



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

College of Agriculture, Food  
and Rural Enterprise  
Industry Training

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2010 and  
January 2011

# CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART ONE: SUMMARY</b>	
1. CONTEXT	1
2. PROVISION	2
3. THE EVALUATION	3
4. MAIN FINDINGS	4
<b>PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION</b>	
6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	8
8. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	9
<b>PART THREE: CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	
9. OVERALL CONCLUSION	10
10. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT	10

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%

All of the data included in this report is supplied by the college.

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

## **PART ONE: SUMMARY**

### **1. CONTEXT**

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

1.2 The aim of the Industry Training programmes is to develop the skills and competences of people working in the industry to enable them to develop and manage sustainable businesses. The training is delivered through short courses, which typically last from half a day, to accredited Challenge programmes which last up to 12 sessions. Challenge programmes are designed to improve the performance of businesses by encouraging participants to focus on those aspects of their business which impact directly on competitiveness.

1.3 The College contributes to the achievement of the Department's goals. Training is also linked to specific departmental initiatives. For example in 2011, the College is leading on two key Departmental initiatives:

---

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

- the Department's Online Services - to increase the use of online services including the Animal and Public Health Information Service (APHIS); and
- Cross Compliance e.g. Electronic Identification in sheep and understanding Land Eligibility Criteria - to help increase compliance levels of farmers.

1.4 The Industry Training provision is part of the College's Development Service and is managed by the Head of Branch for Dairy and Pigs who reports to the Deputy Director (Head of the Development Service). The majority of the training is delivered by local Development Advisors where their role focuses on the development of people's competences to facilitate business improvement.

1.5 The Industry Training provision is delivered either on a College campus, where specialist resources are required, or in out-centres including employers premises or in local community venues to facilitate both the employers and the learners.

## 2. PROVISION

2.1 The provision is delivered by staff from the Beef and Sheep Development Branch, College Services Branch, Crops and Horticulture Development Branch, Dairy and Pigs Development Branch, Equine Education Branch and the Food Technology Development Branch.

2.3 At the time of the evaluation there were 25 courses scheduled each week in both November and January. These courses were being delivered across a wide geographical area across all of Northern Ireland. Courses were being delivered in animal health, animal medicine, business (including benchmarking), diversification, edible crop technical update,

equine health and safety, feed efficiency, food safety for manufacturing, horse knowledge and care, nutrient management, renewable technology, and suckler herd fertility.

2.4 Nearly all the participants were employed in the relevant industry or were interested in diversifying into another business enterprise. The learners had a wide range of age profiles and academic profiles.

2.5 Over the last three years, 20,925 learners have attended a short non-accredited industry training course. A further 9,333 learners have attended accredited training courses leading to industry recognised qualifications and 7,454 (80%) of the learners opted to complete the qualification.

### **3. THE EVALUATION**

3.1 The Department commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to evaluate the quality of the education and training provision of the Industrial Training provision. The aims of the evaluation are to determine the effectiveness of the current provision of training in meeting industry needs in qualitative terms, assess the quality assurance mechanisms in place and determine their effectiveness to improve the quality of the provision and assess the quality of the learning experience for participants.

3.2 In November 2010 and January 2011, the Inspectorate carried out a longitudinal evaluation of the industry training provision. Leadership and management, achievements and standards and the quality of provision for learning were evaluated during each phase by a core team of three inspectors with the assistance of two further inspectors. Discussions were held with all the members of the senior management team, the relevant heads of branches, advisors, three large employers and 14 former students. The inspection team also observed 23 classes and examined a wide range of documentation presented by the

College including the self-evaluation report, minutes of course team meetings, course planning documents, samples of learners' work and assessment materials. As part of the evaluation, The Director of the College completed a questionnaire relating to the provision of safeguarding and pastoral care within the organisation.

#### 4. **MAIN FINDINGS**

4.1 The main strengths are the:

- very good leadership and management of the provision;
- very good use made of links with industry and key stakeholders to identify industry needs and to inform planning;
- wide range of relevant courses which meet the changing and emerging needs of the industry, with good opportunities for learners to gain accreditation from level 2 to level 4;
- very good or better quality of the training and learning in nearly all of the sessions observed;
- very good opportunities for the learners to share good practice; and
- very good standards of work achieved by the learners.

4.2 The main areas for improvement include:

- the further development of strategies to encourage reluctant learners to participate in the training provision;

- a review of the self-evaluation report and the development of a quality improvement plan; and
- a review of the staffing levels in a small number of specialist areas affected by staff illness and retirements.



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

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

6.1 The leadership and management of the provision is very good. The College's business plan clearly identifies the priorities for industrial training with well defined actions and appropriate measurable targets. The provision is well planned and co-ordinated at all levels to meet the needs of industry. Over the last three years, training has been provided to 30,258 learners across a very wide range of courses. During the last six months there have been significant personnel changes; three of the six heads of branches have either retired or taken up new posts. Two new head of branches have been appointed and in the third branch a member of staff is acting-up. These changes have been well managed by the senior management team and the head of industrial training with little or no impact on the provision. However, in a small number of specialist areas the provision has been impacted by staff illness and retirements; in these areas there were no suitably experienced advisors to deliver the provision.

