



This review method
is ESG-compliant

Annual Monitoring for Educational Oversight

College of Agriculture,
Food and Rural
Enterprise (CAFRE)

March 2026

Annual Monitoring: Desk-based assessment

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Outcome

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE; the College) is making **commendable** progress on the implementation of their action plan.

Monitoring summary

2 CAFRE has submitted a substantial annual return, along with a significant and appropriate range of supporting evidence. This demonstrates a thorough approach to addressing the affirmation from its 2024 [Higher Education Review](#), and continuing to build on the four instances of good practice identified in that Review. Taken together the two elements of the submission demonstrate that commendable progress is being made. Furthermore, the annual return confirms that there are no material changes or issues identified that require monitoring.

3 The College offers courses leading to awards of Ulster University, and Queen's University Belfast. CAFRE continues to engage productively with both of its awarding bodies and there is evidence of the College's awareness of, and alignment with, the policies and processes of the two Universities.

4 CAFRE keeps its portfolio of higher education provision under review, and where this demonstrates the need for changes to programmes, the College takes these forward in consultation with its stakeholders, including students, and secures the relevant approvals from the awarding bodies. CAFRE's submission demonstrates continuing demand for its courses. Retention and achievement rates remain strong (as they have been over the past three years), and there is regular analysis and review of this data as part of routine quality assurance processes.

5 Work has continued at CAFRE to address the single affirmation (there were no recommendations) made in the 2024 Higher Education Review, of the "steps taken to strengthen a unified student representative body to better enable student engagement in academic governance and strategic decision-making processes, groups and committees". In 2024-25, CAFRE implemented significant changes to its Student Representative Council and established a Students' Union. These developments were reviewed in the later part of 2025, including through a survey of student representatives. The largely positive feedback has been analysed and appropriate follow-up action taken where a need has been identified. Various other means of capturing the student voice continue to operate effectively.

6 CAFRE's submission also shows its continuing work to build on and further develop the four areas of good practice highlighted in the 2024 Higher Education Review. This includes maintaining close partnership arrangements with its awarding universities, external examiners and industry bodies, continuing to demonstrate a responsive approach to curriculum development to address national educational and skills needs, engaging with

employers to identify professional opportunities for students, and working with partners to influence and implement government policy while also enhancing programme delivery.

7 The College continues to operate a range of effective quality assurance and enhancement processes. Additionally, the College is subject to ongoing peer review by Land Based Colleges and Universities Aspiring to Excellence (LANDEX), the sector body for land-based colleges. The most recent LANDEX report, consideration of which is integrated into CAFRE's internal quality assurance mechanisms, recommended that CAFRE should continue in full membership.

8 External examiner reports from both awarding bodies endorse the academic quality and standards of CAFRE programmes. Where external examiners raise issues, the College ensures that effective action is taken in response.

9 CAFRE's annual return and its supporting evidence demonstrate that academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities continue to be maintained.

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