



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Nottingham Trent University, School of Land-based Studies

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the institution](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the institution](#)

[How effective is the institution?](#)

[Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[How well is the institution led and managed?](#)

[To what extent is the institution educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

[How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

[Students' views of the institution](#)

[Other information](#)

[Part B: The institution as a whole](#)

[Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

[Equine studies](#)

[Floristry and horticulture](#)

[Animal care](#)

[Agriculture and countryside](#)

[Part D: Institution data](#)

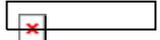
[Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age](#)

[Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age spring 2004](#)

[Table 3: Retention and achievement](#)

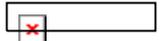
[Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level](#)

Basic information about the institution



Name of institution:	Nottingham Trent University, School of Land-based Studies
Type of institution:	Further education and higher education institute
Principal:	Professor David Butcher
Address of institution:	Brackenhurst Southwell Nottinghamshire NG25 0QF
Telephone number:	01636 817000
Fax number:	01636 816737
Chair of governors:	John Peace
Unique reference number:	5501
Name of reporting inspector:	Ian Seath HMI
Dates of inspection:	8-12 March 2004

Part A: Summary



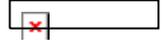
Information about the institution



The university has made significant financial investments in the Brackenhurst campus for the benefit

developments are planned. At the time of inspection, the university was in the process of reviewing and changing its mission statement.

How effective is the institution?



Quality of provision is adequate in all of the 4 curriculum areas inspected. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Quality of provision is satisfactory in floristry and horticulture, agriculture and countryside, and equine studies. Quality of provision is good in animal care. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- clear strategic direction and good leadership of most of the FE curriculum
- effective links between theory teaching and practical activities
- good support for individual students
- new accommodation
- parity of entitlement and treatment with HE students.

What should be improved

- retention rates on many full-time courses
- the proportion of good or better teaching
- the use of management information to set targets and monitor performance
- the promotion of equality and diversity.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

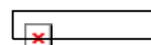
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Equine studies	Satisfactory. There is insufficient attention to the abilities of all students in practical lessons. Assignment guidance and feedback is often insufficiently detailed. Students are well supported at interview, induction, and on course. Health and safety awareness is poor.
Floristry and horticulture	Satisfactory. The pass rate on the part-time garden design course is good, but retention rates on full-time horticultural courses are low Progression to employment and HE is good. Teaching effectively links theory and practical work, and health and safety are well reinforced. Specialist horticultural resources do not reflect current industrial practice. There is insufficient detail on assessment feedback to inform students how they can improve their performance.
Animal care	Good. There is much good teaching and learning; staff are committed and enthusiastic. Linking of theory and practical is good. Achievement is good. The range of animal resources is excellent. Guidance and tutorial support are good. Retention of the current 2002-04 cohort is poor.
Agriculture and countryside	Satisfactory. The farm, estate and surrounding countryside are used effectively to develop students' skills for the workplace. There is good integration of theory and practice. Assessment and feedback are particularly thorough. Retention rates are poor overall, and pass rates on level 2 programmes are poor. There is insufficient attention to students' individual needs in lessons.

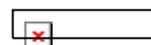
How well is the institution led and managed?



Leadership and management of the FE provision are satisfactory. Achievement on most level 2 and 3 courses is at or near national average figures but retention rates on most level 3 courses is poor. The head of the school of land-based studies provides satisfactory leadership to the school's executive group. Managers work well as a team and provide an open and consultative style. Communication is good. Good leadership is evident at course level in most curriculum areas. Arrangements for assuring the quality of the school's provision are well established and

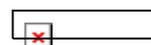
produced shortly before the inspection, lacks systematic analysis of achievement data and fails to identify weaknesses in teaching. The school's teaching observation programme lacks rigour in its grading and fails to identify many weaknesses. However, it is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching standards through its use in staff appraisal. Management information is reliable, but is not always effectively analysed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the institution educationally and socially inclusive?



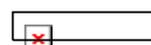
The school's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The school provides courses for many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as for students in residential care. Courses provide practical vocational experience in land-based areas and successfully prepare students to progress into work or higher level courses. The school works closely with carers, parents and external agencies to provide prompt and effective support. Students with sensory impairments, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, mental health problems and other conditions settle into their courses well and many are successful in their studies. However, wheelchair users are not able to access all parts of the school's site. Flexible timetabling arrangements are made in some curriculum areas to accommodate the needs of students with parenting responsibilities. The school has a comprehensive race equality policy. It clearly sets out the organisation's values and effectively covers both staff and student issues. The implementation plan is generally helpful but does not meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Detailed analysis on progress made towards achieving the stated objectives has not yet been fully undertaken. Most staff have received training in race equality issues. A minority of courses have a significant imbalance in the number of male and female students. Effective strategies are not in place to encourage more participation from under-represented groups.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Advice and guidance are effective. Open days are held each month. Taster days, tours of the campus and advice on careers in land-based industries are frequently available. School staff attend many school careers and community events throughout the year. Students' induction is comprehensive and clear. It covers a range of general topics common to all students, as well as specific topics in specialist areas. The school offers good pastoral support. Tutors and specialist staff provide caring, helpful assistance to students. Appropriate financial support is available promptly and a small number of bursaries are provided. Appropriate arrangements are made for providing support and suitable equipment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All students have their literacy and numeracy skills assessed promptly at the beginning of their programme. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and the help provided is effective in enabling students to successfully gain their qualifications. Both group tutorials and individual tutorials are effective and are valued by students. Specialist curriculum areas have an industry advisory panel and local employers take an active part in student seminars each year. Effective and comprehensive careers advice is readily available. A school open day is also held for current students to have detailed advice and guidance about progression opportunities onto higher level programmes.

Students' views of the institution



Students' views about the institution were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the institution

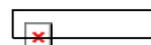
- support and guidance given by teachers
- good courses
- being in a specialist school
- friendly and helpful staff
- experienced, well-qualified staff
- good facilities and resources in equine studies and on agriculture and countryside courses.

What they feel could be improved

- old equipment and machinery in horticulture and floristry
- practical facilities in animal care and horticulture and floristry
- the small number of lockers
- timetabling arrangements
- communal spaces, specifically for those who live out

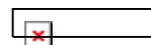
- access to facilities at weekends
- progression from the pathways course.

Other information



The institution inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the institution. Once published, the institution has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The institution's action plan must show what action the institution will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from institutions that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The institution as a whole



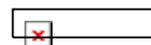
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	43	49	8
19+	45	45	10
Learning 16-18	39	47	14
19+	52	43	5

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

Achievement and standards



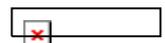
1. Nottingham Trent University offers a range of FE courses within the land-based area of learning. In addition, there are a small number of students on foundation programmes. There are no work-based learners. At the time of inspection, a total of 627 full-time and part-time students were enrolled on FE provision. Of these, 66% were aged 19 and over. Nearly all students on part-time courses are adults. Overall, 15.9% of enrolments were on level 1 courses, 23% on level 2, and 39.7% on level 3 courses. During the inspection week, overall attendance in observed sessions was slightly below national average for this type of provision, at 80%. The average number of students in each class was satisfactory at 9.1, slightly less than national average.

2. Retention rates are below national average on most full-time courses. Over the last three years, no more than 70% of those who start national diploma courses complete them. Retention rates on the national diploma in horticulture are unsatisfactory, with less than half the students completing the course in 2003. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on full-time level 2 courses. Retention rates on the national certificate in countryside management declined from 85% in 2001 to 57% in 2003. Retention rates on the national certificate in horse management course also declined from 79% in 2001 to 64% in 2003. Indications for 2003/04 are that fewer students are leaving courses early. Retention rates on part-time courses are good in horticulture and floristry. A few of the more able students do not complete national diploma courses. Instead, they progress to HE courses after the first year.

3. Overall, pass rates are satisfactory on full-time courses. Pass rates are above national average on the national diplomas in animal care and floristry. However, pass rates on the national diploma in horse studies course have been inconsistent over the last three years and were below national average in 2002/03. Pass rates for part-time programmes are satisfactory with an increase across all courses from 62% in 2001 to 76% in 2003.

4. Students' practical skills are satisfactory overall. Animal care students demonstrate good understanding of the technical aspects of their work as well as sound practical skills. Equine students' written work is satisfactory and they effectively conduct routine practical tasks. Vocational skills are well developed. Horticulture and floristry students progress well to either HE or employment. Students on agriculture and countryside courses show confidence and work to professional standards.

Quality of education and training



5. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 49 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 42.9% of lessons observed, satisfactory in 48.9%, and unsatisfactory in 8.2%. The proportion of satisfactory teaching is higher than the national average for this type of provision. The proportion of good or better teaching is lower than the national average for this type of provision. There is a high proportion of good or better teaching and learning on the animal care course. There is unsatisfactory or poor teaching in equine studies, horticulture and floristry. Of those sessions observed, 44.9% of learning was graded good or better, 46.9% satisfactory, and 8.2% unsatisfactory.

6. In the best lessons, teachers effectively integrate theoretical and practical activities. These lessons are well planned and take account of the varying experiences and abilities of students. Learning is checked frequently, and contributions from students are used effectively to the benefit of the whole group. Teachers often use the facilities and range of activities available on the estate to the benefit of students. For example in one theory lesson the concept of genetics in animals was illustrated when students recorded key characteristics of cows, checked calving dates and milk yields and then researched possible genetic improvements through breeding. Students in animal care are able to use scientific terminology, and understand the concepts involved. For example, in one lesson, students were able to quickly and accurately determine the sex of small mammals.

7. In the less successful lessons, teachers fail to extend and improve the learning of the more able students. Lesson plans show little detail and outcomes and teaching methods are not well defined. Too little account is taken of individual students' experiences. For example, in equine studies, students are given activities that are beyond their abilities and teachers fail to check faults. In horticulture, students are too inexperienced in tractor driving to be able to use a planter correctly.

8. The management of arrangements for the development of students' key skills is satisfactory. All students aged under 19 on full-time courses have one lesson each week and are able to take advantage of appropriate additional learning support if required. However, the key skills sessions are not sufficiently related to vocational areas, and all students attend the same lessons. Students do not have the opportunity to work towards the wider key skills of improving their own learning, working with others and problem solving. Key skills are not well integrated into the curriculum. Students are not enthusiastic about these lessons and in some curriculum areas, cannot see the relevance.

