



**An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,  
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta**  
Department of Further and Higher Education,  
Research, Innovation and Science

# Action Plan for Apprenticeship

2021–2025



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## Ministerial Forewords



**A**pprenticeship crosses boundaries. It provides a bridge between workplace learning and achieving internationally recognised qualifications and it is the one of the few programmes which is offered across further and higher education institutions. It is a forerunner for the true tertiary system my Department is working to build. As the first Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, I am particularly pleased to set out a vision for apprenticeship which will build on both the strong tradition of apprenticeship in this country and the gains achieved under the first apprenticeship action plan during the past five years.

Apprenticeship is a fantastic way to learn. We know this because apprentices told us when we asked them as part of our consultation process. I am determined that this action plan will ensure that apprenticeship will no longer be the best kept secret of our education and training system. I want to see apprenticeship discussed around kitchen tables, in boardrooms, in classrooms and anywhere else that education, skills and career decisions are made. I am determined that these conversations are inclusive and that the apprenticeship population better reflects the wonderful diversity of our people.

This action plan will deliver a structure that recognises the unique role of apprenticeship within our education and training system. It will bring together the key State players in a single National Apprenticeship Office while further embedding the well-established industry-focused approach to developing and delivering apprenticeship. The synergy between employers, employee representatives, learners, and the further and higher education system will be enhanced, delivering an apprenticeship system that is well positioned to leverage the close relationship between enterprise and education.

We are at a critical stage in Ireland's move towards recovery. This plan will underpin an apprenticeship system through which both employers and apprentices can be confident that they are engaging in training and development which is up-to-date, relevant and in areas where the demand for skills is assured. It will deliver clarity for school-leavers, jobseekers and career changers on the wide range of available apprenticeships and will support employers who wish to engage with apprenticeship. Government will ensure that the public sector plays its part. The plan will deliver high quality public sector employment and training opportunities, underpinning the reform of our public service.

I want to sincerely thank all those who have engaged with my Department over the development of this plan. Learners, unions, employers, state agencies, advocacy groups and education and training providers have all given generously of their time and expertise. I know the commitment to apprenticeship you have demonstrated through the process will continue in our work together on the plan in the years ahead.

**Simon Harris TD**

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science



**W**e are living in a time of transformation. The known drivers of rapid change – technological advances and digital adaptation – have facilitated accelerated adoption of changed work practices and at no point has that been more evident than over the past year. The need for action on climate change, and delivering Ireland’s infrastructure will require new and emerging skills over the coming years. The full longer term impact of COVID-19 measures on sectors such as hospitality and retail has yet to be seen. We must ensure that the education and training system is well positioned to support learners and employers both now and into the future and to respond quickly in an increasingly uncertain world.

Apprenticeship is an industry-driven system. It provides a route for employers to shape the experiences and qualifications required for an individual to contribute to an industry. Apprentices are offered a work based learning opportunity which delivers a paid pathway to internationally recognised qualifications at further education, undergraduate or postgraduate level. It will play a vital part in supporting recovery as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis and look to the future.

We have seen that where an apprentice position is made available by employers then there is generally strong demand for that place. Growing apprentice registrations to 10,000 new registrations per annum over the lifetime of this plan will require significant level of engagement by employers. As Minister of State for Skills and Further Education, I have seen at first hand the value and the effectiveness of the State’s skills infrastructure in delivering opportunity, both at regional and national level. Bringing enterprise and the education and training sector together creates an incubation ground for innovation and progressive development and apprenticeship is at the forefront of that partnership.

The structures set out in this plan will set out to make it easier for employers, and in particular SMEs, to engage with apprenticeship both in accessing existing apprenticeships and developing new programmes. It will be easier for potential apprentices to view available opportunities and we will build an apprenticeship system that is at the very heart of skills development in Ireland.

**Niall Collins TD**

Minister of State with responsibility for Skills and Further Education

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Apprenticeships need to be a much larger part of the education landscape in Ireland and play a role in taking us out of the COVID-19 crisis and in tackling climate action.

**Programme for Government**

## Introduction

**T**he Government aims to significantly increase the footprint of apprenticeship within the education landscape over the coming five years, ensuring that apprenticeships are open and accessible and are seen as a viable and exciting path to skills and a qualification. The positive impact of learning which is closely linked to the workplace is well recognised, providing benefits for learners, employers and society as a whole. Employers can proactively support a pipeline of talent targeted to their needs and learners have the benefit of immediate access to applied skills development within the workplace, enhancing knowledge development and boosting career options.

Over the last five years the skills landscape has been transformed under the National Skills Strategy, delivering a robust model for identifying existing and emergent skills needs together with an enhanced ability for the education and training sector to deliver appropriate and targeted programmes to meet those needs. This period has seen investment of over €620m in apprenticeship to address identified skill needs, support growth and productivity, build career paths and support policy objectives as set out in the National Skills Strategy, Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan 2018-2027, and the Climate Action Plan. This investment has delivered radical expansion of the apprenticeship system, promoting apprenticeship development in new and emerging sectors of the economy and delivering a base for rapid growth of the sector over the next five years.

The timeframe of this plan is set against the uncertain background of a pandemic. Substantial Government intervention through the July Stimulus and Budget 2021 has worked to maintain existing employer-employee relationships, allowing for rapid recovery once COVID-19 restrictions lift. However the workplace is changing, and the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions have been most keenly felt in terms of youth unemployment. Apprenticeship provides a route to rapid re-employment for those impacted by scarring effects and structural changes to the economy and labour market. Upskilling and reskilling are a Government priority to foster an inclusive recovery and to support the digital and green transitions, key commitments in the Programme for Government.

An ambitious target of 10,000 new apprentice registrations per annum by 2025 underlines this Government's commitment to reforming the position of apprenticeship in the wider education and training sector. This plan will set out a structure for an apprenticeship system that is flexible and responsive, providing a strong value proposition for employers and potential apprentices, is attractive and easy to engage with, and delivers high standards and sought-after qualifications. Apprenticeship is a work based learning opportunity and delivery of this Plan is dependent on engagement by employers, industry partners and the education and training sector.

**Section 1** describes the context for the development the Action Plan.

**Section 2** sets out the process for the development of the Action Plan.

**Section 3** explores the objectives for the apprenticeship system of 2025 and the key deliverables to be achieved under the Action Plan to meet these objectives.

**Section 4** contains a detailed programme of actions that will be required to meet the key deliverables and to deliver the vision of apprenticeship as set out in this plan.

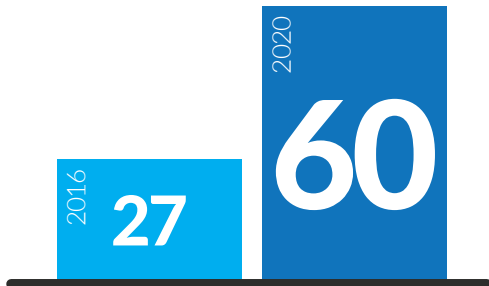
# Section 1

Context for the development of the  
Action Plan 2021-2025





## Between 2016 and 2020:



The number of apprenticeship programmes available has increased from **27** to **60**.



Apprentice population has more than doubled from **8,317** at the end of 2015 to **19,630** by the end of 2020



**18** additional programmes in development with an open application process for new apprenticeships.



**35** new apprenticeships in sectors such as auctioneering, ICT, hospitality, logistics and biopharma.

## Background

**A**pprenticeship is a statutory based programme of structured education and training which formally combines learning in the work place with learning in an education or training centre. The completion of an apprenticeship prepares the participant for a specific occupation, and leads to a qualification recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications at any level from Level 5 upwards. Apprentices are employed under a Contract of Apprenticeship.

The tradition of apprenticeship in Ireland pre-dates the foundation of the State. The current apprenticeship system has its roots in the 2013 Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland which set out the continued benefits of a system which combines workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom based learning in an education or training setting. It also set out the need to expand apprenticeship beyond the 27 craft apprenticeship programmes in place at the time.

Craft apprenticeships have a largely standardised delivery model, with SOLAS serving as a central coordinating provider, setting curricula across programmes and overseeing the delivery of off-the-job training and assessments via a network of Further Education and Training and Higher Education providers. Wider stakeholders (including employer, staff and provider representatives) input into this process via membership of the NAAC (National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee) which reports into the SOLAS Board.

The enterprise-led Apprenticeship Council was established in November 2014 and, to date, has overseen the development of 35 new apprenticeships in sectors such as auctioneering, ICT, hospitality, logistics and biopharma. Two calls for proposals in 2015 and 2017 combined with rationalisation of some existing craft apprenticeships have brought the total number of available apprenticeships to 60 across all sectors of the economy with a further 18 in development. The new programmes are delivered through consortia of employers, employee representatives and education and training providers, departing from the craft apprenticeship system of centralised programme coordination through SOLAS.

The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020 set a target of 31,000 cumulative new apprentice registrations by the end of 2020. A total of 25,815 registrations was reached, supported by strong recovery of craft apprentice registrations. The new apprenticeship base has grown strongly over the past three years with 35 apprenticeships launched during that time, providing a solid foundation for increased awareness and recruitment in the coming years. A programme of review of all craft apprenticeships has been delivered, curricula have been revised and modernised and an updated framework for quality assurance has been developed.

Female participation in apprenticeship grew from 26 in 2015 to 1,017 by the end of 2020. The broadening of apprenticeship offerings has supported this diversification, with a strong correlation

between the participation of females in particular apprenticeships and the industries they serve. Access to apprenticeship programmes have been launched to support diversification of applicant apprentices and pre-apprenticeship opportunities provide a chance for learners to undertake short courses in areas relevant to apprenticeship.

Public sector involvement has also expanded beyond craft apprenticeship. The first public sector intakes into Accountancy Technician (Revenue) and ICT apprenticeship programmes (OGCIO) were recruited in 2019, followed by Recruitment Executive apprentices in the Public Appointment Service (PAS). These programmes, among others, have helped to grow the number of public sector apprentices to 313 apprentices across 28 programmes and 35 public sector employers.

