



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Inspection of the Further
Education and Work-Based
Learning Provision in the
College of Agriculture, Food
and Rural Enterprise

February 2013



Providing Inspection Services for
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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EXCELLENCE



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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, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators used by the Inspectorate to Evaluate Achievements and Standards

Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The proportion of learners enrolled who completed their courses or are still on their programme.
Achievement	The proportion of those learners completing their course who gained their full target qualification.
Success	The proportion of learners enrolled who gained their full target qualification.
Progression	Proportion of successful completers who progress to further/higher education/training or employment.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise
CEIAG	Careers education, information, advice and guidance
Inspectorate	Education and Training Inspectorate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Information and Learning Technology
NI	Northern Ireland

PART ONE: SUMMARY

1. Background information and context

1.1 The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) was formed in April 2004 and is an amalgamation of the former agricultural Colleges located on three campuses in: Greenmount, Antrim; Loughry, Cookstown; and Enniskillen. CAFRE is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and this Department provides funding to deliver further and higher education, industry training, knowledge and technology transfer and benchmarking programmes. As well as this, the College provides work-based learning through the Department for Employment and Learning's ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

1.2 Each campus of CAFRE focuses on specific disciplines, with agriculture, horticulture, land-based technology and veterinary nursing delivered at the Greenmount Campus; food is delivered at the Loughry campus and equine at Enniskillen. The work-based learning provision is delivered at the Greenmount and Enniskillen campuses with additional out-centres located at Banbridge and Tobermore.

1.3 The theoretical components of the programmes in CAFRE are delivered by lecturers with the practical components being delivered by instructors.

1.4 The essential skills provision is sub-contracted to the Northern Regional College, the South West College and The Link Works.

1.5 Over the past three years, enrolments to full-time and part-time further education courses have remained steady, having improved significantly prior to this period. In the current academic year 2012/13, the College has 792 learner enrolments across its further education provision; there are 382 full-time and 410 part-time enrolments. Level two courses account for 28% of the full-time enrolments, with the remaining learners enrolled on level three courses.

1.6 At the time of the inspection, 118 learners were registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme with 71 of them following training at level 2, and 47 at level 3. All of the learners are registered on agriculture training programmes.

1.7 At the time of the inspection, there were 55 and 58 enrolments in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the further education, and work-based learning provision respectively.

Table 1: Enrolments in the College

Type of provision	Number of learners enrolled
Total Enrolments (Further Education)	792
Further Education	Full time: 382 Part-time: 410
Work-based Learning (Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI)	118
ApprenticeshipsNI:	Level 2: 71 Level 3: 47

2. Scope and method of the inspection

2.1 In February 2013, the Inspectorate carried out an inspection of the College's further education, and work-based learning provision. The further education provision covered a range of professional and technical courses up to and including level 3. In work-based learning, the inspection focused on the College's ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

2.2 The inspection focused on leadership and management, the quality of provision for learning, and achievements and standards, including the College's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation are available in the publication '*Improving Quality: Raising Standards*' which can be found on the Inspectorate's web site at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards.htm>.

2.3 Inspectors observed 44 lessons and directed training sessions. Discussions were held with the Director, members of the senior management teams, the Chair and members of the College Advisory Group, heads of branch, course managers, lecturers, instructors, a sample of employers and learners. The inspection team also examined samples of the learners' work, progress reviews, personal training plans, minutes of team meetings, course planning and development documentation, self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans, and other relevant documentation, policies, and reports.

2.4 The inspection also focused on the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance, the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners, and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

2.5 The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the learners to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Table 2: Learner Pastoral Care Questionnaire Returns

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Learners	300	273	91	117

The Inspectorate reported to the Director the main findings emerging from the questionnaires and, where, appropriate, these have been commented upon within this report. In addition, inspectors carried out focus group meetings with a wide range of learners in the College.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

3.1 Further Education¹ and Work-Based Learning Provision in the College

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

¹ Further Education refers to provision up to and including level 3

3.2 Further Education Provision

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.

