the HE and FET sectors.	Q4	
108	Improve the quality of internet connectivity for schools in line with technical developments and available resources.	Q4	

<b>5.3 Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services</b>			
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Actions/subactions for 2018</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Lead agency/ partner</b>
<b>109</b>	Strengthen DES management systems through shared services.		
	<b>109.1</b> Commence detailed planning for the implementation of the preferred solution for the purposes of upgrading the Department's payroll function to shared service standards.	Q3	
	<b>109.2</b> Engage with the Financial Management Shared Services Centre in the Design, Build & Test phase of Financial Management Shared Services Project.	Q4	
<b>110</b>	Improve the quality of services across the sector through the introduction of shared services.		
	<b>110.1</b> Support the roll out of the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) to the Community and Comprehensive schools sector.	Q1	
	<b>110.2</b> Develop detailed mapping and analysis of the current payroll and related HRM processes in the Higher Education sector.	Q2	
	<b>110.3</b> Review the performance of the Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence to support the ETB sector.	Q3	
	<b>110.4</b> Begin the phased implementation of Finance shared service for ETBs.	Q4	
	<b>110.5</b> Commence operation of the Payroll Shared Service for ETBs.	Q4	
	<b>110.6</b> Further develop the Education Sector Procurement hub and the sectoral procurement initiatives to maximise the benefits of centralised procurement for all parts of the sector from schools through to Higher Education Institutions.	Q4	
	<b>110.7</b> Promote the potential benefits of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) for the Department and wider sector and explore potential applications for the Department and the wider sector.	Q4	
	<b>110.8</b> Upgrade ICT systems for Higher Education HR/Payroll to support the shared service agenda.	Q4	
<b>111</b>	Build capacity within the ETB sector focusing particularly on organisational design and workforce planning.		
	<b>111.1</b> Complete the data gathering and consultation on the ETB organisation design phase II (Workforce Planning) and agree next steps.	Q2	
<b>112</b>	Enhance the Department's ICT capabilities through delivering the Department's ICT Strategy 2015-2019.		

## GOAL 05

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/partner
112	112.1 Develop and implement online School Transport Appeals application.	Q1	
	112.2 Implement eCorrespondence, developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Build to Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy.	Q1	
113	Exploit the potential of ICT to enhance the delivery of the State examinations.		SEC
	113.1 Implement an online system for the payment of examination entry fees.	Q2	SEC
	113.2 Continue the implementation of online marking of examinations in an expanded range of subjects.	Q3	SEC
114	Provide safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for eligible children.	Q4	
115	Lead industrial relations negotiations on behalf of the Department and the education and training sector and provide industrial relations and employment law advice to the Minister, Departmental colleagues and sector employers.	Q4	
116	Manage EU co-financed programmes and exploit co-financing opportunities.		
	116.1 Designate the Managing and Certifying Authorities for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) co-financed by the EU through the ESF and the YEI.	Q1	
	116.2 Publish Mid-Term Evaluation of Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL).	Q4	
	116.3 Submit Payment Applications to Commission in line with Regulatory Requirements.	Q4	
117	Manage the Department's Human Resources effectively.		
	117.1 Commence implementation of a new HR Strategy for the Department, in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function, in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function through updated and modern HR practices.	Q1	
	117.2 Provide staff training and development opportunities, including the continued roll out of Underperformance/Disciplinary Code training across managerial grades and liaising with the new Civil Service Learning and Development Centre.	Q4	

# ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018

Action No.	Actions/subactions for 2018	Quarter	Lead agency/ partner
118	Implement the Civil Service Renewal Plan, in line with DPER requirements.		
	118.1 Develop an Employee Engagement Action Plan, arising from the results of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey carried out within the Department.	Q2	
	118.2 Coordinate DES participation in the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards for 2018.	Q3	
119	Improve business processes within the Department using the Business Process Improvement Lean Six Sigma methodology.	Q4	
120	Further develop the Department's response to the potential impact of Brexit on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.	Q4	
121	Oversee, with partners, the implementation of the "Shared Education" objective under the EU PEACE IV Programme (2014-2020) in the target region of Northern Ireland and the six border counties.	Q4	Department of Education Northern Ireland, Special EU Programmes Body, The Early Years/Fermanagh Trust/National Childhood Network, Education Authority/Léargas

## INDICATORS

To measure our progress and success we will use the following indicators and measures:

