



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

**Programme for Government Commitments for the Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science**

1. Recovery Fund - Reskilling and retraining - Prioritise expenditure measures to help those who have been made unemployed by COVID-19 and are unable to return to their previous employment, to receive training and upskilling to enable them secure new opportunities.
2. Implement an upskilling and reskilling programme so that workers from sectors that are unlikely to return to full capacity in the following year can avail of the opportunities in other more sustainable sectors. As part of this, publish an updated Apprenticeship Action Plan to look at new ways of structuring, funding, and promoting apprenticeships. It will have specific targets for the uptake of apprenticeships by women, people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. By the end of 2020, develop a strong pipeline of apprenticeships and traineeships (including mature apprenticeships) to support our recovery phase and to provide new career paths for people with different interests and abilities. Embed apprenticeships and traineeships into Irish enterprise.
3. Publish a Regional Technology and Clustering Programme to strengthen the links between SMEs, Educational Training Boards, multinational corporations and third-level educational institutions and help drive competitiveness, productivity, and innovation in the regions.
4. Use the Human Capital initiative to deliver a wide range of education and training programmes for jobseekers in tertiary education, including fast-turnaround specific skills training, conversion courses into areas of skills shortage, and emerging technology.
5. Further promote a culture of lifelong learning within the workforce, focusing on increasing the lifelong learning from the current rate of 9% to 18% by 2025.
6. Work with Further and Higher Education institutions to put in place a strategy to develop new fast-track, midcareer educational models that can meet the rapidly evolving needs of our new economy.
7. In consultation with stakeholders, seek to utilise the surplus from the National Training Fund to implement an upskilling and reskilling programme, along with the additional funding for Further and Higher Education institutions.
8. Overhaul existing apprenticeships, traineeships and education programmes in the short term and launch a significant effort to upskill the existing workforce for new technologies and building methods (e.g. heat pumps).

9. Create a path for people in rehabilitation from drug addiction to access education and training facilities in their local areas.
10. Explore a new digital skills for citizens grant scheme, focusing on one-to-one training.
11. Enhance the skills and capacity in the construction sector, by increasing training places for apprentices, reviewing the funding model, and expanding shared apprenticeship initiatives.
12. Continue to roll out the development of the Technological University model, with a particular focus on establishing the Technological University in the South East.
13. Develop new apprenticeships in sectors with a strong regional footprint.
14. Conduct an audit of equity of access to Further Education and Training (FET) for those with disabilities.
15. Pilot a new apprenticeship model for early-years professionals.
16. Encourage traditional building skills in devising an apprenticeship programme with the sustainable construction sector, focusing on heritage disciplines and crafts.
17. Further develop access programmes to Higher and Further Education for students from disadvantaged groups, including members of the Traveller Community, those in direct provision, and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
18. Develop a long-term sustainable funding model for higher-level education, in collaboration with the sector and informed by recent and ongoing research and analysis.
19. Continue to reform the way our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operate through their relationship with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), by enhancing performance, financial management, governance, and transparency.
20. Utilise the system performance framework to drive accountability and improvements in our Higher Education sector.
21. Commit to continuing and expanding the important initiatives in the Gender Action Plan towards tackling gender inequality in our education sector. In particular, we will implement the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative.
22. Review and update the International Education strategy for Ireland, recognising the importance of overseas students and academics to our higher education sector.
23. Work with all HEIs to develop partnerships throughout the EU to increase access to Horizon 2020 funding and to increase Irish participation in Erasmus+ programmes.
24. Support the recently established Technological Universities (TUs) and work closely with consortia to establish new TUs. In particular, recognise the urgency attached to the establishment of the TU of the south east of Ireland.

25. Value and encourage the role of Further Education and Training.
26. Enable a culture of lifelong learning within the workforce, with a focus on increasing lifelong learning from its current rate of 9% to 18% by 2025.
27. Recognise the role of community education and its vital role in our communities by supporting its schemes and initiatives post COVID-19.
28. Enhance back-to-work schemes and initiatives to assist in upskilling those who are seeking new employment opportunities after the crisis.
29. Develop a comprehensive Green Further Education and Skills Development Plan, ensuring that learners are equipped with the environmental awareness and green skills that can drive future change.
30. Utilise the Human Capital initiative to deliver a wide range of education and training programmes for jobseekers, to support economic recovery and green skills development.
31. Develop and implement a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning, taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.
32. Review the Back to Education Allowance, to ensure that it can help those unemployed as a result of COVID-19 to access education and training.
33. Work with Further and Higher Education institutions to develop new fast-track mid-career educational models to meet the rapidly evolving needs of our new economy.
34. Ensure that the National Skills Council and the Nine Regional Skills Fora are active in feeding into the development of the National Economic Plan, ensuring Ireland's ambition as a world leader in anticipating and responding to skills needs.
35. Expand Springboard throughout Further and Higher Education, offering upskilling in areas of skills shortages to those who want to upskill, to those who are reentering the workforce, or to those who have been made redundant.
36. Publish an updated Apprenticeship Action Plan to look at new ways of structuring, funding, and promoting apprenticeships.
37. Develop a strong pipeline of apprenticeships and traineeships to support our recovery and to provide new career paths for people with different interests and abilities.
38. Commit to growing the number of apprenticeships significantly between now and 2025, increasing the total number of new registrations to at least 10,000 per annum.
39. Commit to emphasising and building capacity for green apprenticeships through a Green Further Education and Skills Development Plan, as tackling the climate crisis will require a broad range of skills across the construction, energy, and natural heritage sectors.

