

people:skills:jobs:



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
www.delni.gov.uk

Department for Employment and Learning Research Agenda 2007 - 2009

THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

RESEARCH AGENDA 2007 –2009

1. BACKGROUND TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland is responsible for third level education, training and a range of employment measures. Its formal aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

Key Areas of Activity

- Skills
- Research and Development
- Helping People into Work
- Employment rights, responsibilities and remedies

The Department embraces four separate, but related, key areas of activity, which are:

- the Department's central role in enhancing the provision of learning and skills, including entrepreneurship, enterprise, management and leadership, to meet the needs of the economy;
- the important contribution the Department makes to increasing the level of research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy;
- helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self-employment, and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development; and
- the development and maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.

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It works closely with other relevant Government Departments and agencies in the delivery of service and achievement of the key areas.

Further detail of DEL and its activities can be found on the Department's website at www.delni.gov.uk

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2. COMMITMENT TO EVIDENCE BASED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Department, within its Corporate Plan for the period 2005-08¹, recognises that access to high quality, up to date research is an essential ingredient in both shaping and delivering successfully upon its strategic priorities. In order to ensure that the link between evidence and policy development was strengthened, the Department launched its first Research Agenda in 2004 (see www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/DELResearchAgenda04_07.pdf). This set out, for the first time, a number of high level areas where the Department wished to strengthen the available evidence base. It also established how the Department intended managing, financing, procuring and disseminating that research work.

Since the launch of the first DEL Research Agenda, a significant volume of research has been commissioned. Further details of that work are provided at Section 3. However, the Department's research needs continue to evolve. For example, in February 2006, the Department published the new Northern Ireland Skills Strategy, "Success Through Skills". This new strategy requires a clear understanding of current and future demand for skills and that education and training providers are responsive to delivering those. The success of the Skills Strategy will depend critically on the availability of robust and timely information and research evidence, particularly in relation to understanding clearly the skills demand picture.

Given these changing circumstances, it is now opportune to review the original Research Agenda and roll it forward so that it continues to reflect fully the Department's research needs up to 2009. This work is also complemented by a rolling schedule of policy and programme evaluations which the Department updates on an annual basis.

¹ The Department's Corporate Plan can be found at the following web address:

www.delni.gov.uk/corporate_plan_05-08.pdf

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While the research needs of the Department continue to evolve, the aims underpinning the original Research Agenda remain relevant. They are:

- to strengthen further the link that exists between research, policy development and service delivery within DEL;
- to provide improved co-ordination between the Department's planned research and the Strategic and Business Planning process; and
- to enhance interest within the research community in the areas of research relevant to DEL.

The delivery of this new Research Agenda will be overseen by the Department's Cross-Divisional Strategy Forum, the prime group within DEL for making decisions about the policy relevance of research.

3. THE EXPANDING EVIDENCE BASE

The Department's strong track record in supporting and commissioning research has been enhanced further by the work that has flowed from its first Research Agenda. This is presented below, aligned to the Department's four key areas of activity set out previously. Published research reports are available on the Departmental web-site www.delni.gov.uk/index/statistics-and-research/stats-research.htm

Research commissioned to deliver Research Agenda 2004-07

Skills

❖ **Occupational Forecasts and Replacement Demand in NI: Regional Forecasts**

This report examines occupation and replacement demand forecasts for the Northern Ireland economy. It provides annual employment projections for 24 separate occupation groups for each year to 2015. The forecasts provide a measure of the scale of likely job vacancies in each occupation caused by labour turnover as well as by the expansion or contraction of demand. The research was published in June 2006 and provides a valuable resource for the newly established Northern Ireland Skills Expert Group as it considers the future skill needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

❖ **NI Skills Task Force Executive Skills Watch Survey: PA Consulting**

Examines changes in recruitment demand for executive jobs in Northern Ireland. Data are being collected for both the public and private sectors and the detailed analysis is due to be published early 2007.

❖ **2001 Census Rates of Return to skills levels: Prof Vani Borooah**

Using NI Census data, this study examined whether those holding higher level qualifications are also more likely to hold professional jobs. It also examines how this relationship differs across regions of the UK. The research was published in January 2007.

❖ **NI Skills Monitoring Survey 2005: Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA)**

This will provide an update of the 2000 and 2002 Skills Monitoring Surveys and will identify, *inter alia*, skills gaps and training needs across 4,500 public and private sector organisations. A summary report was published in October 2006, a full report is due later in 2007.

