TEAGASC EVALUATION UNIT

_____

An Evaluation of the Teagasc Equine Programme.

1. **Level 5 Certificate in Horse Breeding and Training (CIE5)**
2. **Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship (AEH6)**
3. **Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Stud Management (AES6)**

_____

Report
_____

Date Submitted: 23 December, 2009

Author: Sarah Cahalane, Business Performance Unit

Submitted to: John O'Dwyer, Curriculum & Quality Assurance Officer

Status: Draft 2.2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation of the Teagasc equine programme, consisting of the Level 5 Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training (CIE5) and the Level 6 Advanced Certificates in Horsemanship (AEH6) and Stud Management (AES6), was carried out as a requirement of the quality assurance agreement with FETAC. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the programme and the ways in which it can be improved, and in particular, to ensure the process of self-evaluation is taking place within the organisation.

This evaluation addresses the questions outlined by FETAC in their programme evaluation template. The data was gathered from a number of sources, including the following:

- Self-evaluation checklists
- Analysis of student surveys
- Teagasc business plans
- Site visits to Kildalton College
- Interviews with the Agricultural College Principal
- Focus groups with teachers and students
- Employment survey of the graduated '07/08 AEH6 students.

Table 1 shows the overall average scores from the self-evaluation checklists comparing the '06/07 scores with '07/08. All of the policy areas scored highly and this reflects the evidence that the quality assurance system in place in Teagasc complies with the system agreed with FETAC.

Table 1: Self-evaluation checklist scores

Self-evaluation Results	2006/07		2007/08	
Area	Level 5	Level 6	Level 5	Level 6
Communications	3	3	3	3
Equality	3	3	3	3
Staff Recruitment & Development	3	3	3	3
Access, Transfer and Progression	2.86	2.86	3	3
Programme Development, Delivery and Review	2.83	2.83	2.83	2.83
Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners	2.9	2.9	3	3
Protection for Learners	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sub-contracting/Procuring Programme Delivery	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

* 3 = strength; 2 = acceptable; 1 = for improvement

STRENGTHS

The main strengths of the Teagasc equine programme as identified in this report are as follows:

Programme Design and Content

- The staff are aware of the procedures for making amendments to programme modules, that is, contacting the Curriculum and Quality Assurance Unit (CQAU) directly. They are satisfied that their suggestions are seriously considered and implemented.
- The delivery of the course utilises a very close working relationship between staff and students; this facilitates tailoring of teaching techniques and constant monitoring of course material.
- Programme design and content scores highly in the student satisfaction ratings for CIE5 and AEH6.
- From the CIE5 survey and student discussions the skills-based orientation of the course is the primary reason for enrolment.
- Learner support procedures are in place for all students.

Programme Delivery

- The equine programme is delivered effectively and efficiently.
- Equine students develop a very responsible attitude and good work ethic during the equine programme.
- CIE5 and AEH6 students were satisfied in particular with:
    - Standard of classroom teaching
    - Standard of practical instruction
    - Assistance provided by the course director and tutoring staff.

Associated Services and Resources

- The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is in operation for all staff in Kildalton College and used to identify development and training needs.
- Kildalton College provides excellent equestrian training facilities.

Assessment of Learning

- The CQAU policies and procedures for assessments and students with special needs, e.g. the provision of scribes, are implemented and verified annually.

- Students and staff are satisfied with the methods of assessment.

- CIE5 and AEH6 students were very satisfied with:
    - Method of assessment
    - Clarity of assessment instructions.

Objectives

- Kildalton College organises open days, visits to schools and the production of high quality promotional material for prospective students.

- Students on the equine programme are involved in extracurricular equestrian activities that raise the profile of the programme and the students within the equestrian industry.

- The programme objectives are clearly outlined in the promotional material for the equine programme.

- The Horsemanship programme design corresponds with the world-class British Horse Society (BHS) grades. Students are provided the opportunity to sit for BHS exams and graduate with extra qualifications.

- Equine programme feedback is gathered annually through student satisfaction surveys.

- 93% of the '07/08 AEH6 students are still involved with the equine industry.

- Almost 50% of the '07/08 AEH6 students are employed by the equine industry.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main areas identified for improvement in this report are:

Programme Design and Content

- Identify innovative and resources neutral ways to allow the CIE5 Stud Management students feel their option is important rather than the minority.

- The new module survey should be used to guide/improve module selection, design and delivery for students.

Programme Delivery

- Investigate options to accommodate students who operate at a faster pace.
- There should be increased focus on equine issues in the generic modules and textbooks.
- Communication on the yard needs to be improved.

Associated Services and Resources

- Increase the amount and regularity of mentoring sessions, consider assigning non-equestrian related mentors.
- Innovative training ideas should be explored to allow staff time to pursue training & development needs and students more time for study, e.g., incorporate e-learning elements; exploit the availability of other modules currently taught in Kildalton College, create incentives (free time/extra riding) for early module completion or good team work)
- Staff need to be provided with appropriate changing facilities.
- Applicants should be more adequately prepared for the demands of the CIE5 course.
- Explore ideas to improve student satisfaction with residential facilities and social activities.

Assessment of Learning

- Should students require a warning of potential failure intended to focus their efforts then it should also be made clear that they haven't yet failed.
- Prevent exams piling up on students; ensure no more than the maximum number is sat in one day.

Objectives

- The student satisfaction surveys should be tailored to suit the programme design and FETAC requirements.
- Ensure the Stud Management student voice is captured and considered separately when available.
- Re-address the student attraction and retention issues for the Stud Management option, brainstorm innovative and outside-the-box solutions in the current economic climate.

- Establish procedures to follow-up on students who have completed the CIE5, AES6 and AEH6 courses, e.g., survey shortly after completion, 9-12 months, and after a longer period, 2-3 years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS

AEH6	-	Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship Level 6 (Horsemanship course)
AES6	-	Advanced Certificate in Stud Management Level 6 (Stud Management course)
BHS	-	British Horse Society
CIE5	-	Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training Level 5
CQAU	-	Curriculum & Quality Assurance Unit
EFI	-	Equestrian Federation Ireland
EMS	-	Education Management System
FETAC	-	Further Education & Training Awards Council
HSI	-	Horse Sport Ireland
IHB	-	Irish Horse Board
ISH	-	Irish Sport Horse (Industry)
NALA	-	National Adult Literacy Agency
PMDS	-	Performance Management & Development System
QA	-	Quality Assurance
SEC	-	Self-Evaluation Checklist (FETAC)

Equine programme - This term is used to encompass the CIE5, AEH6 and AES6 courses as a unit.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. Teagasc's mission as part of Foresight 2030 is:

> *"To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bio-economy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability"*

To achieve this mission, the Teagasc Education and Development Directorate operate under the following organisational goals:

1.   Improve the Competitiveness of Agriculture, Food and the Wider Bioeconomy
2.   Support Sustainable Farming and the Environment
3.   Encourage Diversification of the Rural Economy and Enhance the Quality of Life in the Rural Areas.

As such it aims to assist the development of a bioeconomy which has the technological and human resource capability to benefit from flexible, focused and quality assured education and training programmes [1]. To achieve this vision, the education and development directorate has developed a range of courses for the agriculture and horticulture industry.

With almost 27.5 horses per thousand people Ireland has the greatest density of Sport Horses in Europe [2]. Teagasc, through Kildalton College, provides the FETAC accredited equine training programme which is composed of the following:

- Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training (Level 5)
- Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship (Level 6)
- Advanced Certificate in Stud Management (Level 6).