Generation Apprenticeship was launched in 2017 to promote engagement with, and awareness of, the new apprenticeship offering. Initially targeted towards engaging employers through the Generation Apprenticeship partners group, employer ambassador scheme and promoting the skills of registered apprentices through national competition, the initiative has expanded to include a national competition targeted at second level students, and Employer of the Year Awards. The [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) website was relaunched in October 2020, bringing together online platforms for employers and apprenticeship job vacancies.

Applications for new apprenticeship development are now open on an ongoing basis, allowing employers to progress the development of programmes in response to emerging skills needs on an as-needed basis. The publication of a development handbook and guidance document on the relaunched [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) allows prospective employers and consortia members to assess requirements in an accessible and transparent manner.

The apprentice population has more than doubled from 8,317 at the end of 2015 to 19,630 just five years later and the number of employers engaging with the apprenticeship system increased from 3,558 in 2015 to over 6,000 in 2020. To support the above activity level there has been a significant growth in apprenticeship investment from €74.7 million in 2016 to an allocation of €198m for 2021, resourced from a reformed National Training Fund.



**Greater participation by enterprise, particularly SMEs, in the apprenticeship programme will strengthen the enterprise skills base at regional level, increasing enterprise resilience and contribution to economic development.**

**Enterprise Ireland**

## Impact of COVID 19

The developments outlined above took place against a background of positive economic performance with strong employment growth. By December 2019, the unemployment rate which peaked at 16% in 2012 had fallen to 4.8% and there were over 2.36 million people in work. As employment levels continued to grow, skills gaps and shortages were arising across many sectors and at different levels, ranging from more elementary occupations to those requiring graduate or postgraduate qualifications and specialised skills. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 significantly affected these trends. Within one year, the standard rate of unemployment adjusted to take account of those who are out of work due to COVID-19 and in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment was 20.4%. However, for young people under 25 the adjusted unemployment rate reached 44.8%<sup>1</sup>.

This Action Plan is being published at a time of more uncertainty as businesses seek to meet the challenges of Brexit while continuing to manage the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The response to COVID-19 has accelerated digital transformation, changing the nature and capabilities required for occupations. The impacts for some sectors (e.g. aviation and hospitality) have been very severe, recovery will take much longer, and there may not be a return to pre-COVID employment levels. Other sectors including construction and the green economy are forecast to recover more quickly and expand. A significant number of people will need to reskill to find alternative employment and to prepare for the new employment opportunities that will emerge.

Apprenticeship can make a significant contribution to providing those skills. However, the capacity of employers to recruit apprentices during the recovery phase may also be more limited. Ways of working and learning will be different and the apprenticeship system will need to adapt to these changes.

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<sup>1</sup> December 2020

# Section 2

Development of the Action Plan 2021-2025



## Plan informed by:



One discussion document which launched a five month consultation process

**3,750**

survey responses from registered apprentices



**20%**

of the apprentice population shared their experience



**60+**

written submissions



A survey of **340** SMEs who have, and haven't yet, engaged in apprenticeship



**120+** attendees at town hall information session

**T**his Action Plan is being delivered at a significant juncture in the history of the Irish apprenticeship system. For the first time, learnings from both the traditional craft apprenticeship model and the post-2016 apprenticeship model can be utilised to inform the future direction of the system. This plan seeks to provide a single system for the future which builds on the well-established strengths of craft apprenticeship and the learnings from five years of consortia-led apprenticeship in this country. The timing of this plan is also significant, having been developed during the period of the COVID-19 crisis which has impacted heavily on the delivery of craft apprenticeships as well as apprentices in sectors such as hospitality.

The plan is heavily informed by stakeholder input. A written submission process ran from July to September 2020 and invited feedback on all aspects of the existing dual system from the current legislative, governance and operational frameworks, the cost distribution model, barriers to participation by employers and potential apprentices and how to increase participation and diversity in apprenticeships. Over 60 written submissions, some informed by additional internal consultations, were received from across the apprenticeship stakeholder base. A full list of respondents is set out in Appendix II.

In collaboration with SOLAS, an online survey of all registered apprentices was carried out during October 2020 on their experience of the apprenticeship system. 3,750 registered apprentices and former apprentices responded to the survey, representing 20% of the apprentice population.

Targeting SME employers, the nine Regional Skills Fora Managers, in collaboration with the Department, undertook a survey of 340 SMEs to better understand the perspectives of small businesses on apprenticeship and how the particular challenges they face in engaging with apprenticeship might be addressed.

Findings from the three strands of consultation were presented to all stakeholders<sup>2</sup> prior to further discussion with the key agencies and employer, employee and provider representative bodies. Inputs from all three strands of the consultation process are reflected throughout the plan. Specific proposals for change have been considered in conjunction with broader policy requirements and priorities in identifying those actions which will be required to deliver on the objectives set out for the apprenticeship system of 2025.

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2 [www.gov.ie/dfheris](http://www.gov.ie/dfheris)

# Section 3

## Vision and Objectives





**A**pprenticeship offers a skills development opportunity where theory and practice are closely linked, providing an alternative to academic programmes from level 5 – 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. It is the only state-delivered programme which crosses the further education and training and higher education boundary. For the 25 craft apprenticeships this offers apprentices the opportunity to undertake initial off-the-job training within a dedicated Training Centre, while advanced skills are taught within a higher education institution. Programmes are full-time and of between 2-4 years in duration. They offer a route to qualifications and a career for school leavers, career changers and jobseekers.

Apprenticeship can help to break down distinctions between the further education and training and higher education systems for learners, paving a route to a tertiary education and training system which delivers a range of opportunities suited to differing learning styles and interests. Projections show that demand for full time higher education is expected to increase year on year to 2029/2030. Widening the range of options for learners who wish to access education and training is essential in this context as school leavers seek to access a much broader range of pathways to rewarding careers and educational progression. Apprenticeship can also assist in optimising the use of our education and training facilities, maximising the return on capital investment.

The last five years have seen significant reform of apprenticeship in Ireland. Building on established links and developing new ones, stakeholders and state agencies have worked collaboratively to develop the post-2016 consortia-led model of apprenticeship in tandem with continuing to deliver craft apprenticeship. As the system has developed over this period, the governance and funding framework has also evolved to accommodate the two different systems.

In acknowledging the practical and vocational aspects of an apprenticeship, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to accelerate the ability of the apprenticeship model to facilitate access to new forms of learning and assessment, including blended learning. There is also a need to ensure that apprentices, training centre staff and employers are appropriately skilled to access digital learning and supports.

Apprenticeship is a work-based learning opportunity. The route to expansion of apprenticeship lies in attracting and retaining employers who recognise the value that an apprentice can bring to their organisation. Engagement with an apprenticeship programme provides access to high quality and motivated employees who retain access to ongoing learning and development throughout the period of their programme. Potential apprentices require clear information on available opportunities as well as the benefits of building a career combining practical experience with an internationally recognised qualification.

## **This plan will deliver:**

**An apprenticeship system that is flexible and responsive, providing a strong value proposition for employers and potential apprentices, is attractive and easy to engage with, and delivers high standards and sought after qualifications.**

While clear progress has been made in expanding the range of programmes, and developing new processes and systems, fundamental challenges remain to securing the level of engagement by both employers and potential apprentices to firmly embed apprenticeship as part of Ireland's skills and talent development infrastructure. It is evident from the extensive consultation with stakeholders in the development of the new plan that it will not be viable to significantly expand and develop the apprenticeship system over the next five years without addressing the disparities in governance, funding and responsiveness that having a dual model has created.

The process to develop this plan has provided a significant insight into these challenges. The information gathered during the consultation has informed a number of high level objectives for the Action Plan, which are further explored in this section.

For each objective, a number of key deliverables are identified which provide the structure for more detailed specific actions which are set out, with associated timeframes and responsible bodies, in Section 4.

<b>Objective 1: A High Quality and Innovative Approach</b>	Apprenticeship will deliver the highest quality of work-based learning, supporting and demonstrating innovation to empower apprentices and employers to meet current and emerging skills needs
<b>Objective 2: Employer-driven Responses</b>	Apprenticeship will be recognised and valued by employers across all sectors of the economy as a key mechanism for building a highly skilled workforce, contributing to productivity and sustainable growth
<b>Objective 3: Apprenticeship for All</b>	The profile of the apprenticeship population will more closely reflect the profile of the general population
<b>Objective 4: A Valued Option</b>	Apprenticeships will be available and recognised as a work based learning opportunity, providing sought after qualifications across the tertiary education and training sector
<b>Objective 5: A Single, Coherent System</b>	There will be a single apprenticeship system underpinned by a clear governance framework with strong stakeholder input

## Objective 1: A High Quality and Innovative Approach

Apprenticeship will deliver the highest quality of work-based learning, supporting and demonstrating innovation to empower apprentices and employers to meet current and emerging skills needs

Apprenticeship development is a collaborative process. Working together within the consortia or through the existing SOLAS craft apprenticeship structures, employers, employee representatives and education and training providers are collectively responsible for the governance of individual apprenticeships and ensuring that each programme is enterprise-led and meets labour market needs. The establishment of a new apprenticeship or engagement in an existing apprenticeship programme therefore provides an opportunity for employers and education and training institutions to actively leverage close cooperation to support the future needs of the sector.

The core regulatory standards for apprenticeship provided for in the 1967 Act have been enhanced through statutory rules and administrative guidance. An Apprenticeship Code of Practice, which specifies the rights and responsibilities of apprentices and employers and is signed by both parties, forms the basis of each apprenticeship contract. In tandem with adherence to core regulatory standards, apprenticeships are underpinned by a strong framework of quality assurance<sup>3</sup> to ensure programmes will be relevant and responsive to employer needs and provide a high quality learning experience for apprentices.



