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Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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DELIVERING SUCCESS THROUGH EXCELLENCE

An Analysis of the Quality and Performance of DEL Programmes and Provision

(The 3rd Annual Report)



2012

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Introduction

1. The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is tasked with promoting learning and skills, preparing people for work and supporting the Economy. In order to achieve its aim, the Department utilises a wide range of education, training, skills, innovation and employment provision which is delivered through a diverse network of providers ranging from colleges and universities to the Employment Service, training organisations and voluntary groups.
2. In order to maximise the impact of Departmental services, it is essential that the quality, performance and purpose of the Department's wide ranging provision is clearly understood and is of a high standard. The Department's quality improvement strategy, 'Success through Excellence'¹, underscores its commitment to raising standards.
3. The following document provides the third annual quantitative analysis of DEL programmes and provision. It seeks to build on the evidence presented in the DEL Quality and Performance reports published in 2010 and 2011. The report has been completed by the DEL Analytical Services group and forms an important part of the Department's assessment of the quality and performance its programmes and sponsored provision. It augments and gives context to the work of the DEL Quality Improvement Advisor and independent assessments of quality, such as those conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
4. This report highlights the economic and social backdrop for the Department's work and provides an update² on a range of important performance indicators

¹ *Success Through Excellence – A Quality Improvement Strategy for the Further Education and Training System in Northern Ireland* January 2007.

² This report is based on data that are current up to end of 2011 unless otherwise stated.

right across the spectrum of DEL provision. It also provides an update on the progress that has been made on the implementation of the Department's Quality and Performance Action Plan (see **Annex 1**). That Action Plan was established in response to issues raised in previous Quality and Performance reports and is a further mechanism for delivering upon the 'Success through Excellence' agenda. The Department plans to significantly refresh the Action Plan in the coming year in light of the new Programme for Government (PfG) and DEL Business Plan.

Context for Analysis

5. The downturn continues to have a significant impact on the economic, demographic and social backdrop for the Department's provision. Current labour market conditions are offering particular challenges with more people out of work and out of work for longer. Sentiments about the prospects for the economy at national and local level remain downbeat particularly for the short term. The Northern Ireland economy and labour market has a significant exposure to weaknesses in the Republic of Ireland economy and constraint in public expenditure both directly, in terms of potential public sector job losses, and also indirectly through the negative effect on consumer confidence.
6. Demographic factors are also expected to play a part, with population projections showing that there will be approximately 600 fewer young people in the age 16 cohort in 2015 than there were in 2010. This group represents a key cohort for DEL as it is made up of those people that are about to enter the labour market for the first time. The continued decline means that Northern Ireland may have to look more to the up-skilling of the existing workforce and to attract and retain polices to address skill needs in the longer term.
7. Lower average income levels in Northern Ireland compared to the United Kingdom (UK) as a whole and the higher levels of dependency on benefits

present particular barriers for DEL as it works to move people into employment in the current economic context. The lower wage environment creates the conditions for benefit trap issues to be more germane here compared to the UK as a whole.

8. The Department, through the Executive's Sub-committee on the Economy, has worked with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and others to develop the new Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (NIES) which was published in March 2012. It seeks to rebuild the economy in the aftermath of the downturn and rebalance it towards a more vibrant, export oriented private sector. The Executive consulted widely on the strategy and the priorities which underpin it. Both the NIES and the responses from consultees highlighted the importance of innovation, skills and employability to the region's future economic and social development. These areas are at the heart of DEL's agenda. The economic strategy has highlighted again that the work of the Department is critical to Northern Ireland's future success. Performance on each of the strategically important areas of skills, employment and innovation is set out in the remainder of the report.

The Skills Agenda

9. The previous Programme for Government (PfG) set a number of challenging skills targets for Northern Ireland. These included a focus on up-skilling the workforce at level 2 and above, level 3 and above and an expansion of enrolments in subject areas related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The strategic themes of skills and the focus on STEM have been reflected again in the current PfG, which was published alongside the NIES, and in the 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' strategy. These documents point out that a continued focus on skills development is essential if sustainable economic growth and prosperity is to be delivered within Northern Ireland.

10. The Transforming Futures strategy includes a number of long term strategic goals (up to 2020) which focus particularly on ensuring there are sufficient skills available over the next decade to address the productivity gap with the rest of the UK. In particular the goals seek to increase the proportion of those in employment with skills at Level 2 and above, Level 3 and above and those with Level 4-8 skills. In addition, the Skills Strategy includes a goal of increasing the proportion of those qualifying from NI Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at Graduate and post Graduate level in STEM subjects (in particular physical and biological sciences, mathematical and computer science, engineering and technology related subjects). The precise targets are as follows:

- a. **Strategic goal 1:** Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 2 skills and above to 84-90% by 2020, from a baseline of 71.2% in 2008.
- b. **Strategic goal 2:** Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 3 skills and above to 68-76% by 2020, from a baseline of 55.4³% in 2008.
- c. **Strategic goal 3:** Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 4-8 skills and above to 44-52% by 2020, from a baseline of 32.9%⁴ in 2008.
- d. **Strategic goal 4:** To increase the proportion of those qualifying from Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions with graduate

³ The baseline for the strategic goals originated from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2008 data. As a result of fluctuations in the 2008 LFS, the baseline values in the strategic goals has been revised to reflect updates in the 2008 LFS since the skills strategy was published. This value had previously read 55.6%.







⁴ The baseline for the strategic goals originated from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2008 data. As a result of fluctuations in the 2008 LFS, the baseline values in the strategic goals have been revised to reflect updates in the 2008 LFS. Since the skills strategy was published. This value had previously read 33.2%.

and post graduate level courses in STEM subjects (with an emphasis on physical and biological sciences, mathematical and computer science, engineering and technology) to 25-30% in 2020 from a baseline of 18% in 2008.

11. The Transforming Futures strategy recognises that DEL has a key role in delivering these ambitions but that they can only be attained through committed action right across government and society.

12. In order to provide context, recent and longer term trends against both the former PfG skills targets and the more recently established Transforming Futures goals are set out below. It is evident from Table 1 that there has been notable up-skilling of both the Northern Ireland working age population and the percentage of those in employment over the recent past and over the longer term. While there has been a substantial drop (10%) in the number of post 16 enrolments in STEM related subjects since 2003/04, recent performance would indicate that the downward trend is being reversed with 2% growth recorded in each of the last two years.

Table 1: Trends in Key Skills Indicators⁵

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Percentage of NI working age population ⁶ qualified to level 2 and above	Between Q4 2009 and Q4 2010, it is estimated ⁷ that the percentage of the working age population qualified to level 2 and above has increased slightly (by 1 percentage point) and now stands at 68%. 	Between Q4 1999 and Q4 2010, the percentage of working age population qualified to level 2 and above has increased by 10 percentage points ⁸ . 
Percentage of NI working age population ⁹ qualified to level 3 and above	Between Q4 2009 and Q4 2010, it is estimated ¹⁰ that the percentage of the working age population qualified to level 3 and above has increased by 2 percentage points and now stands at 51%. 	Between Q4 1999 and Q4 2010, the percentage of working age population qualified to level 3 and above has increased by 9 percentage points ¹¹ . 
Number of post 16 enrolments in STEM related subjects in NI	Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 there has been a 2% increase in the number of post 16 enrolments (to 74,366) in STEM related subjects (at level 2 and above) 	Between 2003/04 and 2009/10 the number of STEM enrolments ¹² has fallen by 10%. 

⁵ Position as at September 2011

⁶ In this instance the working age population is defined as those aged 16-59 (female) and 16-64 (male).

⁷ Source: Labour Force Survey. This data is subject to sampling error and confidence intervals.







⁸ Ibid.

⁹ In this instance the working age population is defined as those aged 16-59 (female) and 16-64 (male).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² This includes post 16 STEM enrolments in HE,FE, Schools and Training Programmes.

