

people:skills:jobs:



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

Research Agenda

2004-2007

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. DEL's activities are focused around three key themes: *Preparing People for Work, Supporting Businesses and Economic Development and Promoting Learning*. The Department's aim and objectives are as follows:-

Departmental aim:

"To promote learning, to prepare people for work and to support the economy."

Departmental objectives:

"To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training."

"To help people into employment and promote good employment practices."

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

2. COMMITMENT TO EVIDENCE BASED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Within its Strategic Plan for the period 2004 to 2007 DEL reaffirmed its commitment to evidence based policy formulation and development. The Department recognises that access to high quality, up to date research is an essential ingredient in both shaping and successfully delivering upon its strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan commits to commissioning relevant research projects to assist policy preparation and development. This is to be managed by the Department's Research Steering Group (RSG), the prime forum within DEL for making decisions about the policy relevance of research.

The Department's Strategic Plan can be found at the following web address:
www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/DEL_Strategic_plan20042007.pdf.

3. RESEARCH AGENDA – AIMS

The Department wishes to ensure that a comprehensive evidence base exists which will inform the delivery and shape of its medium to long term strategic priorities, details of which are provided at **Section 4** overleaf. It has been reviewing the relevant research that already exists or is currently being undertaken and has considered what further research is likely to be required over the next number of years.

The outcome of that consideration is presented here as an agenda for research. By acting upon this agenda, the Department aims:

- **To strengthen further the link that exists between research and policy development within DEL.** By planning ahead and re-orienting the Department's research effort more to the medium and longer term a comprehensive evidence base can be put in place in advance of major scheduled policy reviews.
- **To provide improved co-ordination between the Department's planned research and the Strategic and Business Planning process.** The Department wishes to ensure that the key issues that are identified by research are fully considered and built into the annual business planning process.
- **To enhance interest within the research community in the areas of research relevant to DEL.** By publishing its research agenda, the Department wishes to give advance notice to researchers and research organisations, in Northern Ireland and beyond, of the areas of work that are of interest to DEL and will be procured by the Department through a competitive public call for research proposals, which will be administered by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). By doing this, the Department intends to build capacity among the research community in the areas where it has a strategic and policy interest, and wishes to harness the innovation and creativity of researchers to deliver a high quality evidence base.

4. WHAT WE MEAN BY RESEARCH

Research is defined as any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge in a particular field or fields. In the case of DEL, the systematic effort will be dictated by its Research Agenda and the discrete research projects, which will derive from that. The fields of interest are related closely to the DEL priorities for action. These are detailed in the Department's Strategic Plan for the period 2004 to 2007 and are, in no particular order.

DEL Priorities for Action

Priority (a): implementing a Skills and Workforce Development Strategy;

Priority (b): implementing the review of Further Education;

Priority (c): putting in place revised funding and access arrangements for Higher Education;

Priority (d): completing the Welfare to Work programme;

Priority (e): developing our employment and other services to business;

Priority (f): modernising and improving our services to make them more effective and efficient; and

Priority (g): ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to enable the Department to manage its information effectively and efficiently and, in particular, to comply with the full implementation of the freedom of Information Act 2000, which will come into effect in January 2005.

Excluded from this definition of research are:

1. Policy evaluations.
2. Evaluation of DEL's schemes and programmes.
3. Economic Appraisal of policies, programmes and projects.

5. THE EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE

A significant volume of research, which is relevant to the DEL strategic priorities already exists or is currently being undertaken. **Annex 1** provides a brief summary of some of the recent NI focused research that is currently available. It is recognised that this is not a fully comprehensive list and excludes, for instance, the vast body of national and international research literature, much of which also has relevance for DEL. The existing research base includes work which aligns with the seven priorities for action previously mentioned. The Department will continue to draw extensively from existing research where it continues to have relevance.

6. THE FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

The Department has re-examined what research is currently available against what is likely to be required to assist in strategic and policy development over the next number of years. This mapping exercise has identified a number of areas where the research base needs to be updated and, in other cases, expanded to fill remaining gaps in the knowledge base. The areas identified for further research are set out below and, in each case, are 'linked' with the appropriate priority for action in the Department's Strategic Plan for 2004-07.

Research requirement A: Interagency Co-Operation on Improving Employability. {Directly linked with action priority (d)}

The prime aim of any research project or projects deriving from this, would be to investigate whether there are existing models of interagency co-operation on improving employability – in Europe or elsewhere – and to assess if there are lessons from these models that could be constructively applied by DEL.

Amongst the questions for investigation are:

- A(1): Where outside NI is best practice in improving employability to be found?
- A(2): To what extent does best practice depend upon interagency co-operation?
- A(3): What kind of agencies are involved and what are their relative roles and responsibilities?
- A(4): What kind of costs and benefits are associated with interagency co-operation?
- A(5): What are the impacts on the relevant target client groups, of interagency co-operation? How are improvements in employability, as a result of interagency co-operation, measured/evaluated? Is there consistency in measurement /evaluation?
- A(6): What lessons could be applied by DEL from other existing models of interagency co-operation on improving employability from elsewhere?

Research requirement B: Dispute Resolution and the Tribunal System. {Directly linked with action priority (e)}

The desirability of doing research in relation to dispute resolution and the tribunal system, arises from the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, made on 13 November 2003. Very little relevant research has been carried out in this area to date. It is desirable, therefore, that DEL addresses this gap and builds up a bank of baseline data to measure the effects of the changes under the Order, to inform future policy decisions.