**Our shared ambition should be to become a world leader in apprenticeship training. Fulfilling this ambition will require increased investment. Achieving this objective will provide significant, valuable and long term economic and social benefits.**

**ICTU**

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Apprenticeship\\_Programmes\\_QAG\\_Topic-Specific.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Apprenticeship_Programmes_QAG_Topic-Specific.pdf)

Authorised Officers (AOs) provide a critical role in ensuring a high quality on-the-job experience in apprenticeship. AOs approve employers before they can register apprentices, progress the registration of apprentices and provide a point of contact for apprentices in addition to general monitoring of compliance with the Code of Practice. The apprenticeship system has undergone a significant amount of change over a relatively short timeframe as the new consortia-led system has been rolled out alongside the craft system and the responsibilities of AOs have expanded across a range of economic sectors and occupations.

85% of apprentices surveyed reported that their apprenticeship programmes had up-to-date and relevant content; this is a direct result of the close link between enterprise and the education and training sector in delivering apprenticeship. The role of the Apprenticeship Council in approving occupational profiles and a requirement for consortia to clearly demonstrate skills needs prior to programme approval has meant that apprentices can be confident that their education journey provides desired industry experience in addition to an internationally recognised qualification.



In a world of rapidly changing skills needs the apprenticeship learning model is uniquely positioned... Apprenticeship learning provides business sectors with a platform to lead in the design and delivery of new programmes, in partnership with an education provider, that accurately reflect their future skills needs.

**Mid-West Regional Skills Forum**

### **Key Deliverable 1:** **A strong framework of quality assurance**

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A review of the application of the quality assurance framework to the craft apprenticeships was completed in December 2020. Building on this, and experience to date, a comprehensive review of the quality assurance, governance arrangements and processes for the existing consortia-led programmes will be undertaken and utilised to inform the development of a robust and future proofed quality assurance system for the future.

The role of the Authorised Officer in supporting the delivery of a quality apprenticeship system is a vital component of the single apprenticeship system. An examination of how the AO network can further evolve to support the delivery of the action plan will be undertaken.

Ongoing opportunities for apprentices to input their views on the functioning and development of the apprenticeship system will be enhanced. These will include appropriate representation within stakeholder advisory bodies and an annual survey of apprentices to be carried out by a new National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) as part of the data collection and evaluation framework.

### **Key Deliverable 2:** **A robust data collection and performance framework will provide an evidence base for continuous improvement of the apprenticeship system**

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The 2019 Review of Participation and Costs of Apprenticeships<sup>4</sup> highlighted the need to standardise cost data collection. Inconsistent and decentralised reporting in areas such as costs and tracking of apprentices means that the information to support an assessment of spend on apprenticeship is unavailable, retention rates are not recorded centrally and the impact of programmes in terms of delivering employer and apprentice requirements has not yet been assessed at a central level.

Stakeholders, through their participation in information gathering to inform the development of this plan, have clearly demonstrated an appetite to contribute to the system. Opportunities for stakeholder engagement will be a key feature of apprenticeship governance structures and annual surveys of employers and apprentices will inform ongoing development and evaluation of the system.

A review of short to medium term apprenticeship outcomes will be delivered as a priority to clearly establish the value of apprenticeship for learners and influencers. This will provide a valuable baseline to drive expansion of the system over the coming period.

Given that the rollout of consortia-led apprenticeship programmes is in its early stages with at most, four full years of recruitment, key measures such as long-term graduate outcomes or programme sustainability are not yet quantifiable. An economic assessment of the apprenticeship system will be delivered by the end of 2024 to inform the direction of the system as we move to the post 2025 provision of apprenticeship.

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4 <https://igees.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Review-of-Participation-and-Costs-of-Apprenticeships.pdf>

**➤ Key Deliverable 3:**  
**An agile system, responsive to workplace change and evolving skills needs**

The rapid pace of workplace and broader economic change arising from increased digital adoption, deployment of artificial intelligence solutions and the need to become sustainable and energy efficient will drive new apprenticeship development and lead to a fundamental shift in how existing sectors do business. Apprenticeship intersects the world of work and the education and training sector. This provides an environment which can support innovation, improving outcomes for employers, apprentices and education and training institutions. Apprenticeship is well embedded in the construction sector so provides a clear opportunity to provide those entering the workforce with the skills required for more energy efficient construction and to deliver on Government's targets in retrofitting the housing stock.

Empowering innovation at a local level is central to the future of the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship consortia will be supported and enabled to ensure that apprenticeship programmes, once approved, are a preferred route for skills development for employers in that sector. The occupational profile will be valued as a living document to ensure that apprentices are, and remain, ready for the changing world of work.

Along with the need for agility, the quality and integrity of apprenticeships must be safeguarded, and this will be achieved through the oversight of a single National Apprenticeship Office. Proposals which could result in a change of duration, NFQ level, or the core skills and competencies as set out in the occupational profile will require re-approval by the stakeholder advisory and oversight body, a role currently undertaken by the Apprenticeship Council and the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

Apprenticeship is an employer-led offering which sits within an extensive range of offerings across the further and higher education and training landscape. Delivering an appropriate response to identified skills needs includes a wide range of interventions from across the tertiary education sector, from traineeships, short course upskilling of existing professionals and craftspersons to PLC, graduate and postgraduate level programmes through appropriate delivery routes including apprenticeship.



**There is huge potential in the apprenticeship pathway to develop the talent required to move Ireland to a low carbon, digitized economy.**

**Chambers Ireland**



**Apprenticeships bring together key innovation stakeholders – industry, government, and tertiary education providers.**

**Ibec**

Strategic areas of skills development during the period of this action plan include skills for the low carbon economy, supporting targets set out within the Climate Action Plan and Project Ireland 2040. Expansion of apprenticeship across all sectors of the economy has widened the range of impact of apprenticeship in areas of skills shortage such as Retrofitting, Technology Skills, Engineering and FinTech. The existing skills infrastructure through the EGFSN, SOLAS SLMRU and the Regional Skills Fora will be leveraged to inform appropriate education and training sector response to identified skills needs, both during programme development and on an ongoing basis. Generational challenges such as climate action, digitisation, regional development and demographic change need powerful responses across education and training and in workplaces. The apprenticeship system needs to be agile to meet these challenges alongside other parts of the skills development system. For example, in the climate area, apprenticeships will ensure that new craftspersons have the skills they need to support growing forms of energy generation and distribution and new construction techniques. However, this needs to be supplemented by approaches to regularly upskill existing craftspeople and to support workers displaced by the rapid pace of change. ETBs are establishing such courses through centres of excellence in Near Zero Energy Building, Skillnet Ireland is delivering a powerful green skills initiative led by employers and developing green skills is at the heart of the Government's post-Covid recovery and regeneration plans.

Apprentice recruitment is heavily linked to economic activity with immediate impacts on recruitment and retention rates where there is a decline in activity. The new funding model will provide for time limited and targeted interventions to support specific areas of national strategic importance or identified skills shortages. The structures as set out in this plan also seek to provide increased practical supports and information for employer-led consortia who wish to propose and develop new apprenticeships.

The contribution of apprenticeship to meeting these needs will be reported on both in the context of the individual subject specific plans and within the annual report to Government on the progress of the Apprenticeship Action Plan.

Ireland operates as a small open economy and the ability of our graduate apprentices to operate on an international stage will be encouraged. The opportunity for international mobility as a component of apprenticeship programmes will be piloted during the lifetime of this plan, either in the workplace or in education and training institutions. The potential for an all-island approach to apprenticeship, particularly in niche skills areas, will be examined.



## + Objective 2: Employer-driven Responses

Apprenticeship will be recognised and valued by employers across all sectors of the economy as a key mechanism for building a highly skilled workforce, contributing to productivity and sustainable growth

Apprenticeship sits within a suite of education and training opportunities funded from the National Training Fund (NTF). Specific skills training, traineeships, the Human Capital Initiative, Springboard+ and Skillnet Ireland deliver robust models designed to provide employers and learners with opportunities for workforce development. These programmes are not necessarily exclusive of each other and, for example, Skillnet Ireland networks have begun to integrate apprenticeship into their skills development offerings<sup>5</sup>.

Apprenticeships provide a structured framework within which employers are facilitated to develop career progression routes to attract and retain people, build loyalty and to broaden the range of entrants to an industry – or to new roles within an industry. Contributions to the National Training Fund are at 1% in 2020 and engagement in NTF funded education and training can therefore provide a robust return for employers, while failure to engage with funded education and training represents lost opportunity.

There are two sets of employer stakeholders within the apprenticeship system. They are not necessarily exclusive of each other in terms of engagement with the system.

- 1) Those who drive apprenticeship development. For this group, time and effort spent in development of programmes through a consortium must be productive. Efficient and effective programme development procedures must support the process. Lessons learned from the 50+ programmes developed and in development will be leveraged to deliver a robust and effective development process.
- 2) Employers of apprentices. This group may not necessarily be involved in (1) above. Growth of this cohort is required for an apprenticeship programme to truly gain a national profile and buy in from employers.



[Apprenticeship provides a] strong talent pipeline, diversity of talent, tenure of participation, study linked to work and projects that impact the company.

**Financial Services Employer**

Supporting employer engagement is central to increasing the visibility and availability of apprenticeship as a route to workforce development for employers and career development for jobseekers and lifelong learners. Reaching the Government's target of 10,000 new registrations per annum will require a widening of employer engagement in leading the development of new programmes, but also in leveraging the opportunity offered by the 60 existing programmes and up to 18 apprenticeships in development as of March 2021.

Apprenticeship is the single and established route to a qualification for many craft occupations. However, many of the newer apprenticeship programmes may provide an alternate to established qualification pathways. Feedback from the SME employer survey provided insight into the barriers to engagement with apprenticeship. General supports for SMEs to engage in education and training will be supported through the strategic blueprint for Irish SMEs beyond COVID-19 as set out in the National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan<sup>6</sup>. Additional financial and non-financial supports targeted towards supporting engagement in apprenticeship will be delivered as set out below.