40. Expand apprenticeships to new and non-traditional areas and work with employers to create new pathways for young people into sustainable and skilled employment, providing practical groundings which will stand to them as they move through their careers.
41. Commit to taking the lead on boosting the availability and uptake of apprenticeships, by providing government apprenticeship schemes.
42. Prioritise innovation in the structuring of non-traditional apprenticeships, in order to make them more appealing, and encourage greater uptake by sectors that have not used the apprenticeship model before.
43. Improve the pathways between second-level education and apprenticeships and ensure that apprenticeships are seen as a very attractive career pathway.
44. Commit to continuing to increase the participation of women in apprenticeships and skills-based programmes.
45. Maintain student contributions at the current level.
46. Review SUSI eligibility and adjacency rates.
47. Conduct a review of the SUSI scheme in 2020, following the impact of COVID-19.
48. Ensure that mental health supports are available for students in Higher and Further Education.
49. Provide a range of free, adequate, safe, and suitable period products in all educational publicly-funded settings (including schools, colleges and HEIs), to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in their education by period poverty.
50. Work with HEIs to ensure that more accommodation is built on and off campus, using cost-rental and other models.
51. Address the gap in postgraduate grants.
52. Recognise the vital work of the Universities of Sanctuary project and commit that the State will further increase the supports for people in direct provision to access third-level education.
53. Continue to support initiatives around student care and welfare on campus, dealing with consent, wellbeing, mental health, drug, alcohol, and substance abuse.
54. Implement the recommendations of the Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions Report and expand the scope of activities to cover both staff and students.

55. Seek to require that all HEIs create a specific action plan around tackling sexual harassment. This should include independent data collection, and a review of supports for students and staff and reportable actions in Annual Governance Statements.
56. Ensure that every Higher Education Institution commissions a survey for all staff and students on harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying, with a view to informing their equality, diversity and inclusion action plans.
57. Continue with, and expand, the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and develop a National Traveller Education Strategy, including a plan to improve access to Higher Education for members of the Traveller Community.
58. Seek to expand funding for programmes to engage with students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds from primary school onwards and encourage all HEIs to include work experience components or Pathway to Professions elements in their programmes.
59. Support access routes and inclusive education initiatives to learners with intellectual disabilities.
60. Examine the creation of a single-information portal for school-leavers for both Further Education and Higher Education programmes of study.
61. Ensure that post-primary schools should each be linked with at least one Further Education provider, so that the system is coherent in providing equal opportunities for all students.
62. Ensure that all Further Education courses are linked into at least one university course, when appropriate, providing a map for students who wish to continue their studies.
63. Improve awareness of STEM career paths beyond purely technical careers and examine the scalability of existing pilot projects to encourage diversity in STEM subjects, in line with the STEM Education Policy 2017-2026.
64. Seek to increase the Fund for Students with Disabilities.
65. Formalise the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme across all institutions and make the entrance points visible, so that students have a clear goal for their studies.
66. Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills within the first year of the Government.
67. Recognise the high-quality research emerging through national funding agencies and programmes, such as SFI, IRC, HRB and PRTL, and continue to support them in engaging in research that addresses societal challenges and advances the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
68. Examine solutions for extensions for researchers who cannot access facilities to complete projects as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

69. Develop challenges-based research funding approaches for all disciplines, so that Irish researchers directly address the major issues facing society in the years ahead.
70. Ensure support for foundational and discovery research.
71. Increase the number of SFI Research Centres and seek to establish a cross-border research centre, to bring together universities and industry, north and south.
72. Examine the need for specialist research institutions outside the Higher Education system.
73. Develop career pathways for early-career researchers, with Starting Grant funding rounds being issued on an annual basis from each of our funding institutions.
74. Expand the linkages between research and enterprise, with a particular focus on encouraging collaboration with domestic SMEs.
75. Work across third-level and research sectors, to ensure that the work and contribution of PhD candidates is recognised appropriately.
76. Publish a Regional Technology and Clustering Programme to strengthen the links between SMEs and third-level education institutes, to help drive competitiveness, productivity, and innovation in the regions.
77. Support Horizon Europe and the establishment of the European Innovation Council to lead financial supports for businesses.
78. Support swift agreement at EU institutional and Member State level for the proposed Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme, to cover the 2021-2027 period.
79. Maintain SFI's presence overseas and as a pillar of trade and investment missions, along with EI and IDA Ireland.
80. Propose the simplification of the application processes for grant funding from EU-funded research and innovation projects. Work at EU level to promote greater SME take-up of research and innovation funding.
81. Work with the Executive and the UK Government to commit to investment and development opportunities in the North West and Border communities, including third-level opportunities for young people from across the region at the Ulster University Magee Campus in Derry.
82. Support a north-south programme of research and innovation, including an all-island research hub, through Universities Ireland.