

What's in the Programme for Government for adult learning?

1. Additional education and training places

The PFG commits to

- Provide resources for an additional 15,000 places in training, work experience and educational opportunities for those who are out of work
- Expanding eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance
- Developing a new graduate and apprentice internship scheme, work placement programmes and further education opportunities for your young unemployed providing an additional 60,000 places across a range of schemes and initiatives.
- Provide a range of initiatives to increase access to further higher level education for the unemployed.
- Make literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into wider variety of further education and training.
- 30,000 additional training places across the education and training system, distributed in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills needs.

2. A new agency to replace FÁS

The PFG plans to

- Replace FÁS with a new National Employment and Entitlements Service so that all employment and benefit support services will be integrated in a single delivery unit managed by the Department of Social Protection. This integrated service would provide a 'one stop shop' for people seeking to establish their benefit entitlements, looking for a job; and seeking advice about their training options.
- This agency will process citizen entitlements such as supplementary welfare allowances, higher education grants and welfare allowances. It will manage as much as possible means testing for State entitlements. It will also be responsible for employment referral and training supports provided by FÁS. This service will offer users a higher level of personalised employment counselling with more frequent face to face interviews. Those on the live register who are identified as being most at risk of long term unemployment which will receive priority treatment for more intensive support. It will ensure active case management for people in need of assistance.

3. Review third level Funding

The PFG will

- Undertake a full review of the Hunt and OECD reports into third level funding before end of 2011. The goal is to introduce a funding system that will provide third level institutions with reliable funding but does not impact access for students.

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- Progress the merger of existing accreditation authorities; the National Qualifications Authority, FETAC and HETAC.

4. Introduce a 'Choice and Voice' approach for Service Users

- Rather than giving fixed budgets to traditional public service providers like the HSE, VECs and FÁS, the PFG promises to put resources into the hands of citizens to acquire services that are tailored to better suit their needs and less expensive for the taxpayer.

5. Education Policy

- In recognising the role of education in economic recovery and a more equal society, the new government will draw from top performing education models like Finland to reverse the decline in educational outcomes.
- The PFG commits to protecting frontline services, and seek efficiencies in line with the Croke Park agreement.

6. Supporting Lifelong Learning

- Lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for job seekers will be a high priority. The PFG will expand training options for jobseekers across the VEC, further and higher education sectors to facilitate upskilling of the labour force. Adult literacy will be addressed through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education.

7. Tackling poverty and protecting the most vulnerable

- The PFG commits to achieving the targets in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty.