

# FURTHER EDUCATION INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

College of Agriculture, Food  
and Rural Enterprise,  
Enniskillen, Greenmount  
(Essential Skills only) and  
Loughry Campuses  
Inspected: January/February 2010

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

|                         |   |               |
|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| Almost/nearly all       | - | more than 90% |
| Most                    | - | 75%-90%       |
| A majority              | - | 50%-74%       |
| A significant minority  | - | 30%-49%       |
| A minority              | - | 10%-29%       |
| Very few/a small number | - | less than 10% |

In assessing the various features of the provision, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

| DESCRIPTOR     |
|----------------|
| Outstanding    |
| Very Good      |
| Good           |
| Satisfactory   |
| Inadequate     |
| Unsatisfactory |

## **PART ONE - SUMMARY**

### **1. CONTEXT**

1.1 The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (the College) was formed in April 2004 as a result of the recommendations of a Review Panel chaired by Dr Daniel O'Hare<sup>1</sup>. It is an amalgamation of the three former agricultural colleges located at Greenmount (Antrim); Loughry (Cookstown); and Enniskillen. The College is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (the Department) and has a service level agreement with it to provide education and training for the land-based and food industries. The Department funds the College to deliver further and higher education, industry training, knowledge and technology transfer and benchmarking programmes.

1.2 The Greenmount campus is the main administration centre for the College and is where the College Director is based. In Enniskillen, the campus manager is the Head of the Equine Education Branch and in Loughry the campus manager is the Deputy Director (Head of Education Service).

1.3 The Enniskillen campus which is located on the outskirts of the town, was founded in 1967 and started delivering equine courses in 1992. In addition to the college facilities, the college leases the Necarne Equestrian Centre from Fermanagh District Council. The Greenmount campus which is located on the outskirts of Antrim town was founded in 1912. The Loughry campus which is located on the outskirts of Cookstown in County Tyrone, was founded in 1908 as The Ulster Dairy School, and started delivering food courses in the late 1960's.

1.4 Due to the specialist provision provided at both the Enniskillen and Loughry campuses they both have a wide catchment area for students. Students at the Enniskillen campuses come from across Ireland with approximately one-quarter coming from the Republic. The courses at Loughry attract students from all over Northern Ireland.

### **2. PROVISION**

2.1 Each campus of the College provides courses in a specialist area. Equine courses are delivered at the Enniskillen campus; agriculture, horticulture, land-based technology and veterinary nursing courses are delivered at the Greenmount Campus, and food and communication courses are delivered at the Loughry campus. The students are provided with good opportunities to progress within their chosen discipline up to honours degrees.

2.2 Essential skills in literacy and numeracy, which are provided at the Enniskillen and Greenmount campuses, are delivered by qualified lecturers from the South West College, and Northern Regional College respectively.

2.3 At the time of the inspection, 98 students were enrolled on the courses inspected. Sixty students were following equine courses in Enniskillen; ten of these students were enrolled on the First Diploma in Horse Care, eight on the Pre-Farrier course and 42 on the National Diploma in Horse Management. There were 54 students enrolled on the food-related courses in Loughry; 30 on the National Diploma and Certificate in Food Technology, and 24 on the National Diploma and Certificate in Food Nutrition and Health.

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<sup>1</sup> **REPORT OF REVIEW PANEL** Education and research and development in agriculture and food science - [http://www.dardni.gov.uk/report\\_of\\_o\\_hare\\_review\\_panel.pdf](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/report_of_o_hare_review_panel.pdf)

2.4 The academic profile of the students varies between courses and campuses. Approximately one-quarter of the students following the level 2 courses in equine studies have four or more General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications at grades A\*-C; just under one-fifth have a level 2 qualification in English, and a similar proportion have a level 2 qualification in mathematics. All of the National Diploma students have four or more GCSE qualifications at grades A\*-C or equivalent. Approximately 90% of the students following food-related National Diploma courses have a level 2 qualification in English and/or mathematics compared to the equine National Diploma where approximately three-quarters of the students have a level 2 English qualification and just over half of the students have a level 2 mathematics qualification.

### **3. THE INSPECTION**

3.1 The Department commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to evaluate the quality of the education and training provision of all three campuses over a three-year period. This is the second year of the evaluation; the further education provision at the Greenmount campus was inspected in 2009.

3.2 In January and February 2010, the Inspectorate carried out an inspection of the further education provision in the areas of equine, food and essential skills (Enniskillen and Greenmount campuses). A team of five inspectors, observed 37 lessons. Discussions were held with all the members of the senior management team, members of the College Advisory Group, the relevant heads of branches, course managers, lecturers, staff in the College with cross-college responsibilities, three employers and 12 former students. The inspection team also examined a wide range of documentation presented by the College including self-evaluation reports, minutes of course team meetings, course planning documents, samples of students' work and assessment materials.

3.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups includes the opportunity for students to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings by the inspection team with groups of students in both the Enniskillen and Loughry campuses. Ninety-eight questionnaires were issued to the students, 94 (96%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate. The returns show that the students' experiences in the College are mostly very good. The Inspectorate has reported to the Director the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with students.

3.4 The Director of the College also completed a questionnaire relating to the provision of pastoral care within the organisation.

### **4. MAIN FINDINGS**

4.1 The main strengths are the:

- very good management at all levels resulting in a strong sense of collegiality that pervades the life and work of the College across all campuses;
- very good ethos and pastoral support by the very committed and hard-working staff;
- good overall retention and success rates, and excellent progression rates to employment and higher level courses;

- excellent resources which provide a realistic working environment where the students develop a suitably broad range of practical skills;
- quality of the links with industry which enhance the students' learning experiences and which provide a good range of work placements; and
- curriculum provision, including additional qualifications, which prepare the students well to meet the needs of industry.

4.2 The main areas for improvement are the:

- limited range of teaching and learning approaches deployed in a minority of classes; and
- timetabling structure for essential skills, and food courses.

## 5. **OVERALL CONCLUSION**

5.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is very good. The College is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the students and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## **PART TWO - OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

### **6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

6.1 The College is very well managed by the Director who provides a clear, strategic direction. The business planning process is comprehensive and is linked effectively to the goals and objectives outlined in the Department's Strategic Plan. The business plan has clearly defined and measurable targets with appropriate actions identified. The management team has amalgamated the three colleges, which are distributed across a wide geographical area, very successfully to form a single College in which all staff contribute to the corporate identity. A strong sense of collegiality pervades the life and work of the College. All managers have clearly defined roles and display enthusiasm and a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all the students. There are clear lines of communication both within each campus and across the College.

6.2 The senior management team of the College has a very strong commitment to quality improvement. Each course manager is required to conduct an annual self-evaluation which includes a review of the previous year's action plan. All of the self-evaluations and action plans are moderated by the cross-college Further Education Teaching and Learning Committee. The outcomes of this process are used to inform the College's Annual Report and Action Plan. Progress towards the achievement of the targets set out in the action plans is monitored regularly by the course team and management. Effective use of is made of data from a range of sources to inform the evaluation outcomes. A particular strength in this process is the extent to which available benchmarking data is used to set appropriate targets for improvement. In the equine provision however, the targets set for improvement are not sufficiently challenging.

6.3 The academic and support staff, are deployed effectively to support learning and teaching. The lecturers are very well qualified and have good industrial experience. Most, however, have not had any formal teacher training; consequently, a significant number have a limited experience of the full range of pedagogical skills they need to engage the students actively in the learning process. All staff have an annual performance review where continuing professional development is agreed. Peer observation of teaching and learning has been introduced recently and is effective in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. These evaluations have been used to inform staff development activities. The staff have good opportunities to engage in appropriate staff development activities which have included, for example, sessions on the teaching strategies to be deployed to address the challenges presented by the small number of students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. In the main, however, there is a need for a wider range of staff development opportunities which focus more clearly on the systematic development of pedagogical skills.

6.4 The quality of most of the physical resources on both the Enniskillen and Loughry campuses is excellent. The high quality resources are well matched to the needs of the students, help to prepare them well for employment and provide an exemplar for the resourcing of industry standard facilities. At the Enniskillen campus, the excellent facilities include a racing enterprise, a specialist breeding unit and an equitation facility. The Loughry campus has excellent, industry-standard food incubation, technology and packaging centres.

6.5 A particular feature of the provision at the Loughry campus is the very strong links that have been developed with the food industry. The campus is highly regarded within the industry; this is exemplified by the extent to which employers are willing to visit the college to give presentations, facilitate visits for students, provide work placement opportunities, provide bursaries for students to support them in their studies and encourage their

employees to undertake courses within the College. These links with industry are used to good effect in the teaching and learning process and help to motivate the students. The staff at the Enniskillen campus have also developed good links with industry to provide good work-placements for students across Ireland and England.

6.6 The College has an effective Information Learning Technology (ILT) strategy which, in the main, is being implemented consistently across the three campuses. The students and staff have access to a good range of ILT resources. While the virtual learning environment (VLE) is used by most of the lecturers, its use is mainly as a repository of information for students. Further development is needed to ensure that the full potential of this system, as an aid to teaching and learning, is realised. Timetables and electronic registers are linked to the Management Information System. Further work is required to ensure that the maximum benefit is obtained from the use of these electronic registers, in particular their capacity to support quality improvement by providing managers with appropriate and timely attendance reports.

6.7 The College has an appropriate equal opportunities policy and works hard to identify and remove barriers to learning. For example, the College's website has been designed to ensure that students with specific learning difficulties can customise the page font or layout to make it more accessible. In addition, clear instructions are provided so that these students can access and enable website speech.

## **7. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

7.1 Most of the students are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their courses. An example of this is the commitment of the equine students to their early morning yard duties where they work as part of a team to look after the horses.

7.2 The standard of most of the students' work is very good; they demonstrate a good understanding of their subjects with high standards of work being observed in the practical sessions. The students are developing good transferable skills including team work, communication, interpersonal skills and the use of ILT. These skills are consolidated and developed further during their work placements.

7.3 The retention rates across the equine and food courses inspected range from satisfactory (75%) to excellent (90%). The success rates range from satisfactory (73%) to excellent (100%). Overall, the retention and success rates are good at 81% and 89% respectively. A key factor which results in the good retention and success rates is the quality of the careers advice and guidance provided by the college and the links with the industry.

7.4 The retention rates in the courses provided for the students in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are good, ranging from 80% to 84%. The success rate ranges from good (84%) to excellent (91%). Overall, the retention and success rates are good at 82% and 87% respectively, due mainly to the good integration of essential skills into the students' vocational context.

7.5 All of the food students who completed their National Diploma courses in the previous academic year progressed to higher education. Most of the equine students who completed their programmes successfully last year progressed to relevant employment within the industry (39%) or to higher education (48%).



## **8. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

8.1 There is a good range of programmes for both the equine and food students, with very good progression opportunities available within the College. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of industry and to provide good employment opportunities for the students. They have good opportunities to complete additional short accredited courses that further improve their employability. Equine students can complete British Horse Society qualifications, and the food students have opportunities to complete courses in health and safety, food safety and manufacturing operations.

8.2 The majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good with a small number of lessons identified as being outstanding. In the best practice, the planning, was detailed with a clear identification of the expected learning outcomes, a good range of teaching strategies was deployed which engaged and challenged the students and effective use was made of very good quality resources to support the students' learning. In the very few sessions where the teaching observed was not as effective, there was an over-reliance on note-taking, and the students were provided with too few opportunities to engage actively in the learning process. In one instance, there was a misinterpretation of the unit specifications which resulted in the work being pitched at an inappropriate level. Information learning technology is at an early stage of development, and consists mainly of PowerPoint presentations.

8.3 Assessment for learning is effective; a good range of assessment strategies are employed and the lecturers' marking of the students' work is effective in helping them improve the standard of their work. The assessment procedures are also effective in helping course managers identify appropriate areas for improvement. For example, in the equine provision, the course team has identified that their students are under-performing at merit and distinction grades compared to national benchmark data, and they have identified a series of actions to raise the levels of achievement.

8.4 The provision for the essential skills of literacy and numeracy is very good. All students on the Enniskillen and Greenmount campuses who have not achieved a grade A\*-C in GCSE English and mathematics are provided with essential skills classes. Nearly all the students on the Loughry campus have achieved at least a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics. The small numbers of students who have not achieved these grades are required to re-sit their GCSE in their previous school in November.

8.5 Most of the students' learning experiences are good, with a good range of activities including practical experiences which are set in realistic working environments. The students report that their work experience was very good, and helped them to see the relevance of their studies and inform further their career choices.

8.6 The College promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. Staff are provided with appropriate training on safeguarding issues. At the time of the inspection, however, a minority of staff had not attended a child and vulnerable adult protection awareness-raising training session. The Director should ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding continue to be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

8.7 All of the students have a very good knowledge of career opportunities within their industries. The provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance is well-planned to provide a coherent programme and is complemented through the industrial links the College has developed with employers. During the inspection, 22 industry representatives attended the annual equine careers day. Students made good use of the event gaining information about possible career opportunities.

