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# 1. Section A: Understanding the requirements

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## 1.1. Background

The Scottish Government wishes to commission a suitable contractor to carry out a large-scale telephone survey exploring the views of Scottish employers on skill shortages, skill gaps and employer led training activity. The Scottish Employer Skills Survey (ESS) 2020 will mirror the UK ESS as previously carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and the Department for Education (DfE) but with some revisions to reflect current Scottish Government policy priorities and the skills impact of Covid-19.

## 1.2. Research and policy context

The following paragraphs outline key findings of existing research in this area and relevant policies which will inform and shape the design and implementation of the Scottish ESS 2020.

**Scotland's National Performance Framework** uses progress under a number of key national indicators to measure progress towards a range of outcomes for Scotland as a whole. These include two measures from the UK ESS, namely; skills shortage vacancies, and skills underutilisation.

In the **2017 UK ESS**, (the most recent UK employer survey for which results are available) 20% of Scottish employers reported having at least one vacancy with around a quarter (24%) of these vacancies proving hard-to-fill with applicants lacking skills, qualifications or experience. This was echoed in the **Scottish EPS 2019** study, which found that 48% of employers had vacancies over the last year and 43% had recruited staff.

The proposed Scottish ESS will play an important role in informing decision making under the '**Future Skills Action Plan**'. The Plan is designed around four themes with a number of related actions under each: (1) Increased system agility and employer responsiveness; (2) More opportunities to upskill and retrain; (3) Ensuring financial sustainability of the system ; and (4) Accelerate learner journey recommendations.

Similarly, data gathered through the Scottish ESS 2020 will assist in measuring progress towards a number of outcomes named in the **STEM: education and training strategy (2017 – 2022)**, such as; a) reductions in the equity gaps in participation and achievement in STEM learning and b) increased employment in STEM-related occupations and employers are more satisfied with the STEM skills and capability of the people they employ.

## 1.3. Aims and objectives

We understand the aim of the Scottish ESS 2020 is to provide insight into employer views on skill shortages, skill gaps and employer led training activity and provide a broad platform of evidence to inform strategic and policy decisions across the Scottish Government and its stakeholders. In order to meet the aims set out above, the objectives of the work are to:

- Develop a robust sampling strategy and survey instrument which will deliver the range and quality of information required;
- To conduct a brief survey pilot before the main stage fieldwork;
- To conduct the survey fieldwork (telephone interviews using CATI) to the highest standards;
- To provide a set of results that informs Scottish skills and employment policy; and
- To produce high quality reports and outputs to Official Statistics standards.

## 1.4. Challenges and ethical considerations

### Robustness of data

A number of aspects of our methodology will ensure that your study withstands public scrutiny: rigorous questionnaire testing and piloting; highest quality interviewer recruitment and training; detailed approach to sample design; use of specialised International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accredited software.

### Response rate

The business environment created by Covid-19 in addition to the time constraints already experienced by business respondents may make a strong response rate more difficult to achieve. We will employ a number of techniques designed to overcome these challenges (explored in Section 2.5).

### Capacity

You can be confident that we have the well-established operational capacity to conduct the maximum number of interviews. We have access to a large pool of trained and experienced interviewers who are accustomed to delivering large-scale, telephone-based surveys.

## 2. Section B: Research design and methodology

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### 2.1. Planning

On commissioning we would set up an initial project meeting with the Scottish Government contract manager and Research Advisory Group (RAG) to discuss and review the scope and detail of the assignment. During this meeting we would agree any refinements to the overall approach (if required), and the targets for the delivery of the timetable. Following the meeting, we will develop a Project Initiation Document for approval by the Contract Manager.

### 2.2. Sample design

The design of the survey sample will be critical to ensuring that the research is robust, reliable, representative, and replicable. As the results from this survey will be used in conjunction with results from the UK ESS to identify trends over time, it is also important that there is

consistency in the sampling approach so that comparisons can be drawn. We have proposed a sampling frame with these concerns in mind.

## Sampling frame

The sampling frame for this study includes all establishments operating in Scotland with two or more people working for them. The sampling unit is therefore at 'site' rather than organisation level. We understand that an exact definition is to be agreed with the Scottish Government Contract Manager prior to drawing the sample. This will include definitions of 'employer' and 'establishment' for the purposes of the survey.

