



Houses of the
Oireachtas
Tithe an Oireachtais

TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

**AN COMHCHOISTE UM
OIDEACHAS AGUS SCILEANNA**

Clár Oibre 2019

Eanáir 2019

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

Work Programme 2019

January 2019

Joint Committee on Education and Skills

Work Programme 2019

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 22nd 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 2019 was agreed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 16th January 2019. 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 17th 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 Government 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 Government Bill.

Legislation

The Government Legislative Programme for Autumn 2018 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; and
- Retention of Certain Records Bill.

Five 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; and
- Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018.

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 2019 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 2019 on the emerging position for 2020.

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 Department 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; and
- (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 2019, 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 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.
- School catchment areas.

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 model¹.
- 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.
- Review of the role of school principals, in the context of the 1973 legislation, including their responsibilities and workload.
- Review of the responsibilities, workload and role of teachers, as well as the high volume of circulars relevant to them.
- New programmes and adequacy of training and support provided to teachers;

¹ The Committee must relist this item as it is unable to progress this matter because it still awaits provision of the Economic Evaluation it requested from the Department for Education and Skills more than a year ago.

- School Completion Programme [jointly with the Joint Committee on Children & Youth Affairs].
- School patronage, including an examination of the community national school model.
- Reduced classroom hours for children in disadvantaged/DEIS schools and reduced classroom hours for Traveller students.
- Progression to second-level and third-level education by members of the Travelling community.
- Examination of SUSI and its eligibility guidelines.
- The national availability of high standard Irish-medium education to school students.
- Pilot scheme for speech and other therapies in schools.
- Status of non-teaching staff in schools.
- Regular engagement with representatives from Caranua as well as survivors who have dealt with the state body.
- Funding for trainee educational psychologists.

Curricula:

- Further examination of Leaving Certificate Reform with specific interest in Continuous Assessment.

Legislation

- Education (Amendment) Bill 2015[PMB];
- Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016[PMB];
- Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016[PMB];
- University College Galway (Amendment) Bill 2017[PMB]; and
- Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018[PMB].

Legislation (Not yet published)

- Higher Education (Reform) Bill.
- Universities (Amendment) Bill.
- Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.
- Industrial Training (Amendment) 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, T.D.
Chair
16th January 2019