

Landex

Land Based Colleges
Aspiring To Excellence



Elements of Excellence in Vocational Teaching and Learning in the Land-based Sector

Response to the call for evidence from the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning on the characteristics and features of excellent adult vocational teaching and learning, including examples of effective, innovative and exemplary approaches.

Prepared for: the CAVTL

Prepared by: Alastair Taylor, Quality Adviser, Landex

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About Landex

Landex is a subscriber organisation for providers with substantial land based provision in at least six SIC areas, and has 36 member Colleges and Universities in England and 6 Associate Members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.*

Landex was formed in 2006 from its predecessor organisation, Napaeo, which represented the interests of Land based Colleges and the industries they served for more than 50 years. Landex Colleges are mixed economy: as such in England they collectively provide over 80% of further education and over 77% of higher education in land based subjects, together with a wide range of 14-16 and cost-recovery programmes.

Courses delivered by most Landex providers are underpinned by substantial business enterprises, which provide a unique learning experience for students.

The primary functions of Landex are to secure continuous improvement in all its members through peer review, support and CPD; and to promote the interests of members and their various client groups through dialogue with government, funding agencies, sector skills councils, quality improvement agencies and professional bodies.

*SIC Land based Occupational Areas

Agriculture Crops and Livestock
Animal Management
Aquaculture
Environmental Conservation
Equine
Fencing
Floristry
Game and Wildlife Management
Landscape
Land Based Engineering
Professions Allied to Veterinary Trade
Trees and Timber
Production Horticulture

1.0 Assumptions

- For the purposes of this report, adult vocational teaching and learning has been applied to all types of learners including full-time and part-time, apprentices and employers, sixteen to nineteen, and nineteen plus.
- Landex represents colleges and universities that deliver substantial specialist land based education and training. However many Landex members provide a wider range of programmes than just land-based subjects. This report covers all provision offered by Landex members including those where land-based is a minor part of General Further Education provision. However much of the detail included relates specifically to land based education and so some contextual information is provided in section 2.

2.0 Context

2.1 The Significance of Land based Industries

- Landbased industries after a period of sustained financial pressure and 'perceived' marginal importance are now regarded as increasingly significant, not only as custodians of the countryside (75% of land in Britain is currently maintained by Farmers and Estate Managers), but economically and socially. Current and increasing World Food Shortages, concerns about Food Security and the drive for Environmental Sustainability are all raising the profile of the industries and highlighting the importance of specialist landbased education and training.
- Current and increasing World Food and Water Shortages, concerns about Food Security and the drive for Environmental Sustainability are all raising the profile of the industries and highlighting the importance of specialist landbased education and training.
- The UK Government and Devolved Administrations are strengthening their approaches to food policy, including by developing a shared understanding of their goals and priorities for the food system. To strengthen cross-government leadership, Defra has a new Departmental Strategic Objective, to ensure sustainable, secure and healthy food supplies. (UK Cross-Government Food Research and Innovation Strategy. Government Office for Science January 2010)
- Concerns are reinforced by the fact that Britain is now only 60% self-sufficient in food, reflecting a reduction of 15% over the last 20 years. When coupled with a Government estimate that an extra 7million people will need to be fed in Britain by 2027, this constitutes compelling evidence of the need to maintain and improve landbased industries. (Metro.co.uk/newsfocus/904657. August 2012)
- In 2011 the farming industry employed nearly 480,000 people and added £8.8billion in GVA (Gross Value added) to the British Economy, an increase of 25% on the previous year. For every £1 generated by farming, food manufacturing added a further £5, resulting to a 'field to plate' contribution to the British economy of £85billion per annum and employment for £3.5 million people. (Metro.co.uk/newsfocus/904657. August 2012)

- In 2011, the agrifood industry, which includes all industries that are involved in the production, processing and inspection of food had an annual output of £129billion, making it the largest manufacturing sector in the UK and providing 13% of national employment and 7% of GVA.
In 2010, exports of agrifood products grew to £16billion, reflecting the sixth consecutive year of growth and the importance of the industry to UK plc. (Defra 2012)
- In total, the UK rural economy is worth £300 billion/annum and employs 5.5 million people (Independent Farming Regulation Task Force. May 2011) emphasising the importance not only of agriculture, but all other essentially rural occupations

2.2 Future Employment in Land based Industries

- The average age of farmers in Britain is 58 and in order to maintain production, RASE has estimated that the agriculture industry will require an additional 60,000 new entrants over the next decade to replace those retiring from an ageing workforce, and that each year 1,000 of those entrants will be required to enter salaried management roles within farming. (Royal Agricultural Society of England, June 2009)
- The government has also estimated that 22,000 new entrants to the sustainable energy industries (DECC 2012) will be required over the next 18 years to service this increasingly important field of employment.

These statistics reinforce the importance of a high quality vocational education system to ensure that an appropriately qualified workforce to meet the needs of these industries.

2.3 Health & Safety in Land based Industries

- Agriculture is potentially a very dangerous industry with a poor health and safety record, and currently the highest level of fatalities of any industry in the UK: 33 deaths were recorded by the HSE (Health & Safety Executive. July 2012) between April 2011 and March 2012.
- The primary risks are associated with lone working, the wide range of skills required of individual employees, high levels of mechanisation and exposure to large numbers of potentially dangerous animals: with 81 people working with livestock being killed over the last 10 years.
- Half of the farmers responding to a recent Health & Safety survey (RUSource Briefing 1568 6th August 2012) had no Health and Safety Policy or arrangements for managing safety in place, and half had never completed a written risk assessment. 30% of farmers indicated that they never gave their employees any Health & Safety training, and a significant proportion did not think that formal training was necessary for carrying out potentially dangerous work activities. This presents significant risks to a new entrant to these businesses unless they have an extensive array of understanding and knowledge of the risks and how to deal with these prior to entering the workplace.
- Specific health and safety risks similarly apply to commercial horticulture businesses, including landscaping, arboriculture and turf management specialisms where lone working with potentially dangerous machinery is commonplace.

3.0 Findings and Best Practice

3.1 Breadth and Depth of Provision

- An essential element of excellence is a sufficient breadth and depth in the curriculum offered. The best land-based colleges offer progression routes across key vocational subjects to give entry and exit points from Entry level through levels 1, 2 and 3, and in most cases to Higher Education. For work-based learners, Level 2 apprenticeships and Level 3 advanced apprenticeships are available. In the best cases, there is strong co-ordination and links between college-based and work-based pathways. For example, a full-time Level 2 Diploma might lead to a Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship.
- The nature of land-based provision has led to a sub-regional offer with the recognition that colleges need sufficient economy of scale to offer a suitable depth and breadth of provision. As a result, learners will travel considerable distances to participate in provision where excellence is on offer. This puts pressure on colleges in terms of transport arrangements and the need for residential accommodation but in the best cases, there is a return on investment in terms of success rates, positive progression and satisfied employers.
- Where economies of scale allow, land-based colleges offer optional pathways. For example, the Level 3 Diploma and Extended Diploma are used for progression to either employment, or Higher Education. In some colleges a more vocational pathway is available with units and modules chosen according to the planned destination. In the case of the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Animal Management, the progression is at one extreme, employment in the related retail sector through to training as a Veterinary Surgeon at University. The demands of these extremes are very different and colleges seek to meet these needs through a range of alternative pathways.
- Many land-based colleges have harnessed the true intent of the Qualification Credit Framework, despite this not always meeting the requirements of funding and inspection arrangements, where the “nesting” of qualifications is not encouraged. Some colleges use initial assessment carefully and where an element of doubt is identified, a learner might be steered towards a lower level, a vocational pathway, or in some cases, a shorter Level 3 qualification such as the Subsidiary Diploma as a pre-cursor to the longer Extended Diploma. This gives less academic learners an earlier opportunity to progress to employment: and for many allows them to achieve early success and as a consequence, the degree of motivation necessary to achieve their full potential.
- The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) acknowledges that the land-based sector has a greater proportion of “Higher Education in Further Education” than in any other sector (over 40% of all land based HE is delivered by FECs). This provision often has a strong vocational flavour given that land-based colleges are able to offer access to a much broader range of physical resources than their HEI counterparts. Whilst this requires careful management to ensure academic rigour, the opportunities for vocational learners to progress into Level 5 and 6 qualifications are often greater than elsewhere and in some subjects, this pathway is very well used.