3.3 Work-Based Learning Provision

In the area 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.

4. Table of performance levels

Overall Effectiveness	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
		Very Good	Very Good

Contributory Performance Levels:	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
Leadership and Management	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good	Very Good	Good

Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education and Work-Based Learning)	
Essential Skills	Very Good
Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education)	
Agriculture	Very Good
Equine	Very Good
Food	Outstanding
Professional and Technical Areas (Work-based Learning):	
Agriculture	Very Good

5. Summary of main findings

5.1 The Director and the senior and middle management teams provide very good leadership and management of the curriculum across the College. The management structure has been recently changed in order to provide more cohesive leadership and management of the main curriculum areas, which meets effectively the needs of the learners and the various industries.

5.2 The College Advisory Group is used very effectively to inform both the strategic and operational direction of the College. The members of the group interviewed feel highly valued and display high levels of commitment to the College.

5.3 The procedures for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are very good in further education and work-based learning. The Inspectorate has a high degree of confidence in the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

5.4 Managers at all levels have access to timely and reliable management information for both further education and work-based learning. This information is analysed and interpreted effectively to raise standards in the College.

5.5 The College gives a very high strategic priority to economic engagement and over the years has developed excellent relationships with a large number of employers. The commitment of employers to the College is evidenced by the large number of bursaries that they sponsor annually. The level of development and impact of economic engagement is very good across the College, and is outstanding in the food provision.

5.6 All of the lecturers and instructors across the professional and technical areas inspected are well-qualified and experienced. The staff have good opportunities to undertake continuous professional development; an important recent feature has been the appropriate focus on enabling staff to complete relevant teaching qualifications.

5.7 The quality of most of the accommodation and resources for teaching, training and learning in the professional and technical areas inspected ranges from good to outstanding.

5.8 The quality of the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners is very good. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the College has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

5.9 The quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is outstanding in further education and good in work-based learning.

5.10 The College offers an appropriate range of full and part-time courses in a majority of the areas inspected in further education.

5.11 The College has developed a very effective model to deliver ApprenticeshipsNI training in agriculture at levels 2 and 3 at satellite centres across NI using innovative links with industry to provide practical training opportunities.

5.12 The quality of teaching, training and learning is good or better in nearly all (94%) of the lessons and directed training sessions observed, with 62% of them being very good or better.

5.13 The use of ILT across most of the provision inspected ranges from good to outstanding and is mostly good. In the outstanding practice, very effective use is being made of on-line journals. There are further opportunities, especially in the essential skills work-based learning provision, to develop further the use of ILT to enhance learning.

5.14 In further education, outcomes on level 2 and level 3 courses are consistently high, with the three year average retention rate being very good and the achievement rate being outstanding, for both full-time and part-time courses. In the essential skills, the outcomes are also consistently high with the three year average retention rate being very good and the achievement rate being outstanding.

5.15 Up to 2011, only small numbers were recruited onto the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The retention rates for the learners recruited since 2011 are currently very good or better.

5.16 What does the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development need to do to improve further?

The College should continue to work to identify and share the outstanding practice in the organisation to further improve the quality of teaching, training and learning across all aspects of its provision.

PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

6. Leadership and management

6.1 Overall, the quality of the leadership and management of the curriculum is very good in further education and in work-based learning.

6.2 Since the establishment of the College, the Director, together with the senior and middle management teams have created three campuses that span a wide geographical area, with each campus having a distinct curriculum offer but one in which the staff and learners feel part of the wider College. This skilful balance has been achieved through most middle managers having responsibility that required them to engage with each of the campuses to co-ordinate effectively the further and higher education provision. The Director recently reorganised the middle management team so that most members of the team have responsibility for a specific curriculum area which is appropriate, at this stage of the College's development.