### Goal 5 Improve national planning and support services

Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
<b>5.1 Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results</b>	Corporate Governance	Develop protocols and Schedules for reviews of DES agencies (2018) Initiate and roll out PCRs in agencies (2018)
	<b>5.2 Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments</b>	Meet demographic demand through the provision of additional permanent primary school places
		9,000 additional permanent primary school places (4,168 large scale projects, 4,832 Additional Accommodation Scheme) (2018) 1,792 replacement primary school places (2018)
	Meet demographic demand through the provision of additional permanent post-primary school places	8,000 additional permanent post-primary school places (6,325 large scale projects, 1,675 Additional Accommodation Scheme) (2018) 900 replacement post-primary school places (2018)
	Provide physical infrastructure to address building needs of primary schools, through extension/ refurbishment projects	137 primary school projects (7 Large Scale Extensions, 130 additional accommodation projects) (2018)
	Provide physical infrastructure to address building needs of post-primary schools, through extension/ refurbishment projects	44 post-primary school projects (14 Large Scale Extensions, 30 additional accommodation projects) (2018)
	Provide physical infrastructure to address building needs of primary schools, through building new/replacement schools	10 new/replacement primary schools (2018)



Policy area	Indicator	Target/indicator (year)
	Provide physical infrastructure to address building needs of post-primary schools, through building new/replacement schools	4 new/replacement post-primary schools (2018)
	Progress delivery of third level infrastructure needs	Preparations advanced for Third Level PPP programme procurement (2018)
<b>5.3: Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services</b>	Successfully operate the largest payroll in the State	103,000 salary (72,000 serving staff including 1,500 home tutors) and pension (29,000 retired staff) Payments issued on a fortnightly basis (2018)  Process 2.5 million transactions annually through the online claim system (absence management and claims for substitution) (2018)
	Provide schools with grant funding for operational matters and administrative support	> 4,000 primary and post-primary schools provided with grant funding for operational matters and administrative support (2018)
	Provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport services for eligible children	>6,000 routes (2018)
		Transport approximately 114,000 children on a daily basis (2018)

## Appendix 1- Bodies under the aegis of the Department

1.	An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
2.	Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)
3.	Educational Research Centre (ERC)
4.	Grangegorman Development Agency (GGDA)
5.	Higher Education Authority (HEA)
6.	Irish Research Council (IRC)
7.	Léargas - The Exchange Bureau
8.	National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
9.	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
10.	National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
11.	Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
12.	Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)
13.	Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)
14.	Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board/RISF – Caranua
15.	Skillnets Ltd
16.	SOLAS An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
17.	State Examinations Commission (SEC)
18.	The Teaching Council

<b>Appendix 2: Acronyms</b>	
ABC	Area Based Childhood Programme
AC	Arts Council
AP- Ed 2016- 2019	Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019
AP- Ed 2017	Actin Plan for Education 2017
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAF	Dormant Accounts Fund
DAHRRG	Department of Arts, Heritage Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFinance	Department of Finance
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DOH	Department of Health
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
ERB	Education about Religions and Beliefs
EPSEN (Act)	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (Act)
EPS	Education Procurement Services
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
FSSU	Financial Services Support Unit
GAM	General Allocation Model
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLIG	High Level Implementation Group for Arts in Education Charter
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison Scheme
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology

## Appendix 2: Acronyms

IP	Intellectual Property
IRC	Irish Research Council
ISS	Integrated Support Service
IT	Information Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IUA	Irish Universities' Association
JC	Junior Certificate
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LC	Leaving Certificate
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PATH	Programme for Access to Higher Education
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PDST- TIE	Professional Development Service for Teachers- Technology in Education
PE	Physical Education
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
POD	Primary Online Database
PPLI	Post-primary Languages Initiative
PPOD	Post-primary Online Database
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RGAM	Recurrent Grant Allocation Model
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Education Needs Organiser
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SPU	Schools Procurement Unit
SSE	School Self Evaluation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
TU	Technological University
TY	Transition Year

Appendix 3: DES commitments arising from the Programme for a Partnership Government

Below are commitments assigned to Department of Education and Skills as the Lead Department.

Com No.	Commitment Description
3.2.3	Invest in skills and training, to allow all to benefit from new opportunities in a recovering economy
4.3.5	To protect the sustainability and viability of rural communities we will not close any small school without the consent of parents. Existing support schemes will remain open for new infrastructural investment in schools.
4.3.7	In partnership with the Apprenticeship Council and industry we will double the number of apprenticeships to provide a total of 31,000 places by 2020 through an annual call for new proposals. We will target over 100 different apprenticeship schemes spread across sectors of the economy and in every region in Ireland.
4.3.21	We will prioritise those institutions with clear ambitions and plans for the furthering of industry-relevant technological research and education. The requirement of a mandatory merger of existing institutions can be reviewed, if a case can be proven, that for geographical reasons, a merger isn't feasible.
6.3.1	An increasing concern in schools and for families, we need to promote awareness and prevention in our education system rather than reacting to incidents. In 2017, Wellbeing will be introduced as a subject in the new Junior Cert curriculum and this is a positive step in raising understanding and awareness amongst teenagers. However, a more thorough understanding of students' own emotional Wellbeing is also required
6.3.3	For teaching staff also, we will invest in SafeTALK and ASIST courses
7.4.2	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome and other conditions. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
8.1.6	We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers).
8.2.8	We must utilise our primary school buildings for afterschool care provision for school age children to offer more options and flexibility to parents. We will link additional capitation to the provision of buildings for afterschool care, where demand exists. Community groups and private providers will be invited to tender to use school facilities (outside school hours).
8.3.2	The introduction of a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus, as a full optional subject.
8.3.7	For teaching staff also, we will support SafeTALK and ASIST courses.