Any proposed research would explore issues such as:

- B(1): What attempts (if any) are made to resolve workplace disputes, short of taking them to the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) or a tribunal?
- B(2): What are the perceptions of dispute resolution across a variety of representative groups in society? What are people's expectations and experiences of the system? How accessible, helpful and comprehensible are the LRA and tribunal routes? Is there an understanding of rights and obligations?
- B(3): How rising case loads and the protracted time needed to resolve cases, impacts on the interests of applicants and respondents?
- B(4): What is the effect on employers of bearing the heavy costs of defending weak tribunal claims? What are the effects on employees of the prospect of a pre-hearing deposit or a costs order being made against them?
- B(5): When cases go to tribunal, what are the factors motivating a "doorstep" settlement?
- B(6): Do the costs to employers in defending claims, damage the efficiency/performance of companies, e.g. what is the impact on insurance costs?

Research requirement C: Research to Inform Employment Law Issues. {directly linked with action priorities (e) and (f)}

Employment law is an important area for possible future research and the following areas are likely to be explored:

- C(1): Ways in other jurisdictions e.g. Republic of Ireland, of dealing with employment rights disputes.
- C(2): Whether the current institutional framework would sustain the adoption in NI of employment law different from that in GB?
- C(3): The potential effect on inward investment and should Northern Ireland (NI) adopt a different employment code to that in Great Britain (GB).

Research requirement D: Engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sectors, in Relation to Training and Labour Market Activities, After the Ending of EU Objective 1 Funding in 2006/07. {Cross-cuts the various action priorities, but tends towards priorities (a) and (d)}

When objective 1 status and funding ends, there will still be a need for DEL to keep working with various voluntary and community sector organisations. One key reason for doing so is that the European Employment Strategy has an increased focus on disadvantaged groups. Subsequent to the ending of Objective 1 funding, such organisations may well face a significant funding gap. DEL will need to have a plan/strategy for dealing with their needs in relation to training and labour market support, in this more constrained financial environment.

It would therefore be useful to commission background research, which addresses issues such as:

- D(1): What are the 'needs' of the community/voluntary sector? Can they be quantified? If so, how can this best be done?
- D(2): What role should DEL play in helping the sector to identify and meet its 'needs'?
- D(3): In order to inform research into these issues, it would be useful to establish the quality of training provided by such organisations and the variation in outcomes.

DEL's research will take into account the work of other departments in this area, for instance, work coming out of the Voluntary & Community Unit of Department for Social Development (DSD).

**Research requirement E: Research to Inform the Welfare Reform Agenda.
{Directly linked to action priority (d)}**

The Department will build upon desk research into the labour market needs and barriers to employment faced by a number of 'difficult to help' client groups already undertaken in this area.

The main aim of future research would be to identify through surveys, what steps DEL would need to take to get people in the 'difficult to help' groups to participate in the labour market. This research is likely to involve:

- E(1): Further work to identify the training/employment needs of these groups, and the real and perceived barriers they face in the labour market. The research should encompass wider issues such as companies attitudes to recruiting 'difficult to help' groups and what employers are prepared to do (or can do) to assist in the transition to work.
- E(2): Exploration of ways in which current interventions could be adapted to accommodate these groups.

Research requirement F: Continuation of Research into Issues Affecting the Labour Market in NI. {Cross cuts the priorities for action}

There will continue to be a need for research into:

- F(1): The effects of large-scale redundancies.
- F(2): The labour force requirements of large scale recruitments.
- F(3): Characteristics and needs of specific groups within the non-employed e.g. young persons or persons currently excluded from the labour market due to illness or disability.
- F(4): The labour market for various kinds of services.
- F(5): Training issues.
- F(6): The impact of workforce qualification levels on company performance e.g. the impact on company performance – and likely social benefit – of raising the skill levels of employees who have no qualifications and who are working in low skilled jobs at NVQ Level 2 or equivalent.

Research requirement G: Research in Support of the Skills Agenda. {Links directly to action priority (a)}

There will be a number of projects arising under this heading, including:

- G(1): The work on a draft Skills Strategy paper indicates a continuing need for significant research on current and future skills needs on the basis of skills monitoring and priority skills forecasting. There is in addition, a need for better basic information on the skills of the Northern Ireland workforce including essential skills. Working with the NI Skills Task Force, the Department will identify a future skills research programme, which complements the Department's plans agreed at the RSG. The forward plan will build on the work already completed and will utilise the Department's Skills Unit as well as the Priority Skills Unit in the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ERINI).
- G(2): Work is also required to decompose the reasons for a lower productivity in Northern Ireland and the contribution that better human capital (i.e. improved skill levels) can make to 'closing the gap'.

Research requirement H: Higher Education Research and Development and Knowledge Transfer Activities. {Directly linked to action priority (c)}

There are a number of questions, which the Department would wish to explore in this regard:

- H(1): In particular, compared to other regions, are the Northern Ireland Higher Education (HE) Research and Development (R&D) and knowledge transfer activities resourced appropriately so that they can play their part effectively in building a knowledge based regional economy?
- H(2): In terms of delivering successful economic and social outcomes, how do the HE R&D and technology transfer activities in Northern Ireland compare with similar regions elsewhere? What is the impact of the investment made by DEL in these activities and what lessons could usefully be learned from best practice that exists either in NI or elsewhere.

It should be noted that the Department intends to take forward an evaluation of the Higher Education Reach Out to Business in the Community (HEROBC) programme through a separate competition. While that will be conducted independently of this research agenda, it will have implications for the research proposals developed under this heading.

Research requirement I: The Outcomes of Education and Training. {Linked to action priorities (a), (b) and (c)}

The Department wishes to update and expand the existing evidence base in relation to the outcomes of education and training and how these benefit both the individual and society.

- I(1): In particular, DEL would wish to assess how different educational, training choices, course types and levels can impact upon an individual's labour market outcome.
- I(2): How do rates of return (in terms of earnings or employability) to education (particularly FE and HE) and training differ between Northern Ireland and other regions?
- I(3): To what extent are the rates of return a reflection of the value added by the education and training or a reflection of the individual's intrinsic ability?
- I(4): Does the FE sector perform to sufficiently support and enable economic development within NI?