9. All full-time students have their literacy and numeracy skills evaluated at the beginning of the programme; individual learning needs are identified. Many students also undertake an initial assessment of vocational skills such as tractor driving or horse riding. This information is used effectively when planning a programme of work. The university's assessment policy is comprehensive and includes the sampling of marked assignments for cross-marking and the moderation of grades to ensure quality. Assignment briefs are also internally moderated; 10% of all assignments are cross-marked. New assessors are well supported and monitored through internal verification. Much work has taken place on a university project to identify suitable assessment methods for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assessment and verification procedures meet regulatory body requirements. Assessments in most areas are well organised and students have a clear understanding of the assessment schedules of their courses. However, in equine studies, guidance is insufficiently detailed and students are often not clear about how assignments should be completed. Most students' assignments are marked thoroughly and accurately and contain detailed, constructive written feedback. Written comments enable students to improve their performance. Students on equine programmes and a few students on horticulture programmes receive poor feedback on written assignments. A minority of assignments in horticulture contain insufficient detail for students to improve their grades. In equine studies, marking is not always accurate and critical comments on practical work are insufficiently precise to help students improve. Progress made by most students is monitored effectively, but assessment information is not used to analyse the performance of different groups of students by gender, disability or ethnic background.

10. Teachers have appropriate academic qualifications and vocational experience. All full-time teachers hold teaching qualifications or are working towards them. In countryside and agriculture, teachers' extensive industrial experience is used effectively to develop students' skills and knowledge. There are too few specialist dyslexia support staff and no staff have basic skills teaching qualifications.

11. The school has a pleasant and large, well-established estate which is used well for practical teaching. A new teaching block provides an excellent range of teaching rooms and specialist laboratories. All the rooms in this new block make good use of information and learning technology (ILT) and many have hearing loops. However, some of the older teaching accommodation is poor and in need of refurbishment. In particular, the small animal housing, teaching accommodation for the pathways courses, and some of the glasshouses in the gardens are poor. The school has a planned building programme to replace this accommodation. There are too few lockers or changing facilities for students on horticultural and animal care courses. Much of the machinery used for teaching in horticulture is out of date and does not represent current industry practice. The range of horticultural machinery available for teaching purposes is insufficient. Students on animal care courses have access to a large number of different species of animals.

12. The learning resources centre at the Brackenhurst campus is good, and contains a wide range of up-to-date books and periodicals. In addition, students can use any of the institute's libraries or IT facilities at other sites. The students make good use of the inter-library lending facility. At the Brackenhurst campus, there are eight students to every computer and students are able to gain access to computers easily during the day. The institute monitors the use of the computer rooms to

identify any shortfalls in provision. There is sufficient access in the evening and at weekends. Information and communication technology (ICT) support for students is excellent, with two full-time technicians, a help desk e-mail address and an out of hours telephone help line. All staff at the learning resource centre have received training in ICT and are able to provide help when necessary. All computer equipment meets current industry standards and is replaced every three years.

13. Residential accommodation is in need of refurbishment and is insufficient to meet the needs of the students. The university intends to build a new student village on the campus which will treble the number of students who can be accommodated. The building programme will be completed by 2005.

14. Refectory facilities are cramped and hot refreshments are not available after 3pm. Student services are located on the first floor of a building and are not easily accessible for wheelchair users. Both the refectory and student services are located in a building which does not have toilet facilities for people with disabilities. The university complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and SENDA. The university intends to re-locate the refectory and student services to a new building when it has been built.

15. The range of provision extends from entry level to HE. Entry level provision is for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and allows students to sample horticulture, agriculture and animal care as well as working towards an entry level qualification. The university plans to introduce a level 1 qualification for September 2005. At the time of inspection, there were no full-time courses at level 1 and few at level 2. In animal care, only level 3 courses are offered. This reflects the university's strategic plan which emphasises the school's focus on specialist FE at level 3. However, progression opportunities for level 1 and entry level students are limited.

16. Opportunities are very good for progression from level 3 to a range of HE courses, including foundation degrees. In 2003, 78% of students progressed from level 3 to HE or another FE course. Flexible timetabling arrangements encourage adult learners to return to education. Many courses run over three full days to allow students to stay in part-time employment whilst they change careers or achieve professional qualifications. Other courses are timetabled to enable child care arrangements. However, few part-time or weekend courses are offered except in horticulture. All students on national diploma courses complete periods of work experience during their course. However, on equine courses, little use is made of this experience when students return.

17. Additional qualifications are offered to students in all curriculum areas. A few enrichment activities are organised by the school within curriculum areas. Visits by course groups to places of interest for their subject, and residential study tours, are organised. Equine studies students assist in the organisation and running of the competition schedule offered at the equine unit. Students also participate in the annual local agricultural show.

18. There are good links with local employers and all subject areas have advisory committees which meet annually. Subject areas hold industry days where students can meet representatives from their industry and have mock interviews. Links with local schools are good, and are used effectively to promote the FE and HE courses offered by the university. The university is participating in a project to provide taster days for pupils from schools in inner-city areas. The schools are visited by staff from Brackenhurst who talk about the opportunities that are available.

19. Student support and guidance is good. Advice and guidance effectively helps students to choose an appropriate course. Weekend open days are widely advertised and are held on a monthly basis. Taster days, tours of the campus and advice on careers in land-based industries are frequently available. College staff attend many school careers fairs and community events throughout the year. Employment opportunities, skill needs and such topics as how to be successful at interviews are covered during seminars. A college open day is also held for current students to have detailed advice and guidance about progression opportunities onto higher-level programmes. Any students wishing to change their programme of study during the first few weeks of term are provided with appropriate guidance on possible career options and on the demands and requirements of their new programme. Able students are assisted effectively to complete their programmes at an early stage in order to progress to HE more quickly. Flexible timetabling arrangements are provided for students

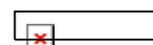
with parenting responsibilities. One student's timetable has been appropriately altered to accommodate his wish to combine land-based studies and A-level studies at another institution.

