



BUNREACTH NA ÉIREANN
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**An Choiste um Oideachas, Breisoideachas agus Ardoideachas,
Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht
Breithniú ar Imleabhar Meastachán Athbhreithnithe (ATHBH) 2023
Vótaí 26 agus 45
Feabhra 2023**

**Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science
Consideration of Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2023
Votes 26 and 45
February 2023**

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

 Reporting on REV consideration..... 2

Committee commentary on consideration of REV2023..... 2

 The REV process 2

 Allocations and performance metrics 3

 Vote 45: 3

 Vote 26: 3

Introduction

On 1st February 2023, the Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (the Committee) met Mr Niall Collins TD, Minister of State for Skills and Further Education at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The purpose was to consider the spending allocations and associated performance metrics for the following Vote:

- **Vote 45:** Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

On 8th February 2023, the Committee met Ms Norma Foley TD, Minister for Education, to consider the same measures for the following Vote:

- **Vote 26:** Education

Standing Order 95(3) of Dáil Éireann states:

“The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure, and administration under paragraph (1) shall be— (a) for the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and (b) to assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.”

Select Committees are tasked with consideration of the annual Revised Estimates for Public Services (or REV)¹ that fall within their remit. While Select Committees have no role in approving the Estimates, it is an ongoing opportunity for the Committee to examine Departmental expenditure, to make the budgetary process more transparent, and to engage in a meaningful way on relevant performance issues.

On 1st and 8th February 2023, the Select Committee sent separate messages to the Clerk of Dáil Éireann, confirming consideration of Votes 45 and 26 respectively was completed, in accordance with Standing Order 101 of Dáil Éireann. Under Standing Order 100(2) of Dáil Éireann, this message is deemed to be the report of the Committee.

¹ The Revised Estimates (comprised of Ministerial Votes / Vote Groups) are included in the Revised Estimates Volume (or REV). REV2023 was published on 14 December 2022.

Reporting on REV consideration

Furthermore, Standing Order 215A of Dáil Éireann states:

Consideration of Estimates by Committees: Report of Committee on Estimate

215A. (1) Subject to Standing Order 215(2) and unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, Committees shall complete their consideration of Estimates referred to them pursuant to that Standing Order not later than 60 days after such Estimates have been so referred.

(2) Any report that a Committee proposes to make arising from its consideration of an Estimate shall be made within a further period of 14 days.

Under SO215A(2), this report summarises issues arising from the Committee's consideration and will be laid before the Dáil and sent to the Minister for consideration. This report will also be provided to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight which will examine all Select Committee reports, collate the information to identify any common issues or concerns, as well as examples of best practice, and make recommendations for the improvement of the consideration process.

This report comprises three sections as follows:

1. The REV process;
2. Allocations and performance metrics; and
3. Other

Committee commentary on consideration of REV2023

The REV process

On 14th December 2022, Mr Paul Kehoe TD, Cathaoirleach, wrote to Ms. Norma Foley TD, Minister for Education and Mr Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), requesting a short, non-technical Departmental briefing within a two-week deadline.

On 29th December 2022, a comprehensive briefing was received from the DFHERIS responding to the request.

On 7th February 2023, a briefing was received from the Department of Education partially responding to the request. The briefing was received the day before the Select Committee

meeting with the Minister for Education. The Committee Secretariat had issued a reminder by e mail on 11th January 2023.

On 7th February 2023, the Department of Education stated that the request for 2023 performance information and details on outcomes actually achieved was not feasible for 2023 or 2022 at that point (*refers to 14th December 2022 when the written request was made*). The Department also stated that it was not clear if a further request was to follow as part of the formal invite to appear before the Committee. It stated, that given, the ambiguity of the initial request, the Department decided to provide the usual briefing in line with the formal invitation that then issued.

Going forward, the Department has asked for prior engagement at line Department level on the co-ordination and content of such requests for information to ensure that the Committee members are being provided with the appropriate information in a timely manner. The Department noted that this is all to assist their role in examining the funding allocated and related outcomes throughout the annual Estimates cycle.

Allocations and performance metrics²

Vote 45:

Minister of State Collins briefed the Select Committee, *inter alia*, on:

- Changes to Subhead A5: Grants to SOLAS.
- Apprenticeships and how applications are processed
- Student accommodation and Measures to ease the cost of living for students.
- Measures to increase undergraduate places in courses such as Dentistry, Medicine and Veterinary where there are skill shortages.

Vote 26:

Minister Foley briefed the Select Committee, *inter alia*, on:

- School Transport Costs

² The Joint Committee agreed that Select Committee Members would ask General Questions for both Votes and not consider individual Programmes or Subheads.

- Proposed Free Schoolbook Scheme for Primary Schools.
- COVID Funding Measures.
- Removal of Funding from the National Parent's Council Post-Primary (NPCPP).
- The proposed roll out of the Programme of Counselling Services for Primary Schools.
- Publication date of the Leaving Certificate Results 2023.
- The need for Physical and Digital Literacy Programmes.
- Provision of School Places for Displaced Ukrainian Students.