8.8 The College is effective in providing additional learning support for the students who require it. A well-defined process identifies and assesses students who may have additional learning needs. The process includes self-disclosure on the application form, self-referral and referral of students by lecturers to the learning support co-ordinator for assessment. Appropriate support is offered to students to help them to complete their programme successfully; for example, the provision of laptop computers, one-to-one support, the provision of readers, and extra time in examinations. In addition, the college has a support fund for students who are facing financial hardship.

## **PART THREE - PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS**

### **9. CURRICULUM AREA: EQUINE**

**Programmes Inspected:**    **Pre-Farrier**  
   **First Diploma in Horse Care**  
   **National Diploma in Horse Management**

#### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The pre-farrier programme is a one year full-time course aimed at preparing students for farrier apprenticeships leading to qualifications accredited by the Worshipful Company of Farriers. The First Diploma in Horse Care is a level 2, one year full-time programme which prepares students for progression to the National Diploma in Horse Management or to employment; the majority of the pre-farrier and First Diploma courses are delivered as a combined programme for the common aspects of the programmes. The National Diploma in Horse Management is a level 3, two-year full-time programme which prepares students for progression to higher level courses or to employment within the equine industry. In 2006, the National Diploma was offered in partnership with the local college of further education, however, since 2007 the College been the sole provider of the programme. The First Diploma and pre-farrier courses have been offered by the College since 2001, and 2004 respectively.

#### **9.2 MAIN FINDINGS**

The main strengths are the:

- quality of the teaching which ranges from satisfactory to very good, almost all being good or better;
- excellent retention rate on the pre-farrier and the excellent success rate on the National Diploma course respectively;
- progression of students on all three programmes to higher level courses or employment;
- good opportunities for students to achieve additional, accredited qualifications and to undertake work placements which contribute to their employability;
- pastoral and course-related support provided for students by staff at all levels; and
- facilities and resources available on the Enniskillen and Necarne campuses.

The main areas for improvement are the:

- interpretation of unit specifications to ensure that the taught content is commensurate with the students' level of study; and
- outcomes of the course review process to include the identification of sufficiently challenging actions, and targets to support the continuous improvement of the provision.

### 9.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The courses are very well led and managed by a highly committed, hard-working Equine Programme Manager who is ably supported by an equally committed and enthusiastic programme team. The majority of the equine team teach across all three programmes, consequently they know their students very well. This contributes significantly to the excellent level of pastoral and course-related support.

The comprehensive range of equine programmes provides very good opportunities for students to progress from the level 2 First Diploma, to degree level. Those students who have not achieved a grade A\*-C in GCSE English or mathematics on entry to their courses, are encouraged to achieve equivalent accredited qualifications in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy. There are good opportunities for students to achieve additional, accredited qualifications, for example, the British Horse Society (BHS) Riding and Road Safety Certificate and BHS Stage 1, 2 and 3 qualifications. These, combined with extended work placements, make an important contribution to maximising levels of student employability.

The specialist, industry standard, equine facilities and resources provided by the College are excellent.

All of the programme team are involved appropriately in the review and evaluation of the courses which results in the production of the Programme Review Report. This includes a review of the previous year's action plan and prioritises actions for the following year. While many of the actions and targets place suitable emphasis on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and levels of student achievement, they are not sufficiently challenging to lead to significant improvement.

### 9.4 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The retention and success rates over the last three years for the First Diploma course are good at 80% and 85% respectively. The retention rate over the last three years for the pre-farrier course is excellent (90%) and the success rate is satisfactory (73%). Over the last 2 years, the retention rate for the National Diploma is satisfactory (75%) and the success rate is excellent (93%).

The progression rate of students on the pre-farrier course over the last 2 years is satisfactory. Over the same period, the progression rates of the First Diploma and National Diploma are excellent and good respectively. The majority of First Diploma and National Diploma students progress to higher level courses within the college.

The course team has identified appropriately the need to increase the number of students achieving merit and distinction grades. In addition to their main programme, the students develop further their levels of employability by undertaking work placements and achieving additional industry recognised qualifications, such as the BHS Riding and Road Safety Certificate.

The students have good opportunities to develop their practical skills, including a wide range of experience in equitation, racing, preparing horses for sale and working within the breeding unit. These experiences are supplemented effectively by the students' participation in competitions and in helping to organise in-house events.