## Sampling approach

We recognise the benefits of keeping the approach to sampling consistent with previous instalments of the UK ESS, especially as the data collected will be used to track key indicators (for example, skill shortage vacancies and skills underutilisation). As part of the planning process, we will review the approach used in the UK ESS, and using data from the Inter-Departmental Business Register 2019 (IDBR), provide an updated paper on sampling for the project.

We note that you have asked for 2,500 interviews to be conducted between October and December 2020. We propose using a stratified random sampling approach with sufficient sampling of establishments in each of a number of key strata (geography, sector and size) to allow for robust sub-group analysis. This will mean that smaller sub-groups of employers (such as large establishments) will be oversampled to ensure that a sufficiently large number of interviews are achieved. This would be re-weighted to reflect the population when reporting at the overall level.

We understand from the project specification that you require an approach to sampling which will enable robust reporting by:

- Industry sector
- Up to 6 employer size bands
- Regional geography on the basis of Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) area
- Urban/rural split

### **Sector quotas**

Quotas by industry sector will use 13 sector categories consistent with those used in the most recent UK ESS for which results are available (2017). Like in the sampling approach for the UK ESS, half of the interviews to be conducted (1,250) will be divided equally across the 13 sectors, with the remaining half in proportion to the number of establishments each sector accounts for within the population. This method will increase the number of interviews achieved in the smaller sectors compared to what their allocation would be through a purely proportional approach, and therefore enhance the confidence with which data within smaller sectors can be reported.

Using this method produces a sector target for 'Public administration' which is greater than the number of interviews realistically achievable given the population. In the table below, this has been revised down using the method employed in the UK ESS (2017), that is, reduced to

a maximum possible using an 8:1 sample to target ratio, with the difference redistributed as evenly as possible across the remaining sectors. We can review and revise this approach, if necessary, with the Scottish Government contract manager on commissioning.

**Table 1: Proposed sampling stratification by sector**

Sector	No. in population	% of population	Interview target	% of total interviews
Primary sector & utilities (SIC 01-03, 05-09, 35-39)	18,820	11%	236	9%
Manufacturing (SIC 10-33)	9345	5%	170	7%
Construction (SIC 41-43)	20,680	12%	249	10%
Wholesale & retail (SIC 45-47)	23,230	13%	267	11%
Hotels & restaurants (SIC 55-56)	14,175	8%	203	8%
Transport & storage (SIC 49-53)	5,615	3%	144	6%
Info & comms (SIC 58-63)	10,560	6%	178	7%
Financial services (SIC 64-66)	3240	2%	127	5%
Business services (SIC 68-82)	50,289	28%	459	18%
Public administration (SIC 84)	55	0%	7	0%
Education (SIC 85)	2000	1%	118	5%
Health & social work (SIC 86-88)	6505	4%	150	6%
Arts & other services (SIC 90-96)	12,550	7%	192	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177,064</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>100%</b>

### *Size band quotas*

Quota targets would be set for 6 size bands as shown in the table below. It should be noted that these size bands are taken directly from the IDBR 2019 and are therefore slightly different from those used in the UK ESS. Interviews would be distributed in proportion to the overall employment accounted for by employers of that size but adjusted to allow for a sufficient number of interviews for subgroup analysis in the larger size categories. This will be corrected at weighting stage.

**Table 2: Proposed sampling stratification by size band**

Size band	No. in population	% of population	Interview target	% of total interviews
0 - 4	132,405	75%	1550	62%
5 - 9	23,425	13%	400	16%
10 - 19	11,800	7%	200	8%
20 - 49	5,915	3%	150	6%
50 - 99	1,840	1%	100	4%
100 +	1,690	1%	100	4%