20. Students' induction is comprehensive and clear. It covers a range of general topics common to all students as well as specific topics of importance to specialist areas. For example, health and safety practices and the course assessment requirements. Systematic procedures are in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality of students. Most students who fail to attend lessons are contacted the same day.

21. Both group tutorials and individual tutorials are effective and valued by students. All new first-year students have a personal progress file that focuses upon self-development. Students' progress is carefully monitored and individual learning plans are up-dated regularly. A minority of action plans have insufficiently precise targets to help students progress at a rate most suited to their ability.

22. Appropriate arrangements for personal support and equipment are made for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school works closely with carers, parents and external agencies to provide prompt and effective support. Students with sensory impairments, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, mental health problems and other conditions settle into their courses well and are successful in their studies. Many students who are identified as needing help to improve literacy and numeracy skills take up the support offered. However, in equine studies and floristry and horticulture, few students choose to take advantage of this support. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed, but individual learning plans for numeracy and literacy are insufficiently developed. However, help provided is effective in enabling students to successfully gain their qualifications. Students receive good support for pastoral issues. Tutors and specialist staff provide caring, helpful assistance to students. Appropriate financial support is available promptly and a number of bursaries are provided to help cover the costs of students' residential accommodation.

Leadership and management



23. Leadership and management of FE provision are satisfactory. Strategic planning of the FE provision on the Brackenhurst site is developed alongside the planning of HE courses. Much of this planning is focused on the improvement of accommodation and resources to support both FE and HE. The university intends to concentrate on land-based FE courses at level 3 from September 2004/05 onwards. The university's governors effectively monitor the strategic plans for this provision through detailed reports provided by the head of school. Nottingham LSC take little account of the university's FE provision in their review and development of the region's provision.

24. The head of the school of land-based studies provides satisfactory leadership of the school's executive group, which includes all programme and cluster managers. Managers work well as a team and deal effectively with course planning and the formulation of school policy. Meetings are frequent and concentrate on the improvement of the school's provision. The school is managed in an open and consultative style and communication with staff at all levels is good. Course management is good with the exception of equine studies where it is satisfactory. There is effective leadership in the floristry and horticulture, animal care and on the pathways course. Communication is generally good within the clusters and effective team work is evident where well-designed schemes of work have been developed, which lead to the successful delivery of courses. Meetings are regular and increasingly focused on raising standards in teaching and learning, though the sharing of good practice is often informal and varies in effect from cluster to cluster. In equine studies, managers are successful in providing a satisfactory working environment for use by students.

25. Achievement on most level 2 and 3 courses is at or near national average figures but retention rates on most level 3 courses is poor. Arrangements for assessing the quality of the school's provision are well established and effectively linked with the university's quality review cycle and system. Cluster reviews usually comprise commentary and analysis of HE courses alongside FE

provision, and much of the action planning and staff development embraces both levels of activity. The school's academic standards and quality committee provides an effective forum for the review of quality issues. At the time of inspection, the school had produced a detailed self-assessment report, using the common inspection framework as a model, for the first time. This report lacks systematic analysis of achievement data. Indeed, data used by the school in making judgements about retention rates on many FE courses was calculated incorrectly. The report also fails to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning. Teaching strengths are referred to only in general terms. This is true in all the curriculum areas inspected.

26. The school's teaching observation programme is effective in identifying the strengths and some of the weaknesses in the teaching of individuals, but is not used to inform the self-assessment report. Teaching observation is often used to support appraisal and staff review but grading by the school is over-generous when compared with grades awarded during the inspection. Some key weaknesses identified by inspectors have been overlooked by the school, and therefore do not routinely contribute to programmes for improving teaching. Students' views on the quality of the provision are carefully collated and given weight in quality reports. The University's centre for academic and quality standards externally monitors the overall performance of the school and comments on its reports. Governors do not directly monitor the quality of the school's FE provision.

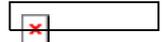
27. Annual appraisal of the teaching staff leads to effective planning for staff development in the programme areas. A detailed school plan is produced annually which relates well to the school's development needs as well as course concerns. Increasingly, the focus of staff development has been on the improvement of teaching. The quality of individuals' teaching is taken account of during appraisal, through peer observation and through the school's teaching observation programme. The university is able to respond very effectively to staff development needs through its HE programmes. Mentoring of new teachers has recently been successfully introduced.

28. Equality of opportunity is actively pursued in the university. An equal opportunities advisory group, chaired by the vice-chancellor, effectively oversees the formulation of policies and monitors the action plans that result. The school's director of programmes is an active member of this group. A comprehensive series of equality policies and plans are in place. These include an effective race equality policy which is the result of appropriate consultation. Two-thirds of staff teaching on FE courses have been trained in the implications of anti-racist legislation. However, the school does not monitor the registration and performance of the small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds who are pursuing FE courses. The university's response to the SENDA has been good. Two thirds of FE staff have been trained in the implications of the act and procedures for eliminating discriminatory practice in admissions, enrolments and teaching are being developed. Procedures to anticipate the individual needs of students with learning difficulties are already established. Governors have been involved in monitoring this progress.

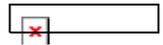
29. The limited number of FE courses provided and the relatively low number of FE students have made management information readily available to senior and curriculum managers in the school. However, systems used are those designed to collect data for HEFCE and this data is not always available in a form appropriate for analysis by FE managers. The introduction of electronic registration of students is initiating a more thorough and timely analysis of attendance, both for individual students and for courses.