❖ **An econometric study of why students do not complete their courses: University of Ulster, Prof Vani Borooah**

This research utilises a large data set of UU student records, to examine those characteristics most associated with students not completing Higher Education courses. The author uses advanced modelling techniques to construct a profile for students who are most at risk and least at risk of withdrawal based upon their personal, social and economic characteristics. The research was published in January 2007.

❖ **HE & FE Participation in NI: University of Ulster, Prof Bob Osborne**

This research will establish a quantitative examination of what factors are important to students as they consider applications to enter HE and FE. It will examine what barriers exist and will attempt to estimate the latent demand for HE and FE which could be met through widening participation. Results will be available in 2007.

❖ **An analysis of higher education students who study in Northern Ireland compared to those who leave for GB - 2003/04 academic year: internal**

This research report looks at how NI domiciled students who study higher education in GB differ from those who study in NI. The report uses data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to provide a descriptive analysis of the different characteristics of students studying in NI and GB. Published October 2005

❖ **Student Income Expenditure Survey: National Centre for Social Research**

This survey is based on Northern Ireland domiciled higher education students at Northern Ireland institutions. It used a representative sample of both full-time and part-time students on designated undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the academic year 2004/05 to collect detailed data on students' financial circumstances and how these differ depending on students' background and characteristics. The survey was published in September 2006.

❖ **Northern Ireland's graduates - the classes of '95 and '99: Kate Purcell & Peter Elias**

Examines the labour market experiences of two cohorts of NI graduates, one graduating in 1995 and one in 1999. The report, published in October 2005, provides details of their career paths, geographical mobility, earnings and debt.

❖ **Widening Access to HE and FE secondary data analysis: internal**

Using a range of data sources, this study aims to assess how successful government policy has been in encouraging under-represented social groups to participate in tertiary education. This research is due to be completed in 2007.

❖ **What can literacy scores tell us about NI's productivity gap?: Regional Forecasts**

Using data from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), this work will examine whether the link between increasing skills and economic growth can be demonstrated for NI. It proposes using a methodology first used in Canada. This is due to be published in 2007.

❖ **Assessing the impact of Essential Skills for Living Strategy on participants: Frontline**

This qualitative research includes making an assessment of the performance of the Strategy, identifying experiences of participants, barriers to participation and also areas of best practice. This research was published in October 2006.

Research & Development

❖ **An examination of Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) and Knowledge Transfer in NI: InnovationLab**

This research will benchmark HERD and knowledge transfer activities in NI with other comparable regions. It will also examine the outcomes of HERD in NI and overall levels of effectiveness. Examples of leading practice will be identified and consideration of suitability for transfer to the NI context. This report is due to be published in Spring 2007.

Helping people into work

❖ **Delivering Employability through partnership? Best practices in inter-agency co-operation on improving employability in Europe: Napier University**

This research will investigate best practice in improving employability outside NI to include an exploration of the extent to which best practice depends upon inter-agency co-operation and the impacts on relevant target client groups. The Department published interim findings in December 2006, which can be found in Labour Market Bulletin 20 (p163). The final report is due to be published Spring/Summer 2007.

❖ **Labour Markets, Spatial Mobility and Benefit Claimants: Rural/Urban contrasts in NI: QUB & Warwick University**

This project seeks to extend earlier research undertaken in NI in three ways. Firstly, by extending it geographically beyond Belfast by looking at perceptions and experiences of the labour market in selected urban and rural locations. Secondly, it is expanded beyond young people by looking at Job Seeker Allowance and Incapacity Benefit Claimants. Thirdly, it will include household circumstances, access to transport, attitudes towards mobility, and the interplay of spatial/non-spatial barriers to employment. Fieldwork is currently underway and the project is due for completion in mid 2007.

❖ **Understanding why people return to New Deal in NI: Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion**

The purpose of the research is to obtain a better understanding of the reasons why some people return to New Deal and to provide a deeper insight into the characteristics and labour market experiences of returners. The research aims to complete during 2007.

❖ **Benefits, tax credits and labour supply in NI: PricewaterhouseCoopers**

Preliminary work in this area was carried out by PwC but further work remains to be scoped. This in part is due to work pressures in other areas and also to ensure that there is coherence between this work and research being taken forward by ERINI in its core work programme.

❖ **Impact of redundancies on Adria employees: Peer Consulting**

In July 2005 DEL appointed Peer Consulting to undertake a piece of research looking at recent redundancies from Adria, a textile company, located in Strabane. The aim of the research was to determine the subsequent labour market experiences of those workers made redundant and to investigate further scope for assistance. The project has been completed and the reports accepted.

