

Nottingham Trent University, School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences

Higher education institution

Inspection dates		20 - 23 November 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications has decreased in the last three years and is very low. During this period, the numbers of adult learners have also decreased and they are now in a small minority.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not sufficiently well planned to meet learners' needs. They do not challenge the learners, all of whom are on advanced level courses, enough to encourage them to achieve high grades.
- Teaching, learning and assessment do not enhance learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters. Teachers do not take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' knowledge and appreciation of the wider, cultural aspects of equality and diversity.
- Although senior managers have a strong focus on improvement, the actions they take to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet had enough impact. Too few lessons are good or better.

This provider has the following strengths:

- The proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 who achieve their qualifications has increased significantly in the last three years. During this period, their proportion of the total number of learners has increased so that they now form a large majority.
- Learners in equine studies develop good practical and vocational skills, which increase their employability.
- The resources to support teaching and learning are good. Learners benefit considerably from using the specialist facilities in animal care and equine studies and also from having access to the provider's higher education learning resources.
- Learners are motivated, hard-working and courteous. They show high levels of respect to each other, staff and visitors.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers support teachers to follow the School central guidance on lesson planning and assessment and that they monitor how well teachers implement it. Improve the planning of learning and also the schemes of learning so that they include effective techniques to provide differentiated activities to meet different learners' needs. Provide greater challenge to learners to inspire them to progress further and attain higher grades.
- Develop more imaginative assessments which stimulate and motivate learners and which are less reliant on written assignments. Increase the range of more interesting and engaging learning activities in lessons. Diversify the types of assignments to include a wider spread of learners' skills and talents.
- Take immediate steps to increase the proportion of good or better lessons in order to increase the likelihood of learners succeeding. Increase the impact of the actions being taken to improve the quality of learning and assessment.
- Improve the effectiveness of course leaders by checking that the good, recent quality improvement initiatives have a positive impact on raising standards. Encourage course leaders to ensure consistent implementation of best practice. Increase the sharing of the good practice, which exists in parts of the provision, across all areas of the curriculum.
- Improve the advice, guidance and support for adult learners so that more of them are enabled to complete their courses and achieve their intended qualifications. Ensure that these learners are advised to enrol on the most appropriate course for them, especially if their intention is to learn about a new area but not necessarily to gain a qualification.
- Encourage, through very effective professional development, teachers' promotion of the wider cultural aspects of equality and diversity and their inclusion in lessons and in assignments. Monitor more rigorously the implementation of this promotion and inclusion through lesson observation and internal verification processes.
- Ensure that teachers in animal care promote and reinforce relevant industrial practice. Improve learners' practical and vocational skills to meet external standards and so that learners increase their employment prospects. Ensure, with immediate effect, that safe animal handling practices are emphasised and implemented.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Although success rates have increased over the last three years from a very low level, the School data for 2011/12 indicate that they are still low. Success rates for the great majority of learners who are aged 16 to 18 have increased very significantly and are similar to those of like providers, but the success rates for the small minority of adults have decreased markedly and are very low.
- The staying on rate for all learners is comparable with that of other providers of land-based courses, as is the pass rate for learners aged 16 to 18, but the pass rate for adult learners has declined and is low.
- School data, based on the learner achievement tracker methodology, indicate that approximately two-thirds of learners gaining qualifications in 2012 made good progress

compared with their attainment on entry to the School. The other third did not achieve their expected grades.

- Learners' attendance has increased in the last two years and is average; their punctuality is good. The standard of learners' work is mostly good in practical sessions and in many cases learners' employability skills meet industry requirements. This is not the case, however, in animal management provision. In theory lessons and in assignments, learners' work is often below the level expected by the course requirements.
- Learners' confidence and self-esteem improve during their courses as they develop their skills and abilities. Learners' behaviour is exemplary; they act maturely and exhibit good respect and courtesy to each other, their staff and to visitors. Most learners are very keen to learn and work hard.
- The outcomes of the very few learners from minority ethnic backgrounds have not differed significantly over several years from those of White British learners. The success rates of female learners, however, are higher than those for male learners and have been so for three years. Male learners constitute the majority of learners on the least successful courses in the School.
- The success rates of learners receiving support for literacy and numeracy have increased in the last three years and are higher than for those not receiving support. Learners greatly appreciate the support they receive, since it relates well to their main vocational course and helps them to progress.
- The proportion of learners progressing between the first and second year of their courses has increased. It is high for learners aged 16 to 18, but is low for the smaller numbers of adult learners. Staff in the School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences are in the process of improving the rigour and reliability of the collection and analysis of learner destination data. The indications are that, of the learners who left the School in 2012, the great majority progressed to higher education, other further education, or to employment which was mostly related to the land-based sector.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because not enough lesson planning and lessons are good or outstanding. Assessment lacks challenge and innovation. These areas for development are reflected in the need to improve learners' outcomes.
- In the best lessons, teachers integrate theory and practical aspects appropriately. They plan a range of activities, clearly explain lesson objectives, and use questions effectively to establish learners' starting points, test knowledge and understanding and to consolidate learning. In these sessions, teachers challenge and support learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding at relevant levels.
- Teachers enrich and enhance learning by organising visits to external events and commercial enterprises. These ensure learners have a broad view of the land-based industry. Learners enjoy these opportunities which extend their knowledge and widen their experiences considerably.
- Learners enjoy their practical lessons much more than theory lessons with good reason. In practical sessions, teachers use their vocational skills and experience of the industry very effectively to motivate learners in practical sessions. Learners in most subject areas gain good employment-related skills. Learners in agriculture and equine studies, for example, gain additional work-related qualifications which further enhance their employability.
- Despite much support and direction by senior managers, schemes of learning and lesson plans lack detail. In the less effective theory lessons, teachers do not involve or challenge learners sufficiently and so they make slow progress. Teachers fail to check thoroughly that learning is

taking place and do not develop learners' higher-level skills such as problem solving, analysis and evaluation.

- Learning resources are good. Learners benefit from using the improved facilities which the university has provided for them and for the higher education students who share the campus. Learners have good access to computers and the library's extensive range of resources which support learning. Teachers use the wide range of practical resources well in order to develop learners' practical, vocational and employability skills effectively.
- Information and learning technology (ILT) resources are good, but they are not used imaginatively to enhance or enrich learning. Inspectors agree with managers that the virtual learning environment (VLE) is at an early stage of development. Some learners access very useful resources such as plant identifications accompanied by recordings providing accurate pronunciation of botanical terms. In other subject areas, however, the potential of the VLE has not yet been realised.
- Learners rightly value the informal support they receive from staff. They benefit from good information, advice and guidance on progression to higher education and on job search and application skills. For many learners, however, individual tutorials to plan their progress and learning occur too late and targets are insufficiently challenging.
- Too much assessment is unimaginative, lacks challenge and does not require learners to demonstrate higher-level skills such as evaluation and synthesis; rather, much of the assessment focuses on learners' achievement of pass grades. Feedback is inconsistent; a minority is very detailed, but most is adequate since many learners achieve the pass standards. In a few areas such as agriculture, the marking of assessments is weak, grading is generous and the internal verification process lacks rigour.
- Entry requirements require all learners to have at least four GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics or equivalent. Consequently, there is no teaching or formal assessment of functional skills. Initial assessment and subsequent planning to meet learners' identified needs have improved. A few learners receive individual support for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia and rightly value it highly.
- The planning for differentiation and for the promotion of equality and diversity are insufficient. A minority of staff and many learners have insufficient understanding of equality and diversity. Teachers rarely take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to enhance learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters.

Animal care and veterinary science

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because lessons and assessments lack sufficient challenge for advanced level learners. This reflects learners' outcomes for this area, in which success rates, which were significantly below the national average for several years, improved in 2011/12 but are still low. Learners' attainment of high grades is also low.
- Attendance, punctuality and behaviour in lessons are good. Learners make satisfactory progress during lessons. The emphasis on progression to higher education is strong, but the attention afforded to the development of employability skills is insufficient. Learners do not take additional qualifications or specialist options to enhance their employability.
- In the best lessons, teachers use a wide variety of techniques to engage learners and the links between theory and practice are good, enabling learners to progress. In theory teaching, the reliance on electronic presentation is excessive; the use of alternative resources and learning

activities to engage learners and promote learning is minimal. Hand-outs do not always assist learners to develop their skills or understanding. Teachers and learners make little effective use of ILT and the VLE.

