Ministers Bruton and Halligan Launch the National Skills Council and Nine Regional Skills Fora

Plan to Make Ireland a Leader in Responding to Rapidly Changing Skills Needs

The Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Richard Bruton T.D., and the Minister of State for Training and Skills, Mr. John Halligan T.D., today (Thursday 27 April 2017) launched the National Skills Council, which will be chaired by Minister Bruton, and nine Regional Skills Fora. The launch took place at Accenture “The Dock”.

The purpose of the National Skills Council (NSC) is to make Ireland a leader in anticipating and responding to the rapidly changing skills needs across all sectors.

Facing the possibility of major changes in the relationships we have with our key trading partners, including the UK and the USA, we have to adopt the best policies to fortify us for the challenges which lie ahead, and ensure that we can nurture, develop and retain talent.

The digital revolution which is taking place is transforming our economy and seeing the emergence of skills that weren’t thought of even five years ago. By offering people the opportunity to adapt and develop their skills, we can also ensure that nobody is left behind because of the changes taking place in the economy.

Each Regional Skills Forum will play a key role in delivering economic growth and driving regional development. Each forum will work closely with the enterprise base in their region, as well as with IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Offices.

Among our key ambitions are:

- Doubling the number of traineeship and apprenticeship places to 14,000, with 20% of school leavers pursuing this route
- Providing for 50,000 upskilling and reskilling places over the next 5 years to meet identified skills gaps in the economy
- Supporting an increase in Lifelong Learning from 6% to 10%
- Accommodating an expected 25% growth in enrolment in HEIs
- Building a skills infrastructure at regional level that can underpin sustainable regional development
- Increasing the numbers of entrants studying on a flexible basis (online, part-time) by 25%
- Increasing the number of students undertaking a work placement or work based project as part of their course by 25%
- Increasing new research enrolments by 30%

Today’s announcement fulfils a key action in the Government’s Action Plan for Education, which aims to make the Irish education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

The Minister for Education and Skills will chair the National Skills Council, the members of which have been drawn from senior levels in the public and private sector. The Minister is also due to nominate a person from the SME sector to sit on the Council.
Minister Bruton said:

“Today we are facing the possibility of major changes in the relationships we have with our key trading partners, including the UK and the USA. We have to adopt the best policies to fortify us for the challenges which lie ahead, and ensure that we can nurture, develop and retain talent.

“Today I am launching the National Skills Council (NSC) which will make Ireland a leader in anticipating and responding to the rapidly changing need for talent and skills across all sectors.

“The National Skills Council, together with nine Regional Skills Fora, will ensure that we can identify, prioritise and address the existing and future skills needs of our economy and society. Each Regional Skills Forum will have a key role to play in delivering economic growth and driving regional development. That is why each forum will work closely with the enterprise base in each region, together with IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Offices.

“Today’s announcement also fulfils a key commitment in the Action Plan for Education, which aims to make our education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

“As Chair of the Council, I look forward to working with the other members of the council, who all bring a vast experience and knowledge, to ensure that we can provide the skilled workforce necessary to ensure the future competitiveness and strength of our economy.

“To remain competitive in an increasingly interconnected world, the workforce has to be equipped with the skills for the jobs of tomorrow. We have to ensure that people are equipped with the skills and competences needed to play an active role in society.”

Minister of State Halligan said:

“That the early indications from enterprise and education and training providers on the work of the nine Regional Skills Fora and the Fora Managers are very positive.

“The work of each Regional Skills Forum and each Forum Manager will have a major impact at regional level by bringing together the key stakeholders in each region to identify existing and emerging specific skills needs and develop swift responses to these skills needs in each of the nine regions. This work will be vital in ensuring that our economy thrives at regional as well as at national level and that sustainable jobs are created right across the country.”

The Regional Skills Fora will provide a cohesive structure for enterprise, employers and the education and training system to work together to respond to the identified skills needs of their regions. They will help enterprise and employers better understand and access the full range of services available across the education and training system and enhance links between education and training providers in planning and delivery of programmes.

Thanking Accenture for making available their facility “The Dock” to launch the National Skills Council and the Regional Skills Fora, Minister Bruton commented that the space is “an excellent example of innovation at work with different stakeholders building relationships, exchanging ideas and working together to find innovative solutions to complex problems. “

Ends
The new Skills Architecture
The new architecture builds on the strengths of the existing arrangements for identification of skills needs, provides a mechanism for mediating demands in a manner that facilitates prioritisation within the identified needs, while at the same time enhancing the education and training provider responses to identified skills needs and ensuring delivery on priorities.

As part of the new architecture, a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora each with a manager have been established to foster close co-operation at regional level between education and training providers and regional enterprise. The Fora and the Managers will provide a local and regional link in the implementation of wider Government policy and initiatives on regional economic development, including the Regional Action Plans for Jobs and Pathways to Work.

Background
A new National Skills Strategy to 2025 (NSS) was published in January 2016 and implementation of the Strategy is ongoing. The Strategy has over 125 measures and over 50 different stakeholders and it provides a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade. One of the key elements of the Strategy is the development of a new skills architecture, including a National Skills Council and the Regional Skills Fora. This architecture will foster closer collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies and develop structures to strengthen engagement between the education and training system and enterprise.

National Skills Council
The Council will:
- oversee research
- advise on prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs
- have a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities.

The members of the Council are drawn from senior levels in the public and private sector. It will be an advisory, non-statutory body under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills.

Regional Skills Fora
To help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector, the Department of Education and Skills has established a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora and appointed 9 Regional Skills Fora Managers.

The Fora will:
- Provide a cohesive education led structure for employers and the further and higher education system to work together in building the skills needs of their regions;
- Help employers better understand and access the full range of services available across the education and training system;
- Enhance links between education and training providers in planning and delivering programmes, reduce duplication and inform national funding decisions.

More details on the Regional Skills Fora are available at www.regionalskills.ie
## Membership of the National Skills Council

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Bruton T.D.</td>
<td>Minister for Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin McVicar</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne O’Leary</td>
<td>Managing Director, Vodafone Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liam Ryan</td>
<td>Managing Director, SAP Labs Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pat Rigney</td>
<td>Founder and Managing Director, The Shed Distillery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niamh O’Donoghue</td>
<td>Secretary General, Department of Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seán Ó Foghlú</td>
<td>Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Orlaigh Quinn</td>
<td>Secretary General, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Watt</td>
<td>Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Shanahan</td>
<td>CEO, IDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julie Sinnamon</td>
<td>CEO, Enterprise Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Mark Ferguson</td>
<td>Director General, Science Foundation Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul O’Toole</td>
<td>CEO, SOLAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Padraig Walsh</td>
<td>CEO, Quality and Qualifications, Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Moriarty</td>
<td>General Secretary, ETBI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Philip Nolan</td>
<td>President, Irish Universities Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Brian Norton</td>
<td>Chair of Board of Presidents, Technological Higher Education Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graham Love</td>
<td>CEO, HEA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Baldwin</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills</td>
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