<p>Percentage of those people in employment with Level 2 skills and above.</p>	<p>Between 2009 and 2010, it is estimated¹³ that the percentage of those people in employment with Level 2 skills above has increased by 2.4 percentage points and now stands at 74.0%.</p> 	<p>Since the baseline in 2008, it is estimated¹⁴ the percentage of those people in employment with Level 2 skills and above has increased by 2.8 percentage points to 74.0% in 2010.</p> 
<p>Percentage of those people in employment with Level 3 skills and above.</p>	<p>Between 2009 and 2010, it is estimated¹⁵ that the percentage of those people in employment with Level 3 skills above has increased by 1.6 percentage points and now stands at 57.5%.</p> 	<p>Since the baseline in 2008, it is estimated¹⁶ the percentage of those people in employment with Level 3 skills and above has increased by 2.1 percentage points to 57.5% in 2010.</p> 
<p>Percentage of those people in employment with Level 4-8 skills and above</p>	<p>Between 2009 and 2010, it is estimated¹⁷ that the percentage of those people in employment with Level 4-8 skills has increased by 1.3 percentage points and now stands at 34.5%.</p> 	<p>Since the baseline in 2008, it is estimated¹⁸ the percentage of those people in employment with Level 4-8 skills and above has increased by 1.6 percentage points to 34.5% in 2010.</p> 

13. While table 1, on the whole, paints a picture of an improving skills profile for Northern Ireland, the region continues to lag behind internationally. Chart 1 (below) sets out the percentage of the Northern Ireland 25-64 year old

¹³ Source: Labour Force Survey. This data is subject to sampling error and confidence intervals and Data are grossed to 2010 mid-year population estimates.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

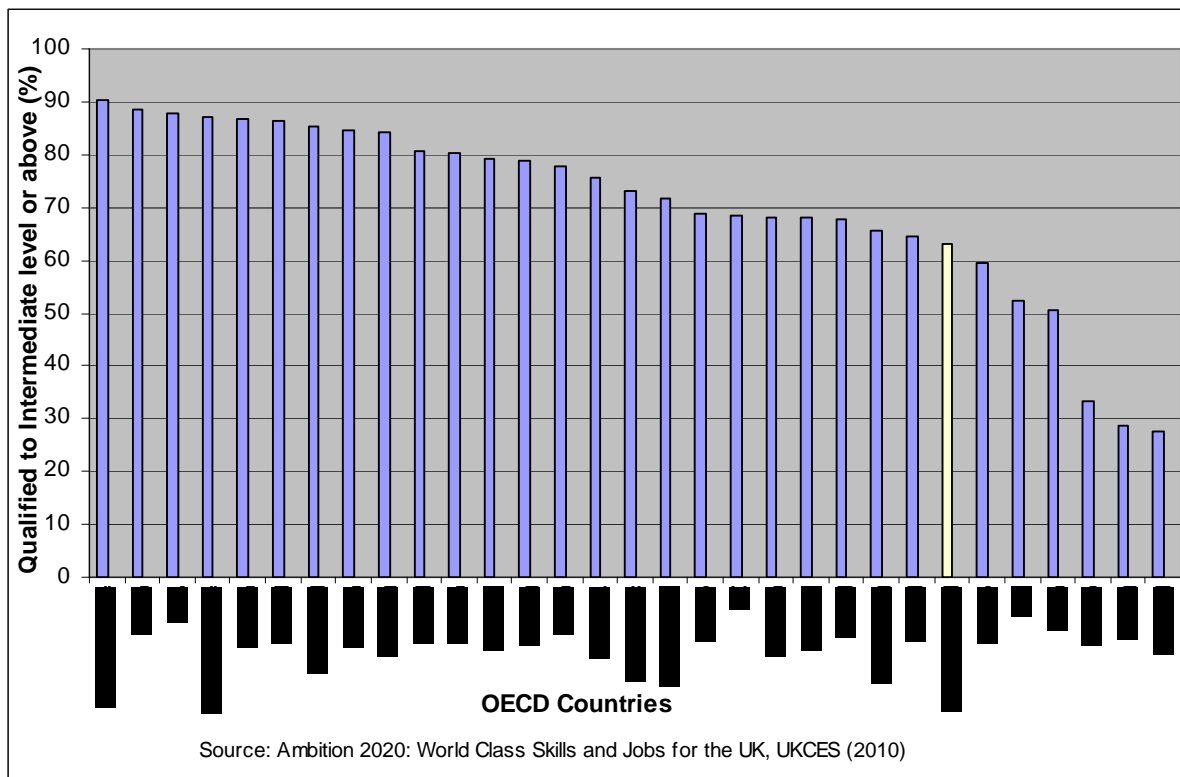
¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

population that has achieved intermediate level qualifications and compares local performance on this indicator with OECD countries (excluding Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia). On this basis, and despite the improvements listed in Table 1, Northern Ireland ranks above only Greece, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Turkey and Portugal which have a lower percentage of their 25-64 population qualified to intermediate level or above.

Chart 1: International skills Profile (OECD Countries)

(Highest level of education attained by 25-64 year olds)



14. The remainder of this section provides an assessment of performance against key indicators for the major DEL sponsored areas that contribute to skills development.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Higher Education







15. The Department aims to promote and sustain the development of an internationally competitive Higher Education (HE) sector in Northern Ireland, accessible to all who are able to benefit and meeting the needs of the Northern Ireland economy and wider society. To this end, the Department is currently drafting a higher education strategy for Northern Ireland in collaboration with key stakeholders. The strategy is due to be published in early 2012.
16. Following an independent review and subsequent public consultation, the DEL Minister has announced that from academic year 2012/13 and for the duration of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period, tuition fees for Northern Ireland students who remain in Northern Ireland to study would be subject only to inflationary increases. A funding package had been agreed with the Executive to address the resultant budgetary pressures, while ensuring the sustainable funding of the higher education sector.
17. Current maintenance support arrangements will continue and HEIs that charge the maximum fee will offer non-repayable bursaries to local students from lower income backgrounds. The current repayment regime also remains. Northern Ireland students commencing higher education courses in Great Britain (GB) will be charged tuition fees of up to £9,000 in academic year 2012/13. A fee loan of up to £9,000 will be available to eligible students. However, as this has significant cost implications for the Department, it will be monitored carefully and, if there are increased cost pressures from changes in student flows, the Department may have to review the provision for new students entering higher education in future years. In addition, the Department has legislated to enable Northern Ireland institutions to charge fees of up to £9,000 to students from Great Britain for entry in 2012/13.

18. The Department intends to investigate the effect that the step change in tuition fees charged elsewhere will have for both local and national students, as data for the academic year 2012/13 emerges. The analysis will place particular emphasis on the impact the new fees position will have on participation rates and widening access.
19. The following analysis provides both a baseline for the consideration of those impacts and an assessment of progress over the most recent year.
20. It shows that overall student enrolments at Northern Ireland HEIs have continued to increase, rising by 6% between 2008/09 and 2009/10. Nevertheless, more recent accepted applicant data from the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), which provides information on a narrower range of students (ie accepted applicants to Northern Ireland HEI full-time first degrees courses) would indicate that there has been a 4% decrease between 2009/10 and 2010/11.
21. In the academic year 2009/10, Northern Ireland's higher education age participation index (API¹⁹) was 50.7%, which is higher than the Scotland API (44.3%) (NB. methodologies used are slightly different), and also the more-wide ranging Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) used in England (46.5% in 2009/10). Wales do not currently calculate a specific age participation rate and therefore its measure of participation is not at all comparable to NI.
22. Northern Ireland continues to have a higher concentration of STEM enrolments (47% of total enrolments) compared to GB HEIs (41%) and these have grown by a substantial 4% over the year to 2009/10. This growing STEM

¹⁹ The Age Participation Index (API) is a measure used to demonstrate changes in participation of young people in Higher Education over time. More precisely it is defined as the number of NI domiciled young entrants (aged under 21) to full-time undergraduate Higher Education (in the UK or Republic of Ireland) as a percentage of the 18 year-old population of Northern Ireland.







enrolment has not translated this year into growing numbers of STEM qualifications. Qualifications in STEM areas fell by 3% over the year to 2009/10. However, the longer term trend on this indicator remains strongly positive (+28% over the last decade).

Table 2: Trends in Key HE Indicators²⁰

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Overall Enrolments	Enrolments at NI HEIs experienced a 6% increase between 2008/09 to 2009/10 	Enrolments at NI HEIs grew by 21% over 10 years to 2009/10 
Widening Access	The proportion of young full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs by National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) 4,5,6 & 7 in 2009/10 was 39.1% ²¹ . 	Between 2002/03 and 2009/10 the proportion of young full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs by (NS-SEC) Classes 4,5,6 & 7 has remained static at around 40%. 
STEM Enrolments	STEM enrolments at NI HEIs increased by 4% over the year to 2009/10. 	STEM enrolments at NI HEIs have increased by 26% between 1999/00 and 2009/10 

²⁰ Position as at September 2011

²¹ Due to a change in question by UCAS the 2008/09 figures for the percentage of entrants from NS-SEC classes 4 to 7 cannot be compared with 2009/10.