1.1   RATIONALE FOR EVALUATION

As part of the Quality Assurance (QA) agreement with FETAC, Teagasc is required to carry out an independent evaluation of its FETAC accredited courses. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of courses and highlight ways in which they can be

improved. This evaluation also aims to ensure the process of self-evaluation is taking place within the organisation.

The aim of FETAC's quality assurance (QA) is to ensure the quality of service on offer to learners is continuously improved. According to FETAC, quality is an attribute of service which is hard to define but easy to recognise when you see or experience it. It has been defined as:

- Meeting and exceeding the expectations of the customer.
- Doing the right thing at the right time, in the right way, for the right person and having the best possible results.
- Conforming to requirements.

Implicit in every definition of quality is the notion of meeting customer requirements in the best possible way. Teagasc needs to identify customer expectations and then structure and monitor its provision in such a way as to maximise the chances of meeting and exceeding them. Quality assurance is the systematic application of policies and procedures that have been designed to deliver a quality service.

The Teagasc Curriculum and Quality Assurance Unit (CQAU) [3], in conjunction with the Teagasc Evaluation Unit [4], has developed an evaluation plan to evaluate all Teagasc training programmes leading to major awards once every five years. The Level 5 Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training (CIE5), Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship (AEH6) and the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Stud Management (AES6) were chosen to be evaluated in 2008.

1.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation will assess the efficiency of the equine programme via Programme Design and Content, Programme Delivery, Assessment of Learning and Associated Services and Resources. Effectiveness will be addressed through the definition and achievement of programme objectives. To satisfy FETAC's interest in constant improvement for the benefit of learners, the evaluation will also make recommendations that could improve programme performance.

The following evaluation questions are outlined in the FETAC evaluation template and will be addressed during the evaluation.

Programme design and content

- Is the demand for the programme from stakeholders still evident?
- Is there sufficient information available on which to base decisions regarding demand, content, learner need etc?
- Is the programme being reviewed on a regular basis and are staff facilitated to contribute to the review?
- Are the reports of external verifiers/monitors/examiners reviewed and acted upon?
- Does the programme meet the needs of learners?
- Are learners leaving the programme early?
- Are the reasons for early drop out known and understood?
- Is learner entry/access easy and is the information provided fair and consistent?
- Is the design and content of the programme accommodating of learner diversity?
- Are exemptions from assessment given where a learner has evidence of prior achievement?

Programme delivery

- Are timetables/schedules being adhered to?
- Are the teaching and learning materials adequate for the purpose?
- Is the delivery style flexible to suit the needs of the learners?
- Is delivery reflected on by tutors and is effectiveness of delivery reviewed?
- Are learners kept informed of their own progress?
- Are learners encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?

Associated services and resources

- Are learner supports and information adequate (learner rights, grievance)?
- Is there a systematic approach to staff development and training?
- Are sufficient resources available to allow staff to deliver the programme effectively?

- Do learners have access to the materials and facilities essential for successful participation in the programme?
- Is there sufficient access for staff and learners to reference materials and IT resources as appropriate?
- Are facilities safe and well maintained?
- Is access to services available to all learner groups (access for disabled)?

Assessment of learning

- Is the administration of assessment and learner registration effective?
- Are assessment strategies appropriate to learner needs and programme design?
- Is assessment fair to learners and consistent as carried out by assessors?
- Is the standard achieved by learners consistent with national standards?
- Is the appeals process effective and are learners provided with the information?

Programme Objectives

- Are the objectives of the programme clearly defined?
- Are the objectives of the programme being achieved?

2.   METHODOLOGY

Analysis of the survey information was conducted along with desk research of the relevant documentation. All documents reviewed during this evaluation are listed in Section 7 and Appendix 2. In addition, the following qualitative research was carried out by the Evaluator:

- Site visit to Kildalton College
- Interviews with the Agricultural College Principal
- Interviews with the equine Course Co-ordinator
- Planning meeting and interviews with the Head of CQAU
- Focus groups with teachers on CIE5, AEH6 and AES6
- Focus groups with CIE5 and AEH6 students
- Employment survey for the graduated '07/08 AEH6 students

In designing and conducting the evaluation the Evaluator has applied FETAC's evaluation questions and Scriven's Key Evaluation Checklist [5]. Scriven's checklist, as shown in Table 1, focuses the evaluation process in order to keep to the key areas and was used by the Evaluator when preparing material for inclusion in the report.

Table 1: Outline of Scriven's key evaluation checklist.

Key Evaluation Checklist			
Preliminary	*Foundation*	*Sub-evaluation*	*Conclusion*
Executive summary	Background & context	Processes	Overall
Preface	Descriptions & definitions	Outcomes	Recommendations & possible explanations
Methodology	Consumers	Cost-effectiveness	Responsibilities
	Resources	Exportability	Meta-evaluation

Donald Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation framework (Appendix 1) was previously used by the Evaluation Unit in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of Teagasc training programmes. In the interests of consistency his single rating method for the student surveys will also be incorporated into this evaluation.

STUDENT SURVEY ANALYSIS

The views of learners were included in the report through the student surveys and focus groups. However, students rate their satisfaction using a four point likert scale. This makes the results hard to assess and difficult for comparisons. For the purposes of the evaluation, the Evaluator used Kirkpatrick's method of weighting the responses to create a single rating for each question. This facilitates comparisons and can be used to set baselines and standards for future measurement. Weighting applies very satisfied a score of 4, satisfied is 3, moderately satisfied is 2 and dissatisfied is 1. In the case of the student surveys, the maximum rating possible is 4.

A standard of acceptable performance was then established based on a realistic analysis of what can be achieved. From examining all the ratings it was deduced that it is possible to achieve a satisfaction rating above 3.0 as many aspects of the course have achieved this. The target performance rating was set as 3.5 because some aspects of the course received this rating or higher. This is a stretch target for other aspects of the course.

The Teagasc standard student survey doesn't map easily to the FETAC required areas. In order to score the specific FETAC topics of Programme Design & Content, Programme Delivery, Associated Services & Resources and Assessment of Learning the Evaluator deconstructed the standard questionnaires and reassigned each question, where appropriate, under the specific FETAC headings. (see Appendix 3)

REPORTING PROCEDURE

This completed evaluation report will be presented to Teagasc Senior Management and the Evaluation Unit Steering Group for approval. On the basis of this report a programme improvement plan addressing any recommendations or issues will be submitted to FETAC by the Teagasc Curriculum and Quality Assurance Unit.

3.   EFFICIENCY

Efficiency of the equine programme will be examined through the FETAC evaluation questions addressed throughout this chapter.

3.1   PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

For the purpose of the evaluation report the phrase "equine programme" refers to the three FETAC courses offered by Teagasc. The programme analysis section assesses the equine programme in terms of objectives, statistics, self-evaluation and satisfaction surveys as well as learner demand and access.

3.1.1   Introduction

In a recent Irish Horse Board (IHB) report [5] on the "The Future of the Irish Sport Horse (ISH) Industry", the value of the ISH market was estimated at a value of almost €600 million to Ireland. Almost 60% of the report's survey respondents had no equine related qualifications. Gaps in the areas of breeding, horse management, welfare and training of horses were highlighted. The Teagasc equine programme contains modules that cover all of these topics and more.

The IHB report specifically recommended education as a key factor for the future development of the equine industry, in particular training. Training firstly, of professionals to ensure standards and accreditation of the industry and secondly, of participants e.g., owners, breeders, riders. Teagasc had trained 19% of the IHB report's survey respondents involved with equines. This far surpassed the other training facilities, including FÁS and the BHS. The Teagasc equine programme is in a prime position to assist the equine industry increase its potential.