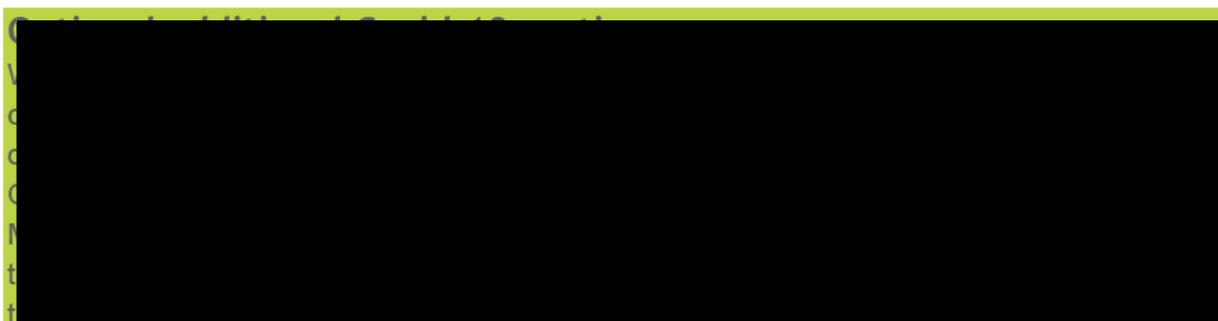
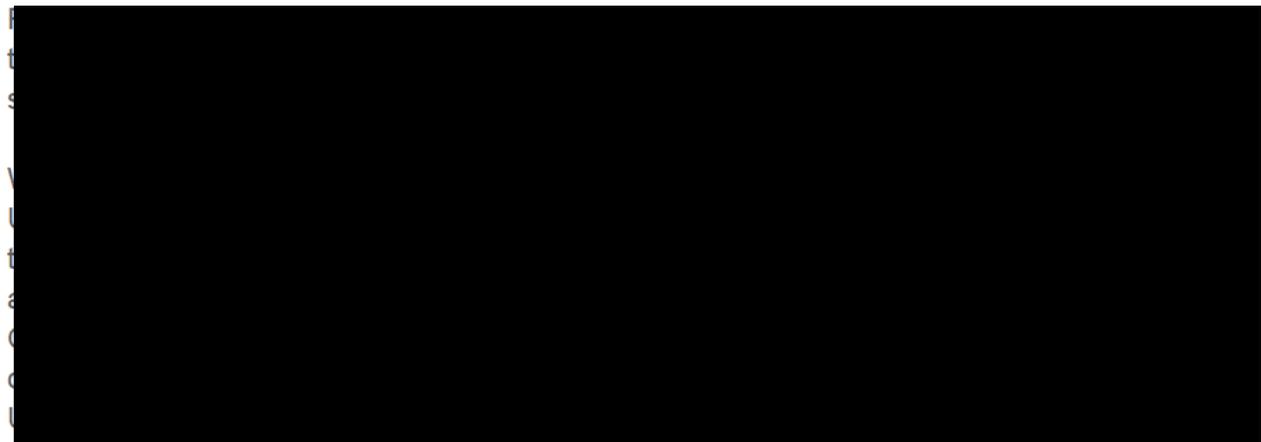
### **Geographical quotas**

Quotas will be set for two geographical measures: (1) by Regional Outcome area and (2) Rural/Urban location (to be defined by Contract Manager). Similar to the quotas discussed above, these will be based on the business population according to the IDBR 2019.

## **2.3. Sample contacts**



## **2.4. Questionnaire design**



## Piloting

As with all of our surveys, we will conduct a short pilot survey with 20 businesses prior to implementation of the main fieldwork. This will allow us to check the average interview length as well as test the flow and respondent understanding of any newly added questions. In this way, we can identify any issues at an early stage and make changes as necessary.

## 2.5. Survey implementation

The survey will be implemented using a telephone methodology. All telephone interviewing would be conducted by our executive team of interviewers who are fully trained and highly experienced in carrying out business surveys of this type. They would be briefed on the specific requirements of this study, including the background to the research and key objectives.

[Redacted text block]

## Response rates

[Redacted text block]

## Covid - 19 and the Scottish ESS 2020

- It is our experience from conducting business surveys throughout May and June that high-level staff members can still be reached at this time.
- The Perceptive Insight research team will work closely with the Contract Manager to ensure that fieldwork overlap with other employer surveys and consultations is avoided where possible.
- In addition, our interviewers will be sensitive to the concerns of potential respondents and to circumstances in which continuing with an interview may be inappropriate.

- To mitigate the risk of reduced capacity due to illness, we have dedicated a generous amount of resource in our methodology to the successful delivery of this project.
- We are fully set up to conduct meetings remotely through the teleconferencing application of your choosing while restrictions on travel remain in place.