30. The school exercises responsible financial management. Recent building projects have been managed well. They have been provided exclusively from HE funds. The remaining poor accommodation on the Brackenhurst site dates from the days before the university merged with the land-based college. Plans for its considerable redevelopment and refurbishment are underway. Many resources are of a high standard. FE students represent around 45% of the students in the school, and have access to all its facilities and resources, as well as the range of facilities and resources on the university campus in Nottingham. Staff and other resources are effectively and efficiently deployed. While it is difficult to separate provision for HE and FE, on the basis of students' achievement and retention rates, average class size, and resources, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Equine studies



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- comprehensive induction and initial evaluation
- good stable work and work experience that effectively develops student's vocational skills
- good pastoral support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention paid to the needs and abilities of all students in practical lessons
- insufficiently detailed feedback to students to help them improve their written and practical work
- insufficient attention to health and safety

Scope of provision

31. The school offers a narrow range of equine studies courses. These consist of a single level 2 national certificate course and a national diploma at level 3. A small number of part-time courses are also available. At the time of inspection, there were 51 students on full-time equine studies courses and 24 on part-time courses. All students on equine studies courses are given the opportunity to work towards British Horse Society (BHS) exams. The school does not offer work-based learning. Within the university, FE students are able to progress on to a number of degree courses including a foundation degree in sports horse management and training.

Achievement and standards

32. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory. Retention on the national certificate course have declined over the last 3 years and were poor in 2003. However, the pass rate has improved and was 100% in 2002/03. For the national diploma course, both the retention and pass rates were satisfactory for 2002/03. For British Horse Society examinations, all 47 entrants passed an examination in 2002/03. Of these, 5 passed a stage 2 exam (11%) and 1 student took the stage 3 exam and the remainder passed stage 1. Of the students on the national certificate course, 55% progressed to the national diploma course, and 22% to employment. On the national diploma, 31% progressed to HE at the university in 2002/3.

33. Students gain valuable experience and are able to work with horses of differing temperaments. All students work well on the stable yard; routine stable work is good and is undertaken by students on a regular cycle. National diploma students undertake a period of work experience which gives them an insight into different ways of keeping horses. However, students' riding skills are insufficiently advanced on this course. For example, riding position and the use of aids are not developed well. Students' written work is satisfactory; however, some work undertaken is not relevant to the level of course. For example, some riding theory contained material not required by the course. Practical work and routine stable duties are valued by students, who develop sound vocational skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Equine studies, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
National certificate in the management of horses	2	No. of starts	19	10	14
		% retention	79	70	64
		% pass rate	73	71	100
National diploma horse studies	3	No. of starts	23	12	21
		% retention	65	92	76
		% pass rate	87	91	88

Source: School Data

Quality of education and training

34. Practical sessions demonstrate good use of small group work. Guidance is effective during riding and lungeing sessions and students are able to demonstrate improvement in the performance of their horse. In the best examples, lessons are well structured, and there is good interaction between students and teachers. Students are interested and are able to work effectively on their own. Industry links are good and provide effective work experience opportunities for students. These include well-regarded dressage, show jumping and eventing yards.

35. The proportion of teaching which is good or better is low. Lesson plans often lack detail and provide only headings of the subject to be taught. Little reference is made to the lesson activity, outcome or teaching strategy. In a few riding lessons, the needs and abilities of the students are not sufficiently recognised. Expectations are too high, and in a few cases this results in unsafe practice. For example, in one observed session, the jumps were positioned on lines of approach and getaway which were beyond the rider's ability to negotiate. Teaching materials are often out of date and photocopied from old magazine articles. Teaching of classroom and practical sessions makes insufficient use of students' experiences. For example, during practical riding sessions students were asked their opinion on the way the horses worked, however, their comments were not used to develop their work further. In a few practical sessions, insufficient account is taken of modern practice. In one observed bandaging session, no mention was made of current veterinary procedure and opportunities to discuss alternative methods were missed. In a tack fitting session, students were working in groups with too few horses and so not all were able to complete the task.

36. Assignment briefs often lack detail and do not guide the students through the assessment

activity. Assignments fail to make use of key skills. Written feedback on assignment work is poor. For example, a few assignments are marked as correct when the detail provided by students is incorrect. In other examples, assignment work contains material not required by the course. Written feedback often lacks sufficient detail to aid students to improve.

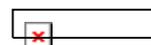
37. Course induction is effective and new students attend a well-organised `Freshers' week prior to the start of term. Induction includes introductions to staff, detailed tour of the facilities and careful initial assessment which includes an evaluation of riding skills. Students are then placed in riding groups appropriate to their level. Although the initial assessment defines learning support needs, students rarely choose to take advantage of support available. Staff support is good, and is valued by students. Students are able to access a comprehensive range of support through the university. Group tutorials are scheduled weekly. All students have the opportunity to talk to their tutor individually and raise any issues and concerns they may have. However, details recorded are often cursory and lack specific, measurable targets.

38. The school has a wide range of specialist equine facilities for horse care, stable management and riding. A variety of horses provide opportunities for students to develop their riding skills. Staff are well qualified and make good use of staff development activities. Attention to health and safety is inadequate. For example, the dividing of the indoor riding school is unsatisfactory, with metal letter markers dividing the centre of the arena and points of reference. In one session, there was nothing to prevent a loose horse from moving to the other side of the arena and becoming entangled in a lungeing session. In some jumping lessons, the positioning of the jumps is unsafe. Health and safety procedures are not reinforced in all areas of the stable yard. On occasion, stable doors are left open with nothing to prevent horses from escaping from the stable yard.