- Where landbased Colleges have diversified to offer courses in other curriculum areas, a similar philosophy has been adopted offering exception opportunities for transfer between study modes and progression to higher education.

3.2 Best Practice Examples

At a number of land-based colleges, the progression routes are very comprehensive. At Entry Level, programmes which develop literacy and numeracy, as well as basic work skills are often delivered within the context of a subject such as agriculture, horticulture or caring for animals. This allows progression to mainstream programme in a vocational area at Level 1 or 2. In some cases these will progress to even higher levels although it is more normal for the progression to be into employment or sideways onto an apprenticeship.

For some learners, progression from Level 2 to Level 3 is a big step so in these cases, careful consideration is given to the appropriate next step. In many cases a programme with a lower number of units is the best way of supporting success. The learner often progresses to a more complex programme once this is completed.

At Level 3, progression to Higher Education is a popular option. These learners find themselves working alongside students who have progressed from the A Level route although the more vocational approach sometimes is enhanced through additional science units to aid this progression.

Increasingly, colleges are looking to develop a specialist progression pathway which offers both depth and breadth. It is commonplace for a learner to commence on a work-based programme and progress to something more college based and academic. In other cases, progression from a Level 2 college based course in Agriculture, to a work-based apprenticeship at Level 3 make for a logical and challenging progression route.

Other practice includes the use of additional qualifications at a different level to the main qualification. On animal management programmes, learners are offered units from agriculture qualifications as a means of broadening their career options. The majority of land-based colleges offer specific health and safety qualification to stimulate safe working in what is a very dangerous industry

3.3 Landex Recommendations

- That good quality in vocational training and education will offer comprehensive progression routes and pathways which are designed around learner needs and capabilities.

4.0 Vocationally Specific Qualifications

- In the best vocational curriculum, careful consideration is given to the needs of industry and employers in terms of the specific skills and experience that an employee needs before entering the workplace.
- As a consequence of the Health & Safety issues identified under 2.3 above, new entrants to land based industries often require, as a precursor to employment, certificates of competence with a health and safety focus. For example a learner wishing to follow a career as an arborist (tree surgeon) will need, in addition to an understanding of trees and horticulture, specific certificates for the maintenance

and operation of a chainsaw and for climbing and safely dismantling trees. Without these 'licenses to practice' they will be unlikely to gain suitable employment.

- Many land-based colleges as well as offering these certificates of competence as free standing qualifications will add them to long qualifications followed either full or part-time. Whilst some of these will be funded by government, it is recognised by adult learners that they will need to make their own contribution if they are to secure these passports to employment. From a college perspective, these qualifications are challenging and require small groups, highly specialised resources, and experienced staff; all of which come at a significant cost.
- Colleges are careful in how they plan these additional qualifications. In many cases, the learner will wait until they are eighteen before they start the necessary training (on account of legal requirements). Some colleges have found that too earlier delivery of certificates of competence can lead to poor retention in so far as learners will use their "ticket" as a quick entry into employment, limiting their range of skills and opportunities for progression. The best colleges strike the balance between early success and the resulting motivational effect of achieving short qualifications by using certificates such as first aid, with the use of vocationally specific certificates such as pesticide applications, as an incentive for those learners who have participated well in the rest of the course.
- There is no doubt that a suite of short vocationally specific courses linked to relevant qualifications is very effective in preparing learners for progression into employment. This approach is used beyond land-based subjects with, for example, sports learners following qualifications in coaching, outdoor pursuits, first aid, etc.
- The importance of industry recognised qualifications and associated awarding bodies should not be underestimated.

