

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

2022-23

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23]

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each module can be found in the Module descriptors.

Section 1 – Material Programme Information

Quercus code	SAFS			
Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University			
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University			
School	Agriculture, Food and Environment			
Entry Award(s)	MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security			
Final Award and exit route(s)	Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security			
Programme title	MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security			
Location(s) of study	Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester Campus with some visits or case study demonstrations off site.			
Mode of study	Full time	1 year	Part-time	2 years
Language of study	English			
Programme start month	September			
Period of validation	September 2021 – August 2028			
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not applicable			
Type of Accreditation	Not applicable			
Accreditation due for renewal	Not applicable			
Entry requirements (this should be the standard University entry requirements unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board, and include UCAS entry profile for UG programmes and IELTS)	<p>A minimum 2.1 honours degree from a UK university, or an equivalent academic qualification from a comparable international institution.</p> <p>Students whose first language is not English must achieve a minimum IELTS score of 6.5.</p> <p>Applicants without a first degree but with acceptable professional qualifications and/or acceptable management experience may also be considered.</p>			
UCAS Code	N/A			
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	Subject Benchmark Statement Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences October 2019 Characteristics Statement Master's Degree February 2020			
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 7			
Approval at AQSC	30 July 2021			
Version	V1 – Removal of module 4415 (AQSC July 2022)			

Section 2 – Programme structure

The structure of all University awards complies with the University's [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) which includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a programme;
- Consequences of failure for referrals, compensation and exist awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards

MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (180 credits)

The accumulation of 180 credits (or more) to include a minimum of 150 at level 7 (of which at least 60 must be achieved from research focused modules: either a Masters dissertation or agreed equivalent research-based project or a combination of a research methods module and a Masters dissertation or agreed equivalent research-based project) and a maximum of 30 at level 6, through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Level 7					
4038a	Integrated Agricultural Systems	7	15	Core	1
4201	Poverty and Food Security	7	15	Core	1
4409	Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture	7	15	Core	1
4250	International Rural Development	7	15	Core	1
4413	Research Skills	7	15	Core	1
4727	Managing Global Soils in a Changing Climate	7	15	Core	2
4414	Dissertation	7	45	Core	Summer
	Plus THREE Electives from:	7			
4722	Climate Change and Sustainability	7	15	Elective	2
4203	Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply	7	15	Elective	2
4724	Environmental Science in Agriculture	7	15	Elective	1
4278	Organic Systems	7	15	Elective	1
4723	Crop Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
4726	Livestock Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
4725	Environmental Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	1
4262	Sustainable Management Strategy	7	15	Elective	1
4263	Entrepreneurship and Business Planning	7	15	Elective	1
	Total credits: MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security		180		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims

Food security has risen-up the global agenda since the COVID-19 pandemic as many people experienced the fragility of food supply chains and the devastating environmental, social and economic impacts of the crisis. The FAO1 (2020) highlighted the interconnected nature of agriculture, people, animals, plants and their shared environment and highlight the necessary strengthening required to improve the resilience of food systems to withstand other disease outbreaks and shocks.

This Master’s programme specifically addresses sustainable agriculture and food security globally and is equally relevant to UK and overseas graduates; to those looking for intensive solutions or local, low tech solutions to food production. It is also of relevance to public administrations, international aid/funding agencies, and business sectors.

The programme attracts students from a wide range of nationalities, backgrounds, previous experiences and age ranges. The diversity of the participants is an important dynamic in this programme and will play a key role in discussing and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related to food and farming globally with the aim or rethinking agricultural and food systems to improve livelihoods and protect the environment.

The aims and objectives of the programme are to support the RAU’s: Vision, A world where all communities thrive in harmony with nature; Mission, Equipping a new generation to thrive through change; and Purpose, To cultivate care for the land and all who depend on it. The MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (SAFS) programme benefits from research-led teaching from key members of the following RAU’s research groups: Sustainable and regenerative agriculture, Livestock health and welfare, Food safety, quality and security, Environment and soil health.

Section 4 – Programme intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

The aim of the programme is:

‘To enable participants to gain the specialised knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute effectively and ethically to strategic decision making, opinion forming and operational management for the development of sustainable agriculture and food supply systems in both developed and developing regions’

With specific themes in:

- Human exploitation of the Earth’s resources for food production and the global and local implications of human development.
- The ecological basis for resource utilisation allied to wider environmental and landscape considerations of food production and supply
- The role and function of institutional structures in relation to development, resource exploitation, social, cultural, ethical and inter-generation considerations.
- The application of development paradigms models and tools to build capacity within communities, institutions and individuals.

The programme explores five key challenges, namely:

- 1) Balancing future demand and supply sustainably.
- 2) Ensuring that there is adequate stability in food supplies – and protecting the most vulnerable from the volatility that does occur.
- 3) Achieving global access to food and ending hunger. This recognises that producing enough food in the world so that everyone can potentially be fed is not the same thing as ensuring food security for all.
- 4) Managing the contribution of the food production to the mitigation of climate change.
- 5) Maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services while feeding the world.

By focusing on sustainable resource management within the agricultural sector, students will explore a series of food-producing strategies, including large-scale conventional agriculture, organic farming, small-scale production and linkage with policy and development. The programme allows students to specialise through electives in innovative and technological solutions or methods that are more traditional.