Non-continuation	The proportion of all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2008/09 who were no longer in HE in 2009/10 was 9.0%, this compares favourably with a rate of 10.2% over the previous period. 	There has been little change in the proportion of all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs over the ten year period between 2008/09 - 2009/10 (9.0%) and 1998/99 – 1999/00 (9% ²²). 
Qualifications	The number of student qualifiers at NI HEIs has remained fairly constant over the year to 2009/10 (rising by only 0.1%) compared with the previous year. 	The number of student qualifiers at NI HEIs has increased by 28% between 1999/00 and 2009/10 
STEM Qualifications ²³	The number of STEM qualifications gained at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions over the last year has decreased by 3.4% to 6,650 in 2009/10. 	The number of STEM qualifications gained at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions has increased by 28% between 1999/00 and 2009/10. 

23. In terms of social class, 39.1% of young full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2009/10 were from the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) 4, 5, 6, & 7. This remains well above the UK average of 30.0%.

24. The latest data show that Northern Ireland HEI non-completion rates have improved over the year, decreasing by 1.2%. However, non-completion rates

²² The figures for 1999/00 are only available rounded to the nearest whole number

²³ Source: HESA, Figures are rounded to the nearest 5.

here remain above (worse than) the UK average, although the gap between NI and UK HEIs has decreased over the last year.

Further Education

25. Further Education (FE) is the main provider of professional and technical education and training in Northern Ireland. The sector plays an important role in raising skill levels in the region. The range of courses provided by the FE sector spans essential skills, professional, technical and academic programmes at levels 2 and above.

26. Enrolments within the FE sector in the past year (to 2009/10) have increased significantly, by 15% overall. Enrolment numbers have grown by a third over the past decade. The latest increase is likely to be due, at least in part, to the continued weakness in the Northern Ireland labour market with individuals seeking to weather out the economic storm by up-skilling or re-skilling so that they can better avail of future opportunities. This apparent desire from individuals to up skill presents real opportunities for the Northern Ireland economy but also creates challenges for the FE sector as it seeks to cope with the increased demand. Within that wider picture of growth, enrolments at Level 2 have increased by 24% over the year to 2009/10 while Level 3 enrolments saw 7% growth.

27. Despite the overall increase, enrolments on STEM courses at Level 2 and above in FE decreased by 2% over the last year. This should be set against a 5% rise last year and an increasing long term trend. The STEM course areas that have contributed most to this recent decline are Construction/Civil Engineering type courses (-9%) plus Electrical/Electronic Engineering (-15%) and Health Sciences (-36%). Enrolments in the STEM areas of Mechanical Engineering (9%), Applied Science (5%) and Manufacturing/Processing









(10%) continued to rise. Overall STEM enrolments account for about a third of all FE enrolments on courses at these levels.

28. The FE sector in Northern Ireland continues to attract a significant proportion of its enrolments from harder to reach groups, particularly those from the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Trends in Key FE Indicators²⁴

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Overall Enrolments at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges	Overall enrolments on professional and technical courses at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges have risen by 15% between 2008/09 and 2009/10.	Overall enrolments on professional and technical courses at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges have risen by 39% between 1998/99 and 2009/10.
Level 2 Enrolments at NI FE Colleges	Level 2 Enrolments at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges have grown by 24% between 2008/09 and 2009/10	Level 2 Enrolments at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges grew by 118% between 98/99 and 2009/10
Level 3 Enrolments at NI FE Colleges	Level 3 Enrolments at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges have increased by 7% between 2008/09 and 2009/10.	Level 3 Enrolments at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges grew by 29% between 98/99 and 2009/10

²⁴ Position as at September 2011

STEM enrolments (National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 2 and above)	Compared to the previous year STEM enrolments at NQF level 2 and above have declined by 2% in 09/10 	STEM courses recorded a 13% increase between 98/99 and 09/10. 
Retention on Further Education Courses	The retention rate on Further Education courses has remained fairly constant – falling marginally from 89% in 2008/09 and 88% in 2009/10 after an increase in the previous year. 	The retention rate on Further Education courses has decreased slightly from 91% in 1998/99 to 88% in 2009/10 ²⁵ 
Achievement on Further Education Courses	The achievement rate on Further Education courses has remained constant over the last year and stands at 70% in 2009/10. 	The achievement rate on Further Education courses has remained relatively static between 1998/99 and 2009/10, falling by 1 percentage point over the period ²⁶ 
Widening Access to Further Education	In the 2009/10 academic year the NI FE Sector engaged 23% of its enrolments from the most deprived 20% areas – a marginal increase from the previous year. 	Over the past decade the proportion of FE enrolments drawn from the most deprived 20% areas has risen from 19% to 23%. 

29. Current retention rates (ie the extent to which those enrolled remain on their course) and achievement rates (the extent to which those who complete their

²⁵ It is important to note that the FE sector has grown substantially since 1998/99 becoming a more diverse sector with increased participation of those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

²⁶ Ibid.

course gain a qualification) have remained fairly static over the last year at 88% (down very slightly from the year before) and 70% respectively.

30. In terms of the success rates²⁷ at NI FE colleges, typically 60% of FE students who embark on a course gain an award from their studies. When like for like calculations are employed NI is broadly in line with the rest of the GB FE Sector in terms of outcome statistics .

31. The first paper in the DEL Quality and Performance series noted the wide variance in success rates within DEL programmes and suggested that an in depth statistical analysis should be undertaken to explain this effect.

32. The Department has completed a pilot assessment of these effects in the Further Education sector. The results of the pilot are being shared with the FE colleges and the analysis will be updated with 2010/11 data when it becomes available. The Department intends to roll out a similar analysis of the variance in success rates across its main programmes.

Training for Success / ApprenticeshipsNI

33. DEL funded training delivers a wide spectrum of provision to meet the needs of individuals and employers alike. Almost 20,000 individuals are currently benefitting from the training.

34. Overall occupancy on DEL Training Programmes has continued to increase significantly during the year to September 2011 (up by over 9%). Currently, more than 50% of all apprentices are aged 25 and over and, whereas 49% of all apprentices are female this rises to 60% for those in the age 25 and over group. Compared to last year, female occupancy has increased by 31%.

²⁷ Success rates are calculated as the retention rate multiplied by the achievement rate

35. The increases in the proportion of females and those aged over 25 seem to reflect a relatively recent change in provision. Level 2 Apprenticeships were introduced in September 2007. All Age Apprenticeships [25+] along with provision for those working Reduced Contracted Hours were introduced a year later. These changes have impacted positively on female participation rates which equated to 21% in September 2007. Whilst the all age provision remains in place, it should be noted that the Department introduced a revised funding policy for adult apprentices (age 25+) from 30th September 2011. For adult apprentices, a 50% funding model applies from that date. It is too early to gauge the impact of this measure on apprenticeship participation. The Department will monitor the position closely.

36. The long term trend of increasing occupancy is also solidly upwards (+36% from 2000 - 2011) although a significant element of this increase has materialised in the last four years (+31%).

37. The information available indicates that occupancy on STEM training programmes continues to struggle in the current economic position, in particular occupancy in the construction, electrical, engineering and automotive sectors has fallen.





Bridge to Employment

38. The Bridge to Employment (BTE) programme is provided predominately through Further Education colleges and aims to provide assistance to inward investment and local companies who are recruiting people who are currently unemployed.



39. The programme includes bespoke training courses which are developed in conjunction with the participating company to provide trainees with the skills needed to meet the recruitment profile of the business. Up to 2010/11 the

proportion of trainees successfully completing training has remained high. In 2010/11, across projects for over 30 companies, some 401 people successfully completed Bridge to Employment training. This represents 95% of those who commenced the training. Some 375 of the 401 trainees were offered employment by the participating company.

Table 4: Trends in Key Training Programmes²⁸

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Overall occupancy on DEL training programmes (ie TfS and AppNI)	Preliminary figures for September 2011 indicate a 9.2% increase in occupancy on Training Programmes compared to the same period a year earlier bringing the total occupancy number to 19,555, 	Occupancy has grown by 36% between 2000 and 2011 
Number of Level 2 and 3 certificates issues by DEL for training programmes (ie TfS and AppNI)	There has been an increase of 14.2% in the number of certificates issued to participants in Department for Employment and Learning Training Programmes between 09/10 and 10/11. 	The number of certificates has increased substantially between 07/08 and 10/11 rising by 32.9%. 
Successful completion of training on Bridge to Employment programmes	The rate at which candidates successfully completed training on Bridge to Employment has decreased over the last year from 98% in 2009/10 to 95% in 2010/11, but still remains at a high level.	The rate at which candidates successfully completed training has decreased from 99% in 2008/09 to 95% in 2010/11, but still remains at a high level.

²⁸ Position as at September 2011

		
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Essential Skills

40. The Department for Employment and Learning launched the Essential Skills for Living Strategy and action plan in April 2002. Essential Skills for Living aims to improve adult literacy and numeracy (including Information & Communication Technology (ICT)) in Northern Ireland.
41. There has been a very significant increase in enrolments on Essential Skills courses since the introduction of the strategy. Recent data suggest that the enrolment levels continue to increase each year, increasing by a very substantial 39% in the year to 2009/10. Factors contributing to this increase are thought to be a funding increase of 27% over the financial years 2008/09 to 2009/10, as well as an increased focus on the quality of Essential Skills delivery by providers.
42. Younger age cohorts (16-25 year olds) account for the bulk of enrolments and there are more males than females. The majority of Essential Skills provision is delivered through Further Education Colleges which commonly encounter those within this 16-25 age group. However all providers of Essential Skills courses will offer the course, if necessary, irrelevant of age.
43. As part of an overall Training for Success or Programme-led Apprenticeship, Essential Skills may form part of the programme of study and males commonly make up the majority of the participants on these Training for Success or Programme-led Apprenticeship programmes. This may have contributed to the higher percentage of males involved in Essential Skills. Again all providers of Essential Skills courses will offer the course, if necessary, irrelevant of gender.
44. Essential Skills providers have, on the whole, been successful in attracting a disproportionately large number of enrolments from the more deprived areas

of Northern Ireland. This is positive given that the evidence available indicates that the need for development of essential skills is concentrated (although not exclusive to) more deprived areas.

45. The data indicate that retention and achievement rates have been 84% and 58% respectively, over the period since the introduction of the Essential Skills strategy.

Table 5: Trends in Key Training for Essential Skills Indicators²⁹

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Enrolments on Essential Skills courses	The number of enrolments on Essential skills courses has increased by 39% from 36,770 in 2008/09 to 51,131 in 2009/10 	Enrolments on Essential Skills course has increased almost thirteen fold from 4,008 in 2002/03 to 51,131 in 2009/10 
Retention on Essential Skills Courses	The retention rate on Essential skills courses has held fairly constant over the last year decreasing by 1 percentage point to stands at 87% in 2009/10 	The retention rate on Essential skills courses has increased from 84% in 2003/04 to 87% in 2009/10 
Achievement on Essential Skills Courses	The achievement rate ³⁰ on Essential skills courses has increased from 47% in 2008/09 to 57% in 2009/10. 	The achievement rate on Essential skills courses has increased from 45% in 2003/04 to 57% in 2009/10 
Qualifications in Essential Skills ³¹	The number of qualifications in Essential skills has increased by 67% from 15,153 in 2008/09 to 25,336 in 2009/10. 	Qualifications in Essential Skills have increased more than seven fold from 3,443 in 2003/04 to 25,336 in 2009/10. 

²⁹ Position as at September 2011

³⁰ The inability to match individuals with Essential Skills qualifications issued by Awarding Organisations to the enrolment data from the providers of Essential skills reduces the robustness of achievement rate analysis by academic year.

³¹ Qualifications in Essential Skills are calculated on the information returned by Awarding Organisations.

Employment Agenda

46. Increasing employment was at the heart of the Executive's PfG 2008-2011, with a key goal being to increase the employment rate over the period to 2020. Public Service Agreement (PSA) 3 focused on increasing employment, subject to economic conditions. On a wider perspective, assisting welfare clients to move towards and into employment remains at the centre of the "Welfare to Work" agenda, as it does in the rest of the UK.
47. The previous PfG goal to increase employment reflects, in part, Northern Ireland's long history of being a region of low employment and high unemployment. Although employment levels (and labour market participation) rose until the downturn, and unemployment fell to historically very low levels, employment levels still remained low by UK standards. In 2005 the working age employment rate in NI was 66/67%³², still some 5 or 6 percentage points behind the UK rate and the lowest of any UK country or region.
48. In general, employment rose steadily until late 2007 when the rise levelled off at an employment rate of around 69%. Since mid-2008, however, the impact of the current recession is clear. The employment rate has fallen to around 67% and there has been a loss of about 40,000 employee jobs – mostly in the private sector but more recently in the public sector as expenditure constraints begin to have an impact. .
49. There were three key Employment PSA targets deliverable by March 2011: the **Into Employment** target, to assist 70,000 working age benefit claimants to move into employment, subject to economic conditions; the **Employers**

³² All rates here are measured using Labour Force Survey (LFS) data. These will be subject to sampling error and also will fluctuate seasonally within any one year. The definition of working age has been changed to 16-64 for both males and females. The PfG Goal was set prior to the change in definition and the target thus relates to a working age population of 16-59 (female); 16-64 (male). All figures here have been corrected to the new definition of the employment rate

Online target, to increase the use of e-vacancy by 25%; and the **Modernised Service** target, to deliver a modernised employment service.

50. The **Into Employment** target was achieved. In the 3 year period April 2008 to March 2011 a total of over 96,000 people moved from welfare into work against the target of 70,000.

51. The **Employers Online** target was not achieved. In the period 2008/09 to 2010/11 - 105,442 vacancies were notified to the Employment Service of these 39,323 or 37.3% were notified electronically. This was against a target of 43%. Across the period the percentage notified electronically rose from 34% in 08/09 to 36% in 09/10 to 42% in 10/11. It should be noted that the target was expressed in a cumulative way – difficulties in the first half of the period to a certain extent obscured the progress achieved in the latter part.

52. The **Modernised Service** target is not quantifiable. The initial phase of modernisation process delivered flexible citizen-focused provision through the introduction of a number of initiatives, such as Pathways to Work and Steps to Work; the second phase focuses on internal modernisation to ensure an improved service is delivered to clients by, for example, the development of technology-enabled business processes and the implementation of a Whole Systems Thinking approach to services to Job Seekers. In order to build on this progress, the Department is currently developing a new Employment Service Strategy 'Working for Success'. It will seek to further transform the services offered to clients of the Employment Service and to employers over the next 5 years. This will include an improved and expanded service for clients before they reach the trigger points for entry into mandatory employment programmes.

53. **Steps to Work** is the Department's main adult return to work programme. Its aim is to assist people who are unemployed or economically inactive to find

and sustain employment. Participation is mandatory for all those on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) aged between 18 and 24 who have been claiming for 6 months or longer and those aged 25 and over claiming JSA for 18 months or more. Steps to Work also offers access to provision for voluntary participants aged 18 or over (16 or over for lone parents) for those on Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, other benefits, and those economically inactive not in receipt of benefits.

54. From September 2008 to June 2011, 61,412 participants started Steps to Work. The majority of participants who started were mandatory, accounting for 74% (45,372 participants) of all starts. Despite the difficult labour market conditions, between September 2008 and December 2010 Steps to Work assisted a total of 10,365 participants to find work with 8,526, entering unsubsidised employment over the period – 25% of all leavers. Over three-quarters (77%) of those who found unsubsidised employment sustained that employment for 13 weeks or more. This represents 19% of all leavers from the programme in that period. The proportions of leavers moving into unsubsidised employment and sustained employment both increased in 2009/10 compared with the previous year. Further information is available in the [Steps to Work Statistical Bulletin, September 2008 to June 2011](#)³³.





55. In addition to the main Steps to Work programme, the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) is a voluntary service designed to help unemployed people in the community overcome those issues that may be preventing them from finding and keeping a job. The service is provided by local community employment organisations in Belfast, Londonderry, Strabane, Newry & Mourne, Moyle and Cookstown District Council areas. In addition to these areas LEMIS is also available on an outreach basis throughout Northern Ireland to individuals with a common employability

³³ See: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/r-and-s-stats/stw-stats-bulletins-11-12/stw-stats-sept08-june11.htm>







barrier to employment, i.e. homelessness, ex-offenders/ex-prisoners, people with a history of drug/alcohol misuse and looked after children/care leavers.

56. During the period April 2007 to January 2012, 1,974 disadvantaged clients from all the areas being targeted (26% of the 7,473 clients case loaded) moved into employment. A further 86 clients entered full time employment less than 16 hours and 222 clients progressed on to other DEL programmes. Evidence from the 2009 FGS McClure Watters evaluation report indicated that 73% of those finding employment were still in work after 13 weeks.