## 2.6. Analysis and reporting

Initially data will be cleaned, and any open-ended questions coded. The processes for ensuring the effective cleaning of data and correction of any errors is outlined in detail in Section E on Quality Assurance. All establishments will be coded to 4 digit SIC 2007 code. Should any occupational data be collected this will be coded to 4 digit SOC 2010 code.

### Weighting

On commissioning, we would discuss in detail with you the weighting strategy to be implemented. At a minimum this will involve weighting the data to account for the oversampling of businesses in certain sectors and within certain size bands to reflect the business population captured in the IDBR 2019.

The weighting strategy will further account for the impact of Covid-19 on particular business sectors, such as, tourism and hospitality. We can also account for seasonality within our approach (noting that the fieldwork for the Scotland ESS 2020 will take place at a different time of year than that of the UK ESS series.)

### Analysis

Following the data cleaning and weighting process, we will analyse the resulting data by key breaks to allow commentary on the following subgroups at a minimum:

- Industrial sectors;
- Employment size band; and
- Regional geography and urban-rural split.

Our specialised survey software will allow us to conduct a range of significance tests on the resulting data and present key descriptive statistics (e.g. standard deviation and standard error).

### Reporting outputs

From the specification, we understand that the following key outputs and deliverables will be required from the project:

- An inception report outlining the final agreed methodology, timetable and risk assessment;
- A progress report after the main survey fieldwork is completed;
- A final report with clearly articulated key findings to Official Statistics standards;
- A technical report describing research design, weighting, sample error and statistical confidence;
- Excel data tables with hyperlinked contents page and a metadata tab with explanatory notes and a key to support the interpretation and usage of the data;
- A **full anonymised, clean dataset** containing all the data collected or analysed during the research in SAS format or other agreed format;
- A **smaller, cleaned, non-disclosive dataset** for use by expert users;



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Qualifications**

[REDACTED]

**[REDACTED] - Operations Director**

**Individual role**

[REDACTED] will be responsible for oversight of the CATI interviewing, including;

- Ensuring sufficiently trained and experienced resource is allocated to the project;
- Quality assurance of the interviewing team is conducted in line with IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme) standards; and
- The telephone interviews are conducted to the agreed timetable.

**Career history**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Qualifications**

[REDACTED]

**[REDACTED] - Senior Research Consultant**

**Individual role**

[REDACTED] will be responsible for the day-to-day project management, design and reporting.  
[REDACTED] will undertake the following tasks:

- Produce the initial draft planning document;
- Prepare the draft sample design;
- Liaise with the Scottish Government Contract Manager to finalise the questionnaire;
- Organise the pilot of the questionnaire and feedback;
- Provide a briefing to the interviewer team;
- Prepare regular updates to the Contract Manager and the progress report on completion of the main survey fieldwork;
- Instruct the data analysis; and
- Drafting and revisions of final and technical reports.

## Career history

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Qualifications

[REDACTED]

## [REDACTED] - Senior Research Consultant

### Individual role

[REDACTED] will assist [REDACTED] in all aspects of the project design, data analysis and reporting. [REDACTED] will undertake the following tasks:

- Set up/script the questionnaires for CATI;
- Conduct checks of the CATI set-up;
- Conduct data analysis;
- Assist in preparation of final and technical reports and other project outputs.

## Career history

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Qualifications

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Client: InterTradeIreland

Contract title: Quarterly Business Monitor

**Project description** Perceptive Insight has been responsible for the implementation and delivery of the all-island Quarterly Business Monitor Survey since 2010. The Business Monitor is the largest all-island quarterly survey of business sentiment, with an achieved sample of 750 businesses (375 in Ireland and 375 in Northern Ireland) for each quarterly wave of the survey. In total, over 20,000 interviews with businesses have been completed as part of this project.

Each quarter a core set of questions are asked about business economic performance, outlook and issues that impact the business. This set of questions is supplemented with thematic questions. For the current quarter, these questions relate to Covid-19, Brexit preparations and skills.

Each quarter a comprehensive report and infographic<sup>1</sup> is prepared based on the analysis of the survey data. This report includes a summary of the survey findings, detailing trend data to compare the results against previous quarterly data, analysis by sector, size, location and export activity.

