



**TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS**

**AN COMHCHOISTE UM  
OIDEACHAS AGUS SCILEANNA**

**Clár Oibre 2018**

**Eanáir 2018**

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**HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

**Work Programme 2018**

**January 2018**

# Joint Committee on Education and Skills

## Work Programme 2018

### 1 Introduction

The Joint Committee on Education and Skills was established following Orders of Dáil Éireann and of Seanad Éireann on 16th June 2016 and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016 respectively. Standing Orders 89(4) (Dáil Éireann) and 77(4) (Seanad Éireann) require that “as soon as may be following its appointment and thereafter at annual intervals, each Select Committee shall prepare a work programme and shall lay such programme before Dáil/Seanad Éireann”.

This Work Programme of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills for 2018 was agreed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2018. In accordance with the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, it was agreed that the Work Programme be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

### 2 Select Committee

The Dáil Select Committee on Education was established by Order of Dáil Éireann on 16th June 2016.

The function of the Select Committee is to consider -

- (a) Bills,
- (b) Proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 164,
- (c) Estimates for Public Services,
- (d) Other matters as shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil,
- (e) Annual Output Statements, and
- (f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select relating to the relevant Department.

#### Pre Legislative Scrutiny

In addition, the Government Legislative Programme makes provision for the publication of a number of Bills. Following changes to Standing Orders (agreed by the Dáil on 17 October 2013), Ministers are now required, except in exceptional circumstances, to bring the general scheme or draft heads of a Bill to

a Committee for consideration. Committees are empowered to consider the draft Heads of Bills but they are not required to do so – it is the prerogative of the Committee to decide on a case by case basis whether it wishes to engage in pre-legislative scrutiny on any particular Bill.

### Legislation

The Government Legislative Programme for Autumn 2017 identifies the Bills relevant to the Department of Education and Skills, as follows:

Bills in respect of which Heads have been agreed and/or texts are being drafted:

- Education (Parent and Student) Charter Bill;
- Higher Education (Reform) Bill;
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill;
- Universities (Amendment) Bill;
- Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill;
- Retention of Certain Records Bill.

Four Private Members Bills have also been referred to the Committee:

- Education (Amendment) Bill 2015;
- Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016;
- Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016;
- University College Galway (Amendment) Bill 2017.

### Estimates and other Financial Matters

The Estimates for Public Services are Ministers' spending plans for the coming financial year. When the Estimates are referred to Select Committees for examination, the Committee has a valuable opportunity to question the relevant Minister about proposed spending. Note: the Select Committee is required to consider the Estimates but are not empowered to amend them.

The Estimate with which the Select Committees must deal in 2018 is the Revised Estimate for Public Services (Education and Skills – Vote 26).

A Supplementary Estimate may be considered in December if additional monies are required by the relevant Government Department.

It is the Committee's intention to focus on –

- what the Department has committed to achieving,
- how monies are allocated between services, and
- exploring the policy issues underpinning the various spending provisions as well as to consider these matters as fully as possible.

The proposed approach presents Departmental Estimates on a Strategic Programme basis consistent with the Statements of Strategy. These Estimates have been supplemented with certain performance information regarding the outputs and impacts of Programme expenditure.

In keeping with a whole of year approach, it is the Committee's intention to have an exchange of views with the Minister for Education and Skills in advance of Budget 2018 on the emerging position for 2019.

In addition, the examination of Value for Money (VFM) Reviews is another important part of scrutinising Government expenditure.

#### Referrals of Motions and Other Matters

From time to time, matters may arise and may be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil. It is not possible to say in advance what those matters might be or when they might arise.

### **3 Joint Committee**

The duties of the Joint Committee are discharged in two ways, i.e.

1. items of business referred to it by one or both Houses, and
2. it can select business for consideration itself, from the areas within its terms of reference. In practice, the Joint Committee's work will comprise the examination of EU business and key policy priorities.