6.3 The College Advisory Group is non-executive and is comprised of twelve representatives from industry, education, and business and finance. The College makes effective use of the group to inform both strategic and operational direction of the College. The members of the group report that their views are valued and they meet regularly at the various campuses so that they can visit the teaching and learning facilities as part of their role. The members of the group display a high level of commitment to their role, the learners and the College.

6.4 The management team has established a successful, open and transparent quality improvement system for both the further education and work-based learning provision. The system is supported by an effective teaching and learning committee that considers programme reviews, provides appropriate challenge within the improvement process and identifies and disseminates good practice. This results in high quality self-evaluation reports with appropriate action plans for improvement. The progress being made in the identified actions is monitored regularly by line managers. The College benchmarks their programmes with the "Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence" group of colleges, located across the United Kingdom. In addition, peer observation was introduced in 2011 to support staff in their teaching, identify and disseminate good practice and to determine specific training needs. To date, approximately 50% of the horticulture, equine and food staff have been observed, with good practice being identified and disseminated across the College.

6.5 In further education and work-based learning, managers at all levels have access to timely and reliable management information which is analysed and interpreted effectively. The progress of learners is continually monitored for the early identification of potential issues so that action can be taken and support made available to improve the overall provision. The collation and sharing of information by lecturers in the professional and technical areas and among the essential skills tutors is good.

6.6 Across the further education and work-based learning provision inspected, the quality of leadership and management of the curriculum is very good; it is outstanding in food. In the outstanding practice, the head of branch, supported well by the course manager, provides strong leadership which is effective in promoting high standards and harmonious working relationships. Strategically, the curriculum is matched well to industry needs as the courses are designed to meet the growing need within the NI food industry for key supervisory roles including production management, technical auditing and product development.

6.7 Overall, the leadership and management of the provision for the essential skills in both further education and work-based learning is very good. The provision is managed by a head of branch who liaises closely with the Northern Regional College, South West College, The Link Works, and the essential skills tutors. A feature of the provision is the good support provided to the essential skills tutors by the professional and technical lecturers to develop appropriate contextualised contexts for the development of the essential skills.

6.8 The College gives a very high strategic priority to economic engagement. It has developed appropriate links with over 1,600 farm and commercial horticultural businesses and approximately 240 food processing and packaging businesses. The partnerships with key employers and sectoral bodies, at both strategic and operational levels, are very good and have resulted in bespoke training programmes being developed to meet well the needs of industry. The staff use these links effectively to provide careers information, and to improve the learners' awareness and understanding of contemporary issues impacting on the sector. An extensive range of learner bursaries, competitions and awards, work placements, industrial visits and guest speakers is in place to support teaching and learning within the College. The employers spoken to report positively about the ongoing work of the College to engage with them and to determine their training and support needs.

6.9 The lecturers, across the professional and technical areas inspected, are well-qualified and experienced. They are supported effectively by instructors who are also well-qualified with very good industrial experience. The College has prioritised the provision of teacher training; there are currently fifteen lecturers enrolled on the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching course, and over forty staff have completed a Certificate in Instructional Techniques course awarded by the sector skills council for land-based and environmental industries. Nearly all the staff have relevant and recent experience in the target industries.

6.10 The quality of the accommodation and access for learners to specialist resources ranges from good to outstanding. Last year a significant investment was made in equine facilities at the Enniskillen campus and currently a state of the art dairy facility is nearing completion on the Greenmount campus.

7. Quality of provision for learning

7.1 Overall, the quality of the provision for learning is very good in both further education and work-based learning.

7.2 The quality of the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners is very good. The student support officer has developed effective links with a range of external agencies to provide support to learners on a wide range of personal, social, financial and educational issues. Appropriate individual support is also provided for those requiring additional help with their learning, including the provision of relevant specialist support such as signers for learners with hearing impairments. Most of the lecturers, across the provision inspected, are aware of the diverse educational needs of the learners in their care. The College administers a hardship fund to assist learners who are experiencing financial problems. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the College has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

7.3 The learners' responses to the Inspectorate's pastoral care questionnaires, and the feedback from a majority during focus group discussions, raised concerns about a number of issues including the price of the food in the canteen and the lack of evening social activities for those staying in residential accommodation across all campuses. In addition, concerns were raised by a few learners about the lack of tractor driving.

7.4 The quality of the provision for CEIAG in further education is outstanding and in work-based learning it is good. The course managers are responsible for providing the service and make effective use of an appropriate on-line careers package. Careers events are organised for the learners with a diverse range of relevant employers attending. Visiting speakers and industrial visits also provide an invaluable and additional source of careers information. All of the learners have a substantive period of work placement that can last from several weeks to one year. These work placements include locations in NI, the United Kingdom and Europe.

7.5 In further education, the College offers an appropriate range of full and part-time courses across a majority of the professional and technical areas inspected, which provide good progression pathways. In most of the areas, progression is available from level 2 to honours degree.

7.6 In work-based learning, the College has a Department for Employment and Learning ApprenticeshipsNI contract for level 2 and 3 in agriculture. Since the downturn in the economy, job opportunities in other sectors have reduced and this has resulted in an increased demand for the apprenticeship provision. The College has successfully dealt with substantial increases in apprenticeships through very good planning and adopting innovative solutions. The College has developed a very effective model to deliver the training at satellite centres using very good links with industry to provide excellent practical training opportunities. There is an appropriate balance between theory sessions and practical skills development. Several employers were able to provide examples of where they had changed their working practices to good effect, as a result of the training received by their apprentices.

7.7 The quality of teaching, training and learning is good or better in nearly all (94%) of the lessons and directed training sessions observed, with 62% of them being very good or better. The high quality of teaching, training and learning is a feature of the provision in most of the equine and ApprenticeshipsNI provision and all of the food provision where the majority of the sessions observed were outstanding. The outstanding lessons are characterised by the use of a broad range of teaching strategies and creative approaches to learning that are well-planned to provide contextualised learning experiences along with the use of industry standard equipment and practices. Lecturers set very high expectations and use clear exposition, effective questioning, very good use of ILT and well-organised demonstrations. The learners are provided with excellent opportunities to develop their practical skills that are well co-ordinated to reinforce the theory that has been delivered.

7.8 The overall quality of the provision for learning in the essential skills is good. The quality of the teaching and learning is good or better. The features of the more effective lessons include a comprehensive initial assessment process where the results are used effectively to inform the lecturers' planning and review the learners' progress. The lecturers make good use of various questioning techniques to ensure consolidation of the learning has taken place.

7.9 The use of ILT across most of the provision inspected ranged from good to outstanding and is mostly good. In the outstanding practice very effective use is being made of on-line journals to enable the learners to record the skills and competences that they are developing. A start has been made in the essential skills to develop the use of ILT to better facilitate distance learning for apprentices, however, this requires further development.

7.10 In work-based learning, the personal training plans are good. They effectively capture the apprentices' entry qualifications and prior experience. The delivery of the various components of the framework is detailed with appropriate milestones. The plans are reviewed on a regular basis by the course manager to ensure that learners considered to be most at risk are identified at an early stage and appropriate interventions are put in place.

8. Achievements and standards

8.1 Overall, achievements and standards are very good; they are very good in further education and good in work-based learning.

8.2 In the further education provision inspected, the attendance is good or better. The learners are confident and well motivated; they work well with each other and have very good independent learning skills. Most of the learners demonstrate good or better spoken and written communication skills. They show appropriate levels of commitment to their career choices and have an excellent understanding of the key principles of their professional and technical area.

8.3 In work-based learning, nearly all of the learners are well-motivated and are developing appropriate skills in practical directed training sessions in their workplace. The instructors have a well-planned assessment schedule in place which confirms that most learners are making very good progress.

8.4 In essential skills, the standard of the learners' work is good or better. All the essential skills are delivered on CAFRE campuses and attendance at classes is also good or better. The tutors have high expectations of the learners and good opportunities are provided to consolidate their learning in their professional and technical areas.

8.5 Over the period 2009/10 to 2011/12, the outcomes on level 2 and level 3 courses in further education have remained consistently high. The three year average retention rate is very good and has increased from 86% to 89%. The achievement rates are very good at 93%.

8.6 Up to 2011, only small numbers were recruited onto the ApprenticeshipsNI programme due to an alternative further education programme that was previously available. However, in 2011, recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme improved significantly with 86 level 2 apprentices, and 50 level 3 apprentices being recruited over the last two years. Of those apprentices who are due to complete shortly, nearly all are on target to complete successfully; the current retention rate on the level 2 programme is very good at 81%, and the retention rate on the level 3 programme is outstanding at 100%.

8.7 In the essential skills, the achievements are mostly very good. Most learners are targeting essential skills at level 2. In further education, over the last three years, the average achievement rates in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are very good at 94% and 90% respectively. In work-based learning, over the past four years, the average achievement rates in literacy and numeracy for those who are retained are very good at 90% and the achievement rate in ICT is good at 80%.

PART THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

9. Agriculture

Performance Level: Very Good

Areas inspected: Further Education Provision in:

- Level 2 Diploma in Agriculture; and
- Level 3 Extended Diploma in Agriculture.

CONTEXT

9.1 CAFRE provides two full time courses for learners in the vocational area of agriculture, a one year level 2 diploma in agriculture course and a three year extended diploma in agriculture. Approximately 150 learners are enrolled in total on these courses. The three year extended diploma course includes a year out of College on work experience.

The quality of the leadership and management is very good.

9.2 The leadership provided by the head of branch has been pivotal in the development of a culture of self-evaluation within the vocational area. As a consequence of this self-evaluation process appropriate areas for further development have been identified. At the time of the inspection the course manager had been in post for six months. In this short period she has undertaken an effective review of the two courses for which she has responsibility and consequently key improvements have been made to the provision for the learners. In taking forward this development the processes for the monitoring and evaluation of the theory sessions need to be developed further and implemented consistently by all staff.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

9.3 The quality of learning and teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Just over 80% of the sessions observed were good or better. The lecturers and instructors were all well-prepared for the lessons. The best sessions began with an effective evaluation of the previous learning; activities were well paced and managed and facilitated the development of independent learning skills.

Achievements and standards are very good.

9.4 Over a three year period 94% of the learners who complete the one year level 2 programme achieve the qualification; the corresponding figure for the level 3 programme is 95%. The retention rates over the same period for the level 2 course are outstanding with 90% of those enrolled completing the course. While the retention rates for the three year extended diploma course is lower at 79%, it is mainly as a consequence of the sandwich provision as a number of learners gained full-time employment at the end of their one-year work placement and don't return for their third year. These learners have mostly achieved sufficient credit in the first year of their course to be awarded a subsidiary diploma. Consequently most achieve a qualification and are provided with opportunities to acquire a range of additional qualifications which add significantly to their employability. Whilst the quality of the standards achieved by the learners in the formal assessment is outstanding the quality of the learners' written work and their spoken responses in lectures remain more variable.

Table of Achievements (Over the last three years)

Course Type	Completion Year 2010			Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			Three Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Full-Time Courses at level 2	92	91	84	93	98	91	86	92	79	90	94	85
Full-Time Courses at level 3	71	100	71	79	97	77	83	91	76	79	95	75
Overall	83	95	79	87	97	85	85	92	78	85	95	80

10. ApprenticeshipsNI

Performance Level: Very Good

Areas inspected: Work-based Learning Provision in:

- Level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI agriculture; and
- Level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI agriculture.