## APPENDIX 03

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.0.1	<p>We are committed to investing an extra €500million in education by 2021 through measures including childcare subventions, HSE Speech and Language Therapists, to bring the number up to 1,102 (a 25% increase) additional National Educational Psychologists (NEPs) to the bring the total to 238 (a 25% increase), reducing the pupil teacher ratio in junior and senior infants, annual increases in primary and secondary capitation rates, additional teacher CPD, a new School Excellence Fund, pay increases in accordance with the Lansdowne Road Agreement and extra third level investment.</p> <p>We will also reduce primary school class sizes; reintroduce guidance counselling to secondary schools and increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households. With this investment we will pursue the below principles of access, excellence, transparency and innovation.</p>
10.0.2	We will produce a three year strategy for the Department of Education within the first 100 days and a framework for measuring its progress in consultation with stakeholders.
10.1.2	Reduce the pupil-teacher ratio for junior and senior infants by providing smaller classes, which have the greatest beneficial impact on younger pupils. The gains from smaller class size in early years are shown to carry forward into future years. Research shows pupils are more likely to stay in school longer and earn better results
10.1.4	Providing additional NEPS psychologists to support new intervention strategies for staff and pupils, and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents
10.2.3	School retention rates are increasing but more can be done to ensure a transition to work or further education for young school leavers. Additional supports to groups working with Early School Leavers will be examined.
10.2.4	We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
10.2.5	The provision of relevant educational programmes, specifically aimed at early leavers and second chance learners should be made available throughout the year, on a modular basis. We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends.
10.3.1	A road map has been agreed for a phased transfer of Catholic schools to new patrons, where the support of communities exists. We will work with all stakeholders to facilitate this process whilst also considering new approaches such as the potential of different patrons on a single site.
10.3.2	We will increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030.
10.3.3	We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation taking account of current draft proposals (publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils). We will seek to enact this legislation for the start of school year 2017-18.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.3.4	The role and power of an Ombudsman for Education, to whom a parent could complain and appeal on foot of a decision by a board of management, will be examined by the relevant Oireachtas Committee to ensure its consistency with the need to ensure better local decision making and accountability to parents.
10.3.5	We will ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents, while also facilitating those small schools who wish to amalgamate.
10.3.6	Within 3 months, we will commence a review of the teacher appointment thresholds in schools with 4 or less teachers.
10.3.7	We will review the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme prior to Budget 2017. We will review the criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board.
10.3.8	We will review the options for standardised testing so that clear information is provided to teachers and parents. Parents should be able to receive annual reports on how their school is doing. Government should also be able to assess how new investments are progressing (e.g. reductions in pupil-teacher ratio, speech & language interventions).
10.3.9	We will introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents, and commence the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act (10 years after its enactment).
10.4.1	In promoting excellence and innovation, we will introduce greater flexibility in our schools and pursue measures to achieve this. This may include nurturing different ambitions through new subject choices, greater engagement with enterprise on future skills needs, and increased flexibility in the day to day management of schools in order to improve outcomes. School leadership will be supported in identifying and introducing reforms that drive up educational standards, particularly in the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic.
10.4.2	We will set out capitation rates to schools on a rolling 3-year basis, allowing for forward planning. School management will have the decision making power to allocate these resources as they deem appropriate, including to posts of responsibility.
10.4.3	We will establish a new Schools Excellence Fund, which rewards new approaches driven by teachers and by parents themselves to the benefit of pupils' education. Applications that seek to tackle educational disadvantage will be prioritised.
10.4.4	We will establish a pool of experts (educators, employers, accountants, business leaders, IT specialists etc.) to assist school initiatives, promote innovation and enterprise engagement especially at second level.
10.4.5	As part of the Digital Strategy, we will introduce new technology bringing remote learning into classrooms, ensuring all students have access to a wider range of subject choices and consistent quality education.
10.4.6	We will invest in additional continuous professional development for teachers, to ensure they are supported throughout their careers, and are best placed to respond to the developing challenges that their students face. Newly appointed school principals will take a preparation course in advance of taking up their role.