In the 2008 brochures the equine programme is described as offered over two years and composed of two options. However, students initially apply for places on the one year Horse Breeding and Training (CIE5) course within which they choose the Stud Management or Horsemanship option. Previously this choice was made at the end of CIE5 and only students who satisfactorily completed the riding modules could progress to the Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship. The remainder progressed to the Advanced Certificate in Stud Management. The

change of allowing an earlier choice of direction is welcomed as it allows students select the Stud Management option voluntarily rather than view it as a fallback option.

The Evaluator found the course prospectus confusing. The wording in the prospectus interchanges freely between Equitation and Horsemanship.

Recommendation 1:

Horsemanship is the official term for the Level 6 Advanced Certificate so the wording should remain uniform throughout course promotional literature for CIE5, AEH6 and AES6.

Promotion of the equine programme occurs during participation in open days held at Kildalton College and the programme routinely organises, or participates in, equine events that are attended by prospective students, stakeholders and the local community. In July 2009, Kildalton College is hosting the World Breeding Federation of Sport Horses Young Breeders' World Championships.

(L-R) Dr Noel Cawley, Teagasc Chairman, Joe Walsh, Chairman Horse Sport Ireland, Crea Warner, Kildalton Equine Teacher & Norman Storey, Teagasc Equine Specialist with equine students in the background. Pictured at the launch of the World Breeding Federation of Sport Horses Young Breeders' World Championships in Kildalton College.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The official objectives of the Teagasc equine programme are clearly defined and stated in the prospectus as:

- To provide students with knowledge and skills relating to the sport horse and adding value to young horses.

- To provide students with the qualifications for employment opportunities in the industry including stud farms, training yards and equestrian centres.
- To provide students with progression and articulation options to higher level courses.

Staff describe their understanding of the objectives as,

"Provide students with the skills, knowledge and expertise necessary to enable them to work safely with horses so they will be reliable and informed members of the horse world."

Their vision adequately encompasses the official objectives.

3.1.2   Student Statistics

Student numbers since '04/05 for the equine programme CIE5, AEH6 and AES6 courses are displayed in Table 2 below and average course statistics in Table 3.

Table 2: Student numbers for the Teagasc equine programme.

Level 5 Horse Breeding & Training (CIE5) Course					
Year	Began	Dropped out	Deferred	Failed	Completed
2004/05	24			2	22
2005/06	30	1		4	25
2006/07	30	8			22
2007/08	34	10		6	18
Average	*30*	*5*	*0*	*3*	*22*
Level 6 Horsemanship (AEH6) Course					
Year	Began	Dropped out	Deferred	Failed	Completed
2004/05	15	1		3	11
2005/06	14			2	12
2006/07	15	1	1	2	11
2007/08	20	1	3	1	15
Average	*16*	*1*	*1*	*2*	*12*
Level 6 Stud Management (AES6) Course					
Year	Began	Dropped out	Deferred	Failed	Completed
2004/05	0				0
2005/06	3				3
2006/07	5	2	1	1	1
2007/08	0				0
Average	*2*	*0.5*	*0.25*	*0.25*	*1*

Table 3: Average student statistics for the Teagasc equine programme.

Programme	Completed	Failed	Dropped Out	Deferred	Progressed Level 6
CIE5	75%	10%	15%	0%	77%
AEH6	77%	13%	5%	5%	
AES6	60%	10%	20%	10%	

CERTIFICATE IN HORSE BREEDING & TRAINING – LEVEL 5

All students who apply to CIE5 cannot be offered a place. In '04/05 65 students applied for CIE5 and 24 were accepted (Table 2). This acceptance rate of 37% demonstrates the interest and demand for the course. Facilities and staff limit the capacity of CIE5, on average 30 students are accepted per year. In total the equine programme handles approximately 48 students per year.

The average number of CIE5 dropouts per year is 15%, (Table 3) and the average failure rate is 10%. There were no fails in '06/07 but the trend has increased from 8% in '04/05 to 18% in '07/08. On average the course has a very high rate of students, 77%, progressing to Level 6.

ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN HORSEMANSHIP – LEVEL 6

The Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship has a low drop out rate (Table 3) but the average fail rate stands above 10%, on average 2/16 students. The fail rate has dropped in the previous four years from 20% - 5% but the drop out and deferral rates have increased. Deferrals refer to students incapable of continuing for medical/personal reasons and leave intending to return. The equine programme has a history of failed/deferred students returning to repeat.

ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN STUD MANAGEMENT – LEVEL 6

The AES6 course has not been popular with students progressing to Level 6 (Table 3). Students were only enrolled in two out of the previous four years; the average student intake for those two years was 4. All 3 students that began in '04/05 completed but only 1/5 was awarded the Level 6 Certificate in '06/07. On average there is a 50:50 completion rate for students.

The CQAU and course co-ordinator attempted to address the issue of attracting and retaining Stud Management students by re-designing the Stud Management student option. The new course design was not implemented due to lack of resources, e.g. staff.

Recommendation 2:

The Stud Management student option, CIE5 & AEH6, must be re-addressed to encourage the attraction and retention of students. Currently this requires innovative, budget neutral solutions.

3.1.3   Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training - Level 5

The Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training Level 5 (CIE5) is a one year full-time course awarded by FETAC. It is composed of two internal options, Horsemanship and Stud Management. The course is aimed at those with some previous equestrian experience who wish to gain practical experience with horses and/or develop a career in the equestrian industry. There is no minimum education entry requirement, however due to limited availability and demand for places all applicants must attend an interview and have their horsemanship and academic abilities assessed. There are separate selection processes for each option with separate marking schemes. Students may apply for one or both options and applicants are scored on the criteria outlined in Table 4 by two to three assessors.

Table 4: Criteria and weighting for places on CIE5 (Horsemanship or Stud Management options).

Criteria	Weighting for Stud Management	Weighting for Horsemanship
Prior Equestrian Exams		10
Written Exam	20	10
Horsemanship	40	20

Riding Exam
  o   Flat riding
  o   Tacking
  o   Jumping
		40

Interview
  o   Enthusiasm
  o   Team Player
  o   Interaction
  o   Ambition
	40	20

Students for the Horsemanship option are required to display a high level of riding capability. Stud Management option students do not ride and therefore are accepted on having displayed an aptitude for handling horses. Only students who demonstrate the capability to safely and ably handle a horse can be accepted.

There are thirty-two weeks of course work at Kildalton College and the majority of equestrian students live on campus due to the demands of the course. Course work concentrates on teaching

equine breeding, training, care and safe working practices. Students spend their time between class work, practical lessons, yard work and study.

On successful completion, attaining the required number of credits, students are awarded a FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training. Students from the Horsemanship option progress to the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship and students from the Stud Management option progress to the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Stud Management. The Level 5 Certificate does not meet the training requirements to be granted stamp duty exemption.

3.1.4   Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship - Level 6

The Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship Level 6 (AEH6) is a one year full-time course with certification from FETAC. The objective of the course is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge to effectively manage horses, stables and teach within commercial equestrian centres. Students must have achieved the CIE5 Certificate in the Horsemanship option, or hold a demonstrable equivalent qualification, to enter the course.

Thirty weeks are spent at Kildalton College developing riding and horse management skills, learning to teach, coach and break and train young horses. Students are encouraged to train for their Equestrian Federation Ireland (EFI) and British Horse Society (BHS) instructor qualifications.

After successful completion of the course, students are awarded a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horsemanship. Students can use the qualification to progress through the Higher Links Scheme to the Higher Certificate in Business Studies in Equine Studies and to continue studying for their BHS qualifications. Qualified students can hope for employment as riding instructors, professional riders and yard managers. This Level 6 Certificate meets the training requirements for stamp duty exemption.

3.1.5   Advanced Certificate in Stud Management - Level 6

The Advanced Certificate in Stud Management Level 6 (AES6) is a one year full-time course with certification from FETAC. The objective of the course is to provide students with the

opportunity to acquire the management skills and equine knowledge to run a commercial stud. Students must have achieved the CIE5 Certificate, or hold an equivalent qualification, to enter the course.

Students spend nine months on placement and complete eight weeks of course work at Kildalton College. The eight weeks are divided between the beginning and end of the course year. Stud Management students study business and pasture management, horse breeding, nutrition, evaluation and health. The course is designed so the student fully understands the day-to-day workings of a commercial stud and can implement their training during placement.

On successful completion students are awarded a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Stud Management. Students can use the qualification to progress through the Higher Links Scheme to the Higher Certificate in Business Studies in Equine Studies. This course is suitable for students hoping to establish their own stud farm or seeking employment as grooms in commercial stud farms where they can work up to stud management. This Level 6 Certificate meets the training requirements for stamp duty exemption.

3.1.6   Programme Self-Evaluation

As part of quality assessment the CQAU and course co-ordinator complete a self-evaluation checklist (SEC) annually for the programme. The checklist consists of criteria that are scored firstly on the availability of evidence and secondly on the level of achievement as judged from the evidence. The maximum score attainable is 3. Table 5 displays the average SEC results recorded for the previous two years, '06/07 and '07/08, for the equine programme.

Table 5: Self-evaluation of the equine programme for '06/07 and '07/08.

Self-evaluation Average Grades*	2006/07		2007/08	
Area	Level 5	Level 6	Level 5	Level 6
Communications	3	3	3	3
Equality	3	3	3	3
Staff Recruitment & Development	3	3	3	3
Access, Transfer and Progression	2.86	2.86	3	3
Programme Development, Delivery and Review	2.83	2.83	2.83	2.92
Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners	2.9	2.9	3	3
Protection for Learners	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sub-contracting/Procuring Programme Delivery	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

* 3 = strength; 2 = acceptable; 1 = for improvement

In '06/07 three of the SEC sections scored less than the maximum (Table 5). The issues raised in '06/07 under access, transfer and progression and fair and consistent assessment of learners which contributed to scores less than the maximum were addressed by the CQAU and course co-ordinator. This resulted in achieving the maximum score in '07/08.

The reasons the scores were less than the maximum were:

1. the student survey provides evidence for some areas of the SEC and scores can vary due to variation in student body opinion
2. the External Verifier requested more robust paper trails for assessments and proficiency tests and the improvement was implemented in '07/08.

The score for programme development, delivery and review relates to the resources available for successful achievement of the programme objectives. In the External Verifier's report there is a request for additional stables and covered riding facilities. The lack of covered facilities, while unacceptable during inclement weather, does not negatively impact on the successful achievement of the programme objectives.

3.1.7   Student Surveys

The student satisfaction surveys are meant to be completed annually by all students attending the equine programme, there were no AES6 students in '07/08 and there were no AES6 previous responses available. The survey is standard for all Teagasc Level 5 and Level 6 students and informs the CQAU and the course co-ordinator for decisions. In '07/08 an older survey version was given to students; the evaluation is based on the responses to the old version.

EFFICIENCY OF STUDENT SURVEYS

The Level 5 survey asks approximately 60 questions under induction, college and residential facilities, coursework, assessments and placement. Level 5 students do not partake in placement. Stud Management Level 6 students go on placement but the Level 6 survey does not ask any questions on placement.

The Level 6 survey asks approximately 20 questions under induction, work experience, proficiency tests and coursework. The Level 6 survey is too simplistic for students who have experienced the complete equine programme. The Level 6 Stud Management student voice doesn't appear to ever be caught, either because there are no students or the students are on placement when the survey is completed.

On the CIE5 survey students enter Horse Breeding & Training rather than Horsemanship/Stud Management for their course title. This lack of discrimination between the options results in a loss of the Level 5 Stud Management student voice.

> **Recommendation 3:**
> Every effort should be made to ensure that the opinions and issues of the Stud Management students are adequately captured and considered separate to the Horsemanship majority, e.g., instruct them to enter Stud Management on the CIE5 survey, ensure the Level 6 Stud Management students complete the survey.

The current format of the survey does not allow analysis or comparison with the specific interests of FETAC. Each section had to be altered (see Section 2) to get usable data.

> **Recommendation 4:**
> The standard student surveys should be re-examined by the CQAU. Surveys should be tailored to capture programme specific information and re-designed for easier analysis and self-evaluation.

3.2 PROGRAMME DESIGN AND CONTENT

The FETAC questions addressed in this section through programme design and content are stakeholder confidence, meeting learner needs, accommodating learner diversity, exemptions for prior achievements and student satisfaction with the programme design and content.

The programme design and content questions relating to evidence of demand, availability of information, programme access, periodic programme review, acting on external verifier's reports

and learners leaving the programme early were addressed through the programme analysis (section 3.1).

PROGRAMME DESIGN

The yard in Kildalton College operates as a fully functioning livery; it is this environment that facilitates the skills-base which contributes to the high demand for the equine programme (Section 3). Teagasc does not keep a permanent herd; they obtain horses of all standards and types on loan. Approximately 30-35 externally sourced horses are required for nine months. The fact that breeders entrust valuable young horses to the yard at Kildalton College says a lot for the reputation of the programme, course leaders and students within the equine industry.

LEARNER DIVERSITY

The course is predominantly female, on average 73% per year. The course attempts to accommodate learner diversity wherever possible and has demonstrated flexibility of its procedures in order to facilitate students. Learner needs are assessed when students start and assistance in the form of extra tuition by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) or scribes and readers for exams are provided if required. Exemptions are granted to students for previous awards achieved on a case by case basis.

Staff work very closely with students between the yard, classes and practicals. They utilise this proximity to become familiar with the personalities and learner types of the students. This knowledge is then used to tailor their teaching techniques to learner diversity.

SURVEY SCORES

Both the CIE5 and AEH6 students rate the programme design & content elements of the course acceptable at 3.4 overall (Table 6).

Table 6: Student survey elements relating to Programme Design & Content.

Programme Design & Content	CIE5	AEH6
Design of:		
Class size	3.2	3.6
Practical group size	3.5	
Module range & choice	3.1	3.2
Amount assessments	3.2	
Class timing		3.3
Support needs for:		
Learning difficulties	3.6	
Physical difficulties	3.3	
Information provided on:		
Content	3.4	3.3
Timetables	3.3	
Requirements to pass	3.8	
Placement		3.4
Proficiency tests		3.5
Average	**3.4**	**3.4**

≥3.5	Excellent
>3.1	Acceptable
=3.1	Borderline
≤3.0	Poor
≤2.5	Very Poor

In the '08/09 CIE5 focus group the reputation of the equine programme amongst prospective students and its skills focus were articulated as the main reasons for applying. This mirrored the '07/08 CIE5 student survey (Table 7) where students stated "gain experience with horses" as their primary reason for entering the course.

Table 7: CIE5 Student survey results for entering the course.

'07/08 CIE5: Reasons for entering the course. (n=18)	Votes
Gain experience with horses	11
A passion for horses	4
Improve riding skills	4
Obtain green cert	3
Because the course is practical/skills-based	3
An interesting course	2
To use as a stepping stone	1
Recommended	1
Start own business	1
Unsure of career path to take	1

ISSUES

CIE5 students scored the "range and choice of modules" at 3.1 (Table 6) which is on the border of the acceptable range. The modules listed under each course by the CQAU [6] are all

mandatory. Facilitating some flexibility in the modules or providing some options would give students a greater sense of ownership over their education.