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**Date of contract** 2010 – ongoing with quarterly reporting

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Client: NIE Networks

Contract title: Customer Consultation Research

**Project description** Perceptive Insight's role was to support the work of the Consumer Engagement Advisory Panel (CEAP), through the facilitation of a comprehensive programme of research. This research was conducted over a number of phases, consisting of and incorporating a range of methods, including:

- 23 depth interviews with non-domestic/business consumers;
- Workshops with stakeholders;
- 500 telephone interviews with non-domestic/business customers; and
- An in-depth literature review to explore existing examples of best practice on the theme of consumer engagement.

On completion of each phase of the research, comprehensive written interim reports were provided to the client, before the submission of an overall summary report<sup>2</sup>. The findings were used to shape the Business Plan and budget application for the period 2017 to 2024.

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**Date of contract** 2016 and November 2019 to January 2020

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<sup>1</sup> <https://intertradeireland.com/insights/business-monitor/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nienetworks.co.uk/investment/investing-for-the-future/document-library>

Client: Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DFER)

Contract title: Quarterly Business Monitor

**Project description** DPER is responsible for the development, promotion and implementation of the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Initiative in the Civil Service. In 2016 and again in 2018, DFER commissioned Perceptive Insight to undertake research with businesses to provide an understanding of the extent to which businesses interact with the public sector and their perception of and level of satisfaction with the services provided.

For each of these studies over 500 telephone interviews were conducted with businesses in the Republic of Ireland. A comprehensive report<sup>3</sup>, data tables and infographic were produced, and the findings were presented at the Quality Customer Service Network (QCSN) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

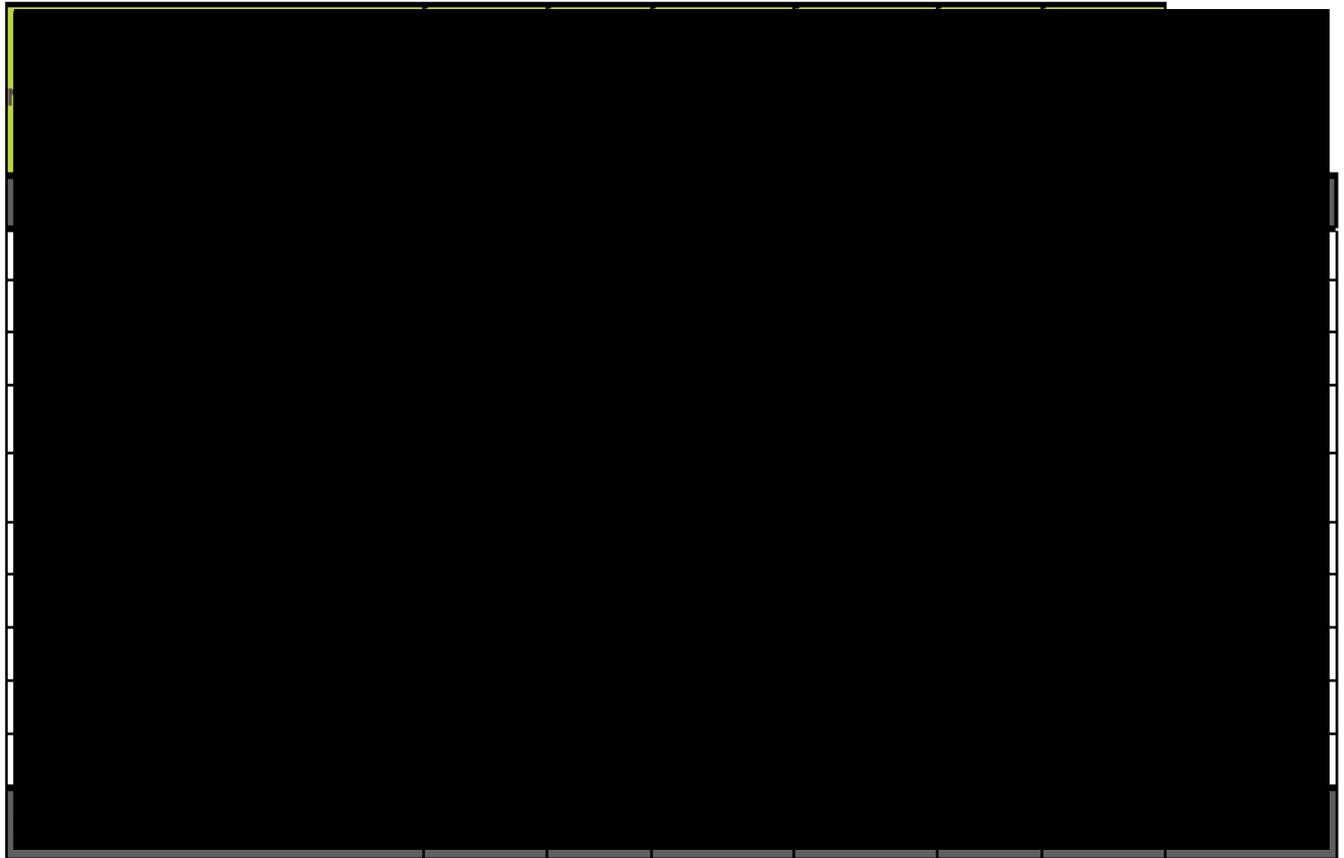
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Date of contract 2010 – ongoing with quarterly reporting.