- I(5): What can the analysis tell us about the size and structure of the education (particularly HE and FE) and training sectors in NI?
- I(6): How do changes in the cost of Education to the individual through, for example, changes in course fees, impact upon rates of return and student decisions on whether to participate and course choice? What are FE student attitudes towards learning and do these have an impact upon labour market outcomes?
- I(7): The Department is also interested in research on vocational education for the 14-19 age bracket and how a change in curriculum towards vocational education may impact on this age group. For example, an area of interest may be, through exposing young people to a more blended curriculum of both academic and vocational subjects, what impact will this have on progression routes compared to the current system?
- I(8): In addition, the Department is interested in integrating e-learning provision into DEL mainstream training programmes. This would require exploring the trends, benefits, added value, implications and costings of such a policy move. Best practice from elsewhere should also be drawn upon. Other questions to address would include how has e-learning facilitated positive educational outcomes, and is it valued in the labour market?

Research requirement J: Widening Access to Further and Higher Education.
{Linked to action priorities (a), (b), (c) and (d)}

The Department wishes to better understand the factors that determine participation rates for Higher and Further Education in Northern Ireland and where variations exist by social background and the Section 75 equality categories, why these materialise.

- J(1): Can government funding effectively encourage wider access to HE and FE in Northern Ireland?
- J(2): Do the cultural, hobby and leisure courses offered at FE institutions widen access to more formal learning for disadvantaged groups?
- J(3): What is the socio-economic make-up of the FE student population in NI and how does this compare with other regions?
- J(4): A significant proportion of NI students leave NI for their HE experience. To what extent do they do so reluctantly?
- J(5): Can additional provision in HE and FE widen access?

Research requirement K: A Programme of Market Research. {Cross cuts the priorities for action, but tends towards priorities (f) and (g)}

K(1): Research is required to provide baseline information on the levels of awareness and effectiveness of the Department's current services and programmes. Its usage will inform the development of appropriate awareness and marketing campaigns, including e-government delivery and interaction on service and policy development between DEL and other government departments and associated agencies to ensure effective implementation of those policies and programmes.

Additional 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 the New Targeting Social Needs (TSN) initiative.

7. DELIVERY OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA

Resourcing

A number of professional economists and statisticians are employed within DEL. These professional staff will have a key role in taking forward the Research Agenda. They will assist with the specification of the research issues, assisting in the selection of projects, steering research and quality controlling research outputs.

CPD will initiate the procurement process, which will be run through open competition under the appropriate regulations.

Clearly resources available to the Department are limited both in relation to financial resources and numbers of staff available to manage the delivery of the Research Agenda. The Department envisages a requirement to prioritise proposals coming forward using a set of evaluation criteria.

Availability of relevant data

Tertiary Education Analytical Services Branch (TEASB) within DEL provides statistics on the higher and further education sector in Northern Ireland. TEASB also provides 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. The 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.

In addition, the Department has agreed in principle to initiate a NI Youth Cohort Study (NIYCS). Subject to funding being available, the fieldwork should start in 2005. The purpose of the NIYCS would be to track the education, training, labour market and social experiences of young people in NI between ages 15/16 and 23/24. DEL is the key stakeholder department for people in this age range. The NIYCS would be a response to the current lack of such tracking data. The future results from such a cohort study have the potential to inform a wide range of DEL interests, from the specification of schemes and programmes to research and evaluation exercises.

Work is ongoing to establish the optimal size for the study and to clarify the issues around which questionnaires will be designed. Once operational, it will form an important resource in addressing many of the research questions posed within this Research Agenda.

Procurement

The Research Agenda will involve a process of public call for research proposals. The Department anticipates that this procurement process will harness the innovation, ideas and skills of the research community by asking it to come forward with ideas and proposals on how to answer the research questions identified earlier. The opening of the public call will be advertised on the Departmental and CPD web-sites as well as in the media.

In addition, it is recognised that urgent and important research requirements may emerge that are not covered in this research agenda and that could not be delayed until the next review of that agenda has occurred. These urgent research needs will be considered on a project by project basis and will, when necessary, be procured by the CPD independently of the Research Agenda.

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 RSG. 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 and it is envisaged that summary reports of research commissioned under the Research Agenda will appear in the Labour Market Bulletin. 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.

8. 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. The Agenda will also be assessed at a thematic level to ensure that the key areas of investigation identified are being addressed.

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 annually so that it continues to address and reflect the Strategic research needs of the Department.

9. 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 themes identified within this document or on any other aspect of the DEL Research Agenda, please e-mail ian.mcdowell@delni.gov.uk or write to:

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Annex 1: Summary of recent NI focused research

Summary of recent NI focused research

2000-2004

THEME	TITLE OF PROJECT / AUTHOR	DATE COMPLETED	KEY FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS
Higher Education - Research and Development and Technology Transfer	The Regional Contribution of HE to Northern Ireland - David Charles et al	January-03	Both QUB and UU are active in their regional mission. In terms of profile, both universities have strong roles in access to educational opportunity and focus on the social and community regeneration of NI. The universities have been active in developing a number of industry-orientated research and technology transfer centres. Although the two universities combined are relatively small in research terms compared with equivalent GB civic universities.
	Higher Education - Business Interaction Survey 2001-02 - HEFCE	January-04	Presents the analysis of the 2003 Higher Education -Business Interaction survey for UK higher education institutions. Demonstrates widespread improvement in interaction between the higher education sector and business, compared with 2000-2001. Includes separate analysis of NI HE business interaction.
	The Knowledge Driven Economy: Indicators for Northern Ireland - NIEC	April-01	Benchmarks NI as a knowledge driven economy. Levels of economic activity, productivity and the knowledge intensity of production are all lower in NI than the UK average, although rates in these areas suggest some improvement over recent years. Suggests that an increase in public and private R&D is needed if NI is to be a knowledge driven economy.
	Developing a Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland - Cooke, Roper and Wylie - NIEC	March-02	Presents differing models of regional innovation and assesses the NI innovation system. Provides insight into current research and innovation environment within NI. Suggests need for greater R&D expenditure in NI. Concludes that, in NI, innovation needs dense networks of collaboration between all actors in businesses, universities, research institutions and government, working together in social partnership.