- Industry skills are insufficiently developed to enable learners to gain high standards of employability. Teachers make good use of a wide range of different types of animals in a well-resourced and managed animal unit and estate. Much of the animal care practical teaching, however, lacks challenge for learners and does not promote industry standards fully. In a few practical lessons teachers did not reinforce learners' skills in safe animal handling and management.
- Staff rightly recognise the need to improve learners' practical skills duties in order to prepare them more effectively for employment. Learners have good opportunities to gain additional experience in the animal unit and are encouraged to do so. They undertake useful work experience as a requirement of their course.
- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners undertake a wide range of theory and practical assessments. The quality of feedback from staff on assessed work is inconsistent. In the best examples, learners receive clear guidance on how to improve their work. In the less effective cases, feedback lacks constructive comment and so learners are unsure how they should improve.
- Tutors are slow to agree individual learning plans with their learners. Minimum and target grades are not used effectively to challenge learners or to drive their progress and their improvement. Staff are developing a new system to set and review target grades more effectively.
- The support provided to improve learners' English and mathematical skills at the study skills development centre, on a drop-in basis or on a regular session basis, is good. Learners rightly value the support they receive and they feel comfortable in openly requesting it. Teachers provide good support for learners with specialist needs such as dyslexia or visual impairment.
- Learners rightly value the support and guidance they receive in individual tutorials. Learners' progress is recorded effectively by teachers who use a recently developed system to record attendance and provide clear progress reports. Tutorial records, however, lack clear action planning and target setting to enable learners to improve their grades.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment is insufficient. Teachers miss opportunities when issues relating to equality and diversity arise to discuss appropriate aspects with their learners. Their planning for the inclusion of equality and diversity matters is infrequently implemented.

Equine studies

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, because they lack challenge and do not motivate learners to progress to their full potential and attain high grades. Schemes of learning and lesson plans are not quality assured sufficiently by a vocational specialist. Success rates have increased from low levels to be above average in 2011/12, except for high grades, which are low.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality are good and they are well behaved and diligent. The development of their practical skills is good. Employability is enhanced through a combination of routine duties, work experience and practical lessons along with additional qualifications.

- The best lessons are lively with engaging activities that develop learners' confidence. The less effective lessons are too teacher-led, lack pace and challenge and do not develop learners' higher level skills. Learning outcomes are not always included at the start of lesson or reviewed for impact at the end. The checking of learning is infrequent. Theory lesson plans are brief and lack detail.
- Routine horse husbandry duties are well organised and make good use of the well-managed yard. Learners enjoy these duties, which assist them to develop their vocational speed and competence. The use of target setting and feedback, however, are insufficient and progression to supervisory roles is limited.
- Teachers and learners use the good practical resources effectively. For example, learners use the mechanical horse frequently to develop their riding skills and they are given challenging and practical exercises. Attention to safe working practices is good. The timetabling of practical lessons does not always allow timely reinforcement of the relevant theory. Learners benefit from a wide variety of good work placements.
- All teachers hold or are working towards a teaching qualification, have appropriate vocational qualifications and have good industrial experience. Their use of ILT and the VLE to aid learning, however, is insufficient. The equine lecture room is cramped and does not contain computers.
- Assignments are linked closely to lessons but methods of assessment lack imagination and variety, with a strong reliance on written responses. For example, written tests in lessons are common and they lack consideration of individual needs such as for learners with dyslexia. Strategies for teaching learners with additional learning needs are insufficiently developed.
- Well-produced workbooks are used to cover the pass criteria in lessons. These are rightly valued by learners but are time consuming and the focus on the higher-level grades is insufficient. Teachers correct spelling and occasionally correct grammatical errors, but their feedback is not always detailed enough to enable learners to improve their work.
- Learners are correct in valuing highly the support they receive to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Tutorials are compulsory and tutors use them effectively to confirm learners' progress towards their target grades, to check their uptake of learning support and to track their achievement of additional qualifications. Target setting is not always specific and peculiar to the individual learner, but it is improving.
- Staff implement strategies to improve learners' retention and achievement. These include more rigorous selection and interview processes, more frequent tutorials and more immediate identification of learners who need additional support.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is limited. Teachers miss opportunities in lessons to reinforce the wider aspects of equality and diversity, such as the value and use of equine animals worldwide. The differentiation in lessons for learners with differing needs is insufficient and so all learners often work towards the same outcomes within the same timescale.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Actions to raise the profile of land-based further education provision within the university over the last two years have been successful in raising learners' expectations, increasing the engagement of staff, improving resources and, in the past year, providing a much sharper focus on quality improvement.
- The School contributes to the well-established strategic planning process across the university and it has a very clear link to overall strategic and policy making forums through the chair of the

