

Frequently Asked Questions for Apprenticeship Food courses at Loughry Campus - September 2026 intake

Q1. How do I apply for a Apprenticeship course?

Applicants must be about to take up or already be in paid employment in an agri-food business in Northern Ireland. The Food and Drink industry is an Economically Important Sector in Northern Ireland and the Apprenticeship programme is also available to adults aged over 24 years.

Applicants must be working a minimum of 21 hours a week.

If you are interested in enrolling on an Apprenticeship programme please speak to your agri-food employer. We welcome enquiries from companies based in Northern Ireland. Applications are made through the employer rather than on an individual basis.

Specific entry requirements for each course are found on our website.

Q2. How do I register onto the ApprenticeshipNI Programme?

Our apprenticeship courses are all run as standard courses. Depending on your eligibility, you will be enrolled as an apprentice through the ApprenticeshipNI Framework and the required administration for this is completed by CAFRE Administrative staff. Eligibility has now broadened to include those working in the private sector, of all ages onto the apprenticeship programme across.

Q2. Where do I get my Unique Learner Number (ULN)?

You will have received your Unique Learner Number through your school. The Unique Learner Number (ULN) is a **10-digit reference number** which is used to access the Personal Learning Record of anyone over the age of 13 involved in UK education or training. If you do not remember it or have mislaid it, please contact your school who will be able to give it to you.

Q3. Are there interviews to get onto a course?

We hold course and career advisory discussions for all Food Apprenticeship courses. The aim of this discussion is to make sure you have applied for the right course, fully understand the entry requirements, including work experience, and answer any questions you may have. The discussion can take place on campus or via video call on Teams.

If you are under 18 years of age you should have a parent(s) or guardian with you. You will receive an email afterwards with an update on your offer – either conditional, unconditional or a decline. Firm offers will only be made when all exam results are available.

Q4. What if I don't come to the careers advisory discussion can I still get on a course?

Attendance at the careers advisory discussion is not compulsory but highly recommended. As long as you fully meet the academic requirements of the course including any additional prerequisites such as work experience then you may still be accepted on the course.

Q5. Do I have to come to one of the campuses for the careers advisory discussion?

In the past we have always invited students to come to the relevant campus for the careers advisory discussion. However, careers advisory discussions can be held over the phone or through a video call.

Q6. How much does it cost to study at CAFRE?

There are no tuition fees for Apprenticeship programmes.

Q7. Can I get on a course if I don't have a GCSE Grade C in English and/or Maths?

Grade Cs in GCSE English Language and Maths or equivalent are required for entry onto Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes.

Applications for the Level 2 course will consider lower grades but students will be required to complete Essential Skills qualifications in the relevant subject in order to bring up their grades during their programme. Where an applicant has never undertaken English Language and/or Mathematics, they may need to attempt these subjects prior in order to receive an offer at CAFRE (ie achieve a minimum of Level 1 Essential Skills / grade D).

Q8. What equivalent qualifications does CAFRE accept instead of GCSEs?

CAFRE accepts a range of qualifications from other awarding bodies as equivalent to GCSEs. However, remember that Grade Cs in English Language and Maths or equivalent are essential for entry on to all of CAFRE courses. If you have a specific enquiry about equivalent qualifications, please contact the relevant Course Manager.

Q9. Can I apply to CAFRE after my Junior Certificate?

No. Students must be studying for or have their Leaving Certificate (Ordinary or Higher, not Foundation) before they can apply to CAFRE. Applied Leaving Certificate is not considered but applicants should contact the Course Manager for further information on alternative qualifications.

Q10. When do courses begin?

Apprenticeships at Loughry Campus normally start teaching in September.

Q11. How are courses delivered?

All CAFRE courses include both classroom and practical learning opportunities. As CAFRE's ethos is 'learning by doing' we want to make sure that you can enjoy the benefits of learning in our state-of-the-art, modern facilities and make the most of your time as a CAFRE student. The nature of our apprenticeship courses allows learners to gain experience and complete assessments in their relevant workplace alongside their study. This can all be contributed towards the learner's portfolio.

Q12. Do I need to purchase anything in advance if I get an offer on a course?

Yes, some courses will require that you purchase specific Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before you come to CAFRE. However, do not purchase anything until you have a definite offer for a place on the course. Once you have accepted the offer you will be informed exactly what PPE you need to purchase.

Course materials and resources will be available on our Virtual Learning Environment – CAFRE online. Although desktop computers with internet access are available for use on campus, we recommend that you bring your own device. Further device information is available on the [‘Student Life – Learner Policies’](#) tab on the website.

You will receive further details when your place on a CAFRE course is confirmed. Again, we strongly advise you not to purchase any equipment until you get an official confirmation of a place on a CAFRE course.

Q13. Is transport assistance available?

yLink is a free smartcard for all 16-23 years olds using Translink services within Northern Ireland. You get third off Translink bus travel in Northern Ireland.

Apply for a free card using this link <https://www.translink.co.uk/ylink>.

Students travelling on bus Eireann can receive up to 15% off fares, and the yLink card is suitable to use for this.

Q14. How far away is the bus station from the college/ how much does a taxi cost from the station?

The bus depot is approximately 2 miles away from the campus. Taxi transfers cost approximately £6. Ulsterbus operate a 'stop' at the Tullywiggan entrance which serves Cookstown and Dungannon.

Q15. Are you allowed piercings?

Jewellery, including those for piercings, is not allowed when you involved in practical food production activities or industrial visit.