The issue of lack of choice was raised again during discussion with the '08/09 Stud Management students. A feeling of their option being insignificant was expressed along with dissatisfaction at "having to" complete the sheep and suckler calf modules despite a lack of interest. Exploiting the availability of other relevant modules being taught at Kildalton College as options could be considered. This would allow the students some choice over their modules, might maintain their enthusiasm for Stud Management and assist in creating the feeling of importance and individuality they appear to be lacking.

> **Recommendation 5:**
> Increasing the flexibility of modules in the equine programme should be investigated. Especially for the Stud Management course. Consider exploiting the availability of other modules currently taught in Kildalton College.

Staff are aware of the procedures in place to make changes to the equine programme and are satisfied with their ability to address issues with modules and programme design. A new module survey for students was piloted in '07/08. The module survey allows students assess their modules for content and relevance, teaching and delivery as well as select their two best and worst modules and offer their own improvement recommendations. Staff can use this new survey to help implement recommendation five and identify any other issues with equine modules.

3.3   PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The FETAC questions specifically addressed under programme delivery are adherence to timetables, adequate teaching and learning materials, flexibility of delivery style to suit learner needs, reflection on delivery by teachers and encouraging learner responsibility. This section also addresses student satisfaction with programme delivery.

ORGANISATION

Delivery of the programme material is done efficiently, effectively and within a timely manner. Students are allocated to groups, CIE5 students are broken into four groups and AEH6 students into two. They are timetabled with precision to operate and maintain the yard and stables; exercise and groom the horses and attend classes and practicals.

The equine trainers compose their own workbooks which require a lot of time and effort. For generic modules, e.g., cash accounts, generic workbooks are used. These workbooks were designed for the agricultural programmes and don't contain specific equine related examples. The students expressed the feeling that this makes some of the modules more difficult to understand and relate to their training. It is understood by the Evaluator that the printing costs of specific Equine workbooks is a limiting factor. Alternative options should be considered, e.g., printing in-house generic workbook supplements containing relevant equine examples.

Recommendation 6:

Where possible workbooks should be updated to have more relevance for equine students. This will assist the learning process. Alternatively consider in-house printed equine supplements to generic workbooks.

STUDENT ATTITUDE

The yard, students and staff are responsible for 30-40 high quality horses. Students learn that the health and welfare of the horses is a priority for any yard. This was already very apparent during the student focus groups. Responses to a request for suggestions of course improvement were all initially related to the welfare of the horses, e.g., "obtain better straw for their bedding".

The students are expected to demonstrate a level of commitment that has rarely been asked of them before. This expectation on their dependability and trustworthiness promotes the development of a responsible attitude, which transmits into their education. Due to limitations the onus is mostly on the student to perform well and seek help if required. The equine students and staff believe that the equine programme instils a good work ethic that will stand to learners in the future.

SURVEY SCORES

The elements displayed in Table 8 were taken from the deconstructed student survey questionnaire to represent student satisfaction with programme delivery, this scored acceptable by the '07/08 CIE5 and AEH6 students.

Table 8: Student survey elements relating to Programme Delivery.

Programme Delivery	CIE5	AEH6
Organisation & running:		
Classes	2.9	2.9
Practicals	2.8	
Pace	3.3	3.1
Standards of:		
Classroom teaching	3.4	
Practical instruction	3.5	
Workbooks	3.3	
Handouts/presentations	3.4	
Yard management		3.3
Patience/support of yard staff		2.4
Safety		3.5
Opportunities:		
Class discussion	3.2	3.7
Express views	3.1	3.5
Ask questions	3.7	3.7
Help from course director	3.6	
Help from tutors	3.7	
Help completing assignments		3.5
Average	**3.3**	**3.3**

≥3.5	Excellent
>3.1	Acceptable
=3.1	Borderline
≤3.0	Poor
≤2.5	Very Poor

ISSUES

Students scored the organisation and running of classes and practicals below the acceptable level. The specific issue was not apparent from the surveys and the focus groups didn't express dissatisfaction with the same topic. It is apparent that running the yard and equine programme effectively requires almost military precision. Yet timetables may occasionally suffer due to the lack of covered facilities during inclement weather conditions and prioritised equine welfare. The equine programme is always completed on time.

Some students feel that the pace of the course could be faster and time is wasted on repetition that is useless to them. While teachers tailor their techniques for learner diversity, they cannot reduce the length of modules and the pace is generally set by those less capable. Consider allowing those

who have passed modules/assessments be exempt some lessons until the class is ready to move on. Smaller class numbers allow teachers more time with fewer distractions to assist those who are having difficulties or falling behind. The possibility of free time would serve as an extra incentive to study.

Recommendation 7:

Investigate alternative arrangements for students who complete modules early/on time. Their time could be better spent as extra help in the yard/studying for other modules.

In '07/08 the level of "patience and support of yard staff" the AEH6 students felt they received was very poor. CIE5 students were not given a similar option but comments made in the survey agreed with this feeling of dissatisfaction. A clash between the CIE5 and AEH6 students in '07/08 was apparent and both levels felt not enough was done to help resolve issues or mediate and provide support. Understandably there are limitations to the level of assistance that staff can provide. FETAC and the CQAU piloted a Leadership module in '08/09 that may assist students in dealing with any future issues.

Students expressed views that there are also issues around staff-staff, staff-student and student-student communications, in particular staff-staff communication on the yard in '07/08. Students feel occasional miscommunication leads to misunderstandings. Several claims were made of direction being for given for yard tasks, only to then be contradicted by another staff member. The equine staff needs to investigate this further, and consider developing standard protocols for all routine yard tasks to prevent future misunderstandings. While this was also an issue in '08/09 it wasn't as apparent.

Recommendation 8:

Equine yard staff should investigate areas of miscommunication/potential miscommunication and set in place, if not already so, written protocols for routine tasks. Involving students in brief fortnightly "Yard Meetings" could be beneficial in rectifying perceived communication issues.

3.4 ASSOCIATED SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The FETAC questions specifically addressed by associated services and resources are the provision of learner supports and information, staff development and training, sufficient resources, learner access to materials and facilities and maintenance of facilities. This section also addresses student satisfaction with the associated services and resources.

PROGRAMME FACILITIES

Kildalton College provides classroom facilities, IT facilities, residential facilities, stables, one indoor arena, two outdoor arenas and a wooded jumping course for the equine students. The current level of resources is adequate to teach the equine programme as it exists at its current level.

INDUCTION

All students are given induction sessions at the beginning of each year that provide information on rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities, course duration, award type and progression along with policies and procedures. By the time the survey is completed at the end of the year the awareness created by the induction has waned (Table 8). All learner information, policies and procedures are clearly documented and available to students. There was no need to use the appeals procedure in the past four years. The equity policy was used successfully in 2007.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Students are normally notified of their results within one week of an exam. Results are posted anonymously and track previous attempts so students can monitor their standing. Written records of achievement are issued periodically and discussed at mentoring meetings. Students feel the mentoring sessions are extremely beneficial and would like more frequent sessions. However, they would be more comfortable talking to a teacher from outside the equine programme.

Recommendation 9:

The mentoring programme should be pro-actively pursued and the possibility of using mentors from other Kildalton College training programmes should be explored.

STAFF

Staff have access to the facilities required to educate and train both the students and horses. But lack access to private changing and showering facilities, currently staff on the equine course change and store, wet and dry clothing, in their cars.

> **Recommendation 10:**
>
> Staff should be provided with adequate changing facilities, preferably with showers due to the inevitable consequences of working unsheltered.