Table 6: Trends in Key Employment Agenda Indicators³⁴

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
Employment Rate	<p>The employment rate has fallen since the onset of the recession, although there has been an improvement over the past year, increasing by 2 percentage points between Q2 2010 and Q2 2011 to 68.0%</p> 	<p>Employment rates rose throughout the last decade until the recession – but forecasts suggest that it will take nearly a decade to recover the pre-recession position. The employment rate has fallen by 1.1 percentage points between Q2 2008 and Q2 2011 to 68.0%.</p> 
Moving Benefit clients into Employment	<p>Numbers have held up despite the recession putting downward pressure on vacancies. In 2010/11, 36,136 clients moved from welfare into work compared to 34,234 in 2009/10.</p> 	<p>The PSA target of 70,000 people moving from welfare into work has already been achieved. Between April 2008 and March 2011 – 96,626 people have moved from welfare into work.</p> 
Employers Online	<p>42% of the vacancies notified to the Employment Service during the 10/11 year were notified via Employers Online. This represents a 6 percentage point increase on the previous year.</p>	<p>There has been a 3 percentage point increase in the number of vacancies notified through Employers Online over the 2 year period 2008/09 to 2010/11 rising from 34% to 42% (target 43%).</p>

³⁴ Position as at September 2011

		
Steps to Work	<p>Since the Steps to Work programme was introduced in September 2008 the percentage of leavers moving to unsubsidised employment has increased from 20% in 2008/09 to 25% in 2009/10.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>	<p>Steps to Work is a new programme, introduced in September 2008, so longer term trends are not applicable at this point</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>
Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS)	<p>Since LEMIS began in April 2007 and during the recent years of economic downturn, a constant 25 – 27% of participants case loaded have progressed into sustained employment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>	<p>A new LEMIS funding model was introduced in April 2011 there is therefore not enough historical data available to predict longer term trends at this point.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>

The Innovation Agenda

57. The Department seeks to enhance innovation capacity through supporting the local universities' research capabilities and research quality; exploiting fully the contribution that the local universities and Further Education colleges can make to the economy and, in particular, increase their responsiveness to the needs of business and the community.

58. Northern Ireland continues to regularly outperform the rest of the UK in a number of HE Innovation and Research and Development (R&D) indicators including the number of spin-off firms and the extent of research collaboration.

59. The Department achieved its previous PfG target of increasing by 300 the number of PhD research students at local universities. This has contributed to the long term trend of increasing PhD enrolments in STEM although data for the latest year (2009/10) indicates that STEM PhD enrolments have fallen back somewhat (a fall of 13%).
60. Research graded at the highest level from the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has been increasing across both Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and University of Ulster (UU) and both universities have improved their overall position in the wider UK HEI context. Forty per cent of research activity submitted by Stranmillis University College was adjudged to be internationally recognised or higher.³⁵
61. Interaction between Northern Ireland HEIs and the business sector continues to grow. A key indicator of this interaction is the extent to which local HEIs generate income from collaborative research. This includes research that is taken forward jointly by an HEI, a public funder and a third party. Data for the latest year (2009/10) show that income from this source has increased by 9% building on an impressive longer term rising trend. Indicators of commercialisation activities are also positive. For example, the number of spin-off companies originating from a Northern Ireland HEI (with some HEI ownership and still active after 3 years) rose by 3% in 2009/10 offsetting much of the 5% loss experienced in the previous year and building on the longer term increasing trend. This is impressive performance given the continued current economic climate.









³⁵ RAE 2008 was the College's first participation in the research assessment exercise and involved six full-time equivalent staff in one Unit of Assessment, namely education. St Mary's University College did not participate in the 2008 RAE.

62. In addition, Northern Ireland compares favourably with the rest of the UK in a number of measures contained in the Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction survey³⁶ (HE-BCI) for the 2009/10 Academic year.
63. The survey showed, on a per institution basis by region, that Northern Ireland exceeded the UK in a number of areas including: collaborative research income - £16.24m compared to £4.71m in the UK; total income from Contract Research - £9.08m compared to £6.19m in the UK; and the total number of spin offs (with some HEI ownership and still operating after 3 years) - 20 compared to 5 in the UK.
64. When noting the strong performance of Northern Ireland's HEIs compared to their counterparts across the UK, it is worth noting the outcomes of the World Economic Forum's 'Global Competitive Report 2011-12'³⁷. It indicates that, in a global context, the United Kingdom is regarded as extremely competitive on a number of innovative measures and ranks 2nd out of 142 countries in terms of the extent of University-industry collaboration in R&D.
65. In addition there was an 8% increase in the proportion of full cost recovery professional and technical provision at Further Education colleges in Northern Ireland (an indicator of community and business interaction) in the last year. Over the longer term cost recovery professional and technical provision in Further Education has increased by 19%.

³⁶ Published by HESA

³⁷ published by the World Economic Forum

Table 7: Trends in Key Innovation indicators³⁸

Indicator	Recent Change	Long-Term Trend
STEM PhD enrolments at NI HEIs	Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 STEM enrolments in PhDs at NI HEIs have fallen by 13% 	Between 1999/00 and 2009/10 STEM enrolments at NI HEIs have increased by 28% 
Income from Collaborative Research at NI HEIs	Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 Income from Collaborative Research has increased by 9% 	Income from Collaborative Research has increased by 232% between 2003/04 and 2009/10 
Number of Spin-off Companies originating from NI HEIs ³⁹	Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 the number of Spin-off companies increased by 3%. 	Between 2002/03 and 2009/10 the number of Spin-off companies has increased by 29%. 
FE Cost Recovery Provision	Between 2008/09 and 2009/10, cost recovery professional & technical provision in FE (which provides an indicator of FE interaction with the business and the community) increased by 8%. 	Between 2002/03 and 2009/10, the cost recovery professional & technical provision in FE has increased by 19% on aggregate 

³⁸ Position as at September 2011

Final Remarks

66. This latest report in the Department for Employment and Learning's Quality and Performance series seeks to provide a high level overview of Departmental funded provision and programmes. The analysis points to a continued hostile operating environment with unemployment remaining on an upward trend and more people being out of work for longer. Nevertheless, there is continued consensus among economic commentators that innovation, skills and employment will be critical in driving future economic growth and prosperity. It is these areas that have also come to the fore in the new Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.

67. This report finds that performance in many strategically important areas has been improving. The proportion of the working age population qualified at level 2 and above and level 3 and above continues to increase albeit the region's skill profile continues to lag behind that of many other successful economies. Numbers participating on DEL sponsored education and skills programmes continue to rise substantially. This is likely, in part, to reflect the more limited opportunities that exist in the labour market currently. It is encouraging to note also that the increased uptake does not appear to be causing a fall off in retention and achievement rates to any noticeable extent. In several of the Department's key work areas the number of enrolments on STEM subjects has continued to increase in the 2009/10 year reversing a long term trend of decline.

68. Across a broad front, DEL skills provision continues to be successful at engaging with those from the more deprived areas and, where comparable data exist, the Northern Ireland performance on this measure tends to be significantly ahead of other parts of the UK.

³⁹ Relates to those spin out companies with some HEI ownership and still active after 3 years.

69. Despite the economic downturn over 96,600 people having moved from welfare into work from April 2008 to March 2011, exceeding the target of 70,000 people set as part of the previous Programme for Government.

70. In relation to innovation and R&D this report has presented a positive picture of strong and growing engagement between HE, FE and the Business community. Notably, however the number of STEM PhD enrolments at NI HEIs has decreased over the last year. This coincides with the phasing out of the Department's previously attained target of increasing by 300 the number of PhD research students at local Universities. Overall, Northern Ireland continues to compare favourably with other UK countries in terms of the key indicators of HE research commercialisation.

71. A number of key issues raised in previous reports, while not reproduced in full here, remain relevant. In particular, there continues to be wide variability in the rate at which individuals successfully complete the course for which they had enrolled and attain the associated qualification. For example, having embarked on a course, some social groups are more likely to attain a qualification successfully than others and retention and achievement rates continue to vary markedly across education and training providers and across subject areas. The Department has completed a pilot assessment of these effects in the Further Education sector. It is sharing the initial outcomes of that pilot analysis with the Further Education colleges before updating the analysis with 2010/11 data when it becomes available. If deemed successful the Department intends to roll out a similar analysis into the variance in success rates across its key programmes.

72. As a response to issues raised through DEL Quality and Performance reports, the Department has developed an Action Plan to ensure the programmes it delivers and the provision it sponsors is of a high quality. The Action Plan is monitored on a regular basis and has been reproduced at **Annex 1** of this

report with a statement of the progress that has been made set alongside each action. The vast majority of the actions have been completed, however there are a number of longer term actions which remain. These centre around increasing the skills levels of the workforce, an issue which will remain relevant over the next PfG period.

