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Dear Peter,

Committee for Education – Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry

The Committee for Education wrote to the Department for Employment & Learning on 12th September 2014 requesting information on how the Department believes that the further and higher education sectors currently interact with shared education programmes and the integrated education sector.

Please find enclosed the Department's written submission in response to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA STANLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION – SHARED AND INTEGRATED EDUCATION INQUIRY

Written Submission from the Department for Employment and Learning

The Department for Employment and Learning thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide evidence to this inquiry. The provision of education to all learners regardless of their background is an unwritten tenet of the further and higher education (FE and HE) sectors in Northern Ireland, and the Department is entirely supportive of the delivery of professional and technical (vocational) education as part of the core school curriculum through the entitlement framework. We set out below some relevant features of the FE and HE sectors in relation to shared and integrated education, how they have engaged in this area in the past and what role they may usefully play in the future.

Further Education

An Integrated Sector

All six further education colleges offer fully integrated education and training. They are required under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group, and report to the Equality Commission on their progress.

The FE sector has played a significant role for over 30 years in providing education and training for members of all sections of the community in a society divided by social and political conflict. Divisions continue to be evident in politics, cultural expression, education, employment and many other aspects of daily life. However, by enabling students from different traditions and cultures to come together to work and learn with others from different backgrounds further education has made an important contribution to the development of a stable and more harmonious society, and has the potential to make further contributions.

The statistics relating to the section of the community from which further education learners are drawn is shown in table 1. This demonstrates clearly that the further education sector as a whole is integrated, with learners from all backgrounds

studying in FE. Colleges are also reflective of the geographical areas they serve, with their intakes closely reflecting the breakdown of the communities in their areas.

Table 1: Accredited Enrolments⁽¹⁾ at NI Further Education Institutions by Background - 2008/09 to 2012/13

Background⁽²⁾	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Catholic	52,919	60,728	55,902	55,726	56,206
Protestant⁽³⁾	46,625	51,988	46,744	46,643	50,566
Other Religion	583	1,266	486	548	621
No Religion	6,080	6,349	6,550	7,126	9,088
Not Stated/Not Known	36,279	43,019	45,743	43,033	40,325
Not Stated/Not Known (%)	25.5	26.3	29.4	28.1	25.7
Total	142,486	163,350	155,425	153,076	156,806

Source: Further Educational Statistical Record

Notes:

1. Enrolments are for courses leading to regulated qualifications.
2. Background is not a mandatory question and has a high non-response rate.
3. Protestant includes other Christian.

Working with Schools

Formal and informal links between schools and colleges have been a feature of the educational landscape for many decades. However, the more recent policy of school and college collaboration has its origins in the Costello Report – “Future Post-Primary Arrangements in Northern Ireland: Advice from the Post-Primary Review Working Group” (January 2004). Between 2004 and 2008 DEL and DE worked together to deliver the Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP), with DEL being the lead department and budget holder. The VEP was developed to progress the recommendations contained in the Costello Report and in the Further Education Means Business strategy to enhance the profile of professional and technical education, and to promote the need for collaboration among schools and FE colleges in the interest of all pupils.

The VEP grew from fewer than 2,000 pupils in the 2004/05 academic year, to around 10,000 pupils in the 2007/08 academic year who were enrolled on over 12,733 professional and technical education courses. Of the 12,733 courses, around 72% were taken up by 14 to 16 year old school pupils, and around 28% were taken up by 16 to 18 year old school pupils. By 2007/08, 220 post-primary schools (including 32

special schools), nine training organisations and all six FE colleges were involved in the VEP.

The VEP ended in June 2008, being replaced by the Entitlement Framework, which was also intended to take forward the recommendations in the Costello Report. Since September 2008, funding has been channelled through DE to schools through the Entitlement Framework funding formula, with schools 'buying' provision from colleges. The Entitlement Framework aims to provide access for pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum to enable them to reach their full potential no matter which school they attend or where they live. Under the Entitlement Framework, one third of the curriculum made available to pupils must be general (academic) in nature, one third must be professional and technical (DE use the term applied) in nature, while the remaining third is at the discretion of the school. However, pupils can still choose to follow a 100% academic course of study, the 'entitlement' being that applied courses have to be made available to all pupils. The Entitlement Framework is enshrined in legislation, and is being implemented by DE on a phased basis.

