



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in the
College of Agriculture, Food and
Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

Report of an Inspection
in January 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is a public body, an integral part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA), and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹. The organisation is managed by the College Director, supported by senior managers of education service and development service and a management team with responsibilities across college services, agriculture education, horticulture, food education and equine, supported by a team of lecturers, instructors and support staff.

At the time of the inspection, 170 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of agriculture, food and drink, horticulture and veterinary nursing.

A minority (15%) of the apprentices has a disability and/or has additional learning support needs. A significant minority (38%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics.

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for learners;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of provision for learning and development; and
- the quality of the leadership and management.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
ApprenticeshipsNI	100%	Very good

¹ Programme registration data provided by the organisation at the time of the inspection is included in the Appendix of this report.

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected² and the essential skills provision	
Agriculture	Outstanding
Food and drink	Good
Horticulture	Very good
Essential Skills	Good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The effective leadership and management who set a clear and appropriately challenging strategic vision for the organisation.
- The highly qualified and experienced staff across all of the professional and technical areas, a number of whom have current industry experience, and the excellent opportunities provided for them to undertake continuing professional development.
- The extensive employer engagement and the excellent links with industry, particularly across the agri-food sector, and the breadth of the organisation's involvement with a range of stakeholders.
- The outstanding quality of the physical resources, including the excellent cutting-edge industry standard accommodation and resources, which support very effectively a commercially relevant bespoke learning and training environment for the apprentices.
- The well-planned curriculum offer reflecting the needs of industry across the agriculture, food and horticulture sectors and providing apprentices with wide range of relevant occupational and employability skills.
- The good or better standards of written work, and the very good or better practical work demonstrated by the apprentices in the college and the workplace.
- The very good quality of most of the directed and practical training observed that supports well the apprentices' learning and training, including the development of an extensive range of industry relevant skills.
- The highly effective support arrangements and careers education, information, advice and guidance, including the well-planned careers events for the apprentices, with a clear focus on industry specific careers advice and planning.
- The high outcomes across the provision, including the overall very good retention rate (88%) and the outstanding achievement rate at 98%.

² A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the organisation, was selected for inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Refine the quality assurance arrangements to better use data to inform the self-evaluation and quality improvement processes, to continue to identify and share effective practice across the teaching and learning and, to increase the involvement of the delivery partners.
- Develop further the essential skills provision in line with the requirements of the revised curriculum.

4. Outcomes for learners

The standards of most of the apprentices' written work are good or better; the standards of practical work demonstrated by them are very good or better. In the professional and technical area of agriculture the apprentices demonstrate high standards of work and almost all of them develop very effective commercial industry standard skills, and have access to, and are developing an appreciation of contemporary farming techniques and emerging technology within the agriculture sector. In the remaining professional and technical areas of horticulture and food and drink the apprentices develop good or better standards of work. In horticulture the apprentices have very good opportunities to develop their technical knowledge and practical skills to enable them to work effectively in horticulture-related job roles. In food and drink the apprentices' standards of written and practical work are good or better, including the standards of their communication skills.

Most of the apprentices achieve good or better standards of literacy and numeracy as a result of their learning in the essential skills, and a minority achieve above the level required by their framework in both literacy and numeracy. The apprentices can apply their literacy and numeracy skills well in their professional and technical training and in their workplace.

Over the last three years, the average achievement rate is outstanding (98%) and the progression to further or higher education or employment has been consistently outstanding (96%) for level 2 apprentices and good (74%) for level 3 apprentices. Almost all of the apprentices make very good progress in their learning and training. The managers, lecturers and instructors set high expectations with regard to the attendance and achievement of apprentices. Attendance at directed training is mostly very good and the standard of the apprentices' presentation in training is exemplary, including their attention to safe working practices and the use of personal protective equipment during directed training. The apprentices engage positively in their directed training, which is effective in improving their employability and enabling them to develop an excellent range of professional and technical skills. The average retention rate across the provision is very good (88%).

All of the apprentices demonstrate increasing degrees of confidence in their spoken communication and in their interactions with lecturers and instructors, employers and others in the workplace, including the real working farm environment. Almost all of the apprentices report that their confidence and motivation has increased through their learning and engagement in the programme. Almost all of the apprentices are developing very well their occupational and employability skills preparing them effectively for employment within the agriculture, food and drink and horticulture sectors, or for progressing to further or higher education or further training. The organisation provides a wide range of very good opportunities through a well-planned curriculum for the apprentices to achieve beyond the minimum required in their framework.

5. Quality of provision

The ApprenticeshipsNI programme provides an appropriate and well-planned curriculum that matches well the needs of the agriculture, food and drink and horticulture sectors and, the aspirations of apprentices. The curriculum planning is effective and well-developed to reflect the industry standards and provide a breadth of opportunity and an industry relevant experience for the apprentices. Progression planning within the programmes is very good and it prepares the apprentices well for, further education, training or employment. Within the food and drink and horticulture ApprenticeshipsNI provision the organisation needs to continue to promote recruitment to these programmes, and the delivery capacity, to better meet the demands of industry.

The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is highly effective. The level and extent of the careers support is aligned well to the professional and technical areas and ensures effective individual career planning and guidance. All of the apprentices are provided with opportunities to broaden their experience through work-related learning and practical activities, inspiring guest speakers and employers. These arrangements enable almost all of the apprentices to make effective and impartial career decisions and to gain access to appropriate progression pathways.

A key strength of the provision is the curriculum enrichment activities and events that are organised for the apprentices, which provide industry standard experiences and excellent opportunities for the apprentices to enhance their employability. There is an excellent and varied range of additional qualifications that the apprentices can complete in agriculture and horticulture to further enhance their employability skills, including short training courses to increase their ability to operate safely in the workplace and comply with industry-related regulations. In the food and drink provision there is an effective and varied range of learning and assessment strategies, including an innovative approach to project based learning built on collaborative practices within the food and drink sector.

