Completion Instructions

We would be very grateful to receive your comments and views on the draft Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Please answer the following questions as completely as you can.

About you

1. Title: Dr (delete as appropriate)
   Surname: Morton..........................................
   Forename: Frances..........................................
   Postal Address: The Open University, 110 Victoria Street, Belfast..........................................................
   Postcode: BT1 3GN..........................................
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   Organisation Name: The Open University..........................

2. Which best describes your area of interest / expertise.
   ✓ Academia    □ Business    □ Local Government
   □ Member of Government Department
   □ Member of the Public    □ Governmental Organisation (NGO)
   □ Political Party
   □ Social Enterprise    □ Voluntary Community Sector
   □ Other (Please specify) .............................................
3. Permissions – I am responding as

4. Individual / Group/Organisation

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public?
   □ Yes □ No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis
   Please tick ONE of the following boxes
   Yes, make my response, name and address all available
   Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address
   Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation will be made available to the public.
   Are you content for your response to be made available?
   Please tick as appropriate
   □ Yes □ No
Innovation

4. Do you agree with the vision set out in the draft Innovation Strategy?
   Agree

Comment Box

The Open University welcomes the clarity of vision set out in the draft Innovation Strategy. The timeframe appears to be realistic, and the context of Northern Ireland's reliance on public sector support/financing is an appropriate place to start.

The Open University welcomes the breadth of innovation-vision beyond science and R&D, as well as the inclusion of the third sector.

We feel that the vision addresses, only in a limited way, what success looks like and what the benchmark for success is. Therefore we recommend that the final Strategy details this more, with clearer measures and benchmarks.

5. Do you consider the key themes in the draft Innovation Strategy are appropriate to ensure that businesses are better supported to engage in innovation?
   Yes

   If you have answered no, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

The Open University considers that the key themes are comprehensive and appropriate. In particular, we note the emphasis on ensuring that cultural change is woven through all themes. This is paramount to achieving change and ensuring that businesses are better supported to engage in innovation. However, the Strategy does not include a theme to link with local authorities, in order to stimulate regional economic growth, which will be necessary.
6. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Generation Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

Yes

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

This response questions whether the focus on ICT in schools sufficient. The Open University proposes the inclusion of other creative skills and lifelong learning, in addition to ICT and digital studies, at knowledge generation stage, in addition to knowledge exchange. We believe that this will enhance creativity and design.

The ‘Knowledge Generation’ chapter indicates a target on STEM graduates but no associated action to achieve this. We ask the Department to question if STEM graduates are the only ones that will be able to fulfil the goals outlined in the draft Strategy, and to take into consideration the contribution that entrepreneurs/business graduates could make.

There is little information on the type of anticipated schemes for supporting innovation: competitions, competitive tendering, joint collaborative funding or innovation grants. The mixture of funding schemes will have a direct influence on the success of uptake by SMEs. Therefore we propose that further clarification is given on this area.

The focus on innovative companies may not be appropriate. Innovation can play a differing role in different sectors/organisational size, so companies may be too generic a category. We propose further consideration of this.

We would welcome further detail on how businesses that have not previously invested in R&D will be encouraged to become active in this area.

The foresight activity, along with the design and creativity work, is very much welcomed by The Open University.

We recommend that consideration is given to how success will be measured in the Strategy, and what the annual uptake expectations of the various innovation schemes will be in any final draft.

Knowledge Exchange

7. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Exchange Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

Yes
If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose.

**Comment Box**

The Open University welcomes the support for programmes and initiatives to encourage collaboration between academia and business. However, we urge that consideration of other available funds to enable this, in addition to HEIF, to be made clear in a final Strategy.

We consider the HEFCE Catalyst fund for large companies to be a potential avenue for knowledge exchange, and ask that this is highlighted in the formulation of the final Strategy.

Throughout the draft strategy, change in culture is seen as a key driver of success, but there is little information on how the cultural transformation will be achieved. Funding in itself may not be enough to achieve cultural change. Therefore we recommend that the Strategy details additional and alternative methods of success.

