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# Evidence Base for the Tertiary Sector: System Transitions

DFHERIS Sectoral Research and Evaluation Group

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# 1 Introduction

This paper is part of a series of three scoping papers undertaken by the DFHERIS Sectoral Research & Evaluation Group (SREG) (see appendix I for Terms of Reference) and considers evidence pertaining to tertiary sector transitions.

The paper brings together current activity within the system to monitor and to reflect progress on supporting transitions throughout the tertiary sector<sup>1</sup>. Along with the baseline papers on Outcomes and Inclusion, this paper provides an initial outline of evidence generated within the Department and its core agencies. It is not an exhaustive compilation of relevant research and analysis in the area under consideration.

It is intended that this work will:-

- Bring together the existing evidence base which demonstrates the contribution of tertiary education to society and to individuals.
- Provide a structure to underpin the promotion of the impacts of the tertiary sector and its component elements to policy makers, sectoral stakeholders and the public to inform decision making, both at a national policy level and to individuals seeking to determine an appropriate pathway through the tertiary system.
- Inform a sectoral research and evaluation programme, supported by a sectoral data strategy, to deliver a comprehensive evidence base for the tertiary sector.

The evidence gathered is grouped into three key categories – transitions into the system, transitions within the system, and transitions out of the system – and reflects on the relevance of the evidence compiled.

The paper will inform the data strategy and research programme for the SREG and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper ‘tertiary sector’ will be used as an overarching term to refer to the Further Education and Training, Higher Education, and Research Sectors.

## 2 Policy Context

The requirement to prepare a strategy for tertiary education, encompassing further education and training and higher education and research, has been set out in legislation<sup>2</sup>. The *DFHERIS Statement of Strategy 2021-2023* commits to promoting ‘*the complementary roles of further and higher education and champion closer alignment and integration, facilitating enhanced information for school-leavers and for all seeking learning opportunities, providing a wider choice at transition points and enabling progression pathways across and between different institutions*’.

The transitions considered in this paper cover pathways through the various levels of tertiary education from school leavers engaging with post-compulsory education as new entrants, through to lifelong learners seeking to return to education to upskill and reskill. Individual strategies related to constituent elements of the system are referenced throughout the paper.

While there has been considerable focus on routes from further education and training (FET) to higher education (HE), the unified tertiary education system approach broadens the scope to support diverse pathways throughout the tertiary system to better meet the diverse needs of learners, researchers, industry and wider society. Progressing this vision of a more cohesive system with a wide range of navigable and pathways will require an in-depth understanding of the missions, structures, and movements across individual sectors. Building a robust evidence base will help inform decisions on how best to deliver a more unified approach, including the range of supports needed to embed changes and expand offerings.

The sections below provide an outline of the policy context underpinning key pathways including current activities and system performance where available. The associated evidence base (Section 5) includes relevant research and analysis completed or underway for that category.

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<sup>2</sup> S33 (1), Higher Education Authority Act, 2022

### 3 Sectoral Transitions – Mapping and approach

The broad objectives of this scoping exercise are as follows:

- 1) An initial mapping of pathways;
- 2) Explore activity and capacity across individual pathways including available data on numbers traversing each node;
- 3) Collate relevant evidence related to incentives and/or barriers to transitions;

There are a myriad of pathways into, across, within and out of tertiary education. Appendix II provides a summary of available evidence across key pathways. As this paper reflects on tertiary transitions, specific pathways are outside the scope of the exercise. This exercise is not an extensive review and has focused on data and research generated by sectoral agencies. In several areas, the volume of research available is reflective of the more common transitions and the numbers of learners traversing these nodes (e.g. school to FE, FE to HE). Other areas have limited coverage, which may indicate less frequented pathways between or within sectors, or a dearth of evidence on these specific transitions. The key pathways under consideration are:

- 1) Transitions into the tertiary system (Section 4.1):
  - a. New Entrants – Post compulsory education transitions (Section 4.1.1);
  - b. New Entrants – Adult learners including those engaging with the tertiary system for the first time and those with previous tertiary experience availing of reskilling/upskilling opportunities (Section 4.1.2);
  - c. International transitions/learners entering the tertiary system from overseas (Section 4.1.3).
- 2) Transitions across the tertiary system (Section 4.2):
  - a. FET-HE transitions (Section 4.2.1);
  - b. HE-Research transitions (Section 4.2.2);
  - c. FET-Research transitions (Section 4.2.3).
- 3) Transitions out of the tertiary system (Section 4.3)
  - a. Workplace transitions (Section 4.3.1)
  - b. International transitions – learners leaving the tertiary system for research/work abroad (Section 4.3.2)

## 4 Transitions

The following section details the key pathways for learners interacting with the tertiary system. These pathways have been categorised into the following: Transitions into the tertiary system, transitions across the system, and transitions out of the system.

### 4.1 Transitions into the system

This sections below reflects on pathways into the tertiary education system, focusing on three key groups including 1) secondary/post compulsory entrants 2) Adult learners 3) international transitions.

#### 4.1.1 Post compulsory education into tertiary education

For many school leavers, discussions on continuing education or training have focused on Leaving Certificate based CAO points and the race to secure a place on a HE programme. DFHERIS is working with partners across the sector, including aegis agencies and ETBs to promote alternative options and to challenge perceptions, particularly in relation to FET and apprenticeship offerings.