4.1 Best Practice Examples

In very specialist subjects such as arboriculture it is very important that learners have the qualifications demanded by industry. These "tickets" for employment such as Chainsaw operation and other health and safety critical elements are vital to progression although careful planning is needed in order that learners do not use the achievement of these qualifications as their ticket for immediate progression to employment. Colleges handle this carefully and often use these essential qualifications as an incentive to motivate learners and to recognise achievement and success.

A range of other best practice examples exist such as: learner completing training and assessment in the safe use of pesticides, and/or fork lift driving assessment, prior to leaving college to ensure employability. Those who work with animals often complete qualifications in the safe use of veterinary medicines. Feedback from employers on these specific qualifications often indicates that these are views as being as important as the main qualification because of the limitations of work which can be undertaken without them.

4.2 Landex Recommendations

- That good quality vocational training and education will reflect a range of qualifications that meet the needs of industry.
- That the colleges use these very well as part of a strategy to motivate and support learners

5.0 Industry Involvement and Commercial Enterprise

- The land-based sector has a strong record in involving industry in the design and validation of qualifications, and in the governance of colleges. At the highest level, specialist input from industry is maintained through their involvement on college Boards of Governors. In merged colleges, the land-based element is often represented through a sub-committee or specific representatives. The best of these will maintain routine engagement with those responsible for curriculum delivery and will make sure the industry voice is maintained.
- During October 2011, Landex carried out a survey across its membership of 36 colleges and universities in England in order to establish the current levels of engagement by members of landbased industries in College Governance.
- Responses to the survey were received from all 36 members. The responses showed that 174 college governors were actively engaged with landbased industries, 106 of whom represented agriculture businesses. 53 of these governors currently own farming businesses. The College with the greatest expertise at Board level had 18 governors from landbased industries, with most independent colleges having more than 5 governors with expertise in at least one area of the landbased curriculum.
- All independent colleges that offer agriculture programmes have representatives of the agricultural industry on their Boards, only 3 of the 'merged' institutions do not (although 1 is currently in the process of recruiting a landbased governor).
- Other sectors of the landbased industry that showed significant representation were horticulture (22 governors), equine (15 governors) and environmental conservation (14 governors). There were 7 veterinary/animal management, and 5 landbased engineering representatives amongst college governors, together with a small number of game, wildlife and fishery management specialists.
- Many colleges work closely with employer groups and individuals to determine the makeup of programmes and courses. At Foundation Degree level it is an essential requirement that employers are engaged in determining the content and character of the programme. Most specialist land based providers have industrial liaison panels for each of their curriculum areas that work closely with teaching staff to ensure that programmes meet the needs of the industries that they serve. Many colleges also use staff involved in the delivery of work-based learning to liaise with employers and gather their views.
- In one example, the term dates for a two year agriculture programme were changed from the traditional academic year to create opportunities for learners to engage in work experience at a time of year when it would add greatest value.

However, many employers are difficult to engage and are largely content to “leave it to the experts” to put together a suitable programme. In other cases, the employers engaged are those with the time to support college’s employer engagement arrangements, or those who are more vocal, often having “an axe to grind”. Although the land-based sector is probably better than most in terms of employer engagement, it still needs to do more in this respect. Many colleges go some way to overcoming this through part-time employment of industry experienced specialists as teachers.

- Most specialist land-based colleges, whether merged or independent, retain a significant element of commercial enterprise such as farms, nurseries, garden centres, livery businesses, retail outlets and veterinary practices, which often operate through business arrangements with commercial partners. Many colleges have very productive relationships with national organisations and offer bespoke provision designed to meet the vocational training needs of specific industry sectors. This is beneficial in terms of exposing all learners to best industry practice and show-casing the vocational career opportunities available. Examples include:
 - Horticulture and Environmental training for the National Trust.
 - Business start-up units for land-based and related industry.
 - Apprenticeship programmes for the suppliers of machinery and specialist technology.
 - National contracts for training across specialist sectors.
 - Co-hosting conservation and voluntarily sector organisations

- Many land-based colleges diversify their income streams with some achieving as much as one-third of turnover (circa £8million/annum) through commercial enterprise (including the provision of residential accommodation). Learners with be engaged in a very broad range of activities which support their development of vocational expertise and commercial acumen. For example:
 - Working alongside staff, under close supervision, on farms, estates and horticultural units
 - Running shows and events for equestrian and other sports
 - Supporting charities such as “Riding for the Disabled” by assisting disabled riders and by arranging ambitious fund raising events.
 - Assisting in the management of outdoor leisure activities such as commercial shoots
 - Running dog shows and agility courses
 - Hosting school visits and coaching young people in sports.
 - Work alongside agencies and charities to support the environment

- For learners on Entry level programmes, use is made of social enterprise to develop learner’s social and vocational skills. Simple tasks such as growing fruit and vegetables, or selling eggs are very effective for learners at this level.

- Colleges use their commercial enterprises as a means of show-casing best practice for learners to follow. For example, college farm data and information on costing, outputs, inputs, and profitability are used as live examples during both business management and husbandry classes. This is very effective in developing learners’ abilities to apply learning to the vocational sector.

- A few merged colleges do not currently have sufficient resources or commercial enterprise on campus. Whilst this can take away from the overall quality of the learners experience and prevent opportunities for immediate response to commercial opportunities, it can be, and often is replaced by very productive relationships with local industry. When used well, this can provide learners with access to the very best commercial practice.

5.1 Best Practice Examples

CAVTL Commissioners were able to see for themselves that good quality vocational training and education will include industry best practice. In Agriculture for example, the commercial farm manager, whilst focusing on profitability of the commercial enterprise, will make sure that learners are given every possible opportunity to link their learning to commercial best practice. When dealing with commerce, learners need to deal with commercial inputs such as veterinary surgeons or industry specialists and in the best examples, learners will engage with these individuals as part of their routine teaching and learning. This will help learners to develop their respect for commerce and commercialism but more than anything, it will enliven their learning.

In many land-based colleges, use of the college farm or other commercial enterprises for project work, such as devising feeding programmes for beef cattle or pigs and using college stock to support commercial trials is an embedded feature. The use of employers on advisory groups, or to verify assignments, or to help with mock interviews is a good example of best practice.

Farm and commercial unit information readily available to learners through a 'farm information room' or virtual equivalent is often used very effectively by being incorporated into the ongoing assignment programme.

5.2 Landex Recommendations

- That good quality vocational training and education will encompass a proportion of commercial input from specialists who are engaged in industry best practice and are current in their practice

6.0 Good Quality Work-Experience

- An essential component of a good quality vocational programme is a period of meaningful and high quality work experience. However in view of the specific Health and Safety issues involved, specialist Land-based providers give careful thought to this with a variety of approaches being used. These include the following:
 - On a programme of one year's duration, a day or more each week may be spent in industry, and this can sometimes be linked to part-time employment. When combined, this can sometimes represent a significant period of work-experience over the course of the year. Some colleges are concerned by this approach in that one day per week is not considered to be enough to emulate the rigours of employment and ensuring appropriate close supervision can sometimes prove difficult.

- On longer programmes, the work experience is often for a lengthy continuous period which might be linked to a college vacation period. This provides an enhanced period of work-experience or employment and is effective in emulating full-time work. However, many colleges find it difficult to secure the variety and number of work-experience placements necessary to meet demand, particularly on those courses where numbers are high.
- Most colleges make use of their own commercial enterprises to provide closely supervised work-experience. This is particularly effective for those learners who need additional support and coaching and the relatively “safe and protected” environment of the college can offer: something unique which can be particularly effective in supporting the vocational development of weaker learners. This reinforces the value of commercial enterprises available on college campuses and Landex, as a membership organisation, regards these resources as an important criterion for membership.
- It was traditional in the land-based sector for learners following certain Level 3 qualifications (currently the Extended Diploma, traditionally the National Diploma) to participate in a three year programme in which the middle year was spent in industry (The programmes were particularly common in Agriculture, Horticulture and Land-based Engineering). This sandwich approach has been discontinued by most colleges, partly because a two year Extended Diploma provides parity with A-Levels in terms of entry to Higher Education, and because better use of the whole calendar year enables appropriate experience to be gained alongside the taught curriculum. It is also difficult to provide appropriately supervised experience for relatively inexperienced learners in industries that are dominated by microbusinesses.

6.1 Best Practice Examples

One college has gone to great lengths to understand the impact of the annual growing cycle in arranging work experience. This has led to a change in terms dates so that learners are based with employers when they can contribute well to the placement and above all, gain more from a learning and development perspective. In another cases, every effort is made to complete college based study by April, in order that learners can benefit from a placement over the summer terms and if necessary into the summer vacation period. In effect, this leads to a placement in industry approaching six months in duration. This is vital in terms of progression to employment at the end of their programme.

Most specialist land-based colleges ensure that some key elements of the overall programme are completed before work experience. These include health and safety topics, perhaps fork lift training. Most colleges leave some key elements of the overall programme until after the work experience so as to encourage learner to complete their full course and not to be tempted away by the lure of immediate employment.

6.2 Landex Recommendations

- That well designed and good quality work-experience is an essential element of vocational teaching and learning.
- That the traditional academic year and terms dates should not be a barrier to the provision of good quality work-experience.

7.0 Securing Appropriate Teaching Staff

- Land-based colleges work hard to secure the services of good quality teaching staff. In some subjects there is a good supply of very well qualified graduates and the challenge for these is to develop appropriate pedagogic skills and vocational competence. In other disciplines many teaching staff still enter the profession through a technical route and acquire the necessary pedagogic skills in service.
- Some land based colleges offer well established induction, initial training and CPD provision in house for all their staff: others take advantage of the service of external providers.
- Most staff across land-based colleges are expected to participate in continuing professional development and through the resources available at most college good opportunities to remain current are offered through involvement with commercial enterprises and by participating in shows and events.
- In some subjects, particularly the more specialist areas, there is insufficient volume of teaching to warrant a full time teacher. This gap is filled by part-time tutors, many of whom run their own business alongside teaching activity. This brings a very good level of currency from which learners benefit. In some cases, these tutors may lack “technical teaching skills” but the compensation comes from the ability of these teachers to engage with learners on up-to-date technologies and techniques. Despite this, some college experience difficulties in securing the services of good quality staff on account of the salaries being paid in industry being far higher than many colleges can afford.

7.1 Best Practice Examples

Specialist colleges adopt a range of approaches but many have identified that it is good to “grow your own” so it is commonplace for staff to be employed as technicians, demonstrators and instructors which all act as a stepping stone to a full-time teaching role. In the more vocational areas such as animal management where there are commercial facilities, these staff are employed to manage the resources and animals at the same time as supporting learners through the management of practical activities and routine duties through which learners care for animals. In the best cases, there are very good links made between this practical activity and the programme of learning with these staff contributing to assessment and learner progress.

7.2 Landex Recommendations

- That the learning experience for a vocational learner should where possible involve contact with a wide range of staff who will contribute to the overall learning

experience. The teaching staff will manage the overall pedagogic process but delivery should in many cases involve a much wider range of staff with complementary skills.

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- That the challenge of recruiting teaching staff with appropriate skills and expertise is a major issue for the learning and skills sector, and meeting this challenge is essential to the success of learners following a vocational pathway. This challenge requires a higher profile to ensure that staff are available to equip learners with an appropriate range of vocational competences as well as theoretical knowledge.

8.0 Curriculum Design and Delivery

- The best land-based colleges give considerable thought to the planning of the curriculum and associated assessment. Although the national fixation with success rates has sometimes been perceived as a barrier and some colleges and tutors have tended towards “teaching to the exam” and making assessment the central focus, some have been very creative in how they have arranged the curriculum so that it focussed on developing vocational skills and expertise. This remains challenging in that too much emphasis has been placed on preparing learners to pass exams rather than developing the skills needed for employment. A range of best practice is evident across land-based college, including:
 - Careful choice of awarding bodies to ensure sufficient rigour in assessment, methods of assessment which are meaningful, and assessment approach which make for more efficient use of staff time. Landex continues to work with its members to introduce assessment arrangements which are of the same high quality across the country.
 - Some colleges have carefully considered the balance between theory and practice. On mainstream programmes, there is a greater proportion of practice at Level 2 although this is often less at Level 3. A split of 70:30, theory to practice is not uncommon and the pressure to gain qualifications is frequently cited as the reason why the balance is so much towards theory.
 - Some colleges use initial assessment very thoroughly to identify, not only learners levels of literacy and numeracy, but practical aptitude. On many programmes a “taster day” is commonplace. This is used to maintain learner interest in the college and programme as well as identifying practical abilities and whether there will be a need for additional practical support. Colleges often offer additional skills sessions in the likes of machinery operation or animal handling – particularly where health and safety is an essential element.
 - At levels up to and including Level 2, it is commonplace for a fully practical and vocational approach to be adopted. This requires colleges to be especially creative in how they design assessment but for learners of a more vocational aptitude, this is proving effective in maintain interest and motivation.
 - The land-based sector is involved in some aspects of world skills such as landscaping and floristry and in some colleges these competitions are used to great effect by encouraging learners to participate in national

competitions and hence enhance their vocational skills. Whilst not everyone can be successful, these initiatives are helpful in developing teamwork and enthusiasm for work.

- Some programmes lend themselves to work-based projects – sometimes utilising the colleges own commercial enterprises but often through employer partnerships. The best colleges will involve Level 3 learners in management projects working alongside industry to develop solutions for implementation. Other projects might be of a more practical nature such as landscaping of play areas in the community, or producing floral displays for local public events. It should be noted that two Landex member colleges were involved in preparing the floral arrangements for Olympic 2012 medal presentations.
- Some programmes have been designed around the needs of industry with a combination of college attendance linked to work-experience blocks. Some very high profile relationships exist such as those with the National Trust, Professional Football and Rugby Clubs, the Lawn Tennis Association, Conservation Bodies, etc.
- Enrichment is viewed as an important component of the best programmes. Trips and visits, often abroad, and sometimes as far afield as America and the Antipodes are not uncommon. Whilst these are complex to arrange, they are no doubt of great value in developing learners' commercial and vocational awareness.

8.1 Best Practice Examples

The concept of a programme of learning as opposed to a learning aim or qualification is one which many land-based colleges have already addressed. The best practice examples above are a small sample of the best practice on offer across the land-based sector. In some cases, these approaches have been a brave move and high risk in terms of success for the main qualification but in terms of employability and progression to employment, have proven very effective.

Many land based colleges have included extra hours in their programme of learning in addition to those on their academic timetable, to ensure learners gain the skills and experience they need to be employable. For example, early morning and evening, and weekend duties are commonplace. These aspects may not be fully captured by external inspection but are nevertheless most important to learners' futures.

8.2 Landex Recommendations

- That colleges and other providers be encouraged to focus upon programmes of learning which lead to progression either to industry or higher level programmes, rather than solely focussing upon success in qualifications.
- That Ofsted and regulators make assessments against the range of concepts above and celebrate the success of colleges in designing high quality programmes of learning which lead to good progression rates into employment and/or higher education.

8.3 Commercial Lessons for the Learning and Skills Sector

- Although most General Further Education (GFE) Colleges offer a similar focus on developing vocational competence through training restaurants, commercial hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, and travel and tourism agencies, these are not always runs with the same commercial focus and scale as those commercial enterprises found in the land-based sector. Most Landex member colleges will employ staff with a commercial focus whilst others, as an alternative, will place high expectations on teaching staff to manage commercial enterprises.
- The land-based sector has a good record in running these commercial enterprises on business principles, at the same time as maintaining an appropriate educational focus. This requirement is reflected in the terms and conditions enjoyed by those staff responsible for commercial enterprises. Land-based colleges usually operate for 52 weeks of the year, often 24 hours/day, on account of the need to tend for plants and animals. GFE Colleges do not always have staff with appropriate skills and terms of employment to deliver the same level of commercial focus.
- Whilst it is commonplace for land-based colleges to invest monies in land and other commercial enterprises, and it accepted that these specialist colleges have the skills and resources to manage these successfully, the same cannot be said of GFE where investment in resources such as sporting facilities (which offer a tremendous teaching resource for learners involved in hospitality, leisure studies, sports studies and business management) is often met by ridicule and criticism. In too many cases these assets do not operate according to a commercially focused business plan with insufficient thought being given to the long term benefits. In this respect, GFE could learn a great deal from the land-based sector.

