



Educational Oversight Annual Monitoring: Desk-based analysis of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, February, 2025

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

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

Monitoring summary

2 CAFRE offers programmes leading to awards by Queen's University Belfast, and Ulster University. The College's monitoring submission demonstrates its continued and effective engagement with both awarding bodies. The programme portfolio offered by CAFRE is kept under regular review, with changes in the portfolio being taken forward in partnership with its awarding bodies. Academic outcomes remain strong, with retention in 2023-24 at similar levels to the previous two years; this is also true of achievement rates.

3 CAFRE's annual return identified one material change, with the appointment of a new Acting Director in September 2024. This was due to the temporary promotion of the previous Director to a more senior role in the government department in which CAFRE is based. The new Director has significant experience within CAFRE, and of engagement in internal and external quality assurance of higher education.

4 There is clear evidence in CAFRE's annual of return of effective and continuing engagement with the outcomes of its 2024 [Higher Education Review](#). This Review made no recommendations and a single affirmation, on the steps being taken to 'strengthen a unified student representative body to better enable student engagement in academic governance and strategic decision making'. This has proceeded with the approval in June 2024 of significant changes to the College's Student Representative Council, and the establishment of the CAFRE Students' Union. The evidence supporting the annual return demonstrated that this is now being operationalised in the current academic year, and there are plans to review in 2025 the implementation and impact of the new Students' Union to identify any potential enhancements for 2025-26.

5 The 2024 Higher Education Review identified four features of good practice relating to aspects of partnership working (with awarding bodies, employers, sector bodies and government), and the ways in which this allowed the College to respond to sector skills needs and priorities. CAFRE's annual report and supporting evidence demonstrated that it has sought to maintain and build on these features, and the positive impact of this for its provision.

6 CAFRE's submission provides evidence that effective quality assurance processes continue to operate at the College, with appropriate consideration of relevant qualitative and quantitative data leading to action planning, the effectiveness of which is evident from the tracking of progress against actions agreed in previous years. There is also clear evidence of engagement with awarding bodies in relation to quality management.

7 External examiner reports submitted in support of CAFRE's annual report demonstrate effective and appropriate external scrutiny of higher education programmes. These reports confirm: the quality of the programmes; effective and robust marking standards; and that the academic standards of the programmes are consistent with the relevant national standards.

8 Consequently, the annual report and supporting evidence indicates that CAFRE continues to effectively maintain academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

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