THEME	TITLE OF PROJECT / AUTHOR	DATE COMPLETED	KEY FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS
Higher Education - Human Capital Development	Education and Earnings in Northern Ireland - Harmon and Walker	April-00	Focuses on private rate of return to education as measured by higher earnings. Analysis of GB data suggests a return (in form of higher wages) of 6% for men and 10% for women per year of education, while NI data suggests higher figures of around 8% for men and 12% for women.
	Skill Development and Enhancement: A Study of Northern Ireland Graduates - Osborne B et al	April-00	Key findings of this cohort of graduates measures some 4/5 years into the labour market include: * General satisfaction with the range and level of skills they acquired in HE. Areas of lower satisfaction were in computing/numerical skills and those associated with knowledge of the business environment * Relatively low level of skill utilization and enhancement in the labour market. * Most graduates are employed in the SME sector and the evidence appears to reveal a neglect of training and skills development in this important sector of employment. * Those working outside NI recorded higher levels of skill utilization and skill development than those inside NI.
	Graduates Moving On - Institute for Employment Research and Employment Studies Research Unit	Forthcoming	Assignment will examine the labour market experiences of the 1998 and 1995 cohort of graduates, their earnings, current job, their prospects and the extent to which higher education has helped them in the labour market.
	Home and Away: Graduate Experience from a Regional Perspective - P. McGregor et al	2002	An economic analysis based on cohort of NI graduates. Indicates that the probability of leaving NI for HE study was linked to A level scores, religion and class. The choice of employment location was heavily related to where the graduate had studied HE ie. those that leave NI to study tend to remain outside NI for employment and vice versa. Those who returned to NI after graduation tended to be less able and earned less on average than those who remained outside NI.
	Projections and Qualifications to 2010 - Institute for Employment Research	2000/01	Includes a regional analysis which contains Northern Ireland employment projections by sector and qualification levels. Anticipates strong growth in employment for those with HE level qualifications.
	Graduates in the Labour Market in Northern Ireland 2001 - DETI	2001	Based on Labour Force Survey Data. The number of persons holding degrees has more than doubled from 60,000 in 1990 to 123,000 in 2001. The proportion of females holding degrees has risen from 37% in 1990 to 49% in 2000. The differential in the employment rates of graduates and non-graduates in the period has remained around 27%. Employment rates for females graduates have been similar to male graduates, but for non-graduates, female rates have been approx 14% lower throughout.
Higher Education- Widening Access	Higher Education Participation in Northern Ireland - Osborne B	May-99	Examines how contemporary policies impact on participation. Examines influence of student finance and HE palces on participation.
	UK/Ireland Student Flows: An Analysis of the 1997 Student Application and Entry Data - Thanki, Osborne and Clancy	April-00	Looks at Student Flows between NI, RoI and GB. In 1997 there were 1915 applications from UK to RoI, 593 of these were from GB and 6014 applications made from RoI to GB institutions. Also examines migration for HE by gender, social class, subject type, previous academic attainment and age.
Further Education	The Economic Role of the Further Education Sector - PwC	2003	Provides a comprehensive picture of the labour market demands for those who leave/graduate/progress from FE paying particular regard to different educational levels and subject types, and examines how this picture is changing and assesses the extent to which the FE sector is effectively working towards or currently addresses the demand.
	Staff Profile in Further Education - PWC	2003	Provides a comprehensive picture of FE staff experience and qualifications. Suggests FE staff in NI are well qualified with a wide range of experience.

THEME	TITLE OF PROJECT / AUTHOR	DATE COMPLETED	KEY FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS
	A Coordinated Approach to the Promotion and Delivery of the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) in Hospitality and Catering - Frances and Ian Bickerstaff	September-01	Report indicates that processes should be developed to: * Improve awareness levels of the industry and the careers it offers. * Inform those schools who may not achieve the 4 GCSEs required for direct entry to GNVQ Advanced Hospitality and Catering of an alternative career progression route - GNVQ Intermediate Hospitality & Catering.
	Addressing the Needs of Adult Learners in the Context of Incorporation of Institutes of Further and Higher Education - Collins K, AcAleavy G, Adamson G, Reid J and Gray J	September-01	Main recommendations in the strategic planning of adult education provision: * Recruitment strategies should be designed to more effectively engage under-represented groups. * Perceived barriers to learning should be addressed by Institutes, with particular attention being paid to barriers that are logistical in nature. * Adult education provision should be improved to allow for greater access at locally based centres, where this is financially viable.
	The Progression of Students Achieving General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) Intermediate Level in 1997 - DTZ Piedad Consulting	September-01	A role of GNVQ/NVQ level 2 programmes is to provide another chance to participate in education or training to those 16-19 year olds who might otherwise have become disaffected and withdrawn. 70.3% of those entering HE in 1999 (from GNVQs) had fewer than four GCSE A-C grades in 1996 and that others may, successfully enter HE in the year 2000.
	Survey into the Qualifications of 16-19 Year Olds on Entry into Full-Time Further Education in Northern Ireland - BDO Stoy Hayward	2003	Conducts a survey to establish a picture of the range, diversity and level of qualifications of 16-19 year old students enrolling on full-time education and vocational training courses in the sixteen FE colleges across NI. A large proportion of this cohort have low or no qualifications.
	Response to ETI findings on Software Engineering - Momentum/ETI/DEL/Employers	February-02	List of core and optional units for HND and Foundation Degrees with emphasis on needs of software industry and use of industry standard units. Development of promotional campaign to attract more young people into software engineering courses. Development of good human resource procedures to retain students on courses. Building stronger relationships with the software sector. Development of up to date and relevant case study material.
	Report of an inspection on the development and use of information and learning technologies in colleges of further education - Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)	November-02	Significant improvements have been realised in ILT networking and resources since 1998/99 baseline under recent ICT strategy. Computer stocks have been greatly improved in terms of numbers and specifications. Targets for staff and student access to industry spec PCs have been met. College networks, broadband access and staff skills have been greatly improved. Main challenges for colleges are to effectively embed ILT into the curriculum: and address the strategic management and leadership issues in relation to ILT.
	Report of a survey on the provision of software engineering in colleges of further and higher education - Education and Training Inspectorate	Inspected 2000/1	Software Engineering provision in the FE sector was generally weak. HNC/HND do not sufficiently meet the needs of the software industry. There are a shortage of lectures in most colleges with suitable qualifications in software engineering with only a few benefiting from curriculum development. Recruitment and retention rates on software engineering courses are poor. College links with the software industry are weak. A set of occupational standards, agreed with industry, was identified as a need.
	The impact of NVQ Programmes within Hospitality and Catering in Northern Ireland - Desmond Hill & Deirdre Bailey	Feb-00	Evaluates the impact of NVQ programmes as a means of increasing qualifications in the NI Tourism industry. The need for enhanced standardisation among different types of NVQs was a key finding.
	Further Education - ETI reports	June 2000-Nov 2001	There have been a number of ETI reports on Further Education. These have taken the form of inspections on FE institutions throughout NI. These reports are available through DENI.
	Higher Education - ETI reports	May 2000-April 2003	In the period May 2000-April 2003, there were also a number of ETI reports on Higher Education. These were mainly reports on HE institutions in NI. Again these reports are available through DENI.

THEME	TITLE OF PROJECT / AUTHOR	DATE COMPLETED	KEY FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS
	Jobskills - ETI reports	May 2000- Oct 2002	Between May 2000 and October 2002, ETI published a number of reports related to Jobskills. These give summaries and surveys of the Jobskills programme and how they are provided in a number of FE and HE institutions throughout NI.
	New Deal - ETI reports	April 2000- Jan 2003	During the period April 2000-January 2003, ETI published a large number of New Deal related reports. These reports look at different perspectives of the New Deal Initiative, such as reports on regional centres throughout NI.
	Participation Rates in Further And Higher Education - Collins,K and McAleavey, G	November- 01	Investigates cross community participation and geodemographic disparities in the take up of further and higher education within the BELB area. Assesses pupils' attitudes towards FE and university and identifies factors which influence the formation of these attitudes. Attempts to establish the extent of geodemographic disparity in access to further and higher education and identifies zones of geodemographic disparity in relation to non-progression. Highlights cultural, social and economic factors affecting male and female pupils in relation to participation and progression in further and higher education.
	Lifelong Learning in Northern Ireland - John Field	2003	Research based on NI Life and Times Survey (2001). Most people in NI take a very positive view of adult learning. 4 out of 5 people think their families would support them if they took up a course of learning. 3 quarters believe the government should be spending more on lifelong learning. Most people want employers to pay costs of training to cope with technological change. Most people also think that workers themselves need to take responsibility for learning new skills. Most people think that their school did not help them prepare for learning in adult life.
Training and Employment	The Development of Call Centres in Northern Ireland - Estimation of Capacity- NIERC	Jan-00	The research was commissioned because there is limited understanding of the nature and extent of the capacity constraints relating to call centres. The research explored evidence for UK cities (including Belfast) about call centre employment. The outcome was that results were used by REB to advise on the location of call centres. Is currently being used in 3 call centres location advice reports, to Invest NI.
	Options Appraisal for Vacancy Taking in Northern Ireland- Deloitte & Touche	Mar-00	The purpose of the exercise was to explore a variety of models (i.e. options) drawing on GB and other experience, for vacancy taking in N.I. This research was used to assist thinking at a time when DEL's vacancy statistics were suspended. The main recommendation of the exercise was that a central vacancy taking service was worth further consideration.
	Quinquennial Review of Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)- KPMG Consulting	Mar-00	There is a legislative requirement to periodically Review the performance of Non-Departmental Public Bodies e.g. Ulster Supported Employment Ltd [USEL]. The purpose of the Review was to assess whether USEL's role in offering employment and other support to people with disabilities, remained valid. The Review concluded that it did, although some shortcomings in management and financial procedures were identified. It was recommended that these be improved.
	Contact for the Interim Evaluation of Worktrack- Williamson Consulting	Mar-00	Worktrack is the successor to the long-established Action for Community Employment (ACE) scheme. It was introduced as a pilot and the purpose of the Interim Evaluation was to assess the success of the pilot as a prelude to fuller roll-out. The evaluation concluded that the programme was basically sound and made a number of recommendations to assist roll-out.