8.4 Best Practice Examples

The best colleges employ staff with a role around the development and use of commercial enterprise as part of the curriculum. These staff will need to have an interest in how this is used to support the learning process and finding staff with the right skills set is a key challenge. These staff need to have a role in supporting teaching and learning but without the restrictions imposed by a formal timetable so that they are able to remain at the cutting edge commercially, and hence able to ensure that the commercial enterprise adds value to the learning process, without diverting educational income into the subsidy of demonstration units and away from more formal teaching and learning.

9.0 Key factors contributing to high quality teaching, learning and assessment.

- The following judgements have been extracted from Ofsted inspection reports for the three years commencing September 2009. All of this suggests much very good practice across the colleges forming the Landex membership. Much of this practice is founded in the land-based sectors focus on developing a good quality vocational curriculum.

9.1 Teaching and Learning

- Highly skilled and well qualified vocational tutors with recent commercial experience are frequently cited as having a significant impact upon the development of learners' occupational skills. Words such as "excellent industry knowledge", vocational credibility" and "regular contact with industry" are often used.
- The routine linking of classroom theory to practical learning activities together with commercial business is viewed as a key factor in the best examples. Terms such as "devise realistic practical tasks to ensure that learners work towards the standards expected in industry" are used
- Land-based colleges frequently enjoy very good quality facilities for learning and extensive estates and in the best examples, the highly effective use of these is judged as a key factor contributing to high quality learning.
- In many colleges, information and learning technology has been harnessed well to enhance the learning experience and this is particularly useful where it is further linked to the college's commercial enterprises such as animal health records and webcams.
- In the more practical lessons where health and safety is critical, small group sizes combined with the effective use of technical demonstrations, peer observation and frequent opportunities for learners to practice skills is vital to good quality learning.
- Learners make better progress and their needs are best met where teachers engage learners in a broad range of activities, used well, so that learners enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Where teachers go to great lengths to understand the needs of their learners and plan programmes carefully in line with individual needs, this is effective in leading to good learner progress. There is reference to "Lessons and schemes of work are well planned" in a few of the better examples
- The best teachers are confident and skilled in arranging a lively and interesting range of activities which meet the differing needs and abilities of learners. Some of the best examples refer to teachers technical teaching skills such as the effective use of group work, nominated Q&A, and the confident delivery style.
- Where learners are involved in college open days, events and shows (such as those with dogs and horses), these are often cited as being best practice. In addition to this, the best examples frequently involve learners in experiencing competitive entry such as the Skills Olympics.
- The use of external speakers and technical visits, including the use of work-experience is viewed as pivotal in enhancing the learner experience and long term progression

10.2 Assessment

- For the most part, assessment is viewed as good with no cases where it was deemed inadequate. There appears to be no link made between the assessment process and the high success rates gained on some programmes which suggests that Ofsted are not making this obvious link.
- Assessment planning is frequently strong with teachers planning assessment schedules carefully and a broad range of assessment activities designed around industry specific tasks which help learners to progress into higher education or employment.
- Assessment is viewed as generally fair and rigorous with detailed written feedback and the correction of mistakes routinely taking place. In the best examples a key factor is cited as “the majority of learners know what is needed to improve and achieve higher grades.
- A key factor in one of the more successful colleges was the judgement that “assignment briefs are well laid out and clearly show learners what is to be done and how high grades can be achieved”.
- In some cases the concept of formative assessment is used with comments such as “assessment is used well in practical lessons to help learners further develop their skills.
- In the best cases, there is a good link between the outcome of assessments and good quality target setting which helps learners to improve their performance and grades. In one good case, “learners are set clear targets; monitoring of their performance and progress is accurate and kept up-to-date