## 9.5 QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

All of the lecturers are enthusiastic and well informed about their subject. The quality of the relationships between the staff and students is excellent. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good, with almost all being good or better. These lessons were characterised by thorough planning which included clearly identified learning outcomes which were shared with, and understood by, the students. The teaching approaches encouraged the students to undertake roles of responsibility within the lesson, and there were time bound tasks which maintained a good level of challenge and the students' levels of motivation and engagement in their learning. In one instance the interpretation of unit specifications was not commensurate with the students' level of study, consequently, the taught content was too challenging for a significant minority of students.

The well-structured timetable takes account of the students preferred learning styles. For example, theory sessions are followed directly by relevant practical activities which enable the students to apply the theoretical content. The end-of-unit evaluation pro-forma, which is completed by staff on completion of each unit, contributes to the continuous improvement of the programme.

## 9.6 CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is very good. The College is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## 10. CURRICULUM AREA: ESSENTIAL SKILLS

**Programmes Inspected:**    **Literacy**  
   **Numeracy**

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

Essential skills in literacy and numeracy are provided on both the Enniskillen and Greenmount campuses for students who have not already achieved a GCSE A\*-C in English and mathematics. The essential skill classes are delivered by qualified tutors from the Northern Regional College on the Greenmount campus, and from the South West College on the Enniskillen campus. A service level agreement is in place with each of the partner colleges for the delivery of the essential skills provision. Nearly all the students on the Loughry campus have already achieved a GCSE at grades A\*-C in English and mathematics. The small numbers of students who have not achieved these grades are required to re-sit their GCSE in November at their previous school. This year a course in the essential skill of information communication technology is being piloted in Greenmount.

### 10.2 MAIN FINDINGS

The main strengths are the:

- very good standards of the students' work;
- good success rates in both literacy and numeracy;
- very good quality of the teaching and learning in most of the classes;

- very good management of the provision; and
- effective collaboration between the essential skill tutors and the vocational tutors.

The main area for improvement is the:

- attendance in a small number of classes.

### 10.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The essential skills provision is very well managed. A service level agreement between the College and the further education colleges providing the essential skills details clearly the responsibilities of each of the partners. The management of the College recognises the importance of having essential skills tutors who have an interest in the vocational area being followed by the students and have worked closely with both further education colleges to ensure that the tutors provide a relevant context for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

During the inspection a small number of lessons was observed in which the essential skills tutor was joined by a member of the College course team. Such team-teaching ensured that the students were provided with good opportunities to apply their literacy or numeracy skills within the vocational context.

### 10.4 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The standard of most of the students' work in the literacy and numeracy classes is good. The students are able to discuss the work they are completing and are making good progress. They are able to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in their vocational context.

In the Greenmount campus, the retention rate is good (80%) for both literacy and numeracy. The success rates are good (84%) for literacy and excellent (91%) for numeracy. In the Enniskillen campus, the retention rates are excellent for literacy (100%) and numeracy. The success rates are very good at (87%) for literacy and satisfactory (79%) for numeracy.

In two of the classes visited the attendance was low; in one case over half of the students were absent. A significant contributory factor for the poor attendance in these classes is the timetabling arrangement where all the other students are free to engage in sporting and recreational activities or return home at the end of the week.

### 10.5 QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

The essential skill tutors have high expectations, are enthusiastic and have developed very good relationships with the students. Most of the students responded well in class and engaged effectively in group work and practical activities.

The quality of the teaching observed was mostly very good. In the best practice observed, the tutor made good use of relevant vocational contexts for the literacy and numeracy exercises. For example, in one lesson the lecturer made effective use of laminated photographs of tractors as a context for a writing activity. In another lesson the lecturer encouraged the students to use a range of techniques to estimate the weight of a horse and then compared the results to the actual weight.

## 10.6 CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is very good. The College is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## 11. CURRICULUM AREA: FOOD

**Programmes Inspected:**     **National Diploma and Certificate in Food Technology**  
   **National Diploma and Certificate in Food Nutrition and Health**

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Diplomas in Food Technology and Food Nutrition and Health are two-year Edexcel courses based in the Loughry campus. These aim to prepare students for employment in the food industry or for further study in food-related higher education courses. In order to facilitate the timetable structure, and the deployment of the teaching staff, the college organises the courses so that a significant number of the optional courses are common for both courses. Both Diploma courses include a 12-week work placement which is organised by the College during the summer break between the first and second year of the course.

