

Nottingham Trent University, School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences Higher Education Institution

Inspection dates		18–21 March 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for students		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Leaders and managers have successfully improved the overall effectiveness of provision since the last inspection; in particular, they have introduced a highly effective range of strategies to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Outcomes for students have risen over the last three years; managers have accurately identified historically low retention for several key groups of students and have begun to introduce effective strategies to resolve this problem.
- Strategies are outstanding to promote and raise students' awareness of employability skills and to provide them with the insight and industry knowledge they require to gain good quality employment.
- The high standard of accommodation and resources and the benefits to students of living and working in a higher-education environment contribute significantly to the good provision.
- Students' behaviour and attitude to their work is exemplary.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Outcomes for all students are not consistently high.
- Progression of students directly to higher education is low.
- Attendance is not consistently high.
- Not all lecturers are identifying sufficient opportunities to promote equalities and diversity in lessons.
- Managers have not fully developed suitable systems to assess and record progress and provide feedback during practical activities.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise success rates by identifying precisely why the comparatively small proportion of male students, adults and those students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are performing less well than the majority of students and design strategies to narrow the performance gap of these different groups of students.
- Continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all staff challenge students in practical activities and lecturers devise methods that will fully stretch and challenge the most able students.
- Extend the current good practice of target setting, recording and reporting on assessed theory work to include all practical activities and assessments.
- Ensure students can gain access to the online individual learning plans outside tutorial time, to enable them to monitor more accurately the progress they are making.
- Establish higher expectations of students to improve their attendance.
- Undertake further training and briefing of staff to continue to raise their awareness of how to identify better opportunities to raise students' awareness of equalities and diversity.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Success rates across the university's, school of animal, rural and environmental sciences have increased substantially over the past three years and in 2012/13 were broadly in line with the rates for students nationally.
- Historically the relatively small proportion of adult students, male students and those students identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have not performed as well as others. In 2012/13, success rates for these groups increased markedly over previous years, but were still well below the rates nationally.
- Managers have accurately identified poor retention within these groups as the main reason for the low success rates. They have introduced a range of targeted strategies to improve retention and additional support available to students. In-year retention figures and feedback from students indicate that these strategies are beginning to have a positive impact. In the current year, overall retention of these students has increased and is high.
- Punctuality in the lessons is good, students' behaviour is of a high standard and most have a very positive attitude towards their learning. Attendance rates are variable. University data indicate that students make the progress expected of them relative to their level of attainment on entry.
- Students' practical and theoretical work is mostly good. Students are engaged in the learning, are keen to progress and take an active part in all classroom activities. They contribute positively and enthusiastically to the rota of maintenance and care for the animals.
- Development of students' English and mathematics skills are good. Whilst virtually all students begin their study with a grade C or above in both English and mathematics GCSE, staff find ample opportunities for students to continue developing and improving their skills in these areas.