**➤ Key Deliverable 4:**  
**Address barriers to employer participation through financial and non-financial measures**

The actions set out to deliver on this objective are designed to provide a comprehensive support package for employers, improving the cost benefit balance through system design, support and capacity building in addition to direct financial supports.

The existing differences in how some cost elements are determined and distributed between employers and the State for the craft and the consortia-led apprenticeships will be balanced through direct



In our experience of planning to take 3 or 4 apprentices, that number quickly grew to double figures as soon as we realized the standard of candidate we could get.  
**Manufacturing sector employer**

<sup>6</sup> <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/SME-Taskforce-National-SME-and-Entrepreneurship-Growth-Plan.pdf>



Candidates applying for the roles are very diverse. Employers receive applications from people with varying backgrounds i.e. school leavers, mature students, returning to work – employer has a great choice of candidates and can choose one that best fits with the organization.

**Apprenticeship consortium**

and indirect supports. In 2019, consortia-led programmes accounted for approximately 7% of expenditure while accounting for 11% of the apprentice population at year end and 14% of apprentice registrations for the year.

Employers of apprentices who are not benefitting from the existing mechanism of State-funded craft apprentice training allowances for off-the-job training will be supported through an annual core grant per apprentice. This core grant may be supplemented from time to time to target priority areas for development – in ensuring gender balance, wider representation of under-represented groups or delivering key skills essential to the national economy.

Direct financial supports to employers will be complemented by an enhanced payment to consortia specifically targeting delivery of shared supports for SME employers in areas such as recruitment, CPD of workplace mentors, QA supports and expertise. Given the diverse employer population between industries and across sectors, the delivery of supports will be determined at apprenticeship consortium level, supporting innovative delivery models and partnership/cross-consortia approaches to employer supports.

A user-centered Apprenticeship Management System will be delivered during the lifetime of this plan to simplify employer engagement with apprenticeship. Employers will be able to access information on their apprentices from across different programmes, allowing for end-to-end management of company apprentices – from recruitment and selection, apprentice application process, programme progress, employer grant payments and apprenticeship consortia-led engagement and development opportunities.

**➤ Key Deliverable 5:**  
**Increase participation in apprenticeship by employers across all sectors of the economy**

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Accessibility to apprenticeship for all involved – employers and potential apprentices - relies on visibility of opportunity. The establishment of a single National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) is the first step in providing a single point of contact for employers or industries willing to engage apprentices or develop an apprenticeship programme. Peer-learning supports for apprenticeship consortia will be delivered under the auspices of the NAO, supporting consortia during the apprenticeship development process and providing a locus for information sharing and collaboration for consortia within mature programmes.

Clear and transparent information on supports for employers and new programme development will be published and easily accessible on the apprenticeship.ie website, adding to existing sector and programme specific information. A key feature of the responses from the survey of SME employers who have not previously been involved in apprenticeship is a lack of awareness of the range of available programmes and how the apprenticeship system operates. The effectiveness of the current Generation Apprenticeship initiative in widening employer engagement will be reviewed and the campaign re-oriented as necessary.

Current restrictions within the Industrial Training Act, 1967 exclude the delivery of apprenticeship in ‘...an activity of agriculture, horticulture or fishing which is an activity of primary production, or any activity of a professional occupation.’ Where there is a clear rationale for an apprenticeship programme, then there should be no unwarranted technical barriers to the development of that apprenticeship. This restriction will be removed within the first year of the operation of this action plan.

**➤ Key Deliverable 6:**  
**Demonstrate Government commitment and leadership through increased availability of apprenticeships across the public sector**

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As the skills needs of public sector bodies become more complex and as more structured approaches to workplace training are required, there is an increased opportunity to use apprenticeship training to support the development of individuals and organisations. Under this plan, the public sector (excluding commercial semi-state organisations) will deliver an increased level of high quality apprenticeship opportunities for those seeking to join and build careers in the public sector. Learnings from longstanding involvement with craft apprenticeship and also the more recent development and rollout of the OGCIIO Technology apprenticeships, Revenue involvement with Accountancy Technician apprenticeship and PAS engagement with the Recruitment Executive programme will inform future progress.

Apprenticeship is a contract of employment and public sector employers must drive the availability of apprentice placements depending on the range of activity within the organisation and the future skills mix required. Public sector organisations (excluding commercial semi-state organisations) will deliver

an assessment of skills needs by Q1, 2022 which will inform a sector wide Apprenticeship Recruitment Plan for delivery by Q3, 2022. The Apprenticeship Recruitment Plan will target a minimum of 750 apprentice registrations per annum through relevant public sector employers by the end of the period covered by this plan. This represents over a five-fold increase on current apprenticeship recruitment levels.

The diversity of the public service in terms of service delivery provides a wide basis for involvement with the range of existing apprenticeships and those in development. The potential for sector specific apprenticeships will be assessed, including in the Built Heritage/Traditional Skills area. The development of cross-sectoral apprenticeships as a route to a public service qualifications will also be examined within the Apprenticeship Recruitment Plan –in public policy development, public sector administration or other areas common to one or more employers.

A significant area of growing skills demand is in the area of healthcare. As an early action to address skills and recruitment needs in the sector and to contribute to public service engagement with apprenticeship, the Health Service Executive will establish a new consortium to develop a NFQ level 5 apprenticeship for the occupation of Health Care Assistant. This will be supported by the network of Education and Training Boards to deliver nationally-available quality assured off-the-job training in line with the needs identified by the HSE. Apprenticeship will deliver an attractive route to career development and progression in the health service.

The public sector is a significant purchaser of goods and services. The potential for the sector to utilise this purchasing power in influencing the availability of apprentice employment will also be examined. This will support and strengthen ongoing commitments towards strategic public policy considerations in procurement processes, including evaluating and managing the environmental, economic, and social impacts of procurement strategies within the State. Members of the Strategic Procurement Advisory Group, chaired by the Office of Government Procurement, will consider the potential for measures supporting apprenticeship in procurement by different Departments and Agencies.

### Objective 3: Apprenticeship for All

**The profile of the apprenticeship population will more closely reflect the profile of the general population**

The long term benefits for apprentices are the opportunities for skilled employment and career prospects that apprenticeships provide. In the short term, the payment of wages or allowances during the training period also confer benefits. For an individual, the decision to embark on an apprenticeship will depend on the extent to which they have access to quality information on apprenticeships and the comparative attractiveness of other forms of education or training, paid employment, or welfare supports.

Significant progress has been made in widening access supports across the general further and higher education sector. The work-based nature of apprenticeship means that prospective apprentices may face barriers related not only to accessing education, but employment also. The expanding range of opportunities available within apprenticeship, as well as changing work practices in traditional areas, provide a step towards increasing opportunity for persons with a disability and other traditionally under-represented groups, however relying on a broader range of apprenticeships is not sufficient to provide equity of opportunity to marginalised groups.

A wide range of submissions to the consultation process addressed the issue of barriers to participation in apprenticeship by under-represented groups. Specific submissions included proposals to overcome these barriers and increase participation by women, lone parents, people with disabilities, young people and older adults experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, Travellers and Roma, young people at risk of offending and former prisoners.

Apprentice feedback highlights a number of challenges for females and others with caring responsibilities. In at least one instance an apprentice was forced to withdraw from their apprenticeship due to difficulties accessing off-the-job training after a period of statutory leave. The requirement for travel for periods of 10-22+ weeks for craft apprentices may be a disincentive for those with mobility issues, transport difficulties or caring responsibilities.

Increased ownership of scheduling by apprentices may, in some part, facilitate access to craft apprenticeship by career changers and those with caring responsibilities. Issues relating to the approach to the payment of allowances will also be examined.

While progress has been made in a number of areas since the 2018 Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship, there remain a number of outstanding areas of action in terms of baseline data collection. Developing areas of good practice are evident, including through the TU Dublin Access to Apprenticeship programme, all female tech apprenticeship classes through FIT, and the rollout of over 500 pre-apprenticeship places in further education and training as part of the PLC reform programme.

There were just over 1,000 female apprentices within the apprentice population by the end of 2020 (representing 5% of the population) and the number of apprentices self-declaring a disability and in receipt of supports is 2.7%, up slightly from the 2018 figure on a significantly increased apprentice population.

### **Key Deliverable 7:** **Include the voice of underrepresented cohorts in apprenticeship**

Delivering equity of opportunity in accessing and completing apprenticeship is dependent on understanding, and meeting, the needs of target groups. An equity of access stakeholder subcommittee will ensure that the voice of under-represented groups is integral to the future development of the apprenticeship system. The subcommittee will include representation which ensures that links with second level, community education, youth justice programmes, broader FET provision and higher education are represented.

The framework for quality assurance will be inclusive of the apprentices' voice, and this will be leveraged to ensure that the experiences of, and outcomes for, apprentices from underrepresented groups are used to inform best practice.

Clear information on existing supports for persons with a disability will be made visible to employers and prospective apprentices through [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie), both through a direct resource page, through consortia information to employers and by reflecting positive experiences in promoting apprenticeship. Employers who demonstrate examples of good practice will be acknowledged through initiatives such as a diversity badge.

### **Key Deliverable 8:** **An inclusive apprenticeship access and delivery structure**

Delivering a diverse apprentice population will involve increased awareness of opportunity, financial supports, employer obligations, and programme structure for both employers and prospective apprentices.

At present all national apprenticeships are structured on a full-time basis and many are designed to be delivered within a set period of time. While recognising the fact that an apprenticeship is a work-based learning opportunity, programmes will be reviewed to ensure that apprentices who may wish to return to, or continue their apprenticeship following a period of absence from, the workplace can be facilitated. This could be achieved through, for example, modular learning or recognition of prior learning. As apprenticeships are reviewed, consideration should be given to increasing the flexibility of learning provision, both on the job and off the job to allow for part time delivery of apprenticeship.

