Education and Training Inspectorate

Evaluation of Industry Training in the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise

March 2015

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1. Context

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (College) is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Department) and provides 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. The College's Development Service unit has responsibility for the planning and delivery of industry training within the College.

The aim of the industry training provision is to develop the skills and competences of personnel working in the various land-based and food industries, including farmers and those working within the equine and food processing industries. The industry training provision consists of three main types of learning programmes:

- short courses, the duration of which ranges from half a day of attendance through to ten days; some of these are accredited and designed to meet legislative requirements;

- challenge programmes designed to improve the performance of farm businesses by encouraging participants to focus on those aspects of their business which impact directly on competitiveness; and

- knowledge technology transfer events to show-case new technologies including, for example, developments in renewable energy.

The industry training learning programmes are delivered by local development advisors based at DARD Direct offices across 10 locations in Northern Ireland or by staff based on

the College's main campuses. The programmes are delivered at the College's campuses in Antrim, Cookstown and Enniskillen and also in a number of out-centres across Northern Ireland to meet the needs of industry and local communities.

The learners attend the training for a variety of reasons including up-skilling: to meet legislative requirements; to further develop their awareness of key business drivers, including opportunities for diversification; and to up-date their general knowledge and skills relevant to their businesses.

Over the last three years, the six branches listed in Table 1 delivered 324 learning programmes to 48,311 learners.

Table 1 – Number of learning programmes delivered between April 2011 to March 2014		
Branch	**Number of programmes**	**Number of Learners**
Beef and Sheep	39	12,447
Crops, Horticulture and Sustainability	88	14,333
Dairy, Pigs and Poultry	68	12,133
Equine	45	1,681
Food Technology	49	2,812
Rural Training	35	4,905
Total	**324**	**48,311**

Appendix 1 lists the learning programmes and the enrolments to them across the period April 2011 to March 2014. Enrolments to the industry training learning programmes have risen consistently and more than doubled in three years, with over 22,000 enrolments in the period 2013/2014. Most of the learning programmes are non-accredited, and consequently do not lead to a formal qualification. Across the three types of learning programme, the food

industry and an increasing number of the rural training programmes are offered on a cost recovery basis with the fees normally being paid by the learners or their employers. The remainder of the learning programmes are provided at no cost to the learners though they do pay for awarding body fees, where appropriate.

2. Overall finding

Overall, the quality of the Industry Training provided by the College is very good.

Summary of key findings

Overall performance level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

What does CAFRE need to do to improve the quality of Industry Training?

- Increase the low number of learners who presently undertake and achieve an accredited qualification; and

- make more effective use of information and learning technology (ILT), including blended learning, to support and enhance the quality of teaching, training and learning.

3. Key findings of the evaluation

3.1 Achievements and standards are good.

Nearly all of the learners are well motivated and engage well with the College staff and their peers. They are keen to learn and update their knowledge about new technologies and current industry practice that will improve the competitiveness of their businesses. Most of the learners report that they will modify their current practice to make improvements by applying the new knowledge and experiences gained during their training. For example, several farmers have changed their practice by applying new knowledge from their learning programme and this has led to them producing better quality silage that will have a positive impact on animal performance during the housing period, and with minimal additional cost.

The training sessions provide good opportunities for all of the learners to up-skill and further develop their working practices. A minority of the learners enter their learning programme with existing knowledge and skills in specialist areas, such as in sustainable energy and food technology, and these are enhanced further by their participation in the industry training learning programmes.

The College staff set high expectations for the learners and, as a result, the outcomes and standards of both the learners' written and practical work observed was good or better, with most of them being able to carry out the required tasks with an appropriate level of competence while complying with relevant health and safety regulations.

A large number (2,454) of young farmers are registered on part-time level 2 agricultural programmes that are delivered in the evening. Most of them have not engaged in any other formal education and training since leaving school and it is therefore a strength that, as they reach the end of their programme, they are making good progress and the retention rate is very good at 89%.

Across the period 2011/2014, 5,968 (12%) of the learners undertook learning programmes leading to an accredited qualification. For these learning programmes the retention rate is outstanding at 100% and the achievement rate is satisfactory at 70%. The food technology learning programmes perform better with a good average achievement rate of 83%.

3.2   Quality of provision for learning is very good

A particular strength of the College is the wide curriculum offer of appropriate programmes which is meeting very well the needs of learners, and is very responsive to the needs of industry. It is often required, for example, to support the industry as a result of unforeseen circumstances such as severe weather, dramatic fluctuations in the prices received by producers and initiatives introduced by the Department. As a result of the introduction of a Young Farmers' Payment[1] by the Department, the College received almost 3,500 applications for a part-time level 2 agriculture programme. In a very short period of time, it developed an appropriate accredited programme tailored specifically to meet the needs of the industry. All of the applicants were offered a place and the programme is currently being delivered to young farmers in 93 groups across multiple locations in Northern Ireland; most of the learners interviewed report that the curriculum is relevant and that the learning will inform their future practice.