- Lecturers work closely with students early in their programme to identify what they might do once they have completed the course. They then help the students prepare for progression, for example by developing students' job-search skills, helping them secure work placements, supporting them with completing application forms for work or to higher education and providing opportunities to practise interview skills.
- The promotion of employability skills is particularly strong. Managers maintain very strong links with industry through hosting groups from the sector. All students complete substantial work experience as a core part of their study. Lecturers ensure that employers and students are clear about how they can gain maximum benefit from this experience and carefully monitor students' progress while on placement. As a result, they gain valuable transferable skills, which prepare them very well for applying for universities and employment.
- The university has accurate information relating to the destinations of students on completion of their course. In 2012/13, progression rates directly to higher-education programmes were comparatively low, but the majority of students progressed to further study or to employment directly relevant to their original course.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which reflects the significant improvement in outcomes and the good progress current students are making. Students enjoy the prestige associated with working in a university setting, which helps them to raise their aspirations and prepares them well for progression.
- Since the last inspection, intensive, well-organised lesson observations and subsequent focussed staff development have improved teaching, learning and assessment significantly, particularly in lesson planning, assessment, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and students' progress. Lecturers link theory lessons well to practical activities, work experience and previous assignments to reinforce learning and develop good analytical and problem-solving skills. Substantial work placements prepare students very well for employment.
- Lecturers plan most teaching well, which helps engage and motivate students. In the best lessons, they use a good mixture of questioning to check and extend students' understanding of topics and previous learning. Students enjoy their lessons particularly where they incorporate innovative practical tasks. In a small minority of lessons, those finishing tasks quickly do not have the opportunity to complete additional work to help them develop further. In a very few lessons, objectives are not sufficiently challenging or do not explain what students are expected to learn.
- Resources to support students are very good. The library incorporates a well-equipped study centre with good access to computers and wifi. Staff have appropriate qualifications and extensive relevant vocational and commercial experience.
- Lecturers use the virtual learning environment (VLE) well to store independent study materials, course notes, assignment briefs, links to relevant topical news items and other sources of information useful to students. Staff mark assignments thoroughly and return them to students promptly. Lecturers provide detailed written feedback, clear guidance and targets to help students continue to develop and improve.
- Managers have put in place a particularly effective online individual learning plan. Lecturers use the system well to set students' short- and longer-term targets, record their additional needs and monitor progress and achievements. However, students are not able to access their records online to ensure they are fully aware of their progress between tutorials. Feedback to students' theoretical assessments contributes to their overall progress reports well, but staff assessing

practical skills do not use the online system to record detailed qualitative feedback on students' competence.

- Lecturers support the development of students' functional skills well, especially in English. Lecturers use assessment very well in the early stages of the course to identify students who require additional support. Staff identify suitable opportunities to develop English and mathematics skills in lessons.
- Students receive frequent and valuable information, advice and guidance to support their career development. Transitional activities to help students prepare for higher education are particularly good and draw valuably on the insight of higher education staff from the university.
- All staff treat students fairly. Any student who is unable to afford additional course costs or specialist equipment is able to apply for financial support to ensure they are not disadvantaged on their programme of study. Lecturers are good at promoting cultural awareness to students, for example making them aware of the various attitudes to the treatment of animals in different cultures. However, lecturers seldom identify suitable opportunities to explore and discuss equalities and diversity in significant depth.

Animal care and veterinary science	
Learning programmes for 16-18	Good
Learning programmes for 19+	

- Teaching, learning and assessment in animal care and veterinary science are good. This reflects students' improving outcomes for this area, which are now around the national average. Punctuality is good and students' behaviour is exemplary. However, attendance is just below the university's target.
- Lecturers use their industry-related skills very well to plan and provide lessons that make good use of the students' own experience. In the best lessons, lecturers know the individual requirements of the students and use a wide variety of activities that develop independent learning and confidence. For example, on occasions students assess the quality of their work, developing their ability to self-reflect. Students also produce teaching materials, for example to teach each other the nutritional requirements of a specific animal. Students are able to research a subject, summarise the information and present it confidently, enabling them to make good progress.
- Students appreciate how lecturers make good use of practical resources and activities to reinforce the theory and identify how it helps them make progress. For example, students learnt to handle, and weigh guinea pigs, and develop veterinary nursing techniques under the supervision of veterinary nursing students. Practical groups are small which helps students develop good animal handling skills. Students work safely and wear appropriate personal protective equipment at all times.
- A small minority of lessons do not challenge students sufficiently. In these lessons, the pace is too slow to maintain students' interest and they do not make enough progress.
- Students undertake regular routine duties that develop particularly effectively their animal husbandry skills and work ethic, and help prepare them well for employment. Experienced technicians support the students and assess their performance, but they do not always set suitably challenging targets for the students to enable them to make rapid progress.
- Students participate in a broad range of activities that enrich their learning and development of skills including external visits, presentations from guest speakers, raising donations for local animal rescue charities and representing the university at the Lincoln county show. Students undertake valuable work experience with a large number of local organisations including zoos,

wildlife parks, seal rescue, RSPCA, vets, dog grooming, pet shops, boarding kennels, catteries and riding schools. The proportion of students moving into employment is high. However, the number choosing to progress directly to higher education last year was comparatively low.