Leadership and management

39. Operational management of equine courses is satisfactory. Management of resources is effective in providing a good working environment for use by students. Management systems are established and the school recognises the need to improve teaching and learning. Measures have been introduced to bring this about; however, activities have not yet improved the overall amount of good or better teaching. Target setting is inadequate and the self-assessment process is insufficiently critical. Course team meetings are regular and well documented. However, actions are rarely ascribed to individuals and lack deadlines. An equine advisory group meets yearly, but it does not effectively inform curriculum managers about the requirements of the industry. Minutes of meetings lack detail and there is insufficient consideration of the strategic development of the FE provision.

Floristry and horticulture



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rate on part-time level 1 garden design course
- good progression to employment and HE

- good linking of theory to practical lessons.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on full-time horticultural courses
- poor specialist horticultural resources
- insufficient critical feedback following assessment.

Scope of provision

40. The school offers a range of full-time courses at level 3 and a wide range of part-time courses from level 1 to level 3. There are no full-time courses at level 1 and 2 and no work-based learning. The majority of the students are adults and courses are arranged to meet their needs. All of the part-time and 55 of the full-time students are over 19. At the time of inspection, there were 58 full-time students studying horticulture national diploma or national award, 8 studying floristry national diploma and 161 part-time students studying horticulture. Part-time students work towards a variety of certificates in horticulture at levels 1 to 3.

Achievement and standards

41. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory overall. The pass rate on the level 1 garden design course is good, with consistently high pass rates over the last three years. Pass rates on all other part-time and full-time courses are satisfactory. Retention rates are poor and declining on the national diploma in horticulture. Retention rates on other courses are satisfactory although most courses have shown declining retention rates for the last three years. There is good progression to both employment and HE courses. Of the 23 leavers in 2003, 12 progressed to employment, five became self-employed as landscape contractors or garden designers and two took up teaching posts overseas. In 2003, 35% of leavers progressed to HE, the majority of which were within the university.

42. The standard of students' work is satisfactory both in theory and practical classes. However, younger students' manual skills are not always developed well. For example, in a machinery lesson on the use of planting machines, the students' were insufficiently experienced in tractor driving to be able to use the planter correctly.

A sample of retention and pass rates in floristry and horticulture, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds certificate in garden design	1	No. of starts	32	20	23
		% retention	97	88	83
		% pass rate	71	100	89
Royal Horticulture	2	No. of starts	16	11	16

Society general certificate in horticulture		% retention	94	91	81
		% pass rate	73	80	54
National diploma in floristry	3	No. of starts	24	22	16
		% retention	67	55	63
		% pass rate	94	100	100
National diploma in horticulture	3	No. of starts	10	20	20
		% retention	80	55	45
		% pass rate	100	82	90

Source: School data for all years

Quality of education and training

43. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are good links between theory and practical teaching. In one practical lesson, the teacher effectively asked probing questions to recap and test students' understanding of soil texture and soil structure. All sessions effectively reinforce health and safety issues and students have a good understanding of the need for personal protective equipment and the production and use of risk assessments. In all machinery practical sessions, students have to produce their own risk assessment before they are allowed to use the machine. Lesson plans often have insufficient detail. They often fail to define teaching methods, or show what the students will be able to do by the end of the lesson. There is little indication of how the less able students will be encouraged or how the more able students will be challenged.

44. The standard of students' assessed work and assignments is satisfactory. A well-planned assessment schedule for all courses is given to students during the first week of their course. All assignments are handed out early in the modules and students are able to plan their own workload. Assignment briefs are satisfactory and all are internally verified before issue. In order to moderate marking decisions, 10% of assignments are cross marked. Feedback from assignments is often insufficiently detailed, and does not clearly show how students can improve their grades. Recent staff development has taken place on this but it is too soon to see any significant impact.

45. Initial advice and guidance to students is good. Students are able to take courses for a two-week trial period and change afterwards if they decide courses are unsuitable. There is a wide and effective range of personal support available. Students are able to access all support, both within the school and on the main university campus. All students are screened for learning support needs during induction. However, take-up for those students identified as being in need of support is poor. Some courses are timed to allow mothers who are returning to education to collect their children from school.

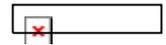
46. Teaching rooms are good. They are fitted with up-to-date equipment that is used well by tutors. Newly built laboratories and design rooms have ample space and equipment for the students. There are sufficient hand tools and small equipment for practical classes. The extensive grounds and gardens contain an adequate supply of plants although there are not many examples of the more unusual species. Much of the machinery is old. The range of machines is insufficient to allow students to become familiar with all types used in the industry. The glasshouses are old and do not reflect current industrial practice. There are insufficient labels on the plant collection and students are not able to identify them easily.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear direction for the curriculum area, and managers operate an open management style. The schedule of team meetings is clear, and they are well recorded with actions set and followed up. There is a student representative on each course team. Quality assurance procedures are robust for schemes of work and assessment plans. Internal

verification of assignment briefs and marked work is good. The self-assessment was compiled using information from a variety of sources including students' feedback, staff meetings and course reviews. Managers set targets for occupancy, retention rates and achievement. These are monitored although there has been no improvement in retention levels. The staff appraisal system is effective and identifies staff development needs. However, there is insufficient staff development to enable staff to remain up to date. There is a systematic teaching observation system in place with observations by both the school and by peers within the cluster. However, grades awarded by the internal system were higher than those at inspection.

Animal care



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good skills and knowledge development
- much good teaching with strong links between theory and practical
- attendance and punctuality in lessons
- excellent animal resources that enrich student experiences
- very good assessment feedback with comments that help students to improve
- good individual advice and guidance.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on the current course
- poor accommodation.