Currently further education colleges work together with schools in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework. Colleges are in the main tasked with the provision of high quality applied (professional and technical) education. The school and college collaboration aspect of the Entitlement Framework has worked well since its introduction, and colleges have had school pupils from different backgrounds attending their campuses to avail of the high quality courses on offer, delivered in state of the art facilities and led by industry expert lecturers. For example, in 2012/13 around 11,500 pupils availed of applied opportunities delivered by further education colleges under the Entitlement Framework policy.

School and college collaboration is important for two main reasons. Firstly, because of the enriched and industrially relevant courses that are made available to pupils as part of their wider curriculum. Secondly, as indicated above, colleges are recognised as being genuinely cross-community integrated educational establishments and, in addition, when attending colleges as part of the Entitlement Framework classes are often a mixture of pupils from different schools and from different backgrounds. Therefore, colleges' involvement in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework can contribute substantially to the shared education policy intent.

It is also important to highlight that college and schools work together on the area planning of provision to be delivered under the Entitlement Framework.

While school/college collaboration has worked well, there is a considerable risk that changes to how the Entitlement Framework is funded, in particular the removal of the 'ring fenced' budget allocation, may reduce schools' willingness to collaborate with colleges. Evidence is emerging that the view of many schools is that they will not be able to afford to collaborate with colleges to the extent that they have in the past when the funding model is changed from the 2015/16 academic year. If schools collaborate less with colleges, there is a risk that the lecturing capacity that has been built up over a number of years will be lost.

All of this is bound to have an adverse impact on the delivery of the shared education agenda, as colleges are fully integrated environments where school children would be studying professional and technical qualifications in classes made up of people drawn from all sections of the community. Additionally, we believe that further education colleges are much better equipped than schools to deliver these qualifications due to their facilities and expertise, so any retrenchment from colleges to schools of the applied section of the Entitlement Framework is likely to jeopardise the shared education outcomes and, indeed, the qualifications outcomes and wider education experience of school children, from whichever part of the community they are drawn.

Shared and Integrated College Estates and Facilities

As indicated, further education colleges, as cross-community institutions that cross all educational boundaries and welcome all ages and backgrounds, are at the forefront of shared education. This continues to be manifested through the continuing development of the college estate. For example, Southern Regional College has an approved outline business case to build a new college in Craigavon which will open up integrated education for a wider section of the population of the area than is currently the case in the existing separate campuses in Portadown and Lurgan. Also relevant is the recent progress of the Lisanelly Education campus in

Omagh which would open up opportunities for South West College to further develop engagement with the post-primary education system.

Colleges also continue to work together to share resources and facilities between themselves through the implementation of a shared services programme. While shared education is not a direct aim of this approach (it is more concerned with realising potential organisational efficiencies and bringing colleges together as a more coherent sector), the lessons learned from these processes may well be of interest to the schools sector when planning their own collaborative arrangements to deliver the shared education agenda.

Higher Education

The majority of Higher Education provision in Northern Ireland operates largely on a shared and integrated basis. The sector is comprised of five institutions, Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster, the Open University, Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College. The institutions are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to creating and sustaining an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of staff and students. The institutions are supported in their efforts by their respective Students' Unions.

Students enrolled at the institutions include all sections of the community as illustrated in the extract from the most recent HESA data below:

Religion ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Protestant	14,200	13,570	14,415	14,740	14,505	14,065
Catholic	19,820	19,380	20,995	21,380	21,275	21,115
Other	1,345	1,395	2,270	2,765	3,510	4,115
Not known	6,720	7,355	5,990	5,070	3,970	4,085
Non NI Domiciles	6,110	6,540	7,320	8,040	8,645	8,335
Total	48,200	48,240	50,990	52,000	51,905	51,715

Source: HESA

2 Information on religion, marital status and dependents is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions.

3. Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate.