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## 3.2. Resource allocation

**Table 3: Proposed resource allocation**



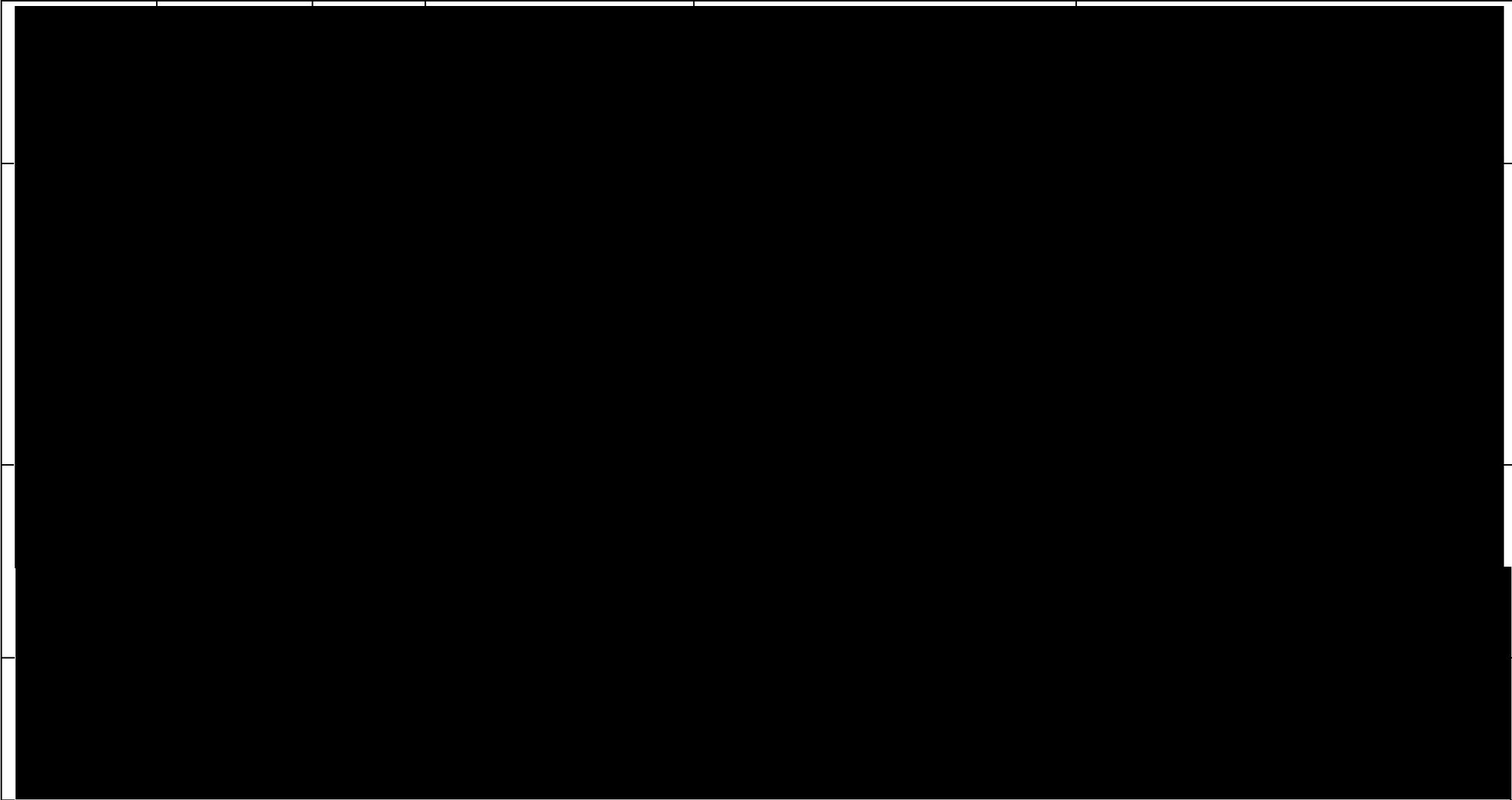
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3