Learnings from existing access and pathway programmes (including pre-apprenticeship programmes)

will be used to enhance provision and will support the transition of young people (16-24 years old) from disadvantaged backgrounds into apprenticeship schemes. An apprentice bursary/support scheme will be established to fund up to 100 apprentices per year who are experiencing severe socioeconomic disadvantage and who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.

The existing employer bursary available to employers of women in craft apprenticeships will be extended to all apprenticeships with a greater than 80% representation of a single gender in order to encourage gender balance across the apprenticeship system.

### **Key Deliverable 9: Monitor and assess targets**

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In order to properly assess the impacts of interventions on the apprentice population we must be in a position to monitor and learn from those interventions. Information on age, gender and self-declared disability across apprenticeship is available, proxy identifiers for apprentice socioeconomic status will be identified and included within the apprentice registration process as will self-declared ethnicity.

The apprentice survey has provided valuable oversight into the apprentice experience. Almost one third of respondents were willing to provide additional information on their experiences to help inform future policy. We will engage with this group to examine the current experience for apprentices which may impact on and inform interventions for under-represented groups.

An employer survey will determine baseline employer attitude and extent of knowledge of supports available to employers for supporting employees with a disability. This will be used to target information supports for employers, provided through the new National Apprenticeship Office and consortia.

The 2018 Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship has already resulted in a significant widening of measures to support increased visibility of apprenticeships. Actions outlined within this Plan are designed to support and enhance progress towards the goals of the Pathways review. A full review will be conducted during the lifetime of this plan, informed by the Equity of Access subcommittee and employer and apprentice experience as determined within the annual survey.



## From a survey of 3750 apprentices



**40%**

of respondents entered apprenticeship directly from full time education and training



**5%**

the proportion of apprentices who already hold a degree level qualification (NFQ level 7-9)



**1 in 3**

respondents found it difficult to source an employer. (35% of craft apprentices compared to 16% of apprentices in consortia programmes)



**90%**

were quite likely or very likely to recommend an apprenticeship to their friends or family



**82%**

of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with their apprenticeship experience



**7** respondents were undertaking their second apprenticeship

## Objective 4: A Valued Option

Apprenticeships will be available and recognised as a work based learning opportunity, providing sought after qualifications across the tertiary education and training sector

There were over 100,000 new enrolments across further and higher education last year<sup>78</sup>. Reaching 10,000 new apprentice registrations per annum will position apprenticeship firmly as a substantial offering for learners within the education and training system. Initiatives such as The Right Course and Generation Apprenticeship have begun to increase the level of exposure of the apprenticeship system as an offering within the wider education and training sector.

A core tenet of apprenticeship is that graduates of apprenticeship programmes should be qualified to work autonomously in a competent, professional and independent capacity in their selected field. The benefits of apprenticeship are well-recognised by those involved in the system, with over 90% of apprentices surveyed prepared to recommend an apprenticeship to friends and family.

Information on and access to apprenticeship opportunities is limited for those who are not already engaged in apprenticeship. Fewer than one in ten registered apprentices had received information on their apprenticeship from career guidance counsellors in schools or other settings, reflecting 2019 findings on the quality of information on apprenticeships in schools<sup>9</sup>. By far the majority (69%) of respondents



We need to change the narrative surrounding apprenticeships and showcase the success stories across the range of the craft based and non-craft-based.

**Apprenticeship consortium**

7 <https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/enrolments/2018-19-enrolment-data-pivot/>

8 [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/07f56687a0/solas\\_facts\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/07f56687a0/solas_facts_report_2019.pdf)

9 The 2019 Indecon Review of Career Guidance highlighted that only 40% of second level students who had availed of one to one guidance sessions were satisfied with the quality of career guidance available to them on apprenticeships. This dropped to

had accessed their apprenticeship through friends and family or through their existing workplace / employer recommendations. Only 4% of registered apprentices found their jobs through [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) with almost one-third of registered apprentices reporting having had difficulty in sourcing their employer.


Once obtained, a high quality apprenticeship should provide a positive learning experience for apprentices. The apprentice survey provided a significant amount of data and insight on the experience of apprentices and former apprentices across all apprenticeship programmes. While four out of five apprentices were satisfied with their apprenticeship experience, feedback has supported anecdotal evidence in the written submissions of non-compliance with elements of the Apprenticeship Code of Practice such as delays in registering apprentices.

When potential reasons for a less than satisfactory experience are explored, a significant minority of respondents (17%) reported being 'not at all' or 'not very' supported in their workplace, rising to 27% for off-the-job training. One in ten apprentices did not have, or were not aware of, a primary contact in their workplace setting and this increased to one in five for the off-the-job component of their apprenticeship. These findings clearly highlight a need for employers and educational institutions to be more proactive in providing learning and other supports to apprentices and in promoting the availability of such supports during on and off-the-job phases.



In our experience there's a huge number of candidates coming straight from school, whose preference is the combination of on-the-job hands-on approach plus off-the-job academic, which the apprenticeship program fulfils.

**Manufacturing sector employer**

 **Key Deliverable 10:**  
**Apprenticeship will be visible, and recognised by learners and influencers (parents, friends and family and career guidance professionals) as an attractive route to qualifications and a career**

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There is a clear need to broaden the awareness of apprenticeship as a work-based route to internationally recognised qualifications and experience for people progressing in their career, school leavers and career changers. Data collected as part of the apprenticeship management system and the baseline study on outcomes for apprentices will be used to develop an evidence base which demonstrates the value of apprenticeship to learners who are choosing a qualification or career pathway.

The National Apprenticeship Office will drive central branding and promotional activities targeted to heighten public awareness of the range of apprenticeship offerings. Visibility of programmes will be supported through the national Generation Apprenticeship campaign and continued engagement with regional vocational skills showcases. The potential for co-location of the Ireland Skills Live event with other career and education showcases will also be assessed, demonstrating the value and range of practical and vocational skills, including those gained through apprenticeship, to school leavers in the midst of choosing their future learning pathway.

Working in co-operation with SOLAS under the #FutureFET vision, the NAO will ensure that school leavers will have access to the same level of information about apprenticeship options as those in further and higher education. The development of more vocational options and pathways, and apprenticeship taster courses, will be explored as



I am given lots of responsibility with tasks in the on-the-job training with my employer and I am learning a lot about management and organisation.

**Year 2, craft apprentice**




**It catapults you further than an ordinary degree as you build up work experience on top of education making you a more lucrative candidate.**

**Graduate, Consortia-led apprenticeship**

part of Transition Year and Senior Cycle reform with the NCCA. The quality of information relayed to school leavers and career changers through guidance counsellors will be enhanced through a dedicated information campaign. This will be supported by a pilot apprentice experience programme for guidance counsellors, delivering direct experience of one or more of the existing and future programmes.

Linkages to and from major career guidance and further and higher application resources will drive initial recognition of the range of offerings available to learners across the system, including an assessment of the ability to facilitate expressions of interest in apprenticeship through the CAO. Enhanced cooperation with the State's Public Employment Service will also increase visibility of apprenticeship to employers and career changers.

Given the status of apprentices as employees, the awarding of an apprenticeship job must be made by the employer, a function which may be facilitated by consortia in certain programmes. The apprenticeship jobs vacancies portal on [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) will be reviewed and learnings from the existing platform and initiatives such as the Mid-West Apprenticeship App will be utilised to deliver a user-friendly and accessible platform for apprentices to source and connect with employers. An ambition of the plan is to move towards an arrangement where all apprenticeship opportunities are visible via a central jobs portal.

 **Key Deliverable 11:**  
**Apprentices will be supported to complete their programmes through clear communication, support networks and increased ownership of their learning journey**

Apprentices themselves are key ambassadors, and high quality apprenticeships should provide a positive learning experience for apprentices. The voice of apprentices in shaping the future of the system will be formalised within the single system of apprenticeship, enhancing the existing apprentice feedback mechanism which is inherent in the QQI quality processes. Apprentices will be included both looking to the future through representation on the apprenticeship stakeholder oversight and advisory structures and also through an annual survey of apprentices which will provide a robust system view for the prior year. Monitoring medium to long term outcomes for apprentices will also be formalised through the commencement of graduate tracking.

While by far the majority of apprentices were satisfied with their apprenticeship experience, two significant issues arose in the consultation - namely communication difficulties arising during the COVID-19 emergency phase and the inability of craft apprentices to influence the location and timing of their off-the-job training.

SOLAS has taken a number of practical steps to enhance communications with apprentices during 2020 and 2021. A clear and coherent apprentice communications strategy will be developed to ensure that apprentices are aware of the route(s) through which communication will take place, including the availability of both on-the-job and off-the-job supports available to address any issues arising during the period of apprenticeship.

Craft apprentices' ownership of their education and training journey will be enhanced through supporting choice in the location and timing of off-the-job training for craft apprentices.



Every day is a new experience where I work. I have picked up a lot of skills already and I am only coming towards the end of my 1st year.

**Electrical Apprentice**

## Objective 5: A Single Cohesive System

**There will be a single apprenticeship system underpinned by a clear governance framework with strong stakeholder input**

Advances have been made in terms of promoting apprenticeship as a coherent offering for employers, apprentices and the public through, for example, the Generation Apprenticeship promotion campaign. However, it is evident from consultation with stakeholders that the differences between craft and consortia-led apprenticeships in terms of oversight, delivery and funding has led to a lack of clarity for employers and education and training providers, and to a lesser extent learners, about apprenticeship. This is a clear obstacle to increasing participation by both employers and potential apprentices. The administrative overhead of operating the two models is also significant across the Department and its agencies and the existence of different funding models makes it difficult to accurately compare costs and evaluate the effectiveness of the system as a whole.

