



Department of  
Education

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Public education  
**A world of opportunities**

# Western Australian College of Agriculture Harvey

## Public School Review

November 2020



# PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

## Purpose

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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 its 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 school review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the principal, the chair of the school council/board and the regional executive director.

## Expectations of schools

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For all Western Australian public schools, expectations are set out in either:

- the Delivery and Performance Agreement, which is an agreement between the Department (represented by the Director General), school (represented by the principal) and school board (represented by the school board chair); or
- the Principals' Statement of Expectations

together with the Funding Agreement for Schools.

## Public School Review – The Standard

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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.



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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

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The Western Australian College of Agriculture – Harvey is located in the foothills of the Darling Scarp. In a high rainfall zone, approximately 145 kilometres south of Perth and 35 kilometres north of Bunbury, the college is in the Southwest Education Region.

Following initial operations as the 'Agricultural Wing' of Harvey Agricultural District High School, the college opened as a separate entity in 1998 and is now run across two sites. It is a 940ha working farm and educational facility offering a wide variety of studies and industry training with an emphasis on agriculture. With access to a considerable range of agricultural industry and recreational opportunities, the college provides a range of Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) certificates to equip students with a variety of work readiness knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Currently there are 168 students from Year 10 to Year 12 enrolled at the college, most of whom are residential students. While attracting students from throughout the State, the majority come from the greater Bunbury region.

The college has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 1018 (decile 4).

In 2013, the college gained Independent Public School status. The College Board assists in setting the strategic direction and has input into the development and implementation of the college's business plan in addition to monitoring progress against agreed targets. A high level of parental input supports the college.

The functions of the College Board are complemented by the farm operational expertise of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC).

## School self-assessment validation

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

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

- The Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) submission provided an open and honest account of the school and community context in relation to the improvement agenda under new leadership.
- The analysis of evidence was appropriate and supported a genuine understanding of the college's performance.
- There was alignment between evidence provided, the analysis of performance and planned actions for improvement.
- The college visit yielded detailed information that added value to the school self-assessment and assisted with validation.
- A shared understanding among staff of the value of self-assessment was obvious.
- A culture of reflection and continuous improvement using a strong evidence base was apparent.
- Staff had knowledge of what had been contributed to the ESAT.
- A number of students, parents and community members representing the College Board and advisory groups engaged openly in the validation visit, providing insights that enhanced the review process.

The following recommendation is made:

- Extend the opportunity for staff and the College Board to contribute comments to the ESAT to enhance ownership of, and commitment to, the school self-assessment process.

## Public School Review

Relationships and partnerships	
<p>The college is developing a culture where staff are committed to a unified purpose and understand their role in the success of students individually and the college collectively. This is enhanced by the broader involvement of advisory groups such as the College Board and AAC.</p>	
Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with a wide range of industry groups complements work with students and the college adding value to opportunities offered.</li> <li>• Recognition of the value of partnerships is evident in relationships with local community groups including Harvey sports clubs and schools and through students volunteering at the community dinner.</li> <li>• Strong connections between the College Board and AAC ensure effective governance and strategic advice. Both are actively engaged and possess a high level of understanding of their roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• The requirement for industry involvement as a RTO<sup>1</sup> is assisted by advice on maintaining industry currency of equipment and techniques from the Trades Advisory Group comprised of industry representatives.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce staff understanding of their role in performance improvement through college-wide approaches to teaching and learning and formalised collaboration across departments.</li> </ul>

Learning environment	
<p>An inclusive, caring and safe college culture supports the students to develop as independent learners in an orderly, calm and stable environment. Well-established operational routines enhanced by a broad variety of opportunities add value to the student learning experience.</p>	
Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A supportive learning environment is enhanced by the implementation of consistent expectations and strategies to manage attendance, behaviour and engagement.</li> <li>• The care and safety of students in the residence is prioritised through supervisor induction, professional learning and adherence to consistent practices documented in the College Handbook. There are strong links between the residential and day programs.</li> <li>• Learning pathways provide a seamless transition and post-school articulation through a focus on practical skilling with clear outcomes.</li> <li>• A case management approach to students at educational risk ensures their identification, with appropriate support and routine monitoring.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimise staff understanding of factors affecting adolescent development and behaviour. Extend CMS<sup>2</sup> and other professional development opportunities to all instructional staff (including a contextually appropriate version for farm and residential staff).</li> </ul>

## Leadership

Leaders are promoting an organised, structured, aligned and supportive work environment where staff are provided clarity about the purpose for all actions. This is to be accompanied by explicit expectations, support for implementation and accountability.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capable personnel provide authentic leadership. High levels of visibility are complemented by predictably responsible actions.</li> <li>• Transition between the strategic and operational elements of college planning is being modelled effectively by leaders.</li> <li>• The value of leadership practices is enhanced significantly by the unity, trust and respect evident in the current leadership team.</li> <li>• Student voice and advocacy in decision making is valued at the college through roles including; Year 10, 11 and 12 counsellors, Year 12 mentors and dorm monitors. This is enhanced by formal leadership development and representation in decision making forums.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the PLC<sup>3</sup> philosophy in identifying meaningful opportunities for staff to work together to align strategic and operational planning.</li> <li>• Prioritise the capacity building of, and succession planning for, staff through a formalised aspirant program.</li> </ul>

## Use of resources

Strategic and operational resourcing is appropriate to address the priority needs of current students and future directions in this challenging environment. Judicious oversight ensures resource management practices are compliant.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human resourcing includes creative deployment practices within the parameters of industrial awards to maximise student learning opportunities.</li> <li>• Physical resources to accommodate the extensive training, class and residential facilities and equipment, are maintained to functional industry standards.</li> <li>• Rigorous management systems are in place to enable highly effective resource budgeting and deployment.</li> <li>• Budget processes are strategic and intentional in ensuring efficiency.</li> <li>• The manager corporate services plays a key role in strategic resource management and is recognised as a knowledgeable and skilled leader.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue engagement with the Department of Education regarding infrastructure planning and contextual funding mechanisms.</li> <li>• Continue to embed processes for asset management and replacement.</li> </ul>

## Teaching quality

Leaders' expectations are articulated clearly and embraced by staff to drive classroom, farm and trades practice. Staff have high expectations of student performance in each area of delivery aligned to the required curriculum.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College-wide beliefs about effective teaching are a key part of the leadership platform. Staff work consistently to ensure that lessons are authentically aligned to current practice in each field.</li> <li>• Teaching staff are implementing an explicit model of teaching as the first phase of greater consistency and efficacy of delivery in both academic and practical lessons.</li> <li>• Embedded curriculum and post-college pathways are appreciated by students, parents and advisory groups. High levels of success are evident in transition to further education, training and/or employment.</li> <li>• Performance management and development processes have been strategically aligned to the AITSL<sup>4</sup> Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, classroom planning, individual staff goals and the provision of relevant teacher feedback to improve their craft.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate expectations regarding consistent implementation of the explicit teaching model to instruction in all class and training delivery.</li> </ul>

## Student achievement and progress

Staff are developing an understanding of the value of evidence-based decision making. Analysis of student achievement data at the class and college level in the farm, training and academic streams, informs planning.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational pathways ensure student engagement and success. A significant proportion of students (98.9 per cent) complete a high number of Certificate II AQF certificates/subjects.</li> <li>• Student progress at the college is positive as demonstrated by the culmination of OLNA<sup>5</sup> achievement in Year 12.</li> <li>• The attainment rate for the college has been 100 per cent since 2016 as a result of all students completing a Certificate II in Agriculture and all ATAR<sup>6</sup> students gaining a rank of <math>\geq 55</math>.</li> <li>• The Western Australian Certificate of Education achievement rate for the college in 2019 was 90 per cent. This was similar to like schools (91 per cent) and above public schools (88 per cent).</li> <li>• Well-established processes exist for the analysis of achievement data arising from academic performance and qualification completion.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance community understanding of student and college success through comprehensive achievement and destination data tracking.</li> </ul>

## Reviewers

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Brett Hunt  
Director, Public School Review

Stephen Swallow  
Principal, Western Australian  
College of Agriculture - Denmark  
Peer Reviewer

## Endorsement

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

Your next Public School Review is scheduled for Term 4, 2023.



Stephen Baxter  
Deputy Director General, Schools

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## References

- 1 Registered Training Organisation
- 2 Classroom Management Strategies
- 3 Professional Learning Community
- 4 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- 5 Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
- 6 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank