



REVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING IN IRELAND DECEMBER 2013

Contents	Page
Executive Summary	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	22
The Review	22
Background issues paper	24
Public Consultation	24
Submissions	25
The Report	25
Chapter 2 Background Context	27
Tomorrow's Skills - Towards a National Skills Strategy 2007	27
National Skills Bulletin 2013	28
Employment and Unemployment	32
OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies	34
Enterprise Size in Ireland	35
Pathways to Work 2013	37
Action Plan for Jobs 2013	38
Learning for Jobs – OECD Review of Vocational Training in Ireland 2010	39
A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed 2013	40
Establishment of Education and Training Boards	42
Establishment of SOLAS	42
National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030	42
Review of Apprenticeship in England	45
Review of Apprenticeship in Northern Ireland	47
OECD Note on Quality Apprenticeship for the G20 Task Force on Employment	47
European Alliance for Apprenticeship	50
Youth Guarantee	52
Conclusions	53
Chapter 3	
Existing Apprenticeships and Other Further Education and Training Programmes	54
Legislative base	54
Operation of the current apprenticeship programme	56
Strengths and weaknesses	58
Costs of apprenticeships	60
International comparison of apprentice pay	62
Recruitment levels	65
Future Demand Forecasts for existing trades	66

Background Issues paper	68
Delivery models	68
Other further education and training programmes	69
Conclusions	72
Chapter 4 Issues Raised in the Submissions	73
Submissions received	73
Legislation	74
Governance	75
Equity	76
Levels of provision	77
Planning and control of numbers of apprenticeships	78
Progression	79
Recruitment	80
Entry levels	80
Curriculum	81
Transversal skills	81
Proposals in regard to existing apprenticeship programmes	82
Scope for expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations	84
Assessment	84
Accreditation of Prior Learning	85
Branding and Awareness Measures	85
Funding	85
Incentives for employers to recruit	88
Licence to Practice	89
Conclusions	89
Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Review Group	90
Benefits of apprenticeship	90
Levels of apprenticeship	92
Definition of an apprenticeship	94
Legislation	95
Governance	97
Functions of the Apprenticeship Council	98
Role of SOLAS	99
Role of the Higher Education Authority	101
Role of Education and Training Boards	102
Role of higher education institutions	103
Role of Quality and Qualifications Ireland	105
How it might work – inviting proposals	105
How it might work – progressing proposals	106
Recommendations regarding existing apprenticeships	108
Scope for expansion into new occupations	110
Recommendations regarding apprenticeship in new occupations	112

Entry Levels	112
Pre-apprenticeship programmes	112
Curricula	113
Assessment	113
Approval of employers	114
Learner recruitment and registration	114
Planning and control of numbers	115
Training abroad	115
Progression	116
Incentives for Employers	116
Gaps in the system	117
Funding of Education and Training Boards and higher education institutions	118
Feedback Mechanism	118
Barriers to participation	119
Branding and awareness campaigns	119
Traineeships	121
EU Structural Funds and Resources	126
Next Steps	126
Conclusions	127
Bibliography	128
Abbreviations	130
Appendix 1 Press Release of 19 May 2013	131
Appendix 2 List of organisations who were written to inviting submissions	133
Appendix 3 List of organisations and individuals who made submissions	137
Appendix 4 Organisations which had meetings with the Review Group	139
Appendix 5 Consultation Framework	140

Executive Summary

The review

On 19 May 2013, Ruairi Quinn T.D, Minister for Education and Skills, announced a review of apprenticeship training in Ireland. The terms of reference of the review were

to determine whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted or replaced by an alternative model of vocational education and training for apprentices – taking into account the needs of learners, the needs of employers, the needs of the economy and the need for cost effectiveness into the future.

The Review Group was asked to complete its work before the end of 2013. A Technical Group was also established to provide background evaluative data for the review. To provide a context for the review, a Background Issues Paper ¹was prepared by the Department of Education and Skills and published at www.education.ie in May 2013.

The Review Group wrote directly to 128 bodies on 27 June 2013 seeking submissions. These included education and training institutions, government departments, trade unions, professional bodies, and sectoral and national employer groups with an existing role, or the potential to have a future role, in the delivery of apprenticeships. In addition, a public advertisement was placed in the national newspapers on 28 June 2013 inviting submissions from any other interested parties. Respondents were asked to give views under a range of headings including governance, equity, scope for expansion into new occupations, funding, recruitment, curriculum, assessment, delivery, providers, and impact on the economy.

A total of 69 organisations (there were also 7 additional documents accompanying submissions) made written submissions to the review. A panel of representatives of the Review Group and the Technical Group also met with 25 major organisations with a role, or potential role in apprenticeships in Ireland.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Review Group are set out hereunder. Information on the background context, the existing system and the submissions received is given at the back of the Executive Summary.

¹ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Apprenticeship-Review-%E2%80%93-Background-Issues-Paper.pdf>

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Review Group.

Many countries are newly adopting apprenticeship systems based on dual modes of learning, combining workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom teaching in an education or training setting. The major benefits of these systems are seen as

- promoting better collaboration between enterprises and education and training providers
- ensuring an enterprise led role in the design and assessment of programmes
- improving the competitiveness of companies
- opening up rewarding careers for a large segment of the population
- ensuring that theoretical learning in an education or training institution is strongly grounded in the practical experience of undertaking a real job,
- supplying job ready employees and
- providing an ideal learning mode for those who learn best by doing.

CEDEFOP estimates that by 2020², while all jobs will require higher levels of skill, 50% of them will need medium level skills and 15% will require low level skills. Holzer and Lerman³ have noted in relation to the future skills needs of the US economy, that even in a high tech world some two-thirds of all jobs will be in the mid to low skills range – 44% mid-range and 22% low-range skills.

In framing the architecture for the operation of an expanded apprenticeship system in the years ahead, the Review Group's recommendations are being proposed in the context of the long term strategic needs of the economy in the coming decades. The pace of change in the knowledge society, the need for constant upskilling if businesses are to maintain market share and grow, and the challenge of unemployment, make enhanced links between education and training providers and employers an imperative. A framework is proposed which provides the scope for an expanded range of apprenticeships operating at any level of the national framework of qualifications from Level 5 upwards.

1. Definition of an apprenticeship.

² http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4086_en.pdf

³ America's Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411633_forgottenjobs.pdf

Apprenticeship is a programme of structured education and training which formally combines and alternates learning in the work place with learning in an education or training centre, (a dual system, i.e. a blended combination of on-the-job employer-based training and off-the-job training) whose completion

- prepares the participant for a specific occupation, and
- leads to a qualification nationally recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications at any level from Level 5 upwards.

Every apprentice should be employed under an approved Contract of Apprenticeship for the duration of training. Apprenticeship training should be substantial in depth and duration, and the apprentice should be employed in a real job. For a programme to be classified as an apprenticeship at entry level; it should have a duration of no less than two years. The structure of the programme should provide for more than 50% workplace based learning.

Graduates of apprenticeship programmes should be qualified to work autonomously in a competent, professional and independent capacity in their selected field. Apprenticeships should be open to persons of all age groups above the statutory school leaving age. They are a valued mode of learning both for initial entrants to the labour market and for those who wish to continue upskilling. Apprenticeships must prepare the participant for a new job role.

2. Legislation

Legislation for apprenticeships should be designed as an enabling framework providing for flexible delivery through a variety of modes, and encouraging innovation and speedy adaptation where necessary. It should not require areas of industrial activity for apprenticeship occupations to be individually designated by order placed before the Houses of the Oireachtas, as is the case currently. The legislation should not specify the format of the programme, other than requiring a dual approach of blended on and off the job learning, leading to a nationally recognised qualification and preparing the learner for a specific occupation. The legislation should define an apprentice as a person to whom an approved Contract of Apprenticeship applies. A contract template should be developed by the national authorities for this purpose.

The legislation should maintain the protections for learners with regard to entitlement to pay, which may not be reduced during the off the job training phases; an obligation on the employer to have the capacity to carry out the required training and to release the apprentice for the off the job phases as required; a right of assessors to visit the employer's premises for assessment purposes, and a prohibition on employers accepting fees for recruitment. The

existing legislation should be repealed or amended and replaced by the more flexible framework.

3. Governance

SOLAS should continue to be the national authority with legal responsibility for administration of apprenticeships, while providing for more plural governance arrangements in the future, which will facilitate apprenticeships at both further and higher level. The principle of subsidiarity should apply to operations to the maximum extent feasible, with curriculum development and programme delivery being devolved through SOLAS to Education and Training Boards, or to higher education institutions, depending on the level of the programmes. Apprenticeships should be enterprise led, with a key role for employers in identifying occupational standards and in shaping the content of the curriculum in collaboration with education and training providers.

An Apprenticeship Council should be established, hosted by SOLAS but involving an equal partnership and close co-operation between SOLAS and the HEA in all aspects of planning and delivery. The Apprenticeship Council should be enterprise led, and the chairperson should be appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Council should report to the Minister.

The Committee should include representation from:

- SOLAS
- the Higher Education Authority
- the Department of Education and Skills
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- representatives of business and trade unions sufficient to ensure an enterprise led approach
- a representative of the further education sector
- a representative of the higher education sector

The Apprenticeship Council should establish sectoral sub-committees as needed. These should include experts, representative bodies for the sectors, professional bodies, trade union and education and training interests.

The apprenticeship system should be integrated into whatever regional structures are developed to facilitate the ongoing co-operation of FE and HE providers with industry in the delivery of education and training programmes. INTREO could also have an important role in these structures.

The main functions of the Apprenticeship Council will be to advise on the design, duration, entry levels, and ongoing provision of apprenticeships in line with

national needs, ensuring optimum quality, efficiency and effectiveness. The Council will advise on the introduction of apprenticeships in new occupations, supported by evidence of sustainable demand, and promote progression pathways. It will advise on numbers of apprenticeship places to be provided in various occupations based on sound labour market intelligence and manpower forecasting, and carry out research, evaluation and data gathering necessary to inform the national programme. The Council will also be responsible for advising on a strategy to assist in providing alternative placements in the event of apprentices being made redundant during training.

SOLAS, working in partnership with the Higher Education Authority, will promote, plan, co-ordinate, fund and monitor the implementation of an enterprise led national apprentice programme at further education level. It will host, with the assistance of the HEA, the operation of the Apprenticeship Council and its sectoral committees.

SOLAS will maintain a national register of apprentices for the purpose of planning and management of overall apprenticeship numbers. This should be based on data transfer from Education and Training Boards and higher education institutions.

SOLAS will maintain a publicly accessible national database of employers approved for apprenticeships, based on data transfer from ETBs.

SOLAS will provide for the devolved operation and management of further education level apprenticeship provision through ETBs ensuring a co-ordinated approach across further and higher education. This will include commissioning of scoping studies, curriculum development, funding, programme delivery and quality support, working through education and training boards. The HEA will undertake similar functions insofar as devolved implementation of higher level apprenticeship programmes is concerned, working through higher education institutions. Both the HEA and SOLAS will work closely together to ensure the gathering of labour market intelligence, manpower forecasting, statistical analysis and research and evaluation necessary for the operation of the national programme. Scoping studies and curriculum development functions will be undertaken in a manner which ensures the full input and engagement of employers, trade unions, education and training providers and professional bodies in the process.

All programmes will be subject to the quality assurance arrangements of QQI, and will operate to consistent national standards. SOLAS will be responsible for the lead role in the funding and continued operation of the existing apprenticeship

programmes for a transition period, with a view to ensuring their integration into the new governance and operational arrangements in the longer term.

The report sets out a possible model to the operation of a new system, but the details will need to be discussed further with interested parties.

A ring-fenced fund should be established to promote the development and operation of apprenticeships in new occupational areas. The Apprenticeship Council should invite proposals from consortia of industries/education/training providers. The request would set out the criteria governing an apprenticeship and include a sustainability test. The sustainability test would require proposers to show the numbers to be trained, the evidence of labour market need, the extent to which the proposers are representative of the industry, future demand, and demonstrate the willingness of employers to recruit and meet the relevant costs associated with apprenticeship. A scoping study may be needed to provide additional information to the Apprenticeship Council, to advise on entry levels, and to determine the detailed occupational standards which should underpin awards. Once the Council has approved a programme in principle, curriculum development (through an enterprise led process), funding and programme delivery should fall to be delivered through the respective structures of SOLAS and ETBs, or HEA and higher education institutions, depending on the level of the programme.

4. Recommendations regarding existing apprenticeship programmes

The Review Group recommends that:

- the curriculum for each family of trades is reviewed and updated as a matter of urgency. Based on the updated learning outcomes needed for each occupation, the programme should be placed at an appropriate level within the national framework of qualifications, and the duration and programme structure should be that deemed necessary to meet those learning outcomes
- programmes should provide for the appropriate integration of transversal skills, particularly literacy, numeracy, maths, science and ICT. They should be designed to equip the participant for progression to the next level of the national framework of qualifications
- the minimum entry levels needed to complete each programme successfully should be reviewed, while ensuring appropriate pre-apprenticeship programmes are made available for those unable to meet the entry requirements

- curriculum review should be carried out on the basis of families of trades, ensuring that core common modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for additional specialised modules that focus on particular occupational requirements
- as with apprenticeships in new areas, an upper and lower ceiling on recruitment levels should be examined, so that programmes are tailored to labour market needs, while avoiding future skill shortages. The State should not fund apprenticeship costs above the agreed upper ceiling for recruitment.
- opportunities for progression should be strengthened, made more transparent and well publicised. The green economy, heritage protection, retro-fitting, sustainable energy, languages and cross disciplinary skills are all areas where progression options could be developed. A master craftsman qualification should also be considered.

It is recommended that funding for existing programmes be ring-fenced and the existing apprenticeship programmes should continue until they are adapted as part of the review mentioned above. Consideration should be given to contracting out studies on curriculum review to ETBs or HEIs so that a large number of programmes can be reviewed simultaneously. SOLAS should continue to play the lead role in operating the existing programmes for a transition phase, with a view to them being integrated into the new operational arrangements described above as soon as possible thereafter.

5. Scope for expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations.

The Review Group concludes that there is significant scope to expand apprenticeships into a wide range of business sectors such as ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sport and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors. Such programmes will require a strong commitment from employers to identifying occupational needs, recruitment and payment of apprentices, and joint collaboration with education and training providers in programme delivery.

Employer led consortia should identify the occupations that are considered by them to be suitable for apprenticeships and make proposals to the Apprenticeship Council for funding.

A more flexible framework should be provided for the future, enabling apprenticeships to be delivered in a variety of formats at a range of levels across the national framework of qualifications. Care should be taken to pilot

approaches and share best practice, and to have regard to international standards in the occupations concerned. All programmes should be designed to prepare the participant for progression.

Ensuring that large employers, particularly multi-nationals, participate in the new programme will be a critical success factor. Where new programmes are feasible and sustainable, the Review Group recommends that the off-the-job elements are funded by the State. It is recommended that the on-the-job costs should be borne by the employer, together with the apprentice's wage costs for the entire duration, to the maximum extent feasible.

The rate of payment to be made to apprentices in new occupational areas should be determined by individual employers, and the Apprenticeship Council should have no role in this.

6. Learner Recruitment and Registration

Recruitment should continue to be the responsibility of employers. To improve access, a publicly accessible database of employers approved for the purpose of apprenticeship should be made available by SOLAS.

Employers must apply to their ETB for (a) approval to be included on the Register of Employers and (b) approval to recruit individual apprentices. The latter is to ensure that recruitment only occurs to an agreed ceiling for various occupations. Once approval to recruit has been given, apprentices will be registered by their employer with the relevant ETB or higher education institution.

Electronic notification will be made by the ETB or HEI to SOLAS when an applicant has been enrolled, and when each phase of their education and training has started and has been completed. In this way, the upper and lower ceilings for provision can be monitored and trends fed back to the Apprenticeship Council

7. Curricula

Curriculum development should occur on the basis of families of occupations, ensuring that core common modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for additional specialised modules which focus on particular occupational requirements. New programmes should not be unduly narrow or specialised, but be designed to prepare participants for broadly based sustainable and durable careers.

Curricula, based on occupational standards identified by employers, will include key transversal skills such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, communications, mathematics, science, problem solving, critical thinking,

time management, research and evaluation, and the ability to apply learning in new contexts.

All programmes should be designed to equip apprentices for progression to the next level of the national framework of qualifications. It should be assumed, as a principle, that achievement of an award at a particular level in the national framework of qualifications prepares the learner for entry to the next level, although this does not prevent receiving institutions from applying specific subject requirements for particular disciplines.

Curricula, once approved, should be publicly accessible in succinct format on a database so that all parties, including employers and learners, are clear as to what is required.

While a lead ETB or HEI may be assigned responsibility for curriculum development, they will do so collaboratively providing for the full engagement of other education and training providers, national employer groups, and sectoral and professional bodies. The resulting curriculum will then be applied on a national basis. There should be scope for minor changes (about 10%) of curriculum content from year to year at institutional level based on identified needs. Family of Trades curricula should be formally reviewed and updated at least every five years.

8. Assessment

Assessment arrangements should be streamlined to ensure that the bulk of the administrative burden falls on the education/training provider, with completion of a portfolio in the workplace, and with a final competence determination mechanism at the end of the programme. Assessment should comply with QQI requirements and be subject to external joint authentication by members drawn from a panel of enterprise and education/training providers.

At key stages during the programme, there should be opportunities for apprentices to gain formally documented credits certified by the relevant awarding body, and supported by relevant information on the learning outcomes achieved. A final award will apply only when the apprenticeship has been successfully completed.

Awards should lead to the same award titles as at present. More detailed information on the award, e.g. the grades achieved, should be provided, together with a certificate or diploma supplement, as appropriate. This will assist apprentices moving abroad or to other programmes, provide greater recognition for higher levels of achievement, and provide more information for employers, as is the norm with other awards under the National Framework.

9. Progression

While it is clear that many learners progress to degree level programmes from apprenticeships, particularly within the Institute of Technology sector, progression opportunities need to be made far more transparent for the future. It is recommended that a working group of higher education institutions and the QQI should be established to map existing apprenticeship programmes and to establish streamlined progression pathways from these programmes, ensuring appropriate mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and for exemptions, where relevant.

10. Incentives for employers

Consideration should be given to providing incentives for employers in the form of subsidies, or PRSI or tax relief, to encourage them to recruit hard to reach groups, such as persons with low skills, those who have been unemployed for prolonged periods, and those with disabilities.

If incentives are to be paid to employers, consideration should be given to holding back a proportion, to be paid based on successful completions. The feasibility of holding back a proportion of funding to ETBs and HEIs should also be examined, to allow for payment based on results.

11. Feedback mechanisms

HEIs and ETBs should gather evaluative feedback on an annual basis from employers participating in apprenticeship programmes, and from learners completing apprenticeship programmes. The feedback should inform future funding.

12. Labour market intelligence, statistics and evaluation.

The proposals in the report envisage that the capacity for engaging with employers, developing labour market intelligence, manpower forecasting, research and evaluation, and gathering systematic data on programme outcomes will need to be significantly strengthened at both further and higher education level to ensure that investment is targeted appropriately.

13. Branding and Awareness campaigns.

Any expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations should maintain and enhance a high quality standing for the programme. For such an expansion to be achieved, it is important that there is a significant shift in public perception of the value of apprenticeships and vocational education and training. This will not occur unless apprenticeships are seen as an integral part of the education and training system and FE apprenticeships facilitate well publicised

transparent progression routes into higher education. Sustained long term awareness campaigns will be necessary to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to learners, parents, employer, education and training institutions, and guidance staff.

It is recommended that all activities under the new programme should operate under the banner of the National Apprenticeship Programme, using the logos of both SOLAS and HEA. Alternatively the advice of a PR firm could be sought as to how best to brand the new approach. It is important that the new brand image conveys a strong enterprise led commitment, nationally recognised qualifications, and the strength of a unified FE/HE approach.

In keeping with the approach under the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the awareness campaigns could include ambassadors and champions, recruitment fairs, advertising, information nights for parents and students, visits to and from employers, and the chance for young people to engage in taster programmes. Continued support for the National and World Skills apprenticeship competitions should enhance awareness of apprenticeship and benchmark Irish apprenticeship provision both internally and internationally.

14. Traineeships.

There are various forms of traineeship and internship which may or may not lead to a formal qualification and the payment of a wage. They differ from apprenticeships in their duration and intensity, and the absence of a formal Contract of Apprenticeship where the apprentice is for most purposes an employee and is paid a wage.

While traineeships and other forms of work based learning have their strengths, it is in Ireland's interests to maintain and develop a strong apprenticeship programme, building on the success of the current system.

The system architecture, recommendations and processes in this report are designed to progress other work based learning programmes. Closer engagement between employers and education and training providers will be an imperative at all levels of the education and training system in the years ahead, if ongoing quality and relevance is to be assured.

15. EU Structural Funds and Resources

Ireland should fully capitalise on the availability of EU Structural Funds and Youth Guarantee funds to support the developments advocated in this report, learning from and contributing to best practice in Europe.

Some of the changes advocated in this Report can be achieved through a re-design of existing programmes. However, if Ireland is serious about improving the scale and quality of its apprenticeship system, a level of investment will be required to ensure effective structures, well targeted programmes, and careful monitoring of outcomes. While the constraints on exchequer spending must be taken account of, investment in high quality apprenticeships has the potential to reduce expenditure in other areas such as social welfare, as well as boosting competitiveness and growth.

16. Next Steps

The Review Group believes that the framework and recommendations set out in this Report provide a workable model for a well-functioning and significantly expanded apprenticeship system which will serve Ireland's future needs. It is not intended that the approach will be prescriptive, but rather that it will enable an enterprise led shared service to be provided embracing further and higher education. The proposals will need to be discussed further with stakeholders to examine how implementation can be progressed as quickly as possible.

Background context

Current skills shortages are being experienced in science, engineering, ICT, financial services, purchasing, marketing, sales and business analysis/statistics, international supply chain management, tool making, CNC machining, clerical and language skills.

Unemployment currently stands at 13.0%, and the youth unemployment is 26.6%.

The OECD Review of Vocational Training in Ireland (2010)⁴ recommended that apprenticeship should be reviewed to improve its efficiency and fairness, extensive use of workplace training should be built into all VET programmes, and there should be a rigorous approach to systematic data gathering and evaluation, and more research on VET should be pursued. The Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed (2013)⁵ echoes these recommendations, and urges prioritisation of the long term unemployed in admission policies, with due regard to the needs of school leavers and those in employment. In particular the report calls for greater linkages between employers and education and training providers at regional and local level, more robust gathering of labour market intelligence, a greater role for enterprises in

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/44592419.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/A-Strategic-Review-of-Further-Education-and-Training-and-the-Unemployed.pdf>

programme design, extended work placements as part of programme delivery, systematic evaluation of programme outcomes, and utilisation of competitive tendering and payment on results where appropriate.

SOLAS, An tSeirbhis Oideachais Leanunaigh agus Scileanna, was established in October 2013 to co-ordinate and fund a wide range of education and training programmes in the further education sector, working in partnership with the 16 Education and Training Boards.

Changes are also under way in the higher education sector on foot of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030⁶, published in 2011. In May 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills announced proposals⁷ for a reconfiguration of the system, for inter institutional collaboration and system governance, for a new process of strategic dialogue and mission based performance compacts between the HEA and its institutions, and for the development of regional clusters to provide a forum for engagement with industry and community organisations, supporting the development of regional plans. The proposed regional clusters will foster collaboration between higher education institutions, education and training boards and enterprise stakeholders to support an integrated response to labour market needs across further and higher education and training.

As part of the overall strategy, work based learning components are increasingly being included in HE programmes. This is seen as enhancing co-operation between employers and institutions, maintaining curriculum relevance, and providing real exposure to the workplace to ensure job ready graduates who are equipped to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.

Reviews of apprenticeship are under way in England and Northern Ireland. In England the Government has recently announced plans⁸ for a greater role for employers in driving the apprenticeship programme, providing for enterprise led identification of occupational standards, programme design and assessment. The implementation plan envisages channelling funding through employers to enable them to purchase the delivery of programmes, but further examination of this issue is under way before announcing the details of the scheme. Close contact is being maintained between the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic and the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland in the implementation of the apprenticeship reviews, in the interests of ensuring mutual recognition of awards, and portability of qualifications across boundaries.

⁶ http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

⁷ http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/report_to_minister_-_system_configuration_2_0.pdf

⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253073/bis-13-1175-future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-implementation-plan.pdf

At European level, apprenticeship is attracting increasing attention as a means of addressing youth unemployment and promoting a skilled labour force. OECD, the International Labour Organisation and the European Commission have highlighted the importance of apprenticeships in ensuring that employers and education and training providers work closely together, in expanding workplace learning, and in ensuring ongoing relevance and quality in line with labour market needs. It is the countries with strong apprenticeship systems that have the lowest youth unemployment rates.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships⁹ is an agreement between employers and trade unions at European level and the European Commission to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across Europe, particularly in countries with high youth unemployment rates. The Alliance will raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships among employers and learners, promote good practice, support quality, improved partnership between providers, employers and employment services, in company mentoring and coaching, and increasing the supply of apprenticeships, using EU funding to full effect.

Under the Youth Guarantee¹⁰, EU funds are being made available to ensure that all young people under 25 will get a good offer of a job, an apprenticeship, traineeship or education and training place within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Member States are being asked to prioritise youth employment measures within national budgets and as part of the next round of EU Structural Funds 2014-2020, front loading as much investment as possible to 2014 and 2015. Funds under the Youth Guarantee are being targeted towards countries where the youth unemployment rate is 25% or more, including Ireland. In some EU member states it is expected that apprenticeships will be a key measure among the initiatives to be funded.

Existing apprenticeships and further education and training programmes

Chapter 3 highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the existing apprenticeship programme. Positive feedback from employers and learners, excellent performance in the World Skills Competitions, a practical opportunity to earn and learn, to gain confidence in performing an adult role in the workplace, strong partnerships between employers and providers of education and training, and nationally recognised certification are all seen as key strengths of the programme. Ireland's apprenticeship programme is viewed as being of high quality, and Irish apprentices are in high demand internationally.

⁹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-634_en.htm

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

The weaknesses of the programme relate to an over-dependence on the construction sector leading to significant redundancies when the sector collapsed, high costs, rigidity in structure and duration, almost exclusively male participation, and placement of all awards at a single level in the national framework of qualifications. The pace of curriculum reform is also viewed as too slow. Peaks and valleys in recruitment have posed challenges for planning and delivery, and for employment of trainers and investment in infrastructure. Employer controlled recruitment without reference to national needs has led to increased downstream State expenditure.

The cost of apprenticeship is high, relative to other programmes, at €11,715 per annum or €35,290 over the lifetime of the programme (see p61). This cost is for State outlay only for the 3 phases (totalling 40 weeks out of 2010 weeks), where the apprentice is in off the job training. The employer bears the remaining costs and generally contributes 0.7% of payroll to the National Training Fund. The wage paid to apprentices is high by comparison with rates paid internationally, with the exception of Australia, Denmark and Sweden.

Chapter 3 shows data extracted from the Strategic Review of Further Education and Training of the Unemployed showing unit costs and programme outcomes, where available, from other comparable further education and training programmes. Apart from traineeships, where 60% are placed in employment, the outcomes from FET programmes are relatively poor, in terms of the proportions gaining employment, with job seekers facing increasing competition from the large numbers now completing higher education programmes.

Submissions to the review

Written submissions to the review were received from 69 organisations representing business sectors, education and training bodies, Government Departments and agencies, trade unions, professional bodies, organisations representing persons with disabilities and from individuals.

The vast majority of submissions identified the strengths and weaknesses of apprenticeships already highlighted. They considered that future apprenticeships should have a statutory underpinning in the form of an enabling framework which would provide for flexibility and innovation and a variety of delivery modes, while protecting the interests of apprentices. They indicated a strong need for apprenticeships to be enterprise led, through a partnership between employers, trade unions and education and training providers. They recommended that employers should be firmly in the driving seat in identifying the scope for new apprenticeships, determining occupational standards, and having a greater role than at present in curriculum design and delivery, in partnership with education and training providers. Apprenticeships should have a robust regulatory structure

overseen by the State, and operate in accordance with the quality assurance arrangements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

The programme should be overseen by a committee representing employers, trade unions, education and training providers (further and higher level) and the QQI. Professional bodies, where they exist, should also have a role in curriculum design.

While the majority of submissions envisaged apprenticeships mainly as programmes providing intermediate level skills, ten submissions considered there was scope for apprenticeships at higher levels of the national framework of qualifications. Many other submissions advocated the development of a master craftsman qualification as a progression route. Almost all submissions stressed the importance of having clear and transparent progression routes into higher education if apprenticeship is to be expanded successfully, and attract parity of esteem with other career pathways.

There was general agreement that existing apprenticeships should move away from a generic placement at Level 6 of the national framework of qualifications, and that each programme should be reviewed and placed at a level commensurate with the learning outcomes needed for the occupation. The duration and structure of such programmes should be altered accordingly. Curriculum review should occur on the basis of families of trades, ensuring common core modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for specialised modules which focus on particular occupations.

The consensus was that entry levels should be reviewed on a trade-by-trade basis, and that, where necessary, pre-apprenticeship programmes should be provided to help entrants meet these requirements. Transversal skills such as literacy, numeracy, maths, science and ICT should be integrated into apprenticeship programmes, and content should be designed to equip the learner for progression to the next level of the national framework of qualifications.

Many submissions considered that there was scope for expansion of apprenticeships into new areas such as ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sport and leisure, childcare and social care sectors, financial services, accounting, hairdressing and beauty care sectors. Along with ensuring clear progression opportunities, any expansion should be supported by marketing and awareness campaigns making clear the benefits of apprenticeships to learners, parents, education and training providers, career guidance professionals and employers.

The majority of submissions considered that the State should continue to bear the costs of the off the job elements of provision, as is the norm across Europe. A

number considered that the apprentice wage in current programmes is too high and should be reviewed. Others argued the apprentice was already paying a fair share in accepting a wage below that of a fully qualified worker, and below the minimum wage in the early stages of the programme. Employer organisations were adamant that employers could not absorb more costs. One submission suggested that funds should be channelled through employers to enable them to purchase education and training for apprentices, along the lines of the proposed UK model.

Proposals for reducing the cost of apprenticeships included reducing the length of programmes; treating the apprentice as a higher education student while on the off the job placement; treating the apprentice as a third level student for at least part of the programme; paying an allowance equal to the standard training allowance on other VET programmes; or enabling the employer to top up a JobBridge payment.

Many submissions suggesting expansion of apprenticeships envisaged that the State would bear the cost of the payment to the apprentice at least in the initial years of the programme, as well as the delivery costs of the off the job training elements. This suggests the absence of a clear understanding that an apprentice is an employee who has a Contract of Apprenticeship and is paid a wage.

Some submissions argued that an upper and lower ceiling for recruitment of apprentices for each occupation should be set by agreement with the social partners. Where employers recruit above the upper ceiling, the State should not fund the delivery costs.

Overall, submissions envisaged that an expanded apprenticeship programme could play a very significant role in tackling unemployment and promoting a skilled workforce.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The review

On 19 May 2013, Ruairi Quinn T.D, Minister for Education and Skills, announced a review of apprenticeship training in Ireland. The terms of reference of the review were

to determine whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted or replaced by an alternative model of vocational education and training for apprentices – taking into account the needs of learners, the needs of employers, the needs of the economy and the need for cost effectiveness into the future.

The press release announcing the review is shown in Appendix 1.

1.2 A Review Group appointed by the Minister was established for this purpose consisting of

- Mr Kevin Duffy (Chair): Mr Duffy is currently Chairman of the Labour Court
- Dr Hilary Steedman, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics
- Ms Sandra Guilfoyle, Human Resources Manager, Jones Engineering Group
- Dr Tony Dundon, Head of Management Discipline, School of Business and Economics, NUI Galway
- Dr Peter Rigney, Industrial Officer, ICTU
- Mr Tony Donohoe, Head of Education, Social & Innovation Policy, IBEC
- Mr William Egerton, Managing Director, Dromone Engineering
- Mr Michael Stone, Managing Director Designer Group, and representing the Construction Industry Federation

The Review Group was asked to

- 1) consider the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of apprenticeship and what improvements can be made to its current structure
- 2) examine alternative methods of work-based training in Ireland

- 3) consider the structural mechanisms, and criteria, under which collaboration with industry/employers can be pursued into the future, either through improved, alternative or complementary models of work-based training

Following a consultation process, the Review Group was asked to recommend options to the Minister for Education and Skills, recognising the broad spectrum of vocational training available, for the development of the apprentice formation system, and other work based education/training systems, including, as necessary:

- legislative changes;
- model of delivery/curriculum/ range of crafts/ occupations ;
- funding and finance mechanisms;
- provision changes;
- staffing and resource implications;
- governance changes and
- transition actions resulting from recommendations.

Announcing the launch of the process, Minister Quinn said he wanted to *“ensure that the review was comprehensive with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures appropriate balance between supply and demand.”*

The Review Group was asked to complete its work before the end of 2013.

1.3 To support the work of the Review Group, a Technical Group was also established, consisting of

- Dr Bryan Fields FAS (now SOLAS)
- Chris Feeney FAS (now SOLAS)
- Tony Power FAS (now SOLAS)
- Fergal Costello, Higher Education Authority
- Maurice Doran Higher Education Authority
- James Coyle Higher Education Authority
- Paul O Brien Department of Education and Skills
- Margaret Kelly, Secretary to the Review Group and Chairperson of the Technical Group

The role of the Technical Group was to provide background evaluative data to support the work of the Review, to undertake a work programme determined by the Review Group, and to develop and comment on options for the future.

1.4 Background Issues Paper

To provide a background context for the review, a Background Issues Paper was prepared by the Department of Education and Skills and published at www.education.ie in May 2013. This provided information on the objectives of the review, a description of the current legislative context and programme, information on the profile of participants, recruitment levels, programme outcomes and costs, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. Short descriptions of other further education programmes and a brief outline of international models of apprenticeship were also given, along with some options for change. Some of the data in the Background Paper has been updated in this report.

1.5 Public consultation

The Review Group developed an outline consultation framework and, on 27 June 2013, wrote directly to 128 bodies and agencies with a role in the implementation of existing apprenticeships or with a potential to have a future role in the event of expansion of the programme into new occupations. These included education and training institutions, government departments, trade unions, professional bodies, and sectoral and national employer groups. Appendix 2 shows the list of bodies consulted.

In addition, a public advertisement was placed in the national newspapers on 28 June 2013 inviting submissions from any other interested parties, and giving the website address for the Background Issues Paper and consultation framework.

The consultation framework referred to the Background Issues Paper and asked respondents to outline their views on

- Area 1 - an overview of the effectiveness of the current system, the issues which need to be addressed, and on the ideal model for the future of apprenticeship, having regard to Ireland's current and future needs

- Area 2 - looking forward, what changes might be made in a re-structured or fundamentally reformed apprenticeship system. Respondents were asked to consider a significantly broader approach which embraced a wide range of occupations, and provided for different modes of funding, delivery and apprentice-employer relationships.

- Area 3 - information on other systems/programmes in Ireland, including those with significant work based learning

- Area 4 - information on programmes in other jurisdictions which have a significant work- based learning element which are relevant as possible future models in Ireland
- Area 5 - the scope for broader integration of other occupations into an apprenticeship or traineeship model in Ireland. This could include an exploration of areas where current work based learning provision is of an ad hoc or unstructured nature.
- Area 6 - any other points deemed relevant to the review.

Respondents were asked to give views under a range of headings including governance, equity, range of occupations, funding, recruitment, curriculum, assessment, delivery, providers, and impact on the economy.

1.6 Submissions

A total of 69 organisations (there were also 7 additional documents accompanying submissions) made written submissions to the review. These are posted on the Department of Education and Skills website at www.education.ie. A list of the organisations which made submissions is included in Appendix 3.

Following receipt of the submissions made in August, September and early October 2013, a panel of representatives of the Review Group and the Technical Group met with 25 major organisations with a role, or potential role in apprenticeships in Ireland. These organisations are listed Appendix 4. The focus of these meetings was to discuss the submissions received, to address the potential for expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations, and the organisations' proposed role, if any, in the implementation of new programmes.

1.7 The Report.

Chapter 1 sets out an introduction to the Review.

Chapter 2 sets out the background context for the review, the changing landscape in the labour market, in the education and training sector and in Europe, which have the potential to impact on apprenticeships.

Chapter 3 highlights the issues set out in the Department's Background Issues Paper on Apprenticeships, and gives a brief outline of existing apprenticeship and further education and training programmes

Chapter 4 summarises the key themes in the submissions received.

Chapter 5 sets out the recommendations of the Review Group.

Where the term "enterprise" is used in this report, it is intended to include both employers and trade unions.

Chapter 2

Background Context.

- 2.1** This chapter sets out the labour market context for the review, the key reports of relevance governing education and training and skills needs, and the policy developments in apprenticeship in Europe.
- 2.2 Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs) 2007**

In July 2005, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment asked the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) to identify the skills required for Ireland to become a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy by 2020. In response the Expert Group published a report *Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy*¹¹ in 2007. The report argued that investment in education and training, through increased participation, improving the productivity of workers, and encouraging innovation, were all essential to boost economic growth and living standards in Ireland. This was not only important to promote employment, competitiveness and growth, but also to contribute to greater social cohesion, better public health, reduced levels of poverty and social welfare dependency and a reduction in crime rates.

The report foresaw a continued decline in employment in agriculture and the manufacture of machinery, a significant reduction in the demand for unskilled work, and a growth in demand for employment in the ICT, medical devices, pharmaceuticals/biotechnology, food and drink, and high-value engineering, financial services, business and marketing sectors. Generic transferable skills, such as literacy, numeracy, IT and people skills, would be increasingly valued and employees would be required to demonstrate flexibility and an ability to continually acquire new knowledge and skills.

The report highlighted the significant proportion of people in the labour force in the older age group with less than upper secondary education and stressed the importance of upskilling this group in a climate of rapid economic and technological change.

Specifically, the Expert Group proposed that, by 2020:

- 48 % of the labour force should have qualifications at NFQ Levels 6 to 10;
- 45 % should have qualifications at NFQ levels 4 and 5; and
- the remaining 7% should have qualifications at NFQ levels 1 to 3.

¹¹ http://www.forfas.ie/media/egfsn070306b_national_skills_strategy.pdf

In order to achieve these objectives, an additional 500,000 individuals within the workforce would need to progress at least one level within the national framework of qualifications. This would require

- 70,000 to upskills from NFQ levels 1 & 2 to level 3
- 260,000 to upskill to levels 4 and 5
- 170,000 to upskill to levels 6 to 10.

The report urged that completion rates to Leaving Certificate should increase to 90%, and the entry rate to higher education should increase to 72% . The changes would be achieved through an integrated "One Step Up" approach across the education and training sectors.

Since then, annual Expert Group publications such as *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply – Trends in Education and Training Outputs*¹², and *National Skills Bulletin- Labour Market Transitions*¹³, have kept abreast of the ongoing outflows from the education and training system and the supply and demand for skill needs. The Expert Group has also published a number of sector skills reports including manufacturing, ICT, biopharma-pharmachem, retail, financial services, medical devices and food. Together, they reveal a diverse and constantly evolving demand for new skills.

2.3 National Skills Bulletin 2013

The *National Skills Bulletin 2013*¹⁴ is a study prepared by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of SOLAS for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. It highlights skills shortages in

- science (particularly in the bio-pharma, food and beverage, bio technology and medical device sectors requiring skills in R&D, product development, data analytic skills, science and business, and a need for laboratory technicians
- engineering (tool design and polymer technology, quality control, process and design engineering, mechanical, electrical and electronic, and food technologists at technician level; and at higher level quality control, mechanical engineers, green technology, process automation, medical devices and pharmaceutical sectors, electrical and electronic engineers, chemical process and project management engineers)

¹² http://www.forfas.ie/media/05072013-Monitoring_Ireland%27s_Skills_Supply_2013-Publication.pdf

¹³ http://www.forfas.ie/media/15072013-National_Skills_Bulletin_2013-Publication.pdf

¹⁴ http://www.forfas.ie/media/15072013-National_Skills_Bulletin_2013-Publication.pdf

- ICT (software developers, web, cloud, mobile, database, games, data analytics, customer relations, project managers, user support, network security, testing and troubleshooting)
- business (purchasing, marketing, sales, business analysis/statistics)
- finance (risk, regulatory compliance, accounting (solvency, financial management, multilingual technicians), fraud, credit control)
- health (non-consultant hospital doctors, nurses (cardio, intensive care geriatric, oncology, theatre))
- sales (technical sales, multilingual customer support, online sales and marketing)
- transport (international supply chain management)
- clerical (multilingual accounts, debt collection) non-construction craft occupations There is a significant shortage of precision engineering skills in tool making and CNC machining;

Language skills were a prerequisite for many newly advertised vacancies, particularly in sales, customer care activities, but also at professional level (e.g. engineering, finance). A variety of languages were in demand, particularly German, but also French, Italian, Spanish and Dutch.

Most of these jobs required higher education qualifications and experience.

The report also shows high levels of movement in and out of employment in the retail, clerical, hospitality, business executive, construction labourer, and childcare sectors, as well as teaching, farming and nursing.

Overall, the report shows progress in implementing the National Skills Strategy, indicating that by Quarter 4, 2012:

- 17% of those in the labour force had lower secondary education or less (compared with 27.9% in Q2 2005, the latest data when the Strategy was published)
- 40% had upper secondary or further education qualifications (compared with 40.3% in 2005)
- 43% had higher education or training qualifications (compared with 31.8% in 2005)

A considerable challenge remains in terms of those who are employed and unemployed with less than upper secondary education. In addition, as higher education continues to expand, (Ireland now has the highest proportion of those in the 30-34 age group with higher education qualifications) the relative position of those with lower qualifications in accessing jobs continues to weaken.

The joint Forfas, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation submission to the Apprenticeship review outlined some of the key drivers of change which will impact on competitiveness and provision of education and training in the period ahead. These include

- demographics – world population growth and increasing middle classes creating new demands for good and services, allied with ageing populations giving rise to increased opportunities for home care and elder care. In the Irish context, the school going population will increase rapidly in the years ahead, putting sustained pressure on the resources available for adult learning.
- a shift towards environmental and energy sustainability in goods and services allied with increased regulation of this area
- disaggregated global supply chains are driving specialisation within many firms seeking to plug in to global networks.
- cost competitiveness is placing increased scrutiny on all aspects of business, raising the demand for continuous improvement, lean manufacturing techniques, and increased automation
- the competitive manufacturing environment puts a particular emphasis on research, development and innovation activities, not only in the context of

R&D for new products and services, but also the ability to absorb technologies and expertise developed externally which can drive innovation in manufacturing products and processes.

- ICTs are having a highly significant impact on manufacturing and service processes with ICT enabled processes such as increasing automation, computer integrated manufacturing (CIM), simulated manufacturing, virtual test beds and 'digital factories' at the cutting edge of manufacturing competitiveness.

Employment and Unemployment¹⁵

Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 3 2013 CSO

000s

Aged 15 or over	in labour force			Employed			Unemployed			Distribution of unemployed by age group	proportion of each age group who are unemployed
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total		
15-19	26.8	25.6	52.4	16.9	18.2	35.1	9.9	7.4	17.3	6.1%	33.0%
20-24	93.5	81.5	175.0	67.6	64.4	131.9	25.9	17.1	43.0	15.2%	24.6%
25-34	301.1	279.3	580.4	251.8	249.5	501.3	49.3	29.9	79.2	28.0%	13.6%
35-44	322.4	256.6	579.1	279.5	233.9	513.4	42.9	22.8	65.7	23.2%	11.3%
45-54	262.1	203.4	465.5	232.0	185.7	417.8	30.0	17.7	47.7	16.9%	10.2%
55-59	96.7	73.9	170.6	84.1	67.8	152.0	12.6	6.1	18.7	6.6%	11.0%
60-64	64.5	38.1	102.7	57.0	35.6	92.6	7.5		10.0	3.5%	9.7%
65+	40.2	16.2	56.5	39.4	15.9	55.3	0.0		0.0		
Total	1207.3	974.6	2182.1	1028.3	871.0	1899.3	179.0	103.8	282.9	100.0%	13.0%
Of which under 25	120.2	107.1	227.4	84.5	82.6	167.0	35.8	24.6	60.4		26.6%

seasonally adjusted rate 12.8%

* seasonally adjusted rate 26.5%

¹⁵ http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/labourmarket/2013/qnhs_q32013.pdf

2.4 Employment and Unemployment

Currently 13.0% (seasonally adjusted rate 12.8%) of the labour force is unemployed, and the youth unemployment rate is 26.6%. (seasonally adjusted rate 26.5%)

The most recent published statistics on employment and unemployment by highest educational attainment are from the CSO Quarterly National Household Survey for Q2 2011¹⁶. These show the following:-

Educational Attainment of 25-64 year olds in the labour force

	Distribution by education level	Labour Force Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
			%	%
Primary or less	10%	46%	35	24
Lr sec	15%	67%	54	21
Upper sec	24%	76%	65	14
Post LC (includes apprenticeships etc) ¹⁷	13%	78%	64	18
Third level	38%	87%	81	7
Of which Higher Cert or equiv	4%	84%	73	12
Ord degree or equiv	11%	85%	78	7
Hons Degree or equiv	16%	88%	83	6
Post Grad	7%	91%	87	5
Total		76%	66	13

As expected, labour force participation rates and employment rates are highest for those with the highest skills, and unemployment rates are highest for those with the lowest skills. However, the position of those with further education and training qualifications at Levels 4, 5 and 6 shows no improvement over those with a Leaving Certificate or equivalent only, and indeed the unemployment rate for this group is 4% higher than for those with a Leaving Certificate. The figures for 2010 show the same rate of employment for both sets of award holders, while the position of those with post Leaving Certificate awards in 2009 was 1% higher than those with a Leaving Certificate (71% and 70% respectively.)

¹⁶

<http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/education/2011/educationalattainment2011.pdf>

¹⁷ National Craft Certificate, Advanced Certificate and FETAC level 5 and 6, Specific Skills etc are shown as post Leaving Certificate.

2.5 OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).¹⁸

The results of this survey of adult aged 16-65 in 24 countries in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology rich environments were announced on 8 October 2013. Some 6000 adults in Ireland were surveyed over the period 2011/12. An extract of the results is shown below. The performance of Ireland in literacy is not significantly different from the average, and shows no significant change from the International Adult Literacy Survey in 1995. The performance of Ireland in Maths is below average, and performance in problem solving in technology rich environments is at the average. The survey shows the significant gap in achievement between Ireland and the top scoring countries such as Japan and Finland.

¹⁸

<http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/education/2012/piaac2012.pdf>

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

**Proportion of Adults Aged 16-65 scoring at various proficiency levels (Level 5 is highest)
Programme of International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2012**

Ireland ranked 17th out of 24 countries

Literacy	<Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	<Level 2	Adj mean	Adj mean
								16-65	16-24
Ireland	4.3	13.2	37.6	36.0	8.1	0.4	17.5	265.7	270.2
Ave	3.3	12.2	33.3	38.2	11.1	0.7	15.5	270.7	277.9
England	3.3	13.1	33.1	36.0	12.4	0.8	16.4	270.0	261.8
North Irl	2.5	14.9	36.2	34.3	9.4	0.5	17.4	264.6	269.4
France	5.3	16.2	35.9	34.0	7.4	0.3	21.5	260.6	274.6
Germany	3.3	14.2	33.9	36.4	10.2	0.5	17.5	267.1	277.7
Japan Highest	0.6	4.3	22.8	48.6	21.4	1.2	4.9	293.6	296.5
Spain Lowest	7.2	20.3	39.1	27.8	4.6	0.1	27.5	250.5	263.0

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Proportions of adults aged 16-65 scoring at different proficiency levels (Level 5 is highest)

Ireland ranked 19th out of 24 countries

Numeracy	<Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	<Level2	Adj mean	Adj mean
								16-65	16-24
Ireland	7.1	18.1	38.0	28.8	7.0	0.6	25.2	254.8	257.6
Ave	5.0	14.0	33.0	34.4	11.4	1.1	19.0	266.2	269.4
England	6.4	17.8	33.3	29.8	10.4	0.9	24.2	259.4	252.8
North Irl	5.6	18.7	35.9	29.0	7.8	0.7	24.3	255.3	260.8
France	9.1	18.9	33.8	29.0	7.8	0.5	28.0	252.8	262.9
Germany	4.5	13.9	31.0	34.9	13.0	1.2	18.4	269.0	273.9
Japan Highest	1.2	7.0	28.1	43.7	17.3	1.5	8.2	285.7	280.5
Spain Lowest	9.5	21.1	40.1	24.5	4.0	0.1	30.6	244.6	254.3

Problem solving in technology rich environments

	<Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	No computer	Opted out	<Level2
					Experience		
Ireland	12.6	29.5	22.1	3.1	10.1	17.4	42.1
Ave	12.3	29.4	28.2	5.8	9.3	10.2	41.7
England	15.1	33.8	29.3	5.7	4.1	4.6	48.9
North Irl	16.4	34.5	25.0	3.7	10.0	2.3	50.9
France	missing						
Germany	14.4	30.5	29.2	6.8	7.9	6.1	44.9
Japan	7.6	19.7	26.3	8.3	10.2	15.9	27.3

2.6 Enterprise Size in Ireland (CSO 2011 Business demography) ¹⁹

2011

Enterprise size	No of enterprises	% enterprises	No of employees	% employees
All enterprises	189055		1118679	
0-9 employees	171652	90.8%	229519	20.5%
10-19 employees	9499	5.0%	124392	11.1%
20-49 employees	5023	2.7%	148769	13.3%
50-249 employees	2421	1.3%	232053	20.7%
250+	460	0.2%	383946	34.3%

The above figures show that over 90% of Irish firms employ less than 10 people, and only 0.2% employ 250 or more. However, these large firms account for 34.3% of employment overall, and a further 20.7% are employed in enterprises ranging from 50 to 249 employees. The figures highlight the importance of engaging larger and medium sized firms if an expansion of apprenticeships is to be realistic. It also demonstrates the challenge of engaging the 186,000 small companies who account for 45% of total employment.

2.7 Pathways to Work 2013²⁰

This report presents the Government's 50 point action plan to tackle long term unemployment. The range of measures proposed includes:

- a greater number of places on employment and training schemes for long term unemployed people in the second half of 2013, with the long-term unemployed to remain a priority for available resources in 2014.
- the plan provides that 51,000 places on further and higher education and training programmes will be made available to long term unemployed persons. These will include:

¹⁹ <http://www.cso.ie/quicktables/GetQuickTables.aspx?FileName=BRA16.asp>

²⁰ <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Pathways-to-Work-2013.pdf>

- 6500 additional Momentum places,
 - 6000 new Springboard places,
 - 2500 extra Jobbridge places,
 - 2500 extra TÚS (a community work placement initiative) places,
 - 2000 extra Community Employment places and
 - 3000 new social employment scheme places in Local Authorities
- a set of more attractive incentives for employers to recruit long-term unemployed people.
 - a faster roll-out of the full INTREO work activation service nationwide.
 - a more effective interplay between welfare payments, tax and in-work payments to reduce welfare traps and make work pay
 - a staged roll-out of a Youth Guarantee so young unemployed people will, when the guarantee is fully rolled out, receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

In addition, a Pathways to Industry Group will be established to advise on the implementation of the key priority actions under the strategy.

2.8 Action Plan for Jobs 2013²¹

The Action Plan for Jobs 2013 published by the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation provides for a range of measures including

- an incentive programme for employers who employ jobseekers who have been on the Live Register for 12 months or more.
- a target to get 2,000 more small businesses trading online in 2013 and 2014, with the creation of 3,200 jobs.
- the creation of a single licensing application system for up to 25 licences in the retail sector, saving retailers over €20m per annum.

²¹ <http://www.djei.ie/publications/2013APJ.pdf>

- IDA plans to target more than 130 new investments, secure €500m worth of research and development investment and help create 13,000 new jobs this year.
- provision of an extra 2,000 ICT graduates in 2013
- a €70m energy efficiency fund, to create 5,000 jobs
- a plan to make Ireland one of the leading countries in Europe for what it calls 'Big Data', a sector growing by up to 40% per annum.
- establishing Ireland as a leading location for start-up and growing med-tech and healthcare companies.

2.9 Learning for Jobs – OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training – Ireland 2010 ²²

While the national qualifications framework, the range of post second level VET programmes, the collaborative social partnership and the innovative ways of engaging employers through Skillnets are all cited as strengths, the report recommends that

- the apprenticeship system should be reviewed to improve its efficiency and fairness
- extensive use of workplace training should be built into all VET programmes
- programmes should be carefully targeted at the particular skill levels of adult learners as well as at labour market needs
- the needs of those with literacy and numeracy difficulties should be systematically identified and addressed
- all teachers, trainers and instructors should have pedagogical training, and in the longer term, so should supervisors of apprentices in companies

²² <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/44592419.pdf>

- there should be a rigorous approach to systematic data gathering, and evaluation and more research on VET should be pursued.

2.10 A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed. (National Economic and Social Council – Autumn 2013) ²³

The focus of this report was to review the effectiveness of further education and training programmes and the degree to which they are targeted at the Government priority of addressing unemployment. The report is strongly critical of the evidence base which indicates that programmes offered are in response to enterprise needs, and of the patchy and fragmented data available on programme outcomes. It recommends

- prioritisation of the long term unemployed in admission policies, in accordance with Government policy, with due regard to the needs of school leavers and those in employment;
- alignment of FET with local and regional skills demand and labour market intelligence;
- close involvement of enterprise in the design and delivery of programmes;
- seamless linkages between Intreo offices and their local Education and Training Boards
- high level strategic co-operation between SOLAS and Intreo about the design of relevant FET provision and referral arrangements;
- movement towards flexible provision with shorter duration, dualist delivery models incorporating extended work placements and on the job training;
- comprehensive data collection and evaluation of all courses against appropriate metrics of progression or employment;
- utilisation of competitive tendering and payment on results where appropriate, with Education and Training Boards becoming regional hubs for FET procurement;
- re-organisation of provision around effective programmes using the strategic funding responsibility of SOLAS.

²³ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/A-Strategic-Review-of-Further-Education-and-Training-and-the-Unemplo>

In particular, the report argues that "there is scope for greater linkages between employers and providers. For example, despite the exporting sectors demand for intermediate and foundation level skills there is insufficient recognition of the potential of FET to meet this demand. Similarly, within the large domestic sector, employers' awareness of their skills needs and of the opportunities offered by FET are poor. In addition, small local employers are often not incorporated in national or sectoral skills frameworks. Therefore, future skills assessments should rigorously explore the demand for intermediate and foundation skills both in exporting and domestic sectors. This should be followed by more systematic and effective engagement with employers at regional and local level to ensure that their needs are met. As activation strategies prompt more actors in the public system to seek stronger engagement with employers, it is important to ensure that that engagement is as streamlined and effective as possible. The ETBs should move rapidly and put in place an appropriate advisory infrastructure for identifying the FET needs of employers in their catchment areas. Small domestic, non-exporting employers should also be encouraged to develop higher skills and engage with local FET providers. In general, more employers need to take responsibility for training needs and, in co-operation with providers, to become more involved in both syllabus development and job placements."

The report also cautions against placing too much emphasis on higher education qualifications if these are not needed to meet skill needs:-

"Even when the need for intermediate skills important to local economies is identified, there can be a preference to meet them through higher education institutions rather than through the further education and training system. For example, while some 170,000 were employed in the retail, health and hospitality sectors in the Dublin region in 2011, there were only 5,000 Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course enrolments in those fields that year and three times that number enrolled at undergraduate and postgraduate level in the same fields (OECD, 2013). The prestige of going to be third level is justified on many solid grounds and is the correct choice for a large number of people. But encouragement and support for higher levels of enrolment at third level needs to be done in a way that does not harm groups of learners and types of economic activity where a third level education is not required. The potential for harm and how to avoid it has been expressed in this way by the OECD:

There are still many jobs that do not require university degrees and school reforms based on the premise that an economy can be transformed rapidly into one in which everyone is a symbolic analyst are unrealistic and have

potential boomerang effects. ...[For example, one] danger is that public schooling graduation standards are raised so high to prepare more for university that a significant number of lower-performing students ...fail to complete ...and become even more alienated from schooling.... Policy makers [need to raise levels of educational attainment to ensure forecast growth in skill requirements are met with some room to spare but in a fashion that maximizes educational opportunity for individuals from under-represented groups and avoids shutting out or leaving adrift those who do not seek or are not prepared for university study. This includes further examination of the potential benefits of strengthening of career, technical, and vocational education and training systems for those not attending university (Handel, OECD: 2012:83).17

2.11 Establishment of Education and Training Boards.

In July 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment of 16 Education and Training Boards to replace the 33 Vocational Education and Training Committees, in accordance with the *Education and Training Boards Act 2013*.²⁴ The ETBs main role is to provide and maintain recognised schools, and centres for education or training, including providing programmes of further education and training in their catchment areas.

2.12 Establishment of SOLAS

The *Further Education and Training Act 2013*²⁵ provided for the dissolution of FAS and the transfer of its training functions to An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS). On 29 October 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment of SOLAS. In partnership with the 16 new education and training boards, SOLAS will be responsible for the integration, co-ordination and funding of the wide range of training and further education programmes around Ireland. One of its first tasks will be to devise a strategy for the development of a unified further education and training sector.

2.13 National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030²⁶

The Report of the Strategy Group was published in January 2011. It set out a range of measures designed to address the challenges of widening participation, enhancing teaching, learning and research, promoting

²⁴ <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2013/a1113.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2013/a2513.pdf>

²⁶ http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

engagement with wider society and developing internationalisation. A world class system will be underpinned by reformed system governance, public funding aligned with national priorities and the development of a new system configuration to meet future needs.

As part of the Strategy implementation, in May 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills announced a major reorganisation of the higher education system and a new framework for system governance. The changes are intended to create a more dynamic, responsive and high quality higher education sector. Ireland will develop a strong network of outward facing institutions with critical mass and the strengths in research, innovation and teaching to support economic and social well-being.

One of the core objectives under the new performance framework is meeting Ireland's human capital needs across the spectrum of skills areas through both core funding and specifically targeted initiatives. A set of high level system indicators for 2014-2016 has been published and the HEA will report to the Minister on the performance of the system in meeting these targets on an annual basis.

As part of the new system performance framework, the HEA are implementing a new process of strategic dialogue to agree performance compacts between the HEA and the higher education institutions. Performance funding will be aligned with the achievement of the indicators agreed as part of that process.

Regional clusters are being established to strengthen regional capacity and competitiveness and will provide a forum for engagement with enterprise, community organisations and other education providers and will support the development of regional plans. These regional plans will initially focus on shared academic planning between higher education institutions in the cluster and the improvement of access, transfer and progression for students in the region.

The HEA has also published a *National Survey of Employers' Views of Irish Higher Education Outcomes (December 2012)*²⁷ which showed that over 75% of companies are confident that graduates have the right workplace and transferable skills and subject or discipline knowledge. However they are less confident about graduates written communication, business awareness and entrepreneurship skills, and about them having "the right attitude". More than 80% of companies who recruited STEM graduates

²⁷ http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_employers_survey_pilot_report.pdf

were satisfied with the calibre of graduates, but were significantly less satisfied with the speed of content changes in line with changing needs. Half the companies surveyed did not feel there was adequate engagement between institutions and enterprise.

In 2011, the HEA published a report on Roadmaps for Employment-Academic Partnerships, Work Placement in Third Level Programmes.²⁸ The report sets out the important role work placements play in promoting stronger partnerships between higher education institutions and enterprise, and to ensure that graduates have the required competences for the workplace. Key benefits highlighted include

- enhancing networking and mutual understanding between HEIs and workplaces
- maintaining curriculum relevance along with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practice
- integrating employability skills into the curriculum, providing real exposure to a workplace role and the opportunity to develop confidence and independence.

The report sets out a toolkit for organising and supporting work placements.

More recently, the HEA has invited proposals from industry and HEIs to participate in a national pilot to deliver a post graduate programme in professional practice focused on the STEM (Science, Technology, Mathematics and Science) sectors.²⁹ The pilot is intended to provide an opportunity for graduates to acquire cross disciplinary skills in a work based environment and will examine ways to provide a systemic bridging between education and employment through opportunities for level 8 graduates to acquire cross disciplinary skills through a type of structured professional experience. This proposal is based on the premise that the sophistication and technological intensity of Ireland's enterprise clusters in core technologies such as bio, nano and cyber are transforming products and the way they are designed, produced and serviced. In that context, traditional entry points for graduates are also changing and increasingly there are expanding opportunities for those with cross disciplinary skills as well as workplace experience.

²⁸ http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/reap_work-placement-report.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.heai.ie/en/news/heai-call-expressions-interest-participate-pilot-programme-professional-practice>

2.14 Review of Apprenticeships in England.

Doug Richard, entrepreneur and educator, was asked to consider the future of apprenticeships in England and to recommend how they can meet the changing needs of the economy. His report "*The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*"³⁰ was published in November 2012. It recommended that:

- apprenticeships should be redefined and targeted at those who are new to a job role which requires sustained and substantial training. Apprenticeships should be for a minimum of a year.
- the focus should be on the outcome. Standards should be identified by employers at a high level and clearly set out what apprentices should be able to know, understand and do at the end of their apprenticeship. These standards should link to the requirements for professional registration, where such exist. There should be one apprenticeship qualification per occupation. Testing and validation should be independently assessed and provide for the direct involvement of employers, and be overseen by an appropriate regulatory body.
- all apprentices should have level 2 English (Irish equivalent Level 4) which is deemed to be the equivalent of Grades A-C in UK GCSEs before starting an apprenticeship
- innovation and diversity should be encouraged and unnecessary prescription stripped out.
- the purchasing power for investing in apprenticeship should lie with the employer, with Government channelling funds in a simple and streamlined manner, accessible to small firms, perhaps through tax or social insurance credits. Payment should be linked in part to successful completion of the apprenticeship.
- good quality information, guidance and awareness boosting should be invested in to promote the benefits of apprenticeship to learners and employers.

Following a public consultation process (*The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Next Steps from the Richard Review March 2013*)³¹ the

³⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf

³¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190632/bis-13-577-the-future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-next-steps-from-the-richard-review.pdf

Government response was published in October 2013 (*The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan*.)³²

The Implementation Plan accepted most of the recommendations in the Review. While not requiring Level 2 English and Maths as a pre-entry requirement for apprenticeships, the implementation plan proposed to step up investment and support to ensure that those who did not have this level would be supported to reach it during their apprenticeship, and to strengthen English and Maths generally. The Government agreed to introduce grading in certification of apprenticeships, in the form of pass, merit and distinction. While agreeing in principle with the proposal to channel funding through employers, the implementation plan indicated this was being examined further to determine the best approach. The Next Steps report had also proposed kite-marking of colleges by employers to encourage them to use the providers who were considered most responsive. This is not mentioned in the implementation plan, but the development of indicators is proposed for evaluation purposes, including gathering data on apprentice and employer satisfaction. A minimum proportion of off the job learning (at least 20%) is also set for apprenticeships. Funding was announced for Trailblazers, under which employer led consortia would develop standards and a high level assessment approach to underpin new awards in Aerospace, Automotive, Digital Industries, Electrotechnical, Energy and Utilities, Financial Services, Food and Drink Manufacturing, and Life Sciences and Industrial Sciences.

Consultation on the implementation of the Richard recommendations also covered identification of the most appropriate mechanism for payment of State supports to employers, whether through direct payments, tax relief etc. A decision on this issue is to be taken before the end of 2013.

Apprenticeships in England operate mainly at UK Levels 2, 3 and 4, (Irish levels 4, 5 and 6) but are mainly in the lower skills areas. The strategy envisages encouraging a greater emphasis in the future on higher level and advanced apprenticeships. *Next Steps from the Richard Review* states

"As we improve the quality of Apprenticeships, we must ensure that young people in particular, and their parents and teachers, view Apprenticeships as a visible and valued pathway to a rewarding career. Too often today it is seen to be of lower status than other academic options. Yet apprenticeships offer pathways into highly skilled and often well-paid jobs

³² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253073/bis-13-1175-future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-implementation-plan.pdf

across the economy, from science and engineering to accountancy, and from technicians to management. With Higher Apprenticeship opportunities rapidly expanding up to postgraduate level, and Apprenticeships increasingly leading to professional registration, we must ensure that they attract the profile and standing they deserve."

2.15 Review of Apprenticeship in Northern Ireland

In February 2013 Mr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, announced a review of apprenticeships and youth training to ensure a high quality workforce needed to support the growth and rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy.³³

Among the issues being examined are what occupational areas should benefit from Government funding in order to grow and rebalance the economy, how to have parity of esteem with other further and higher education pathways, the role that higher education institutions should play, and how apprenticeships can be expanded into the professions. The review is due to be completed by year end.

Close contact has been maintained the Department of Education and Skills in the South and the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland in the ongoing implementation of the reviews. It is important to ensure mutual recognition of awards and portability of qualifications for apprentices across boundaries. The leaflet published by Quality and Qualification Ireland, "Qualifications can cross boundaries"³⁴, shows how levels of qualification in Northern Ireland, England Wales and Scotland align with the Irish framework of qualifications.

2.16 OECD Note on Quality Apprenticeships for the G20 Task Force on Employment 26 September 2012³⁵

At a European level, both the OECD and the European Commission are placing increasing emphasis on apprenticeship programmes as a means of promoting a skilled workforce, ensuring the relevance of education and training systems to labour market needs, and addressing youth unemployment. The OECD prepared a *Note on Quality Apprenticeships for the G20 Task Force on Employment* meeting in Mexico in September 2012. This highlighted that apprenticeships "*have proven to be particularly*

³³ <http://www.delni.gov.uk/terms-of-reference-apprenticeships-and-youth-training.pdf>

³⁴ http://www.nqai.ie/docs/publications/UK_comparison_guide.pdf

³⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

effective" in promoting a smooth transition from school to employment, as well as reducing dropout rates in upper secondary education.

The paper indicates that difficulties can be arise where apprenticeships are *“limited in coverage to their traditional sectors such as construction and manufacturing.., where there is a bias in favour of academic education and where employers are reluctant to take on apprentices.... Especially when other forms of cheap labour are available (internships, temporary or casual jobs) that do not require a direct investment in training by the employer, it can be particularly difficult to generate a sufficient number of apprenticeship places. There may in fact be a difficult trade-off to manage between ensuring that the costs of firms investing in apprenticeships (e.g. in terms of labour costs, compliance costs, etc.) are not too high while ensuring that apprentices face suitable working conditions and acquire appropriate and certified training.”*

The report identifies a number of features of a quality apprenticeship programme:-

- quality apprenticeships should not be limited to specific age groups, but should be open to both adults and teenagers.
- quality apprenticeships should facilitate participation by disadvantaged youth, with additional subsidies offered to employers where necessary (Pre-apprenticeship programmes in Germany are mentioned as an example of good practice.)
- quality apprenticeships should have a strong training component, preparing participants for durable and productive working careers. In this sense apprenticeships differ substantially from other forms of work experience schemes, such as internships, that merely offer interns the opportunity to see the functioning of a particular occupation or profession in practice.
- quality apprenticeships should provide training that is not too narrowly focused. This is important to ensure participants develop and maintain the ability to progress in their careers and adapt to change after they have left the programme. Thus, ideally, training should take place both on- and off-the-job.
- quality apprenticeships should cover multiple sectors and occupations and should encourage the participation of women.

- quality apprenticeships should involve an equitable sharing of their costs among employers, the public authorities and apprentices. ...In the absence of any public intervention, it is likely that employers would provide a sub-optimal level of training, especially general training. Hence, it might be efficient to subsidise the training component of the program, for example through government funding of off-the-job training while employers could directly provide on-the-job training. Other forms of incentives can also be envisaged, both during the apprenticeship (lower taxes or social security contributions, direct subsidy to the firm or the apprentice) and at completion if the apprentice is hired.
- quality apprenticeships should operate according to competence-based completion rather than time-based completion.
- quality apprenticeships require good governance to prevent misuse as a form of cheap labour.
- quality apprenticeships work best if they are jointly managed by the social partners and relevant institutions. Representatives of employers and workers should be directly involved in the development, implementation and governance of apprenticeship systems, particularly in the definition of the content of training, together with the relevant training institutions.
- quality apprenticeships should be certified and well integrated with the formal schooling system.

2.17 European Alliance for Apprenticeships

On 30 January 2012 the members of the European Council agreed a series of actions to stimulate employment, especially for young people.³⁶ These included

- Member States setting out in National Reform programmes the concrete measures which will be taken to improve the responsiveness of education and training programmes to employment needs,
- stepping up efforts to promote young people's first work experience and their participation in the labour market: the objective should be that within a few months of leaving school, young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship;
- increasing substantially the number of apprenticeships and traineeships to ensure that they represent real opportunities for young people, in cooperation with social partners and where possible integrated into education programmes;
- making renewed efforts to get early school-leavers into training;
- making full use of the EURES job mobility portal to facilitate the cross-border placement of young people.

The European Commission agreed to support these efforts by working with those member states which have the highest youth unemployment to re-direct available EU funds towards support for young people to get into work and training, enhancing mobility by increasing work placements under the Leonardo Da Vinci programme, and using ESF aid to support the setting up of apprenticeship type schemes, and schemes for young business starters and social entrepreneurs.

In July 2013 the European Commission launched the European Alliance for Apprenticeships³⁷ to help address youth unemployment by improving the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU through a partnership of education and employment interests. The announcement referred to the low youth unemployment rates in countries with strong

³⁶ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/127599.pdf

³⁷ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-634_en.htm

apprenticeship systems (Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Denmark) and indicated that measures to strengthen apprenticeships would be supported by the European Social Fund, The Youth Employment Initiative (Youth Guarantee), and Erasmus+, the new EU programme for education and youth.

The Alliance was supported by a declaration from European level trade unions and employer groups which committed to raising awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships among employers and learners, promoting good practice, encouraging the development of quality apprenticeships, co-operating with schools and employment services, supporting in-company mentors and coaching of apprentices, and increasing the supply of apprenticeships.

The Commission committed to promoting peer learning and best practice, ensuring optimum use of EU funds to meet the objectives of the Alliance, examining the inclusion of apprenticeships in the EURES network, and inviting eurochambers and other stakeholders to pledge measures to support delivery of the Alliance.

The Alliance highlights the benefits of an apprenticeship:

For Learners

"A VET-student who spends much of her or his time being trained within a company will more effectively learn the skills needed in the work place: using modern machinery and equipment and being involved in real-life work processes. The accompanying school will provide him/her with a good balance between general skills and firm-specific skills, a broader perspective and a nationally recognised qualification. In many countries, a VET education with solid work-based learning is the safest way to employment."

For Companies

"A company that takes on apprentices is likely to have a net profit on this investment either within the apprenticeship period or shortly afterwards, when hiring a fully-trained worker. Coming in with a fresh mind and new perspectives, apprentices can also contribute to useful adjustments and innovations within the company."

For Society

"Evidence shows that countries with strong VET and apprenticeship systems have much lower youth unemployment than countries where work-based learning is not embedded in the system. The likely benefits for society are many, such as: more taxes raised, less welfare expenses, higher consumption, more active participation in civil life, etc."

2.18 Youth Guarantee ³⁸

The Youth Guarantee is an EU initiative aimed at ensuring that all young unemployed people under 25, whether registered with employment services or not, will get a good quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or education and training place within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Each Member State has been asked to prepare a National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. The Department of Social Protection is leading this in Ireland and an inter-Departmental Committee has been established for this purpose.

Member States are being asked or prioritise youth employment measures within national budgets, and this work is being supported by the European Social Fund, and a €6bn Youth Employment Initiative for the period 2014-2020. Of the latter, €3bn will come from a dedicated Youth Employment budget and €3bn from the ESF. Given current budgetary difficulties, only the European Social Funding will require Member States to provide matching funding. The €6bn is to be front loaded over 2014 and 2015. The Youth Employment Initiative is being targeted towards countries where youth unemployment is at least 25%. Youth unemployment in Ireland averaged 28% in 2013.

Proposals are currently being finalised in Ireland both for the new round of EU structural funds from 2014 to 2020, and for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. While apprenticeship is a demand-led programme, where specific referrals are not currently made by the public employment service as is the case with some other training programmes, it has an important contribution to make to reducing youth unemployment. Ireland's share of aid under both measures is expected to be of the order of €136m at current prices and apprenticeship will be considered for assistance.

³⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

Conclusions

This Chapter sets out the labour market and policy context for apprenticeships and education and training programmes in Ireland, the recent policy reports and the developments at a European Level. In spite of rapidly increasing higher education participation, significant challenges remain in terms of the high rates of unemployment, the proportion of those in the labour force, both employed and unemployed, with low skills, the low ranking of Ireland in the recent PIAAC study, and the relative weakness of FET programmes in helping people to access employment. However, reforms are under way with the establishment of SOLAS and the ETBs and the implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.

Apprenticeship reviews are also under way in Northern Ireland and in England. In Europe major programmes of co-operation have been signed to promote models of best practice in apprenticeship across Member States and the Alliance for Apprenticeships and the use of EU Structural Funds are seen as key methods to achieve this objective. Apprenticeships are viewed as vitally important as a means to promote a highly skilled workforce and to address unemployment, and a way of forging close links between education and training providers and enterprises.

Chapter 3

Existing Apprenticeships and Other Further Education and Training Programmes.

3.1 Legislative base for current apprenticeship system

The main legislation governing apprenticeships is set out in the *1967 Industrial Training Act, the 1987 Labour Services Act, and SI 168/1997 Labour Services Act 1987 – Apprenticeship Rules*.³⁹ The National Training Fund Act 2000 provided for a levy on employers to be paid into a National Training Fund, and also repealed a number of sections within the Industrial Training Act of 1967.

The 1967 Act established ANCO (An Chomhairle Oiliuna), gave it the power, among other functions, to provide for vocational training including apprenticeships, the power to charge a levy on employers, to establish a register of apprentices, and the power to make rules governing apprenticeships, subject to consultation with the industrial training committee representing workers and employers and the Minister for Education.

An apprentice is defined in the Act as a person employed by way of apprenticeship in a designated industrial activity and includes any person to whom regulations under section 28 of the Act applies.

The Act defined an “*activity of industry*” as any activity of commerce, of a trade or occupation, but excluded primary production in agriculture, horticulture or fishing and excluded any activity of a professional occupation. In order to establish an apprenticeship in any occupation, SOLAS is required, by Section 23 of the 1967 Act, to first designate the relevant activity of industry as a “designated industrial activity” by an Industrial Training Order. This order must be laid before both houses of the Oireachtas before becoming active.

Where an Industrial Training Order has been made, SOLAS, in accordance with Section 27 of the Act, may make rules in relation to the employment in the relevant designated industrial training activity of apprentices of a particular class including specifying the form of contract to be used for such employment.

³⁹ www.irishstatutebook.ie

Section 28 of the Act gives power to SOLAS, to declare that every person employed in a particular manner in a Designated Industrial Activity by a particular employer shall be deemed to be an apprentice for the purposes of the Act.

Therefore apprenticeships are confined to cases where ANCO (and now SOLAS) makes a formal designation of an industrial activity as an apprenticeship, under an Industrial Training Order which must be laid before the Oireachtas. Before doing so, employer and employee organisations representing substantial numbers in the activity must be consulted.

The Act provided that such apprentices could only be recruited with the approval of ANCO. Section 32 of the Act obliges employers to release apprentices for the off the job phases and for examinations without reduction of wages or increase in hours of employment. It also provides that pay may be deducted from an apprentice for non-attendance except where this is due to sickness or other unavoidable cause.

The *Labour Services Act 1987* provided for the dissolution of ANCO and the establishment of FAS, and the transfer of a range of functions to FAS including ANCO's training functions.

SI 168/1997 Labour Services Act 1987 - Apprenticeship Rules 1997 set out the minimum age and entry standards, provided for a vision test where necessary, precluded an employer from charging a fee or other consideration for an apprenticeship and set out rules governing dismissal and termination of contract in the event of consistent failure to meet the standards required. The Rules also required employers to demonstrate to FAS that they have the capacity to provide the on the job training required, and to provide relevant release for the off the job phases. The modules of training for the on and off the job phases were to be determined by FAS following consultation with the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee or other appropriate body or bodies as determined by FAS.

An apprentice is employed and paid under a Contract of Apprenticeship. For most purposes, he/she is treated as an employee. However,

- a person serving an apprenticeship who is dismissed within a month of the end of the apprenticeship period is not covered under the Redundancy Payments Acts 1967 (Section 7.4)

- a person serving under a designated statutory apprenticeship who is dismissed within 6 months of starting or within 1 month of completing an apprenticeship is not covered by the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977 (Section 4)⁴⁰.
- the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 does not apply to persons serving in designated statutory apprenticeships (Section 5).
- the Protection of Employment (Fixed Term Work Act) 2003 does not apply to a person serving under a contract of apprenticeship.

The *Further Education and Training Act 2013* provided for the dissolution of FAS and the transfer of its functions to An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS). On 29 October 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment of SOLAS. In partnership with the 16 new education and training boards, SOLAS will be responsible for the integration, co-ordination and funding of the wide range of training and further education programmes around Ireland. One of its first tasks will be to devise a strategy for the development of a unified further education and training sector.

Education and Training Boards were established under the *Education and Training Boards Act 2013*, which provided for the dissolution of the VECs. The ETBs main role is to provide and maintain recognised schools, and centres for education or training, including providing programmes of further education and training in their catchment areas.

3.2 Operation of current apprenticeship programme.

SOLAS now has responsibility for the operation of apprenticeships in the following areas:-

⁴⁰ This exclusion does not apply if the dismissal is on grounds of trade union membership or active or on grounds related to pregnancy or maternity

Current Apprenticeship Trades

Construction sector	Brick and Stonelaying Carpentry and Joinery Floor and Wall tiling Painting and Decorating Plastering Plumbing Wood Manufacturing and Finishing
Electrical sector	Electrician Electrical Instrumentation Instrumentation Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Aircraft Mechanics Electronic Security Systems
Motor Sector	Agricultural Mechanics Construction Plant Fitting Heavy Vehicle Mechanics Motor Mechanics Vehicle Body Repairs
Engineering	Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting Metal Fabrication Sheet Metal Work Toolmaking Industrial Insulation Farriery
Printing sector	Print Media

All programmes currently lead to awards at Level 6 Advanced in the National Framework of Qualifications. However a review is currently under way which will result in the programmes for each occupation being given an individual placement in the NFQ. This review will also make recommendations on programme duration and structure and review content in the light of current labour market needs.