6.2 The College has a high commitment to quality improvement. An extensive internal review of the provision was carried out in 2006 and most of the recommendations have been implemented. An effective quality assurance process is in place to monitor the quality of the provision. Each learner completes a satisfaction survey at the end of each course. The results of these surveys are analysed on an on-going basis to identify both good practice and practice that needs to improve. A self-evaluation report is produced that identifies strengths and areas for improvements in the provision and the findings from these reports are moderated at a teaching and learning committee meeting. The outcomes of this process are communicated to the senior management team, who provide the necessary support where required. The self-evaluation report, however, is too descriptive and does not make sufficient use of the available data to underpin the evaluations. While most of the identified

areas for improvement are being addressed, a formal quality improvement plan would improve the process.

6.3 Very good links have been established with industry and key stakeholders. The College links directly with over 1600 farm and commercial horticulture businesses, and over 240 food processing businesses through the delivery of technology transfer, technology development and training. These links are used very effectively to identify the training requirements of each of the industries. All of the employers contacted were very supportive of the programmes offered by the College and the staff delivering the provision. In addition, the employers reported the College was very responsive and flexible in meeting their needs.

6.4 Relationships are excellent at all levels. All the staff display a high level of commitment to the delivery of the provision, which can require them to work a significant number of unsociable hours. The staff are well qualified and experienced and this provides them with very good credibility among the learners and the industry. There are opportunities to share good practice and continuing professional development is well supported through the performance review system.

6.5 While there is a good up-take on the industry training provision there is a significant cohort of learners, particularly in the agriculture sector who have not engaged in the training. An innovative delivery method has been adopted recently to engage learners from the rural community who would not normally attend a course. A number of short courses were held in sheep markets across the country during sheep sales. These courses were very well attended by farmers many of whom would have had little or no previous contact with an advisor. This initiative has been successful. Further strategies, however, are required to encourage reluctant learners to participate in the training provision particularly in the agriculture sector.

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

7.1 A wide range of relevant courses are provided. The curriculum is outstanding with good opportunities for the learners to obtain qualifications from level 2 to level 4 and is well designed to meet the changing and emerging needs of the industry.

7.2 The quality of the training and learning is very good or better in nearly all (92%) of the sessions observed. The advisors have good relationships with the learners and are well organised with good planning. In the classes observed the learning was related to appropriate real life contexts and a very good range of strategies was used to engage and challenge the learners including demonstrations and small group work. Very good use was made of questioning and a feature of the provision was the high levels of discussion and participation by the learners.

7.3 Very good use was made of visiting speakers. The speakers were carefully chosen and were very well briefed about the session they were to deliver. Visiting speakers included web designers, veterinary surgeons and business owners. There were also good opportunities for the learners to visit other businesses to share good practice.

7.4 The specialist resources to support training and learning on the college campuses are very good. In most of the lessons there is good use of information and learning technology however, in a small number of the venues, located in the community, there were limited opportunities to use the technology to it full potential due to the facilities available.

7.5 The learners in a small number of the computer short courses had a wide range of skills and experiences. This makes it difficult for the advisors to meet all of the learners' needs. There are opportunities at the application stage to better determine the applicant's

skills and experience so that the classes can be organised to include learners with similar skill levels.

7.6 At the time of the evaluation, the organisation has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding. The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

## **8. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

8.1 Nearly all the learners are highly motivated and committed to their training and are able to relate the training to their own business. They are enthusiastic and are eager to learn about new practices. Most of the learners participated enthusiastically in discussion and small group exercises, and reported that they were planning to use some of the concepts in their own business in an attempt to improve their competitiveness.

8.2 The standards of work observed are very good. The engagement by the advisors observed, and the content of the lessons provided the learners with good opportunities to develop a broad range of knowledge and capabilities that are appropriate to the current and emerging needs of their industries.

8.3 For courses leading to a qualification, the retention rate over the last three years is excellent at 93%. The success rate for the learners who opted to complete a qualification is good at 85%.

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

### **9. CONCLUSION**

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

- the current provision is very effective in meeting the training needs of the Industry, however, the strategies to encourage reluctant learners to participate in the training provision are under-developed;
- the quality control arrangements in place are effective in improving the quality of provision, however, the self-evaluation report is too descriptive and a formal quality improvement plan needs to be developed; and
- the quality of the learning experience for the learners is very good with nearly all of the sessions visited being very good or better.

### **10. KEY PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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

- develop further strategies to encourage reluctant learners to participate in the training provision; and
- review the self-evaluation report and develop a formal quality improvement plan.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2011

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