In 2022, changes were made to the CAO system to include links to apprenticeships and FET level 5 and 6 programmes (via [fetchcourses.ie](https://fetchcourses.ie)), to raise awareness of the range tertiary offerings and the many benefits they can offer e.g. local availability, greater flexibility, an opportunity to explore disciplines on a short-term basis, work-based learning, employment opportunities and progression routes to HE.

Measures designed to help guide students exploring tertiary education options include:

- ETBs piloting taster modules <sup>3</sup> delivered during transition year, offering students an insight into more technical and vocational training;
- Availability of resources for teachers and guidance counsellors to ensure they are fully informed and can advise students on the range of opportunities and pathways available.

The Department of Education tracks transitions from second level to FE and HE and across NFQ levels as well as the number of entry routes to HE<sup>4</sup>. Previous studies, such as the National Forum for the

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<sup>3</sup> The FET taster series was designed to provide second-level students with an insight into the value, relevance and availability of FET programmes. For example, see further information on the Limerick/Clare ETB taster module: <https://lcetb.ie/mulgrave-street-campus-launches-fet-taster-series/>

<sup>4</sup> See Education Indicators for Ireland 2022 [gov.ie - Education statistics \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications/2022-03-education-indicators-for-ireland-2022/)

Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education<sup>5</sup> report on transitions from FE to HE, included qualitative research based on surveys of students and their perceptions of transitions into the tertiary system. Further evidence/analysis related to post compulsory transitions is included section 5.

#### 4.1.2 Adult learners

A key system objective set out in the DFHERIS Statement of Strategy is to ‘*open up diverse and progressive pathways for everyone, enabling personal growth, developing our learners’ talent, promoting lifelong learning*’. Demand for more flexible learning pathways is driven by the wide ranging motivations of adult learners, including:

- Those seeking to upskill or reskill to ease the transition back to work (as envisaged under Pathways to Work 2021-2025’) or keep pace with the demands of a dynamic employment sector;
- Adult learners seeking to improve literacy, numeracy, or digital skills;
- Lifelong learners at various life stages seeking flexible and adaptive provision, including those reengaging with education through informal or accredited programmes within the community education sector.

Ireland’s ongoing work with the OECD on the Skills Strategy project and a review of the National Skills Strategy 2025 has focused attention on skills throughout the life course, which will require a balanced, responsive, and cohesive tertiary system to help maintain a competitive edge. Demand for training under Skillnet Ireland and other specialised skills programmes (including Springboard+ and the Human Capital Initiative) further demonstrate the increasing need for more flexible routes and short-term upskilling/reskilling opportunities.

Recent initiatives which have the potential to improve flexibility for disparate groups of learners include a coherent and consistent system of recognition of prior learning, including previously credentialed learning and non-formal and informal learning. The introduction of stackable micro-credentials also provide greater opportunities for those balancing education and other work/life demands. A further

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<sup>5</sup> National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education - Transition from Further Education and Training to Higher Education

innovation gaining currency at an international level is the introduction of individual learning accounts (ILAs) designed to make training entitlements portable and accessible over time.

Adult and lifelong learning is a policy priority which traverses several strategies and initiatives with wide ranging objectives from promoting inclusion to meeting national economic and skills needs. Research and data requirements around adult transitions to, and progression through, the tertiary system must be robust and multifaceted, demonstrating responsiveness to the diverse needs to learners and the effectiveness of initiatives referenced above. Sections 6 & 7 include qualitative and quantitative analysis of relevance. Key reports include SOLAS data on Lifelong Learners in FET (FET in numbers 2019: Lifelong Learning)<sup>6</sup>, which features data on enrolment numbers and previous educational attainment. Information on participation rates, profiles, drivers and outcomes for lifelong learners can also be found in the CSO Adult Education Survey<sup>7</sup>

### 4.1.3 International transitions

The final grouping considered under transitions into the tertiary system are overseas/international learners. This includes students enrolled in tertiary programmes overseas and who avail of the opportunity to study at one of Ireland's tertiary Institutions (including Erasmus+ programme participants) or entrants that have travelled on a student visa programme, in order to study in Ireland. According to data from Erasmus+, 10,015 student and 2,502 staff movements into the Irish tertiary system in 2021<sup>8</sup>. This is one of the largest per capita movements of students in Europe, demonstrating that Ireland is an attractive destination for EU member state students.

The numbers of international students enrolled in higher education is monitored by the Higher Education Authority (HEA)<sup>9</sup> with aggregate data recorded via the SRS. SOLAS monitors FET enrolments via the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS)<sup>10</sup>, which captures enrolments by individual country. The total number of international students in Ireland (public and private) is tracked as part of DFHERIS' annual performance budgeting. However issues with acquiring these figures were noted as part of the Revised Estimates Volumes for the Public Service (REV) 2023 submission.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/a52d1c6298/15429\\_lifelong\\_learning\\_fet\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/a52d1c6298/15429_lifelong_learning_fet_report_web.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/education/adulteducation/survey/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/factsheets-statistics-evaluations/programme-and-country-factsheets/country-factsheets-2021/erasmus-in-ireland-in-2021>

<sup>9</sup> <https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/access-our-data/access-our-data-students/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/aca0d6d647/non-irish-nationals-in-fet.pdf>



The ICOS International Student Report 2021<sup>11</sup> highlights issues that may impact International transitions in the future. Barriers identified include language/cultural barriers, visa issues and broader system challenges including student accommodation shortages, which have an acute impact on the international student community. It is also important to note the distinction between international students entering the system to pursue a specific programme by choice, and international students who migrate to Ireland for other reasons (e.g. international protection, family reunification etc.). NARIC Ireland<sup>12</sup> has developed an online foreign qualification database with over 1,600 comparability statements. The database offers clarification for those with prior international educational and/or professional qualifications on how this attainment aligns with Irish qualifications, helping to ease the transition to the Irish education system and workforce. Sections 6 & 7 below lists evidence with respect to International transitions into the system.

## 4.2 Transitions across the tertiary system

This section will consider three key transition pathways between specific sectors within the tertiary education system: 1) FET-HE transitions 2) HE-Research transitions 3) FET-Research transitions. An overview of activity in relation to these pathways and supporting evidence can be found below and in the grids in Section 6 & 7.

### 4.2.1 FET-HE transitions

Fostering better links between the FET and HE sectors has been a policy priority for several years, highlighted across strategies for both sectors. A FET-HE Transitions Reform Group<sup>13</sup> was established by the Department of Education in March 2017 to map pathways, identify barriers and put forward proposals for a more consistent and collaborative approach to align programme offerings and enhance FE to HE pathways. More recently, there has been a shift in the policy approach and greater recognition of the value of standalone FET programmes, with emphasis on the sector's unique strengths and broader social and economic impact. Nonetheless, clarifying and diversifying routes between the two sectors

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.internationalstudents.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2021-12/ICOS%20International%20Student%20Report%202021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.internationalstudents.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2021-12/ICOS%20International%20Student%20Report%202021_Final.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Recognition of foreign qualifications | Quality and Qualifications Ireland (qqi.ie)

<sup>13</sup> Further Education and Training (FET) Progression to Higher Education (HE), Transitions Reform Working Paper June 2020

continues to be an important strategic goal as numbers of learners traversing the sectors is still relatively low<sup>14</sup>.

There is a drive to clarify the messaging around programmes within the FET sector and the diverse opportunities available. Courses may be employment focused (apprenticeships, specific skills training, vocational training opportunities), providing key skills in response to labour market demands. Others, including programmes under the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS), have a progression focus, providing a strong foundation and linkages for learners seeking a route to HE. There is evidence demonstrating the positive impact FET on student preparedness and retention as they progress to HE *‘Those that transition to HE after a FET foundation tend to prosper, with HE retention rates comparing very favourably with those entering HE directly from lower Leaving Certificate points brackets’*<sup>15</sup>

The report of the Transitions Reform Group notes that movements within FET are not universally linear with large groups of learners traversing the NFQ framework to avail of opportunities for initial learning, upskilling, and reskilling. Increasingly, learners with HE qualifications reengage with the system via FET programmes in specific areas such as digital skills or marketing, applicable across a variety of employment sectors. FET offers learners an opportunity to adopt a cumulative approach to building skills and aligns with objectives under the unified system platform.

The Department recently engaged in an exercise to review Transitions Group proposals against current departmental priorities. Evidence collated to support the work of the group can be found in resource D of the *Transitions Reform Working Paper*<sup>16</sup> included in the grid below. This resource holds data on PLC links to HEIs across the country. It also includes data on specific entry routes into HE by course year.

#### 4.2.2 HE-Research transitions

Pillar four of Impact 2030<sup>17</sup> includes a commitment to *‘ensure that researchers in Ireland have the right opportunities, skills and career incentives to maximise their impact and realise their career potential.’* Actions under the 2022-2024 work programme aim to strengthen transitions into HE research by fostering a consistent standard of research student experience. This includes initiatives to improve career advice, expand and diversify pathways so that researchers have an opportunity to make an impact

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<sup>14</sup> SOLAS (2020), *FET Learner Outcomes: Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC)*

<sup>15</sup> Future FET: Transforming Learning, The National Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.transition.ie/files/2020/des-transitions-sub-group-working-paper-june-2020.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/224616/5f34f71e-e13e-404b-8685-4113428b3390.pdf#page=null>

across academia, industry, and/or public policy. This approach is aligned with the National Framework for Doctoral Education<sup>18</sup>, which targets “*excellence in all forms of doctoral education in Ireland*”.

National funding agencies have a number of opportunities for doctoral students through investigator-led research grants, PhD fellowships, Research Centres and Centres for Research Training. Further opportunities exist to support students in progressing their research careers within academic, industry or the public service, the establishment of a new funding agency will present an opportunity to review the current suite of funding awards available and further develop networks and expand pathways.

In terms of barriers to HE-research transitions, attention has been drawn to the availability and levels of PhD stipends and supports. Research scholarship awards, designed to help cover PhD programme tuition fees, living and/or research costs, are highly competitive. Those fortunate enough to secure scholarships may still struggle to subsist at current stipend levels, particularly in the current economic climate. In response to calls to increase the level of stipends, an independent National Review of State Supports for PhD Researchers commenced in early 2023. The review will consider stipends levels and consistency across funders and HEIs, along with wider supports and conditions which may be impacting the doctoral education experience<sup>19</sup>. Other issues which may impact the ability to access, progress and complete research education/training include PhD researcher status (i.e. student or employee), the student accommodation crisis and, for international research students, the availability of, and financial support for, visas.

The HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey<sup>20</sup> and dashboards provide a detailed analysis on the movement of graduates from HE, including data on further study, field of study, and barriers to educational progression and employment.

### 4.2.3 FET-Research transitions

Evidence on FET-Research transitions is difficult to source, which may reflect limited movements across this pathway. Without sufficient research in this area, it is hard to draw any definitive conclusions on FET-research activity.

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<sup>18</sup> [https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national\\_framework\\_for\\_doctoral\\_education\\_0.pdf](https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/19070-phd-researcher-supports/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://hea.ie/statistics/graduate-outcomes-data-and-reports/>

Submissions to the recent Unified Tertiary Transitions consultation<sup>21</sup> highlight the value of growing collaboration between ETBs, HEIs, research and industry to ensure a balanced and complementary approach to the creation of knowledge and skills. While there is potential for the FET sector to strengthen links with the research sector, some submissions noted barriers within the FET system such as time constraints, limited access to research resources and difficulty in attracting researchers.

Both Impact 2030 and the Unified Tertiary System platform include specific actions to support collaboration between the two sectors. In addition, the FET sector is actively engaging with the wider R&I agenda via regional innovation plans, aligned to smart specialisation objectives. This activity may help to build connectivity and improve movement between the two sectors. Given the potential strategic benefits to FE – research transitions, there may be scope for further analysis of movements and interaction across the sectors.

#### **4.2.4 Within sector transitions**

The previous paragraphs describe various pathways between individual sectors. However, transitions may also occur within sectors. For example, FET to FET transitions could include a learner leaving one FET course to enrol in another, or students moving from an undergraduate programme to a postgraduate programme in higher education.

SOLAS gathers data on previous educational attainment for learners enrolled in FET programmes on an annual basis within FET Facts and Figures. This data does not include information on when previous qualifications were obtained but indicate movement between levels and/or courses. In addition, the HEA Graduate Outcomes report captures information on learners availing of opportunities for further study following completion of an honours degree programme in the previous year.

### **4.3 Transitions out of the system**

This section focuses on the two key transition pathways out of the tertiary education system – transitions into the workplace and international transitions.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/982e2-unified-tertiary-education-sector/>

### 4.3.1 Workplace transitions

A key objective for the tertiary sector is to ensure that learners engaging with the system build the requisite knowledge and skills needed to access, effectively contribute and progress within the workplace. The current OECD assessment of the national skills strategy will offer an insight into the current performance of Ireland's skills system, including the balance of skills supplied and career pathways and transitions.

Feedback from employers highlight the value of transversal skills and their impact on transitions to employment. This is echoed in the National Framework for Doctoral Education which emphasises the development of both discipline-specific skills and transferable skills among researchers, including career management, entrepreneurship and innovation, and communications. National funding agencies have developed discrete funding programmes designed embed connectivity between the research community and enterprise, public policy, and civic society. These programmes offer researchers a broader perspective on pathways outside of academia and an opportunity to build valuable networks and apply their skills and knowledge across sectors.

The recent reforms and growth in numbers enrolling in apprenticeships demonstrate that these programmes have become an increasingly attractive option for learners. The opportunity to engage in work based learning offers learners an insight into the work environment at an early stage and the practical skills needed to ease the transition to established employment.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs Annual Report for 2021<sup>22</sup> maps skills needs across various sectors against key policy targets. Skillnet Ireland's *Seeking Safe Spaces* report<sup>23</sup> holds data on recent graduates by industry and their perception of how well their skills match job requirements. Further evidence on workplace transitions can be found in Sections 6 & 7.

### 4.3.2 International transitions

International transitions out of the tertiary system cover employment or educational opportunities outside of Ireland.

Educational mobility opportunities are often facilitated through the Erasmus+ programme, which offers Irish students the ability to study in institutions across Europe. According to data from the Erasmus+

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.skillsireland.ie/all-publications/2021/design-skills-implementation-group-year-in-review-2020-2021.html>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.skillnetireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ICBE-Research-Report\\_Graduate-Transitions-into-a-digitally-transformed-workplace.pdf](https://www.skillnetireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ICBE-Research-Report_Graduate-Transitions-into-a-digitally-transformed-workplace.pdf)

Annual Report 2021<sup>24</sup> roughly 5,000 learners and staff moved from Ireland to study abroad. The SFI-NSF Student Mobility Programme provides PhD students in Ireland with the opportunity to collaborate on research projects in laboratories in the United States of America. The benefits of participation in such programmes is highlighted in the Eurostudent VII Synopsis of Indicators 2018-2021<sup>25</sup> which notes that “*Students with mobility experience feel their programme prepares them better for the international labour market.*”

The HEA’s Graduate Outcomes survey<sup>26</sup> collects data on Irish graduate movement abroad, with roughly 6% securing international employment in 2021. In addition, SFI collects data on the destinations of researchers on SFI-funded teams<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff16650b-7b6e-11ed-9887-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.eurostudent.eu/download\\_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT\\_VII\\_Synopsis\\_of\\_Indicators.pdf](https://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT_VII_Synopsis_of_Indicators.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://hea.ie/statistics/information-for-institutions/graduate-outcomes-survey/>

<sup>27</sup> SFI Research on the R&D System - Analysis of destinations of researchers on SFI-funded teams (Not published)

## 5 Evidence base

### 5.1 Inputs – Policy intervention

The following sections form the evidence base for data/research on transitions, aligned to key strategies for the sector. The Inputs listed represent policy interventions to support pathways into, across and out of the tertiary sector. Research and analysis listed in the outputs and outcomes grids include information on the quantitative and qualitative impacts related to these objectives.

Theme	Policy intervention
Transitions into the system	<p><u>Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Key Deliverable 10: Apprenticeship will be visible and will be recognised by learners and influencers (parents, friends and family and career guidance professionals) as an attractive route to qualifications and a career</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Future FET: Transforming Learning (2020-2024)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic Priority: Creating Pathways: Pathways from School to FET</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategic Priority: Creating Pathways: Facilitating Lifelong Pathways</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3: Innovation and Agility (2019-)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Human Capital Initiative</i></li> </ul> <p><u>International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic Priority 2: Internationally oriented, globally competitive institutions</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Ireland's National Skills Strategy (2016-2025)</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Objective 4 - People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Pathways to Work 2021-2025</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Working for Jobseeker</i></li> </ul> <p><u>SOLAS Green Skills for FET 2021-2030</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Objective 3: Green Skills for Careers</i></li> </ul>
Transitions within the system	<p><u>Future FET: Transforming Learning (2020-2024)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic Priority: Creating Pathways: Pathways to/from HE</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Impact 2030</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pillar Four Flagship Initiatives</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Progressing A Unified Tertiary System for Learning, Skills and Knowledge (2022-)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Objective 1 – Learning and Development opportunities</i></li> </ul>



## 5.2 Outputs – Quantitative measures

The following lists evidence related to quantitative outputs of transition activity. Outputs tend to represent what is produced by a policy/initiative. Outputs assist in determining long-term targets. In this context, outputs are indicators, data on movements, and performance updates in the form of annual reports etc.

### 5.2.1 Transitions into the system

Theme	Existing Work
Second Level to Tertiary Education	DFHERIS/DoE (2023) - <a href="#">Education Indicators for Ireland</a> HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Access our Data - Students</a> OECD (2021) - <a href="#">DIGITAL EDUCATION OUTLOOK 2021</a> OECD (2021) – <a href="#">Skills Outlook 2021: Ireland</a>

<p>New Entrants – Adult Learners</p>	<p>AONTAS (2021) - <a href="#"><u>National further education and training (FET) learner forum 2020/2021 - Learner report</u></a></p> <p>Department of Education (2020) - <a href="#"><u>National Training Fund Expenditure Report 2019</u></a></p> <p>DFHERIS/DoE (2023) - <a href="#"><u>Education Indicators for Ireland</u></a></p> <p>Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (2021) - <a href="#"><u>Public Service Performance Report</u></a> - Springboard targets for enrolments</p> <p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#"><u>Access our Data - Students</u></a></p> <p>HEA (2021) – <a href="#"><u>Key Facts &amp; Figures</u></a></p> <p>HEA/Indecon (2021) – <a href="#"><u>Mature Student Participation in HE (2021)</u></a></p> <p>OECD (2021) – <a href="#"><u>Participation in Further Education and Training (FET) funded by SOLAS, by Labour Force status, 2019</u></a></p> <p>Skillnet (2021) – <a href="#"><u>Transforming Business Through Talent</u></a></p> <p>SOLAS (2022) – <a href="#"><u>Community Education in FET: A study of Community Education in Ireland</u></a></p> <p>SOLAS (2020) – <a href="#"><u>FET in Numbers 2019: Lifelong Learning</u></a></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) - <a href="#"><u>FET System Focus Report 2021 on Lifelong Learning</u></a></p> <p>SOLAS - National Lifelong Learning Report (2022)</p> <p>SOLAS (2021) - <a href="#"><u>National Skills Bulletin 2021</u></a></p>
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International	<p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Access our Data - Students</a></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Research Info-Byte – Barriers to Employment and Further Study</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) - <a href="#">This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) – <a href="#">Non-Irish Nationals in FET</a></p> <p>SFI – <a href="#">Annual Research Outputs (nationality of SFI-funded researchers)</a></p> <p><b><u>Other</u></b></p> <p>CSO (2023) – <a href="#">Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland</a></p> <p>Erasmus+ (2022) - <a href="#">Erasmus+ in Ireland in 2021</a></p> <p>European Commission (2022)- <a href="#">Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021</a></p> <p>OECD (2022) - <a href="#">Education at a Glance</a></p> <p>ESRI (2022) - <a href="#">Engagement of international students at Irish Higher Education institutions</a></p> <p>ICOS (2021) – <a href="#">International Student Report 2021</a></p> <p>National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2021) – <a href="#">Transitions of International Students into Higher Education in Ireland</a></p>
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### 5.2.2 Transitions within the system

Theme	Existing Work
FET-HE	DFHERIS/DoE (2023) - <a href="#">Education Indicators for Ireland</a>

	<p>SOLAS (2022) – FET Learner Outcomes: Healthcare Learners</p> <p>SOLAS (2020) – <u>FET Learner Outcomes: Post-Leaving Certificate</u></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) - This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</p> <p>SOLAS (2022-2024) - <u>Transforming Learning Strategic Performance Agreements</u></p> <p>SOLAS (2022) – <u>Transforming Learning: Strategic Performance Agreement Annual Progress Report 2022</u></p> <p>Transition Reform WG (2020) - Resource C: Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) Process across HEIs</p> <p>Transitions Reform WG (2020): Resource D – PLC links to HEIS</p> <p>Transitions Reform WG (2020): Resource E: Overview of FET Programmes</p> <p>Transition (2020) - Transitions Reform Working Paper – June 2020 Resource</p>
HE-Research	<p>CSO (2022) – <u>Job vacancies data</u></p> <p>DFHERIS (2021) - <u>Higher Education Research &amp; Development Survey 2018-2019</u></p> <p><u>DFHERIS - R&amp;D Budget 2020-21</u></p> <p>HEA (2020) – <u>A Study of Transition in Higher Education</u></p> <p>HEA (2023) – <u>Completion Reports</u></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <u>Graduate Outcomes</u></p> <p>HEA (2022) - <u>Higher Education System Performance: Institutional and System Profiles 2018/19</u></p>

	<p>Health Research Board (Ongoing) – <a href="#">All Funding Schemes</a></p> <p>IRC (2022) – <a href="#">Programme Calls in 2022</a></p> <p>Ireland Education Yearbook (2021) – <a href="#">Select Results from the PGR Student Survey</a></p> <p>OECD (2022) - <a href="#">Education at a Glance</a></p> <p>SFI (Ongoing) – <a href="#">Funding Calls</a></p> <p>SFI – <a href="#">Research Outputs (PhD students funded)</a></p>
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### 5.2.3 Transitions out of the system

Theme	Existing Work
Workplace	<p>HEA (2021) – <a href="#">Key Facts &amp; Figures</a></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Graduate Outcomes - Class of 2021</a></p> <p>HEA (2023) – Info Bytes: <a href="#">barriers to employment and further study</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2019) - <a href="#">Irish National Employer Survey 2019</a></p>
International	<p>EURIreland (2021) – <a href="#">Numbers of Staff and Students on mobility to Partner countries grew by 48%</a></p> <p>European Commission (2022) - <a href="#">Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021</a></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Graduate Outcomes 2021</a></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <a href="#">Graduate Outcomes Survey – data and results</a></p>

	SFI - Research on the R&D System - Analysis of destinations of researchers on SFI-funded teams
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## 5.3 Outcomes – Added value

The following section establishes the evidence base for outcomes of transition movements. Outcomes represent the added value or impact of a particular action/policy. In this context, outcomes are reviews of policy/system effectiveness, which can come in the form of assessing its impact or through surveying participants.

### 5.3.1 Transitions into the system

Theme	Existing Work
Second Level to Tertiary Education	<p>ESRI (2022) - <u>a north-south comparison of education and training systems: lessons for policy</u></p> <p>Eurostudent VII (2021) – <u>Flexible Pathways into and within Higher Education</u></p> <p>EUROSTUDENT VII (2021) - <u>Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</u></p> <p>Indecon/DFHERIS (2022) - <u>Review of the Student Grant Scheme</u></p> <p>Indecon/DoE (2019) - <u>Review of Career Guidance</u></p> <p>National Forum for the Enhancement of T&amp;L(2015) - Transition from second level and further education to higher education</p>

<p>New Entrants Adult Learners</p>	<p>- AONTAS (2021) - <u>The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Irish Community Education Sector</u></p> <p>European Commission (2021) - <u>A European approach to micro-credentials</u></p> <p>Eurostudent VII (2021) – <u>Flexible Pathways into and within Higher Ed</u></p> <p>EUROSTUDENT VII (2021) - <u>Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</u></p> <p>HEA (2021) – <u>Study Of Mature Student Participation In Higher Education</u></p> <p>Indecon (2022) - <u>Review of the Student Grant Scheme</u></p> <p>OECD (2021) - <u>Quality and value of micro-credentials in higher education: Preparing for the future</u></p> <p>OECD (2019) - <u>Skills Strategy 2019</u></p> <p>QQI (2021) - <u>Early exploration into Micro-credentials in Higher Education, 2014–2020</u></p> <p>QQI (2021) – <u>Green Paper on the Qualifications System</u></p> <p>QQI (2021) - <u>Technical Paper on the Qualifications System</u></p> <p>Skillnet Ireland (2021) – <u>A Micro-Credential Roadmap: Currency, Cohesion and Consistency</u></p> <p>Skillnet Ireland (2020) – <u>Micro-Credentials: An Evolving Ecosystem</u></p> <p>SOLAS (2022) - <u>Shifting Sands: Navigating the patterns emerging in the Irish labour market post-COVID-19</u></p>
<p>International</p>	<p>European Union (2022) - <u>Study on mobility flows of researchers in the context of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions</u></p> <p>EUROSTUDENT VII (2021) - <u>Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</u></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) – <u>Non-Irish Nationals in FET</u></p>



	SOLAS (2021) - <a href="#">This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</a>
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### 5.3.2 Transitions within the system

