



National Skills Council

National Skills Council

Statement of Priorities Winter 2019

In 2019, the National Skills Council, within its remit to advise on the prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs, discussed the development of the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) and the question of ensuring a continued Regional Focus in Responses to Skills Needs.

The Council recognises that the significant investment through the HCI will help to develop new undergraduate places, new conversion courses for graduates to meet identified areas of skills needs in our modern workforce and drive agility and innovation across Higher Education.

The Council recognises that there are a number of different strategies in place across Government that have a Regional focus. These include Project Ireland 2040, Future Jobs Ireland, Regional Action Plans and the Action Plan for Education, all of which amongst other aims, contain an ambition to ensure a continued Regional Focus in Responses to Skills Needs.

Therefore, the Council underlines the importance of and declares the following to be the key priorities for the education and training system in these areas:

Human Capital Initiative:

- The primary objective of the Human Capital Initiative is to fund additional capacity across the higher education sector and to use that investment to meet priority skill needs for the future.
- There is a need to prioritise skills needs for the economy, particularly in high-productivity growth sectors
- Mitigating Brexit risks continues to be a priority.

- Promoting regional development and NDP/Project 2040 Objectives
- Innovation and reform in programme provision is crucial to meet existing and future skills needs.
- Responding to digitalisation and the future world of work is challenging and will ultimately affect all sectors of the economy.
- There is the need for continued strengthening of relationships with enterprise and addressing identified future skills needs
- There should be a continued focus on the provision of upskilling and reskilling through lifelong learning programmes.
- Governance and monitoring will be key requirements of the HCI and the Council looks forward to progress made under the HCI over the coming years.

Regional Focus in Responses to Skills Needs:

- The education and training system needs to continue to be flexible, agile and responsive to existing and future skills needs of society and the economy across all regions.
- Planning across all Departments and agencies should be aligned with the National Development Plan
- Employment is the driver of population in all regions and there should be a strong focus on digital and transversal skills in all regions
- Throughout the regions, there is a need to reskill/upskill sectors affected by decarbonisation and there is a need to support those employees who need to transition to new sectors in order to remain employable.
- The ongoing review of apprenticeship should needs to consider how to incentivise employers to become involved with apprenticeship.
- A skilled and healthy workforce is crucial in all sectors of the economy across all regions,
- In all regions, there needs to be a focus on remote working and, flexible hours in order to attract returners to the workforce.
- The implementation of the HCI is an opportunity to introduce more flexibility in the HE sector across all of the regions.

ENDS