



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Stephen van Rooyen
EVP & CEO
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11th November 2020

Dear Stephen

The Skills and Productivity Board

I am delighted that you have agreed to chair the Skills and Productivity Board (SPB). The evidence and analysis the board produces will play a significant part in addressing the most pressing gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the labour market, helping to rebuild our economy post-Covid-19 and deliver a bold skills agenda. As a business leader, and an employer focused on improving the skills of their workforce, I am grateful for you taking on this critical role.

In order to provide independent expert advice on the nation's labour market challenges, you will lead a board of six leading skills and labour market economists. My officials and I are grateful for your considered views throughout the selection process. I am pleased to confirm that - following a highly competitive selection process - the following individuals have now been appointed to the board:

- **Arun Advani - University of Warwick:** Assistant Professor, IFS Fellow
- **Claire Crawford - University of Birmingham:** Reader in Economics
- **Andrew Dickerson - University of Sheffield:** Professor of Economics and Director of Sheffield Methods Institute
- **Ewart Keep - Oxford University:** Emeritus Professor in Education, Training and Skills, Department of Education Oxford University
- **Grace Lordan - LSE:** Associate Professor & Founding Director of the Inclusion Initiative
- **Sir Christopher Pissarides - LSE:** Regius Professor of Economics and Nobel laureate

Under your leadership the board will play a central role in driving forward the government's ambitious plans to upgrade the skills system – including improving higher technical education - and boost productivity. I know we agree on the importance of ensuring that courses and qualifications on offer to students across

the country are high-quality, are aligned to the skills that employers need for the future and will help grow our economy after the coronavirus outbreak.

To this end, you and I have agreed the board will prioritise the following questions over the next 12 months:

- **Which areas of the economy face the most significant skills mismatches or present growing areas of skills need?**
- **Can the board identify the changing skills needs of several priority areas within the economy over the next 5-10 years?**
- **How can skills and the skills system promote productivity growth in areas of the country that are poorer performing economically?**

This is an ambitious agenda that reflects the challenging economic context in which we find ourselves. Each of these questions covers a wide field of enquiry and opens a broad range of possibilities for research. As you begin to tackle these three questions, I would encourage you to prioritise the accumulation of evidence that can have the greatest impact, to build on the excellent analytical work that has already taken place inside and outside government, and to focus on actionable insights that we can use to reform our skills system. My officials stand ready to provide support where necessary.

Furthermore, I know that you and I share the view that we could learn a great deal from work happening in other countries, facing similar issues in their labour markets. I welcome the board's advice on what 'good' looks like across the globe.

I look forward to seeing the SPB's outputs on these vital questions and for their contribution to ongoing efforts to levelling up opportunity across the country and ensuring people have the skills they need to progress. As we continue our important work on building a post Covid-19 economy, I ask that the board operates closely with officials in my department and across government to ensure wider priorities on labour market recovery and economic growth are considered within their agenda.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education