



Department of  
Education

**Shaping the future**

# Western Australian College of Agriculture - Cunderdin

## Public School Review

# Public School Review

## Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed by the Department of Education's Public School Accountability directorate. A review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General about the performance of public schools in delivering high quality education to students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the Principal and staff with their improvement planning.

Initially conducted on a three-year cycle, subsequent reviews are determined to occur on a one, three or five year timeframe.

The Principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence from the school. Information to be validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the Public School Review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the Principal and the regional Director of Education.

## Expectations of schools

The Statement of Expectation (the Statement) makes clear and public the expectations and responsibilities of schools and the Department in student achievement and progress.

The Statement is between; the Department of Education, represented by the Director General; the school, represented by the Principal; and is noted by the school council/board, represented by the Chair.

The Statement sets out the expectations of Principals in relation to the delivery of the 2020-2024 strategic directions *Every student, every classroom, every day*, and *Building on Strength*.

The Statement will underpin each school's strategic planning and self-assessment and will form part of the school's Public School Review, as well as the Professional Performance Review of the Principal.

## Public School Review – The Standard

A Standard has been developed across the domains of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework to describe essential indicators of performance. The selection of the indicators is based on literature research and historical reviews of school performance in Western Australian public schools.

The purpose is to better ensure that judgements about student performance are standardised and objective. Indicators describe what is evident in schools functioning 'as expected' within each domain.

The Standard defines the expected level of school performance. Judgements are made in relation to the Standard. External validation is also based on evidence presented relating to the Standard.

For further information or resource in alternative formats for people with accessibility needs, please contact [PublicSchoolAccountability.PublicSchoolReview@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:PublicSchoolAccountability.PublicSchoolReview@education.wa.edu.au)

## Context

Western Australian College of Agriculture – Cunderdin was first opened in 1984. Comprising of over 2000 hectares and situated approximately 160 kilometres from the Perth central business district, the college is well located in the Wheatbelt Education Region to attract a range of students. In 2012, the college was granted Independent Public School status.

The college supports students with aspirations in horticulture, farming, university entrance and trade entrance. Facilities at the college include a mechanical workshop, trade centre, tennis courts and shearing sheds.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 1004 (decile 5). Currently, there are 135 students enrolled in Year 11 and Year 12.

The College Board has a governance role and a high profile within the college and wider community. The college is also supported by a Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C).

## School self-assessment validation

The Principal submitted a comprehensive and rigorous school self-assessment.

The following aspects of the school's self-assessment process are confirmed:

- The Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) summary outlined the current context of the college.
- Leaders described the Public School Review process as an opportunity to prioritise an extensive review of the progress and performance of the college.
- The timing of the Public School Review aligned with the Business Plan 2022-2024 and planned actions identified, which contribute directly into the new plan and next steps for the college.
- Consultation with the College Board, Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and the P&C contributed to the ESAT submission. Members and representatives each shared with the review team, aspects of their interactions with the college during the validation visit.
- Leaders worked collaboratively in collating the entries and evidence provided in the ESAT submission.
- A number of staff and students participated in conversations throughout the validation visit, each providing further elaboration to support aspects of the ESAT submission.

The following recommendation is made:

- Utilise the Standard and the ESAT for ongoing school self-assessment practices between review cycles.

## Public School Review

### Relationships and partnerships

The unique environmental context of an agricultural college with residential facilities, creates strong relationships and partnerships with families and the wider community providing sustained benefits for the college and its students.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- High levels of collaboration exist between staff within each unique management area across the college. A commitment to being more connected with each division is being prioritised.
- The college has established multiple sustainable partnerships with industry, government, local business and further education institutions that enhance the learning experience of students.
- A conscious effort to provide more effective communication across the college is acknowledged by families, staff and students.
- The AAC and College Board advocate highly for the college and ensure good governance of the highly complex organisation.
- The P&C acknowledge the capacity of the college to meet the individual needs of students. They are actively identifying ways to gain more parent involvement.
- The Annual Open Day provides an opportunity for parents, prospective students and community members to observe first-hand the students' knowledge, skills and achievements.

#### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Progress the implementation of structures and opportunities for 'Class', 'Trade', 'Farm' and 'Residential' to work collaboratively to establish consistency of expectations across the college.
- Ensure the roles and responsibilities of the AAC and College Board are clearly articulated to members.

### Learning environment

The agricultural learning environment provides wide-ranging opportunities for students to actively engage in experiences that meet their individual needs and areas of interest within the agricultural industry.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The highly engaging environment sees students reside and immersed in agricultural life. Students described positively the care the college extends to them and the opportunities they are provided.
- The student services team, with representation across the college management areas, has a collective understanding of individual student needs and work in collaboration to support identified students.
- The college has prioritised health and wellbeing with the appointment of a student wellbeing coordinator to progress the whole-school plan which is currently in development.
- The Trade and Farm staff are building strong relationships with students through their 'young adult' ethos. Students often spend time beyond the school day working alongside the staff.
- The college values 'student voice' and engages students in authentic opportunities to contribute in decision making.

#### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Progress efforts to become increasingly culturally responsive through existing partnerships with the local Aboriginal community.
- Finalise the development of the strategic plan in the support of student wellbeing and students at educational risk.

## Leadership

The college structure requires leaders with diverse knowledge and skills to work collaboratively to create the best educational provision for students. A collective commitment to the college vision and direction is evident.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The Principal, manager corporate services, associate principal and the residential and farm managers oversee the day to day running of the college ensuring the effectiveness of infrastructure, finance, staffing, policy, procedures and occupational safety and health decision making.
- Business plan priorities align to the unique contextual needs of students in an agricultural setting. Consultation with the key stakeholders ensures expert advice is factored into strategic and operational decisions.
- Consistency in operational planning across the college is driving the actions of staff. Opportunities to come together as a whole staff is maintaining connectedness between the diverse staff roles.
- The college is undergoing a review of processes to build staff capacity and leadership opportunities. Second-in-charge roles are nurturing future leaders across the college.
- A senior staff leadership day facilitated by Growth Coaching International provided time to reflect on their leadership and strengthen working relationships between team members.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Ensure the new business plan is developed strategically through collaboration with staff, consultation with stakeholders, and includes measurable milestones and targets across all elements of the college.
- Differentiate the performance management and professional review processes to meet the needs of the various groups of staff. Ensure these include an aspect that supports college priorities and direction.

## Use of resources

The extent and complexity of financial and resource management cannot be understated at the college. The distinct and specific operational budgets are managed with strong governance and external support.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The college successfully operates three distinct operational budgets (school, farm and residential). Forty per cent of the farm income is returned to the Department annually.
- The Principal, farm manager and manager corporate services work collaboratively to manage the farm enterprise budget. The AAC is a reliable avenue for advice.
- The Finance Committee is representative of all areas across the college. Members have a good understanding of financial and resource management practices.
- The college prioritises funds for the safety and wellbeing of students ensuring targeted initiatives and student characteristics funding supports the students for which it is intended.
- The college is doing everything it can to overcome human resource issues, seeking support and advice from the Department's Agricultural Education directorate. Workforce planning demonstrates the ongoing needs of the college with particular attention to the professional learning needs of staff.

### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Refine financial management procedures, processes and accountability across all cost centre managers to achieve consistency in budget management.

## Teaching quality

The motto 'all staff are teachers in their own right' demonstrates the collective belief across the college that teachers, trainer and assessors, residential and other staff, all contribute to the learning experience of students.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- A shared belief about teaching and learning is developing across the college with genuine buy in from staff, many of whom are not trained teachers, to establish consistent practices that suit all disciplines.
- Student choice features highly in shaping learning programs. Students described 'wanting to do something' in agriculture to having specific aspirations based on the opportunity provided to engage in their passion.
- Students are empowered to own and monitor their achievement and progress through engaging directly with the WACE<sup>2</sup> tracker, training plans and trade progress records.
- Students at educational risk are identified and supported through targeted intervention particularly in literacy to achieve their OLNA<sup>3</sup>.
- 'Class' teachers are developing a consistent approach to instruction and participate in classroom observation and feedback.
- The college is addressing STEM<sup>4</sup> through an initiative (Launch process) which provides student a framework to tackle a problem. Students successfully use this process in designing projects in the Trades area.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Strengthen teaching and learning across the college by exploring elements of consistent practice that would contribute to student learning regardless of the discipline area.
- Increase the focus on data literacy to inform teaching practice.

## Student achievement and progress

All students are on individual pathways guided by their interests and talents. Each are provided autonomy over the direction of their studies spending increased time in their areas of choice.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The number of WACE eligible students is higher than like schools and the State. One hundred per cent of these students achieved their WACE in 2020.
- Eighty-nine per cent of Year 12 students achieved three or more VET<sup>5</sup> qualifications in 2020, 40 per cent of which were Certificate III qualifications.
- An ATAR<sup>6</sup> improvement plan has been developed in 2021 to increase ATAR results. Students are actively engaged in setting goals for improvement.
- One hundred per cent of students enrolled in Certificate II in Agriculture, Automotive, Construction and Furniture Making achieved the qualification in 2020.
- Students participate and achieve highly in awards in a number of extra-curricular competitions. The 2021 Royal Show and Farms Skills competition successes are examples of many opportunities proudly shared by students with the review team.
- The college had three students shortlisted as finalists for the 2021 SCSA<sup>7</sup> VET Awards and a student was further shortlisted as a finalist for the 2021 Beazley Medal: VET.

### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Review the impact of, and continue with the implementation of, the ATAR improvement plan.

## Reviewers

Vicki McKeown  
**Director, Public School Review**

Clare Roser  
**Principal, Western Australian College of Agriculture  
- Narrogin  
Peer Reviewer**

## Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse the commendations and recommendations made by the review team regarding your school's performance.

Your next school review is scheduled for Term 4, 2024.



Melesha Sands  
**Deputy Director General, Schools**

---

## References

- 1 Students at educational risk
- 2 Western Australian Certificate of Education
- 3 Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
- 4 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- 5 Vocational Education and Training
- 6 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
- 7 Schools Curriculum and Standards Authority