The development and training of staff is managed through the Teagasc PMDS process. The onus is on the equine staff to seek out training to ensure they stay abreast with current equestrian techniques. However, opportunities for staff to avail of training are limited due to requiring all staff at all times to teach the course and run the yard.

> **Recommendation 11:**
>
> Consider using innovative training techniques to create more flexible time for staff. Suggestion: Consider exploiting the potential of e-learning combined with support tutorials rather than a full week of scheduled classes.

SURVEY SCORES

After consideration by the Evaluator the survey areas deconstructed to associated services and resources will be examined under two distinct headings. The primary elements of the student survey (Table 9) are, in the Evaluators opinion, directly related to the associated services and resources as outlined by FETAC. Table 10 consists of the secondary elements which delve into student satisfaction with the general college and residential facilities. These facilities are related to the FETAC areas of interest as they play an important role in the mental well-being of the equine students.

Table 9: Primary student survey elements relating to Associated Services & Resources.

Associated Services & Resources	CIE5	AEH6
Information given on:		
Rights & responsibilities	2.7	
Rules & regulations	3.3	
Entry requirements & success	3.4	
Duration to complete	3.3	
Type of award	2.8	
Progression and transfer options	2.7	
General satisfaction with:		
Supervision of written assessments	3.7	
Method of results notification	3.0	
Appeals procedure	3.5	2.9
Identified person for queries		3.4
Assistance selecting appropriate tests		3.7
Average	**3.1**	**3.3**

≥3.5	**Excellent**
>3.1	**Acceptable**
=3.1	**Borderline**
≤3.0	**Poor**
≤2.5	**Very Poor**

INFORMATION PROVIDED

Students are primarily dissatisfied with the level of information they receive about the demands of the equine programme prior to starting. They are informed during interview that the course is demanding but the warning is obviously not taken seriously by the prospective students. It is important to keep a balance as negative emphasis on the course demands could discourage interested students. Once settled the students are, on the whole, happy with the work they have to perform but are still resentful of feeling they were ill-prepared which carries over into their attitude.

Recommendation twelve is proposed on the assumption that the students will work more willingly and be more amenable, in particular from the immediate outset, if they feel they have been adequately informed and prepared. The students feeling of resentment can also impact on their learning focus.

Recommendation 12:

Facilitating prospective students to meet with current Level 6 students in order to ask questions about the course could be explored. Or prospective students could be provided an opportunity to experience "A day in the life of the equine programme".

COLLEGE/CENTRE AND RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Kildalton College is set on its own extremely picturesque grounds. The grounds are well-maintained and the students enjoy the surroundings for the equine learning experience, however they request more access. The Level 6 focus group expressed a wish for more access to the woods for cross-country training, and both levels requested increased acreage for grazing the horses.

The majority of equine students reside on campus in Kildalton College for two years. Only CIE5 students were asked about the facilities, AEH6 opinion was sought in discussion, overall dissatisfaction is high, with the residential facilities in particular. The residential rating is disturbing considering the influence of these facilities on the mental well-being of the students.

Table 10: Secondary student survey elements relating to Associated Services & Resources.

General Facilities	CIE5
College/Centre facilities	
Appearance college & grounds	3.8
Classroom facilities	3.1
Practical facilities	3.4
Social areas	1.5
Parking	3.0
First Aid	3.5
Residential	
Quality & choice of food	2.2
Bedrooms	3.0
Opportunity for study	2.6
Shower/toilet facilities	2.0
Sports facilities & activities	1.4
Social activities	1.3
Average	**2.5**

≥3.5	Excellent
>3.1	Acceptable
=3.1	Borderline
≤3.0	Poor
≤2.5	Very Poor

RESIDENCES & FOOD

The course is predominantly female and therefore the dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of shower and toilet facilities (Table 10) must be assumed to be in the female residences.

Quality and choice of food scores very poorly but from discussions choice and access to food, rather than quality, are the main issues. At weekends students are provided with one mid-day dinner option but have no access to food after 5pm if they are hungry. The new common room

may address the issue of choice but something must be done about the availability of food outside set hours.

SOCIAL AREAS & ACTIVITIES

The equine students are the only students normally resident at weekends; they rely on the college social areas. The new building will shortly be opened; it houses new social facilities.

Sports facilities and activities are available, but the students believe them to be mostly male orientated, e.g., "no girls hockey team". Students reported that tractors occasionally obstruct some of the sports facilities, e.g. tennis courts.

Social activities, outside of equine programme co-ordinated activities, are felt to be non-existent, there is very little to occupy their free time particularly at weekends.

STUDY FACILITIES

The opportunity to study is scoring lower (Table 10) than the Evaluator would like. Opportunity to study is elementary to student success.

Equine core study material consists of the workbooks and handouts provided to students. The internet is the other main reference source for students as the books in the project room are orientated for horticultural students and only accessible 3-4 times a week during lunch. There are approximately 50 computers in Kildalton College with access to internet for project and study use. Computer rooms open from 8 am – 11 pm but are also used for module practicals throughout the day, their evening usage is not exclusive to equine students.

Equine students feel their time for study and to access IT facilities is limited due to the long days on the equine programme. The new building due to open is to house a library that will be open 5-6 hours a week, depending on staffing resources, it is also hoped to have a wireless network that will facilitate greater access.

Recommendation 13:

Explore options to raise the satisfaction levels with facilities. Suggestions:

- Provide a private common room with (or allow students provide) limited food facilities (e.g. fridge/microwave)
- If not already available provide quiet study areas
- Provide wireless facilities

Explore options to place the onus of entertainment on the students:

- Facilitate the creation of a student sports and social club
- Establish a students union with class reps to deal with student issues and activities

3.5   ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

The FETAC questions specifically addressed through assessment of learning are use of appropriate assessment strategies for learners and the consistency of assessments. This section also addresses student satisfaction with the assessment of learning from the survey.

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE

Students are continually assessed throughout the year. Written exams are held every Friday and the results are typically displayed within one week of sitting the exam. The continual assessment design is working well and it suits both staff and students. Assessments and proficiency tests are externally verified to ensure fairness and consistency.

In the focus groups and surveys students expressed the view that exams shouldn't be allowed pile up. Four to a maximum of five exams are scheduled for a Friday. Students can get in difficulties if there are also re-sits of previous exams scheduled.

Recommendation 14:

Effort should be made so that students never sit more than the maximum five exams on any day.

The equine programme uses the Teagasc Education Management System (EMS) to monitor student results and progress. A couple of '08/09 students reported receiving misinformation on failing a module and thus, the programme. They were unclear on how they received the

information and admitted the issue was resolved quickly; however, they found the incident traumatic.

Recommendation 15:

Should a student require a warning of potential failure intended to focus their efforts then it should also be made clear that they haven't yet failed.

SURVEY SCORES

The CIE5 and AEH6 students are both very happy with the assessment of learning on the equine programme (Table 11).

Table 11: Student survey elements relating to Assessment of Learning.

Assessment of Learning	CIE5	AEH6
Notice for written assessments	2.6	
Notice for proficiency tests		3.3
Clear intructions	3.4	
Questions clear & understandable	3.6	
Time allowed	3.7	
Fair marking for written	3.6	
Fair marking of skills	3.4	3.4
Feedback received from staff	3.1	
Frequency of receiving records	3.3	
Opportunities to practice		3.9
Opportunities to repeat tests		3.9
Timing of proficiencies		3.8
Average	**3.3**	**3.7**

≥3.5	Excellent
>3.1	Acceptable
=3.1	Borderline
≤3.0	Poor
≤2.5	Very Poor

CIE5 students are of the opinion that adequate notice isn't given for written assessments. Normally teacher's consult with students as to the most appropriate time to schedule an assessment but they will never get a consensus and the length of notification may vary from teacher to teacher. Some equine students may feel they have inadequate free time to prepare for all the exams on a given Friday (see recommendation 14).

Recommendation 16:

A minimum notification period for written assessments should be agreed between the teachers and students and implemented as standard throughout the equine programme.

---

4. EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness of the equine programme is addressed in this section through the definition and achievement of programme objectives.

4.1 ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The equine programme has clearly defined objectives (see section 3.1.1). The number of students completing the programme (see section 3.1.2), the number of certified students employed/working in the equine industry and the number of students continuing their education (Figure 5) can all be taken as evidence that the programme is achieving its objectives.

Figure 5 shows the results of a follow up phone survey of the '07/08 AEH6 students by the course co-ordinator at the request of the Evaluator. In terms of the equine industry 93% of the students are still involved while almost 50% are employed by it. In continuing education 7% of the students progressed to 3rd level and 20% are continuing to study for the BHS qualifications. The 20% self-employed/working at home with horses are supporting the equine industry by feeding their training back into their community through the people they interact with, businesses they start up and horses they train or breed.
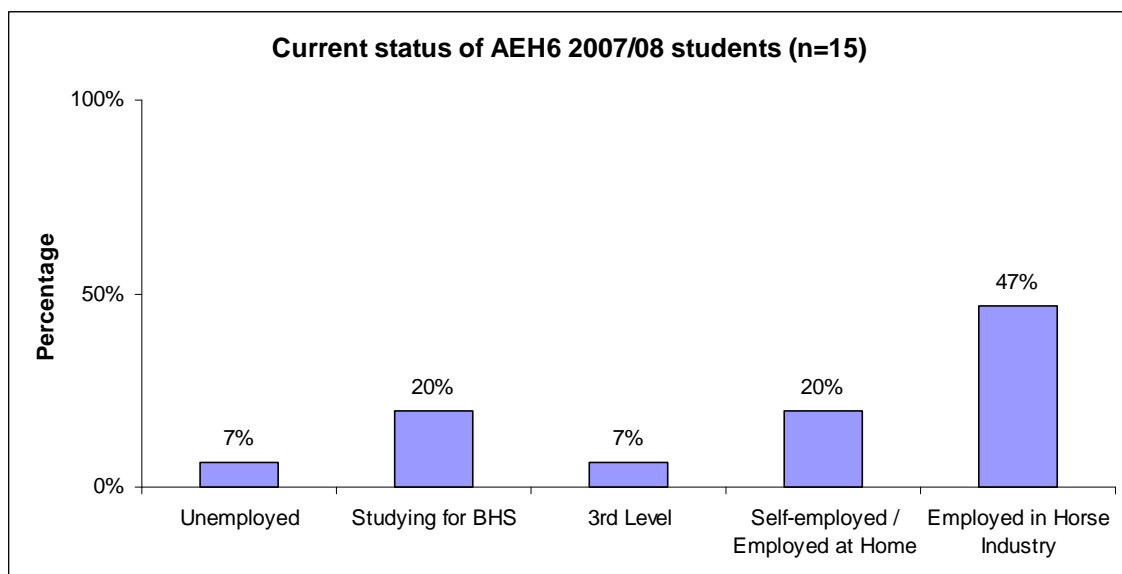
Figure 5: Percentage figures for the current employment status of the 2007/08 AEH6 students.

Recommendation 17:

Follow up surveys of previous students are essential for assessing achievement of programme objectives. Procedures should be implemented to ensure this occurs.

4.2   OVERALL STUDENT SATISFACTION

The CIE5 and AEH6 students would recommend the course 100% to family and friends (Table 11). Apparently any areas of dissatisfaction do not deter them from appreciating the quality of the equine programme. They also feel that Teagasc is delivering a committed and high quality service through the equine programme in Kildalton College (Table 12).

Table 12: Student satisfaction with the Equestrian CIE5 and AEH 6 courses.

Overall Student Judgement of the Course	'08 Level 5 (n=18)		'08 Level 6 (n=15)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Would you recommend the course to family/friends?	100%		100%	
Do you feel Teagasc is committed in delivering a quality service to you?	89%	11%	100%	

In the focus groups students consistently insisted they didn't want to give the wrong impression, that despite any issues they raised they thought the equine programme was "a very good programme".

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Teagasc equine programme is satisfying the evaluation requirements of FETAC and successfully achieving its objectives. The equine programme is well co-ordinated, the staff are dedicated and accommodating and the students are secure, confident and enthusiastic. The programme provides the foundations of a support network for students through the contacts and friendships established during their training.

The Horsemanship design is well thought out and executed. It is obvious that there are some issues with the design of the Stud Management option, an attempt has been made to work on this area but more must be done. A new course design was previously outlined by the CQAU and the course co-ordinator but lack of resources influenced its implementation, e.g. time, funding, staff. The Evaluator feels that it is essential this must be addressed and innovative solutions sought due to the current economic climate.

Considering the recommendations on education and training made by the recent report [2] on *"The Future of the Irish Sport Horse Industry"* the equine programme has great potential to influence future development of the Irish equine industry.

Teagasc should exploit its potential in the field of equine education, thereby facilitating both FETAC and bolstering the Irish Sport Horse industry.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made by the evaluation report, please refer to the main text for qualitative information. In the current economic climate some of these recommendations may not be straightforward to address. The Evaluator advocates innovative outside-the-box thinking in order to produce solutions.

Programme Design and Content

- The design of the Stud Management student option (CIE5 and AEH6) must be re-addressed to improve the attraction and retention of Stud Management students and increase their sense of importance to the equine programme.

- Investigate increasing the flexibility of module options on offer. In particular for the Stud Management option of CIE5. Consider the possibility of exploiting other relevant modules currently taught in Kildalton College to provide choices that the student is interested in.

Programme Delivery

- Generic course workbooks should be updated to contain examples relevant to the equine programme or an in-house workbook supplement of equine examples created.

- Consider alternative arrangements for students who complete modules early/on-time, e.g., free time/extra riding as an incentive.

- Equine yard staff need to assess areas/potential areas in the yard where miscommunication can arise. And set in place, if not already so, standard protocols for routine yard tasks to ensure clarification for students and staff. (This was a particular issue in '07/08, not as strong an issue in '08/09)

Associated Services and Resources

- The mentoring programme is very beneficial to students and should be pro-actively pursued and allocating mentors external to the equine programme should be considered.

- Staff have no adequate changing facilities and should be provided with some near the equine yard at a minimum, preferably with shower facility.

- Incorporating innovative training techniques into modules should be considered in order to provide more flexibility for staff who wish to pursue training and development needs.
- Prospective students should be facilitated to discover more about the demands of the course prior to embarking on the equine programme. Allowing access to current Level 6 students or to live "a day in the life of" the programme should adequately display the programme expectations so they are fully informed prior to starting but not disconcerted.
- Issues with the residential facilities and social activities for equine students at Kildalton College should be addressed. (see recommendation 13)

Assessment of Learning

- Incidents of inaccurate reporting to students of results must be investigated thoroughly and procedures implemented to prevent recurrence.
- The exam load of students should be monitored. Students should never be allowed sit more than the maximum number of exams on any day despite a requirement to sit repeat attempts.
- Teachers and students should agree a minimum period for prior notification of exams and it should be implemented as standard throughout the equine programme.

Student Surveys

- The opinions and issues of the Stud Management students are either not captured adequately (AES6) or considered separate (CIE5) to the Horsemanship majority. Effort must be made to ensure this happens as the student voice is currently lost.
- The standard student surveys need to be re-examined by the CQAU. Surveys should be tailored to capture information specific to the equine programme and re-designed to facilitate analysis for self-evaluation and FETAC evaluation.
- Establish procedures to collect progression information on equine programme graduates to monitor achievement of programme objectives.

Other

- The wording in the equine programme promotional literature must remain uniform throughout for clarity.

7.   REFERENCES

1.   Carey, D. and P. Browne, *Teagasc Education and Development Directorate Business Plan.* 2009.

2.   Quinn, K. and K. Hennessy, *The Future of the Irish Sport Horse Industry: analysis and recommendations.* 2008.

3.   Tully, E., *Curriculum and Quality Assurance Unit Business Plan.* 2008.

4.   Kavanagh, J., *Evaluation Unit Three-Year Plan.* 2008.

5.   Davidson, J.E., *Evaluation Methodology Basics: the nuts and bolts of sound evaluation.* 2005.

6.   CQAU, *Memorandum on Implementation of Teagasc Level 5 & Level 6 Certificates in Equine Programmes (CIE5, AEH6, AES6).* 2007.

Appendix 1 – Kirkpatrick Framework

Donald Kirkpatrick's Four Level Evaluation Framework:

Developed by Kirkpatrick in 1959 the method consists of four levels:

- **Level 1 - Reaction**: this measures how participants on the programme react to it. For the equestrian programme, this can be measured using the existing student surveys.
- **Level 2 - Learning**: this measures the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge and/or increase skills as a result of attending the programme. This is measured through assessments on the horticulture programme.
- **Level 3 - Behaviour**: this measures the extent to which a change in behaviour has occurred because the participant attended the training programme. This is more difficult to measure as it involves a transfer of learning. This could be measured by conducting a telephone survey of past students on the CIE5, AEH6 and AES6 courses some time after they have completed the course.
- **Level 4 – Results**: this measures the final results that occurred because the participants attended the programme. This is similar to measuring impact and tries to determine what final results occurred due to attendance and participation in the horticulture training programme. This could be measured by conducting a telephone survey of past students on the CIE5, AEH6 and AES6 courses after a period of time.

Dr. Jack Philips has taken the Kirkpatrick framework a step further and has included a fifth level, which examines the return on investment (ROI) of training and development courses. For the purpose of this evaluation, and to meet FETAC's requirements Level 1, 2 and 3 of the Kirkpatrick framework will be assessed and Levels 4 and 5 will be addressed as far as the information allows.

Appendix 2 – Information Reviewed

The following documents were reviewed during the course of this Evaluation**:**

1. Teagasc Courses in Agriculture, Horticulture and Food Prospectus 2008.
2. Kildalton College Course Prospectus 2008.
3. Teagasc Kildalton College Business Plan 2009.
4. Teagasc Curriculum and Quality Assurance Unit Business Plan 2008-09.
5. Teagasc Level 5 & Level 6 Student Survey 2007/08.
6. External Verifier's reports from 2004/05 – 2007/08.
7. Self-evaluation Checklists CIE5, AEH6, AES6 2006/07 & 2007/08.
8. Review of Teagasc's Education and Training Provision and Report of the Education and Training Forum. Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2005.
9. An Evaluation of the Teagasc Level 5 Certificate in Horticulture and the Teagasc Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture Programmes. Teagasc Evaluation Unit, 2008.
10. Profile of the Irish Sport Horse Industry. Katherine Quinn & Karen Hennessy.
11. Vocational Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training – Level 6 Course Modules 2007-08.
12. 2008-09 Vocational Certificate in Horse Breeding & Training Level 5 Module Specs.
13. FETAC Quality Assuring Assessment Policy.
14. "What's happening in FETAC?" March 2007
15. Progression from FETAC Level 5 Certificates and Level 6 Advanced Certificates to Higher Education Courses 2008.
16. British Horse Society Ireland website – www.bhsireland.ie
17. British Horse Society – www.bhs.org.uk
18. FETAC website – www.fetac.ie
19. FÁS website – www.fas.ie
20. Teagasc website – www.teagasc.ie

Appendix 3 – Deconstruction of Standard Student Surveys

FETAC Areas	Colour Key
Programme Design & Content	
Programme Delivery	
Associated Services & Resources	
Assessment of Learning	

Level 5 (CIE5) Standard Survey Deconstruction

Original Layout		FETAC Area
Q.1	**Induction**	
	Information given about your rights and responsibilities	
	Information given about rules and regulations	
	Information given about course content and elective choice	
	Information given on class and practical timetables	
	Information given about requirements to pass your course	
	Information given about the entry requirements for success on the course	
	Information on length of time required to complete the course	
	Information about the award you will get	
	Information on progression (to the next level) and transfer (to another related course) after completing the course	
Q.2	**College/Centre Facilities**	
	Overall appearance of the college/centre and grounds	
	Classroom facilities	
	Facilities for practical instruction	
	Student social areas	
	Car parking	
	First aid in college/centre	
	Residential students only	
	Quality and choice of food served	
	College bedrooms (if applicable)	
	Opportunity for study	
	Shower/toilet facilities (if applicable)	
	Sports facilities and activities	
	Social activities	
Q.7	**The Course**	
	Organisation and running of classes (Following timetable)	
	Organisation and running of practicals (Following timetable)	
	Standard of classroom teaching	
	Standard of practical instruction	
	Workbooks	
	Handouts/presentations	
	Opportunity for discussions in class	

	Encouragement to express your views	
	Opportunity to ask questions in class	
	Class size	
	Practical group size	
	Help from course director	
	Help from tutoring staff	
	Range and choice of modules offered	
	Support for students with learning difficulties	
	Support for students with physical disabilities	
	Pace of course	
Q.8	**Assessments**	
	Amount of assessment	
	Notice of written assessments	
	Instructions for written assessments easy to understand	
	Written questions clear and straightforward	
	Time allowed for written assessments	
	How written assessments are conducted and supervised	
	Written assessments fairly marked	
	Skills assessment fairly marked	
	Method of notification of performance in assessments	
	Feedback from staff on performance in assessment	
	Frequency of issuing of Records of Achievement	
	Assessment Appeals Procedure	
Q.9	**Placement**	
	Notice of placement details	
	Meeting enterprise choice	
	Standard of husbandry on placement unit	
	Level of contact with master farmer/horticultural host	
	Level of responsibility given to you	**Responses not included as not relevant to CIE5 students.**
	Safety standards	
	Willingness of master farmer/horticultural host to give instruction	
	Assistance with diary	
	Length of working day	
	Time off arangements	
	Level of payment	
	Frequency of payment	
	Length of the placement period	

Level 6 (AEH6) Standard Survey Deconstruction

Q1	Induction	
	Information given about the level 6 course content and timing	
	Information given about the level 6 placement	
	Information given about proficiency testing	
	Link person to direct queries to clearly identified	

Q2	Work experience - Yard supervision	
	Standard management on yard	
	Level of patience/tolerance/support of staff on yard	
	Safety standards on unit	

Q3	Proficiency testing	
	Help with selecting appropriate tests	
	Opportunities to practise proficiency tests while on course	
	Adequacy of notice for proficiency tests	
	Proficiency tests fairly marked	
	Opportunities to repeat failed tests	
	Assessments appeals procedures (if used)	
	Timing of proficiency tests	

Q4	Coursework	
	Timing of class work	
	Organisation and running of classes	
	Class size	
	Standard of teaching	
	Opportunities for discussion in class	
	Opportunities to ask questions in class	
	Encouragement to express your views in class	
	Help with completing assignments	
	Choice of modules available	
	Pace of course	