- Students produce work to a high standard. Lecturers give detailed written feedback that gives clear guidance on how students can improve their work and achieve higher grades. Lecturers thoroughly correct punctuation, spelling and grammar on marked work and expect that students use the correct terminology and referencing systems. Lecturers frequently incorporate engaging mathematics challenges in the lessons. For example in one lesson, students had to calculate the heart rates of rabbits and work out the amount of medication to give an animal, relative to its body weight.
- The information and guidance students receive are good and they have an accurate and realistic perception of what to expect from their study programme. Tutors set good short-term personal targets and staff set good specific targets for improving assignment work. Lecturers expect students to achieve high grades and students respond well to this form of motivation.
- Students have a good understanding of equality and show mutual respect. A few lecturers incorporate some good examples of diversity in lessons for example, considering the symbolism of the egg in different cultures and discussing guinea pigs and rabbits as a food source in parts of the world. However, lecturers do not always use the opportunities that arise in lessons to explore diversity.

Equine studies

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment in equine studies are good. This reflects the success rates on the diploma at level 3 in horse management that have increased each year and are now high, and well above the national average.
- Staff make good use of excellent specialist resources to help students improve their riding, and industry skills and knowledge. Students develop good practical riding and horse care skills and all achieve British Horse Society progressive rider tests and the riding and road safety test. Students have the opportunity to ride different horses and identify the improvements they need both in the training of the horse and their own riding. Good discussions with fellow students and lecturers enable them to improve the performance of the horse and their own riding over jumps and on the flat.
- Lecturers create a very well structured and supportive learning environment. They are highly motivated and set high expectations and clear boundaries for students. In turn, students demonstrate a high standard of behaviour, motivation and mutual respect. Students are quick to volunteer their own time to undertake additional activities, for example to come in to the university early in the morning to prepare horses for the day's activities.
- Lecturers make good use of their extensive industry knowledge and experience to inspire students to progress into higher education or careers in equine and other related industries. Excellent industry links ensure high-standard work placements leading to good employment opportunities. For example, a successful work placement enabled one student to gain a rare employment position bringing on young horses and riding for a top show jumper.
- Lecturers plan lessons and the order of topics well. For example, in an anatomy lesson students produced an excellent range of models of a horse's jaw and teeth at various ages to demonstrate how the teeth wear. In a related session on nutrition, students calculated the

digestible energy of various feeds in relation to the amount of energy required for different equine activities.