Scope of provision

48. The national diploma in animal management (formerly animal care) is the only full-time level 3 provision in the school of land-based studies and animal studies course cluster. The school offers a part-time national certificate course that runs as a sub-set of the diploma and is appropriate for students in employment. The national diploma course recruits around 50 students annually, including a very small number of certificate students, and students are attracted onto the course from a wide catchment area. There are a significant number of HE programmes for students to progress on to. There is no level 2 provision in the course cluster, and consequently no opportunity for progression within the university for students on the pathways course. The course links with other providers with animal-based programmes at level 2, and who bring their students on visits with a view to enrolling on the national diploma.

Achievement and standards

49. Over the past three years, retention rates have fluctuated. At the time of inspection, 18 of 44 starters remained on the second year of the national diploma course. The course team has identified this problem and has introduced a number of measures aimed at improving retention rates. Early indications are that these are being successful. The pass rate for the national diploma in animal care has been satisfactory for the last three years.

50. Students produce good written work. The development of practical skills and theory work are good. Students are able to demonstrate good use of technical language and have a good understanding of the scientific terms used. Homework and classwork are good or very good. Animal handling skills are especially well developed. For example, students are able to trim the hooves of a large number of different breeds of goat. Students are punctual and attendance is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care area, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
BTEC national diploma in animal care	3	No. of starts	67	52	49
		% retention	70	63	78
		% pass rate	95	87	90

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), institution (2002)

Quality of education and training

51. There is much good teaching with very good use of a variety of activities in lessons. Teachers demonstrate appropriate use of ICT and other resources. Students undertake a variety of work including presentations, problem-solving, and individual and group work. Links between theory and practical work are good and help stimulate and maintain the interest of students. All teachers effectively link theory to practice. For example, in one session on goats, students enthusiastically identified the breeds of the schools own animals by name. Students are well motivated and participate effectively in lessons. They readily question, and enter into discussions with, peers and the teacher.

52. Assessment is good. Policies and guidelines are fully implemented by teachers. Individual learning needs are identified during initial advice and guidance. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Tracking systems are good and ensure that progress is considered at each stage of the course. Homework and classwork are regularly set and marked with good annotation that indicates how students can improve. Students are fully aware of the progress they are making. Systems for internal verification and moderation are effective.

53. Students receive very good initial advice and guidance on to the course and have a realistic view of what is expected of them. This guidance involves group presentations, informative tours and individual interviews where each student's individual needs are taken into account. Applicants and parents appreciate the time and effort given to these events. Students receive very good subject support on the course through formal and informal tutorial sessions. Teachers make themselves available to students, who speak highly of the support given to them. Students are able to access the wide and comprehensive support available from the university.

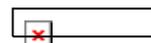
54. The accommodation is of variable quality. Generally, the animal housing is old and in poor condition but the animal specimens within it are exceptional; there is a collection of over 80 species and over 600 specimens. The teaching accommodation is mainly in a new building which contains very good laboratory and teaching areas. Students' lockers and changing accommodation is inadequate with no local showering facilities.

55. Students benefit from the good levels of staffing within the course. Staff are appropriately qualified, enthusiastic and motivated. Teacher training students provide support in some practical classes. Pathway classes with animal care content are appropriately staffed and individual support workers accompany students where necessary. Students with particular learning difficulties on the national diploma are supported effectively. For example, the school employed a signer to support one student with hearing problems who went on to achieve the national diploma.

Leadership and management

56. The national diploma is led and managed well. The self-assessment and review process is thorough. Course team meetings and committees are well recorded and have appropriate student representation. Self-assessment documents are produced from mid-year and end-of-year reviews. Students' feedback is taken very seriously by the course team, who obtain and analyse feedback from each module of the programme. Additionally, centrally organised feedback is analysed in the mid-year review and end-of-year review. Detailed action plans are drawn up and improvements are made where appropriate, or taken up as issues in school or faculty meetings.

Agriculture and countryside



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- Students' well-developed skills for the workplace
- good integration of theory and practice
- thorough assessment and feedback.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- poor pass rates on level 2 courses
- insufficient attention to individual students' needs in lessons.

Scope of provision

57. There are two full-time countryside and two full-time agriculture courses at levels 2 and 3. Short part-time courses, such as pesticide application, chainsaw competence and welding, are also offered. Recruitment onto agriculture courses has declined in recent years. There were insufficient students to run the national diploma agriculture first-year course in 2002/03 and 2003/04. Courses are delivered on a modular basis to allow part-time attendance, although take up is small. At the time of inspection, there were 9 agriculture students and 27 countryside students; 78% of the countryside students are aged over 19 and 88% of agriculture students are aged under 19. There are good progression routes within the university to a foundation degree and two degree courses.

Achievement and standards

58. Retention rates have declined over the last three years and were poor overall in 2002/03. Pass rates on the national certificate countryside course are low. Students' destinations are closely monitored and show good progression into industry and HE. In 2002, 5 of the 9 students progressed from the national diploma agriculture to degree courses and 10 out of 14 national certificate in countryside management students progressed to employment.

59. Students arrive punctually to lessons. Attendance is good. Non-attendance is rigorously followed up. Students work well together and are confident about asking questions and expressing their views. They take pride in their work, particularly the practical aspects. The standard of written work is good at level 3. Students value the opportunities to undertake and achieve additional skills. Students cope well with work experience on and off site.

A sample of retention and pass rates in agriculture and countryside, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds national certificate agriculture	2	No. of starts	10	9	13
		% retention	90	89	77
		% pass rate	67	75	80
City and Guilds national certificate countryside management	2	No. of starts	19	13	28
		% retention	85	69	57
		% pass rate	72	89	75
Advanced national certificate countryside management	3	No. of starts	13	10	14
		% retention	85	70	57
		% pass rate	73	71	88

Source: School data for all years

Quality of education and training

60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Teachers often draw on their own and students' practical experiences to reinforce learning. There is a strong awareness and application of all aspects of health and safety. Students routinely carry out effective risk assessments. There is good use of the farm, estate and other local sites. Theory and practice are integrated well. In the best lessons, teachers effectively develop practical skills through a range of activities. In one habitat management practical session, students identified plants, tested soil, cleared brush, lopped branches and mapped the site. Another small group was involved with chainsaw training and were thinning out small trees under close supervision. At the end of the lesson, students were all able to evaluate how well they had carried out the activities and suggest improvements. In another lesson, the concept of genetics was introduced effectively. Students recorded key body characteristics of particular cows on the farm. Back in the classroom, they checked calving dates and milk yields and recommended genetic improvements by selecting bulls with specific improvement traits suitable for breeding.

61. Insufficient attention is paid to students' individual needs in lessons. Sometimes teaching activities are used which are not wholly appropriate to the learning styles of the students. There are missed opportunities to link teaching to assessment, and extend the more able students. Often, the same activity is used for every student. In the least successful lessons, exposition is too long and students are not sufficiently involved. Teachers often answer their own questions and checking of learning is cursory. Whilst specific assignments are identified for key skills, opportunities are missed to signpost key development in everyday activities. Whilst many lessons have useful hand-outs, there is insufficient use of ICT to reinforce learning.

62. Assessment is well organised. Students are clear about the requirements of their courses. Written work that is presented by level 3 students is comprehensive and reflective. Many students take the opportunity to give their views on assignments. Work is marked thoroughly. Most teachers provide comprehensive and constructive written feedback. This explains exactly what a student has to do in order to improve their grade. There is detailed tracking of progress. Cross-marking and moderation of grades are accurate. The results of assessments are swiftly communicated to the course tutor and are discussed in tutorials. Assessment and internal verification are effective.

63. All students are interviewed prior to acceptance. There is an effective induction procedure, which includes health and safety. Teachers and support staff know the students well. Many students on level 2 courses have been identified as requiring support. Students speak highly of the informal support they receive from teachers. Resident students value the support of the wardens. Guidance and advice for current students wishing to progress internally are good. One-to-one formal tutorials are carried out termly. Tutorial details are well documented although they often they lack specific targets.

64. The farm, estate, woodlands, wetlands and other local sites and farms provide a good resource for practical teaching. Commercial activities are used effectively to enhance students' experiences. Students successfully undertake early morning milking duties on site, milking Jersey cows to fulfil a supermarket contract. Countryside students successfully undertake contract work on forestry commission land. On the school estate, students on advanced national certificate in countryside management were undertaking a relevant survey related to maintenance of right of way footpaths. The library is well stocked with books, periodicals, videos and useful help sheets. The library learning resource homepage is easily accessible on any networked computer and has links to the online catalogue, useful websites and electronic databases. Teachers effectively use their extensive professional experience and knowledge in lessons.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality assurance arrangements are clear and are understood by the team. Teachers are actively involved in the planning and self-assessment process. Minutes of team meeting clearly designate actions, roles and responsibilities. However, course teams do not routinely analyse management information system data to set targets. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses, however it is

insufficiently self-critical. All full-time and most part-time staff were appraised last year. Observation judgements are discussed at appraisal and inform staff development plans. Trends in observation records show that this is having an impact on raising the standard of unsatisfactory teaching but, as yet, has not had an impact on raising satisfactory and good teaching to outstanding. Teachers confirm that their individual staff development needs in relation to classroom teaching are being met, although subject-specific updating is less of a priority. Recent training has included sessions on teaching to large groups and training on the use of data-projectors. However, the use of ICT in teaching during the inspection was poor. The school has an effective employer and industry network. Courses have been modified in the light of students' and industry feedback.

Part D: Institution data

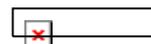
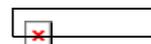


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

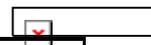


Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	15	48
2	22	18
3	62	30
4/5	n/a	n/a
Other	0	3
Total	100*	100*

Source: provided by the institution in Spring 2004

* does not add up to 100% due to rounding of figures

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age spring 2004



Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	0	0	0
Land-based provision	212	415	100
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	0	0	0
Information and communication technology	0	0	0

Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	0	0	0
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	0	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	0	0	0
Humanities	0	0	0
English, languages and communication	0	0	0
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	212	415	100

Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
		1	Starters excluding transfers	28	39	34	108
	Retention rate	82	92	97	87	82	71
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate	52	81	70	58	65	76
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	Starters excluding transfers	58	33	45	79	45	68
	Retention rate	91	76	73	91	84	76
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate	62	60	76	79	79	63
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	Starters excluding transfers	75	78	63	71	90	66
	Retention rate	92	91	96	89	73	80
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate	87	80	87	83	91	81
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention rate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for institutions of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary institutions or sixth form institutions).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Institutions in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. Institution rates for 1999 to 2002: Institution ISR..

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	46	50	4	28
Level 2 (intermediate)	36	36	28	11
Level 1 (foundation)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other sessions	40	50	10	10
Totals	43	47	10	49

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).