All of the directed and practical training sessions observed were of a good or better quality, with just under three-quarters being very good or outstanding. The most effective sessions were characterised by a good range of teaching, training and learning strategies being used to engage the learners. The staff provide accurate and up-to-date specialist learning experiences, which are relevant to current industry practice. They work hard to develop good relationships with the learners and to create a positive climate which is conducive to

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[1] Details of the Young Farmers Payment can be found at: http://www.dardni.gov.uk/the-young-farmers-scheme.pdf

learning. The pace of teaching, training and learning is appropriate and good use is made of formative assessments to guide the lesson planning and this leads to good participation by the learners. A significant minority of the learners found that the classes provided excellent opportunities for networking to promote and develop their businesses, and they also received very good peer support when required.

The College has developed an appropriate online decision making support tool to assist farmers in complying with recently introduced aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms. In addition, good quality online learning resources are used well to support the recently introduced part-time level 2 programme in agriculture. An effective online level 4 equine programme has also been developed resulting in learners being recruited from a wide geographical area. There is a need, however, for staff to identify further opportunities to build on the good experiences to date and to make better use of ILT and blended learning approaches, to further enhance the quality of the training provision and support learning, and to make the training more accessible.

The quality of the pastoral care provided by the College is very good with relevant opportunities provided for staff and learners to develop positive relationships that promote mutual respect. Appropriate links have been developed with a range of external agencies to support learners as the need arises. The learners have the opportunity to self-refer for additional learning support when they apply for their programme and they can also be referred by their lecturer or instructor during their learning programme. These arrangements are appropriate and meet the learners' needs though only a very small number of learners were availing of the additional learning support at the time of the evaluation. Regular reviews of the learners' progress are carried out with appropriate learning support organised by the student support officer where required.

The provision for careers education, information, advice, and guidance is mostly informal but meets well the needs of the learners. All of the learners interviewed were aware of all the current opportunities in their industries and they reported that they received good or better advice and guidance and sign-posting as required.

3.3   Leadership and management is very good

The strategic leadership provided by the College Director and the senior management team is very good; it is well informed by the Agri-Food Strategy Board report, Going for Growth[2], and the outcomes of the CAP reform process. Through the College's business planning process, realistic targets are set to develop the competencies of people employed in the agri-food industry. The roles, responsibilities and functions of management and staff, to support the achievement of the College's key strategic objectives, are clearly defined.

The staff are all very well qualified and experienced and demonstrate a strong commitment to the College, the industry, and their learners. They are deployed effectively and there is an appropriate performance review process in place that identifies individual staff development needs. Most of the staff participate in regular continuing professional development activities and as a result implement up-to-date current industry practices.

The training resources and accommodation in the college are of a high quality. The quality of the out-centres used to provide training are also of a good quality.

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[2]   Report of the Agri-Food Strategy Board Going for Growth -
http://www.agrifoodstrategyboard.org.uk/uploads/Going%20for%20Growth%20-%20Web%20Version.PDF

Effective practice – links and partnerships

The College has extensive and effective links at various levels with industry, external agencies and other key stakeholders in the agri-food sectors. The industry is keen to engage with the College and these links are used to very good effect to inform curriculum planning and to meet the workforce training and development needs at both regional and national level.

The College demonstrates a very strong commitment to self-evaluation and quality improvement planning and has in place an effective process that brings about improvement. The College teaching and learning committee has a formal role in the quality process that includes reviewing, evaluating, and monitoring the industry training provision and, if required, initiating appropriate actions to improve the quality of the learning programmes. Appropriate processes are in place to get feedback from key stakeholders including learners and the quality of provision is evaluated across a sample of regional offices to allow benchmarking to take place. The College has introduced a process of lesson observations to inform the quality improvement process but this needs to be embedded further, particularly in relation to identifying and sharing good practice across the learning programmes.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the College has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments[3] but the following areas need to be addressed:

- review vetting arrangements for sub-contracted staff; and

- further improve governance by training a member of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's senior management team in safeguarding

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[3] The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development refers to the child protection and safeguarding guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning

4.   Conclusion

Overall, the quality of the industry training provision in the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise 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.

5.   Evaluation method and evidence base

Between December 2014 and March 2015, the ETI carried out a longitudinal evaluation of the College's industry training provision.