The consultation process has brought to the fore the complexity of these governance arrangements with multiple and overlapping relationships and roles between individual stakeholders, education and training providers and regulatory bodies, whose roles and responsibilities have also evolved over this time.

The system is now at a juncture whereby it is clear that unless these issues are tackled by moving to a single apprenticeship system, the potential to firmly embed apprenticeship as an attractive and sought-after mode of work based learning will be severely constrained in the years ahead. In moving to a single model the objective is to build on the strengths of both the existing craft and the consortia led models.

The existing system has seen two major shocks in the past 15 years, firstly the 2007 housing and economic crash and, currently, the COVID-19 pandemic. While those involved in apprenticeship delivery have moved to meet the challenges presented on both occasions, the need for rapid movement has also highlighted limitations of the more centralised craft apprenticeship system compared to individual consortia who had more flexibility to adapt delivery and assessment processes to the changed environment.

Innovation and the pace of technological change are blurring distinctions between different types of economic activity, and between traditional craft roles and occupations. The capacity of a centralised system built on a common structure and award level to respond and adapt to these changes will be more limited than one which can accommodate more programme diversity.

Over the period of the action plan, the dual system of programme governance will be replaced by a single distributed system of programme governance – the single apprenticeship system. Placing responsibility for curriculum and employer supports close to where activity is taking place will

leverage the core strengths of education and training providers, employers and partners who are immersed in the respective industry. It will also foster the integration of apprenticeship within the quality assurance arrangements of the educational institutions across further and higher education.

The process by which this transition will take place will be planned in close collaboration with apprenticeship stakeholders, including union partners, through representation on the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, the National Apprenticeship Alliance and new craft apprenticeship consortia.

### **Key Deliverable 12:** **A coherent, representative, governance framework and structure**

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**Apprenticeship consortia** comprising employer, employee representatives, education and training providers and other key stakeholders will be directly responsible for the development and delivery of apprenticeship programmes. Programme validation, quality assurance and delivery will be managed through a coordinating provider (a further or higher education institution) who is a member of the consortium. The relevant consortium is responsible for oversight of the coordinating provider in the delivery of their role and the continued relevance of curriculum and programme delivery within the boundaries of the occupational profile.

Consortia funding will be standardised under the single apprenticeship system. The role of the consortia in supporting employers will be enhanced, with target-linked funding utilised to support SME participation, to meet identified skills needs and promote diversity within the apprentice population.

A new **National Apprenticeship Office (NAO)** will be established with responsibility for all aspects of the management, oversight and development of the apprenticeship system and for implementing this Action Plan. It will be the public face of the apprenticeship system and will be headed by a Director who will establish a strong national profile for the office and the role. The office will co-ordinate and drive the delivery of the action plan. It will act as a single point of contact for employers, apprentices and providers in accessing information and guidance on apprenticeship. It will also manage the provision of supports to apprenticeship consortia in developing and implementing apprenticeships. This will include supporting the establishment of consortia networks for peer-learning and the provision of additional specialist supports to the consortia themselves. Where consortia are created around apprenticeships or groups of apprenticeships, for example in craft apprenticeship, there may continue to be collaboration on shared issues. It will also facilitate a separation between the system oversight and coordinating provider roles, both of which are currently undertaken by SOLAS for the 25 craft apprenticeships.

The NAO will facilitate a coming together of the statutory functions of SOLAS and the HEA as they relate to apprenticeship. SOLAS and the HEA will share responsibility for the office, and its staffing will reflect the shared system responsibility across FET and HE. Given the roles of SOLAS and



HEA Boards in discharging statutory responsibilities in relation to apprenticeship, these Boards will approve all governance, reporting and delivery arrangements prior to the establishment of the Office. This approach ensures that the delivery of apprenticeship remains a core offering of the further and higher education and training sector while promoting coherence in the delivery of programmes. The role of the office will be recognised through legislative provision.

Stakeholder insight is critical to both the existing and continued success of apprenticeship. The National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee have an established place in craft apprenticeship and the Apprenticeship Council has successfully steered the first phase of the expansion of the Apprenticeship system.

A new **National Apprenticeship Alliance (NAA)** which is representative of apprenticeship stakeholders will be appointed to help steer the next phase and create a single coherent system. The NAA will discharge its role in respect of all apprenticeships. The Alliance will provide advice and guidance to the NAO on all aspects of its work and to help it drive the implementation of the Action Plan. The NAA will also review and approve formal occupational profiles in the development of new apprenticeships. This ensures the national character of apprenticeship programmes is maintained with nationally-approved standards of knowledge, skill and competence and only a single apprenticeship in place for any one occupation. Any changes to occupational profiles will be subject to NAA approval. The work programme for the new office will be structured around specific thematic areas with working groups established to provide for the direct input of Alliance members and other stakeholders.

Governance and management structures will foster agility and responsiveness, be easy to engage with and be inclusive of all stakeholders with a legitimate interest in the development of the apprenticeship system. It is clear that good working relationships between apprenticeship stakeholders have been instrumental in the development and expansion of apprenticeship to date. The diverse range and number of stakeholders who took part in the process to develop this plan demonstrates the level of commitment to and ambition there is for apprenticeship in Ireland. A key priority is to capture the wealth of perspectives and experience of this broad range of stakeholders in the new governance structures.

 **Key Deliverable 13:**  
**All apprenticeships will be delivered through the single system**

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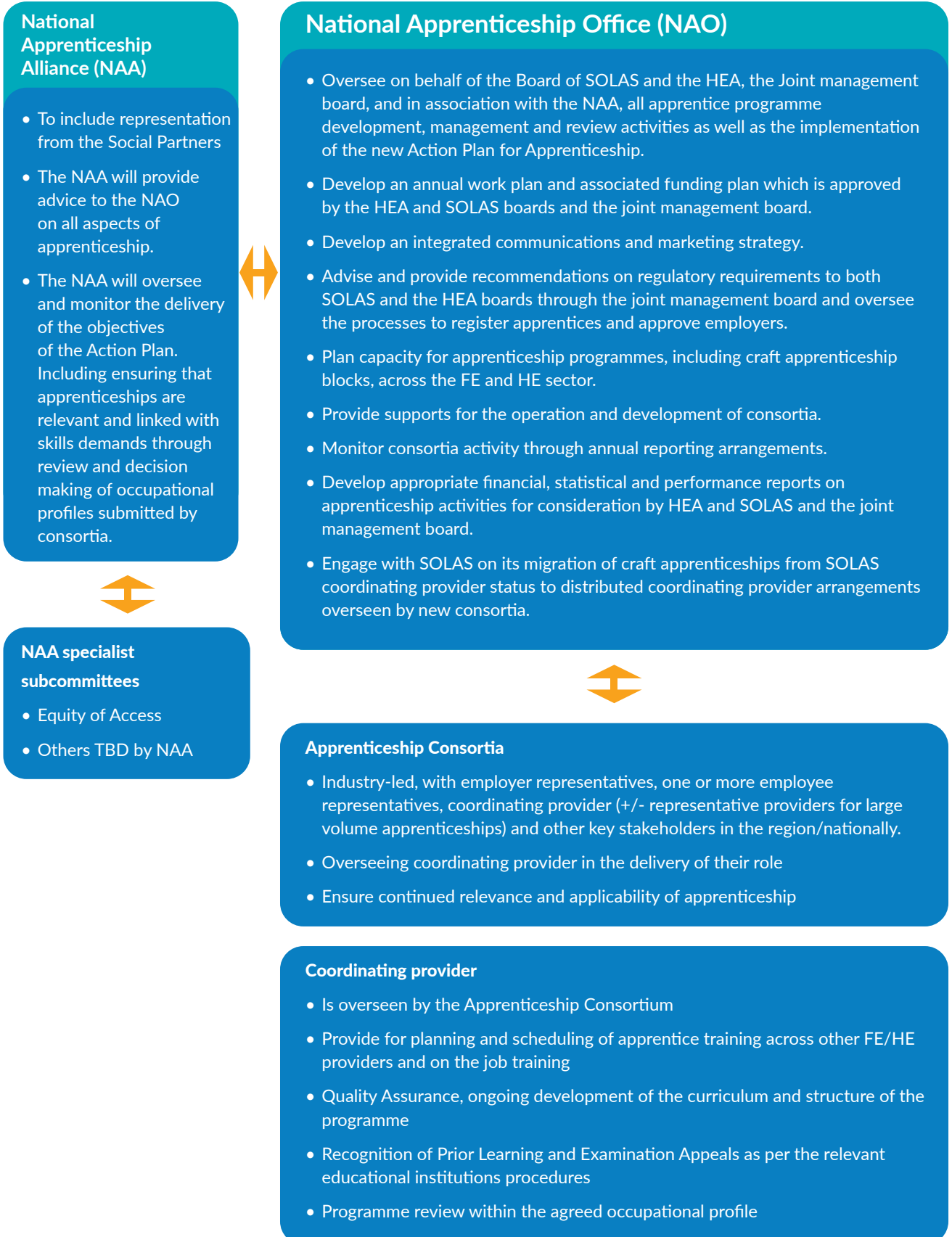
Delivering the single apprenticeship system will involve change for all apprenticeships. The role of existing consortia will be enhanced both in the support that is received from the NAO and in the supports that they are required to deliver to SME employers. Existing consortia-led apprenticeships, and those in development, will migrate to the single apprenticeship system by the end of 2022.

The change for craft apprenticeship is more significant. It will be supported through a robust migration plan which is reflective of the scale of the project which will impact 25 apprenticeships and 17,000+ apprentices, and which will be cognisant of the existent structures and strong positive traditions within the sector.

SOLAS, in its role as coordinating provider will work with the NAAC and relevant stakeholders, including the NAO and NAA to agree a migration plan to the single apprenticeship system. The coordination of individual craft apprenticeship delivery will remain with SOLAS until that programme is migrated to the new system. This will provide time for staged migration and clear communications to all stakeholders as part of that process.