Employment rights, responsibilities and remedies

❖ **Report on 2003 Flexible Working Surveys**

This report analyses attitudes and practices identified by separate surveys into flexible working carried out amongst employees and employers during 2003. It focuses particularly on the employee aspect, and compares findings in this area against those obtained from research amongst employers.

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4. LOOKING FORWARD – RESEARCH AGENDA 2007 -2009

Throughout the business planning process in 2006, Policy Divisions within DEL, in conjunction with the Analytical Services Group, scoped the future research needs of the Department. In order to identify the current gaps in the knowledge base, this scoping exercise examined the existing research base within Northern Ireland, including that of other Departments/Agencies, against what is likely to be required to inform strategic and policy development over the coming years. In order to provide a clearer and direct link with policy, the areas identified for further research are categorised under the Department's four key areas of activity and presented overleaf.

It should be noted that some of these new research areas have already been commissioned due to urgent and emerging work areas, and where this has been the case it has been highlighted. It is anticipated that the other areas identified under immediate priority will be commissioned in 2007, with the remaining research needs initiated thereafter. In addition, it is recognised that other urgent and important research requirements may emerge that are not covered in this Research Agenda which will have to be carried out and may impact on the delivery of other planned research.

The areas are outlined at a relatively high level with more detailed Terms of Reference being developed prior to commissioning each project which will take account of any other research produced at that time as well as the Departmental needs.

Immediate Priority

Skills

- a) Ensuring best use is made of Labour Market Information (LMI) to influence policy development and service delivery.** The Department's Skills Strategy, "Success Through Skills" underscores the importance of LMI to understanding the demand for skills. It recognises that LMI can, if used and disseminated effectively, influence and improve the choices of employers, job seekers, students and education and training providers. The Department requires research to examine best practice elsewhere in the use of LMI and to examine how Northern Ireland can learn from those examples. In order to address this high priority research need the Department has commissioned research from the Washington based National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) to examine the use of LMI in regions of the US and internationally. This work is regarded as key to informing the Department's review of LMI.
- b) Examination and identification of Priority Skills areas in Northern Ireland.** A Northern Ireland Skills Expert Group has been established to advise the Department on skills demand issues within the region. One of the key tasks for that group is to identify the current and future priority skill areas for Northern Ireland. This will require research to examine best practice models for skills prioritisation and the development of a robust methodology for priority setting in Northern Ireland. In order to meet this high priority research need, the Department has commissioned the Priority Skills Unit within the Economic Research Institute for Northern Ireland (ERINI) to examine international models for identifying priority skills and, on the basis of that work, provide recommendations on criteria for identifying NI priority skill areas.

Immediate Priority

- c) To understand better the impact of larger numbers of migrant workers arriving in Northern Ireland as a result of the significant expansion of the EU in 2004.** The Migrant Workers Thematic Group of the Race Forum was established following discussions at Permanent Secretaries' Group. The Thematic Group are to develop an action plan in relation to migrant workers and research and data elements form one facet of this plan. Four main areas for attention were identified: numbers of migrant workers; experiences of migrant workers; the impact of migrant workers on the NI labour market; and attitudes towards migrant workers. Work is already underway to address some of these issues and further areas are likely to be identified going forward. This work will be taken forward in conjunction with the Thematic Group on Migrant Workers. The precise arrangements for carrying forward this work have still to be agreed.
- d) Understanding utilisation of skills from an employee perspective.** The Economic and Social Research Council's Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE) has committed to undertaking a 2006 Work Skills Survey. The Department has linked with this survey and the researchers have agreed to extend it to include a representative sample from NI. The main objective for including NI is to provide an employee perspective on skills issues in order to balance the employer information from the Department's Skills Monitoring Survey. This survey will also establish a benchmark from which change can be monitored. The Main Report is due to be completed by end of July 2007.

Immediate Priority

- e) To understand determinants of UK graduate earnings.** This research will combine the individual level student record and destinations data for the whole population of 2005 leavers from UK universities to investigate the determinants of graduate occupational earnings. It will examine the determinants of variations around the average returns to a first degree. The results will yield estimates of the 'additional premium' associated with institution, subject, degree classification and region.
- f) To better understand the management and leadership practices within NI companies.** DETI is taking the lead in this research in collaboration with the Department. The research will involve benchmarking NI against other countries to see how management and skills practices differ from elsewhere. This is likely to commence in 2007.
- g) Exploring employers' skill needs and local education and training provision in different parts of the UK.** This project will investigate the nature of employers' skill needs, and education and training providers' responses in Scotland and NI. The project focuses specifically on two sectoral areas: creative and cultural industries; and science, engineering and manufacturing technologies. The aim is to build upon, and compare findings with, existing research carried out elsewhere in the UK in order to explore the ability of education and training providers to meet employers' changing skill needs. The research is being led by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA). Results will be available in 2007.

Immediate Priority

- h) Better understand factors that determine participation rates in Further and Higher Education in NI by social background and Section 75 categories.** As part of its Widening Access Agenda, the Department has already commissioned a number of pieces of research into participation rates in FE and HE and assessed these by social background and where possible Section 75 categories. The Department will continue to undertake research in this area based upon updated data becoming available and will also, where appropriate, direct research to identify any issues faced by these groups through attendance at FE and HE institutions in NI.
- i) To identify over time the changes education and training policy have on different cohorts of young people and their experiences and outcomes in the labour market.** The Department intends to establish a Youth Cohort Study (YCS) in Northern Ireland, similar to those undertaken in Great Britain, which will provide detailed information tracking the education, training, labour market and social experiences of young people between the ages of 16 and 24. A Steering Group has been recently established with a view to a pilot exercise for Autumn 2007 and the first phase of main fieldwork in autumn 2008.
- j) To assess how education and training choices impact upon an individual's labour market outcomes.** Availability of information on the outcomes of FE students and trainees is currently somewhat limited. Therefore, the Department intends during 2007, in the first instance, to instigate a scoping study to determine the feasibility of conducting a survey to track a cohort of FE leavers (including those from essential skills and training courses) to assess the impact of FE provision on labour market experiences, progression routes (including those on non-professional and technical courses) and associated outcomes.

Immediate Priority

Research and Development

k) To better understand the key economic and social impacts generated by Higher Education Institutions in relation to the UK regions. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), in partnership with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) initiated a 3-year research programme in 2006 to assess the impact of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on regional economies. In particular, the programme will seek to assess these impacts in relation to transferring knowledge, research, expertise and skills to society for economic, social and cultural benefits. Stage 1 of this initiative has already taken place, with five academic networks established who have scoped existing research and produced gap analyses on various aspects of the impact of HEIs on regional economies. To build on this work, the ESRC has now selected a series of full research proposals to commence in 2007.

Helping people into work

l) Examination of issues contributing to low employment rates of older workers. The Department will commission in 2007 research into the barriers to the employment of older workers (those aged 50 and over). This work is required to examine issues behind the low employment rate of older working-age people in NI to inform the development of policy and services for this group.

m) Experiences and outcomes of participants on New Deal. Research into the destinations, attitudes and experiences of a sample of recent participants in New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds and New Deal 25+ is planned to commence in early 2007. This work will provide details of the current status of participants, their experiences of New Deal, their post New Deal history and the appropriateness of the provision delivered.

Immediate Priority

Employment rights, responsibilities and remedies

- n) An examination of employment-related tribunals and alternative dispute resolution procedures.** This research will investigate the operation of systems for resolving workplace disputes in Northern Ireland once those disputes have proceeded beyond the use of formal workplace procedures. The research project will look, in particular, at the operation of employment-related tribunals, the use of alternative methods of resolving disputes (in particular the conciliation services provided by the Labour Relations Agency), and user expectations/experiences of these.
- o) Examination of the impact of Flexible Working Law.** The Department intends to undertake some comparative analysis of the 2003 and 2006 flexible working research. Employee and Employer Surveys were conducted in both years and the research project will compare and contrast the attitudes and practices reported by employees and employers in 2006, and will seek to establish the extent of change between the 'baseline' research in 2003 and the 'follow-up' project in 2006.

Medium-term Priority: Scheduled to be commissioned in 2007/08 – 08/09

Skills

- p) Identification of future demand and supply of FE and work-based learning provision.** The Department wishes to undertake an assessment of the future demand and supply of Further Education and work-based learning in Northern Ireland, taking into account demographic, societal, economic and social changes. Consideration of the need for this research will be further assessed down the line in light of Sector Skills Councils work and the implementation of the size and structure review recommendations.
- q) An examination of the impact of variable tuition fees in Higher Education.** Variable tuition fees were introduced in Northern Ireland in September 2006. These recent changes will be monitored by the Department as each new cohort enters higher education commencing in 2006/07. This will include an analysis of NI-domiciled applicants and entrants to HE both within NI and outside NI by a range of variables including social class, gender, religion and A-Level score. In addition the Department plans to undertake a further Student Income & Expenditure Survey. This would allow a comparison of students' income and expenditure under the new student support arrangements against the baseline data collected in 2004/05.
- r) Understanding better the skill needs of the Northern Ireland economy.** The Department also recognises the need to build upon its current bank of information on the skills of the Northern Ireland workforce and the needs of employers within specific sectors in the region. Therefore building upon the work above on priority skills areas and drawing heavily from research carried out by the Sector Skills Councils, as they develop their Sector Skills Agreements, the Department requires an analysis of this extensive information to understand the key skill issues in NI that are being identified including cross-sectoral issues.

Medium-term Priority: Scheduled to be commissioned in 2007/08 – 08/09

s) An assessment of the role of the FE Sector in promoting social cohesion. Whilst the FE Sector will have an increasingly economic focus, in line with current DEL strategies, particularly FE Means Business, the sector will continue to have an important role to play in enhancing social cohesion and in providing opportunities for lifelong learning, giving people a second opportunity for education, and in encouraging those who are unemployed or socially excluded to participate in education and training. This research will examine the sector's on-going and future contribution to social cohesion/inclusion, within the context of current DEL strategies and, make specific recommendations for both DEL and the sector, to assist in determining how best this role might be taken forward.

t) Identification of usage and impact of diagnostic and brokerage tools in NI firms. Research is required into the different forms of diagnostic and brokerage tools used by employers in other regions to further develop the capability of their people. In Northern Ireland, it would be beneficial to understand the extent to which employers use these tools after gaining Investor in People status. The research should also identify what difference these tools make to employers in terms of increased business performance, focus of skills investment, productivity and efficiency.

Helping people into work

u) An investigation into the barriers to work faced by the unemployed and inactive. The Department would like to commission research into any barriers inadvertently inherent in the structures and procedures in the Northern Ireland systems faced by people accessing jobs and benefits offices' services.

Medium-term Priority: Scheduled to be commissioned in 2007/08 – 08/09

v) Research to inform the roll-out of the Welfare Reform Agenda.

Further work may be required to identify the training and employment needs of 'difficult to help' groups. However given that the UK Green paper on Welfare reform has only recently been published, precise research requirements will be scoped at a later stage.

w) Investigation into the barriers preventing women and lone parents from entering employment.

Research is required to better understand the barriers which are faced by women and lone parents, who are currently out of the labour market, from entering employment.

x) Identification of employer attitudes towards DEL interventions.

The Department requires research into employer attitudes around DEL's interventions, especially in relation to job-broking with its clients.

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Employment rights, responsibilities and remedies

y) Understanding changing attitudes and perceptions for resolving employment rights disputes.

During 2004-2005 research was carried out, on the Department's behalf, into the attitudes and practices of employers and employees with regard to a series of employment rights. Most notably, the research investigated what mechanisms existed in Northern Ireland workplaces for resolving employment rights disputes. This new research will follow-up this 'baseline' analysis by undertaking an Employment Relations Survey during 2007-08 to identify the extent of the change in attitudes and practices over time.

z) Increase in paid holiday entitlement.

Part of the Government's manifesto in the 2005 general election was to increase statutory paid holiday entitlement to ensure that bank and public holidays were appropriately reflected. Work on assessing the impact on businesses has been carried out at a UK level and, depending on the assessment of the applicability of this research in a local context, it may be necessary to carry out separate research in Northern Ireland on this issue.

5. DELIVERING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

RESOURCING

Clearly resources available to the Department are limited both in relation to finance and numbers of staff available to manage the delivery of the Research Agenda. The management of the delivery of the Agenda will reside with the Departmental Cross-Divisional Strategy Forum. The Department's professional economists and statisticians within the Analytical Services Group will have a key role in supporting this Forum to take forward the Research Agenda. They will assist with the specification of the research issues, the selection of external researchers where required, steering research and quality controlling research outputs.

PROCUREMENT

The previous Research Agenda involved a process of public call for research proposals by asking the research community to come forward with ideas and proposals on how to answer the research questions identified within it. This process was procured by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD).

That procurement approach attracted significant interest from the research community and a large number of research proposals came forward and were selected as a result. The need to commission a wide range of projects at this point in time through an open procurement process is not as clear as was the case several years ago. It is considered appropriate that procurement for the Research Agenda 2007-09 will be underpinned by a project-by-project approach, that is, each project will be procured and commissioned on an individual basis.

It is recognised that urgent and important research requirements may emerge that are not covered in this Research Agenda and these could not be delayed until the next review of this Agenda has occurred. Therefore allowance for new emerging policy issues has been built into the roll-out of this Research Agenda to ensure that it is flexible to respond to unforeseen work as necessary.

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Where appropriate, the Department will work in conjunction with CPD in relation to the procurement of each research area.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

A Steering Group will be appointed by DEL for each project to oversee the development of the research. DEL may invite officials from other Departments or interested bodies to sit on Steering Groups when the research would be of a wider interest. The researchers will be required to present findings to that Steering Group and provide suitable progress reports throughout the duration of the research project.

LINKAGES WITH OTHER GROUPS

As it develops and takes forward its Research Agenda, the Department, where appropriate, consults and works in partnership with a number of other bodies. For example, the Department when developing this Research Agenda has consulted with relevant Departments and bodies within Northern Ireland, across the rest of the UK and within the Republic of Ireland. For example, the NI Skills Expert Group² and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs in Ireland collaborate closely on issues in relation to skills and the labour market. Both groups are working together to ensure that the evidence is available to underpin policies that will deliver the necessary workforce skills across the island.

² The NI Skills Expert Group (NISEG) provides a long-term view on the skills needs and opportunities for Northern Ireland as a whole. Within its remit, the Skills Expert Group (SEG) advises the Department on skills research needs.

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DEL also engages with other key Departments, such as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Invest NI, the Department of Education, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Department for Social Development, in relation to taking forward relevant research and regular Research Co-ordination meetings are held with these Departments and agencies to ensure complementarity in taking forward individual Departmental Research Agendas.

AVAILABILITY OF RELEVANT DATA

There is a wide body of statistical information which can be used to underpin research. For example, the Analytical Services Group within the Department provides statistics on the higher and further education sector in Northern Ireland as well as on training and employment programmes, such as New Deal and Jobskills. Analytical Services also provide statistics on NI domiciled students who study higher education courses through the Open University and who leave NI to study higher education courses in GB or the Republic of Ireland. Further detail on the statistics available can be found at www.delni.gov.uk/statistics.

Labour market statistics (including training statistics) are available from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and can be accessed from www.statistics.detini.gov.uk.

A compendium of Northern Ireland education statistics is also available from the Department of Education's web-site www.deni.gov.uk.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is Northern Ireland's official statistics organisation. Their web-site contains a comprehensive range of official NI statistics from the Government Departments, as well as information about the Census. These statistics can be accessed from www.nisra.gov.uk.

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Additional data considerations

Where relevant, the research projects taken forward will be required to have due regard for the Equality Legislation as set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and Lifetime Opportunities – The Government's anti-poverty and social exclusion strategy for Northern Ireland..

DISSEMINATION

DEL is committed to ensuring that the work emanating from this research agenda will feed into policy development. The research findings will be presented to the Department's Cross-Divisional Strategy Forum. The Department is also committed to publishing and widely disseminating the research work it funds. Currently summaries of research findings are normally published in DEL's Labour Market Bulletin, which is available to an audience far beyond the public sector. Full reports are usually made available electronically on the Department's web site or in hard copy upon request. Dissemination, where appropriate, also takes place through seminars and conferences.

Alongside its consideration of research emerging from this agenda, the Department will continue to monitor the policy relevance of research conducted by other individuals and organisations both nationally and internationally.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

Monitoring of the Research Agenda will be undertaken by DEL on an annual basis to assess how effectively the aims of the Agenda are being delivered. This will include an assessment of the procurement methods utilised to ensure that the Department taps into the creative and innovative research ideas from the research community.

Each research project will be monitored by a Steering Group to ensure that it runs according to the Terms of Reference and timescale agreed at the outset.

Finally the overall Research Agenda will be reviewed and updated on an on-going basis to ensure that it continues to address and reflect the Strategic research needs of the Department. Research commissioned outside the Department will also be examined to ensure that work is not duplicated and is complemented by DEL research activities.

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7. COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

The Department for Employment and Learning would welcome views on its Research Agenda. If you would like to make any comments on the research areas identified within this document or on any other aspect of the DEL Research Agenda, please e-mail teasb@delni.gov.uk or write to:

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