

Public Consultation on Tertiary Education Strategy to Identify the Objectives and Outputs of Further Education and Training in Tertiary Education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 IRELAND

Timeline

2025 Design

ID number 50883

Background

In 2022, the government outlined its policy platform for a tertiary education strategy through its newly created Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). The vision for a tertiary education sector was outlined in its 2022 policy paper:

The vision is for a well-functioning, unified tertiary system for knowledge and skills, composed of complementary further education and training, higher education and research and innovation sector 'Policy Platform: Progressing A Unified Tertiary System for Learning, Skills and Knowledge' (p.8).

The policy paper also noted (p.9):

- (a) *The diverse sectors of tertiary education, research and innovation have traditionally been organised, funded and operated in separate ways.*
- (b) *The operation and evolution of the sectors in separate spheres has restricted the scope to derive the benefits of more integrated thinking and actions across the system.*

The paper also states (p.7)

Though the individual sectors within the tertiary system are performing well, without progressing a more unified approach it will be difficult to achieve coherent and complementary formative and continuing further education and training, undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral education and research. Additionally, there is scope within the system to improve the sustainability of the ways in which the system as a whole responds to changing stakeholder needs (learners, industry, public interest and wider society), playing to individual sectoral strengths with the added value of sectors working together, especially at regional levels. For learners especially, pathways between sectors are underdeveloped and can be expanded.

A public consultation on a unified tertiary system was also undertaken in 2022. The report on the findings of the public consultation stated (p.44):

'it is apparent that there is an overarching welcome for the policy vision and a readiness to

embrace a more unified approach to tertiary education. Furthermore, it is also evident from the contributions made that in many ways, stakeholders, sectors and regions have recognised the benefits of working together in a more joined up and collaborative way and have already made a number of notable achievements in this regard'. Progressing a Unified Tertiary System for Learning, Skills and Knowledge Public Consultation Report

This report (p.44) identified the next steps as further engagement with sectors and stakeholders, to identify further strategic actions and a more comprehensive and extensive set of outcomes.

In the interim, a number of sectoral initiatives were launched, such as the new Tertiary degrees. A Tertiary Degree is a new pathway from Further Education and Training with seamless progression into Higher Education to earn an undergraduate degree. Learners can start studying in a local Education and Training Board and graduate from a Higher Education Institution with the dual benefits of both campuses throughout.

In 2025, a further public consultation on the Tertiary Education Strategy was launched to identify the objectives and outputs of further education and training; higher education; research and innovation.

This consultation closed in September 2025, and its findings will inform the final Tertiary Education Strategy (expected to be published in Q1, 2026). This strategy will drive further transformation of the FET sector and the priorities and delivery of VET programmes.

Objectives

The public consultation on the Tertiary Education Strategy is to identify the objectives and outputs of:

- (a) further education and training;
- (b) higher education; and
- (c) research and innovation.

The consultation outlines the aims of the Tertiary Education Strategy to *'strengthen and support the further education, higher education, research and innovation system through the creation of a coherent vision and objectives. The Strategy will adopt an integrated approach, taking full account of the linkages between further and higher education and research through a set of strategic actions.'*

The objective of the public consultation was to ensure the alignment of the strategy with the evolving needs of different sectors, the economy and wider society.

The information collected through the Tertiary Education Strategy public consultation survey will be used to inform strategy development, and the specific objectives and outputs for the Further Education and Training sector as a key stakeholder to the strategy.

Description

Respondents to the public consultation were asked to consider a number of questions, which were:

- (a) What should be the primary objectives of the Tertiary Education Strategy?
- (b) What should be the actions of the strategy?
- (c) How to make the tertiary education system more adaptable and responsive to emerging challenges and changing contexts?
- (d) Which outcomes will define the success of the Tertiary Education Strategy?
- (e) What are the specific barriers or enablers to enhancing the system's focus on impact and outputs and how could these be addressed?

Questions to agencies under the auspices of DFHERIS were differentiated to include:

- (a) What actions would your organisation like to lead, or contribute to, in the Tertiary Education Strategy?
- (b) In what ways could your organisation help to make the tertiary education system more adaptable and responsive to emerging challenges and changing contexts?

Questions to other bodies and organisations were differentiated to include consideration of:

- (a) What actions would your organisation or group like to see in the Tertiary Education Strategy?

The information collected through the Tertiary Education Strategy public consultation survey will be used to inform Strategy development.

2025 Design

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Bodies responsible

- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)
- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)
National, regional and local authorities

Other

Higher Education, other public interest stakeholders

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European and international dimensions of VET

VET internationalisation strategies

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Related policy developments

2025 Design

Future Proofing the National Qualifications Framework: NQF Levels 5-6 (EQF 4-5) Proposal for Intermediate Awards in European Higher Education Area

The consultation process for QQI is similar to the Irish parliamentary processes of Green and White Papers. Where QQI issues a Green Paper, this is the first consultation of policy proposals for debate and discussion as part of the consultation with stakeholders.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Design

Public and Stakeholder Consultation on National Further Education and Training Strategy 2025-2029

The stakeholder consultation process, which included both workshops and bilateral meetings commenced in Q4, 2024. The public consultation opened on 31st January 2025 and was published by both the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and SOLAS.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Tertiary Degrees in Further Education and Training, guaranteeing progression to Higher Education.

Creating a unified tertiary system is one of the strategic priorities of the National FET strategy 2020-24.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2023 Completed

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Strategy 2021-23

DFHERIS funds and creates policy for the higher and further education and research sectors. It also oversees the work of the State agencies and public institutions operating in these areas.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Approved/Agreed

Transforming Learning 2020-24: Ireland's National Further Education and Training Strategy

The FET strategy 2020–24 was developed in consultation with the FET sector and other key stakeholders. Consultation was wide-ranging and included bilateral meetings, regional workshops and a public call for submissions.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Public Consultation on Tertiary Education Strategy to Identify the Objectives and Outputs of Further Education and Training in Tertiary Education: Ireland. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/50883>