The migration plan will include a prioritised list of apprenticeships for phased migration and criteria for the allocation of consortia membership and the coordinating provider role which protects the established role of, and substantial existing infrastructure within, the public further education and training and higher education systems in the delivery of craft apprenticeship in Ireland. All craft apprenticeships will have migrated from the SOLAS/NAAC management and delivery of programmes to the single apprenticeship system by the end of 2025.

# The Single Apprenticeship System



# Section 4

Delivering on the objectives



## Section 4: Delivering on the objectives

This action plan provides a roadmap to a single apprenticeship system and a clear value proposition for employers and apprentices through enhanced governance and funding structures, employer supports and operational arrangements. Apprenticeships need to be accessible to employers and potential apprentices. It must be easy to engage with the system and to see the benefits which arise from investment in apprenticeship.

The scale of the change is significant. Craft apprenticeship has a well-established history and tradition of excellence in delivering skills within specific sectors. The apprenticeship offering of 2020 is a vastly expanded offering by employers and education and training providers across multiple sectors and qualification levels. Embedding this fundamental shift in the placement of apprenticeship within the Irish education and training sector is a substantial ask for stakeholders within the sector, for employers, learners of all ages and for the influencers of these learners at the point of choosing a route to an internationally-recognised qualification.

This section will set out the baseline actions required to achieve the key deliverables and, in turn, meet the objectives set out within this Plan and the Government's overall target of 10,000 new apprenticeship registrations per annum by 2025. The actions listed are front-loaded in order to deliver rapid change and provide a platform for further development during the lifetime of the plan.

This action plan is not a static document. Progress towards baseline actions will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report delivered to Government, outlining progress and learnings and setting out detailed areas for action in the next phase of delivery. Delivery of the plan will be through the National Apprenticeship Office and supported by the National Apprenticeship Alliance.

Key Deliverable 1: A strong framework of quality assurance			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
1.1	Publish terms of reference for review of QA framework and operation of consortia-led system of programme governance	Q2, 2021	QQI/SOLAS/HEA
1.2	Deliver the review of QA framework and operation of the consortia-led system.	Q4, 2021	QQI/SOLAS/HEA
1.3	Revise the statutory QA guidelines for apprenticeship	Q1, 2022	NAO
1.4	Review and update 2017 Apprenticeship Handbook	Q1, 2022	NAO
1.5	Complete a review of the role of Authorised Officers and how the AO network can further evolve to support the delivery of the action plan	Q2, 2022	NAO/QQI
1.6	Develop and provide centralised supports for apprenticeship consortia to include: Support and enhance networks for formal and informal peer learning (eg QA Forum, subject/sector specific groupings) Opportunities for engagement on developing skills needs, collaboration with RSF; Supports to build in-company training capacity and training programmes for mentors; Provide regular CPD Training for employers on governance, assessments and QA, including a pilot shared visiting assessor scheme.	Work programme for new body	NAO

Key Deliverable 2: A robust data collection and performance framework will provide an evidence base for continuous improvement of the apprenticeship system			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
2.1	Deliver initial study of employment outcomes of apprenticeships over time.	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
2.2	Establish a performance framework to assess efficiency and effectiveness of apprenticeship, to include:- - monitoring of employer and apprentice mix in terms of employer size/apprentice gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic background - apprentice retention rates - annual survey of apprentices, employers, educational institutions and consortia - routine graduate tracking	Q2, 2022	NAO
2.3	Standardise cost data collection to enable the effectiveness and efficiency of apprenticeship investment to be monitored	Q2, 2022	NAO
2.4	Annual publication of performance data	Q4, 2022 and annually	NAO
2.5	Deliver value for money review of apprenticeship to review the impact of the single apprenticeship system in driving fit-for-purpose apprenticeships and to inform the development of a successor action plan	Q4, 2024	DFHERIS

Key Deliverable 3: An agile system, responsive to work place change and evolving skills needs			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.1	Assess the potential for cross-border apprenticeship programmes to enhance Ireland's ability to respond to skills needs as an all-island economy.	Q1, 2022	DFHERIS
3.2	Deliver pilot programmes for access to international placements for apprentices through existing Erasmus+ placements or, where a programme is suitable, through international on-the-job placements.	Q4, 2023	NAO/Apprenticeship Consortia

Key Deliverable 4: Address barriers to employer participation through financial and non-financial measures			
FINANCIAL SUPPORTS			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
4.1	Introduce annual employer base grant per registered apprentice in programmes not subject to direct payment of Training Allowance by ETBs.	Q1, 2022	NAO
4.2	Recognising the appropriate sectoral pay agreements, assess the potential to move craft apprentice supports from direct payment to apprentices to an employer grant model to eliminate the impacts of the existing model on craft apprentice experience.	Q4,2022	NAO
NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORTS			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
4.3	The NAO will link potential consortia members, education providers and supporting consortia members and/or provide supports to build in-company training capacity and training programme for mentors, regular CPD and training for employers on governance, assessments and QA.	Q2, 2022	NAO/QQI
4.4	Deliver sector specific supports through the apprenticeship consortia to support SME employers through, for example, trial the delivery of shared/visiting assessor scheme to support on-the-job assessment while maintaining a commitment to standards and quality.	Q2, 2022	NAO/Consortia
4.5	Deliver user-centered development plan for an apprenticeship management system to simplify employer participation within and across apprenticeship, to include: assessment of demand for increased utility within the ApprenticeshipJobs.ie platform to allow employers receive and process CV applications; further development of apprentice registration system with access for apprenticeship consortia/employers; data platforms to support transparency and evaluation	Q2,2022	NAO

**Key Deliverable 5: Increase participation in apprenticeship by employers across all sectors of the economy**

	<b>Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
5.1	Increase the online visibility of apprenticeship engagement and apprenticeship development processes for employers/ sectors who wish to assess the potential for new apprenticeship development.	Q2, 2021	SOLAS
5.2	Remove legislative barriers to development of apprenticeship programmes in areas arising from existing legislation	Q4, 2021	DFHERIS
5.3	Review the impact of the Generation Apprenticeship initiative in terms of widening employer reach.	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA

**Key Deliverable 6: Demonstrate Government commitment and leadership through increased availability of apprenticeship opportunities across the public sector**

	<b>Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
6.1	Health Service Executive to establish a new consortium to develop a NFQ level 5 apprenticeship for the occupation of Health Care Assistant.	Q2, 2021	HSE
6.2	Deliver a series of targeted briefing sessions to public sector employers setting out the current range of available apprenticeship offerings and routes to new apprenticeship development. Engagement will be sought from existing PS employers of apprentices to share experience of programme development and implementation.	Q3, 2021	DFHERIS/SOLAS /HEA/Civil and Public Service HR Group
6.3	Deliver scoping on Built Heritage/Traditional Skills Apprenticeship within the planned National Traditional Building Skills Centre	Q4, 2021	DHLGH/OPW
6.4	Deliver guidance on the inclusion of an apprenticeship/ staff development provision within Public Sector tendering processes.	Q4, 2021	Office of Government Procurement
6.5	Feasibility assessment to be delivered by Departments and Agencies for a base level of apprenticeship provision at Department/Agency level, linked to identified skills needs and available programmes. The assessment will also review the potential for cross-departmental /cross-sectoral apprenticeships in Government and Public Sector Administration.	Q1, 2022	Civil and Public Service Employers
6.6	Formal commitment from Departments to be published as part of the Government's Apprenticeship Recruitment Plan which will target a minimum of 750 apprentice registrations per annum by 2025.	Q3, 2022	Civil and Public Service Employers



Key Deliverable 7: Include the voice of underrepresented cohorts in apprenticeship			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
7.1	Establish Equity of Access sub-committee of the National Apprenticeship Alliance	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/DFHERIS
7.2	Create a mechanism such as a diversity badge and qualifying criteria to be awarded to employers demonstrating examples of good practice	Q2,2022	NAO
7.3	Involve under-represented groups and a wider variety of stakeholders in designing promotion campaigns e.g. to reflect the participation and positive experience of people from all backgrounds and communities, the availability of assistive supports etc.	Q2,2022	NAO
7.4	Assess the potential to include apprenticeship within the general tertiary education equity of access provisions, reflecting the greater integration of apprenticeship provision across further and higher education	Q1, 2022	DFHERIS

Key Deliverable 8: An inclusive apprenticeship access and delivery structure			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
8.1	Information on access to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship courses will be published on www.apprenticeship.ie	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
8.2	The existing female bursary for craft apprenticeships will be extended to all apprenticeship programmes with greater than 80% representation of a single gender	Q1, 2022	NAO
8.3	Deliver bursary programme to fund up to 100 apprentices per annum who are experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage and who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.	Q1, 2022	DFHERIS/NAO
8.4	Access to apprenticeship programmes and pre-apprenticeship courses will be clearly labelled as such, with progression routes into apprenticeship clearly identified	Q1, 2022	NAO

Key Deliverable 9: Monitor and assess targets			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
9.1	Follow-up the apprentice survey with additional workshop/ survey based analysis targeted to developing a baseline view of female apprentices/those with caring responsibilities/ socioeconomic disadvantage/other target groups.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/ DFHERIS
9.2	Develop proxy indicators to gather info on the socioeconomic background of apprentices in order to provide a baseline of under-represented groups.	Q2, 2022	NAO/Equity of Access Subcommittee
9.3	Conduct a baseline survey of the 6000+ apprentice employers to determine employer attitude and extent of knowledge of supports available to employers for supporting employees with a disability	Q2,2022	NAO
9.4	Set a baseline for disability and socioeconomic targets in 2021 with targets to 2025	Q3, 2022	NAO/Equity of Access Subcommittee
9.5	Deliver impact evaluation on existing interventions:- 1) Access to apprenticeship 2) Pre-apprenticeship 3) Bursary Scheme	Q4, 2022	NAO
9.6	Deliver a review of the effectiveness of apprenticeship supports to inform the future development of the system from 2026.	Q2,2024	NAO