CONTEXT

10.1 The College provides ApprenticeshipsNI training in agriculture across NI. Delivery centres are located at Banbridge, Enniskillen, Greenmount and Tobermore. At Greenmount, the College farm is used for practical training activities; at the other centres, local commercial farms are used for these activities. Both level 2 and level 3 apprentices attend the College one day each week for professional and technical training; those who require essential skills training attend for a second day. Currently there are 86 level 2 apprentices and 50 level 3 apprentices registered on agriculture programmes.

The quality of the leadership and management is very good.

10.2 The head of branch and course manager have been in place for approximately eighteen months and have worked hard to improve the provision, to good effect. The course manager demonstrates high levels of commitment and provides good levels of support to the staff, for example, to those most recently appointed who benefit from a suitable mentoring programme. The timetable meets well the needs of the level 2 apprentices with an appropriate balance between co-ordinated theory and practical sessions. The self-evaluation process is effective and has identified the main areas for improvement. Excellent links have been established with a number of farms which provide very good practical training opportunities and access to appropriate facilities and livestock.

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

10.3 The quality of teaching, training and learning observed ranged from good to outstanding with most being very good or better. In the more effective sessions, the lecturers bring their practical experience to the learning; they plan effectively and use to good effect each of the apprentices' individual strengths and experience to engage well with the group. Nearly all of the employers are well-informed about the programme and provide very good opportunities for the apprentices to apply and consolidate their learning and skills.

A small number of the level 2 placements do not provide a sufficiently broad experience for the apprentices; however the College ensures that they get the appropriate experience on the farms used for training. The well-planned residential visit to a number of farms in Scotland provides appropriate opportunities for the apprentices, who attended, to observe a good variety of farming enterprises.

Achievements and standards are good.

10.4 Up to 2011, the numbers recruited onto these programmes were very low with only 14 apprentices recruited over a 3 year period. In 2011, there was a significant increase with 42 level 2 and 25 level 3 apprentices recruited. The retention rate for those apprentices recruited in 2011 is very good (81%) and outstanding (100%) for the current level 2 and 3 apprentices respectively. Most of the current second year apprentices are on target to complete successfully later this year. The standard of most of the apprentices' work, both in class and in practical activities, is good or better. A number of employers reported that they had adopted new practices in their business as a result of the training received by their apprentices. The apprentices' attendance at class is good and most are well-behaved and highly motivated.

Tables of Achievements (Over the last four years – ApprenticeshipsNI)

No table of achievements is available due to the low numbers recruited in previous years; the current cohorts have not yet completed.

11. Equine

Performance Level: Very Good

Areas inspected: Further Education Provision in:

- Level 2 Diploma in Horse Care;
- Level 2 Pre-farriery; and
- Level 3 Extended Diploma Horse Management.

CONTEXT

11.1 The College offers the Level 2 Diploma in Horse Care, Level 2 Certificate in Forge Work and the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Horse Management. The learners have good opportunities for progression within the College from level 2 to degree level.

The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.

11.2 The head of branch, supported well by the programme manager, heads of year, and lecturing staff, has demonstrated outstanding strategic leadership in the ongoing development of the campus and the curriculum. The quality of the accommodation and equine facilities are outstanding. Good relationships exist between staff and management, including the industrial staff, who play an integral and important role within a cohesive curriculum and College development team. The lecturers are all well-qualified and experienced, with a number having international experience or holding nationally recognised accredited professional qualifications. Management and staff have developed good links to a wide range of companies across the equine industry, including contacts to a number of key internationally recognised organisations and professional bodies. The process for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning is very good and identifies well the strengths and areas for improvement which would further improve the equine provision.