73. With a new draft PfG now published, a comprehensive review of the current action plan will be conducted as part of the development of the next DEL Quality and Performance assessment.

Annex 1:

**DEL QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE ACTION PLAN –
AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS⁴⁰**

A Departmental Action plan was developed in response to issues raised in the first baseline analysis of DEL Quality and Performance in 2010. The action plan was developed to ensure the programmes the Department delivers and the provision it sponsors are of a high quality.

The Department is committed to monitoring the implementation of the action plan on a regular basis and this update includes a statement of the progress that has been made alongside each action. Many of the original actions have now been completed although a number have longer timescales and continue to be progressed. A table of contents is set out below.

It is intended that a comprehensive review of the following action plan will be conducted as part of the development of the next full Quality and Performance assessment with a view to refreshing it fully.

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⁴⁰ Position as at September 2001

**A. SKILLS -
A.1 Attainment of Key Public Sector Agreement (PSA) Targets**

<p>Issue (A.1.1) Attainment on Level 2 (and above) and Level 3 (and above) PSA Skills Targets.</p>	<p>Current Position Based on current trajectories, significant challenges remain in attaining these Level 2 and 3 targets.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Work with other departments and agencies to encourage and facilitate uptake and accreditation of level 2 and level 3 skills.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11 Business Year</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division, Skills & Industry Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action As part of the implementation in Northern Ireland of the UK-wide reform of vocational qualifications, the introduction of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) will ensure relevance of vocational qualifications to employers (employers, through Sector Skills Councils, are part of the qualification development process). The QCF will also facilitate a much more flexible approach to the acquisition of qualifications and units of qualifications, to the benefit of learners and employers. There is now a particular focus on explaining the benefits to learners and employers, and the Department intends to run a number of employer seminars over the next few months.</p> <p>The Department's new skills strategy for Northern Ireland, 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' is the overarching strategy for much of the work of the Department. Strategic Goal 1 and Strategic Goal 2 of the strategy reflect the likely proportion of those in employment skilled to Level 2 and 3 that will be required to meet the needs of business. The Department's work towards achieving this skills profile will contribute to achieving the outgoing PSA targets.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.1.2) Attainment on Level 2 (and above) and Level 3 (and above) PSA Skills Targets.</p>	<p>Current Position Based on current trajectories, significant challenges remain in attaining these Level 2 and 3 targets.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Review reasons for non-completion of qualifications and encourage Department sponsored education and training providers to focus further on level 2 and 3 enrolments and on achievement of these qualifications.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11 Business Year</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division, ES Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Within the Steps to Work programme a review of the NVQ Level 2 strand, including the reasons for the high rate of non-completion, has recently been carried out. It should be noted that StW provides a relatively small number of NVQ Level 2 qualifications per year (approx. 100-150). Note: (a) StW does not offer NVQ Level 3; and (b) StW Providers have no input to enrolment: this is via Employment Service Advisers.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.1.3) Attainment on Level 2 (and above) and Level 3 (and above) PSA Skills Targets.</p>	<p>Current Position Based on current trajectories, significant challenges remain in attaining these Level 2 and 3 targets.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Assess the validity of the level 2 and level 3 measurement tool via the planned review of the Department for Employment and Learning's PSA Data Systems. Bring forward recommendations for change as appropriate.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11 Business Year</p>	<p>Department Lead Analytical Services</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action A review of the method of measurement of Level 2 and Level 3 targets is well underway. The Department has been liaising with DFP to ensure the Labour Force Survey is picking up the qualifications in a comprehensive and consistent manner.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.1.4) Extend and enhance the benchmarking of Department for Employment and Learning programme performance.</p>	<p>Current Position The Quality and Performance report sought to benchmark Department for Employment and Learning programme performance against similar provision elsewhere but recognised the need to develop this work further.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Assess how benchmarking within and across the Department for Employment and Learning programmes can be extended and made more meaningful. Consideration will be given to developing national and international benchmarks. Build further robust benchmarks into the next iteration of the Quality and Performance report.</p>	<p>Timescale By end of 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead Analytical Services working in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning's Quality and Performance Branch</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action QPB is currently working with Analytical Services on an exercise to benchmark the quality of FE provision in NI against similar provision in Scotland initially and subsequently Wales. Work is also underway to build an econometric model to assess and benchmark more comprehensively, success rates in Further Education colleges initially and, subsequently, across other Department for Employment and Learning funded programmes and provision. In addition, a benchmarking project will be taken forward as part of the implementation of 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures'. The project is designed to establish, maintain and publish a set of skills performance data making a comparison between the Northern Ireland performance and a selection of other small, open developed economies.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.1.5)</p>	<p>Current Position</p>
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Promote and facilitate enrolments in STEM areas.	The Quality and Performance report highlights the significant challenges that lie ahead if STEM PSA targets are to be attained.	
Planned Action The independent 'Report of the STEM Review' was published in late 2009. The Department for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with the Department of Education, will publish a strategic response and Action Plan.	Timescale By end of 2010/2011	Department Lead Skills and Industry Division
	Progress towards achieving action The STEM Strategy, 'Success through STEM' was produced in conjunction with DEL, DE, DCAL, DARD, DETI and DHSSPS. This was approved for publication by the Executive in March 2011. The Strategy outlines how Government will take forward the relevant recommendations from the 'Report of the STEM Review' and details three priority action areas.	

A.2 Higher Education Teaching and Learning

<p>Issue (A.2.1) Pattern of HE Enrolments at NI HEIs, particularly part-time enrolments.</p>	<p>Current Position Developing a Northern Ireland Higher Education Strategy. As part of this process Expert Groups, a Project Group and overarching Steering Group were established to consider this and other issues relevant to HE in Northern Ireland. The Department issued a consultation paper on the development of a higher education Strategy in January 2011. The consultation period closed in June 2011. The Department has considered the issues raised by respondents to the consultation and stakeholder engagement events and, in co-operation with the Higher Education Strategy Steering Group, is establishing a framework for the strategic development of higher education over the next decade.</p>	
<p>Planned Action The Department is currently drafting a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland, in cooperation with the Steering Group and its Chair, Sir Graeme Davies, part of which will look at future policy in regard to part-time study and ensuring widening participation in higher education in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Timescale A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland is due to be launched in the New Year</p>	<p>Department Lead Steering group chaired by Sir Graeme Davies. Expert groups independently chaired. The Department for Employment and Learning is responsible for secretariat support and for production of a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>Progress towards achieving action Continuing to work with the Steering Group and Sir Graeme Davies in drafting a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland which will address issues in regard to part-time study and widening participation in higher education in Northern Ireland.</p>		

<p>Issue (A.2.2) Pattern of HE Enrolments at NI HEIs, particularly part-time enrolments.</p>	<p>Current Position As Accounting Officer for the Department, the Permanent Secretary holds meetings with the Heads of the Higher Education Institutions to provide comfort on the accountability arrangements each has in place. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss issues on the performance, operation or accountability of the institution.</p>	
<p>Planned Action HEI representatives to outline what actions they are taking, or plan to take, to address concerns raised including in the Quality and Performance report. These will be reviewed at the next Accountability Meeting.</p>	<p>Timescale Annual reviews with interim monitoring of progress as required.</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Accountability meetings were conducted with the HEIs during April and May 2011.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.2.3) Promoting STEM enrolments in HE</p>	<p>Current Position There is a PSA target to increase the number of students studying STEM (especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds) by 25% by 2015. This target is not on track to be met currently.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Develop a Widening Participation Strategy (WP) for NI which will examine a range of measures including the possibility of expanding the Step-Up to Science programme.</p>	<p>Timescale The WP strategy is scheduled to be completed at the same time as the HE Strategy (see above).</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The development of the WP Strategy is on target. Separately, work has been commissioned to examine the effectiveness of spend on WP activities. Through the consultation process there will be an examination of how better VFM can be achieved from WP spend.</p>	

Issue (A.2.4) HE Non-Completion Rates	Current Position The NI universities have improved their position compared to last year although their non-completion rates are still above their benchmarks.	
Planned Action Both universities are taking a series of measures to reduce rates still further.	Timescale Measurement of progress will be monitored each year.	Department Lead HE Division
	Progress towards achieving action Retention rates are being examined as part of the HE Strategy.	