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	Irish Language Vocational Training Research Project- GAIRM	Mar-00	<p>GAIRM is an “umbrella” organisation which represents a variety of Irish Language groups/Lobbyists etc and is based in Derry/L'Derry.</p> <p>It approached DEL with a research proposal to investigate the demand for vocational training (mostly around NVQ2 level) to be delivered through Irish.</p> <p>DEL funded the research, but the prime responsibility for having it carried out, was GAIRM's.</p> <p>They employed external consultants to do it.</p> <p>GAIRM was unable to clearly demonstrate that a sufficiently large clientele existed to make it worthwhile for themselves (or anyone else), to deliver vocational training through Irish, on an economically viable scale.</p>
	Contract for assessing the Impact on Northern Ireland Industry of the EU Part-Time work Directive- EPEC	Mar-00	<p>This was a small, desk-top, research project designed to assess the benefits to employers of complying with this Directive.</p> <p>The research concluded that for individuals and businesses generally, the benefits and costs would be of the same order as those in GB.</p>
	Evaluation of Premiere- KPMG Consulting	May-00	<p>Premiere is a Management Development Programme which aims to “convert” unemployed non-business (and mostly, arts) graduates into people with solid training in business administration/ management etc.</p> <p>The evaluation found that premiere had some success in placing students in graduate level posts.</p>
	Economic Appraisal of the Relocation of Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)- Williamson Consulting	Aug-00	<p>This project complements the Quinquennial Review already referred to.</p> <p>USEL was located in premises that were unsatisfactory for various reasons e.g. run-down and located in a pre-dominately Protestant area rather than a more appealing “neutral” setting.</p> <p>The appraisal considered a variety of re-furbishment and new build options and recommended a site which would have more appeal for geographical access and community background reasons.</p>
	Labour Recruitment Patterns in Northern Ireland - Malton Foods- QUB	Aug-00	<p>This research was undertaken in the Cookstown/Dungannon/Magherafelt area to investigate the ability of the labour force in this area to sustain employment growth in the food sector.</p> <p>The focus of research was Malton foods (Unipork) which had expansion plans but had found difficulties in attracting and holding on to labour.</p> <p>Amongst other things, the research concluded that terms and conditions needed to be improved if the expansion plans of the company were to be successful in recruiting the extra staff needed. The company was very grateful for the analysis and took many steps.</p> <p>It also recommended attracting labour from outside NI as part of any solution to high labour turnover.</p>
	Management Dev. Research 2000- MRC (Ireland) Ltd	N/A	<p>The aim of this project was to assess the use within NI industry of “New Management Standards” and their impact on company profits, productivity etc.</p> <p>Findings suggested that use and awareness of NMS was growing and that they were having a perceived (generally modest) positive effect on profits, sales, productivity etc.</p>
	Final Evaluation of Adapt and Employment Community Initiatives- KPMG	N/A	<p>This was an evaluation of, complementary, European Union - initiated schemes.</p> <p>Adapt had the aim of preventing unemployment in the face of industrial change.</p> <p>The Employment Initiative was directed at assisting people from disadvantaged social groups to enter, re-enter or improve their existing position within the labour market.</p> <p>Both schemes covered a variety of projects across NI.</p> <p>The intention underlying projects was that they should be innovative, draw-in partners from other EU countries, and be capable of mainstreaming.</p> <p>Experience of the performance of Employment/Adapt was used to inform their successor programme, EQUAL.</p>

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	Evaluation of Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training for People with Disabilities (and Assessment of need)- Venture International	N/A	<p>The evaluation's main aim was to assess the existing provision of pre-vocational and vocational training for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Sub-aims were to quantify the need for such training and identify gaps between supply and demand.</p> <p>This was done with reference to District Council areas and 16 broad course subject areas, such as communications, horticulture, caring & counseling etc.</p> <p>Useful advice was offered on identifying and quantifying demand and need at the level of the individual.</p>
	Evaluation of One Pilot- Deloitte & Touche	N/A	<p>The aim was to test new processes and procedures for the delivery of a joint job-brokering and benefits service for a range of benefit claimants. The new arrangements were piloted by DEL and the SSA in Dungannon and the results were used to inform the wider roll-out of Jobs & Benefits offices which is currently work in progress.</p>
	Labour Recruitment Pattern in NI - Phase III- C-Star QUB	N/A	<p>This project explored the relationships between "employability" and the recruitment practices of 2 large employers in the Food and Hospitality sectors.</p> <p>The employers' anonymity was preserved by calling them site one (food-location in Mid-Ulster and recruiting from a wide rural hinterland) and site two (hospitality - located in central Belfast and recruiting throughout Belfast).</p> <p>Issues explored included the importance of the type of jobs offered in enhancing employability, the significance of employment location, and the consequences of mismatches between labour supply and labour demand.</p> <p>Some conclusions were: the two employers found it difficult to recruit or retain labour in certain occupations. For site one, an image problem and the low pay and poor conditions for some jobs, were difficulties.</p> <p>The employer at the Belfast site felt potential employees preferred informal working in the cash economy to working in the "formal" setting of the hospitality sector.</p>
	Scoping Study on Increased Employability- Deloitte & Touche	N/A	<p>In April 2001, a Task Force on Employability and long-term Unemployment was set-up, chaired by Dr Seán Farren.</p> <p>The purpose of the Scoping Study was to identify the broad parameters that affect employability and to identify possible areas for action that the Department might take to increase the employability of individuals.</p> <p>The study made a number of recommendations about using existing data to provide a better understanding of the target population (mainly the socially excluded) and measuring employability e.g. through individuals' interaction with the benefit system and their take up of tax credits.</p>
	Background Research into JobClubs and Labour Market Intermediaries Provision- Williamson Consulting	Jan-01	<p>There is considerable interest in exploring the merits of the various routes by which the unemployed can be assisted in their search for work.</p> <p>The purpose of the research was to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore how the existing pattern of Job Club provision - which was skewed towards the east of N Ireland - could be made more equitable. assess whether a number of existing voluntary sector bodies delivering services to unemployed people would be capable of operating as LMI "pilots". <p>As a result, 10-12 JobClubs were recommended for establishment throughout N Ireland and two suitable candidates were identified to deliver LMI type services.</p>
	Harland & Wolff Redundancy Study- Cambridge Economic Associates	Jan-01	<p>In September 2000, Harland & Wolff announced a plan to make some 580 workers redundant. A Taskforce was set-up by the First and Deputy First, Ministers to ensure that government efforts to assist redundant workers was targeted effectively.</p> <p>This research supported the Taskforce's remit by tracking the labour market experiences of those made redundant.</p> <p>Results offered insight to policy makers on how people adjusted to the loss of their old jobs and how they assessed the help they got from the various government agencies.</p>

