

Introduction

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a genuinely employer-led organisation, with Commissioners drawn from the highest levels of the private, public and voluntary sectors, supported by trade union leadership.

Our job is to provide vigorous and independent challenge, advising the highest levels of UK Government and Devolved Administrations on employment and skills strategy, targets and policies. We will take account of the devolved nature of skills policy in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and employment in Northern Ireland and negotiate how it operates in the nations with this political context in mind.

All our work will consider issues of equality and opportunity for all in building a sustainable economy, and will be underpinned by a strong evidence base to ensure that the advice and recommendations put to Ministers are robust and of the highest quality.

During this financial year, we will prepare a five year Strategic Plan covering 2009/10 to 2013/14, setting out a long-term work programme that will ensure the UK has a strong and socially inclusive society in 2020.

Our first year

Our first year of work will focus on developing the UK Commission and our knowledge base. It will provide clearer pictures of the existing employment and skills systems, the experience of employers and individuals in engaging with these systems, and approaches to the development and utilisation of skills in the workplace.

Priorities

This year, we will

- Establish the UK Commission as a functioning organisation, including preparation of our five year strategic plan
- Assess the UK's progress towards becoming a world leader in employment and skills by 2020
- Prepare work for the government's 2010 review of the employment and skills system
- Begin reforming, relicensing and empowering Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)
- Offer an holistic view of the employment and skills systems, including higher education, and how they might be better organised to meet the needs of employers and individuals
- Advise the UK Government on how the employment and skills system in England can be made simpler for employers and individuals to access

Finance & governance

As a non-departmental public body (NDPB) and a company limited by guarantee there are controls and constraints which the UK Commission has to work under in terms of how we manage resources.

The UK Commission is finalising a governance framework which has been developed in accordance with Cabinet Office and Treasury Guidance.

Measuring performance

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills will assess progress towards meeting the milestones and deliverables set out in this plan as one element in a framework for understanding our performance.

Risk management

The UK Commission is fully committed to achieving influence and impact in pursuit of our goals and meeting our legal, financial and other obligations by managing risk efficiently and effectively.

This abridged version of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' 2008/09 Business Plan should be read in conjunction with the complete version, which is to be found at www.ukces.org.uk with further information about the UK Commission and its Commissioners.

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Programme of projects 2008/09

1) Advisory role projects

UK State of the Nations Report

Each year we will publish a comprehensive and authoritative report tracking the UK's progress towards the 2020 vision outlined by Lord Leitch in his 2006 review of skills.

Employment and Skills Services

These projects look at different aspects of the employment and skills systems and contribute to the government's 2010 review. The work will begin to establish a clearer picture of the current system and opportunities for improvements.

Linking Spatial and Sectoral Initiatives

Investigate collaborative work between sectoral and spatial employment and skills initiatives, linking the work of SSCs with the priorities of the devolved administrations and English regions.

Employment and Skills Local Customer Journeys

Work at local level to assess the effectiveness of customer journeys for employers and clients through the employment and skills systems.

Talent Mapping Project

As part of the work of the Talent Coalition, to map all the 'asks' that are made of employers in relation to the employment and skills system.

Simplification Project

Scope a review of the employment and skills systems in England. Start a debate on simplification of the post-19 organisational landscape.

2010 Review of Employment and Skills Services

Recommend whether more radical change is needed to integrate employment and skills services in England, Wales and Scotland.

Commission Projects

The UK Commission will offer advice that will contribute to the employability of new entrants to the workforce and the continuing development of skills of those in work.

Employability Skills Project

Build on existing SSC and other work to provide advice to Ministers on improving the employability of people from all educational backgrounds.

Skills Utilisation Project

Assess the evidence on the role of skills utilisation and high performance working in business success – a UK-wide project, with Scotland leading.

Review of Employer Collective Measures

Engage with employers and provide a view to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations on the levers available to stimulate employer investment in skills.

Employee Demand Study

Investigate what is known about the existing barriers and challenges facing low-skilled workers in accessing career-enhancing training.

Underpinning Research and Policy Analysis Programme

Underpinning projects will produce solid evidence on which other projects will be based. They will ensure the UK Commission understands the policies and performance of the employment and skills system, and can effectively monitor the progress of the UK towards its economic, employment and skills goals.

Research and Policy Analysis

A full annual research and policy analysis programme will include evidence reviews of 'what we know' about key employment and skills issues, research studies to fill identified gaps in knowledge, and policy analysis and evaluation of what works on a UK and international basis.

Labour Market Information

Development of a new standard for sectoral and regional LMI reports to ensure rigour, consistency and reliability of that data across the four nations.

2) Executive functions

SSC Performance and Relicensing

The UK Commission funds and manages the performance of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and advises on their relicensing, aiming for a strong and credible network of re-licensed SSCs that provides a coherent employer voice on skills issues.

SSC Relicensing

Commissioner Panels will review assessor findings and make recommendations. To be completed by December 2009.

SSC Performance – preparation

Preparation of contracts and performance management and measurement arrangements in good time for the relicensing of SSCs.

SSC Performance – ongoing assessment

SSC performance will be assessed through risk-based performance management process using the new SSC standard.

Qualifications Reform

Engagement of employers in driving qualifications and standards development will lead to revised qualifications and a reformed system which better meet the needs of employers, individuals and the economy.

The UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (UKVQRP)

Continue to lead Sub Programmes 1 and 6 to support the UK VQRP, and develop revised qualifications with a system which better meets employer needs.

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Review the strategic future direction of National Occupational Standards.

Apprenticeships

Work with SSCs and the UK Government and Devolved Administrations to improve the quality of and availability of Apprenticeships (Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland).

14-19 Development – Qualifications for young people

Manage Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) in England and contribute to policy and curriculum development in the rest of the UK.

Qualifications policy

Analyse developments in the UK Qualifications systems and support the alignment of national frameworks with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Related programmes

Career pathways for women

Test new recruitment and career pathways for women in sectors where there are skills shortages and where women are under-represented.

Employment and careers guidance

Ensure information and guidance offered in England is based on sound labour market intelligence to help individuals make better career choices.

3) Establishing presence and reputation

In order to achieve maximum influence with stakeholders, the UK Commission needs to establish its identity, vision and presence in the employment and skills landscape.

Establish UK Commission presence and reputation

Facilitate the establishment of a strong and positive corporate reputation with key audiences.

Support to UK Commission colleagues

Establish the core communications processes, mechanisms and collateral to help UK Commission colleagues execute and promote successful projects.

Maximising UK Commission profile

Seize on positive aspects over and above the immediate work programme to establish and positively reinforce the UK Commission's corporate reputation.

4) Creating, enabling and developing the organisation

Corporate Services

Creating a fully established organisation with the capabilities, structures, systems, processes and attitude to deliver the annual Business Plan efficiently and effectively, including developing business plans and financial and performance management and reporting. Enabling the UK Commission to fulfil its legal and Corporate Governance obligations, and Commissioners to perform their duties effectively.