- Since the last inspection, the use of ICT has improved and it is now good. For example, videos of student presentations on the life cycles of different parasites enabled students to complete good revision from the VLE. A small minority of lessons lack sufficient challenge, particularly for those more able students, who often complete the main activities early.
- Students benefit from good and regular tutorial and support arrangements that help them to identify and work towards suitably challenging targets. Tutors use an online system very well to set students' targets and monitor their progress and attendance.
- Lecturers integrate mathematics and English well into lessons. For example, students developed their practical mathematics by calculating the time needed to transport horses to a competition using the mileage and speed whilst allowing for compulsory heavy goods vehicle rest breaks.
- Lecturers mark written assignments thoroughly, checking and correcting spelling and grammar and providing clear feedback on how to improve. This helps students improve and successfully raises standards. Lecturers do not always provide such detailed feedback on a minority of industry-specific topics. For example, during routine stable duties, staff were occasionally slow to produce assessment reports or correct errors and they did not provide enough detail to guide students on how to compile their own risk assessments.
- Lecturers promote equality and diversity well, for example through discussions about the schooling of horses throughout the world and of the different cultural perspectives of the horse as a meat animal. Lecturers are less effective at developing appreciation of some wider cultural aspects that have an impact on the equine industry.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and governors have an ambitious, but realistic vision to improve and grow further education provision at the university, based on sound strategic planning. Managers value the further education provision at the university and staff benefit from the opportunity to provide both further- and higher-level courses. Since the last inspection, the university has invested significantly in developing the employability skills of students.
- Governors and senior managers thoroughly check performance against targets, they challenge staff about the quality of teaching and learning and regularly monitor its impact on students' performance and progress. Since the last inspection, course leaders are more effective at implementing strategies for change and raising standards. The senior manager responsible for the provision ensures a clear sense of direction and purpose for all staff.
- Since the last inspection, self-assessment and quality improvement processes have improved and these are now very thorough. Staff have accurately identified the need to understand performance data and the setting of targets in more detail. Effective and routine moderation of self-assessment takes place and includes feedback from other land-based colleges.
- Student representatives contribute effectively to course reviews. Managers do not always complete and submit external funding agency surveys on time to provide national comparative data. The quality improvement plan contains suitable objectives and timescales and clearly identifies progress to date.
- Managers have implemented significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment. Management of staff performance and lesson observation schemes are comprehensive. Managers use these to produce detailed individual staff development plans. They undertake systematic moderation and consistently challenge staff to improve their practice. Staff particularly benefit from the wide range of high-standard staff

development activities that enable them to explore and share good practice, both internally and externally with other land-based colleges.

- Students benefit from very good industry-standard resources and facilities. However, students in equine yards do not always have sufficient access to computers. All staff thoroughly promote a strong awareness of health and safety which helps lessen risks to students.
- Leaders maintain very good involvement with employers, particularly with the planning for courses and subjects. Meetings with employers take place regularly to match the students' skills with employment or placement opportunities. Students have a broad variety of internal and external work experience opportunities. Students also take part in a wide range of commercial competitions. For example, NTU horticulture students' garden design won a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show.
- Senior managers have made the realistic decision to offer only qualifications at level 3, because in their view this is where the university's strength lies, the restriction in the numbers of students at the Brackenhurst campus, and the high number of other local providers that offer qualifications at level 1 and 2. The outreach programme to recruit students in schools, colleges and the community is particularly active. Recruitment numbers have increased slightly over three years.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is mostly effective with regular training for staff and students. Since the last inspection, staff have increased the emphasis on strategies to promote equality and diversity which has led to some improvement, but lecturers do not promote it consistently in lessons. Results from students' feedback have led to improvements including removal of gender stereotyping in marketing materials, improved access around the campus for students with restricted mobility, revised flexibility of timetables and increased personal tutorials for adult students.
- The university meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding. Students benefit from good liaison between duty managers, residential assistants, appointed safeguarding staff and the campus security team. Staff protect students effectively from bullying and harassment.
- Managers have recently revised safeguarding training at induction to meet the needs of students better and to incorporate modules on e-safety and bullying. Six students aged 16 to 18 are resident at the university and receive good welfare support. Staff thoroughly promote good health and safety practice, and students feel safe around the campus.

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	16-19 study programmes	19+ learning programmes
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Animal Care and Veterinary Science	2
Equine Studies	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Higher education institution							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 192							
	Part-time: 21							
Principal/CEO	Eunice Simmons							
Date of previous inspection	November 2012							
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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	136	49	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	14	N/A	N/A
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		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		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A. 							

Contextual information

The Nottingham Trent University's school of animal, rural and environmental sciences is based at the Brackenhurst campus near Southwell, within a rural part of Newark and Sherwood District Council's area. The vast majority of students at the campus are studying higher-education level courses. The further education (FE) students within the school represent all the FE-level provision across the university. Unemployment in the county is slightly below the regional and United Kingdom average. The proportion of the county population that has no qualifications, and the proportion having advanced level qualifications are just below the United Kingdom 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 2012/13 was just below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Peter Nelson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the head of further education 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 students' 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 students and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of 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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