Initial Teacher Education

Within the initial teacher education sector, i.e. the two universities and university colleges, accommodating faith based education provision within current structures leads towards religious imbalances in student enrolments at the teacher training colleges. This is also reflected in the table of NI domiciled enrolments at the university colleges below:

Religion	Stranmillis University College			St Mary's University College		
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2010-11	2011-2012	2012-2013
Protestant	715	820	895	5	5	10
Catholic	355	400	445	930	975	1,045
Other	25	30	30	5	5	5
Not known/available	160	40	45	10	5	10
Total	1,250	1,290	1,415	950	990	1,070

Source HESA

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 in line with HESA Policy.

The principle of shared and integrated education was a key issue in the recent Stage Two Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure. The Minister recently commissioned this review to consider how best to develop teacher education to a world-class standard; to enhance and improve sharing and integration; to examine whether the funding provided could be used more effectively; and the structural changes that need to be made achieve that. The Review Panel invited submissions from across the teacher education sector and held meetings with key stakeholders including representatives of the integrated education sector.

The final report reflects the evidence provided to the Panel, demonstrating commitment throughout the teacher education sector to the principle of shared education, and also the commitments outlined in key public documents such as *Programme for Government, Together: Building a United Community*; and the *Department of Education Ministerial Advisory Group 'Advancing Shared Education'*.

The Panel commented:

"It is clear from evidence submitted to us, and from our discussions with the teacher education institutions, that all subscribe to the principle of shared education, that all make a contribution at present to what shared education entails, and that all are

willing to contribute to the further development of shared education. Moreover, shared education is a key policy objective supported by all political parties in Northern Ireland and therefore has important implications for initial teacher education.

As the recent report to the Minister of Education defined it, shared education involves two or more schools or other institutions from different sectors working in collaboration in a way that “delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion”. Moreover, just as faith-based teacher education is accepted to require active participation in and personal experience of what it means to teach in a particular faith tradition, so we maintain that all teacher education students should, as part of their total programme and experience, engage in shared education activities of the kind we have mentioned.”

The Review Panel also draws attention to the future sustainability of the current Initial Teacher Education system and acknowledges that although this can build on the existing high quality provision, there is a need “to accelerate those developments in a way that will ensure financial sustainability. The report provides examples, such as encouraging providers to diversify their provision through perhaps greater collaboration and jointly offered undergraduate degrees between the Universities and the University Colleges, drawing on their different expertise.”

The Panel concludes:

“Underpinning all of these considerations is the need to make the best use of limited financial resources in training and developing a teaching force for Northern Ireland that is truly world-class. Given what we have learned about the commitment to achieving that objective that already exists in Northern Ireland, we believe there are good grounds for being hopeful.”

This is consistent with the Stage One Study of Initial Teacher Education (2013), conducted by independent consultants, which analysed the financial stability of the two university colleges and demonstrated that the colleges are heavily reliant on maintaining intake numbers and grant levels per student in the future to remain

financially viable and concluded that both colleges are unlikely to be financially viable unless significant efficiency savings can be obtained or additional income earned.

The Review Panel has included in the '*Conditions for Change*' section of their report that it recommends for any new Initial Teacher Education infrastructure, that each institution should ensure that every teacher education course should include a programme of shared education. The Review Panel acknowledged that this was a matter for the Department of Education however it believed that,

"initial teacher education has a vitally important role to play in the achievement of effective shared education and we hope that DE will agree to make the preparation of new teachers in shared education a significant and compulsory element for all programmes. Such an element is an integral feature of all four policy options outlined in the report."

Work is underway on engaging with the HE institutions about the detail of the report including the focus on shared education.

Conclusion

Taken together, the further and higher education sectors in Northern Ireland have a good track record in delivering education to all citizens, regardless of their background. In the light of the FE sector's remit for delivering the Entitlement Framework, the Department believes that there is the potential for the schools sector to learn from the experience of FE in delivering this approach successfully, whether it is through direct engagement with colleges or engagement at a departmental level. Engaging colleges as partners in delivering the Entitlement Framework will also assist greatly in achieving the aims of the shared education policy, as well as ensuring that the best professional and technical education is available to all school-age learners.

We wish the Committee well with its inquiry.