The evaluation focused on:

- the quality of the leadership and management of the College;

- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;

- the achievements and standards; and

- the quality of the provision for training and learning.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards*

A team of two inspectors observed a total of 453 learners in 22 directed training sessions. Discussions were held with the Director, members of the senior management team, heads of branches, members of the teaching and learning committee, lecturers and advisors. The evaluation team also examined samples of the learners' work, minutes of team meetings, course planning and other development documentation, self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans, and other relevant documentation, policies, and reports.

The evaluation also focused on the arrangements for care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups. The arrangements for the evaluation included the opportunity for the learners to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the evaluation.

A total of 200 questionnaires were issued and the return rate was very low (3%). In addition, inspectors carried out focus group meetings with a wide range of learners in the College. The learners who responded to the questionnaire or who participated in the focus groups were very positive about the quality of the provision and their experiences in the College.

Branch	Learning programme	Enrolments April 2011 to March 2014
Beef and Sheep	Assessing Fodder Quality & Quantity	1703
	Benchmarking analysis	849
	Benchmarking analysis - Financing the Farm	117
	Efficient use of nutrients to enhance grassland productivity	256
	Finishing Dairy Origin Beef	16
	Grassland management – Mid season management	698
	Grazing Management – Early grazing and planning turnout	485
	Helping Farmers to Comply	132
	Improving Ewe Efficiency	471
	Improving use of grass/clover swards	370
	Increasing efficiency of production	1622
	Introduction to Organic Production	31
	Marketing options for Beef & Lamb	454
	Producing quality calves for specific outlets	335
	Reducing costs of production	119
	Soil & Sward Improvement	881
	Store Lamb finishing	35
	Sustainable Parasite Control in Sheep	114
	Sward Establishment and Improvement	368
	Using fodder crops to reduce wintering costs	145
	BovIS Online Carcase Benchmarking	17
	Breeding and Rearing Replacement heifers for the suckler herd	234
	Land Eligibility	20
	Nutrient Management Planning	457
	Respiratory Disease of Cattle	18
	Taxation	899
	Efficient Upland/Lowland Sheep Production	367
	Heifer Synchronisation/AI & 2yr old calving	7
	Improving Suckler Cow Fertility	7
	Improving Suckler Cow Fertility & Heifer Synchronisation/AI & 2yr old calving	20
	Improving Technical Efficiencies	28
	Profitable Suckler Beef Production	54
	Protecting your Asset	496
	PTO Awareness Day	15
	Soil & Sward Improvement	17
	Animal Challenge Health - Sheep	201
	Animal Health Challenge – Beef	143
	Business Challenge for Beef and Sheep farmers	24
	Suckler Herd Fertility Challenge	222
Crops, Horticulture and Sustainability	10 Ways to sell more plants	39
	An Overview of Employment Law in NI	4
	Anaerobic Digestion Workshop	136
	Benchmarking Analysis	16
	Benchmarking analysis - Financing the Farm	115
	Benchmarking for Arable Growers	202
	Biomass Production	22
	Bramley Storage	44
	Business Management for Wind Turbine Investment	79

	Cereal Variety Update	92
	Cross Compliance	82
	Cross Compliance for Arable Growers	35
	Cut Flower/Foliage Production	9
	Dry Stone Walling	76
	Energy Efficiency Workshops	201
	Energy from Solar Technology	530
	Energy from Wind	188
	Field Boundary Management	29
	First Aid	71
	Getting it right with blight	36
	Grain Sampling & Storage	20
	Grassland Weed Control	14
	Heat from Biomass	202
	Hedge Restoration	89
	HGCA Fungicide Update	101
	Improving Agronomy for Arable Growers	237
	Introduction to Renewables	446
	Investing in the future for sustainable mushroom production	144
	Merchandising Skills Course	27
	Nitrates and Phosphorus Regulations	1095
	NRoSO Roadshow	472
	Nutrient Management Computer	56
	Nutrient Management Planning	442
	Nutrient Management Planning for Arable Growers	141
	Pest & Disease in Ornamental Crops	49
	POFRE Enniskillen - Seminars	291
	Potato Storage	22
	Power from Hydro Technology	103
	Practical On Farm Renewable Energy 2013 - Seminars	497
	Principles of live Quarry Shooting	11
	Procurement of Government Contracts	9
	Protecting Your Water	39
	Quality Apple Production	795
	Quality Edible Crop Production	207
	Quality Mushroom Production	350
	Quality Ornamental Programme	207
	Quality soft fruit crop production	127
	Quality Vegetable Crop Production	60
	Right time, right product, right rate for cereals	109
	Seed Potato Health Check	19
	Soil & Sward Improvement	27
	Business Management Training for arable farmers/commercial horticulture growers	101
	Cut Flower/Foliage Production	302
	SRC Willow Production	8
	Energy from Heat Pumps Workshop	16
	Horticulture 2012	692
	Land Eligibility and Mapping Workshops	930
	NICMS Workshop	227
	Physical Assessment of a Soil	20
	Pofre Enniskillen 2013	424
	Pofre Greenmount 2012	789
	Rain Water Harvesting Workshop	13
	Taxation	33
	Trolley-Plant Fair Seminar	38
	Red Grouse & Upland Management Conference	53
	Arable Conference	252