## APPENDIX 03

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.4.7	In order to improve student's outcomes and school performance, we will examine the potential for measures to assist teaching principals.
10.4.8	We will also incentivise voluntary school participation in new "Local Education Clusters" that encourage schools to improve student outcomes by sharing best practice and school improvement experiences, foster collaborative in and out-of-hours initiatives, staff peer mentoring and leadership, and that allow for cost reductions through economies of scale.
10.5.1	The curriculum is evolving. In 2016, we need to focus on the future needs, abilities and capacity of students. Focus must remain on literacy and maths, but new subjects should be introduced such as the arts, entrepreneurial education, and mental health awareness.
10.5.2	We will further accelerate the Digital and ICT agenda in schools by including a coding course for the Junior Cycle and introducing ICT/Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject.
10.5.3	We will also introduce a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus as a full subject.
10.5.4	Guidance counselling at secondary level will be enhanced.
10.5.5	We will evaluate transition supports available to young people at all levels of the education, with a view to promoting initiatives which support young people at critical points in their lives. Transition Year, in particular, will be used to prepare young people with key skills before they make the transition to higher education or work. We will work with industry and colleges to open up new opportunities and programmes in transition year.
10.5.6	The relevant Oireachtas Committee will be requested to review the recommendations contained in the forthcoming STEM report and outline the way forward in implementing a National Strategy to develop competence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
10.5.7	We will benchmark entrepreneurial activity in Irish higher education and work with the Higher Education Authority to ensure an ambitious and implementable plan to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs.
10.6.1	We are committed to delivering a school capital investment programme for extensions/refurbishments, additional school places, and eliminating the use of prefabs. Significant funding has been secured as part of the Capital Plan.
10.6.2	We support an annual application process for the Minor Works and Summer Works schemes.
10.6.3	In addition we will introduce a new funding mechanism for low cost safety measures for primary schools such as car parks and bus lay-bys.
10.6.4	Schools buildings must be utilised out of hours if they are to remain at the centre of communities into the future, both throughout the day and throughout the year, including better utilisation of information technology. Afterschool care, homework clubs and other community activities should be permissible. Additional capitation funding will be linked to the availability of afterschool care options, where demand exists.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.7.1	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education advice on how best to address this. Where efficiencies are made as part of this review, consideration is to be given to the extension of the July Provision Programme to support families over summer months.
10.7.2	We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
10.7.4	We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers), and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents.
10.8.1	We will change the structures of the Department of Education to ensure it operates as a dynamic policy leader focused on quality education and improving outcomes for every student.
10.8.2	We support the creation of Technological Universities, linked to industry and with the capacity to create and retain jobs in regions.
10.8.3	We will implement the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, published in December 2015.
10.8.4	We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses and opportunities available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends. We support the introduction of mid-degree “sandwich year” courses, whereby students spend their third year of university working in industry.
10.8.5	Together with the Apprenticeship Council, SOLAS, the Education and Training Boards, and industry, we will double the number of apprenticeships by 2020. We will also significantly increase the number of traineeship places. We will develop a mechanism to recognise a person’s practical work experience and expertise in order to enable them to take on an apprentice.
10.8.6	Create financial incentives for the third level system to respond to skills gaps
10.8.7	Invite industry to partner in the delivery elements of the curricula at third and fourth levels
10.8.8	Create a strong system for the delivery and renewal of skills in newly emerging technical areas (including apprenticeships, traineeships, and in service progression)
10.8.9	Significant exchequer resources are invested in both current and capital spending in the Higher Education sector. Following the publication of the Expert Group report on the Future Funding of the Higher Education Sector, we will propose that the relevant cross party Oireachtas Committee review its recommendations and outline a proposed funding plan for this sector.
10.8.10	We will propose an examination of the efficiency and operation of SUSI in parallel with this report, including the potential of providing SUSI liaison personnel in each region

## APPENDIX 03

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.8.11	We support new flexibility for appropriate higher education institutions within strict budgets, transparency and new accountability agreements, to set their own staffing needs, hire the best lecturers, automate routine processes and adapt work practices to staff and student needs. By allowing universities more flexibilities and 'earned autonomy' they can prioritise and address issues themselves for the improvement of their institution, and the creation of a new relationship with students.
10.8.12	We will do this by initiating a Review of the Further, Adult and Community Education sector by the Oireachtas Committee on Education and an implementation of reforms to ensure the effectiveness of the sector.
10.8.13	We will also commission an independent examination to identify the supports and barriers to accessing higher education for lone parents, and examine measures to increase participation. The recommendations of this report are to be published in advance of Budget 2017
11.14.1	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
11.14.2	We will publish an updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion to narrow the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, and examine how students outside of DEIS can be better supported.
11.15.1	We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation providing families with fairer access to their local schools.
11.17.2	We will review implementation of the National Action Plan on Bullying in our schools.
14.1.9	We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
14.1.10	We will also implement a national access programme for higher education to boost college numbers from families without a history of third-level education, as well as mature students.

# ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2018

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2018



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