

Sir Michael Rake
UK Commission for Employment and Skills
Chief Executive's Office
Room 212
Richmond House
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London
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25 March 2008

Dear Sir Michael

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills: High Level Responsibilities

Summary

1. This letter sets out the Government's and the Devolved Administrations' long term purpose and responsibilities for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and represents the remit for the Commission for its activities across the UK.

2. The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have challenging ambitions to make the nation world-class in employment and skills. Achieving this offers the prize of improved employment, increased productivity and social inclusion in a rapidly changing global economy. The vision has been set out in:

- World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England
- Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work (in England)
- Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy
- Success through Skills: The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Skills that Work for Wales.

3. Employers, individuals and government all stand to benefit from making these visions a reality and all have a role in achieving a combined UK ambition. Central to our success is the establishment of an employer led UK Commission for Employment and Skills to strengthen the employer voice, deliver greater leadership and influence and to achieve the best from the employment and skills systems.

Purpose of the Commission

4. The UK Commission will help the UK achieve world class standing in employment, skills and productivity.

5. Primarily advisory in nature, the UK Commission will strengthen employer leadership, providing greater influence through a single employer-led board. It will advise on the employment and skills systems, seeking to ensure that they are flexible enough throughout the UK to respond effectively to competitive challenges, changing employment trends and employer demand. It will:

- a. develop an independent view of how employment and skills services can be improved to achieve increased employment retention and progression, skills and productivity;
- b. provide advice to inform strategic policy development, analysis and exchange of good practice to drive and shape the skills and employment system to meet the needs of employers and individuals;
- c. express its advice and recommendations at the highest level to Ministers in the four nations;
- d. fund and manage the performance of the Sector Skills Councils and advise Ministers on their re-licensing.

6. At all times the UK Commission will respect the devolved responsibilities and differing arrangements for employment and skills within the UK and reflect this in its work and approach. The UK Commission will provide advice to Ministers which they will consider individually and/or collectively. The UK Commission will not undertake single country reviews except by agreement with relevant Ministers in that country. The UK Commission will seek to establish a relationship of mutual respect and trust with government across the UK.

Responsibilities

7. The Commission's high level responsibilities cover the four UK nations collectively and individually. The UK Commission will:

1. Assess progress towards making the UK a world-class leader in employment and skills by 2020, in the context of the aims and priorities of the four UK nations.
2. Work effectively across the four UK nations to support the world class employment and skills agenda.
3. Advise Ministers in the four nations on the strategies and policies needed to increase employment, skills and productivity.
4. Monitor the contribution of each part of the employment and skills system in

creating sustained employment and career progression, challenging performance and recommending improvements in policy, delivery and further innovation, directly or as agreed with individual nations.

- 5 Advise on how employment and skills related services can best work together to deliver an integrated service that meets the needs of employers and individuals.
 - 6 Promote employer investment in people and the better use of their skills at all levels.
 - 7 Fund and manage the performance of the Sector Skills Councils and advise Ministers on their re-licensing.
8. We should be grateful if the UK Commission will begin consideration of its vision, strategy and one year operating plan to be received by the end of June 2008, with a five year plan to be produced by the end of 2008/9. Each of these will respond to the Remit above.



John Denham

Secretary of State
Department for Innovation, Universities
and Skills



James Purnell

Secretary of State
Department of Work and Pensions