We would like to highlight that small SMEs often find that engagement in KTPs can be very challenging, and the strategy should address this issue. We recommend a final document should detail how support will be provided for these companies, and how barriers will be minimised.
Knowledge Exploitation

8. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Exploitation Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

Yes

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

The Open University welcomes the inclusion of this section, and notes that the actions/goals are appropriate and explicit.

We welcome the emphasis on open data, but ask: can more be done? For example, engagement with Queen’s University ‘big data’ centre is going to be crucial in this area of innovation; therefore we recommend the Strategy includes proposals to do this.

We recommend that the strategy should take into account more fully the work done in higher education, and opportunities to exploit Intellectual Property.

At present, the draft Strategy has no information on student training, specifically on entrepreneurship. Students are the entrepreneurs of the future who will set-up the new SMEs and we recommend that the Strategy takes this into account by detailing further the provision of entrepreneurship training for students.

Cultural Change

9. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Cultural Change section, necessary to deliver the aims of the strategy?

Yes

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box
The Open University welcomes actions and interventions in the public sector – but seeks fuller and clearer justification on the specific ones mentioned in this draft Strategy.

The Open University also welcomes the appointment of a Chief Scientific Advisor but recommends that the remit and collaboration of such a post, if created, extends beyond science and the STEM agenda. The suggestion of developing Innovation Champions is considered to be a good one to communicate the value of innovation, and maintain a focus on innovate practice, across public sector and government.

We seek further detail in the final Strategy, on the provision of a forum for industrial innovators to discuss collectively and with HEIs / government on issues such as how to implement the strategy and achieve the anticipated outcomes.

Measuring Progress

10. Do you consider that the performance indicators and proposed monitoring arrangements are appropriate to provide timely indications of progress?

Yes and No.

If you consider that there are other indicators which should be used, please detail below.

Comment Box

We ask that the Strategy considers more fully how culture is considered to be a strategic driver, and for further detail on how success in this area will be measured. At present, within the draft strategy, culture change does not appear to be one of the indicators of success listed.

The growth of SME involvement between now and 2025 is unlikely to be linear. Therefore the Strategy must anticipate what growth expectations will be like in each consecutive period.
Equality Impact Assessment

11.
Do you have any comments on the Equality Impact Assessment (available on consultation website page at www.detini.gov.uk/innovationstrategy)?

No

If you have answered yes, please provide details

[Blank space for comments]

General Comments

12.
Are there any additional comments you wish to make in relation to the draft Innovation Strategy?

Yes

Comment Box
The Open University welcomes the draft Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland, and sees this as a positive step in achieving economic growth and development for Northern Ireland.

The Open University is the largest institution in the UK, and is uniquely placed to contribute to the implementation of the Innovation Strategy. Operating in and funded by the administrations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, our mission is to be “open to people, places, methods and ideas”. We aim for all Open University research to have a distinct and material impact across the economy, society and cultural life. The university supports a broad and vibrant research and enterprise portfolio and fosters research teams able to compete with the best in the world.

In the UK’s latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE, 2008) the Open University was ranked in the top third of UK higher education institutions. The results placed The Open University in the UK’s top 50 higher education institutions, according to the Times Higher Education Table of Excellence published on 18 December 2008. The University achieved the second largest improvement in UK research rankings, rising 23 places to 43rd. 50% of OU research was assessed in the RAE as internationally excellent, with 14% as world leading. The RAE results evidence the quality and stature of the University and its research.

With Queen's University, The University of Ulster and The Open University, Northern Ireland has three high quality, highly engaged and responsive universities.

The Open University has over 4,500 students in Northern Ireland, and offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. At present, 35% of our current students are studying a STEM qualification.
Questionnaire Complete – Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

Please email your response to innovationpolicyunit@detini.gov.uk

Or send by post to Innovation Policy Unit, Room 125, Netherleigh,
Massey Avenue, Belfast, BT4 2JP.