The quality of the essential skills provision is good. Difficulties with a sub-contractor, who was unable to fulfil the terms of the contract, has led to an un-avoidable delay in starting the essential skills provision. Effective planning has led to a new sub-contractor being appointed and the provision has now commenced. Almost all of the apprentices are well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning and progression in the essential skills. The apprentices are developing an appropriate range of literacy and numeracy skills effectively within their professional and technical training. To further improve the provision the organisation should work with the new sub-contractor and the delivery partners to develop further the planning for essential skills delivery, in line with the requirements of the revised curriculum.

The quality of the learning, training and teaching is good or better, with 54% of the sessions observed very good or outstanding. The better sessions were characterised by highly effective planning, interactive learning and the use of a range of suitably contextualised activities to engage and motivate the apprentices. There is an appropriate focus on the development of the apprentices' professional, technical and practical skills. The quality of the practical training is consistently very good or better. The lecturers and instructors monitor closely the apprentices' progress and collaborate effectively with an extensive employer base to provide the apprentices with wide-ranging opportunities to extend their learning and develop a broad range of professional and technical skills.

The quality of the apprentices' personal training plans is mostly very good and used to good effect to monitor and track the apprentices' progress. The reviews of the apprentices' progress are carried out regularly by the lecturers and instructors on the employers' premises, are systematic and set appropriate targets. However, the written record does not always reflect sufficiently the work carried out during the review.

The arrangements for the care and welfare of the apprentices impacts positively on their learning, development and outcomes. Apprentices have very good access to an appropriate range of support services. A comprehensive and well-planned induction programme is in place, which provides appropriate pre-entry advice and guidance and underpins the inclusive ethos of the organisation. The quality and effectiveness of the processes and systems for identifying and managing individual support needs are well-established and effective. The managers and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the care and welfare needs of all of the apprentices and there is a coherent approach to planning, identifying and supporting the apprentices' individual needs, in order that they can achieve to their full potential. Information and learning technology is used effectively to support and promote greater independence in the apprentices' learning and development.

6. Leadership and management

The senior management team is highly committed and effective in their leadership of the provision. The organisation is led by the Director who is supported well by a team of highly motivated senior managers, middle managers, lecturers, instructors and support staff to deliver high quality Apprenticeship training across the agri-food and horticulture sectors. The organisation has well-defined strategic priorities and a clear strategic vision, linked to the needs of industry, including their membership of and contribution to Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence (Landex) to meet strategically the interests of the land-based industries and further enhance the quality of the learning experiences provided for apprentices. The senior managers and staff are well supported by the College Advisory Group, which acts in an advisory and non-executive capacity and is highly committed to the work of the organisation. The management and staff have effective collaborative working relationships with an extensive range of employers and external agencies that are used well to inform curriculum development and to support the apprentices in the development of their professional, technical and employability skills. These links need to be used more effectively to increase the recruitment levels to the food and drink and horticulture provision which are currently under utilised.

The quality of the accommodation and learning resources is of a very high standard. There is a significant investment in learning resources including new livestock accommodation that has been designed to incorporate the highest standards of animal welfare and the latest technology which have ensured CAFRE is innovative and sector-leading across the United Kingdom. The accommodation is very well-maintained across all campuses, to meet effectively the needs of the apprentices. A number of out-centres across Northern Ireland are used to deliver the agricultural provision in order to make it more accessible. This includes working closely with carefully selected farmers, located near these out-centres who provide training facilities in a real working environment for the apprentices. The food and drink provision is delivered on the employers' premises.

There are well defined channels of communication in the organisation and regular meetings are held with staff, at all levels, to share information. The staff are all appropriately qualified to a high professional standard and have extensive experience in the sector. The organisation places a high priority on the continuing professional development of all staff, with nearly all the delivery staff having completed the Certificate in Teaching. There is effective planning and co-ordination of the provision, with staff working collaboratively to share resources and meet the needs of the apprentices.

The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning is mostly effective. The management have worked hard with staff to raise their capacity for self-evaluation. The organisation has a highly reflective and responsive ethos and has engaged very well with a range of key stakeholders in the self-evaluation process to inform the evaluation of provision. To improve this process further it would be important to embed the quality assurance arrangements to include increased monitoring of the sub-contracting and delivery-partner arrangements for the essential skills and to continue to identify and share effective practice across the teaching and learning. It is appropriate that the organisation is developing their quality assurance processes further to make better use of data to inform self-evaluation and quality improvement.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect the guidance issued by the Department.

7. Overall effectiveness

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the apprentices.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	170	100%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Agriculture	143	84%
Food Technology	16	9%
Horticulture	10	6%
Veterinary Nursing	1	1%

Table 3 - Qualifications of current apprentices/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	38%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	50%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	50%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	50%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	75%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	6%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

Five ETI inspectors observed 88 apprentices in 11 directed training sessions; visited 13 apprentices in their workplace; and interviewed 38 in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with management and staff, across the campuses, including Enniskillen Campus (Enniskillen), Loughry Campus (Cookstown) and Greenmount Campus (Antrim). Samples of the apprentices' work and personal training plans, and lecturers' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined; and the organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

As part of the evaluation of CAFRE's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people, the apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 80 questionnaires issued, 66 (83%) were returned, including 2 with written comments. The returns show that all of the apprentices feel safe and secure in the organisation and almost all of them indicated that they made the right choice following their training programme. All of responses from the online questionnaire and discussions with the apprentices were positive about the extent and quality of support they receive.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, Quality of Provision and on Leadership and Management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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