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/7434/3f941b8a7588401b804482b6cc779553.pdf#page=1>







### 4.3. Timetable

[Redacted]

[Redacted Table]

\* [Redacted]

## 4.4. Data security processes

[Redacted text block]



We will, however, carry out a number of checks to clean and validate the data. All steps to be taken to ensure a clean dataset will be set out in a separate document and reviewed prior to completion of the fieldwork. This will ensure that a rigorous data cleaning process can be carried out efficiently. We will range check all fields against the questionnaire. For all skipped questions and routed 'not applicables' the responses will be rigorously checked and validated. Inter-field consistency checks will also be conducted. Open-ended string questions will be recoded to numeric values against a suitable coding frame developed by Perceptive Insight research consultants.

A consistent method for deriving variable names or codes for any new variables will be agreed with the Contract Manager prior to implementation. We will provide to you in Excel format, a detailed index of variable syntax and logic. This will additionally outline any derived variables that have been created for analysis purposes.

## 6. Section F: Sustainability

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Perceptive Insight accepts responsibility for the harmful effects its operations can have on both the local and global environment and is committed to reducing them. We commit to comply with all relevant environmental legislation. To support this we will implement a training program for staff to raise awareness of environmental issues and enlist their support in improving the Company's performance. Perceptive Insight will encourage the adoption of similar principles by its suppliers.

The key points of our strategy to achieve this are:

- Minimise waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are as efficient as possible;
- Minimise toxic emissions through review and careful selection of energy sources and energy efficient equipment;
- Actively promote recycling both internally and amongst our customers and suppliers;
- Source and promote a product range to minimise the environmental impact of both production and distribution;
- Meet or exceed all environmental legislation that relates to the Company.

## 7. Section G: Fair work

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The following paragraphs outline Perceptive Insight's approach to implementing the principles of the Fair Work Framework.

### *Effective voice*

We recognise and value the contribution that our staff make both to the company and to our clients. The staff at Perceptive Insight have membership of the following trade organisations:

- Market Research Society (MRS);
- Association of Qualitative Researchers (AQR); and
- Social Research Association (SRA).

### *Opportunity*

In accordance with the NI Act 1998, it is our policy to provide equality of opportunity to all. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. Decisions on employment, selection for office, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful

discrimination, and based on aptitude and ability. Pay scales are objectively determined and linked to job title.

### **Security**

Permanent contracts are given to all core staff. Staff on flexible contracts are given considerable notice of potential changes in working hours and availability of future work and are not prevented from pursuing additional employment outside of their contracts with Perceptive Insight.

### **Fulfilment**

We are delighted to have attained the **Investors in People** (IIP) accreditation in recognition of the training and development that we provide to our staff.

### **Respect**

We are committed to: promoting equality of opportunity for all persons; promoting a good and harmonious learning and working environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment is tolerated; preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation; and taking lawful affirmative or positive action where appropriate.

## **8. Section H: Business continuity and disaster recovery**

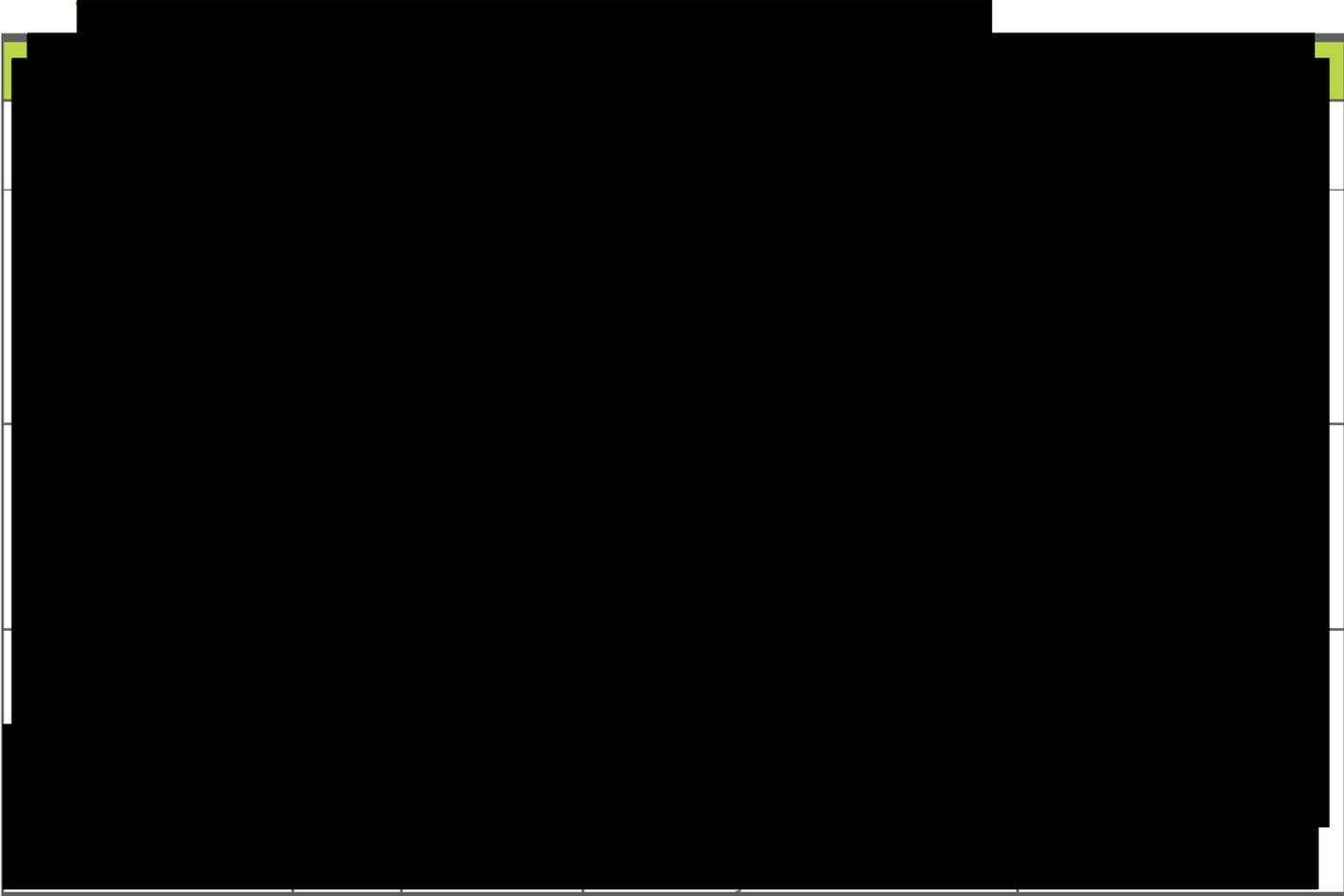
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## 9. Non-scoring information only questions

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Q1	SCOTTISH BUSINESS PLEDGE (NON-SCORED)  The Scottish Business Pledge is a Government initiative which aims for a fairer Scotland through more equality, opportunity and innovation in business. Information on this can be found at the following link: <a href="https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/">https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I have signed this.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, but I commit to signing it in the future. (Do not have a premises in Scotland but commit to signing if this changes)
Q2	LIVING WAGE (NON-SCORED)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am accredited

	<p>The Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative and the Living Wage Foundation recognise and celebrate the responsible leadership shown by Living Wage Employers and support employers to incorporate the Scottish Living Wage into organisational structures long term. More information can be found at the links below:</p> <p><a href="http://scottishlivingwage.org/">http://scottishlivingwage.org/</a>  <a href="http://www.livingwage.org.uk">http://www.livingwage.org.uk</a></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No, but I commit to obtaining accreditation in the future</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, but I commit to paying staff directly involved with the delivery of this contract the Real Living Wage</p>
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