	High Density Orchard Growth Control	20
	Horticulture Forum	12
	Import Substitution	5
	Low Carbon Event	16
	Minimum Tillage	21
	Mushroom Technology	146
	NICMS Workshop	236
	Ornamental Bedding Plant Nutrition	5
	Pest & Disease	54
	Pest & Disease in Ornamental Crops	5
	Plant/ Trolley Fair	39
	POFRE Enniskillen Awareness	156
	Potato Storage	22
	Practical On Farm Renewable Energy 2013	202
	Precision Water Management	9
	Protecting your Asset	492
	Renewables Event	23
	Sustainable Farming in LFA's	337
	Woody Biomass	102
	Business Challenge for Arable Growers	62
	Potato Challenge	9
	Cereal Challenge	48
Dairy, Pigs and Poultry	Animal Health - Calf Health	171
	Animal Health - Herd Diseases	137
	Animal Health - Lameness	244
	Animal Health - Mastitis	127
	Benchmarking analysis - Financing the Farm	116
	Breeding - Sire Selection Using PLI	510
	Buildings - Farmyard Planning	104
	Buildings - New Dairy Unit	896
	Business - Benchmarking Analysis Workshop - Dairy	317
	Business - New Entrant Introduction to Dairying	83
	Business - Robotic Milking Systems	33
	Business - Taxation Briefing	431
	Grass & Forage - Alternative Forages	148
	Grass & Forage - Forage Review	90
	Grass & Forage - Grazing Management	470
	Grass & Forage - Nutrient Management	417
	Grass & Forage - Sward Improvement	86
	Health & Safety on Pig Units	14
	Herd Fertility - Breeding for Profit	65
	ICT - Parlour Feed Programmes	409
	Nitrates and Phosphorus Regulations	134
	Nutrition - Dietary Evaluation	461
	Nutrition - Feeding Concentrates	1026
	Nutrition - Ration Formulation	262
	Pigs - Improving Feeding Herd Performance	75
	Pigs - Improving Number of Pigs Weaned	213
	Pigs - IPPC Awareness	8
	Poultry health, welfare disease & Bio security	166
	Replacements - Calf Rearing (Systems & Nutrition)	420
	Replacements - Heifer Rearing (Systems & Nutrition)	55
	Robotic Milking System	14
	Soil & Sward Improvement	399
	Animal Health - Transition Cow	7
	Basic Pig Production	21
	Buildings - Cow Comfort	59
	Business - Labour Efficiency	296

	Business - Planning & Investment	206
	Data Collection & Management Reporting	39
	Improving feeding Herd Performance - Dairy	89
	Improving feeding Herd Performance - Pigs	84
	Improving Pigs Sold/sow/year	104
	Introduction To Spreadsheets	11
	Nutrient Management Planning	9
	Nutrition - Managing Body Condition Score	116
	Aphis Online	8
	Business - Finance	27
	EID for sheep	6
	Grass & Forage - Silage Production	41
	Growing Forage Maize in NI	23
	Herd Genetic Report	67
	Introduction to computers and Internet for Business	12
	Introduction To Spreadsheets	10
	IPPC Awareness	11
	New Entrants to Dairying	67
	Use of Constructed Wetlands for treating farmyard dirty water	14
	Vat online	156
	ICT _ Dairy Equipment & Technology	124
	Business - Robotic Milking Systems	33
	CAP Reform Briefing	49
	Heifer Rearing Meeting	13
	New Dairy Unit Open Day	1042
	New Dairy Unit Tour	524
	Protecting your Asset	494
	Zero Grazing	91
	Animal Health Challenge - Dairy	31
	Business Challenge (Dairying)	51
	Sow Herd Fertility Challenge	84
	Dairy Herd Fertility Challenge	13
Equine	Breeding Seminar	27
	Equine Business Awareness	15
	Equine Health - Lameness	39
	Equine Health - Preventing Respiratory Diseases	40
	Equine Structure	97
	Equitation Training	10
	Grassland Management for Horses	22
	Health & Safety - Risk Assessment	5
	Horse Racing Industry Day	31
	Management of the Mare & New Born Foal	25
	Management of the Pregnant Mare	18
	Natural Horsemanship	24
	Pony Club Event	99
	Producing Haylage for Horses	27
	Technology Seminar	25
	The Coughing Horse	58
	Training the horse for Show Jumping	30
	TREC Ireland Association	17
	TREC Ireland Training	27
	Young Breeders	6
	Athletic Horse Seminar	103
	Digital Marketing for Equine Business	27
	Equine Anatomy and Physiology	17
	Equine Law Seminar	25
	Equine Nutrition and Fat Scoring	82
	Equine Nutrition and feeding	17