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

11.3 The lecturers are all well-qualified and experienced, and plan well for their lessons. They make good use of a variety of teaching methods and a majority of them make good use of ILT to support their teaching and learning. All of the teaching and learning is good or better with most being very good or outstanding. There is, however, a need for a small number of lecturers to differentiate the lesson content, provide more challenge, and encourage more independent learning for the more able learners in the theory sessions. The quality of the assessments is good or better, a variety of tasks are set which provide appropriate challenge for the learner, and they are mapped effectively to allow learners to undertake additional industry recognised professional qualifications. A rigorous internal verification process is in place and there is evidence of marking for improvement. In the practical sessions, the lecturers place a strong emphasis on health and safety and they develop well the variety of skills and competences the learners need to care for and handle horses safely. All of the learners undertake a relevant work placement as part of their programme and are offered a good range of additional qualifications.

11.4 The learners are well supported in their learning and an effective induction process is in place. A comprehensive CEIAG programme is in operation which includes a careers fair, the use of guest speakers, and industry visits. The learners interviewed are aware of the progression opportunities available to them and what they need to do to achieve at a level which will enable them to progress to meet their career aspirations.

Achievements and standards are very good.

11.5 The learners' written work is mostly good or better, they demonstrate a good understanding of the work being undertaken in the theory lessons and practical sessions observed and respond well when questioned on various subjects, demonstrating good progress in their learning. In the practical sessions, the learners adhere well to health and safety practices and demonstrate high levels of skill and competence when working with and handling the horses. Over the past three years the overall outcomes on the equine programmes are good. The average retention rate is very good at 80%, and the achievement rate is good at 88%. Although the College has carried out a trend analysis and can provide reasons why learners leave their course or do not achieve, more could be done to improve the achievement rate on the level 2 forge work certificate programme, which is satisfactory at 68%.

Table of Achievements (Over the last three years)

Course Type	Completion Year 2010			Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			Three Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Full-Time Courses at level 2	100	83	83	80	92	73	100	83	83	94	85	80
Full-Time Courses at level 3	66	89	59	67	93	62	78	89	70	70	90	63
Overall	79	86	68	72	92	67	88	86	76	80	88	70

12. Essential Skills

Performance Level: Very Good

Areas inspected: Full-time further education and work-based learning provision.

CONTEXT

12.1 The essential skills provision for both the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department for Employment and Learning funded learners is delivered by three providers: the Northern Regional College, South West College and The Link Works. A number of models of delivery are used to meet the local circumstances and include front-loading the essential skills at the beginning of the year. Essential skills are delivered on the Greenmount and Enniskillen campuses. There is no essential skills provision on the Loughry campus where nearly all the learners have already achieved a level 2 qualification in literacy and numeracy. Those who have not achieved are re-sitting their General Certificate in Secondary Education during their first year. Currently there are a total of 55 apprentices (levels 2 and 3) taking one or more essential skill and 58 full-time further education learners taking one or more essential skill.

The quality of the leadership and management is very good.

12.2 The head of branch has worked very hard with all staff to ensure that staff and learners value the opportunity to complete essential skills. Most of the learners spoke positively about their essential skills experiences and realise the importance of having level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Most employers also recognise the importance of their employees achieving literacy and numeracy qualifications. The CAFRE staff provides good support to the essential skills tutors that includes regular monitoring of attendance and helping to provide learning materials and relevant contexts that engage the learners. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are good.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

12.3 The quality of teaching and learning observed ranged from good to outstanding with most being very good. In the more effective practice, a very comprehensive initial assessment is completed and the results are used well to inform both planning and future progress reviews. Working relationships are excellent between lecturers and learners, questioning is used effectively to develop extended spoken responses and there is good pace throughout the sessions. Most of the learning and assessment is delivered through an appropriate range of contexts relating to the professional and technical areas being studied.

Achievements and standards are very good.