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	The ability to critically evaluate the principles of agricultural production for both large- and small-scale systems.	4038b, 4728 4723, 4726
2.	Critically evaluate issues of sustainable development considering people, place and planet.	4250, 4722 4203, 4262 4263
3.	Appraising the complex issues of sustainable management of natural resources.	4727, 4724 4725
4.	Decipher and evaluate the impacts of climate science and change on agricultural systems and food supply.	4727, 4722
5.	Determine factors influencing the provision of food quality, supply and security.	4201, 4728
6.	Ascertain and evaluate the processes of policy formulation in agriculture and food production.	4409, 4725

Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	To lead and manage time and resources appropriately in both individual and team situations to enable successful project delivery.	4038A, 4250 4722, 4726 4262, 4263
2.	Develop lifelong skills which enable the synthesise and analyse of data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evaluate solutions to complex practical problems and policy challenges.	4727, 4413 4414, 4278 4723, 4262 4263
3.	Evaluating, citing and referencing sources of data and information with academic integrity in an appropriate manner whilst ensuring the avoidance of plagiarism.	4413, 4414 4722, 4203 4723, 4726 4262

4.	Ability to critically and creatively think, design and analyse an investigation to test a hypothesis. collect appropriate results, analyse data and present conclusions using a variety of methods.	4409, 4413 4414
5.	To develop and recognise leadership skills to critically analyse situations for addressing diverse organisational, business and social issues.	4038A, 4263
Programme specific skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Appreciate the role of self-reflection and critical analysis in one's own and others personal attributes for a range of situations including resilience, open-mindedness, reflection, ethical consideration, motivation, professional behaviours, and employability.	4201, 4409 4722, 4203 4262
2.	To understand and evaluate complex information analysis to influence decisions and policy within a range of political, economic, and social systems and institutions for strategic decision making.	4038A, 4409 4413, 4414 4726, 4263
3.	To appraise and develop project management solutions for sustainable agricultural and food assessments by effectively and creatively analysing and reporting of results and findings.	4727, 4250 4413, 4414 4263
4.	To effectively communicate through a variety of mediums on food and agricultural topics to a wide range of audiences.	4201, 4250 4278, 4723 4725, 4262

Section 5 – Learning and Teaching Strategy

The format of the programme is a mixture of residential learning and blended learning approaches supported by a range of learning materials and activities presented on the RAU VLE. The programme is available over 1-year full time or 2 years part-time.

A Postgraduate Certificate can be obtained by accumulating 60 credits through successful completion of any 4 taught core modules.

A Postgraduate Diploma can be obtained by accumulating 120 credits through successful completion of 8 taught modules without the dissertation.

The delivery is through a combination of lectures, seminars, speakers, case studies, workshops and with activities presented through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which is also used to host other supporting material including videos, webinars, quizzes, podcasts and other relevant presentations.

Teaching will include group discussions, tutorials, facilitated discussions, workshops, guided independent study and a research project. Assessment will be a balance between individual and group work and will consist of a range of critical reports, written examinations, poster presentations, sustainability plans, policy summaries, oral presentations, critical reflections and dissertation / applied project. Each module is supported by a comprehensive resource list that is maintained through the RAU Library Talis system.

Study support for overseas students and those who have been out of education for a while:

The Induction Week programmes for September starters provide sessions focusing on what to expect and what is expected from the student when studying at Masters level at the Royal Agricultural University. Students are also inducted to IT services, the library, health care, Student Support Services and the Students Union during this time and introduced to key figures so they know where and how they can gain extra support if required.

Student Support Services provide a series of study skills sessions to support international students in transitioning to the UK and the conventions of UK HE. This provision continues throughout the duration of their study at the RAU: students may request support such as proofreading, module brief interpretation, help with academic writing skills, dyslexia and disability support as well as any kind of pastoral support. Additionally, the International Orientation takes place immediately prior to Induction Week every September for students who feel they would benefit from learning more about the country, its traditions, heritage and culture prior to commencing their study. This ten-day residential programme is open to all UG and PG international students arriving to study at the RAU for the first time, and focuses on integrating students from across the globe joining a variety of programmes, in order to build community and enhance Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity in this small, specialist institution.

Section 6 – Assessment Strategy

The programme has been designed to offer a range of assessment methods which consist of individual and group work, exams and coursework. There is a diversity in the range of assessments to be completed from reports, policy briefs and critical appraisals.

Assessments based on core modules:

	Level 7
Coursework	100%
Exam	0%
Practical	0%

Section 7 - Course work grading and Feedback

Assessment is an integral part of the learning experience of students. All University programmes are assessed by a range of assessment activities, each developed to provide the most appropriate means of demonstrating the student's achievement of a specified learning outcome. An assessment may assess more than one learning outcome.

The University operates standard pass criteria which can be found in the RAU Academic Regulations; (paragraphs 137 – 153).

The normal basis for awards will be the overall average score in the final assessment, graded as follows:

Distinction weighted average of	70%
Merit weighted average of	60% - 69%
Pass weighted average of	40% - 59%
Fail average	0% - 39%

In addition to assigning a percentage mark to the work, the tutor adds comments; usually about the strengths and weaknesses of the piece as well as advice about improving the work. All assessment decisions are subject to internal moderation and external scrutiny by the programme's External Examiners. Students must ensure they retain all coursework in case the External Examiner(s) wishes to see it.

Section 8 – Employability

The global focus of this programme addresses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and thereby leaves the graduates prepared for a wide range of careers in the private sector or for national Governments or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) including trade associations. The graduates will be equipped to work in international, national, regional or local based roles. The skills gained throughout the programme will equip graduates for working in policy, advisory, food chain, management, retail, production, research, educational services or for further study in the higher education sector.

Section 9 – Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

The programme is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 6 years. This process ensures that the programme engages with the applicable national Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All programmes are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:

- External Examiner's Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Course Representatives
- Annual Programme Monitoring