



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

AN COMHCHOISTE UM

OIDEACHAS, BREISOIDEACHAS AGUS ARDOIDEACHAS,

TAIGHDE, NUÁLAÍOCHT AGUS EOLAÍOCHT

Clár Oibre 2024

Eanáir 2024

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON

EDUCATION, FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION,

RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

Work Programme 2024

January 2024

33/ES/

MEMBERSHIP



Cathal Crowe TD
Fianna Fail



Paul Kehoe TD Fine Gael
(Cathaoirleach)



Carol Nolan TD
Independent



Jim O'Callaghan TD
Fianna Fáil



Marc O Cathasaigh TD
Green Party



Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD
Labour Party



Pádraig O'Sullivan TD
Fianna Fáil



Senator Aisling Dolan
Fine Gael



Senator Eileen Flynn
Independent



Senator Rónán Mullen
Independent



Senator Fiona O'Loughlin
Fianna Fáil (Leas-
Cathaoirleach)



Senator Pauline O'Reilly
Green Party

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INTRODUCTION

The Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science was established following Orders of Dáil Éireann and of Seanad Éireann on 31 July 2020 and 16 September 2020 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, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science for 2024 was agreed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2023. 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.

SELECT COMMITTEE

The Dáil Select Committee on Education was established by Order of Dáil Éireann on 31st July 2020.

The function of the Select Committee is to consider -

1. Bills,
2. Proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 164,
3. Estimates for Public Services,
4. Other matters as shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil,
5. Annual Output Statements, and
6. such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select relating to the relevant Departments.

PRE-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY

In addition, the Government Legislative Programme makes provision for the publication 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 Government Bill.

LEGISLATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The drafting of the Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill is progressing in parallel with the Committee's consideration of the General Scheme as part of the PLS process. It is intended to seek the approval of Government for the publication of the Bill in January and expected that the Bill will commence its progression through the legislative process during Q1 2024.

The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill, 2019 passed Second Stage in the Dáil on 8th July 2021 and is awaiting an order for Committee Stage. Officials are currently engaging with stakeholders and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) regarding proposed amendments to the Bill. Following this a memo for Government will be submitted to seek approval for several amendments. The Department is working towards moving the Bill to Committee Stage in Q1/Q2 of 2024.

DEPARTMENT OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

Not expected to bring forward any new legislation in Q1 2024.

Research and Innovation Bill, 2023 is due to be published shortly and will then go to first stage.

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 2023 is the Revised Estimate for Public Services (Education– Vote 26 and Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science – Vote 45)

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 Departments have 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 the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in advance of Budget 2024 on the emerging position for 2025.

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.

JOINT COMMITTEE

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

- items of business referred to it by one or both Houses, and
- 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 the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the remit of these Departments, in the European context, forms the basis of the Joint Committee's remit in terms of scrutiny of European matters.

Role of Oireachtas Committees in EU Matters is under consideration and a substantive narrative will be included shortly in a revised Work Programme.

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 2024 to December 2024, in addition to core business such as legislation etc., the Committee will focus on key priority topics within the remit of both Departments.

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

GENERAL

- Progress on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)s, as set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, under the remit of the Departments of Education and Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and how to build the provisions of Standing Order 100(4) into the ongoing work of the committee.
- The need for decent working conditions for all staff in the education sector including (a) resolving issues regarding pay equality & conditions for school secretaries, (b) review of the Role of School Principals and (c) review of the Work Loads of Teachers
- Progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the published Report of the Oireachtas Special Committee on Climate Action, that come under the remit of the Department of Education and the Department of Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to include Climate and Biodiversity in our education infrastructure.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVEL

- Educational Disadvantage and specifically (a) Review of DEIS Model; (b) Early Childhood Intervention, (c) Hidden Barriers to Education and (d) Traveller Children in Primary and Secondary Schools.
- Special Needs Provision and the examination of the lack of resources for those with additional needs, including a review of:
 - ringfenced funding to make sure every child who needs one has full access to an SNA for autism services provision.
 - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS),
 - School Inclusion Model (SIM).
 - state recognition of a broader range of intellectual disabilities.

- The Future of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in Primary and Post Primary Education.
- Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), to include identifying innovative measures to support school leadership and the quality of teaching.
- Underfunding of Catholic voluntary secondary schools with respect to other school types and the resulting implications for parents who choose to send their children to Catholic voluntary secondary schools.
- Inadequate access for primary gaelscoil pupils to a secondary gaelscoil.
- Religious instruction in Schools.
- Deaf Education with specific reference to Irish Sign Language students.
- Post Primary Education on Inishbofin Island
- Adequacy of the Department of Education's Digital Strategy with reference to Digitisation and artificial Intelligence in Classrooms.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

- The Cost of Student Accommodation and the impact on equality of access to tertiary education with reference to the National Student Accommodation Strategy.
- Review of the Apprenticeship Model.

- Reform of the scientific and innovation research models in higher education institutions to increase PhD candidates with specific reference to Precarious Employment practices.
- Review the implementation of the Recommendations in the Joint Committee Report entitled '*The Future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Irish Education*'.
- Measures to support a north-south programme of research and innovation, including an all-island research hub, through Universities Ireland.
- North South Student Mobility.
- Educational issues facing asylum seekers and those in direct provision with specific reference to the issue of access to third level education.
- The need for greater regulation and oversight of the English language teaching sector.

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.

Alternatively, the Committee may seek written submissions from candidates, outlining their (a) professional credentials and work experience and (b) key priorities in their appointment.

This presents an opportunity for Chairpersons Designate to outline their experience and the approach they will take as Chair to the agency or body to which they are proposed to be appointed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Paul Kehoe", is displayed within a light blue rectangular box.

Paul Kehoe, T.D.

Cathaoirleach,

23 January 2024