### 11.2 MAIN FINDINGS

The main strengths are the:

- highly motivated and enthusiastic students and hard-working and committed lecturers;
- good range of theory and practical activities which are supplemented effectively by a wide range of industrial experiences;
- excellent standards achieved including very good retention rates and the excellent success and progression rates;
- additional qualifications achieved by the students which prepare them well for work or further study;
- very good management of the courses; and
- strong links with the food industry which are used to good effect to support learning and teaching.

The main areas for improvement are the:

- improved recruitment of students onto the courses; and
- structure of the timetable and the teaching strategies employed in a significant minority of the classroom-based sessions.

### 11.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the courses are effective in providing the students with high-quality education and training which matches well the needs of the food industry. The links with industry are particularly strong and are used to good effect to support teaching and learning through, for example, the provision of work placements, careers talks, educational visits and sponsorship for students. Consequently, the students are well-informed about possible career opportunities within the food industry both locally and nationally.

The co-ordination of the programmes is effective in ensuring high standards of teaching and achievement. The communication within and across course teams is excellent; team meetings are held regularly. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for staff to evaluate the quality, relevance and appropriateness of the programmes and amend course design where necessary.

While the numbers of students enrolled on both courses has increased significantly this year, the overall numbers enrolled over the past three years have been low. The management of the College has identified appropriately the need to consolidate this recent improvement in course up-take.

### 11.4 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The standards achieved by all of the students are excellent. They are highly motivated and hard-working; they take pride in their work and respond positively to their lecturers. All students are supported effectively so that they achieve their full potential. A particular feature of the provision is the opportunity provided for the students to develop the skills and capabilities required to meet the current, and emerging, needs of the food industry. The lecturers set and expect high standards of work from them, with a strong emphasis on developing the personal skills and transferable qualities that are needed in the food industry. These include team leadership, management, quality control, logistics, stock control, labelling, packaging, storage, distribution and sales.

The average retention rate over the last three years for the programmes is good at 80%. The average success and progression rates over the same period are excellent at 100%.

### 11.5 QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

The students are provided with excellent programmes of learning to prepare them to work in industry or to progress to higher level courses. The programmes are well-balanced and appropriately well-planned, providing the students with excellent opportunities to develop their practical skills and their knowledge and understanding of the food industry. The students are provided with very good opportunities to undertake additional vocational qualifications in food safety, health and safety, European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), and in manufacturing operations. These additional qualifications do much to improve their employability.

The quality of the provision for teaching and learning is very good. There are many significant strengths; in particular, the quality of the planning for the courses and the quality of resources to support learning. The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. In just over two-thirds of the sessions the quality of the teaching was judged to be good or better; in just over half of the sessions it was very good or outstanding. In the best practice observed, the students were encouraged to participate in a good variety of learning activities. These sessions were well-paced and good opportunities were provided for the students to engage in discussion activities which were well-structured and planned so that the learning objectives were achieved and key learning



points consolidated. In a significant minority of instances however, there was an over-reliance on work-book note-taking; the students had insufficient opportunities to interact with their peers or with their lecturer in a meaningful manner. The teaching sessions are, in the main, very long. Whilst this is appropriate for the practical activities which form the basis of many of the units it provides a significant challenge for the teaching staff to provide stimulating and motivating theory sessions which engage the students actively in their learning. The lecturers are industrially experienced, passionate about their subject and hard-working. Whilst all the lecturers are well-qualified in the vocational area few have specific teaching qualifications.

The assessment of the students' work is regular and thorough, and almost all of the lecturers provide evaluative and constructive feedback to the students. The course manager and year managers know the students well and they monitor, review and record progress regularly and effectively.

The resources to support learning and teaching are excellent. The students are provided with excellent opportunities to work with industry-standard equipment in facilities that replicate those they will encounter in the workplace

## 11.6 CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is very good. The College is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## **PART FOUR – CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

### **12. OVERALL CONCLUSION**

12.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is very good. The College is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the students and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

### **13. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

13.1 The College needs to take account of the key priorities for development, which include the need to:

- ensure that the quality of the teaching is more consistent across all of the classes by disseminating examples of good practice more widely; and
- review the timetable structures to create shorter theory sessions in the food-related courses and to improve the attendance in the essential skills courses.

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