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	Needs and Effectiveness Evaluation- Williamson Consulting	18-Jun-01	<p>This exercise was designed to construct for the first time, a "needs" model for the Vocational Training side of DEL. Such a model, using HMT guidance, had previously existed for the FE and HE side of DEL (also updated as part of the exercise).</p> <p>The work was of great importance in demonstrating per capital levels of spending on DEL programmes, compared with broadly the same programme in England (the comparator, UK territory) and hence, in enabling DEL to defend its spending.</p>
	Evaluation of the Worktrack Programme- DTZ Piedad	22-Jun-01	<p>Worktrack is the successor to the long-established Action for Employment [ACE] scheme. As with the Interim evaluation of Worktrack referred to earlier, the evaluation focussed on the performance of the programme in providing training and jobs for its target group.</p> <p>The evaluation included interviewers/surveys involving lead and secondary providers of jobs/placements, current participants, past participants and non-participants.</p> <p>The evaluation concluded that the basic "Worktrack" model is appropriate and made recommendations for improving its delivery e.g. reducing the number of providers, more hands-on management by DEL etc.</p>
	Location Quotients in the UK and ROI IT Sector 1995-1999- NIERC	29-Jun-01	<p>This project was commissioned in connection with the work of the N. Ireland Skills Task Force. Its purpose was to compare the employment performance of the IT Sector in NI and the ROI with that of GB regions.</p> <p>Location quotients were calculated, which allowed for standardisation of differences in region size. An LQ of above/below 100 indicated that the region has above/below the UK average share of employment in SIC Division 72.</p> <p>Analysis of the data showed the best performing regions were the South-East, London and the East, all with LQs greater than 120. NI's LQ was 45. Wales with 41, was the worst UK region.</p>
	Skills and Training Needs in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry- Mclver Consulting	Aug-01	<p>The Project aimed to investigate the skills and training needs of the NI Tourism and Hospitality industry, a key sector with the potential for significant employment growth.</p> <p>A major objective of the work was to determine whether the Skills issues in the industry were a 'first order problem'. To this end, a wide range of reports and previous research was reviewed and assessed.</p> <p>The main conclusion arrived at was that firms in the industry should move to implement Best Practice Human Resource Management. Furthermore, the study suggested that DEL should fundamentally review its strategy and priorities in relation to training in this industry.</p>
	Area Perceptions, Mobility, Employment and Exclusion- C STAR QUB	Oct-01	<p>Although not funded by DEL (but by the Economic and Social Research Council), this project is of interest to DEL in that it sheds light on the problem of 'chill factors' - a problem that has implications for labour mobility and willingness to take a job in 'unattractive areas'.</p> <p>The research focussed on the impact of sectarian violence on everyday life in Belfast. It dealt with the experiences and feelings of Belfast residents who have to cope with segregation and the strategies and actions of managers in the public and private sectors.</p> <p>An important conclusion was that considerable evidence is available to show that people who gain work can, in some circumstances overcome barriers associated with sectarian fear in that they work in mixed areas and mixed workplaces.</p>
	Taskforce on Employability and Long-Term Unemployment- Action Plan- PA Consulting Group	Feb-02	<p>This exercise involved the use of specialist consultants in advising on the form and content of the report for the Employability Taskforce.</p> <p>Their efforts and the report led, amongst other things, to the Targeted Initiatives project.</p>
	Evaluation of Rapid Advancement Programme- PwC	Mar-02	<p>The RAP aims to fast-track and 'convert' non-IT unemployed graduates into persons trained in a range of dedicated IT disciplines. The programme is delivered by BIC Systems at al, in Belfast and the North West region. It involves placement with IT employers.</p> <p>Both participants and companies were broadly satisfied with the programme. Problems included a lack of basic IT literacy on the part of some participants and insufficient pro-active support from the delivery agent, BIC Systems.</p> <p>The report made a number of recommendations for improvement, which led to RAP's relaunch as RAP 2.</p>

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	Evaluation of the Business Education Initiative- PwC	Apr-02	<p>The BEI offers undergraduates at NI universities the opportunity to study business-related subjects at US colleges/universities (generally church-affiliated) for a year.</p> <p>Participants and US college/university Presidents and NI employers were covered by the evaluation.</p> <p>The programme was judged by all parties to offer benefits. Its performance was generally praised and it was recommended it should continue largely unchanged.</p>
	Follow-Up for Harland and Wolff- Ulster Marketing Surveys	May-02	<p>This project followed-up redundant H&W workers (see also Number 17 on this list), 18 months after they received their redundancy notices.</p> <p>The overall findings were reassuring: the share of those who had found jobs in the course of the year had grown from 67% to 80%. Similarly, the proportion of those unemployed fell from 23% to about 11%, over the period.</p> <p>It was recommended that further work should focus on how and why people moved between unemployment and employment.</p>
	Economic Scenarios in Connection with DEL Corporate Plan 2003-2006- Dr G Gudgin	Jul-02	<p>The purpose was to produce 3 sets of economic forecasts for the NI economy, in connection with the DEL Corporate Plan for 2003/4 to 2005/6. There was a forecast for each of the following assumptions about economic (ie GDP) growth.</p> <p>Each of the 3 forecasts covered economic variables such as employment, unemployment, population, migration, etc.</p> <p>Directors were asked to comment on how scenarios impacted on their spending plans, but only two replies were received.</p>
	Skills Shortages in NI. The Influence of Subject Choice at Secondary Level- Prof. R. Osborne (UU)	Jul-02	<p>The project was based upon evidence that there are hard-to-fill vacancies and skills shortages in the priority skills areas of the IT and Electronic Engineering sectors.</p> <p>Consequently, the purpose of the project was to learn more about the uptake of subjects for employment in these sectors, where graduates in the sectors study, and where they go after completing their degrees.</p> <p>The main conclusions were:</p> <p>Numbers of people qualifying in relevant subjects remains roughly constant over time, thereby doing little to alleviate skills shortages.</p> <p>Women and Catholics are 'under-represented' amongst people taking these subjects.</p> <p>The main recommendation was that source data should be refined and developed to allow higher quality analysis to be undertaken.</p>
	The Uptake of Places on the Training for Work Programme- Williamson Consulting	Aug-02	<p>This project was undertaken in response to lower than expected uptake of places on the Training for Work Programme.</p> <p>A number of possible factors were listed for investigation e.g. difficulty in accessing the target group (the non-JSA, and mainly women returners), competition from other DEL programmes etc.</p> <p>The research suggested the kind of factors listed above had some influence on low up-take, but concluded the problem was temporary. A number of recommendations were made including an improved marketing of the programme.</p>
	Review of Modern Apprenticeships- DTZ Pleda	Sep-02	<p>This is a key DEL programme and the Review/Evaluation was designed to assess its effectiveness.</p> <p>Surveys of participants and employers were undertaken. Key players such as Training Providers were also consulted.</p> <p>A final report with extensive conclusions and recommendations is due with DEL in June 2003.</p>
	Essential Skills for Living- Dr. Tony Dignan/ Economic Research and Evaluation	Dec-02	<p>The purpose of this project was to assist DEL in identifying a research programme to inform the implementation of the essential Skills for Living: Strategy and Action Plan for Adult Literacy in NI.</p> <p>Considerable work was done (including comparing the situation in England, Scotland and RoI) on identifying the scale of the problem with a view to setting a 'baseline' for standards in literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>The main recommendation was that a NI baseline survey will need to be undertaken.</p>