12.4 The expectations by staff of the learners is high and most target essential skills at level 2. There is evidence that the learners have good opportunities to consolidate their learning through their work in the professional and technical areas. The attendance at class is good and most learners are highly motivated. For the further education learners, the retention and achievement rates are very good over the last three years at 85% and 92%. For the current apprentices, the achievement rates in literacy and numeracy are very good at 90% and good at 80% in ICT. The standard of work produced by the learners is good or better

Table of Achievements (Over the last three years) - Essential Skills in full-time further education

Essential Skill	Completion Year 2010			Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			3 Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Literacy	94	90	84	75	98	74	90	95	86	86	94	81
Numeracy	93	84	78	65	100	65	89	91	81	83	90	75
Overall	93	87	81	71	99	70	89	93	83	85	92	78

13. Food-Related Courses

Performance Level: Outstanding

Areas inspected: Further Education Provision in:

- National Diploma Food, Science and Manufacture Technology; and
- National Diploma Food, Nutrition and Health

CONTEXT

13.1 The number of learners registered in this professional and technical area has increased over the last 3 years from 59 in 2010/2011 to 68 in 2012/2013. At the time of the inspection, 63 full-time and part-time learners were registered on national diploma level 3 food related programmes in the Loughry Campus. The College provides learners with excellent opportunities to progress on to appropriate Foundation or Honours Degree programmes.

The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.

13.2 The head of branch, supported well by the course manager, provides strong leadership which is effective in promoting high standards and harmonious working relationships. Strategically, the courses are designed to meet the growing need of the NI food industry for people to fill key supervisory roles including production management, technical auditing and product development. The course and year managers work well together and have designed carefully broad, comprehensive and well-balanced programmes, which enable the learners to achieve high standards of work and additional accreditation. The work of the highly qualified, multi-disciplinary staff team is characterised by strong collegiality and a commitment to excellence. The arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning are robust. They include regular peer observation of teaching and learning, and the tutors are provided with constructive feedback on their performance.

13.3 The links and partnerships with key employers and sectoral bodies, at both strategic and operational levels, are excellent. The staff use the links effectively to provide careers information and to improve the learners' awareness and understanding of contemporary issues impacting on the sector. The quality of the accommodation, physical resources and equipment is excellent. The learners have access to state-of-the-art food facilities, including modern food manufacturing and packaging equipment, product development and sensory evaluation facilities, and laboratories, which enable them to develop the appropriate competences and skills relevant to a future career in the industry.

The quality of the provision for learning is outstanding.

13.4 The quality of teaching and learning in the observed lessons ranges from outstanding to very good; significantly, it is outstanding in the majority (64%) of them. All of the lessons observed are characterised by the use of a broad range of teaching strategies and creative approaches to learning. Overall, the training provided is rigorous and is enhanced well through the effective use of ILT. Very good use is made of on-line personal journals to enable the learners to record the skills and competences that they are developing. The coherence and breadth of the curriculum offer, matched effectively to the individual needs of learners, is a particular feature of the quality of the provision for learning.

Achievements and standards are outstanding.

13.5 The learners respond well to the very high expectations and standards staff set for them. Their levels of engagement in learning are significant. As a result, they are making very good progress in their professional and technical units and have an excellent understanding of the key principles of food and nutrition. The learners' spoken communication skills are well-developed; most are confident in their use of language, they engage effectively in discussions and activities during small group work and regularly make verbal presentations of a high standard to their peers. The standards of the learners' written work are mostly very good, and they use electronic resources extensively to research and support their work. They are developing good skills in referencing techniques and make effective use of a wide range of ILT applications and on-line tools to complete and support their work.

13.6 The learners are developing well their skills in independent learning, as well as their transferable skills in areas of specific relevance to the agri-food chain, including managing effectively their own time, teamwork and leadership. They have an excellent understanding of the opportunities for progression to higher education and employment and well-developed skills in career planning. Average retention rates over the last three years are very good at 89% and achievement and progression rates are outstanding at 96% and 95% respectively.

Table of Achievements (Over the last three years)

Course Type	Completion Year 2010			Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			Three Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Full-Time Courses at level 3	79	91	71	93	100	93	89	94	84	89	96	85
Overall	79	91	71	93	100	93	89	94	84	89	96	85

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