A.3 Further Education

<p>Issue (A.3.1) Increasing Level 2 and Level 3 enrolments.</p>	<p>Current Position The Department has PSA targets to increase the proportion of enrolments at FE colleges in levels 2 and 3. Latest data show that progress is being made.</p>	
<p>Planned Action FE Division to share the outputs of the quality and performance report and specific PSA monitoring data with Colleges in advance of the College Development Planning (CDP) process. It will agree actions with colleges to aid achievement of these targets. Policy drivers which will help to achieve above targets include: Curriculum Policy (including ILP); Work Based Learning; and VQ Reform.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>

Progress towards achieving action

Through the College Development Planning (CDP) process, interim targets have been agreed to enable Colleges to work towards achieving these PSA targets for Level 2 and Level 3. The targets range from 94.5% down to 89.3% to allow for the variation in demand across the sector. The bespoke CDP process recognises the individual "distance to travel" in meeting the PSAs and reflects the local community need. In 2009 a project was commenced by the Learning Skills Development Agency to research the "FE experience" of 16-19 year olds, and to develop and implement a shared electronic Individual Learner Programme (e-ILP) that could be used across the FE sector to plan and monitor individuals' learning. A major consideration in this work was making recommendations on the best use of existing college computer systems (including the Virtual Learning Environments) to incorporate best practice in terms of learning plans for 16-19 year olds. The Individual Learner Plan was piloted, initially with 16-19 year olds enrolled with FE colleges, from September 2009. The impact of the project on college recruitment, retention and achievement will be monitored.

<p>Issue (A.3.2) Increasing numbers on priority skill areas including STEM.</p>	<p>Current Position The Department has PSA targets in these areas and latest data show that significant progress is still required.</p>	
<p>Planned Action FE Division to share the outputs of the quality and performance report and specific PSA monitoring data with Colleges in advance of the CDP process and agree actions with the colleges to aid achievement of these targets.</p> <p>Policy drivers which will help to achieve above targets include: Curriculum Policy (including ILP); Work Based Learning; and VQ Reform. Consideration to be given to attaching weighted funding to STEM areas that are not already included in priority skills areas.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Of all of the FE curriculum PSA targets, this one is the most reliant on, and "vulnerable" to, learner choice. Therefore, it has to be recognised that colleges offering relevant provision will not guarantee sufficient learner uptake to meet this target. Through the College Development Planning (CDP) process, interim targets have been agreed which recognise the distance travelled and yet to travel by individual colleges. Through some colleges have yet to achieve the PSA target, they have agreed to the targets set in the CDP's based on their current performance and likely demand locally.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' the Department will be examining its policy on the funding of identified priority skills areas.</p>	

Issue (A.3.3) Variability in success rates across colleges.	Current Position The Quality and Performance report identifies variability in the success rates of students across colleges, subject areas and across a range of student characteristics.	
Planned Action FE Division to share and discuss the outputs of the quality and performance report with Colleges in advance of the CDP process and agree actions with the colleges to address variability in success rates.	Timescale By end 2010/11	Department Lead FE Division
	Progress towards achieving action Through the College Development Planning process, the Department challenges colleges on their rates of learner retention and achievement. In addition, retention, achievement and progression rates are key performance indicators outlined in Improving Quality : Raising Standards (IQ:RS), the Inspectorate's manual of quality indicators against which Colleges are evaluated by the Inspectorate and against which they are required to carry out an annual self-assessment. These are key indicators for the Inspectorate in determining a college's overall performance level but particularly the performance level for Achievements and Standards.	

Issue (A.3.4) Variability in success rates across colleges.	Current Position The Department continues to implement, its Quality Improvement Strategy, 'Success Through Excellence', and has recently carried out a review of its effectiveness.	
Planned Action Colleges are currently undergoing training in self-evaluation to strengthen their ability to identify weaknesses in their own provision and to plan for improvement appropriately.	Timescale Follow up inspections and support through 2010/11	Department Lead FE Division
	Progress towards achieving action The Department's Quality Improvement Strategy, 'Success Through Excellence', has recently been reviewed and inspection models are currently being revised, with the aim of linking self-evaluation more closely to inspection.	

<p>Issue (A.3.5) Variability in success rates across colleges.</p>	<p>Current Position Each of the FE colleges has had a range of inspection activities in 2009 including their provision of priority skill areas at level 2. Overall grades awarded ranged from satisfactory to very good.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Areas for improvement arising from these inspections are being addressed through the provision of post-inspection support and follow-up inspection activity.</p>	<p>Timescale End 10/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The Colleges submitted a whole college self-evaluation report and quality improvement plan in March 2011. Evaluation of these by the Inspectorate confirmed that four of the colleges had satisfactory or better processes in place to self-assess the quality of their provision. The two others are re-submitting their reports.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.3.6) Variability in success rates across colleges.</p>	<p>Current Position Survey evaluations across all of the colleges are being carried out by the ETI in three priority skills areas at level 3 in 2010.</p>	
<p>Planned Action To strengthen the quality of provision across FE Colleges, post-inspection support and follow-up inspection activity will be provided as required.</p>	<p>Timescale End 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The survey of the Priority Skills areas at level 3 undertaken in 2010 confirmed that the overall quality of provision was satisfactory in two colleges, good in three and very good in one. Those colleges with individual Priority Skills areas evaluated as just satisfactory, inadequate or unsatisfactory are currently undergoing follow-up inspection activity. It is complete in one college where significant progress was made in the two professional and technical areas subject to review.</p>	

A.4 Training Programmes

<p>Issue (A.4.1) Contribute further to Level 2 and Level 3 attainment.</p>	<p>Current Position The current level of achievement is summarised in the Quality and Performance Baseline analysis.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Ensure that individuals are not prevented from attaining a qualification to reflect their skills and knowledge – this will be to the advantage of the individuals concerned, while contributing to the Department meeting its PSA targets.</p>	<p>Timescale By December 2010</p>	<p>Department Lead Skills and Industry Division.</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Training for Success aims to target 16 and 17 year old school leavers (up to 24 in certain circumstances) with a flexible menu that allows young people to enter training at an appropriate level and progress to a stage where they can maximise their potential through achievement of qualifications, employment, individual tailored training, personal development and employability skills.</p>	
<p>Issue (A.4.2) Contribute further to Level 2 and Level 3 attainment.</p>	<p>Current Position The current level of achievement is summarised in the Quality and Performance Baseline analysis.</p>	
<p>Planned Action The Department will assess options for the development of an up-skilling programme, as an alternative to an apprenticeship for individuals who only require a small amount of training or only require assessment and recognition of existing skills.</p>	<p>Timescale End 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead Skills and Industry Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The need to up-skill is recognised in the Department’s skills strategy, ‘Success through Skills – Transforming Futures’. A key theme in the strategy is to encourage employers to support the wider skills agenda and encourage their staff to gain more knowledge through training. This work is being taken forward through the Skills Solutions Service. The Department is introducing a team of trained Skills Advisors who can engage with employers to help identify their skills needs and match those with the appropriate Departmental offer where relevant. These advisors will have access to a funding stream to provide first time level 2 and level 3 qualifications to employees not previously qualified to that level. This model will be capable of providing innovative and flexible ways to deliver training including through the accreditation of prior learning.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.4.3) Contribute further to level 2 and Level 3 attainment.</p>	<p>Current Position The current level of achievement is summarised in the Quality and Performance Baseline analysis.</p>	
<p>Planned Action The Department is working with the University of Ulster to develop a teacher education qualification for those employed in the work based learning sector. A pilot programme for this qualification commenced in February 2009 and the evaluation, which has been completed by ETI, confirmed that the quality of the programme was very good. The Department will roll this programme out across the sector.</p>	<p>Timescale 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead Skills and Industry Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The Teacher Education Programme developed by the University of Ulster at the Department request continues to roll out across the suppliers of work-based learning and employment programmes. It is in big demand from the sector as most supplier organisations that have achieved good outcomes from ETI inspections report a definite link to the skills staff developed on this Certificate in Teaching programme. This action is largely achieved. The programme is now in its second year of roll out and will be a contractual requirement for suppliers under the new contracting arrangements.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.4.4) Increasing Occupancy in priority skill areas including in STEM areas.</p>	<p>Current Position From September 2007 to 2009, there has been a marked increase in apprenticeship occupancy for: Health and Social Care/Child Development and Wellbeing; Retailing; Administration; and Hospitality and Catering. However, occupancy has fallen in some priority skills areas including Electrical Installation and Construction.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Consider options for enhancing apprenticeship occupancy in Northern Ireland's priority skills areas. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further promotion of priority skills areas (including STEM) through the current re-contracting exercise; and • using the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) to promote specified qualifications. 	<p>Timescale By December 2010 to inform the FE college CDP process for the 2011/12 academic year and the monitoring of Apprenticeship provision.</p>	<p>Department Lead Skills and Industry Division and FE Division.</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action The Qualifications and e-Learning Branch within FE Division is taking forward a Department wide project to consider and make recommendations that will maximise the impact on the Northern Ireland economy of public funding for vocational qualifications (VQs) in NI. A key output from the project will be a process that will enable the Department to focus its funding on those VQs that have been identified by Sector Skills Councils as being particularly important to their sectors in NI. Public funding for VQs will be increasingly focused on qualifications, and skills, needed by the NI economy.</p>	
<p>Issue (A.4.5) Address variability in achievement rates.</p>	<p>Current Position The current level of achievement is summarised in the Quality and Performance Baseline analysis.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Evaluate the quality of provision through inspection and other quality regimes, and support improvement where appropriate.</p>	<p>Timescale By December 2010</p>	<p>Department Lead Skills and Industry Division.</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action This work is ongoing. Quality and Performance Branch (QPB) are currently working with the Scottish Inspectorate to take this work forward. The Scottish Inspectorate is very keen to work jointly on this. Some initial discussions have taken place with Wales and these are currently being pursued.</p>	

A.5 Essential Skills

<p>Issue (A.5.1) Engaging further with older age groups.</p>	<p>Current Position The Department is seeking to introduce separate targets for key providers of essential skills to encourage further focus on enrolments from the harder to reach age groups.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Separate age targets for Essential Skills enrolments to be agreed as part of the CDP process.</p> <p>In addition, a pilot Workforce Delivery programme to be developed in conjunction with the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils. It will target 500 Essential Skills learners. The pilot will be evaluated and reported upon by the ETI. That evaluation will include a focus on the barriers to participation from older age groups.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Targets which focus delivery on those aged 20+ are now in place across the FE Sector and built into the colleges' performance targets.</p>	

<p>Issue (A.5.2) Addressing variability in success rates.</p>	<p>Current Position The Quality and Performance report identifies variability in the success rates of students across providers, subject areas and across a range of student characteristics.</p>	
<p>Planned Action The Department will engage individually with the FE colleges as principal providers of Essential Skills to discuss the outputs of the Quality and Performance report and agree actions that will be taken as part of the CDP process.</p>	<p>Timescale By end 2010/11</p>	<p>Department Lead FE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Each college has an agreed ES Action Plan in place to address quality of provision and these have been revised and updated.</p>	

B. THE EMPLOYMENT AGENDA -

<p>Issue (B.1.1) Due to data limitations related to the new Steps to Work programme, analysis of the employment section of the Q&P report was conducted at a high level. Validated information on Steps to Work is therefore required to conduct a more detailed analysis.</p>	<p>Current Position A series of quarterly bulletins is now published. The latest statistical bulletin was published on 21 Sept 2011 The first StW Statistical Bulletin has been produced and published by the Department for Employment and Learning, Analytical Services on 29 September 2010 and will be published quarterly thereafter.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Provide validated programme outcome data for further analysis.</p>	<p>Timescale By March 2010.</p>	<p>Department Lead ES Division and Analytical Services.</p>
<p>Progress towards achieving action Action complete – data on Steps to Work now published quarterly and has been considered as part of the current Quality and Performance Report</p>		

<p>Issue (B.1.2) PSA3 Indicators 4, 5 and 6 which relate to: moving people into employment; increasing use of e-vacancy service; and modernising the employment service.</p>	<p>Current Position See detail in Quality and Performance interim report.</p> <p>Note: all targets in PSA3 subject to economic conditions.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Actions detailed in the Department's PSA3 Monitoring Report and performance is monitored on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Timescale By March 2011</p>	<p>Department Lead ES Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action Indicator 4 - Assisting 70,000 working age benefit clients to move into employment was achieved in September 2010.</p> <p>UPDATE Over the 3 year period 96,568 clients were assisted into employment . The 70,000 was allocated across the 3 year period as:</p> <p>2008/2009 Target 24,000 , Achieved 26,256 2009/2010 Target 23,000 , Achieved 34,234 2010/2011 Target 23,000</p> <p>However following the achievements in the previous years the 2010/2011 Target was revised upwards to 32,000 and the achievement was 36,136.</p> <p>So an overall 3 year achievement of 96,626 into employment equated to 138% of the 70,000 into employment target and 114% of the revised 79,000.</p> <p>Indicator 5 - Increase by 25% the use of e-vacancy by March 2011, the economic downturn has impacted adversely on this target and will continue to do so. Working group is reviewing and taking actions in a number of areas. Progress reported monthly to Senior Management.</p> <p>UPDATE Increase by 25% the use of e-vacancy. The 25% increase on the March 2008</p>	

outturn was allocated as below:

2008/0009 Target 37% vacancies notified electronically, Achieved 34.04%

2009/2010 Target 40% , Achieved 36%

2010/2011 Target 43% , Achieved 42.56%

So by the end of the 3 year period the ES just fell short (42.56%) of the 43% vacancies notified electronically.

Indicator 6 - Deliver a modernised employment service by March 2011. The second phase of the Modernisation Programme is currently underway. Work on a number of projects under the Modernisation programme will continue throughout 2010/11.

The PSA target to deliver a Modernised Employment Service by March 2011 was met through a combination of the Programmes/Projects aimed at improving provision to customers; and through continuing the work (which has been mainstreamed) into 2011/12 to continuously improve the service delivered by the ES.

C. THE INNOVATION AGENDA -

(see Section 7 of the Department for Employment and Learning Quality and Performance Baseline Analysis report for further details)

<p>Issue (C.1.1) Support Knowledge Transfer from the NI research base.</p>	<p>Current Position The latest HE-BCI survey for AY 2009/10 shows that the continuing investment through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) is yielding both tangible and increasing benefits in terms of the commercialisation and exploitation of university research (see section 7.9 to 7.18 of the Q & P Report). This success is reflected in the recent Times Higher Education Award naming QUB as the UK's Entrepreneurial University of the Year.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Administration of the third round of NI HEIF (AY 10/11 to AY 12/13).</p>	<p>Timescale NI HEIF 3 to commence August 2010.</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action NI HEIF 3 implemented following successful review of NI HEIF 2 and the securing of the required Ministerial approval. Universities' Knowledge Transfer strategies approved.</p>	
<p>Issue (C.1.2) Encourage increased HE/FE collaboration focused on meeting the needs of business and the wider community.</p>	<p>Current Position The Department's Connected project (launched in April 2007) has received a positive evaluation (see sections 7.24 to 7.25) and Ministerial approval has been granted to develop the next phase of the programme from April 2010.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Liaise with QUB/UU/ANIC to implement the new 4-year Connected 2 programme to cover FY 10/11 to FY 13/14.</p>	<p>Timescale The Connected 2 programme to commence April 2010.</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
	<p>Progress towards achieving action New Connected 2 programme commenced following the securing of Ministerial approval for four years of funding.</p>	

<p>Issue (C.1.3) Support increased postgraduate provision to meet the needs of the local economy.</p>	<p>Current Position The Department has funded three intakes of 100 additional PhDs for AY 08/09, AY 09/10 and AY 10/11 focused on areas of economic priority as informed by MATRIX.</p>	
<p>Planned Action Support the run-out of additional PhD places (300 for AY 10/11)</p>	<p>Timescale Run-out of additional PhD places to take place over AY 11/12 & AY 12/13</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
<p>Progress towards achieving action The last Programme for Government's target of supporting 300 extra places by AY 10/11 achieved. Funding secured to fully support the run-out of all places.</p>		
<p>Issue (C.1.4) Increase the quality of research as measured by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).</p>	<p>Current Position The results of the most recent RAE, published in December 2008, confirmed that research undertaken in Queen's University and the University of Ulster is of world class quality, with 87% of the assessed research in Northern Ireland considered to be "internationally excellent" of which 14% was adjudged "world leading". Forty per cent of research activity submitted by Stranmillis University College was adjudged to be internationally recognised or higher. RAE 2008 was the College's first participation in the research assessment exercise and involved six full-time equivalent staff in one Unit of Assessment, namely education.</p>	
<p>Planned Action The Department, in conjunction with the other UK HE funding bodies, will develop a new mechanism, (known as the Research Excellence Framework) (REF) which will continue to assess research on the basis of</p>	<p>Timescale First assessment under REF will take place in 2014.</p>	<p>Department Lead HE Division</p>
<p>Progress towards achieving action Department is engaged fully in the development of the REF UK.</p>		

quality but will use a process which is simpler and less burdensome.	
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