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New Deal	Qualitative Study of the New Deal Core Gateway Period- PwC	22-Jun-00	Sought views/options on courses etc offered under Gateway, with the aim of improving it. Tended to find that some older participants were reluctant to attend CG in order to obtain computer-related skills training. Classes tended to be dominated by younger, more computer-literate people. Older persons' confidence tended to suffer as a result. Recommended improvements in structure and duration of Gateway.
	New Deal Qualitative- PwC	Dec-01	Extensive study of views/options of participants regarding all aspects of New Deal. Many examples of good practice were found. ND worked better with younger participants. The role of the ND Personal Adviser emerged as a significant factor in successful delivery of ND . On the downside, ND had a limited impact on participants who were poorly motivated and had 'bad' labour market histories. These and other lessons from the evaluation were used in the re-design of ND.
	An Evaluation of New Deal (Innovation Funds) - Williamson Consulting	Jun-03	The ND Innovations funds were launched in 1999 as a way of developing initiatives to complement ND by providing extra assistance to those with multiple barriers to employment. Six projects were established under this fund. They catered largely for people who were hard to attract to ND, or who found it difficult to obtain or maintain placements on ND options. The projects had variable success - although some people clearly benefited, a couple of projects had trouble attracting participants. It is recommended that future performance could be improved by better local ownership of projects and more effective mentoring.
	Young People Unemployment Duration and the New Deal in N.Ireland- Dr. D McVicar (NIERC)	Jun-02	The aim of the project was to explore the probability of the 18-24 age group leaving the unemployment register after different lengths of time unemployed before and after the introduction of ND for 18 to 24. Findings included:- ND 18 to 24 has significantly reduced unemployment for young people; ND 18 to 24 appears to produce a better result for females than males.
Skills	A Study of the N. Ireland Labour Market for IT Skills - NIERC	Aug-03	The project assessed the nature and size of supply - Side problems faced by IT firms. Surveys were conducted which concentrated on firms employing significant numbers of IT personnel. It is only possible to give a brief flavour of the findings here, including:- Recruitment becomes more difficult the more experienced are the staff being sought. Average salary levels in NI were broadly on a par with those in GB. There is a well developed training culture in the sector. Amongst the various conclusions it may be noted that skills shortages resulted from an inability to recruit suitably technically efficient and experienced staff - not young graduates.
	A Study of the N. Ireland Labour Market for Mechanical Engineering Skills- NIERC	Nov-02	Again, this study was undertaken for the NI Skills Taskforce as part of its remit in focussing upon 'priority skills'. The survey-based work concentrated on 5 SIC groups which were taken as defining mechanical engineering skills. Skills deficiencies, the employment structure of the sector and the balance between supply and demand, were all investigated. The research suggested the potential for a shortfall in the supply of appropriate craft skills. Recommendations included the need to make more resources available to strengthen the links between the worlds of employment and education. Also, that government should promote the value of vocational qualifications at all levels - including Modern Apprenticeships.
	The N. Ireland Skills Monitoring Survey 2000- Skills Unit/ REB	Jan-03	The survey was designed to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the skill needs of NI employers in the non-agricultural private sectors. Areas covered included employee turnover, current vacancies, difficult to fill vacancies external skills shortages and staff retentions. Information was gathered through surveys. Conclusions included the assessment that skill needs are rising because of factors such as technical change and globalization and that work readiness skills such as literacy and numeracy continued to be lacking.

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	A Study of Labour Market Conditions in the N. Ireland Electronics Industry- NIERC	Oct-01	<p>This study was commissioned by the NI Skills Task Force as part of its ongoing research into 'priority skills' - those where a shortfall in supply could potentially hold back the growth of the NI economy.</p> <p>The work had 2 aspects:</p> <p>A survey of NI electronic engineering companies which examined how factors such as relative wages and competition for staff, might affect the incidence of labour shortages.</p> <p>An examination of the balance between skills demand and supply to 2005, to assess the adequacy of education and training provision.</p> <p>Findings included the fact that demand for skills needed in the sector, was high. Unfilled vacancies were a problem at all levels. There is a need to address the priority given to electronic engineering within education and training provision in N Ireland.</p>

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