university's governing body. He takes a close interest in the further education provision through formal arrangements to meet the Dean regularly and to attend advisory committee meetings.

- A management restructuring of the further education provision at the senior level has facilitated improvement, but course leaders are insufficiently effective in implementing change and raising standards. Actions to improve success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 were effective in 2011/12 but it is too early to be confident that this level of performance will be sustained, since overall success rates in earlier years were low.
- Much work to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been undertaken over the past year. Internal lesson observations now provide a much more accurate evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement. Some of the proposed changes are too recent for their impact to be evaluated fully, but earlier actions have been slow to have sufficient impact, particularly on the quality of learning and assessment. Increasing the proportion of good or better lessons is an urgent priority for managers as it is currently too low.
- Learners are benefiting from a much more rigorous approach to performance management, which has led to significant changes in the deployment of staff. Teachers are appropriately qualified and they have access to good opportunities for professional development. Learners also benefit from having access to very good resources to support teaching and learning.
- Self-assessment and quality improvement processes have improved significantly over the past year, but they are not yet sufficiently well embedded. Good arrangements to gather feedback directly from learners are having a positive impact. The use of data to improve the provision is not sufficiently well developed and not all targets are realistic.
- Managers use self-assessment to identify many of the strengths and areas for improvement accurately. They give insufficient emphasis, however, to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessed grades.
- The School offers a range of land-based provision but only at advanced level. There is no work-based learning even though some learners wish to progress along this route rather than proceed to higher education. Good arrangements for partnership work with schools and colleges raise awareness of land-based education and encourage applicants from relevant intermediate level courses elsewhere.
- Well-developed policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity ensure that the School meets its statutory duties. Effective arrangements ensure that staff are appropriately trained and updated in these areas. The extent to which teachers promote equality and diversity in lessons, however, is a key area for improvement. The difference in success rates between male and female learners has not been reduced.
- Learners who feel that they are victims of bullying or harassment can access prompt support, although the incidence of such issues is extremely rare. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to promote safe working practices and any incidents and accidents are carefully monitored. The extent to which teachers ensure that learners are learning and working safely, however, is weak in one of the areas inspected.
- The School meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Significant improvements to the rigour of maintaining an accurate and complete single central record relating to safeguarding have been implemented over the last eighteen months. Good arrangements are in place to help ensure that learners aged 16 to 18 are not at risk.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nottingham Trent University, School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3		3	3					
Outcomes for learners	3		3	4					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3		3	3					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3		3	3					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Animal care and veterinary science	3
Equine studies	3

Provider details

Nottingham Trent University, School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.

Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 186
	Part-time: 46
Dean of School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences	Professor Eunice Simmons
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2004
Website address	www.ntu.ac.uk/ares

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	149	46	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	21	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 							

Additional socio-economic information

The School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences is the only one of the nine Nottingham Trent University Schools to be based at the Brackenhurst Campus, near Southwell within the Newark and Sherwood rural area. Unemployment in the county is slightly below the regional and UK average. The proportion of the county population which has no qualifications and the proportion having advanced level qualifications are just below the UK average. The main employment sectors in the area are public administration, health, public services, construction and manufacturing. The proportion of county pupils achieving five GCSEs at A*-C, including English and mathematics, in 2011/12 was just below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Shaun Dillon HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the FE Adviser as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took account of all of the provision. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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