Theme	Existing Work
FET-HE	<p>HEA (2023) - <a href="#">An Analysis of Non-Progression Rates in Irish Higher Education Institutions – Overview and Key Findings</a></p> <p>Indecon (2021) - <a href="#">Increasing the sustainability of Higher and Further Education provision in Ireland</a></p> <p>Indecon (2019) - <a href="#">Review of Career Guidance</a></p> <p>Indecon (2022) - <a href="#">Review of the Student Grant Scheme</a></p> <p>NFETL (2016) - <a href="#">Transition from Further Education and Training to Higher Education</a></p> <p>NFETL (2015) - <a href="#">Transition from Second Level and Further Education to Higher Education</a></p> <p>QQI (2022) - <a href="#">Evaluation of the Comparability of the Advanced Certificate and Higher Certificate Qualifications</a></p> <p>QQI (2021) – <a href="#">Green Paper on the Qualifications System</a></p> <p>QQI (2021) - <a href="#">Technical Paper on the Qualifications System</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2022) - <a href="#">FET Learner Outcomes – Early Leavers</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2022) – <a href="#">FET Learner Outcomes: Healthcare Learners</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2020) – <a href="#">FET Learner Outcomes: Post-Leaving Certificate</a></p> <p>SOLAS (2021) - <a href="#">This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</a></p>

HE-Research	<p>Eurostudent VII (2021) – <u>Flexible Pathways into and within Higher Education</u></p> <p>HEA (2022) - <u>An Analysis of Non-Progression Rates in Irish Higher Education Institutions – Overview and Key Findings</u></p> <p>HEA/CSO (2022) – <u>Higher Education Outcomes – Graduation Years 2010-2019</u></p> <p>HEA/IUA/QQI/THEA (2021) - <u>The National Framework for Doctoral Education in Ireland: Report on its Implementation by Irish Higher Education Institutions</u></p> <p>IRC (2021) - <u>Pre-award Process Review of the IRC Laureate Award</u></p> <p>StudentSurvey.ie (2019) - <u>The Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students</u></p> <p>TUD (2022) - <u>Staying the Course: Factors Affecting the progression of Access Foundation Students at Technological University Dublin</u></p> <p>TUD (2011) - <u>Work Placement in Third-Level Programmes</u></p>
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### 5.3.3 Transitions out of the system

Theme	Existing Work
Workplace	<p>Cedefop (2021) - <u>apprenticeship governance and in-company training: where labour market and education meet</u></p> <p>CSO/DFHERIS – <u>BERD Survey</u></p> <p>EGFSN (2022) - <u>AI Skills: A Preliminary Assessment of the Skills Needed for the Deployment, Management and Regulation of Artificial Intelligence</u></p> <p>EU (2022) – <u>Chameleons Project</u></p>

	<p>EU Horizon (2021) - <u>Interdisciplinary and intersectoral doctoral education designed to improve graduate employability</u></p> <p>EUA (2020) - <u>Tracking the careers of doctorate holders</u></p> <p>HEA (2022) – <u>Graduate Outcomes: Employment Outcomes for Doctoral Graduates</u></p> <p>HEA/QQI (2021) - <u>The National Framework for Doctoral Education in Ireland: Report on its Implementation by Irish Higher Education Institutions</u></p> <p>HEA/SOLAS (2019) – <u>Irish National Employer Survey</u></p> <p>Skillnet (2021) – <u>Seeking Safe Spaces: Graduate Transitions into a Digitally Transformed Workplace</u></p> <p>StudentSurvey.ie (2022) – <u>Irish Survey of Student Engagement National Report 2022</u></p> <p>SFI - Research on the R&amp;D System - Analysis of destinations of researchers on SFI-funded teams</p> <p>SOLAS (2022) - <u>Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2022</u></p>
International	EUROSTUDENT VII - <u>Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</u>

## **Appendix 1 DFHERIS Sectoral Research and Evaluation Group Terms of Reference**

The Sectoral Research and Evaluation Group will build on the strong knowledge exchange collaborations between the Department and its agencies and support dissemination of, and collaboration on, research and evaluation activity across the sector. Specifically, the group will:

- Provide an information sharing forum for sectoral research, evaluation work, and data availability, supported through the development of an annual register of work plans, including recent or upcoming publications, research, and analysis from across the tertiary education and research sector.
- Explore innovative approaches to informing the research agenda including new methods of stakeholder engagement.
- Consider thematic areas of focus, aligned to DFHERIS strategic priorities, around which a programme of engagement and dissemination activities will be developed to broaden awareness of system activity and outcomes from across the tertiary education and research sector.
- Identify opportunities for further collaborative activity, potential areas of overlap, and/or gaps in evaluation and research activity which may need to be addressed to provide a comprehensive view of activity and outcomes across the sector.
- Identify barriers to ongoing and planned research and evaluation work across the sector, and propose a programme of solutions to address these barriers.
- Identify key target audience(s) for the dissemination of learnings and information sharing.
- Explore further communication channels to raise awareness of agency research and evaluation activity, including – for example - circulation of promotional materials on publications or analysis linked to the suite of activities underway

## **Appendix 2 DFHERIS Sectoral Research and Evaluation Group Membership**

Evidence for Policy Unit, DFHERIS

Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Irish Research Council (IRC)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

Skillnet Ireland (SI)

SOLAS

From April 2023

National Apprenticeship Office (NAO)

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)

## Appendix 3 Summary of transitions evidence

Transitions from							Transition to		
	FET	HE	Research	International	Workplace				
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• C3 GR DoE/DFHERS Education Indicators</li><li>• DoE/DFHERS Education Indicators</li><li>• ESRI - a north-south comparison of education and training systems:</li><li>• EUROSTUDENT VI Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</li><li>• Indecon/DFHERS - Review of the Student Grant Scheme</li><li>• Indecon/DoE - Review of Career Guidance</li><li>• NFT&amp;L - Transition from Second Level and Further Education to Higher Education</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DoE/DFHERS Education Indicators</li><li>• ESRI - a north-south comparison of education and training systems</li><li>• EUROSTUDENT VII Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</li><li>• Indecon/DFHERS - Review of the Student Grant Scheme</li><li>• Indecon/DoE - Review of Career Guidance</li><li>• NFT&amp;L - transition from second level and further education to higher education</li><li>• NFTL - Transition from FET to HE</li></ul>	NA	Out of scope	Outside scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cedefop - Apprenticeship Governance and In-company Training: Where Labour Market and Education Meet</li><li>• Irish National Employer Survey 2019;</li><li>• FET facts and Figures;</li><li>• FET In Focus</li></ul>			
FET	Limited evidence of transitions in FET from people who have previously acquired a FET degree (FET Facts and Figures 2020) though nothing on direct course movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DFHERS/DoE - Education Indicators for Ireland</li><li>• SOLAS – FET Learner Outcomes series (Section 6)</li><li>• SOLAS - This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</li><li>• Transitions Reform Working Paper and Resources</li><li>• NFTL - Transition from FET to HE</li><li>• HEA - An Analysis of Non-Progression Rates in Irish HE</li><li>• Indecon - Review of Career Guidance</li><li>• Indecon - Review of the Student Grant Scheme</li><li>• QQI - Evaluation of the Comparability of the Advanced Certificate and Higher Certificate Qualifications</li></ul>	NA	Erasmus+ in Ireland in 2021 data					
HE	Limited. Instances of transitions into FET from learners who have previously acquired a HE degree (FET Facts and Figures 2020) , though little on direct transitions from HE to FET.	HEA Graduate Outcomes (Further study outcomes data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DFHERS - Higher Education Research &amp; Development Survey 2018-2019</li><li>• Eurostudent VI – Flexible Pathways into and within Higher Education</li><li>• HEA Employment Outcomes for Doctoral Graduates 2022</li><li>• HEA/CSO – Higher Education Outcomes – Graduation Years 2010-2019</li><li>• HEA/IUA/QQI/HEA - The National Framework for Doctoral Education in Ireland: Report on its Implementation by Irish Higher Education Institutions</li><li>• OECD Education at a Glance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HEA – Graduate Outcomes 2021</li><li>• HEA – Graduate Outcomes Survey – data and results</li><li>• EURIreland – Numbers of Staff and Students on mobility to Partner countries</li><li>• EUROSTUDENT VII Synopsis of Indicators 2018-2021</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HEA – Graduate Outcomes - Class of 2021</li><li>• HEA – Key Facts &amp; Figures</li><li>• Irish National Employer Survey 2019</li></ul>			
Research	Limited and may be an area for further exploration as Unified Tertiary System actions roll out.	Evidence limited. Upcoming review of Human Capital Initiative, and in particular activity under Pillar 1 may offer information on transitions in this area.	NA	HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey Class of 2018.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSO/DFHERS – BERQ Survey</li><li>• EU – Chameleons Project</li><li>• EU Horizon - Interdisciplinary and intersectoral doctoral education designed to improve graduate employability</li><li>• EUA - Tracking the careers of doctorate holders</li><li>• HEA/QQI - The National Framework for Doctoral Education in Ireland: Report on its Implementation by Irish HEIs</li></ul>				
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSO – Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland</li><li>• Erasmus+ - Erasmus+ in Ireland in 2021</li><li>• European Commission - Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021</li><li>• SOLAS - This is FET Facts and Figures 2020</li><li>• SOLAS – Non-Irish Nationals in FET</li><li>• OECD's Education at a Glance (October 2022)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Erasmus+ - Erasmus+ in Ireland in 2021</li><li>• European Commission - Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021</li><li>• HEA – Access our Data - Students</li><li>• HEA – Research Info-Byte – Barriers to Employment and Further Study</li><li>• IOS – International Student Report 2021</li><li>• OECD's Education at a Glance (October 2022)</li></ul>	IOS International Students Survey Erasmus+ in Ireland in 2021 details student movements but not granular	Out of scope	Out of scope				
Adult Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AONTAS - National FET Learner Forum 2020/2021 report</li><li>• CSO Adult Education Survey</li><li>• EUROSTUDENT VI Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</li><li>• OECD – Participation in FET funded by SOLAS, by Labour Force status, 2019</li><li>• Skillnet – A Micro-Credential Roadmap: Currency, Cohesion and Consistency</li><li>• Skillnet – Micro-Credentials: An Evolving Ecosystem</li><li>• SOLAS – Community Education in FET: A study of Community Education in Ireland</li><li>• SOLAS National Lifelong Learning Report (2022)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSO Adult Education Survey</li><li>• DFHERS/DoE - Education Indicators for Ireland</li><li>• European Commission - A European approach to micro-credentials- EUROSTUDENT VII Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021</li><li>• HEA – Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher Education</li><li>• OECD - Quality and value of micro-credentials in higher education: Preparing for the future</li><li>• QQI - Early exploration into Micro-credentials in Higher Education, 2014–2020</li><li>• Skillnet – A Micro-Credential Roadmap: Currency, Cohesion and Consistency</li><li>• Skillnet – Micro-Credentials: An Evolving Ecosystem</li></ul>	HEA Key Facts and Figures	Out of scope	Out of scope				