**Key Deliverable 10: Apprenticeship will be visible and will be recognised by learners and influencers (parents, friends and family and career guidance professionals) as an attractive route to qualifications and a career**

	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
10.1	Position apprenticeship within career guidance websites and support structures, as a clear route to qualifications and a career in areas of proven skills need.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/ Further and Higher Education and Training institutions
10.2	Promote the availability of apprenticeship opportunities alongside other further education and training and higher education offerings through, for example, reciprocal links to FETcourses.ie and assessing the ability to indicate expressions of interest through the CAO.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/CAO/ DFHERIS
10.3	All apprenticeship opportunities will be advertised on or linked from www.apprenticeship.ie with clear guidance on scheduled/expected recruitment dates for programmes with group intake.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
10.4	An information pack will be delivered to all guidance counsellors / webinar / apprentice online showcase for guidance counsellors and Intreo staff. This will target the shortfall in promotion of apprenticeship, and particularly developments in apprenticeship.	Q2, 2022	NAO
10.5	The development of apprenticeship taster courses will be explored as part of Transition Year and Senior Cycle reform with the NCCA	Q2, 2022	NAO
10.6	In common with other further and higher education and training programmes, clear ladders of progression into and beyond an apprenticeship will be published in the respective apprenticeship brochures.	Q4, 2022	NAO/ Apprenticeship Consortia
10.7	Assess the potential for short programmes for guidance counsellors providing on-location/in-company experiential learning opportunity.	Q3,2023	NAO

**Key Deliverable: 11 Apprentices will be supported to complete their programmes through clear communications, available support networks and increased ownership of their off-the-job training**

	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
11.1	Deliver clear communications strategy for all apprentices to ensure that appropriate structures are in place for both ongoing and emergency communications	Q3, 2021	SOLAS
11.2	The availability of supports for apprentices will be communicated at induction and reinforced for apprentices throughout their learning journey.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS
11.3	Explore the potential for craft apprentices preferences for training locations to be taken into account in scheduling both as part of SOLAS delivery structures and within the single apprenticeship system	Q1,2022	NAO

Key Deliverable 12: A coherent, representative, governance framework and structure			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
12.1	Develop a governance plan for the oversight of the National Apprenticeship Office, agreed by the Boards of SOLAS and the HEA	Q2, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/DFHERIS
12.2	Define outline and structure of National Apprenticeship Office with reference to expected deliverables and required staffing supports.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/DFHERIS
12.3	Agree composition and terms of reference for the National Apprenticeship Alliance taking into account the need to ensure that all stakeholders are appropriately represented.	Q3, 2021	SOLAS/HEA/DFHERIS
12.4	Appoint a new National Apprenticeship Alliance	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
12.5	Establish the National Apprenticeship Office	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
12.6	Deliver legislative recognition of the National Apprenticeship Office	Q4, 2021	DFHERIS

Key Deliverable 13: Migrate all apprenticeships to the single system			
	Actions required to meet the Key Deliverable	Timeframe	Responsibility
13.1	Agree distribution of roles and supports between the National Apprenticeship Office, apprenticeship consortia and validating bodies (QQI/HEIs).	Q2, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
13.2	Deliver consortia-led apprenticeship migration plan focused on the changed requirements arising from the single apprenticeship system and supported by a robust communications and support strategy	Q4, 2021	SOLAS/HEA
13.3	Deliver craft apprenticeship migration plan which includes a prioritised list of programmes (or groups of programmes) for phased migration to the single apprenticeship system and criteria for the allocation of consortia membership and the coordinating provider role for craft apprentices. This will protect the established role of, and substantial existing infrastructure within, the public further education and training and higher education systems in the delivery of craft apprenticeship in Ireland.	Q1, 2022	SOLAS / NAAC
13.4	Deliver clear communications strategy around the staged migration of craft apprenticeship programmes	Q1, 2022	SOLAS / NAAC NAO / NAA
13.5	Complete migration of existing consortia to the single apprenticeship system	Q4, 2022	NAO
13.6	Complete migration of craft apprenticeships to distributed delivery model	Q4,2025	SOLAS / NAAC NAO / NAA

## Appendix I – List of existing apprenticeships

Apprenticeship	NFQ Level	Duration (years)
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>		
Arboriculture	Level 6	2
<b>BIOPHARMA</b>		
Laboratory Analyst	Level 7	3
Laboratory Technician	Level 6	2
<b>CONSTRUCTION</b>		
Brick and Stonelaying (c)	Level 6	4
Carpentry and Joinery (c)	Level 6	4
Geo-Driller	Level 6	2
Painting and Decorating (c)	Level 6	4
Plastering (c)	Level 6	4
Plumbing (c)	Level 6	4
Stonecutting and Stonemasonry (c)	Level 6	4
Wood Manufacturing and Finishing (c)	Level 6	4
<b>ELECTRICAL</b>		
Aircraft Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Electrical (c)	Level 6	4
Electrical Instrumentation (c)	Level 6	4
Electronic Security Systems (c)	Level 6	4
Industrial Electrical Engineer	Level 7	2
Instrumentation (c)	Level 6	4
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (c)	Level 6	4
<b>ENGINEERING</b>		
Engineering Services Management	Level 7	2
Fariery (c)	Level 6	4
Industrial Insulation (c)	Level 6	4
Manufacturing Engineer	Level 7	3
Manufacturing Technology	Level 6	2
Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting (c)	Level 6	4
Metal Fabrication (c)	Level 6	4
OEM Engineer	Level 6	3
Pipefitting (c)	Level 6	4
Polymer Processing Technology	Level 7	3
Principal Engineer – Professional Doctorate	Level 10	4
Sheet Metalworking (c)	Level 6	4
Toolmaking (c)	Level 6	4

<b>FINANCE</b>		
Accounting Technician	Level 6	2
Insurance Practitioner	Level 8	3
International Financial Services Associate	Level 6	2
International Financial Services Specialist	Level 8	2
<b>HAIR</b>		
Hairdressing	Level 6	3
<b>HEALTHCARE</b>		
Healthcare Assistant	Level 6	2
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; FOOD</b>		
Commis Chef	Level 6	2
Chef de Partie	Level 7	4
Sous Chef	Level 8	2
Butcher	Level 5	2
<b>ICT</b>		
Network Engineer Associate	Level 6	2
Software Developer Associate	Level 6	2
CGI Technical Artist (Animation, Games, VFX)	Level 8	2
Cybersecurity	Level 6	2
Telecommunications and Data Network Engineering Technician	Level 6	2
<b>LOGISTICS</b>		
Lean Sigma Manager	Level 9	2
Logistics Associate	Level 6	2
Supply Chain Associate	Level 7	3
Supply Chain Manager	Level 9	2
Supply Chain Specialist	Level 8	2
<b>MOTOR</b>		
Agricultural Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Construction Plant Fitting (c)	Level 6	4
Heavy Vehicle Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Motor Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Vehicle Body Repairs (c)	Level 6	4
<b>PROPERTY SERVICES</b>		
Auctioneering and Property Services	Level 6	2
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>		
Recruitment Executive	Level 8	3
<b>SALES</b>		
Retail Supervision	Level 6	2
Sales	Level 6	2

(c) denotes a craft apprenticeship

## Appendix II – Submissions informing the Action Plan

Aontas (Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation)  
Careersportal  
Chambers Ireland  
CombiLift  
Connect Trade Union  
Construction Industry Federation (CIF)  
DePuy  
Dublin Chamber of Commerce  
Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)  
Enterprise Ireland  
Farm Forestry Contractors  
Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)  
Fine Gael Counsellor for Howth Malahide LEA, Fingal County Council  
Freight Transport Association Ireland  
Griffith College  
Hair and Beauty Industry Confederation (HABIC)  
Industrial Development Authority Ireland (IDA)  
International Financial Services Apprenticeships (IFS)  
Insurance Institute of Ireland  
Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)  
Irish Medtech Association  
Irish Prison/Probation Service  
Irish Second-Level Students' Union  
Irish Universities Association (IUA)  
Laboratory Apprenticeship Programme  
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board  
Leargas  
Macra na Feirme  
National Adult Literacy Agency  
National Centre for Guidance in Education  
National College of Ireland  
National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning  
National Learning Network (Rehab)

National Recruitment Federation  
National Traveller Women's Forum Ireland  
Original Equipment Manufacturing Apprenticeship Steering Group.  
Pavee Point  
Peter Mark  
Professional Accountancy Training – Fintech  
Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Restaurant Association of Ireland  
Retail Ireland Skillnet  
The Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI)  
St Stephen's Green Trust  
Technological Higher Education Association  
Technological University Dublin  
TU Dublin, Access to Apprenticeship Programme  
Tipperary Rural Travellers Project  
Union of Students in Ireland  
University of Limerick  
Women in Trades

\*11 personal submissions were also received but identifying details have been redacted for data protection purposes, in addition to 8 submissions/SME Surveys from the Regional Skills Fora  
The discussion document, submissions and the information session are available on [www.gov.ie/dfheris](http://www.gov.ie/dfheris)



## Glossary

AC	Apprenticeship Council
AO	Authorised Officer
CAO	Central Applications Office
CGI	Computer-Generated Imagery
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Board Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
FIT	Fastrack to Information Technology
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HSE	Health Service Executive
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NAA	National Apprenticeship Alliance
NAAC	National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee
NAO	National Apprenticeship Office
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NTF	National Training Fund
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
OPW	Office of Public Works
PAS	Public Appointments Service
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RSF	Regional Skills Fora
SLMRU	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh Agus Scileanna
TU Dublin	Technological University Dublin

This action plan is available on  
[www.gov.ie/dfheris](http://www.gov.ie/dfheris)



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