

Department for
**Innovation,
Universities &
Skills**

SIMPLIFICATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
DECEMBER 2008

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This is the Executive Summary to the DIUS Simplification Plan published 10 December 2008, the full report is available on the DIUS website. The Plan lays out how DIUS is simplifying requirements and processes for businesses, front line public sector workers and learners, to remove bureaucratic obstacles to success wherever possible. There is also some more detailed information on a few specific measures where we are making the biggest impact. This is followed by a summary of all the simplification initiatives underway or planned.

BETTER REGULATION IN DIUS

DIUS is committed to the Government's better regulation agenda. Working to the principles of better regulation: *transparency; accountability; proportionality; consistency; and targeting*, encourages innovation and will help the Department to deliver our aim to become an exemplar in policy delivery. Successes so far:

DIUS is working to simplify its regulations and processes; to remove bureaucratic obstacles to success for businesses, learners and the front line public sector wherever possible.

The 2008 Simplification Plan sets out how DIUS is continuing the progress it has made since the Department was created in July 2007, to drive forward the better regulation agenda in its policy making and delivery.

"As a personal overview on the new Packaged Goods Regulations...I cannot think of another piece of legislation that has been so universally welcomed as a simplification and clarification"

Michael Harvey, Principal Trading Standards Officer of West Sussex County Council

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN REDUCTION FOR BUSINESS

In 2005 the Government initiated an exercise to assess the administrative costs legislation imposes on businesses each year.

All Government Departments have made a commitment to reduce those business burdens. In 2006 the Prime Minister set a target of 25% reduction by May 2010 for each Department. The DIUS baseline administrative burdens total (as estimated in the 2005 exercise) was approximately £542 million per year.

Against that 25% target, by December 2008 DIUS has:

- already delivered savings estimated at £130.5 million p.a. – equivalent to 24%;
- identified simplification measures that will enable us to exceed our target, delivering estimated savings of nearly £170 million by May 2010 – equivalent to a 31% reduction.

In addition DIUS is reducing other costs for business, with savings in the plan to date of almost £12 million.

REDUCING BUREAUCRACY BURDENS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

DIUS has also been working to reduce the bureaucracy of regulation imposed upon the front-line public sector. A key element of this is to minimise the amount of data we ask for from staff and organisations like the colleges, universities and other service providers.

The Department has a 20% reduction target for public sector data requirements by May 2010. Since the 2007 Plan the number of data streams required by DIUS (and its non-departmental public bodies) has reduced from 33 to 30, and others have reduced frequency or numbers of bodies required to submit.

SOME KEY SUCCESSES SO FAR

National Weights and Measures Laboratory has brought in the **new Weights and Measures (Packaged Goods) Regulations 2006**, which have successfully removed a large number of prescriptive requirements from the previous legislation, while maintaining levels of consumer protection.

The new, simplified regulations have been warmly received by both businesses and Trading Standards. They also account for the vast majority of the DIUS administrative burdens reduction to date; £129 million administrative burden reduction is allocated to this one measure.

The UK Intellectual Property Office successfully negotiated **The London Agreement**, which came into force in May, ending the need for businesses to file full translations of patent applications in 15 European states. As translations are around 25% of the cost of a European patent, the London Agreement will save UK businesses an estimated £10 million every year. These savings will increase as more Member States ratify the treaty.

UK-IPO has also developed its online services, extending and improving the forms available electronically. Plus, there is a fast-track examination service for trade marks, introduced in April 2008. The revised online trade marks application form has prompted an increase in uptake from 40% to 56% by September 2008, largely down to ease of completion.

To simplify things for employers **Train to Gain**, is putting funding for training directly into businesses' hands. To date more than 100,000 employers and over 570,000 employees have benefited from Train to Gain.

"I thought I should just say well done. This new website is extremely clear and concise – better than the previous one. Great job – it's cleared the fog that was putting me off and actually encourages me to start getting patents. Well done again."

Customer feedback to UK-IPO

The further education Information Authority (IA) has been set up to improve data and collection standards for all organisations involved in further education and training. The goal is that only priority information is to be collected and then only once. That data can then be used for a variety of purposes.

One significant step forward is the introduction of **Unique Learner Numbers**. These should allow more efficient and effective data sharing, in on-line learner records, owned by learners themselves. So far, over 3 million people have been assigned unique learner numbers. The goal is that end users find the whole system simpler to navigate around.

For 2007/8 the estimated administrative savings of colleges are over £9.5 million. In addition the Learning and Skills Council estimate savings from the Managing Information Across Partners project of around £7 million each for LSC and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2008-9.

The independent **Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG)** was set up in 2004 to review policies for their regulatory impact on HE, explore areas of bureaucracy and recommend ways of doing things better. This year HERRG has delivered its final report and recommendations to DIUS, all of which have been accepted by the Department.

HERRG worked with the funding, inspection and data collection agencies to adopt the principles of lighter touch, risk-based activity in a Higher Education Concordat, launched in May 2006. There are now 28 signatories, including all the key regulatory bodies, committed to the Government's Principles of Good Regulation. HERRG has achieved its main objectives and the Concordat is now embedded within the sector.

SOME FUTURE SIMPLIFICATIONS WE ARE AIMING TO ACHIEVE

- NWML is planning to remove all 'prescribed quantities' for pre-packaged goods (except wines and spirits) from April 2009, giving business greater freedom over pack sizes and greater choice to consumers. Alongside this, NWML intends to move to a principles-based approach for quantity indications for food – rather than the current prescriptive system. These two measures should significantly reduce bureaucracy burdens for the businesses affected.
- In parallel with these changes, NWML is looking at the whole body of weights & measures legislation. Some of the legislation is outdated and complex after years of piecemeal change. NWML has commissioned research and had discussions with stakeholders on what reform might be appropriate and is now looking at what scope there is to further reduce burdens on business.
- The roll-out of the Framework for Excellence and an integrated service for employment and skills provision aims to give all those in the FE system

straightforward access to the information they need. The goal is that information will also be used more effectively by those inspecting the FE system to reduce duplication.

- A Challenge Panel, chaired by John Denham, the DIUS Secretary of State, is being set up to drive a faster response to employer concerns on bureaucracy in the new apprenticeships service and the skills and training system in general.
- The Train to Gain skills brokerage service will be integrated with Business Link's, so that businesses can get a wide variety of support and guidance in one place.
- Student Finance England, the new centralised and fully integrated student finance service, will be available for new students wishing to enter into Higher Education in September 2009.

"There have now been six years of sustained effort to ease the burden of regulation on universities and concern about excessive...regulatory requirements... has now greatly diminished."

Steve Bundred, Chair of HERRG,

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