
Opening Statement by the Minister of State for Skills and Further Education

**Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science, 28 November 2023**

Vote 45 – Supplementary Estimate 2023

A Chathaoirligh agus a Bhaill den Choiste (Chair, members of
the Committee)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning
and for the Committee's consideration of the 2023
Supplementary Estimate for the Department of Further and
Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

I am accompanied here today by officials from my
Department.

As part of Budget 2024, the Government outlined that Supplementary Estimates would be required to provide for a number of measures, including:

- A Cost of living package of €2.1 billion;
- Costs of humanitarian supports for Ukrainian refugees of €1.3 billion;
- Covid-19 related spending pressures; and
- Christmas bonus payments for eligible social protection recipients.

I will now provide the Committee with an overview of the 2023 Supplementary Estimate for Vote 45 which was agreed as part of the normal budgetary process.

At a Cabinet meeting dated 21st November 2023, the Government agreed to a Substantive Supplementary Estimate which increased the net Voted allocation for Vote 45 to €3,211,397. This allowed for funding of the following measures;

Firstly, €115 million for measures which will provide immediate and tangible relief for apprentices,

undergraduates and post graduate students against the challenges of the rising cost of living, as follows:

1. A once-off €1,000 reduction in the undergraduate student contribution fee for higher education students eligible for the free fees initiative. Estimated to benefit circa 94,000 undergraduate students.
2. A once-off reduction of 33% in the contribution fee for Apprentices in Higher Education;
3. An increase to the Postgraduate Fee Contribution Grant from €4,000 to €5,000 benefitting circa 1,790 students eligible for SUSI and;
4. A further €8.1 million investment in the Student Assistance Fund for the 2023/24 academic year bringing the total to over €17 million.

These are significant, impactful changes that will help to address the cost of living issues facing students.

Secondly, €8.9 million funding will provide supports to Ukrainians students in Ireland.

We are all well aware of the profound impact the war in Ukraine has had.

This funding builds upon the supports the Government put in place in the 2022/23 academic year for Ukrainian persons eligible under Section 60 of the International Protection Act, 2015. These supports include;

- tuition fees and payment of a monthly stipend for students in higher education,
- a temporary bursary scheme for those in further education; and
- Access to the Student Assistance Fund and mental health supports.

English language provision remains a priority and funding was agreed during Budget 2024 negotiations for the continued delivery by the 16 Education and Training Boards of the English Speakers of Other Languages programme for Ukrainians

wishing to develop their language competency as part of their social, economic and cultural integration into Irish society.

Finally, as part of this supplementary estimate, other technical adjustments, amounting to a total of €½ million are required to facilitate University pay and pension costs, impacts of Department of Social Protection Budget 2024 announcements on the further education sector and offset of 2023 expenditure pressures by savings expected on the Vote.

Appropriations in aid received greater than forecast brought the total net supplementary ask to €107 million.

I trust that this overview is of assistance to the Committee. I am happy to discuss these issues in more detail, and I commend the Supplementary Estimate to the Committee.

Thank you.