Currently all programmes are of 4 years duration, except for printing which is 3 years. The majority of programmes are distributed over 7 phases as follows:-

Current
Apprenticeship
Phases

Phase	Delivered By	Minimum Duration
1	Employer	12 weeks
2	Education and Training Boards (Formerly FAS)	20 weeks
3	Employer	26 weeks
4	Institutes of Technology *	10 or 11 weeks
5	Employer	26 weeks
6	Institutes of Technology *	10 or 11 weeks
7	Employer	12 weeks

*The main providers are Institutes of Technology, but two Colleges of Further Education also provide these phases. Some trades have different Phase 4 or 6 durations from these standard ones. Industrial Insulation, Print Media and Floor and Wall Tiling have 5 phases.

In practice, much more time than the minimum shown above is spent in the workplace over a 4 year period.

Apprenticeships are overseen by a National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee which advises the Board of SOLAS and includes representation from the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS, Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology Apprenticeship Committee (representing IoTs and FE colleges), employers and trade unions. The Committee also advises on the designation of new occupations in apprenticeship training, based on scoping studies. The NAAC establishes expert working groups representative of the main stakeholders to develop guidelines on curricula, and a small group of experts, also representing the stakeholders, then develops the curricula in accordance with the guidelines.

Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age on entry. The entry requirements are set at a minimum of 5 Grade Ds at Junior Certificate or equivalent, or successful completion of an approved pre-apprenticeship course, or at least three years' work experience approved by SOLAS. In practice c 73% of entrants had the Leaving Certificate in 2012, having risen from 53% in 2002, but there are considerable variations in entry levels from one trade to another.

3.3 Strengths and weaknesses

A Background Issues Paper on Apprenticeships was published by the Department of Education and Skills in May 2013 as an input to the Review. It points to the strengths of the apprenticeship system in Ireland in terms of

- positive feedback from employers and learners,
- excellent performance in World Skills Competitions,
- the significant contribution of craftspersons to energy provision, infrastructural development, manufacturing, the high technology sector, transport and construction
- a practical opportunity to earn and learn for young people and an attractive alternative to entry to higher education
- the opportunity to mature and assume adult roles, and gain confidence and independence, while being able to apply theoretical education and training in a real work setting
- close partnerships between education, training providers and employers, with the active participation of trade unions, providing a structured programme of on and off the job learning.

Those who complete apprenticeships are awarded a National Craft Certificate which is recognised at Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications, and is aligned with Level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework. Irish apprentices are in high demand internationally. Apprenticeships are also seen as an important progression route for those who leave school early, although the vast majority of entrants (73% in 2011) held a Leaving Certificate.

Weaknesses are not related to the quality of the programme per se, but are largely related to

- an over dependence on the construction sector, with the result that apprentices were disproportionately affected when the sector collapsed
- peaks and valleys in recruitment in times of economic boom and retrenchment, with its impact on future skills labour supply and associated challenges for education and training providers and for investment in staffing and infrastructure. Apprenticeship registrations rose to a peak of 8305 in 2005, and fell to 1434 in 2012

- the number of apprentices made redundant during training without qualifications following the collapse of the construction sector. This was addressed by providing alternative placements with other employers and by increasing the number of apprenticeships in public sector organisations under the Redundant Apprentices Placement Scheme.
- employer controlled recruitment, without reference to national needs, leads to downstream increased State expenditure
- predominantly male recruitment raising issues of equity
- the rigidity of a 4 year programme for all trades except printing, and a single award at Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications
- high costs for the off the job phases, vis a vis other vocational education and training programmes.
- a somewhat rigid legislative base which makes it difficult to adapt or develop new programmes in line with changing needs

3.4 Costs of apprenticeships.

The employer meets the cost of on the job training for 170 of the 210 weeks of the programme, and pays the apprentice a wage during this period. Employers also pay a levy of 0.7% of payroll costs to the National Training Fund in respect of PRSI classes A and H which goes towards the cost of training for the employed, and those seeking employment. This was reduced in 2011 to 0.35% for certain employees as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative.

The State bears the cost of the 40 weeks of on the job training, and the cost of the apprentice's wage for this period, and is reimbursed part of this cost from the National Training Fund. The costs for 2011 are shown overleaf:-

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Apprenticeship Costs – State outlay only	
	€m
	2011
FAS costs, excluding student charges and apprentice allowances	€13.376
Education sector costs	€35.716
Student charge paid by SOLAS	€2.308
Apprentice allowance paid by SOLAS during off the job phases	€36.404
Income from exam fees	-€0.900
	€86.904
No of graduates from Phases 2, 4 and 6	7,418
	€11,715
Cost per apprentice per calendar year	
Unit cost p.a net of allowances	€6809
Nett cost after NTF, including allowances	€4705

The figures above are based on using only the students in Phases 2, 4 and 6 to arrive at a unit cost, as the State only pays for these phases. However, the NESC report referred to on p70 uses the total number of students, 9000, over all phases, to arrive at a unit cost.

Based on the gross costs to the State, and the throughput over phases 2, 4 and 6, the estimated cost of apprenticeship over the duration of the programme is estimated at

€20,540 per apprentice for programme delivery and support
 €14,750 per apprentice for allowance costs
 €35,290 per apprentice

In 2011, a total of €316m was paid into the National Training Fund by employers and total expenditure for that year was €326.269m. The Fund contributed in the region of €52m to the costs of the apprenticeship programme in 2011. When this contribution is offset against the State outlay, the average annual net cost per apprentice was €4705.

Comparable figures for annual unit costs for delivery of laboratory based courses such as engineering and science at undergraduate Levels 6, 7 and 8 in 2010/11 for whole-time equivalent students were €10,233 in the IOT sector, and €11,755 in the university sector. These figures reflect expenditure by the institutions only and exclude student support grants. An apprentice is compared to a HE student within the HE sector on the basis of being 0.5 of a whole time equivalent student.

3.5 International Comparison of Apprentice Pay⁴¹

The table overleaf is extracted from a report on An International Comparison of Apprentice Pay prepared by London Economics for the Low Pay Commission.

When the percentages shown are converted into sterling rates per hour, it will be seen that the rates of apprentice pay in Ireland are high compared with most countries, with the exception of Australia, Denmark and Sweden.

⁴¹Pay<http://londoneconomics.co.uk/practice-area/labour-market-economics/> not published yet

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

International Comparison of Apprentice Pay - London Economics

Apprentice Pay in Sterling as % of fully qualified rate

		Fully Qualified Rate	Year 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Australia	All	£17.74	42%	42%	64%	70%	
Austria	All	£11.23	25%	33%	44%	53%	
Belgium	All	£13.85	21%	23%	25%	26%	28%
Denmark	Construction	£18.63	38%	45%	55%	64%	
France	Under 18		16%	24%	34%		
	18-20	£12.57	26%	31%	42%		
	21 or over		34%	39%	50%		
Germany	All	£16.41	21%	24%	27%	28%	
Ireland	Engineering	£14.86	30%	45%	65%	80%	
	Construction	£15.15	33%	50%	75%	90%	
	Automotive	£13.36	33%	50%	75%	90%	
	Paper/Printing	£9.74	75%	80%	90%		
	Electrical	£18.26	30%	45%	65%	80%	
Italy	Construction Level 3	£7.63	74%	79%	86%	91%	96%
Netherlands	Starting age 17	£16.25	31%	38%	45%	52%	
New Zealand	All	£13.72	43%	43%	43%		
Spain	All	£9.64	31%	36%			
Sweden	School based <20		46%	50%	54%	63%	74%
	Firm Based <20	£15.97	36%	44%	53%	63%	74%
	>20		54%	59%	63%	74%	
Switzerland	All	£22.95	9%	13%	17%	20%	
England		£11.89	51%	47%	62%		
Scotland		£12.84	42%	50%	54%		
Wales		£10.96	63%	62%	61%		
Northern Ireland		£10.50	57%	53%	58%		

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Apprentice Pay per hour in Sterling based on table above

		Fully Qualified Rate	Year 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Australia	All	£17.74	£7.45	£7.45	£11.35	£12.42	£0.00
Austria	All	£11.23	£2.81	£3.71	£4.94	£5.95	£0.00
Belgium	All	£13.85	£2.91	£3.19	£3.46	£3.60	£3.88
Denmark	Construction	£18.63	£7.08	£8.38	£10.25	£11.92	£0.00
France	Under 18	£12.57	£2.01	£3.02	£4.27	£0.00	£0.00
	18-20	£12.57	£3.27	£3.90	£5.28	£0.00	£0.00
	21 or over	£12.57	£4.27	£4.90	£6.29	£0.00	£0.00
Germany	All	£16.41	£3.45	£3.94	£4.43	£4.59	£0.00
Ireland	Engineering	£14.86	£4.46	£6.69	£9.66	£11.89	£0.00
	Construction	£15.15	£5.00	£7.58	£11.36	£13.64	£0.00
	Automotive	£13.36	£4.41	£6.68	£10.02	£12.02	£0.00
	Paper/Printing	£9.74	£7.31	£7.79	£8.77	£0.00	£0.00
	Electrical	£18.26	£5.48	£8.22	£11.87	£14.61	£0.00
Italy	Construction Level 3	£7.63	£5.65	£6.03	£6.56	£6.94	£7.32
Netherlands	Starting age 17	£16.25	£5.04	£6.18	£7.31	£8.45	£0.00
New Zealand	All	£13.72	£5.90	£5.90	£5.90	£0.00	£0.00
Spain	All	£9.64	£2.99	£3.47	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Sweden	School based <20	£15.97	£7.35	£7.99	£8.62	£10.06	£11.82
	Firm Based <20	£15.97	£5.75	£7.03	£8.46	£10.06	£11.82
	>20	£15.97	£8.62	£9.42	£10.06	£11.82	£0.00
Switzerland	All	£22.95	£2.07	£2.98	£3.90	£4.59	£0.00
England		£11.89	£6.06	£5.59	£7.37	£0.00	£0.00
Scotland		£12.84	£5.39	£6.42	£6.93	£0.00	£0.00
Wales		£10.96	£6.90	£6.80	£6.69	£0.00	£0.00
Northern Ireland		£10.50	£5.99	£5.57	£6.09	£0.00	£0.00

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

3.6 Recruitment levels.

Change in New Apprentice Registrations by Trade and Calendar Year																2013 Estimate
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Construction Family of Trades																
Carpentry	1,180	1430	1617	1667	1547	1849	2089	2124	1907	1353	511	140	96	72	91	90
Cabinet Making	230	288	303	287	235	216	194	179	207	154	75	21	9	Recruitment ceased		
Wood Machinist	51	40	37	37	22	15	24	15	14	13	4	3	0	Recruitment ceased		
Wood Manufacturing											New Trade		13	15	12	20
Brickwork	339	368	441	416	441	549	677	599	473	247	57	20	10	11	6	5
Plasterwork	163	175	188	201	186	268	310	278	220	143	57	14	12	5	4	5
Floor & Wall Tiler	11	10	29	31	39	37	36	41	32	43	12	4	4	1	1	0
Painter and Decorator	120	136	159	148	151	139	157	149	161	113	62	19	8	18	11	10
Plumbing	589	689	827	857	730	938	1,249	1,251	1,500	1,039	453	127	91	146	97	155
Electrical Family of Trades																
Electrician	1,659	1,919	2,150	2,156	1,814	1,766	2,028	2,160	2,269	2,054	1,106	523	373	355	397	430
Instrumentation	42	31	36	38	24	20	17	19	17	19	7	4	2	4	8	5
Electrical Instrument	31	50	29	41	37	41	43	39	46	56	37	24	15	18	24	40
Refrigeration	79	79	101	77	78	74	88	88	106	117	83	27	26	29	34	45
Electronic Security								New Trade		12	51	16	11	8	7	10
Aircraft Mechanic	56	84	81	82	60	28	28	33	56	66	24	21	18	35	36	40
Network Technician			55	Single Year Recruitment Only												
Motor Family of Trades																
Motor	433	472	550	493	458	418	404	453	439	450	415	158	191	221	253	265
Vehicle Body Repair	90	116	140	117	93	101	102	111	95	69	109	50	28	32	23	25
Construction Plant	92	87	91	114	82	83	102	103	87	94	64	26	30	32	45	55
Heavy Vehicle Mech	133	155	135	142	193	142	104	136	135	149	117	92	65	59	74	90
Agricultural Mech	52	53	58	65	67	45	50	51	51	62	48	18	26	21	19	30
Motor & Heavy Vehicle Mechanic Combined																
Engineering Family of Trades																
Metal Fabrication	318	324	340	242	266	256	223	199	198	190	192	87	57	60	103	125
Toolmaker	150	110	124	105	43	46	39	34	33	15	21	18	31	42	57	75
MAM Fitter	350	378	403	322	229	212	180	166	171	203	134	69	65	101	110	135
Sheet Metal Worker	101	117	105	111	98	69	74	67	46	51	68	31	10	8	11	20
Industrial Insulation								New Trade		7	7	3	5	0	1	0
Farriery								New Trade			21	6	3	9	5	0
Print Family of Trades																
Printer	30	37	35	23	10	18	15	10	20	44	30	14	4	5	5	10
Bookbinder	7	19	14	6	7	2	1	0	5 Recruitment Ceased							
Originator			8	12	5	5	2	0	2 Recruitment Ceased							
Carton Maker	6	0	2	1	1	Recruitment Ceased										
Annual Totals	6312	7167	8058	7791	6916	7337	8236	8305	8290	6763	3765	1535	1203	1307	1434	1685
Per Cent Change/yr		+14%	+12%	-3%	-11%	+6%	+12%	+1%	-0%	-18%	-44%	-59%	-22%	+9%	+10%	+18%
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013

With the collapse in the construction sector, recruitment into apprenticeships is now at 20% of its peak year. However, there is evidence of recovery over the 2011 base, with intake increasing by 10% in 2012 and a further estimated 18% increase in 2013.

3.7 Future Demand Forecasts for Existing Trades

A Department of Education and Skills inter-agency study group forecasts future intake into apprenticeship, and revises its estimates annually in the light of the most recent available economic data. Based on the data up to September 2013 and on economic growth forecasts (from DKM Economic Consultants in the case of the construction related trades and the Central Bank and ESRI in the case of non-construction trades), the following scenarios of apprentice recruitment are predicted in the December 2013 report, which covers the period up to and including 2017. For statistical reasons it is not possible to make forecasts where occupational populations are low, so the forecasts are limited to 14 trades of the 25 existing trades. However these 14 trades cover over 87% of all apprentices recruited in 2012.

Construction Trades Forecasts

Construction Related Trades Apprentice Recruitment Forecasts to 2017

Trade	Apprentice intake level		Baseline forecast in 2017	Optimistic forecast in 2017
	Actual 2012 intake	Peak intake		
Electrician	397	2,269	795	1,125
Carpenter/joiner	91	2,124	610	855
Plumber	97	1,500	350	495
Bricklayer	6	679	165	225
Plasterer	4	310	80	110
Painter/decorator	11	161	55	75
Wood manufacturer/finisher	11	340	100	140
Construction plant fitter	45	114	40	60
Total	662	7,497	2,195	3,085

The main difference between the Baseline and Optimistic Forecasts is use of a higher projected rate of residential unit construction in the Optimistic forecast than in the Baseline forecast from the year 2015 onwards. The Forecasting Group recommends that the more conservative Baseline forecast should be adopted for now and reviewed again in 2014, when economic stability may be clearer. Both forecasts predict a recovery to substantial growth from about 700 recruits in 2012 to either 2,200 or 3,100 in 2017 in the construction sector, depending on the

growth scenario, and mainly occurring in 2015, 2016 and 2017. SOLAS, ETBs and IoTs will experience an increased wave of demand from 2015 onwards in the case of SOLAS and 2016 onwards in the case of Phase 4 and Phase 6 providers.

Non-Construction Trades Forecasts

Forecasting of recruitment to non-construction trades is based on more uniform predictions of future economic activity, but is made difficult because some occupation populations are below statistical reliability norms for some years in the surveyed past period. This could result in unstable recruitment ratio calculations. Consequently, for statistical reasons, forecasts for Tool making and for Refrigeration Craftspersons are not made for some scenarios.

The recruitment ratio of apprentices to craftspersons is calculated in two scenarios, one where the ratio is the average ratio over the period 2007-2012, the second where the ratio is based on the 2012 outturn alone.

The forecasts for non-construction trades show limited growth from current levels to 2017 and are forecast to reach about 41% of peak recruitment values in that year.

Non-construction related trades - apprentice intake forecasts for 2017				
			2007-2012 ratio scenario	2012 ratio scenario
Peak Intake is the highest intake since 1998	2012 Intake	Peak intake level	Forecast 2017 Intake	Forecast 2017 Intake
Mechanic (heavy vehicle and motor)	327	688	360	340
Vehicle body repairer	23	140	50	30
Fitter	110	403	110	120
Toolmaker	57	150	N/A	55
Refrigeration craftsperson	34	117	55	N/A
Aircraft mechanic	36	84	35	45
Total except for Toolmaking and Refrigeration	496	1315	555	535

Note: Toolmaking and Refrigeration cannot be included in the totals because no prediction is made for toolmaking in one scenario, while no prediction for refrigeration is made in the other scenario.

3.8 Background Issues Paper

The Background Issues Paper poses a number of issues for consideration in the review under the key headings of governance, funding, recruitment, providers and delivery methods, curriculum and award, duration, range of occupations and alternative pathways. It presents examples of other Irish and international models.

On the question of planning the number of training places for apprenticeship, the report presents a number of models for consideration:-

- (a) a planned recruitment model under which a recruitment quota would be agreed between employers and the State on a 2-3 year rolling basis, setting the upper limit of allowable apprentices for each trade.
- (b) a capacity limited model under which a recruitment target would be agreed as above, and the State would provide State training places up to that level. If employers wished to recruit above that level, they would be required to form an industry training network and provide and fund the training themselves.
- (c) a sub-contracted model under which training courses outside the main provision could be sub contracted to private colleges or industry providers for limited periods.

3.9 Delivery models

The Paper also described a number of potential delivery models:-

- a blended on the job/off the job model, either the same as, or a variation of the current phased model
- an Institute of Technology pre-apprenticeship model – a stand-alone programme in an Institute of Technology leading to a Higher Certificate, followed by an industry training period leading to the award of craftsperson at Level 6 or 7 as appropriate.
- an Education and Training Board pre-apprenticeship model for some or all of a pre-apprenticeship programme
- a trade dependent pre-apprenticeship model – with the majority being delivered by ETBs, but the Institutes of Technology providing for more technologically or capital intensive programmes

- a non-statutory based scheme – this might be a development of FAS traineeships or PLC programmes combining on and off the job elements
- an industry provided model, with the State only involved in a regulatory and quality assurance role, perhaps using enterprise led learning networks, such as Skillnets
- or a hybrid system – a system using different models of delivery for different occupations

These issues are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.10 Other Further Education and Training Programmes.

Both the Background Issues Paper and the NESC *Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed* set out information on other education and training programmes in the further education sector. A summary is given of the available data in the table overleaf.

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland
Outcomes from Further Education And Training Programmes

Full-time							Progression		
	Participant s	Gross Cost	Nett cost	Unit cost Net of allowanc e	Duration	Target Group	Gain employe nt	Furthe r learn	Certificatio n
PLC courses	35609	£170,000,000	£170,000,000	£4,775	1-2 years	school leavers and re-entrants	25%	33%	72%
VTOS	5637	£80,000,000	£34,300,000	£6,084	1-2 years	Unemployed+other welfare	19%	44%	73%
Youthreach	3700	£70,000,000	£50,700,000	£13,703	2 years	ESL	13%	45%	75%
Apprenticeships	9000	£87,800,000	£51,400,000	£6,929	40 wks /4 yrs	labour market entrants /re-entrants			
Traineeships	5000	£34,400,000	£12,100,000	£2,420	c 40 wks	unemployed	60%	15%	
Specific Skills	16300	£66,100,000	£25,600,000	£1,570	c32 wks	unemployed	43%	29%	80%
Momentum	6500	£20,000,000	£20,000,000	£3,077	20-24 wks	100% LTU			
FAS CTC	3600	£40,400,000	£26,000,000	£7,222	1 year	ESL	26%	20%	
Spec Tr Prov	3300	£52,100,000	£30,800,000	£9,333		disabled			
Part time									
BTEI part time	32066	£23,000,000	£22,800,000	£717	400 hrs pa	20% LTU, 60% Less Upper sec	3%	58%	43%
FAS Bridging	2200	£5,200,000	£1,700,000	£773	ave 3.3 days	5% LTU	35%	15%	47%
Local Trn Init	4600	£31,500,000	£4,200,000	£913	ave 13.5 days	56% LTU	41%	16%	67%

* this differs from the unit cost shown earlier in that all 9000 apprentices are counted, whereas only 7418 in Phases 2,4 and 6 incurred a cost to the State
Very short programmes of a limited nature, such as Adult Literacy, or short Skillnets courses, and fee paying programmes have not been included above.

The Background Issues Paper indicates that of those who were registered in the programme over the years 1993 to 2011, (statistics beyond 2011 would have included data on apprentices who are still engaged in training) 61% successfully completed the programme, 16% were still in training, and 23% either did not achieve the standard or left the trade. Information on employment outcomes is not provided.

*A Working Paper Where do FETAC (QQI) award holders go?*⁴² was published by Quality and Qualifications Ireland in May 2013. Through a data matching exercise done with the co-operation of the Central Statistics Office, the HEA, the QQI, Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection, the study examined the outcomes of those who received further education awards in 2009. It showed the following full awards

FETAC Full Award Holders 2009

	Number	%
Level 1	63	0.2%
Level 2	176	0.6%
Level 3	2380	8.4%
Level 4	1592	5.6%
Level 5	17236	61.0%
Level 6	6794	24.1%
	28241	

Of the 2009 full award holders, 18% entered higher education in 2009/10, 21% received a FETAC award in 2010, 56% gained employment in 2010, and 2% were recorded as self-employed. The PPSN data from the HEA only covers 80% of the funded cohort, and more students could have progressed to higher education the following year. 24% received unemployment assistance or benefit at some stage during 2010. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive. Separate data is not shown by award level.

The establishment of SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards will present new opportunities for the development of an integrated data management system and the introduction of systematic tracking tools to monitor programme outcomes.

42

<http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Misc%20docs/Where%20do%20FETAC%20learners%20go%20for%20web%2021aug13rd%20rhona%20Doc.pdf>

Conclusions

While the unit cost per apprentice completion is high, given that it represents only 40 weeks State outlay, the figures are relatively modest when apprentice pay is excluded, and when the contribution of the National Training Fund is offset. However, wages paid to apprentices are high by international standards.

The main criticisms of apprenticeship relate not to the quality of the programme but rather to its rigid structure and duration, and the impact of over reliance on a small group of occupations predominantly in the construction sector. Of the remaining further education and training programmes, traineeships, which are explicitly designed based on employer needs, and include a strong work based learning element, show the best progression rates to employment.

Chapter 4

Issues raised in the Submissions

4.1 Submissions received

The Review Group developed a consultation framework for the purpose of seeking submissions on apprenticeship. This is set out in Appendix 5.

Submissions were sought by writing directly to 128 organisations representing employers, trade unions, professional bodies, education and training providers, Government Departments, and other agencies with a role or the potential to have a future role in an expanded form of apprenticeship programme. In addition, a public advertisement was placed in the national media on 28 June 2013 seeking inputs.

Written submissions were received from 69 organisations, listed in Appendix 3. Follow up meetings were held with 24 national organisations to discuss the submissions received, to identify the scope for expansion, and the potential organisations' roles in implementing new programmes. These organisations are listed in Appendix 4.

Of the submissions received

- 16 were from employer/business sector representative bodies (24%)
- 5 were from businesses (7%)
- 7 were from educational institutions (10%)
- 7 were from Government Departments or agencies (10%)
- 5 were from training organisations (7%)
- 5 were from trade unions (7%)
- 3 were from educational representative bodies (4%)
- 3 were from professional bodies (4%)
- 2 were from organisations representing persons with disabilities (3%)
- 16 (24%) were from individuals, including those operating businesses in the sectors covered by apprenticeships, those who teach or taught apprenticeship programmes, former policy makers and academic experts in apprenticeship.

The vast majority of submissions considered that the present apprenticeship system had served Ireland well and had produced a skilled workforce for the sectors concerned. Successes in the World Skills competitions, and international

demand for Irish apprentices were frequently cited. As identified in the Background Issues Paper, the weaknesses identified were

- over-reliance on a narrow group of trades, mainly in the construction sector, with the collapse of the sector making a large number of apprentices redundant
- a heavily gendered approach attracting few female participants
- high costs
- a demand led system leading to boom and retrenchment cycles, with employer controlled recruitment leading to downstream State expenditure, and knock on difficulties for instructor/lecturer employment and investment in infrastructure
- rigidity of a 4 year structure and a single award
- a somewhat rigid legislative base making it difficult to develop new programmes or adapt to changing needs.

Recommendations in the submissions

4.2 Legislation

The majority of submissions recommended that apprenticeships should have a statutory underpinning, and that there should be protections for the apprentice to ensure a quality programme, an obligation on employers to release the learner for off-the-job education and training without reduction of pay, and to have a formal contract of apprenticeship governing employment conditions.

A minority of submissions were opposed to a statutory framework for provision of an expanded apprenticeship programme. This arose from a concern that a rigid structure might stifle innovation and adaptation. They were particularly concerned that the practice of having to designate new areas of activity as apprenticeships through a Statutory Instrument laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas was inappropriate in a labour market demanding rapid adaptation and change. The overall consensus which emerged was that any legislation should be in the form of an enabling framework which:

- (a) did not require areas of training activity for apprenticeships to be individually designated

- (b) set out the distinguishing features and criteria governing apprenticeships
- (c) provided for key protections for the learner and clarified his/her employment status
- (d) empowered the development of a variety of modes of delivery
- (e) set out the broad obligations of the different parties
- (f) provided that all apprenticeships were covered by an approved contract of apprenticeship.

4.3 Governance

The majority of submissions highlighted the need for apprenticeship programmes to be employer led, through a partnership between employers, trade unions and education and training providers.

A very strong emphasis was placed by employer organisations on this issue, arguing that they had an inadequate influence over the content of existing VET programmes outside of apprenticeship, and that as a result, programmes were not responsive to labour market needs. Any new system should put employers firmly in the driving seat in identifying the occupational needs which should underpin programmes. This was not to promote an overly instrumentalist approach, but rather to ensure that graduates from apprenticeship programmes would have the mix of occupational, technical and transversal skills necessary to play an active role in their companies, supporting growth and competitiveness, and adapting rapidly to organisational culture and business processes. They would have qualifications based on industry standards which were widely recognised, easy to understand, and trusted by employers. Employer organisations and professional bodies, working with education and training providers should be central in the development of new frameworks for apprenticeships, curricula and delivery mechanisms.

Apprenticeships should have a robust regulatory structure overseen by the State and subject to the quality assurance arrangements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland. The programme should be overseen by a committee representing employers, trade unions, education and training providers (further and higher level), and the QQI. Professional bodies, where they exist, should also have a role in curriculum design. The Department of Education and Skills should play a key role in ensuring an appropriate framework, setting policy and participation targets, managing funding allocations and creating sustainable funding models

The submissions stressed the importance of having a single entity with legal responsibility for managing and co-ordinating the apprenticeship programme, and the majority saw this function as being undertaken by SOLAS.

However, *the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeships (INAP), Memorandum "An Architecture for Modern Apprenticeships – Standards for Structure, Organisation and Governance (2012)"*⁴³ points to the need for "plural governance" structures, while ensuring clarity as to the roles of each actor within the system.

One submission suggested that a small secretariat should be established jointly by SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority, staffed from each organisation, to drive liaison and co-ordination and development of a new programme. Depending on the level of the programme, curriculum development should be a function of either SOLAS or higher education providers, working to occupational standards identified by employers. Governance, management, quality assurance and funding should fall within higher education or further education structures depending on the level of the programme in the national framework of qualifications. Skills councils should be the mechanism through which standards should be identified by employers working with education and training providers. Regional skills councils building on the regional clusters announced for higher education institutions could provide for balanced regional planning and development, ensuring co-ordination between the work of education and training boards, higher education institutions and employers in meeting labour market needs.

4.4 Equity

The majority of submissions considered that an improved gender balance would best be achieved by widening the scope of apprenticeships into new areas such as business administration, ICT, social care, hospitality, financial services etc. The continuation of bursary schemes to encourage females in non-traditional areas, as well as pairing schemes under which female apprentices were placed together in a workplace were advocated. For persons with disabilities, the submissions recommended that

- a widened range of occupations would allow for greater recruitment into apprenticeships
- mandatory testing, such as colour vision tests, should continue to apply where relevant
- a scheme of reasonable accommodations should be put in place providing for adaptive technology, learning supports, mentoring, staff training and if necessary, longer time to achieve an award

⁴³ http://www.inap.uni-bremen.de/dl/memorandum_inap_commission_architecture_apprenticeship_2012.pdf

- pre-apprenticeship programmes should be provided to enable different groups to reach the entry standards for apprenticeships, and ensure the appropriate maths, science, ICT and literacy skills to equip them to follow a programme successfully
- subsidies for employers should be considered to encourage them to recruit hard to reach groups into apprenticeships.

4.5 Levels of Provision

The majority of submissions viewed apprenticeships as having the potential to lead to Level 5, 6 and 7 qualifications in the National Framework of Qualifications. This may have stemmed from a view that the key role of such programmes would be to meet intermediate and middle level skills up to technician level training, while acknowledging that the learning outcomes from some existing apprenticeships programmes might more appropriately be placed at Level 7.

However, ten submissions considered there was scope for apprenticeships at higher levels of the national framework of qualifications. Many other submissions also advocated development of a master craftsman qualification for apprenticeships, although it was unstated whether this would be through an apprenticeship mode of learning.

It should be noted that the *Memorandum of the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeships : An Architecture for Modern Apprenticeships – standards for Structure, Organisation and Governance* (2012)⁴⁴ states

"One of the main aims of this Memorandum is to address obstacles that militate against the successful establishment or expansion of modern dual VET systems. One of these is the fact that the term "apprenticeship" is associated by many policy makers, human resource managers, parents and students with an outdated concept of vocational education that does not fit the modern digital age. This is in spite of the fact that international VET research shows that the contrary is true with modern dual VET systems demonstrating their relevance in all occupational sectors. Moreover, many countries are implementing the principle of dual vocational education in third level higher education with great success".

⁴⁴ http://www.inap.uni-bremen.de/dl/memorandum_inap_commission_architecture_apprenticeship_2012.pdf

The report sets out an example for the dual track vocational training in higher education which exists in Germany leading to dual bachelor degree, masters and post graduate qualifications, with progression to doctoral programmes. The Memorandum was prepared by a commission of experts from Germany, South Africa, United States, Australia, Canada, China and the European Training Foundation.

The report *Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union*,⁴⁵ published by the European Commission in 2012 states

".. the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs proposes thirteen actions which will contribute to improving the functioning of Europe's labour market, increase job flexibility and security, provide incentives to invest in training, ensure decent working conditions and facilitate job creation. Specifically, the Agenda stresses that employers should be encouraged to co-invest and participate in the activities of education and training institutions, particularly in higher education and vocational education and training; these partnerships can develop and update skills profiles, multidisciplinary curricula and qualifications, and facilitate the provision of work-based learning, from apprenticeships to industrial PhDs"

4.6 Planning and control of numbers of apprenticeships.

It was accepted that there was a need for the State to ensure that the number of apprenticeships funded by it would depend on the skill needs of the overall economy. Many suggested that an upper and lower ceiling for recruitment to individual sectors should be planned for, informed by robust labour market intelligence and manpower forecasting. A minimum number should always be trained in order to avoid future skill shortages, and provision beyond the upper ceiling for recruitment should not be funded by the State. The upper and lower ceilings should be agreed in dialogue between the parties within the overall co-ordinating committee for apprenticeships, based on the labour market research.

It was envisaged that there could continue to be highs and lows in recruitment, depending on needs, and that contracting out delivery to private providers, and to industry trainers, could help in dealing with peak demand.

Some submissions stressed the importance of providing the opportunity for private providers and industry trainers to bid to supply apprenticeships, and that the competition would drive up the responsiveness of the statutory sector and promote improved quality.

⁴⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/forum12/supply_en.pdf

4.7 Progression

No matter what perception organisations had of the role and place of apprenticeships in Irish education and training, the vast majority of submissions stressed the importance of having seamless progression pathways from apprenticeship into higher education.

It was acknowledged that many apprentices do progress from a National Craft Certificate to degree programmes, especially in the Institute of Technology sector. However, in most cases this was on the basis of assessment by the college of their individual circumstances and prior learning on a case by case basis, and not on the basis of a clear entry entitlement publicised in advance. It was argued that unless there was transparency about entry entitlements and progression routes, the attractiveness and public perception of apprenticeships as a valued career pathway would not be improved. It should be assumed that if an applicant completes a full award at a particular level of the national framework of qualifications their learning has, in principle, equipped them to successfully enter the next level of the framework. Of course, as with the Leaving Certificate, particular subject requirements may apply, to enable a particular programme to be followed at the next level.

The majority of submissions agreed that the content of apprenticeship programmes should be designed to equip learners to progress to the next level of the national framework of qualifications.

The need was also highlighted to enable learners to progress sideways at the same level, e.g. to gain additional specialisms, to learn a foreign language etc. This was seen as particularly important in the overlap between mechanics and electronics in the motor industry, in adapting to green economy needs, for building maintenance, heritage and retro-fitting in the construction trades.

A significant number of submissions adverted to the need for a master craftsman qualification along the lines of the German model.

4.8 Recruitment

While some submissions argued for mixed modes of recruitment, this was generally in the context of an initial programme provided by an education and training institution, followed by extended training in the workplace, rather than a dual mode model with education and training interspersed by periods within a workplace setting. These submissions envisaged that the training/education provider would recruit learners for the initial stage, and employers would recruit for the workplace stage.

However, the majority of submissions considered that employers should continue to recruit apprenticeships. This was seen as essential given that they will be paying the apprentice for a long term programme, and will have a formal contract of apprenticeship.

Some submissions suggested that a database offering a service matching applicants with employers, as applies in the UK, could assist people in obtaining a suitable apprenticeship.

4.9 Entry levels

A number of submissions considered that the present entry levels, (a minimum of 5Ds in the Junior Certificate) were too low and suggested that entry should require a Leaving Certificate. However, this was accompanied by a concern not to further erode the opportunities for early school leavers and those with low skills to progress within the education and training system. The general consensus in the majority of submissions was that

- entry levels should be reviewed on a trade by trade basis
- that some programmes would need a higher level of entry, and a higher level of maths and science, if applicants were to successfully complete them
- that it may be necessary to specify specific subject requirements in maths and science for some apprenticeships as a pre-requisite to entry
- that there should be pre-apprenticeship programmes designed to prepare early school leavers or those with low skills to meet the entry criteria for apprenticeships

- that a pre-entry assessment of applicants should be undertaken where there was a doubt as to whether they were in a position to meet the entry criteria for apprenticeship

4.10 Curriculum

The consensus in the submissions was that occupational standards should be identified by an employer led process. These standards should be used to develop curricula by education and training providers working in partnership with enterprise, and professional bodies where relevant.

Within existing apprenticeships, the pace of curricular reform was criticised as being too slow, and submissions argued that some programmes were not preparing apprentices adequately for today's needs (e.g. changes in farm tractor machinery, the interface between mechanics and electronics in the motor industry, computer aided design and manufacturing in other trades, untapped opportunities in the green economy, use of modern materials in metal trades etc).

It was imperative that any expanded system would be capable of adapting quickly to changing needs. A move away from an overly centralised approach was mooted in some submissions with curriculum development being assigned to higher education institutions or education and training boards, who would engage collectively with national interest groups in its development, once occupational needs had been identified. Nonetheless, there was agreement on the need to have apprenticeships delivered in accordance with national curricula to uniform national standards. It was argued that all curricula should be reviewed a minimum of every five years, and there should be provision to adjust up to 10% of the programme content locally each year without having to re-submit the programme for validation.

4.11 Transversal skills

Transversal skills such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, maths and science, research and evaluation skills, report writing, enterprise, and the ability to apply learning in new contexts were stressed in submissions. The IBEC submission⁴⁶ states

"... successive IBEC surveys have identified key transferable skills (e.g. communication, teamworking, critical thinking, time management, adaptability, creativity and information management) as a critical education outcome. The challenge is to embed these skills in the learning environment, curriculum and assessment at all levels of education and training."

⁴⁶ <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Review-of-Apprenticeship-in-Ireland/Submissions/IBEC.pdf>

Start your own business training was recommended either as part of an apprenticeship programme or as an add on programme afterwards.

4.12 Proposals in regard to existing apprenticeship programmes.

There was a consensus that, while the quality of existing programmes was generally high, changes were needed to

- move away from a generic placement at Level 6 of the national framework of qualifications for all apprenticeship programmes
- update the curriculum for each family of trades as appropriate, and, based on the learning outcomes needed for the occupation, assign an appropriate level of certification within the national framework of qualifications
- provide for programme duration based on the time needed to achieve the learning outcomes needed for the occupation
- revise the structure of the programme as appropriate to meet the learning outcomes for the programme
- equip the participant for progression to the next level of the national framework of qualifications
- ensure the appropriate integration of transversal skills, particularly literacy, numeracy, maths, science and ICT
- review the minimum entry levels needed to successfully complete the programme and what supports in the form of pre-apprenticeship programmes might be needed to support learners to participate
- use existing e-learning resources to full effect, and develop additional resources to reinforce and support the delivery of the programme.

Curriculum review should occur on the basis of families of trades, ensuring that core common modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for additional specialised modules which focus on particular occupational requirements.

The continued need for programmes, together with the number of places needed, should be reviewed, supported by robust labour market intelligence and manpower forecasting.

As with apprenticeships in new areas, an upper and lower ceiling on recruitment levels should be examined, so that programmes are tailored to labour market needs, while avoiding future skill shortages.

Opportunities for progression should be strengthened, made more transparent and well publicised. The green economy, heritage protection, retro-fitting, sustainable energy, languages and cross disciplinary skills are all areas where progression options could be developed. A master craftsman qualification should also be considered.

Two submissions recommended that the amalgamation of Phases 4 and 6 (currently 10-11 weeks each) should be considered to provide a 20-22 week placement in the Institute of Technology sector. This would provide opportunities for increasing the intensity of off-the-job learning, for better integration of transversal skills, and provide more time for completion of portfolio work and other assignments associated with assessment. However feedback from employer groups suggests this might be problematic. A number of groups commented that Phase 2 (in a training centre for 20 weeks) was too long, and that employers had difficulty with apprentices being away from the workplace for this length of time.

One submission from an employer organisation indicated explicit opposition to the amalgamation of phases 4 and 6. This submission pointed to the increasing trend towards sub-contracting in the industry over the last decade, resulting in smaller firms. This made it imperative to keep the administrative arrangements simple, and to take full account of the difficulties smaller firms might have in scheduling work. Day release rather than block release might be preferable in some cases. In the main, the preference of education and training providers was towards block release, on the basis that this would give rise to greater continuity of learning and smoother administration. Overall, the consensus was that any new system should not be prescriptive, but provide a framework enabling a variety of models to be delivered. The motor industry submission made a plea not to take apprentices for off-the-job learning during the peak period for the trade in January to March.

One submission was opposed to a 2+2 model of provision, with the first two years in a college followed by 2 years in the work place.

4.13 Scope for expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations

Submissions pointed to apprenticeships being a tried and tested way of learning which has been successful in many countries across the EU. Many professions also have somewhat informal apprenticeships, where off the job and on the job learning form part of the process for professional recognition e.g. accountancy, law, medicine, architecture etc. It was considered that apprenticeship as a way of learning, as a dual model, and one which provides for theoretical study reinforced by practical learning and experience, was ideal as a preparation for careers in a large number of occupations. The submissions referred to the potential for apprenticeships in ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sport and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors.

However, apprenticeships would not be successful unless there was a strong commitment from employers to identifying occupational needs, recruitment and payment of apprentices, and joint collaboration with education and training providers in programme delivery. It was recommended that employer led consortia should identify the occupations which were considered by them to be suitable for apprenticeships.

A more flexible framework should be provided for the future, enabling apprenticeships to be delivered in a variety of formats at a range of levels across the national framework of qualifications. Care should be taken to pilot approaches and share best practice, and to have regard to international standards in the occupations concerned. All programmes should be designed to prepare the participant for progression.

4.14 Assessment

A number of submissions pointed to the need to strengthen the assessment of the on-the-job components of apprenticeship. It was highlighted that rotation of work based learning across more than one employer may be needed to ensure that an apprentice gets the full range of experience required by the programme. Submissions from employer and business organisations highlighted that systems need to keep bureaucracy to a minimum, and be simple and streamlined for enterprises, especially micro enterprises, to use. Most of the submissions pointed to the need for a terminal test of knowledge skills and competence at the end of an apprenticeship. Three submissions proposed joint assessment by independent representatives of industry and education/training providers, within the overall quality assurance and assessment processes of the QQI.

On the question of whether learners should have the opportunity to gain a partial award during their apprenticeship, the submissions recognised, for the most part, the need for appropriate recognition of learning at key stages during the programme. However, there was a concern to avoid ambiguity, and to make it clear that a learner could not be regarded as a qualified worker until they had completed a full apprenticeship. To do otherwise would put the credibility and quality of the overall programme at risk.

4.15 Accreditation of Prior Learning.

The submissions recognised the importance of ensuring appropriate recognition of prior learning in the recruitment and delivery of apprenticeships. This is an obligation on providers of education and training under Section 56 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.⁴⁷

4.16 Branding and Awareness measures.

Submissions stressed the importance of maintaining a high quality brand image for apprenticeships and protecting the strengths of the existing system. They pointed to the societal pressures on young people to opt for higher education and the need to promote apprenticeship programmes as a valued career pathway with good progression opportunities which attracted parity of esteem. Sustained awareness campaigns would be needed to convince learners and employers of the benefits of apprenticeships. Guidance staff and parents would also need to be targeted. The HEA submission⁴⁸ states

"Apprenticeships should be promoted as an established high status mode of training within the continuum of State education and training. Apprenticeship occupations should have a clear brand image, with clear public recognition of the well-defined occupational role and status of any apprenticeship occupation. Long term persistent promotion campaigns should be undertaken to embed knowledge of the apprenticeship pathway among guidance staff, employment support systems, employers, employees, parents and students."

4.17 Funding

Varying views on the issue of funding were expressed in the submissions, with no consensus emerging.

⁴⁷ <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2012/a2812.pdf>

⁴⁸ <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Review-of-Apprenticeship-in-Ireland/Submissions/Higher-Education-Authority-HEA-.pdf>

One submission proposed that public funding for the education/training element of apprenticeships should be routed through employers, thus driving up quality and reducing costs. This is the route being proposed in the English review of apprenticeships. Another submission recommended that provision should largely be in the statutory sector, and that this would help safeguard the quality and consistency of provision.

Most submissions agreed on the need for an equitable tripartite sharing of costs between employers, learners and the State. The majority of submissions considered that the State should continue to bear the costs of the off the job delivery of education and training, as is the norm across Europe.

On the issue of the apprentice wage, a small number of submissions considered it was too high and should be reviewed, and that it was an obstacle to recruitment. However, some argued that the apprentice was already paying a fair share of the costs in accepting a wage below that of a fully qualified worker, and below the national minimum wage in the early stages of the programme.

Many employer organisations were adamant that they could not absorb more costs. Employers pay the apprentice wage for 170 weeks of the 210 week programme at present, meet the on the job training costs, and contribute 0.7% of payroll to the National Training Fund. Some submissions argued that the National Training Fund should be refocused to more explicitly cover the costs of work based learning programmes, particularly those in small and medium sized enterprises.

Suggestions for reducing costs were made as follows:-

- reduce the length of apprenticeships. (However, some submissions indicated that the off the job components were not long enough and that Phase 4 and 6 should be extended. It is likely that any reduction in the duration of the existing apprenticeships would primarily reduce costs for the employer.)
- treat the apprentice as a third level student while on off the job placement, similar to practice with nursing. (However, it would give rise to variations in income which might be untenable for apprentices with families)
- treat the apprentice as a third level student for the first two years of apprenticeship, delivered entirely in an off the job setting, and leading to the award of Higher Certificate. This would be followed by on the job placement with an employer, with the apprentice being

paid a wage for this phase. This is similar to the 2+2 model described for Norway in the Background Issues paper.

- pay an allowance equivalent to the standard training allowances on other VET programmes.
- pay an allowance equivalent to the standard training allowances on other VET programmes for the first 3 years of training, and have the employer pay a wage in the fourth year.
- enable employers to top up a JobBridge payment

Some submissions proposed that in an expanded model of apprenticeships in new areas of activity, the question of a wage should be a matter for individual employers.

Many submissions from employer representative groups suggesting expansion to new occupations envisaged that the State would bear the cost of the payment to the apprentice, at least in the initial years of the programme, mainly in the form of a training allowance. There was not a clear understanding in these proposals of the apprentice as an employee with a contract of apprenticeship. Rather, some confusion with traineeships and internships emerged.

It is notable that the submission by Professor Felix Rauner of the TVET Research Unit in the University of Bremen says

"Different research has – among others – already been undertaken at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education (BIBB, Germany) as well as the University of Berne (Switzerland), and the University of Bremen with the aim to collect data on cost and monetary returns of in-company training. One central result of such studies is that in-company training can be organised as a self-financing system, provided that learning takes place in real work processes and apprentices are able to contribute to the company's work (Wolter/Ryhan 2011, Rauner et al 2010, Brown/Hauschildt 2011).⁴⁹

The main direct costs of in-company training include apprentice wages, the wages of trainer specialists for the time they oversee apprentices, materials, and the costs of additional space and material required for apprenticeship. The benefits include the value of production generated by

⁴⁹ <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Review-of-Apprenticeship-in-Ireland/Submissions/Prof-Felix-Rauner.pdf>

the apprentice, sometimes separated by whether the activities would otherwise have been performed by skill or unskilled workers. A common and realistic assumption is that, as the years in training take place, the apprentice's work contributions increasingly substitute for tasks undertaken by skilled workers (for an overview on existing studies, see Lerman 2013 forthcoming).

Such studies on cost-benefit relations in apprenticeship (namely the in-company training part of apprenticeship) in countries with an integrated dual VET system give reason to the argument, that apprenticeship needs no state subsidies for companies.

IRELAND: One of the most striking problems of the Irish apprenticeship system is a financial one. The Irish state should no longer be in charge of paying allowances to learners. Its share in the financial support of the system should be limited to the provision of the theoretical knowledge (FÁS, technical college, vocational schools etc)."

4.18 Incentives for employers to recruit.

Submissions proposed that employers should be paid a subsidy to recruit apprentices when national need for places exceeded supply. In other countries, subsidies are paid to employers in respect of hard to reach groups, such as those with low skills, those who have been unemployed a long time, persons with disabilities etc. Some submissions suggested the JobsPlus scheme should be expanded to apprenticeships. Others were critical of any scheme paying an employer subsidy unless it was expressly linked with the provision of education and training and the achievement of a nationally recognised qualification.

The report "*Apprenticeship and Traineeship in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Makers and Practitioners*"⁵⁰ published in June 2013 by the European Commission, Ecorys, IES and LRS, shows that in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom, employers are paid a subsidy in some form for recruitment of at least some groups of apprentices. This can take the form of a completion bonus, a subsidy or tax or social insurance relief.

A number of submissions suggested that, when tendering for public service contracts, e.g. for major infrastructural projects, it should be a requirement on

⁵⁰ *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors. A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners.* European Union 2013.

proposers that they recruit apprentices. The feasibility of this should be further explored, if it can be done legitimately within EU tendering rules.

4.19 Licence to practice.

Four submissions urged that a licensing system be introduced for those who completed an apprenticeship programme, giving them a license to practice their occupation. Under this arrangement only those who held the national qualification would be entitled to use the title pertaining to the occupation concerned. Employers would have to use only qualified persons who had been granted the licence for the occupation. This is on a par with the systems which operate in Germany and Austria, where apprenticeship is a significant mode of training, and where a large number of occupations are regulated by the State. In contrast, Ireland has at present only a small number of regulated professions.

Conclusions

There was a considerable degree of agreement in the submissions on the changes which should be made to existing apprenticeships, the scope for expanding apprenticeships into new areas, and the degree to which the system should be underpinned by an enterprise led partnership of employers, trade unions, and education and training providers. There were varying views on possible funding models. All agreed costs should be shared between the State, the apprentice and the employer. Submissions envisaged a new apprenticeship system as playing a significant role in promoting a highly skilled workforce and tackling unemployment.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Benefits of apprenticeship

Apprenticeship, the oldest type of vocational education, has experienced a revival in recent years. Many countries are newly adopting apprenticeships based on what is termed the ‘dual system’ of vocational education, combining workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom teaching in an educational institution. The major objectives of such systems include

- better coordination between vocational education and training providers and employers ensuring relevance to labour market needs
- a stronger role for employers and social partners in the design and assessment of programmes
- improving the competitiveness of companies and promoting dynamic learning organisations
- providing a skilled workforce
- promoting consistent national standards in line with best international practice
- promoting employment opportunities for young people, thus facilitating transition from school-to-work
- opening up rewarding careers for a large segment of the population.
- enabling participants to earn and learn and acquire a national qualification which equips them for a specific occupational pathway
- ensuring that theoretical learning in an education or training institution is reinforced by the practical experience of undertaking a real job, and equips the participant to absorb workplace culture and business processes, while honing employability skills
- providing an ideal learning mode for those who learn best by doing.

The importance of apprenticeship, recognised internationally by the EU and G20, and by the proportions of persons within apprenticeship in advanced economies, is evidence of its value to developed economies. Countries with strong apprenticeship systems such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland have some of the lowest rates of youth unemployment in Europe. A major policy pillar of the EU strategy to promote competitiveness, employment and growth is to increase the role of apprenticeships in VET systems, and to strengthen the use of dual systems in providing a Youth Guarantee. Under the Guarantee, all young people not in education, training or work will get a good quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or education and training place within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The European Alliance for Apprenticeship, an agreement between the European Commission and employer and social partner representatives, has been established to promote and support the expansion of apprenticeships across Europe, and EU structural funds have been committed for this purpose. A European co-operation agreement has been signed between Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Slovakia and Latvia to share practice and to promote expansion of apprenticeship models as a way of addressing unemployment and enhancing skills.

One of the important objectives of this review is, per Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn, to advise on "*an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures appropriate balance between supply and demand.*"⁵¹

Forfas, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and D/Jobs Enterprise and Innovation⁵² have pointed to the changing landscape in the Irish labour market and to the threats and opportunities which will impact on education and training for future needs. The National Skills Strategy recommends that, to keep pace with change, significant investment in upskilling must be made to achieve a 72% entry rate into higher education, and a 90% completion rate in the Leaving Certificate.

However, not all occupations will require a degree level qualification. The need for increased research based innovation and job creation is fully accepted, but should be seen in the context of an employment pyramid with even greater numbers of employees trained and capable of implementing and turning research outcomes into product, manufacturing and services practicality. CEDEFOP estimates that by 2020⁵³, while all jobs will require higher levels of skill, 50% of them will need medium level skills and 15% will require low level skills. Holzer

⁵¹ <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2013-Press-Releases/PR13-05-19.html>

⁵² <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Review-of-Apprenticeship-in-Ireland/Submissions/FORF%C3%81S-Enterprise-Ireland-IDA-Department-of-Jobs-Enterprise-and-Innovation-Joint-Submission.pdf>

⁵³ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4086_en.pdf

and Lerman⁵⁴ have noted in relation to the future skills needs of the US economy, that even in a high tech world some two-thirds of all jobs will be in the mid to low skills range – 44% mid-range and 22% low skills.

In framing the architecture for the operation of an expanded apprenticeship system in the years ahead, the Review Group's recommendations are being proposed in the context of the long term strategic needs of the economy in the coming decades. A unified framework of education and training qualifications across all levels of award in the State has often been cited as a key strength of the Irish system. More recently, the policy and functional responsibility for education and training have been brought together in a single Ministry, and FAS and VECs have been integrated into Education and Training Boards whose activities will be funded and co-ordinated by SOLAS. The rationale underpinning this approach is to provide a seamless continuum for learners, and to improve co-ordination, efficiency and effectiveness.

5.2 Levels of apprenticeship

Across Europe, while apprenticeships predominantly operate at upper secondary, post secondary and sub degree level, there has been an increasing trend towards provision of dual systems within higher education. Germany offers dual qualifications at bachelor degree, master's degree and post graduate levels giving progression to doctorate qualifications. Italy offers Advanced Training and Research Apprenticeships which lead to doctoral qualifications. Both Poland and Finland provide tertiary VET qualifications with significant workplace training elements. The National Strategy for Higher Education in Ireland envisages increasing emphasis on workplace learning as an integrated element of higher education programmes. Accordingly, in framing an architecture to meet future needs, the Review Group considered that the system needs to be developed in the context of the potential for apprenticeships to operate at any level of the National Framework of Qualifications from Level 5 upwards, embracing both middle level and higher level and advanced skills.

A very significant proportion of students learn best by doing, and the apprenticeship system offers theoretical education and training soundly grounded in practical experience, producing a work ready employee. Mass access to second level and higher education poses challenges for the system in responding to a variety of learning styles. Reforms in junior cycle are beginning, designed to address curriculum overload, rote learning, strengthen key skills, provide for greater creativity and innovation, promote more relevant and flexible forms of assessment, and ensure that the needs of those currently least served by the system

⁵⁴ America's Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411633_forgottenjobs.pdf

are better addressed.⁵⁵ The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has also made proposals for change in senior cycle⁵⁶ to address the same challenges, and it is planned that these will begin as soon as is practicable, given the need to first embed the junior cycle reforms. Change is also under way in admission systems to higher education. In the years ahead, it is anticipated that within further and higher education and training programmes there will be an increasing emphasis on

- enhanced dialogue between employers and social partners and education and training providers and a stronger role for the former in shaping the content of programmes
- improved co-ordination between education and training providers and employers, and employment services under Intreo
- more opportunities for workplace learning as an integral part of education and training programmes for a range of occupations

The pace of change in the knowledge society, the need for constant upskilling if businesses are to maintain market share and grow, and the challenge of unemployment, make enhanced links between education and training providers and employers an imperative. Accordingly, the recommendations below are designed to provide for a seamless continuum, with apprenticeships having the potential to operate at any level of the national qualifications framework from Level 5 upwards.

Level 5 has been chosen on the basis that apprenticeships must offer a formally structured and sustained period of learning leading to a national qualification which equips the learner for a sustainable and durable occupation. For this reason a minimum duration for entry level apprenticeships of 2 years is recommended. It is considered that most learners would have the scope to achieve this level within a two year timeframe. Pre-apprenticeship programmes are also recommended for those who are not ready to meet the learning requirements of a Level 5 programme. This does not prevent other forms of VET being provided at lower levels of the system, including traineeships. Choosing Level 5 as a base also puts apprenticeships firmly in the middle level and higher level skills

⁵⁵ http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Documents/JC-Framework_FINAL_02oct12.pdf

⁵⁶ http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/Towards_Learning_an_overview_/Towards_Learning_an_Overview_of_Senior_Cycle_Education.pdf

domain, which is important for maintaining a high quality brand image, and for addressing future labour market needs.

It should be noted that the majority of countries with apprenticeship systems in Europe begin with a dual programme as part of the upper secondary education system. The Review Group considered that such an approach was neither feasible or desirable in the Irish case on the basis that

- having to make career choices at the age of 15/16 before entering upper second level education is not appropriate
- successful VET is best built on a firm foundation of broadly based general education
- in the knowledge society, Ireland's needs are best met by having optimum participation rates in school to completion of upper secondary education
- an outflow of younger people into the labour market at age 15/16, apart from being undesirable, would exacerbate unemployment levels.

5.3 Definition of an apprenticeship

The Review Group recommends that:

- apprenticeship is a programme of structured education and training which formally combines and alternates learning in the work place with learning in an education or training centre, (a dual system i.e. a blended combination of on-the-job employer-based training and off-the-job training) whose completion
- prepares the participant for a specific occupation
- leads to a qualification nationally recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications at any level from Level 5 upwards
- the apprentice is employed under a contract of apprenticeship for the duration of training.
- apprenticeship training is substantial in depth and duration, while employed in a real job. For a programme to be classified as an apprenticeship at entry level; it must generally have a duration of no

less than two years. The structure of the programme should provide for more than 50% workplace based learning.

Graduates of apprenticeship programmes should be qualified to work autonomously in a competent, professional and independent capacity in their selected field.

Apprenticeships should be open to persons of all age groups above the statutory school leaving age. They are a valued mode of learning both for initial entrants to the labour market and for those who wish to continue upskilling. Apprenticeships must prepare the participant for a new job role.

These characteristics are common to apprenticeship programmes in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and most EU countries where apprentices are employees; they are also consonant with the recommendations of the Richard Review of Apprenticeships in England.

Every apprentice should be subject to an approved Contract of Apprenticeship concluded between the participant and the employer. For most purposes, he/she should be treated as an employee. However,

- a person serving an apprenticeship who is dismissed within a month of the end of the apprenticeship period is not covered under the Redundancy Payments Acts 1967 (Section 7.4)
- a person serving under a designated statutory apprenticeship who is dismissed within 6 months of starting or within 1 month of ending an apprenticeship is not covered under the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977 (Section 4)
- the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 does not apply to persons serving in designated statutory apprenticeships (Section 5)
- the Protection of Employment (Fixed Term Work Act) 2003 does not apply to a person serving under a contract of apprenticeship.

None of the submissions recommended any change to these aspects of provision.

5.4 Legislation

Based on the feedback, the Review Group considers that legislation for apprenticeships should be designed as an enabling framework only. It should be designed to protect apprentices' rights while providing for flexible delivery,

innovation and speedy adaptation where necessary. It should not require areas of industrial activity for apprenticeship occupations to be individually designated. The conclusion of the Review Group is that the legislation should

- keep the minimum age at the statutory school leaving age
- not specify a minimum entry level – this is not a legislative matter, and minimum entry levels should be set on an occupational basis for each programme
- not specify the format of the programme, other than requiring a dual approach of blended on the job and off the job learning leading to a nationally recognised qualification and preparing the participant for a specific occupation
- define an apprentice as a person to whom an approved Contract of Apprenticeship applies. A contract template should be developed by the national authorities for this purpose.

Among the protections for learners that the Review Group considers should be provided for in statutory rules are

- the apprentice entitlement to pay may not be lessened while on release off the job
- that an obligation is placed on the employer to have the capacity to carry out the required training
- that an obligation is placed on the employer to release the apprentice for off the job training
- that an obligation is placed on the apprentice to attend except for sick leave or other unavoidable circumstance
- that an obligation is placed on employers, education and training providers and apprentices to provide all documentation necessary for the effective operation of the programme
- that assessors have the right to visit the employer or training premises, subject to reasonable notice.

- that an obligation is placed on the Apprenticeship Council (see 5.5 below) to devise a strategy to assist in providing alternative placement for apprentices in the event of redundancy
- that an employer is prohibited, as at present, from accepting fees for employing an apprentice, except from public or EU sources
- that an employer is precluded, as at present, from taking on a new apprentice in place of one who has been made redundant without first offering it to the original incumbent.

It is envisaged that the original legislation will have to be repealed or amended and replaced by the new more flexible framework.

5.5 Governance

SOLAS is the national authority with legal responsibility for administration of apprenticeships at present. It is recommended that this should continue, while providing a framework for more plural governance arrangements in the future. The rationale for promoting these new governance arrangements is to provide a framework which will facilitate apprenticeship at either further or higher education level.

There are currently major differences in legislative underpinning and culture between higher education institutions and those in the further education and training sector. For example higher education institutes control quality through statutory academic councils, have delegated authority to make awards, develop curricula, are examining bodies and have nationally coordinated data base systems for records. Development of cost effective and efficient work based systems should recognise and capitalise on these differences and should endeavour to optimise utilisation of existing governance, resources and systems to the maximum. The principle of subsidiarity should apply to operations in so far as is feasible.

In this structure, the essential development and delivery methods will be similar in FE and in HE, but will be within the culture of the individual education sector. Further detailed work on mechanisms is required, but the details contained here illustrate the main concepts involved and can be developed further in discussion between the parties concerned.

A further objective is to ensure that the new system is not overly centralised, particularly in regard to curriculum development which must take place at a rapid pace to maintain its ongoing relevance to changing needs. The Review Group concludes that the current structures cannot deliver this.

An Apprenticeship Council should be established, hosted by SOLAS, but involving an equal partnership and close co-operation between SOLAS and the HEA in all aspects of planning and delivery. The Apprenticeship Council should be enterprise led, and the chairperson should be appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Council should report to the Minister.

The Committee should include representation from:

- SOLAS
- the Higher Education Authority
- the Department of Education and Skills
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- and representatives of business and trade unions sufficient to ensure an enterprise led approach
- a representative of the further education sector
- a representative of the higher education sector.

The Apprenticeship Council should establish sectoral sub-committees as needed. These should include experts, representative bodies for the sectors, professional bodies, trade union and education and training interests.

The apprenticeship system should be integrated into whatever regional structures are developed to facilitate the ongoing co-operation of FE and HE providers with enterprise in the delivery of education and training programmes. The regional clusters being developed at higher education level and those of other relevant agencies could be adapted to form the basis of such an approach. The main focus of such regional structures would be to promote a regionally co-ordinated approach, to provide a systematised forum for liaison on programme implementation issues, to assist employers to co-operate with each other and with education and training providers, and to ensure that programmes are appropriately aligned with regional needs. INTREO should also have an important role in this process.

5.6 Functions of the Apprenticeship Council

The functions of the Apprenticeship Council could be as follows:-

Having regard to the work of the EGSFN, the processes for quality assurance of Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the role of the regulated professions where relevant, and international best practice,

- to advise on the design, duration, entry levels and ongoing provision of apprenticeship programmes at FE and HE level, in line with national skill needs and ensuring optimum quality, efficiency and effectiveness
- to advise on the introduction of apprenticeships in additional occupations promoting an enterprise led approach, supported by evidence of labour market needs and sustainable demand,
- to promote a seamless continuum and progression within occupational pathways and between further and higher education and training for participants in apprenticeship programmes
- to devise a strategy to assist in providing alternative placement for apprentices in the event of redundancy
- to advise on an ongoing basis on the number of apprenticeship places needed in various occupations to respond to current and future labour market needs
- to advise on the cessation of State education and training input to apprenticeships in occupations where the level of demand is no longer viable to justify continued provision
- to undertake scoping studies, evaluation, data gathering and research and manpower forecasting necessary to support the work of the Committee
- to carry out additional functions relating to apprenticeships as may be deemed necessary.

5.7 Role of SOLAS

The recommended role is as follows:-

Subject to the policy determinations of the Minister, working in partnership with the Higher Education Authority, advised by the Apprenticeship Council, and subject to the resources available to the agency, to

- to host, with the assistance of the HEA, the operation of the Apprenticeship Council and its sectoral committees,

- to operate a national register of apprentices for the purpose of planning and management of the apprenticeship system, allowing for integration and transfer of data as appropriate from ETBS and HEIs to SOLAS
- to operate a publicly accessible national database of employers approved to provide apprenticeships, based on data transfer from the ETBs
- to promote, plan, co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of an enterprise led National Apprenticeship Programme at further education level
- to establish devolved operational and management systems for apprenticeship provision through further and higher education and training institutions and other providers, ensuring the respective roles of SOLAS and the HEA in the co-ordination and funding of education and training boards and higher education institutions
- to provide for the commissioning of scoping studies and the development of curricula at the request of the Apprenticeship Council, insofar as apprenticeships at further education level are concerned, working to the maximum extent possible through education and training boards, and ensuring full input and engagement of employers, trade unions, education and training providers and professional bodies in these processes
- to develop approved templates for contracts of apprenticeship
- to provide for, through ETBs, support services necessary for the operation of apprenticeships at FE level, such as management information systems, reporting and evaluation frameworks, teaching and learning resources, staff development and mentoring, ensuring co-ordination and synergy between FE and HE approaches
- to ensure programmes conform with the quality assurance arrangements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland and operate in accordance with consistent high quality national standards
- to undertake the gathering of labour market intelligence, manpower forecasting, statistical analysis and research and

evaluation necessary to support the effective and efficient operation of National Apprenticeship programme

5.8 Role of the Higher Education Authority

The role of the Higher Education Authority will be:-

Subject to the policy determinations of the Minister, working in partnership with SOLAS, advised by the Apprenticeship Council, and subject to the resources available, to

- to promote, plan, co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of an enterprise led National Apprenticeship Programme at higher education level
- to assist SOLAS in the support of the Apprenticeship Council and its sectoral committees,
- to establish devolved operational and management systems for apprenticeship provision through further and higher education and training institutions and other providers, ensuring the respective roles of SOLAS and the HEA in the co-ordination and funding of education and training boards and higher education institutions
- to ensure integration and transfer of data as appropriate from HEIs to SOLAS regarding the national register of apprentices
- to enable higher education institutions to advise, when requested, as to whether employers are in a position to provide the required on the job training elements for a quality apprenticeship programme
- to provide for the commissioning of scoping studies and the development of curricula at the request of the Apprenticeship Council, insofar as apprenticeships at higher education level are concerned, working to the maximum extent possible through higher education institutions, and ensuring full input and engagement of employers, trade unions, education and training providers and professional bodies in these processes
- to assist SOLAS, after a transition period, in the integration of existing apprenticeship programmes into the new governance and operational arrangements in the longer term

- to promote dialogue and co-ordination in the development and implementation of apprenticeship programmes between employers, trade unions, and further and higher education and training providers,
- to promote, through higher education institutions, support services necessary for the operation of apprenticeships at HE level, such as management information systems, reporting and evaluation frameworks, teaching and learning resources, staff development and mentoring, ensuring co-ordination and synergy between FE and HE approaches
- to support higher education institution to operate programmes conforming with the quality assurance arrangements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland and operating to consistent high quality national standards
- to undertake the gathering of labour market intelligence, manpower forecasting, statistical analysis and research and evaluation necessary to support the effective and efficient operation of National Apprenticeship programme

5.9 Role of the Education and Training Boards

Subject to the approval of SOLAS and the resources available, to

- provide apprenticeship programmes at further education level in accordance with the agreed national framework for such programmes, and the quality assurance arrangements of the QQI
- to ensure that programmes of apprenticeship operate to consistent high quality national standards
- to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place for the accreditation of prior learning of those entering apprenticeship programmes
- to undertake or commission scoping studies and curriculum development for further education and training programmes when requested to do so, ensuring full input and engagement of employers, trade unions, education and training providers and professional bodies in these processes

- to promote dialogue and co-ordination in the development and implementation of apprenticeship programmes between employers, trade unions, and further and higher education and training providers,
- to provide support services necessary for the operation of apprenticeships at FE level, such as management information systems, reporting and evaluation frameworks, teaching and learning resources, staff development and mentoring, ensuring co-ordination and synergy between FE and HE approaches
- to register apprentices on FE programmes and ensure appropriate data transfer to SOLAS, ensuring compliance with entry criteria
- to work with programme providers and employers to ensure appropriate scheduling of on and off- the- job learning for (a) existing apprenticeships during the transition phase and (b) FE apprenticeship programmes generally
- to determine the capacity of employers to train apprentices, informed by the advice of HEIs where appropriate, as to whether such employers are in a position to provide the required on the job training elements for a quality programme
- to operate a regional register of employers approved for the purpose of providing apprenticeships, ensuring appropriate data transfer to the national database held by SOLAS
- to provide for the continuing co-ordination of existing apprenticeship programmes for a transition period, with a view to ensuring their integration into the new governance and operational arrangements in the longer term

5.10 Role of Higher Education Institutions.

The recommended role of Higher Education Institutions will be

Subject to the approval of HEA and the resources available, to

- provide apprenticeship programmes at higher education level in accordance with the agreed national framework for such programmes, and the quality assurance arrangements of the QQI

- to ensure that programmes of apprenticeship operate to consistent high quality national standards
- to undertake or commission scoping studies and curriculum development for higher education programmes when requested to do so, ensuring full input and engagement of employers, trade unions, education and training providers and professional bodies in these processes
- to promote dialogue and co-ordination in the development and implementation of apprenticeship programmes between employers, trade unions, and further and higher education and training providers,
- to provide support services necessary for the operation of apprenticeships at HE level, such as management information systems, reporting and evaluation frameworks, teaching and learning resources, staff development and mentoring, ensuring co-ordination and synergy between FE and HE approaches
- to register apprentices on HE programmes and ensure appropriate data transfer to SOLAS, ensuring compliance with entry criteria
- to work with SOLAS, ETBs and employers to ensure appropriate scheduling of on and off- the- job learning for (a) existing apprenticeships during the transition phase and (b) HE apprenticeship programmes generally
- when requested to do so by an ETB, to advise on the capacity of employers to train apprentices, where appropriate, as to whether such employers are in a position to provide the required on the job training elements for a quality programme
- to provide for the continuing co-ordination of existing apprenticeship programmes for a transition period, with a view to ensuring their integration into the new governance and operational arrangements in the longer term
- to provide transparent progression pathways to higher levels of the national framework of qualifications for learners who have completed apprenticeship programmes, ensuring appropriate accreditation of prior learning

5.11 Role of Quality and Qualifications Ireland

The main role of QQI within the Apprenticeship Council will be to ensure that programmes conform with the quality assurance processes required under the national framework of qualifications, to advise on best international practice, and to give preliminary advice on whether a proposal for a new programme is likely to fall within further or higher education level. The authority will also have a key role, through other fora in advising on standards and in promoting progression pathways for apprentices to higher education programmes.

5.12 How it might work – inviting proposals

The proposals in this Report will fall to be discussed further with interested parties. What is proposed here is a possible approach which the Review Group considers to be a workable model. It is not intended that the approach will be prescriptive, but rather that it will enable an enterprise led shared service to be provided embracing further and higher education.

It is recommended that existing apprenticeships should continue to operate and be funded as at present for a transition period. Ultimately they should fall within the new governance arrangements proposed in this report.

A ring fenced fund should be established to promote the development and establishment of apprenticeships in new occupational areas. The Apprenticeship Council could invite proposals from consortia of industries/education/training providers. The request for proposals would set out the criteria governing an apprenticeship and include a sustainability test. The sustainability test would require proposers to show:

- the numbers to be trained
- the extent to which the proposers are representative of the industry
- the continuing demand for apprenticeships into the future
- evidence of labour market need and future strategic economic priorities, supported by evidence based studies
- the capacity to support quality training (facilities, participation in training of trainers, capacity to provide required range of experience, co-ordination with other employers, etc)
- the willingness of employers to recruit and meet the relevant costs associated with apprenticeships
- a willingness of employers and education and training providers to engage collaboratively in development and delivery of apprenticeships
- a marketing plan to promote apprenticeships

The proposal should set out the format and structure of the programme proposed, an outline of the main occupational needs to be addressed, demonstrate the depth and transferability of the skills to be acquired, the entry levels proposed, and how learners will be equipped for progression to the next level of learning.

5.13 How it might work - Progressing proposals

When a proposal is received by the Council, and it is considered appropriate for an apprenticeship, an initial determination of whether it is likely to be an FE or HE level programme will be made, based on the advice of the QQI. The proposal will be sent to HEA or SOLAS for further advice.

Depending on the level of the programme, either HEA or SOLAS will determine whether a scoping study is necessary, and if so, commission one, or provide for such commissioning through an ETB or HEI. It will be a requirement that the scoping study

- is undertaken by an appropriate expert (s)
- engages actively with key actors in the proposed occupation – enterprise representatives, education and training providers, professional bodies where relevant and trade unions, and shows evidence of same in setting out the occupational standards which should underpin the development of the programme
- indicates the clear commitment of the parties concerned to support implementation of the programme, if one is approved.
- advises on entry levels, and sets out the progression opportunities following completion of the programme, where relevant.

There will a report at this stage back to Apprenticeship Council. The report will identify the broad occupational needs which the programme should meet.

If the Apprenticeship Council (after taking advice from its sectoral committee) decides to approve the initiative, with the agreement of HEA or SOLAS depending on the level, the proposal is then sent back to HEA or SOLAS for curriculum development. Curriculum development will generally take place through a HEI or ETB.

The same process of engagement with industry representatives, education and training providers, professional bodies where relevant and trade unions, must

happen with the curriculum development phase, and it must be demonstrated that the national sector level interest groups are included in this process. The curriculum will be informed by

- the detailed occupational needs identified by employers
- best international practice in the occupation
- anticipated future needs and
- the requirement that those who complete the programme will be prepared for progression to the next level of the National Framework of Qualifications

The curriculum development phase will outline the minimum entry requirements needed for the apprenticeship, any specific subject requirements, and any tests (e.g. vision tests) which the participant should pass. Advice on the scope for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities should also be given.

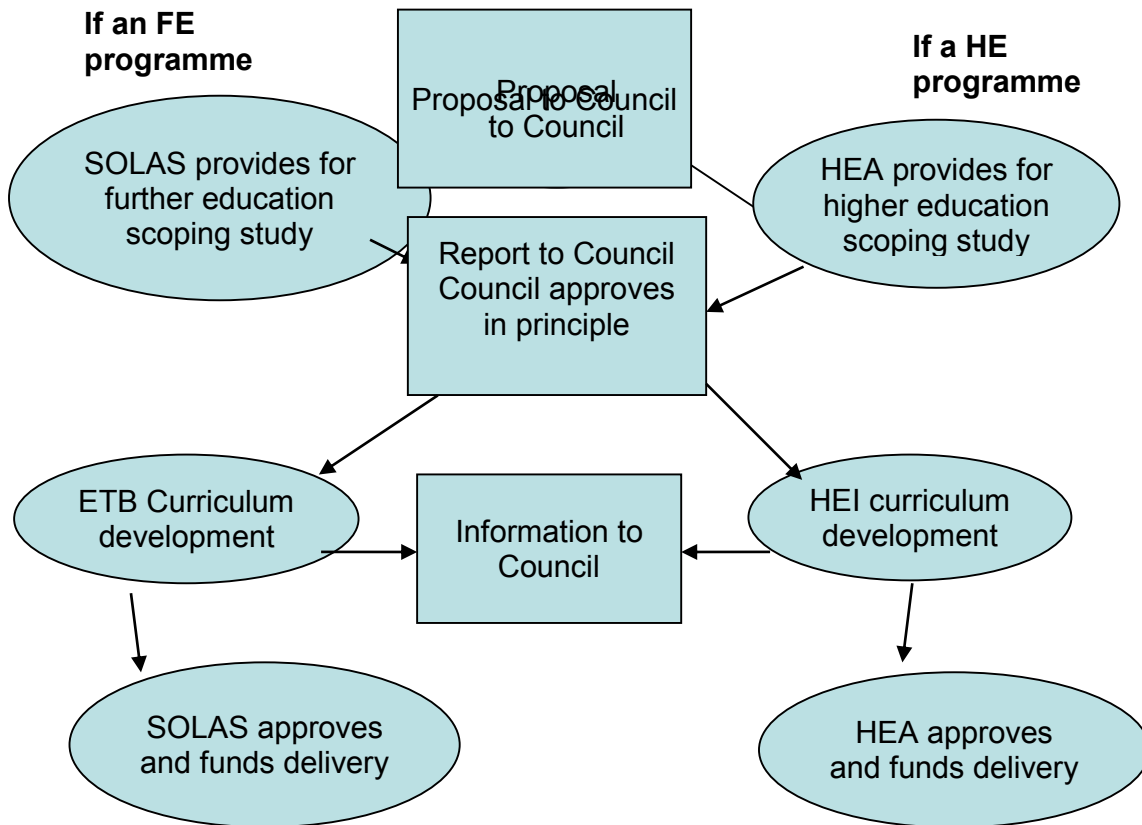
Once the curriculum has been agreed among the parties concerned, HEA or SOLAS would then approve implementation in principle. The programme would be submitted for validation through the normal quality assurance processes for the relevant institutions, assuming they have delegated authority, without further submission to the Apprenticeship Council being required. Where there is no delegated authority, it will be necessary to submit the programme to QQI for validation.

There will be a report to Apprenticeship Council after the curriculum development stage, but this is not a request for approval. The education and training component of programmes will be subject to the normal funding rules of HEA or SOLAS.

Under these processes, the Apprenticeship Council will not engage in detail after approving the post scoping study phase. However, the report on the curriculum development stage to the Council, mentioned above, must demonstrate that the relevant sectoral level actors have been engaged in the process, and the Council will continue to monitor that this is the case.

All programmes will be subject to the QQI normal validation and quality assurance arrangements. After programme validation, the HEA or SOLAS will either tender for delivery of the education and training phases, or assign delivery responsibility direct to particular HEIs or ETBS. SOLAS or HEA will decide whether tendering to private providers is appropriate in the context of each programme.

Many of the submissions raised concerns about the pace of curriculum reform. It is vital that the process from approval of proposals to award recognition is carried out as quickly as possible to ensure that apprenticeship programmes keep pace with rapidly changing industry needs. Speed of response is an essential aspect of a quality system. This should be reported on by SOLAS and HEA as a Key Performance Indicator, that is transparent and challenging.



The arrangements above are designed to reflect the unified approach in the national framework of qualifications, and allow for the respective roles of SOLAS, Education and Training Boards, Higher Education Authority and higher education institutions in the delivery of an integrated approach.

5.14 Recommendations regarding existing apprenticeships

The Review Group acknowledges that submissions considered that the quality of existing programmes was high. However, it recommends

- a move away from a generic placement at Level 6 of the national framework of qualifications for all apprenticeship programmes

- that the curriculum for each family of trades, as a group, is reviewed and updated as a matter of urgency. Based on the updated learning outcomes needed for the occupation, the programme should be placed at an appropriate level of certification within the national framework of qualifications
- programme structure and duration should be based on the time needed to achieve the learning outcomes needed for each occupation
- programmes should provide for the appropriate integration of transversal skills, particularly literacy, numeracy, maths, science and ICT
- the minimum entry levels needed to successfully complete each programme should be reviewed, while ensuring appropriate pre-apprenticeship programmes are made available for those unable to meet the entry requirements
- existing e learning resources should be used to optimum effect, and over time additional resources should be developed to reinforce and support the delivery of the programme

Curriculum review should occur on the basis of families of trades, ensuring that core common modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for additional specialised modules which focus on particular occupational requirements.

As with apprenticeships in new areas, an upper and lower ceiling on recruitment levels should be examined, so that programmes are tailored to labour market needs, while avoiding future skill shortages.

Opportunities for progression should be strengthened, made more transparent and well publicised. The green economy, heritage protection, retro-fitting, sustainable energy, languages and cross disciplinary skills are all areas where progression options could be developed. A master craftsman qualification should also be considered.

It is recommended that funding for the existing programme should be ring-fenced and the current operation of the programmes should continue until they are adapted as part of the review mentioned above. Consideration should be given to contracting out studies on curriculum review to ETBs or HEIs so that a larger number of programmes can be reviewed simultaneously.

It is envisaged that SOLAS will continue to have the role in operating the existing programmes, as a present. After a transition period, it is intended that the current programmes will be integrated into the new operational arrangements for apprenticeships generally, with devolved functions for the ETBs and HEIs according to the level of programme.

5.15 Scope for expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations

The submissions received referred to the potential for apprenticeships in ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sport and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors. Such programmes will not be successful unless there is a strong commitment from employers to identifying occupational needs, recruitment and payment of apprentices, and joint collaboration with education and training providers in programme delivery.

As outlined in the sections on initiating and progressing proposals, a ring fenced fund for development of new apprenticeships should be established. Employer led consortia should identify the occupations which are considered by them to be suitable for apprenticeships and make proposals to the Apprenticeship Council for funding.

A more flexible framework should be provided for the future, enabling apprenticeships to be delivered in a variety of formats at a range of levels across the national framework of qualifications. Care should be taken to pilot approaches and share best practice, and to have regard to international standards in the occupations concerned. All programmes should be designed to prepare the participant for progression.

In any new programme structures, account should be taken of the difficulties highlighted by employers in releasing apprentices for off the job learning for prolonged periods. However, this must be balanced with the need for participants to have the required intensity and continuity of learning during the off the job phases, as well as considering the administration, employment, economy and efficiency needs of education and training providers.

Neither the Review Group nor the vast majority of submissions favoured the 2+2 model of apprenticeship delivery, under which an initial 2 year programme leading to a Higher Certificate would be provided, followed by a two year placement in the workplace. It is acknowledged that this proposal had the merits of reducing the costs for the State and for employers. However, it does not work to the strengths of the dual system, enabling theoretical learning to be grounded

by practical experience in the workplace on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, it would not be as effective as the current model in forging close employer/provider co-operation in programme delivery. The INAP Memorandum on An Architecture for Modern Apprentices⁵⁷ advises

"The kind of duality of school and industry that is preferable is when the school-based learning phases and learning on the job phases alternate at short intervals. A duality entailing just one long phase each for the school and the workplace is not recommended. The company as a learning venue cannot be replaced successfully by other types of 'practical' training outside the company. To allow numerous opportunities for 'reflection on work experience' (reflected work experience) a substantial amount of time for company-based and systematic work experience is required. This should comprise at least 50% of the entire training period."

It is noted that in England, the Government is making funding available for "Trailblazers", under which employer led consortia will develop standards and a high level assessment approach to underpin new awards in Aerospace, Automotive, Digital Industries, Electrotechnical, Energy and Utilities, Financial Services, Food and Drink Manufacturing and Life Sciences and Industrial Sciences.

Given national funding constraints, the Irish Government must concern itself with issues of deadweight, and the risk of a transfer of funding responsibility from employers to the State. In inviting proposals for new apprenticeships, consideration could be given to:

- prioritising investment towards sectors where there are skill shortages
or
- prioritising investment towards those areas which have the greatest return in terms of promoting competitiveness and growth, or of addressing unemployment

The importance of ensuring that large employers, particularly multi-nationals, participate in the new programme cannot be overstated. These will be critical to ensuring that flagship programmes are developed and promoted which are attractive to learners and lead to highly respected career pathways. This will be a considerable challenge, as the majority of firms employing apprentices at present are micro enterprises. Given the commitment of the European social partners in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, it is expected that

⁵⁷ http://www.inap.uni-bremen.de/dl/memorandum_inap_commission_architecture_apprenticeship_2012.pdf

employer's organisations and trade unions in Ireland will play their part in promoting the benefits of apprenticeships, and in encouraging their members to participate. Providing opportunities for apprentices to earn and learn is one of the most effective ways of demonstrating corporate social responsibility. It also promotes a skilled workforce and the role of companies as learning organisations.

Feedback from business groups indicates a willingness of employers to engage in identifying occupational standards and working with education and training providers, if they are supported to do so. Ensuring State funds for scoping studies and curriculum development in a collaborative process is vitally important to kick start new programmes.

Inviting proposals for new apprenticeships, as recommended in this report, will demonstrate whether there is an appetite among employers to recruit and pay apprentices. Where new programmes are feasible and sustainable, the Review Group recommends that the off-the-job elements are funded by the State. It is recommended that the on-the-job costs should be borne by the employer, together with the apprentice's wage costs for the entire duration, to the maximum extent feasible.

Recommendations regarding apprenticeships in new occupations.

5.16 Entry levels

Entry levels may need to be raised to cater adequately for occupations with a high mathematics, science or technology content. However, care should be taken to ensure that opportunities for those with lower skills to progress are not eroded unduly. Entry levels should be set on an occupation by occupation basis.

A pre-entry assessment of applicants should be undertaken where there is a doubt as to whether applicants are in a position to meet the entry criteria for apprenticeship. Mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning should be a routine part of determining whether entry criteria are met.

5.17 Pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Pre- apprenticeship programmes leading to awards at Levels 4 or 5 of the National Qualifications Framework should be provided for those wishing to become apprentices. In particular they should prepare students for the literacy, ICT, maths and science needs of the labour market.

5.18 Curricula

Curricula, once approved, should be publicly accessible in succinct format on a database so that all parties, including employers and learners, are clear about what is required.

Curricula, based on occupational standards identified by employers, will include key transversal skills such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, communications, mathematics, science, problem solving, critical thinking, time management, research and evaluation, and the ability to apply learning in new contexts.

Curricula should be designed to prepare the learner for progression to the next level of the national framework of qualifications. Curriculum development should occur on the basis of families of occupations, ensuring that core common modules are provided to the extent feasible, while allowing for additional specialised modules which focus on particular occupational requirements. New programmes should not be unduly narrow or specialised, but be designed to prepare participants for broadly based sustainable and durable careers.

While a lead ETB or HEI may be assigned responsibility for curriculum development, they will do so collaboratively providing for the full engagement of other education and training providers, national employer groups, trade unions and sectoral and professional bodies. The resulting curriculum will then be applied on a national basis. There should be scope for minor changes (10%) of curriculum content from year to year at institutional level based on identified needs. Curricula should be formally reviewed and updated at least every five years.

5.19 Assessment

Assessment arrangements should be streamlined to ensure that the bulk of the administrative burden falls on the education/training provider, but with completion of a portfolio in the workplace, and with a final competence determination mechanism at the end of the programme. Assessment should comply with QQI requirements and be subject to external joint authentication by members drawn from a panel of enterprise and education/training providers. Assessment should encompass both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills and competences necessary for the occupation.

The programme should include arrangements for formal assessment under the QQI processes, ideally at least annually, leading to formally documented credits and information on learning outcomes achieved, certified by the

relevant awarding body. A final award will apply only when the apprenticeship has been successfully completed.

Awards should lead to the same award titles as at present, but will have been achieved through an apprenticeship route – e.g. Level 5 Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate, Ordinary Bachelor Degree, Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma, Master’s Degree, Post graduate Diploma, Doctoral Degree.

More detailed information on the award or credit, e.g. the grades achieved should be provided, together with a certificate or diploma supplement, as appropriate. This will assist apprentices moving abroad or to other programmes, provide greater recognition for higher levels of achievement, and provide more information for employers, as is the norm with other awards under the National Framework.

5.20 Approval of employers

Based on generic criteria developed by the Apprenticeship Council, ETBs will approve employers for the purpose of providing apprenticeships by asking for a report from an FE or HEI advisor. This assessment of the capacity of employers should be undertaken by a person who has the appropriate expertise for the occupation concerned.

The report should show that the employer has the capacity and equipment to provide the full range of learning required, and that a named person is in a position to supervise the apprentice's learning programme. Such named persons should also make themselves available for meetings necessary for the effective operation of the apprenticeship.

SOLAS will maintain a national register of employers approved for apprenticeships, informed by data transfer from the ETBs. This will be a publicly accessible on-line register so that learners can know what is available in their area.

5.21 Learner Recruitment and Registration

Recruitment will continue to be the responsibility of employers. To improve access, a publicly accessible database of employers approved for the purpose of apprenticeship will be made available.

Employers must apply to their ETB for (a) for approval to be included on the Register of Employers and (b) approval to recruit individual apprentices. The

latter is to ensure that recruitment only occurs to an agreed ceiling for various occupations. Once approval to recruit an apprentice has been given, employers will register him/her with their education and training board or higher education institution.

The education and training components of apprenticeships should have at least two application deadlines per year, and will only begin where there is a viable class group. ETBs or HEIs will assist in locating alternative placements in other institutions for apprentices who cannot get an education or training place in their local area. The existing allowances for expenses for those living away from home while on off the job training will continue.

Electronic notification will be made by the ETB or HEI to SOLAS when an applicant has been enrolled and when each phase of their education and training has started and has been completed. In this way, the upper and lower ceilings for provision can be monitored and trends fed back to the Apprenticeship Council.

The relevant HEIs and ETBS should include their apprentices in off the job training as students, but have an additional flag to show they are following an apprenticeship route.

5.22 Planning and control of numbers of apprenticeships

An upper and lower ceiling on recruitment levels should be agreed for apprenticeships in the various occupations, informed by sound labour market intelligence and manpower forecasting, and the advice of the Apprenticeship Council, so that programmes are tailored to labour market needs, while avoiding future skill shortages.

When the upper ceiling for apprenticeships has been reached, no further State funding will be available for the off the job elements of apprenticeship training. It will of course be open to employers to provide training and fund this element themselves.

The Apprenticeship Council may cease apprenticeships in occupations where there is not viable demand. However, there will be an obligation to ensure that those already recruited can complete their training.

5.23 Training abroad

Training abroad of apprenticeships should be encouraged and promoted, particularly among multi-national companies.

5.24 Progression

If apprenticeship is to be a valued career pathway with equal parity to entry to higher education, it must offer transparent progression routes, publicised in advance. These should show

- the enterprise pathways to higher levels within the occupation
- the progression routes to higher levels of education and training.

Proposers of apprenticeship should consider the development of Master Qualifications along the lines of the German model

It should be assumed as a matter of principle that learners who achieve a full award within the national framework of qualifications, have demonstrated the capacity to progress to the next level. This will not prevent the HEI from applying particular subject requirements as a pre-condition for entry to the programme sought.

While it is clear that learners do progress to degree level programmes from apprenticeships, particularly within the Institute of Technology sector, progression entitlements need to be made far more transparent for the future. It is recommended that a working group of higher education institutions and the QQI should be established to map existing apprenticeship programmes and to establish streamlined progression pathways from these programmes, ensuring appropriate mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and for exemptions, where relevant.

In addition, there will be need for sideways movement within the framework, enabling those who complete apprenticeship to acquire additional specialisms, to cross skill, or to avail of intensive language courses, or start your own business courses. Existing apprentices are in high demand internationally, and the availability of language courses would assist in supporting their international mobility.

5.25 Incentives for employers

Consideration should be given to providing incentives for employers in the form of subsidies, or PRSI or tax relief, to encourage them to recruit hard to reach groups, such as persons with low skills, those who have been unemployed for prolonged periods and those with disabilities.

It is noted that employers strongly stressed that they were not in a position to absorb more costs. The payment by an employer of an apprentice wage

throughout the period of training, both in the on and off the job phases, for new apprenticeships, is a departure from the existing scheme. However, if the State were to assume the off the job wage cost in new programmes, the scope for expansion would be extremely limited.

This issue should be discussed further with employer organisations. Employers already pay a levy of 0.7% of payroll costs into the National Training Fund. This is capable of funding the operation of an apprenticeship scheme in full, but it is also deployed to other sources. The fund generates of the order of €350m per annum, of which approximately €52m is deployed to meet apprenticeship costs, and the remainder is allocated to other programmes. It may be that there is a case for re-focussing the role of the fund more explicitly towards apprenticeship programmes.

If incentives are to be paid to employers, consideration should be given to holding back a proportion, to be paid on completion based on results.

5.26 Gaps in the system.

With the integration of 10 regions of FAS into 16 ETBs, and in the context of apprenticeships expanding into a wide range of new occupations, there is a particular need to ensure that both SOLAS and the ETBs have the necessary staffing and resources to effectively implement the new system. In particular, there are gaps in that the former VECs had no earmarked funds for scoping studies and centralised curriculum development, for liaison with enterprise, or for Accreditation of Prior Learning. While FAS had resources for these functions across its ten regions, there will be scaling issues arising in the integrated system. It is vital that these weaknesses are addressed if the new system is to be a success.

In addition, this report envisages a greatly strengthened Secretariat for the Apprenticeship Council with increased resources, through skills and labour market research units, to engage in more intensive gathering of labour market intelligence, manpower forecasting, management information systems and research and evaluation.

It is proposed that the Secretariat and skills and labour market research units would be jointly staffed by HEA and SOLAS.

5.27 Funding of Education and Training Boards and Higher Education Institutions.

A ring fenced fund for new apprenticeships should be made available.

The education and training delivery costs of apprenticeships should be borne by the State, as is the norm in most countries, supported by the National Training Fund.

If the delivery of apprenticeship is subject to a public tender, it should also be open to private providers to submit applications.

Institutions should be funded on the basis of an agreed fee per block, or a per capita grant which is subject to a minimum level.

Provision for students in workplace learning should be built into the funding systems of HEA and SOLAS. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of holding back a proportion of funding to be paid on the basis of successful completions.

There may be a need to review the Higher Education and PLC Student Support Schemes, which are confined at present to full-time students, and cater only for students who are moving to a higher level of award to that held on entry. Apprentices will be paid a wage by their employer and would not be expected to be eligible for student support. However, it will be important to the success of the initiative and the overall attractiveness of apprenticeship and work based learning models that the funding regimes do not unduly deter participation or progression. Such a review should have due regard to overall public expenditure constraints.

5.28 Feedback Mechanism

HEIs and ETBs should gather evaluative feedback on an annual basis from employers participating in apprenticeship programmes, and from learners completing apprenticeship programmes. This should be gathered on the basis of a common template and give opportunities to highlight problems experienced, and comment on the overall quality of the programme.

Where issues are highlighted requiring attention, they should be referred in the first instance to the institutions concerned for a response, and if unresolved, the Regional structure. If the difficulties continue to be unresolved, they should be referred to the Apprenticeship Council for attention, and inform the process of future funding.

5.29 Barriers to participation

The Department of Social Protection should carry out any necessary review of schemes and activation strategies to ensure that there are no barriers to the participation of the unemployed in apprenticeships (e.g. loss of medical card, rent supplement, differing treatment of education and training programmes etc).

5.30 Branding and Awareness campaigns

Apprenticeships are designed to:

- bring employers and education and training providers closer together to promote the provision of a skilled labour force
- open up streamlined and valued occupational pathways enabling learners to acquire qualifications and to progress in line with their social and occupational aspirations
- form part of a concerted societal effort to promote high levels of competitiveness and growth
- lead to nationally recognised qualifications which are portable internationally.

The submissions to this review consistently pointed out the importance of protecting the image of apprenticeships as a high quality programme leading to a valued career pathway. Holders of the present National Craft Certificate are in high demand internationally and Ireland has excelled in the World Skills Competitions.

Any expansion of apprenticeships into new occupations should maintain and enhance this high quality image. For such an expansion to be achieved, it is important that there is a significant shift in public perception of the value of apprenticeships and vocational education and training. This will not occur unless apprenticeships are seen as facilitating well publicised transparent progression routes into higher education.

This report is designed to achieve a closer alignment of education and training programmes with industry needs and Government priorities, supported by rigorous labour market intelligence and evaluation, and systematic data gathering on inputs, programme outcomes and participant follow-up. It is

important that the apprenticeships in new occupations are seen as a new initiative leading to high quality durable careers built on best international practice. Branding is important if learners and employers are to engage in the new programmes, and if parents, education and training providers and guidance staff are to be convinced of the merits of the new approach. In some professions, it may be appropriate to brand and market certain apprenticeships as ‘professional traineeships’. However there should be no ambiguity that these are offered with protection and legal status of the contract of apprenticeship.

The Review Group is of the view that all activities under the new programme should operate under the banner of the National Apprenticeship Programme, using the logos of both SOLAS and HEA. Alternatively the advice of a PR firm could be sought as to how best to brand the new approach. It is important that the new brand image conveys a strong enterprise led commitment, nationally recognised qualifications, and the strength of a unified FE/HE approach.

Expansion of apprenticeship programmes enabling participants to earn and learn, and leading to high quality stimulating careers are an integral part of the reforms being mooted. It is vital that both further and higher levels of education and training are viewed as providing for a seamless continuum of quality VET, responsive to Ireland’s skill needs, both at intermediate and advanced levels.

To achieve a sea change in public perception a sustained public awareness campaign will be needed, actively supported by employers, academia, VET providers, guidance counsellors and industry champions. This will not be effective unless there is well publicised information about:

- the benefits of apprenticeship as a way of learning
- the career prospects which result within occupations
- the opportunities which exist to undertake further specialisation and higher levels of learning.

Similar to the approaches used in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the branding and awareness measures could include:

- ambassadors and champions drawn from enterprise, education and training, past participants etc
- recruitment and careers fairs, regionally and nationally
- advertising and websites, facebook, twitter etc
- information nights for parents and students organised by guidance staff
- visits to and from employers
- the chance for young people to engage in taster programmes.

5.31 Traineeships

The terms of reference for this review included recommendations on other forms of workbased learning, such as traineeships. The Review Group has concentrated on apprenticeships as this is the focus of the OECD recommendations, and the thrust of EU policy. The advantage of apprenticeships over traineeships is that programmes are longer, provide for formally structured in depth learning on a dual basis, lead to a nationally recognised qualification, equip the learner to practice a specific occupation, and are the subject of a formal contract of apprenticeship between the employer and the apprentice. In particular, the apprentice is paid a wage throughout, and effectively makes the transition to full societal participation and adulthood. The stability of a wage, and the sense of identity of the participant as an employee of the company, earning while learning, are strong features of apprenticeship.

SOLAS has devised a range of traineeships which have the following features:-

- the programme has been developed through an employer-led process to equip the participant for a specific job
- programmes generally last between 26-59 weeks, leading to a nationally certified award
- traineeships are formally structured learning programmes combining off the job training in an ETB centre with on the job learning in the company
- training is delivered in accordance with an agreed training plan
- employers deploy a skills coach to oversee the on the job elements of the programme
- the participant is paid a training allowance, not a wage, and this is State funded.

JobBridge is an internship programme which provides work experience placements of 6-9 months duration for unemployed persons. The internships are designed to overcome the lack of previous work experience which can be a deterrent when seeking work. JobBridge is not designed to lead to a qualification, and does not provide for a formally structured learning programme. The participant is paid a State funded welfare payment and a top up of €50 per week.

More recently the HEA has published a call for proposals for the development of a pilot to deliver a Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice to holders of honours bachelor degrees. The new programme, which will begin in early 2014, is designed to promote cross disciplinary skills in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) sectors. Programme content will be designed by enterprises and higher education institutions

working collaboratively, and lead to the award of a Level 9 Post Graduate Diploma. The programme will be delivered partly in higher education institutions and mainly in the workplace. Participants will be paid a wage which must be equivalent at least to the national minimum wage. If participants are eligible for JobBridge, they will be paid that welfare payment and top of €50 by the State instead. Costs for higher education elements of the programme, if any, will be borne by employers. This initiative is also referred to as a STEM internship or Graduate Traineeship.

It will be seen that there are various forms of traineeship and internship, which may or may not lead to a formal qualification and the payment of a wage. They differ from apprenticeships in their duration/intensity, and the absence of a formal Contract of Apprenticeship where the apprentice is for most purposes an employee and is paid a wage.

The *ILO (International Labour Organisation) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO Contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment (November 2012)*⁵⁸ highlights the differences as follows:-

⁵⁸ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

Principal attributes of apprenticeship compared to informal apprenticeship and other workplace-based arrangements

	Wage	Legislative framework	Work place based	Programme of learning	On the job training	Off the job training	Formal assessment	Recognised certification	Duration
Traineeship	Maybe	No	Yes	No	Maybe	No	No	No	variable
Internship	No	No	Yes	No	Maybe	No	No	No	variable
Informal Apprenticeship	Pocket money in kind	No	Yes	No	Maybe	No	No	No	variable
Workplace learning	Yes	No	Yes	No	Maybe	No	No	No	variable
Apprenticeship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	fixed

This report also states:-

"Business Europe, an employer organization representing 41 Employer Federations from 35 European countries has listed the following advantages to firms of apprenticeship:

- *companies have their staff trained according to practical requirements;*
- *companies and their employees get used to training and integrating "newcomers" and they see the importance of learning;*
- *provided that vocational schools are well-equipped, young people can bring to the company the newest know-how from the training institute;*
- *employing apprentices is a unique source of recruitment for companies; former apprentices constitute a "pool" of competences for companies or even for a sector;*
- *apprentices contribute to production;*
- *apprentices contribute to the company with new energy and enthusiasm" ⁵⁹*

On 4 December 2013, the European Commission published a proposal for a Council Recommendation⁶⁰ which, if agreed, would require Member States to implement a quality framework for traineeships as soon as possible but no later than the end of 2014. This proposal envisages that a traineeship would have to be based on a written agreement between the trainee and the company. This would set out the educational objectives, working conditions, rates of pay, where applicable, and provide transparent information on the duration of the traineeship and the level of social protection available. The proposal is in response to concerns, highlighted in a Eurobarometer survey across EU Member States⁶¹ that some traineeships lack sufficient learning content and have inadequate working conditions. The survey of 500 people in Ireland showed that 20% had undertaken a traineeship, compared with an EU average of 46%. However, satisfaction levels in Ireland were higher, with 75% of those who had received financial compensation during the traineeship indicating it was sufficient to cover their basic living costs, compared with an EU average of 46%. 85% of Irish respondents were satisfied that their experience would help them secure regular employment, compared with an EU average of 71%.

⁵⁹ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

⁶⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2011&furtherNews=yes>

⁶¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1161_en.htm

It is clear that the apprenticeship system offers benefits over and above those in traineeships and internships in terms of

- the sustained duration of dual education and training leading to a nationally certified qualification and enabling the participant to practice an occupation
- the explicit arrangements for enterprise led curriculum development
- the protection of a legal framework and a formal contract of apprenticeship
- the stability and sense of identity of the apprentice as an employee with a wage contributing to productivity, and the company's growth and development as a learning organisation
- the societal contribution of the company in contributing to apprentice formation and employment

International evidence shows that company outlay on investment in training apprentices is compensated for by the apprentice's productivity by completion of training. The report indicates

"...apprenticeship provides firms with young employees who have mastered the skill set necessary for a given role within the firm. In addition, the apprentice has acquired knowledge and transferable skills. He/she has absorbed the culture of the firm and an appreciation of its organization and operation. Where apprentices are recruited as full-time employees the return from apprenticeship on the firm's investment is substantial. The case is made below from evidence of a cost-benefit analysis of apprentice training in England.

"Training an Apprentice in engineering was relatively expensive compared to other sectors (estimated as £28,762, on average, across the case studies) but such costs must be set against the potential benefits of training. The engineering case studies indicate that the employer's investment was, on average, paid back in less than three years. More importantly, the evidence points to significant benefits to establishments from investing in Apprenticeships through lower labour turnover, a better fit between the skills possessed by employees and the skills required by the company, and some control over skill-shortages potentially pushing up wage rates. There is also evidence of apprentices bringing innovation into workplaces."

While traineeships and other forms of work based learning have their strengths, the apprenticeship system confers extra benefits contributing to a highly skilled labour force, social cohesion, stability and employment. It has the potential to

provide respected pathways to adulthood opening up new careers for a large segment of the population. In meeting the challenges which lie ahead, it is in Ireland's interests to develop a strong apprenticeship programme, building on the success of the current system.

The system architecture, recommendations and processes in this report are designed to also progress other work based learning programmes. Closer engagement between employers and education and training providers will be an imperative at all levels of the system in the years ahead if ongoing quality and relevance is to be assured. However, for the reasons stated above, the preference is for apprenticeships to be developed, where they are feasible and sustainable .

5.32 EU Structural Funds and Resources

Ireland should fully capitalise on the availability of EU Structural Funds and Youth Guarantee funds to support the developments advocated in this report, learning from and contributing to best practice in Europe. The funds can support technical assistance, training of trainers, delivery costs, exchanges of participants, trainers and policy makers, in keeping with the objectives in Ireland's National Reform programme.

Some of the changes advocated in this Report can be achieved through a re-design of existing programmes. However, if Ireland is serious about improving the scale and quality of its apprenticeship system, a level of investment will be required to ensure effective structures, well targeted programmes, and careful monitoring of outcomes. While the constraints on exchequer spending must be taken account of, investment in high quality apprenticeships has the potential to reduce expenditure in other areas such as social welfare, as well as boosting competitiveness and growth.

5.33 Next Steps

The Review Group believes that the framework and recommendations set out in this Report provide a workable model for a well-functioning and significantly expanded apprenticeship system which will serve Ireland's future needs. It is not intended that the approach will be prescriptive, but rather that it will enable an enterprise led shared service to be provided embracing further and higher education. The proposals will need to be discussed further with stakeholders to examine how implementation can be progressed as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

Apprenticeships and other work-based training have the potential to play a critical role in boosting skill levels across our economy, and in supporting people into sustainable careers. The commitment in the Government's Action Plan for Jobs to review the apprenticeship system and deliver an updated model of training is timely, and coincides with unprecedented interest in apprenticeships and vocational training at a European level.

A key element of a successful apprenticeship and vocational system is to engage enterprises both in the design of curricula and in the delivery of programmes. This will ensure the continuing relevance of qualifications in a rapidly changing labour market. The starting point for any consideration of apprenticeship models usually includes a reference to the well-established dual systems of countries such as Austria, Denmark and Germany. However, much of the commentary tends to ignore the fact that Ireland cannot simply adopt systems that have been built over generations, upon very different economies, labour markets and institutional arrangements. This is not to say that we don't have much to learn from these systems. Indeed, this Review has tried to distil some of the principles on which European systems are based to inform a model that could work in an Irish context.

The OECD and the European Commission have argued that on-going structural change in the Irish economy requires a flexible apprenticeship system where the terms of the apprenticeship depends on the needs of the specific sector. The governance framework and operational arrangements set out in this Report are designed to include real possibilities to create new apprenticeships rapidly, and to react to emerging needs and target resources and participants towards sectors with high potential for growth.

Bibliography

- Vocational Education and Training in Europe - Perspectives for the Young Generation. Memorandum on Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training in Europe. December 2012.* European Commission 2012.
- A Roadmap Towards the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.* European Commission Non-Paper May 2013
- Action Plan for Jobs 2012.* Government of Ireland Dublin
- Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors. A guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners.* European Union 2013.
- Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union. Final Report.* European Commission.2012
- CEDEFOP (2009) Future Skills Supply in Europe. Mid Term Forecast up to 2020. Synthesis Report Luxembourg 2009*
- CSO 2013. *PIAAC 2012, Survey Results for Ireland from the OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies.* CSO Dublin 2013
- Department for Education, Department for Business Innovation and Skills England 2013. *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Next Steps from the Richard Review.*
- Department of Education and Skills (2011). *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Report of the Strategy Group.* Dublin
- EGSFN and FAS (2013). *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply* EGSFN and FAS Dublin 2013
- EGSFN and FAS (2013). *National Skills Bulletin 2013* EGSFN and FAS Dublin 2013
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2012). *NEETS Young People not in Employment Education or Training. Characteristics, Costs and Policy Responses in Europe.* Luxembourg 2012
- FORFAS (2010) *Review of Labour Market Programmes* FORFAS Dublin
- FORFAS (2013) *Ireland's Construction Sector: Outlook and Strategic Plan to 2015.* FORFAS Dublin 2013
- FORFAS 2012. *Guidance for Higher Education Providers on Current and Future Skills Needs of Enterprise - Springboard 2012.* FORFAS 2012
- FORFAS 2013 *Future Skills Requirements of the Manufacturing Sector to 2020.* FORFAS Dublin 2013
- HEA (2012). *National Survey of Employer's Views of Irish Higher Education Outcomes.* Dublin
- HEA (2013). *Report to the Minister for Education and Skills on System Reconfiguration, Inter-Institutional Collaboration and System Governance in Irish Higher Education.* Dublin
- HEA 2011. *Work Placement in Third Level Programmes - Roadmap for Employment Academic Partnerships.* Dublin
- HM Government England 2013. *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan.* October 2013.
- Holt, Jason (2012). *Making Apprenticeships More Accessible to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises.* Department for Business Innovation and Skills. England 2012
- Holzer J, Lerman R (2007) *America's Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs. Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond.* Georgetown University American University and the Urban Institute 2007
- ILO (2012) *Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues. ILO Contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment.*
- INAP.(2012) *The International Network on Innovative Apprenticeships. Memorandum, An Architecture for Modern Apprenticeships - Standards for Structure, Organisation and Governance.* Germany 2012
- Isusi Inigo.IKEI Spain. *Financing Apprenticeship in European Countries* CEDEFOP Workshop May 2013

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

- Kis Victoria (2010). *Learning for Jobs: OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training - Ireland*. OECD 2010
- Lerman, Robert L. *Can the United States Expand Apprenticeships ? Lessons form Experience*. American University, Urban Institute and IZA.
- London Economics. 2013. *An International Comparison of Apprentice Pay : Draft Final Report*. OECD 2009. *Vocational Education and Training in Switzerland. Strengths Challenges and Recommendations*. OECD 2009
- OECD 2012. *OECD Note on Quality Apprenticeships for the G20 Task Force on Employment*. September 2012
- Pathways to Work 2013. 50 Point Plan to Tackle Unemployment*. Government of Ireland Dublin
- Pattison Sandra National Centre for Vocational Education Research Australia. *Governance and Financing of Apprenticeships in Australia*. CEDEFOP Workshop May 2013
- Rauner Felix. University of Bremen. A Contribution to the Workshop: Apprenticeship: Governance Modes and Financing Approaches. CEDEFOP Workshop May 2013
- Review of Apprenticeships Call for Submissions*. Department of Employment and Learning Northern Ireland 2013
- Rhodes, Chris. (2012) House of Commons Library. *Apprenticeship Policy Standard Note SN/3052*
- Richard, Doug. (2012). *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*. Department for Business Innovation and Skills England.2012
- Ryan Paul, *The Institutional Requirements of Apprenticeship: Evidence from Smaller EU Countries*. International Journal of Training and Development. Blackwell Publishers 2000
- Smyth E, Banks J and Calvert E. ESRI. *From Leaving Certificate to Leaving School - A Longitudinal Study of Sixth Year Students*. ESRI Dublin 2011.
- Steedman, Hilary. (2010) London School of Economics and Political Science. *The State of Apprenticeships in 2010. International Comparisons: Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland*. Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network 2
- Steedman, Hilary. (2010) London School of Economics and Political Science. *The State of Apprenticeships in 2010. International Comparisons: Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland*. Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network 2010
- Steedman, Hilary. (2013) London School of Economics and Political Science. *Local Youth Employment Strategies for Ireland: Developing the Apprenticeship Model*.
- Sweeney, John. NESC. *A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed - A review for the Department of Education and Skills*. Department of Education and Skills. Dublin 2013
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2012). *International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate Level Skills and Apprenticeships. Case Study Report. Evidence Report 42*. UKCES 2012
- Zelloth Helmut. Education and Training Foundation. *Apprenticeship in Low and Middle Income Countries: Ways for Development* . CEDEFOP Workshop May 2013

Abbreviations

CEDEFO	
P	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CNC	Computer Numerical Control
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EGSFN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
EURES	European Job Mobility Portal
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council (now QQI)
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICT	Information and communications technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INAP	International Network on Innovative Apprenticeships
	A service from the Department of Social Protection offering a single point of contact for job seekers and employers for all employment and income supports.
INTREO	
IoT	Institute of Technology
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NUI	National University of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme of International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QQI	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Appendix 1 D/Education and Skills Press Release 19 May 2013 Minister Quinn announces plans for consultation of stakeholders in relation to apprenticeship in Ireland

'Steering group to produce a blueprint for development of apprenticeship within the context of work-based learning in Ireland' – Minister Quinn

The Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, today announced the appointment of an independent steering group to progress a review of apprenticeship in Ireland through consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Minister Quinn said the group, to be chaired by Kevin Duffy, current chairperson of the Labour Court, will produce recommendations to the Department on the future development of apprenticeship based on that consultation process with relevant interest groups.

Membership of the Review Group, which is expected to complete its work before the end of the year, draws on national and international expertise including academic, business, and employee interests.

The review will have regard to existing education and training policy and, in particular, to national targets relating to second-level education and participation in higher education. It will focus on apprenticeship as a progression route from second level provision. It will also explore the potential for connections between work-based learning and other further education and training provision. This will encompass an examination of alternative methods of work-based education and training.

Announcing the launch of the process, Minister Quinn said he wanted to “ensure that the review was comprehensive with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures appropriate balance between supply and demand.”

“Ireland has been well served by a very high standard of apprenticeship training and education that has contributed greatly to the skills of our workforce. However it is timely to examine how the current system can be amended in the context of ongoing reform of the Further Education and Training sector.” said Minister Quinn.

Notes for Editors:

The Minister proposes to appoint the following members to the Review Group:

- Mr Kevin Duffy (Chair): Mr Duffy is currently Chairman of the Labour Court
- Dr Hilary Steedman, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics
- Ms Sandra Guilfoyle, Human Resources Manager, Jones Engineering
- Dr Tony Dundon, Head of Management Discipline, School of Business and Economics, NUI Galway
- Dr Peter Rigney, Industrial Officer, ICTU
- Mr Tony Donohoe, Head of Education, Social & Innovation Policy, IBEC
- Mr William Egenton, Managing Director, Dromone Engineering

Terms of Reference:

It is proposed that the consultative phase of the Review will address three key themes:

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

- Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of Apprenticeship and what improvements can be made to its current structure
- An examination of the alternative methods of work-based training in Ireland
- Consideration of the structural mechanisms, and criteria, under which collaboration with industry/employers can be pursued into the future, either through improved, alternative or complementary models of work-based training

Recommendations from the Review:

Following a consultation process, the Review Group shall recommend options to the Minister for Education and Skills, recognising the broad spectrum of vocational training available, for the development of the apprentice formation system, and other work based education/training systems, including, as necessary:

- Legislative changes;
- Model of delivery/curriculum/ range of crafts/ occupations ;
- Funding and finance mechanisms;
- Provision changes;
- Staffing and resource implications;
- Governance changes;
- Transition actions resulting from recommendations.

ENDS

Appendix 2.

List of Organisations which were written to, inviting submissions

Institute of Art Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire
Institute of Technology Waterford
Association of CEOs of VECs
ACCA Ireland
Accounting Technicians Ireland
Alcohol and Beverage Federation Ireland
Association of County and City Councils
Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland
Athlone Institute of Technology
BATU - Building and Allied Trades' Union
Bord Gais
Bord Iascaigh Mhara –Irish Sea Fisheries Board
Chartered Accountants Ireland
Chartered Institute of Building in Ireland
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Chartered Institute of Training and Development
Co Cork VEC and Dun Laoghaire VEC.
Communications and Management Institute
Construction Industry Federation
Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies in Ireland
Cork Institute of Technology
Corporate Social Responsibility Ireland
County and City Managers Association
D/Agriculture Food and Marine
D/Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht
D/Children and Youth Affairs
D/Communications Energy and National Resources
D/Education and Skills
D/Environment Community and Local Government
D/Finance
D/Health
D/Jobs Enterprise and Innovation
D/Justice and Equality
D/Public Expenditure and Reform
D/Social Protection
D/Transport Tourism and Sport
Dublin Institute of Technology.

Early Childhood Ireland
Eirgrid
Electric Ireland
Electrical Contractors Safety and Standards Association
Electricity Supply Board
Engineers Ireland
Enterprise Ireland
ESB Networks
Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
Failte Ireland – The National Tourism Development Authority
FAS.
Financial Services Ireland
Food and Drinks Sector
Forbairt Naionra Teoranta
Forfas
Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
German Irish Chamber
Health Management Institute of Ireland
Health Services Executive
Higher Education Authority
Higher Education Colleges Association
IBEC - Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICT Ireland
ICTU - Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDA Ireland
ILAM (Leisure industry)
Institute of Bankers Ireland
Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Institute of Incorporated Public Accountants
Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
Institute of Technology Carlow
Institute of Technology Dundalk
Institute of Technology Letterkenny
Institute of Technology Limerick
Institute of Technology Tallaght
Institute of Technology Tralee
Institutes of Technology Ireland
Irish Aviation Authority
Irish Banking Federation
Irish Computer Society
Irish Concrete Foundation
Irish Federation of University Teachers
Irish Hairdressing Federation

Irish Hardware and Building Materials Association
Irish Hospitality Institute
Irish Hotels Federation
Irish Institute of Legal Executives
Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management
Irish Institute of Training and Development
Irish Management Institute
Irish Medical Devices Association
Irish Mining and Quarrying Society
Irish Offshore Operators Association
Irish Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
Irish Small Firms Association
Irish Software Association
Irish Vocational Education Association
Irish Wind Energy Association
Local Government Directors Association
Mandate
Medical Laboratory Scientists Association
National Competitiveness Council
National Economic and Social Council
National Electrical Contractors Ireland
OPATSI - Operative Plasterers and Allied Trades Ireland
PharmaChemical Ireland
Public Appointments Service
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Registered Electrical Contractors Ireland
Registered Gas Installers Ireland
Restaurants Association of Ireland
Retail Ireland
RGDATA
Sales Institute of Ireland
SIPTU - Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
Skillnets
Sligo Institute of Technology
Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland
Society of the Irish Motor Industry
⁶²Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland
Teachers Union of Ireland
Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development Authority
TEEU - Technical Engineering and Electrical Union
Telecommunications and Internet Federation

⁶² SOLAS was not established at this stage.

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

UCATT - Union of Construction and Allied Trades and Technicians
UNITE

Appendix 3.

Organisations which made written submissions to the review

Accounting Technicians Ireland and Chartered Accountants Ireland
Ahern James
Ahern Mike
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants Ireland
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland
Autolaunch
Bord Gais
CDS Architectural Metalwork
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
City and Guilds
Construction Industry Federation
Cork Institute of Technology
Craft Council of Ireland
Craft Unions - BATU, OPATSI, TEEU and UCATT
D/Agriculture Food and Marine
D/Social Protection
Dublin Institute of Technology.
Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute
Dunne Gregory
Education and Training Boards Ireland
ESB Networks
Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association
FAS Instructors Committee
FAS Services to Business Staff
FAS.
Forfas, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and D/Jobs Enterprise and Innovation
German Irish Chamber
Health Services Executive
Hewison James
Higher Education Authority
IBEC - Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICTU – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Institute of Art Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire
Institute of Technology Carlow
Institute of Technology Dundalk
Institutes of Technology Apprenticeship Committee
Ireland Munster Centre Society of Operations Engineers
Irish Computer Society
Irish Hairdressing Federation

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Irish Hospitality Institute
Irish Hotels Federation
Irish Medical Devices Association
Irish Road Haulage Association
Liebherr Container Cranes
Local Government Managers Association
Mc Cabe Peter J
Mc Donagh Sean Dr
Morrissey Tom
Mulcahy Michael
Murdock Henry
Murrán Seamus
National Centre of Excellence in Furniture Design and
Technology Galway Mayo Institute of Technology

National Disability Authority
Nyhan Barry Dr University of Bremen
O Connor Len Dr
O Farrell Kevin
O Hare Terry
O Reilly Terry
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Rauner Felix Prof Dr, University of Bremen
Rehab Group
SIPTU - Services Industrial Professional and Technical
Union
Skillsnets
Small Firms Association
Smith Erica Prof University of Ballarat Australia
Society of the Irish Motor Industry
Teachers Union of Ireland
The Heritage Council

Appendix 4.

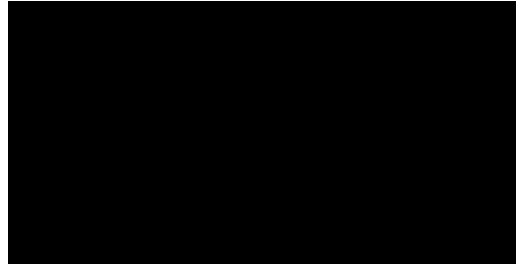
Organisations and persons who had meetings with the Review Group

Construction Industry Federation
Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies
Craft Unions - BATU, OPATSI, TEEU and UCATT
Education and Training Boards Ireland
Engineers Ireland
FAS Instructors Committee
Forfas, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and D/Jobs Enterprise and Innovation
Higher Education Authority
IBEC - Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Irish Hotels Federation
Irish Small Firms and Medium Sized Enterprises Association
Mc Donagh Sean Dr
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Ralph Lissek German Irish Chamber
SIPTU - Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
Society of the Irish Motor Industry
SOLAS
Teachers Union of Ireland and Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland

Appendix 5

Consultation Framework

*An Roinn Oideachais agus
Scileanna,
Sr. Mhaoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1*



*Department of Education
and Skills
Marlborough St,
Dublin 1.*

To the organisations and bodies
named in the address

26 June 2013

Consultation on the Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland

On 19 May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced a wide-ranging review of apprenticeships in Ireland. The role of the review is to "*examine the future of apprenticeship training in Ireland with a greater focus on work-based learning and a closer alignment of the current needs of the Irish labour market.*" The text of the Press Release is at

<http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2013-Press-Releases/PR13-05-19.html>

and a copy of the Discussion Paper setting out the key issues can be accessed at the end of the Press Release or directly at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Apprenticeship-Review-%E2%80%93-Background-Issues-Paper.pdf>.

A Review Group has been established to progress this task, and submissions are now being invited from targeted organisations and bodies with an interest in this area. The submissions are seeking views across 6 key areas :-

- Area 1 - your overview of the effectiveness of the current system, the issues which need to be addressed, and presenting your ideal model for the future of apprenticeship, having regard to Ireland's current and future needs
- Area 2 Looking forward, what changes might be made in a re-structured or fundamentally reformed Apprenticeship system in regard to any or all of the issues set out on page 6. Please feel free to consider a significantly broader approach which embraces a wide range of occupations, and provides for different modes of funding, delivery and apprentice-employer relationships.
- Area 3 - information on other systems/programmes in Ireland, including those with significant work based learning

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

- Area 4 - information on programmes in other jurisdictions which have a significant work- based learning element which are relevant as possible future models in Ireland
- Area 5 - the scope for broader integration of other occupations into an Apprenticeship or traineeship model in Ireland. This could include an exploration of areas where current work based learning provision is of an ad hoc or unstructured nature.
- Area 6 - Any other points deemed relevant to the review.

A suggested format for submissions is attached. Please note that you do not need to respond to all aspects highlighted in the framework unless you consider them to be relevant to your area of interest/expertise. However, as this is a fundamental review of apprenticeship in Ireland, the Review Group welcomes a broad range of inputs, and would like the process to be as comprehensive as possible.

Submissions should be returned by **e mail** to Apprenticeshipreview@education.gov.ie by close of business on Friday **30 August 2013**. Please note that all submissions received will be published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

We are very grateful for your input and expertise in this important area. An electronic copy of this letter and consultation framework is available at www.education.ie should you wish to circulate this document.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Kelly
Secretary to the Apprenticeship Review Group
E mail kellymg30@hotmail.com

Background context for the review.

The current apprenticeship model is established by the Labour Services Act 1986 and amendments and is governed by statutory regulations approved by the Oireachtas. It covers 26 designated trades, in the trade families of Construction, Engineering, Electrical, Motor and Print trades. FAS has statutory responsibility for the system. In general the apprenticeship consists of seven phases, four of which are with the employer and last about 170 weeks. The three off-the-job phases interspersed throughout the apprenticeship take place in a FAS Training Centre and an Institute of Technology /or College of Further Education and last a total of about 40 weeks.

Currently legislation is before the Oireachtas, to integrate the training resources of FAS and the education and training resources of the countrywide Vocational Education Committees into sixteen regional Educational and Training Boards. In addition further legislation is in progress to establish SOLAS as a national authority with responsibility for policy and funding of further and vocational education and training. Therefore changes in the structure, range and policies for apprenticeship could take place in a new broad context of reform of vocational education and training.

The consultative phase of the Review announced by the Minister will address three key themes:

- 1) Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of apprenticeship and what improvements can be made to its current structure
- 2) An examination of the alternative methods of work-based training in Ireland
- 3) Consideration of the structural mechanisms, and criteria, under which collaboration with industry/employers can be pursued into the future, either through improved, alternative or complementary models of work-based training

Following the consultation process, the Review Group will recommend options to the Minister, recognising the broad spectrum of vocational training available, for the development of the apprentice formation system, and other work based education/training systems, including, as necessary:

- Legislative changes;
- Model of delivery/curriculum/ range of crafts/ occupations;
- Funding and finance mechanisms;
- Provision changes;
- Staffing and resource implications;
- Governance changes;
- Transition actions resulting from recommendations.

Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Cover Sheet

Response to Consultation on Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Name of Organisation
Address

Occupational sectors which are covered in the submission

Contact Name	Email address	
Phone number	Fax No	Mobile

Date of submission

The submission should be made by e mail to Apprenticeshippreview@education.gov.ie by close of business on Friday **30 August 2013**. Please note that all submissions will be published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

Consultation on Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland. Suggested issues for submissions.

Area 1 Overview

- 1 Having regard to the issues outlined in the Press Release and Discussion Paper, please set out your views of the effectiveness of the current apprenticeship programme, highlighting the issues you consider should be addressed to ensure a skilled workforce to meet Ireland's current and future needs.

- 2 Please set out an overview of your ideal model for apprenticeship in the future, indicating whether the programme should be extended to cover new occupations, and whether there should be various sub models for different fields of activity.

- 3 How should the Irish apprenticeship system fit into the EU and international structures ?

Area 2. Looking forward, what changes would you recommend in a re-structured or fundamentally reformed apprenticeship system in regard to any or all of the issues below. Please feel free to consider a significantly broader approach which embraces a wide range of occupations, and provides for different modes of funding and delivery.

- 1 Governance**
 - 1a Should future apprenticeships have a statutory underpinning ? What aspects, if any, should be statute regulated, and what aspects should be market or stakeholder controlled ?
 - 1b How and who should be involved in planning, curriculum development, support, regulation and monitoring of apprenticeships to ensure compliance with national objectives ? (Quality assurance to be through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI))
 - 1c What would be the most effective system of governance to combine long term system and brand stability with an agile response to national needs? How can governance arrangements be simplified/streamlined ?
- 2 Equity**
 - 2a How can a better gender balance be achieved in apprenticeships ?
 - 2b How can education and training and labour market entry routes for early school leavers, and those ill equipped for direct entry to more academically oriented FE and HE programmes, be best protected and expanded ?
 - 2c How can the interests of persons with disabilities be advanced within future apprenticeships ?
- 3 Range of occupations**
 - 3a Should the range of occupations covered by apprenticeship/traineeships be broadened outside the traditional craft industries ? If so, what occupations/programmes should be covered and how would this be achieved ? Please state why you consider these occupations suitable for apprenticeship
- 4 Funding**
 - 4a How can the costs of apprenticeship be shared between apprentices, employers and the State ?
 - 4b How can the costs of expansion into new disciplines be best supported given economic constraints ?
 - 4c Who should pay the learner (a) on the job (b) off the job ?
 - 4d Should pay or allowances vary by discipline ?
 - 4e What supports, if any, should be available for learners availing of off the job training away from home ?
 - 4f Describe how the changes you propose will decrease or increase the costs of apprenticeship to Employers, apprentices or the State.

- 5 Recruitment**
- 5a Who should control recruitment to apprenticeships and how should this be done?
 - 5b Given that an agile response to labour market needs inevitably gives rise to peaks and valleys in demand, how can the impact of this on planning, infrastructural investment, and employment of trainers, be best catered for ?
 - 5d Should State provision of training be decoupled from employer recruitment ?
 - 5d How can the supply and demand for the different disciplines be most effectively planned ?
 - 5f What should be the minimum entry requirements ? Should these vary for individual occupations ?
 - 5g Should there be a probationary period ?
- 6 Curriculum**
- 6a What is the appropriate balance of (a) technical and occupational skills and (b) transversal skills, and what subjects should be added or strengthened in the programme ? (e.g Transversal skills could include mathematical skills, ICT, communications, literacy, teamwork, planning, research and evaluation skills)
 - 6b Should the programmes for various trades and occupations have different learning outcomes and durations ?
 - 6c How should the programme provide for progression beyond apprenticeship?
 - 6d How can learners be best prepared for potential career change in a knowledge based society?
 - 6e What transition measures/programmes, if any, are needed to prepare students to enter an apprenticeship, (a) in the case of early school leavers and (b) in the case of those with a Leaving Certificate or equivalent and (c) those with significant experience beyond school ?
- 7 Assessment**
- 7a Should the different disciplines/trades lead to awards at different levels of the national framework of qualifications ?
 - Should interim awards be provided for during training ?
 - 7b Should time spent on and off the job be more flexible where learners are assessed as meeting the final learning outcomes for the relevant discipline ?
 - 7c

- 7d How should arrangements for accreditation of prior learning be best delivered ?
- 7e How can redundant apprentices be best catered for ?
- 8 Delivery**
- 8a What should be the appropriate balance between work based learning and education/training ?
- 8b How should this be best structured in terms of phases, duration, block or day release, e-learning etc
- 8c Can employers play a greater role in delivery and how should this be done ?
- 8d Should web based learning form part of the approach and how would this be integrated into the programme ?
- 9 Providers**
- 9a What providers should deliver the off the job elements in regard to (a) technical and occupational skills (b) transversal skills
- 9b How should this be structured ?
- 10 Economy**
- 10 What is the impact of your proposals on the economy in terms of
(a) meeting Ireland's current and future skills needs
(b) providing a high quality entry route for apprentices to sustainable employment
(c) costs to the State, to employers and apprentices

Area 3. Information on other systems in Ireland including those with a significant work based learning element.

Please provide information below on any programmes which you feel should be considered as part of this review in the format requested below. (The Review Group already has data on Skillnets and FAS Traineeships so these need not be covered). Complete a separate sheet for each type of programme. Please include programmes such as internships, or programmes of an ad hoc nature which you consider relevant).

- 1 Name of programme
- 2 Level of Certification and Certifying Body
- 3 Target Group
- 4 Main Providers
- 5 General disciplines/occupations covered
- 6 Duration of programme in
 - (a) months/years
 - (b) tuition hours per annum
- 7 Duration of programme in weeks
 - (a) in the workplace,
 - (b) in education
 - (c) in a training centre
- 8 How is work placement structured (e.g block release for x weeks, day release etc)
- 9 Who is responsible for recruitment ? (providers/employers/other)
- 10 Who funds the programme ?
- 11 What pay or training allowances apply ?
- 12 Please state why you feel this would be a good model for apprenticeship/traineeship ?

Area 4. Programmes in other jurisdictions which have a significant work based learning element, and are relevant to future models of apprenticeship/traineeship in Ireland.

Please give details of relevant programmes of which you are aware, if possible quoting relevant reports or website addresses. Please complete a separate sheet for each programme.

- 1 Country
- 2 Name of programme
- 3 Who regulates the programme and its curriculum and how is this done ?
- 4 Target Group
- 5 Main Providers
- 6 General disciplines/occupations covered
- 7 Duration of programme in
(a) months/years
- 8 Duration of programme in weeks
(a) in the workplace,
(b) in education
(c) in a training centre
- 9 How is work placement structured (e.g block release for x weeks, day release etc)
- 10 Who is responsible for recruitment ? (providers/employers)
- 11 Who funds the programme ?
- 12 What pay or training allowances apply ?
- 13 Please state why you feel this would be a good model for apprenticeship/traineeship in Ireland ?
- 14 Please quote any relevant sources, websites.

Area 5. Scope for broader integration of other disciplines into an apprenticeship or traineeship model in Ireland.

Please provide examples of programmes or occupations which could be integrated into a more structured form of traineeship/apprenticeship.

Please complete a separate sheet for each programme/occupational area. Where multiple programmes of a similar structure are being described only one sheet is necessary, but please list the names of each programme here.

- 1 Name of programme
- 2 Occupations covered*
- 3 Target Group
- 4 Level of Certification and Certifying Body*
- 5 Duration (a) in work (b) in an education centre (c) in a training centre.*
- 6 Nature of payment or training allowance to learner, if any
- 7 Who controls recruitment ?
- 8 Who funds the programme ?
- 9 How and who should regulate the operation of the programme and the curriculum ?
- 10 What are the advantages of incorporating this into an apprenticeship/traineeship model ?
- 11 What key interests should be engaged with in developing such an approach (e.g name key unions, employer bodies, providers)

* If the occupation is not catered for at present through a formal training programme, please make suggestions under the headings above, as to what format, duration, and level of certification might be suitable.

Area 6. Please make any other points you consider relevant to the review.