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Department for  
**Employment  
and Learning**  
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# Consultation on the Development of a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland

## Response Questionnaire

# CONSULTATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND QUESTIONNAIRE

## A Vision for Higher Education: 2010-2020

### PROPOSAL

- The Department's vision for higher education is one of a sector which is vibrant, of international calibre, which pursues excellence in teaching and research and which plays a pivotal role in the development of a modern, sustainable knowledge-based economy which supports a confident inclusive society which recognises and values diversity.

### QUESTIONS

#### Question One

- What are your views on the vision outlined above for the development of the higher education sector up to 2020?

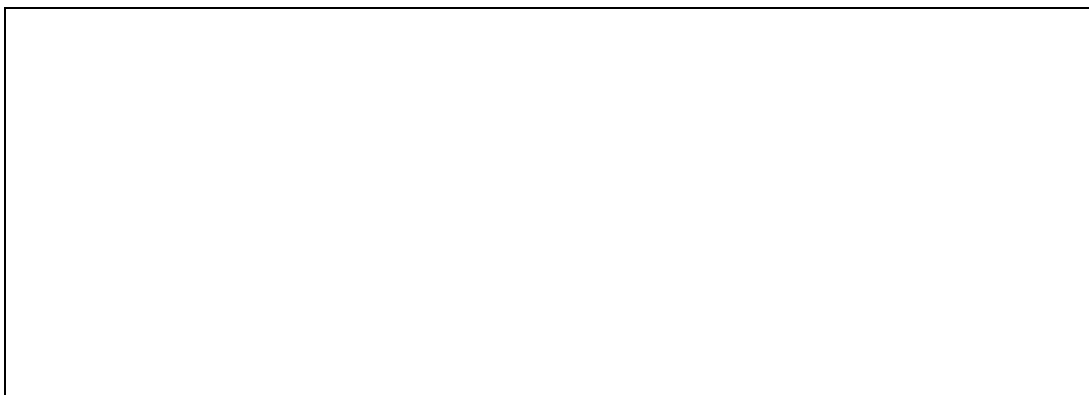
## **A Learning Society**

### PROPOSALS

- Teaching and learning needs to be flexible, accessible and of the highest quality. More flexible pathways to qualifications need to be developed, with funding arrangements incentivising this change.
- The sector should seek to develop “Distinctive Northern Ireland Graduates”; graduates who possess additional skills that will place them at an advantage globally.
- A greater emphasis on part-time participation in higher education and on postgraduate research and training is required involving closer collaboration with industry and continuing Government commitment to research and development activities.
- The roles of the FECs in the provision and delivery of higher education should be further developed and fostered in partnership with the Universities and University Colleges.
- There is a need to incentivise choices for STEM areas beyond the traditional higher education courses
- There is a need for a greater emphasis on sub-degree qualifications which better meet the needs of local industry and brings Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK and Europe.
- It is imperative that we build on the success to date of widening participation to ensure access for all those who can benefit from higher

education, addressing inequalities of gender and socio-economic grouping at a time of constrained resource availability.

**What are your views on the above proposals?**



## QUESTIONS

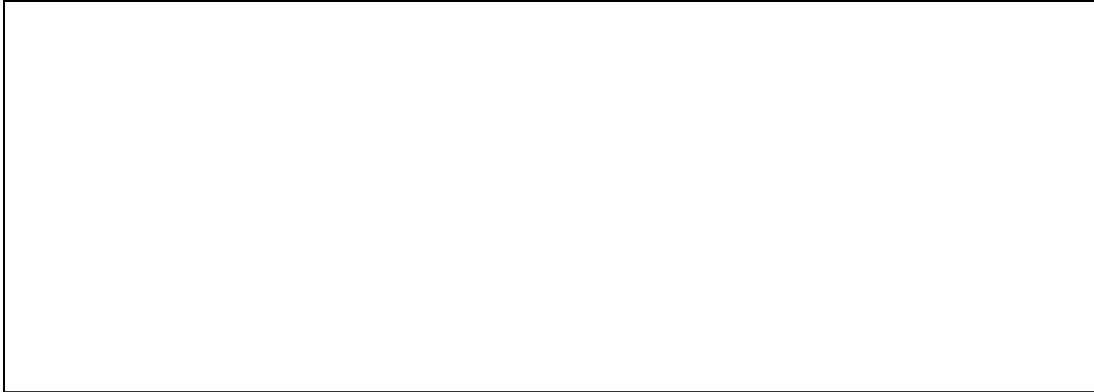
### Question Two

- How should higher education in Northern Ireland be delivered to best support the needs of current and future learners, including those in the workforce?



### Question Three

- How can learning at higher education institutions in Northern Ireland be made distinctive from the rest of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and Europe, leading to graduates with greater employability potential?



### **Higher Education and the Economy**

#### PROPOSALS

- Research should continue to be funded at an appropriate level to enable our Universities to fulfil their central role to develop and sustain a world-class research base in Northern Ireland.
- Increased employer engagement with higher education and the continual development of knowledge exchange activity with businesses, the public sector and with the third sector is required.
- The promotion of entrepreneurship in the local economy through the higher education sector, including the development of graduates with the right set of skills necessary to compete in a global economy.

- Working more closely with local industry, particularly SMEs and potential investors to ensure that skills gaps are identified and addressed, putting in place flexible client-focused approaches to do so.
- Northern Ireland must play to its strengths, ensuring the development of a high quality skills base and a willingness to respond to investors.
- Cross-departmental co-operation to promote interest in, and the study of, priority subjects from an early age, achieving the right balance between these and other subject areas, whilst respecting academic freedom.

**What are your views on the above proposals?**

## QUESTIONS

Question Four:

- How can the higher education sector maximise its contribution to Northern Ireland's economy, particularly in relation to research and development?

Question Five:

- How can higher education, government and business work more effectively to identify research and development needs and improve the knowledge and skills of the current, and future, workforce?



**Internationally Connected**

PROPOSALS

- Expansion of Northern Ireland's market share within the UK in respect of international activity and overseas student enrolments through the development of a unique Northern Ireland higher education selling point.
- Encouraging, incentivising and supporting Northern Ireland students to avail of the opportunities for international mobility.
- Institutions should seek to further develop their portfolio of well managed overseas institutional partnerships that benefit not only their students and institutions but Northern Ireland as a whole.
- Healthy and substantial international research links should continue to be fostered, for overseas trade and inward investment. In particular, HEIs

should continue to work with SMEs to ensure they are well placed to reap the benefits of internationalisation.

**What are your views on the above proposals?**

## QUESTIONS

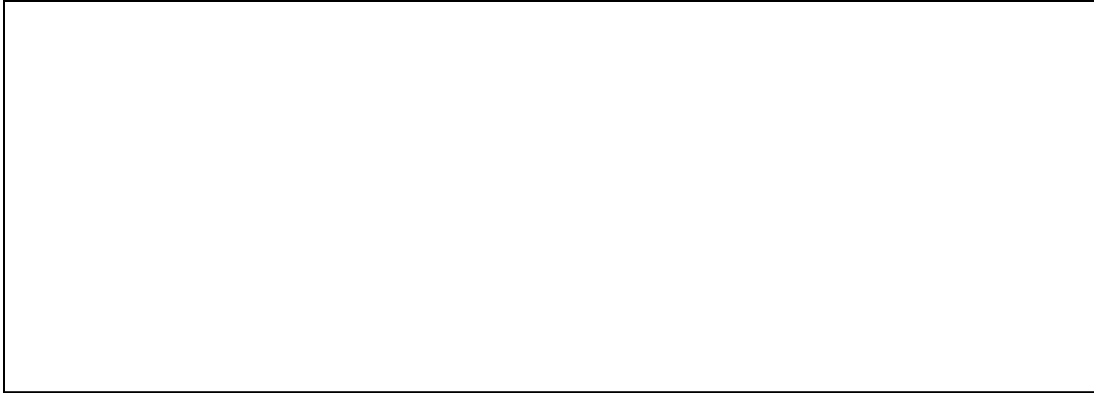
Question Six:

- As higher education becomes increasingly globalised, how can Northern Ireland's institutions further expand their international portfolios, to assist not only the higher education sector, but Northern Ireland as a whole?



Question Seven:

- How can Northern Ireland's students be encouraged, incentivised and supported to become more internationally mobile?



## **Higher Education and Civil Society**

### PROPOSALS

- Increasing opportunities for learners to enter higher education and assist in the development of initiatives and programmes at the HEIs to ensure the establishment of an open and diverse society.
- Promoting the creation of sustainable outreach links between the HEIs and the local voluntary, community and local Government sectors, supported by external engagement committees in which all stakeholders are represented.
- HEIs working in partnership with FECs to encourage and promote the provision of higher education in enabling those from geographical 'cold-spots' to benefit from a higher education experience.

**What are your views on the above proposals?**



**QUESTIONS**

Question Eight:

- How should the already established relationships and interfaces with local communities and civic society be developed further to maximise their effectiveness?



Question Nine:

- If new relationships and interfaces need to be established, what should they look like?



## Higher Education Finance and Governance

### PROPOSALS

- Changing the funding model for higher education to a simplified system that better reflects the need for part-time, modular study to ensure flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness in higher education.
- Assessing the extent to which MaSN, as a means of controlling expenditure, is still fit for purpose.
- Considering whether the Financial Memorandum between the Department and the Universities and University Colleges takes account of the UK-wide HEI Financial Memoranda and also reflects the appropriate degree of assurance.
- Striking a clear balance between HEI autonomy and the role of the Department through a renewed funding and governance framework to ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities.

**What are your views on the above proposals?**

## QUESTIONS

Question Ten:

- How can we ensure that government funding is being used effectively to support learners and respond to economic priorities?



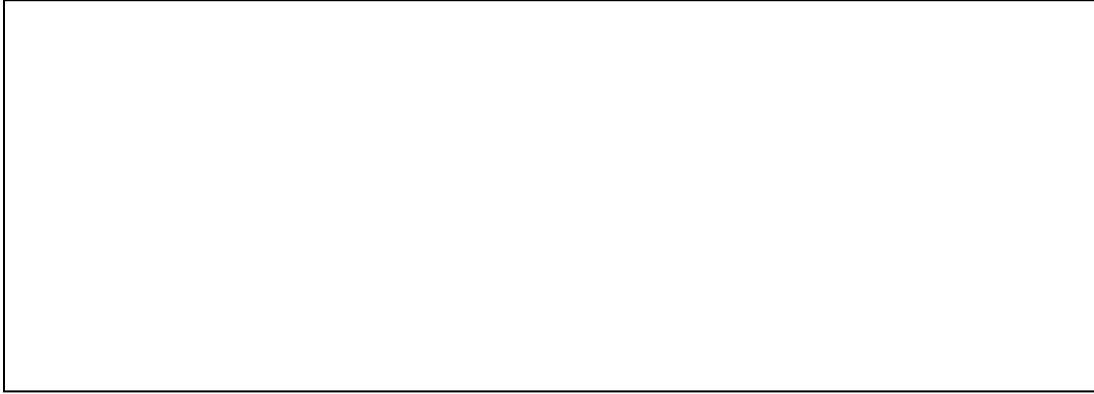
Question Eleven:

- What are your views on the higher education funding model in Northern Ireland?



Question Twelve:

- How could government funding, including student support, be revised to support modular and flexible study?



Question Thirteen:

- What are your views on the cap on student numbers (MaSN)?



## **Implementing the Strategy**

### QUESTION

Question Fourteen:

- What are your views on the establishment of a strategic implementation body to oversee implementation of the strategy when it is finalised?

**We welcome any additional thoughts or comments on the consultation?**

Name:

Organisation:

Contact Number:

E-mail:

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