#### Engagement on EU Matters

The Joint Committee shadows the Departments of Education and Skills and the remit of this Department, in the European context, forms the basis of the Joint Committee's remit in terms of scrutiny of European matters. In fulfilling its role in examining EU business, the Joint Committee engages in the following activities:

- (i) Scrutiny of EU Legislative Proposals and Non-Legislative Proposals
- (ii) Engagement with Ministers in advance of EU Council meetings;
- (iii) Engagement on the Statutory Departmental Scrutiny Report with the Secretary General of the Department;
- (iv) Attendance at the Inter-Parliamentary Meeting of EU Parliamentary Committee Chairpersons;
- (v) Engagement with European Bodies such as the EU Commission and the EU Parliament and its Committees.

### Key policy priorities

The Joint Committee is empowered to consider such other policy issues as it may select within its terms of reference. In the period January to December 2018, in addition to core business such as legislation etc., it should be possible to focus on a number of major topics within the remit of the Department.

The following are some of the key policy issues identified by the Joint Committee for examination:

### Primary Level and Secondary Level

- The future of Irish language education with particular reference to the Irish Medium Education Sector.
- An examination into the barriers facing the perceived vulnerable groups such as lone parents, travellers, refugees and asylum seekers in terms of accessing education.
- An examination into broadening state recognition of a wider range of learning disabilities, particularly at Leaving Certificate level, to include disabilities such as dyscalculia.
- Demographic changes affecting primary and secondary schools.
- The impact of Brexit on the Irish education system (resumed).
- The protection of school lands.
- The delivery of schools i.e. the issue of the lapse in time between the announcement of the construction of new schools and the time at which construction is completed. It is proposed that the Forward Planning Unit in the Department be considered as stakeholders in this discussion.
- Substitute Teachers including the supply of and recruitment.

### Higher and Further Education

- The Committee's intention to publish a report on its findings in relation to the Report of the Expert Group on Cassells Report Future Funding for Higher Education (Cassells Report) and specifically the three options contained therein for a future funding model.
- The ability of the Irish higher education sector to acquire and retain International Research Funding with specific reference to EU Horizon 2020 Funding post Brexit.
- The proposed incorporation of the Programme for Research into Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) into Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and in particular, how the current functions of the PRTLTI will be maintained following this change.

### General

- Consideration of the draft *Action Plan for Education 2016 to 2019* published by the Department of Education and Skills.

- Regular engagement with representatives from Caranua as well as survivors who have dealt with the state body.
- An examination into education inequality and disadvantage to include student Stakeholders affected by the issue as well as community organisations.
- ASD classrooms in mainstream schools; an examination into the level and impact of shortages especially at secondary level.
- Examination into the reported low levels of educational attainment by Travellers.
- Capitation Grants.
- Further engagement on the topic of skills and apprenticeships, with particular focus on matters such as vocational education, the National Training Fund and upskilling those in employment.

#### Curricula:

- Further examination of Leaving Certificate Reform with specific interest in Continuous Assessment.
- Undertake a review of sexual health and relationship education, including the areas of contraception and consent, in primary and post-primary schools, colleges, youth clubs and other organisations involved in education and interactions with young people.
- Legislation
  - Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016 [PMB].
- Legislation (Not yet published)
  - Higher Education (Reform) Bill
  - Universities (Amendment) Bill
  - Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill
  - Qualifications and Quality Assurance Bill

#### Chairpersons Designate of State Boards

In accordance with the Government Decision of May 2011, which put new arrangements in place to ensure greater transparency in the appointment of persons to State boards and bodies, the Joint Committee will meet with the Chairpersons designate, as the nominations arise.

It presents an opportunity for Chairpersons designate to discuss the approach they will take as Chairperson with the Committee and to give their views as to what contribution they can make to the agency or body to which they are proposed to be appointed.

*Fiona O'Loughlin*

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Fiona O'Loughlin, T.D.  
Chair  
23 January 2018