	Equitation Training	81
	Health and safety for equestrian events	17
	Horse Health	17
	Joseph Murphy Demonstration	36
	Managing equine health through nutrition	20
	Online Equine Breeding	60
	Online Equine Health	95
	Online Equine Nutrition	134
	Preparing mares for inspection	63
	Stable Management	88
	BHS Riding and Road Safety	18
	BHS Stage 1&2 Training	14
	Farrier Technology	20
	BHS Standard setting CPD Event	17
	RDA Instructors Course	10
	BHS PTT Training	4
	BHS Riding and Road Safety	14
	Level 2 Certificate in the principles of Horse Care	18
	Transport of horses	42
Food Technology	An Awareness of Craft Beer Manufacture	25
	% Fat Testing	3
	Applied Nutrition	1
	Butter & Spread Sensory Analysis	5
	Butter Screening	5
	Food For Thought	155
	Hard Cheese	4
	Introduction to HACCP	36
	Lean Manufacturing	27
	Meat Microbiology	8
	OVE	12
	Safe Cooking	2
	Sensory Analysis	90
	Food Technology Short Courses	233
	Meat Short Courses	115
	Dairy Short courses	2
	Dairy Short courses	43
	Innovation Short Courses	46
	Lean Manufacture	61
	Adv Award Dairy Technology	14
	Factors Affecting Meat Quality	9
	Into to CIP	3
	Intro to Diary Chemistry	2
	Intro to Hard Cheese	12
	Intro to Icecream	5
	ND Chemistry	1
	Food Technology Short Courses	155
	Meat Short Courses	97
	Management Dairy Effluent	2
	Adv Award Meat Skills	36
	BTEC Professional Award in Auditing Food Safety Management Systems	14
	CIEH Level 2 Award in Food Safety-Manufacturing	805
	CIEH Level 2 Award in Health & Safety in the Workplace	104
	CIEH Level 3 Award in Food Safety –Manufacturing	135
	CIEH Level 3 Award in HACCP for Manufacturing	133
	CIEH Level 3 Award in TSP- Training Skills and Practice	55
	CIEH Level 4 Award in Food Safety-Manufacturing	71
	CIWM Waste Management Awareness	5
	RSPH Foundation Certificate in HACCP	186

	RSPH Level 4 Award in HACCP Management for Food Manufacturing	32
	Professional Award in Auditing	6
	Waste Awareness	18
	Audit 3	2
	Audit 4	7
	Auditing for Continuous Improvement	7
	Fd Microbiology	1
	Level 2 HACCP	8
	Level 3 Audit	5
	TSP	9
Rural Training	Animal Handling	150
	Diversification Awareness	442
	Diversification Challenge - Business Start	276
	Diversification Challenge - Business Development	98
	13 - 15Yrs Tractor Driving	540
	Additional PA Units (PA3, PA4, PA6AW, PA9)	76
	Advanced Sheep Shearing	63
	AMTRA SQP	72
	ATVA	27
	Basic Welding	86
	BTDS Tractor Driving - 2 Day	71
	BTDS Tractor Driving - 4 Day	78
	Chainsaw Maintenance & Cross Cutting - CS30	9
	First Aid	192
	Gear & Grinding	18
	Instructional Techniques (Beekeepers)	7
	Intermediate Beekeeping	194
	IPPC	21
	Lawnmowers	29
	Manual Handling	191
	Nominated Storekeepers	35
	Nutrient Management Planning for FACTS	15
	PA1 - Safe Handling of Pesticides	681
	PA2A - Field Crop Sprayers	149
	PA6A - Hand-Held Applicators	288
	Preliminary Beekeeping	385
	PTO Tractor Driving	103
	Sheep Dips	40
	Sheep Shearing	482
	Telescopic Handler - 2 day	17
	Telescopic Handler - 4 day	23
	BASIS	12
	Advanced Welding	13
	FACTS	14
	Brushcutter / Strimmer	8

Quantitative terms used by the ETI

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory