

# The Royal Agricultural University

## Programme Specification:

### **BSc (Hons) Agriculture**

(available with Placement and Foundation Year)

**2023/24**

#### **PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24]**

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

Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University			
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University			
Subject Area	Agricultural Science and Practice (ASP)			
Entry Award(s)	BSc (Hons) Agriculture BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Foundation Year BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Placement Year			
Final Award and exit route(s)	BSc (Hons) Agriculture Diploma in Higher Education Agriculture Certificate in Higher Education Agriculture			
Programme title	BSc (Hons) Agriculture			
Location(s) of study	The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester			
Mode of study	Full time	3 years  4 years (with Foundation <b>or</b> Placement Year)	Part-time	6 years
Language of study	English			
Programme start month	September			
Period of validation	September 2023 until 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>GCSE minimum five GCSEs at Grade C/4 including English Language and Mathematics (or Maths Numeracy for Welsh applicants) plus satisfactory level 3 qualifications:</p> <p>A-Level: (Example grades BCC) – minimum of 104 UCAS tariff points across three A-Levels or equivalent qualifications – recommended one science subject</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C&amp;G Advanced Technical/BTEC – Level 3 Extended Diploma (1080) at Distinction-Merit-Merit</li> <li>• C&amp;G NPTC/C&amp;G Advanced Technical/BTEC – Level 3 Diploma (720), Extended Certificate (360) and 90-Credit Diploma (540) acceptable when accompanied by other Level 3 qualifications</li> <li>• International Baccalaureate: 26 points</li> <li>• Access to Higher Education: 45 credits at level 3, of which 21 must be awarded at Distinction and 15 at Merit or</li> </ul>			

	<p>higher. (Pass at Functional Skills level 2 are accepted in lieu of GCSE English &amp; Mathematics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A period of relevant practical experience is also highly recommended</li> </ul>
UCAS Code	D700
RAU Quercus Code	AG
HECoS Coding	Code 1: 100517 Agriculture; Code 2: 100516 Agricultural Sciences
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	<p>UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.          Business and Management (2019)          Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food and Consumer Sciences (2019)</p> <p><a href="#">QAA Subject Benchmark Statements</a></p>
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 4, 5 and 6
Approval at AQSC	May 2023

## 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.

**Students enrolled to study the programme with the Integrated Foundation Year will study the following modules in their first year of study:**

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
<b>Level 0</b>					
0IFY1	Managing Landscape	0	15	Core	2
0IFY2	Digital Skills	0	15	Core	2
0IFY3	Rural business skills	0	15	Core	1
0IFY4	Land related studies	0	15	Core	1
0IFY5	Change in the Countryside	0	15	Core	2
0IFY6	Enterprise and Marketing	0	15	Core	1
0IFY7	Environment and conservation	0	15	Core	1
0IFY8	Agriculture and Farming	0	15	Core	1
	<b>Total Credits: Integrated Foundation Year</b>		<b>120</b>		

**Students enrolled to study the BSc (Hons) Agriculture with/without placement year will study the following modules:**

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
<b>Level 4</b>					
1325	Introduction to the Agri-Food Industry	4	15	Core	2
1441	Applied Animal Science	4	15	Core	1
1442	Applied Plant Science	4	15	Core	1
1007	Soil and Environmental Science	4	15	Core	2
1422	Ecosystems Services and Sustainability	4	15	Core	2
1443	Business Finance and Accounts	4	15	Core	2
1444	Innovation and Technology	4	15	Core	1
1400	Personal Development Skills	4	15	Core	1
	<b>Total Credits: Level 4</b>		<b>120</b>		
	<b>Total Credits: CertHE</b>		<b>120</b>		

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
<b>Level 5</b>					
2378	Research and Evidence	5	15	Core	2
2132	Farm Business Planning	5	15	Core	1
2373	Agromony	5	15	Core	2
2372	Animal Health and Welfare	5	15	Core	2
2349	The Resilience of Agro-Ecosystems	5	15	Core	1

2337	Personal and Professional Development Skills and Employability	5	15	Core	1
2317	Industry Placement	5	15	Core	2
<b>Plus, any one elective from the list below;</b>					
2379	Agricultural Commodities Trading	5	15	Elective	2
2374	Crop Technology and Mechanisation	5	15	Elective	1
2375	Livestock Husbandry Systems	5	15	Elective	1
	<b>Total Credits: Level 5</b>		<b>120</b>		
	<b>Total Credits: DipHE</b>		<b>240</b>		

<b>Placement Year (studied after Year 2 of the taught programme)</b>					
PPY	Professional placement year	5	120	Core	All year

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/Optional	Semester
<b>Level 6</b>					
3329	Climate Change and Natural Resource Challenges	6	15	Core	1
3330	Technology and Agroecology Innovation	6	15	Core	2
3331	Food Supply Systems and Policy	6	15	Core	2
3332	Specialist Study Module	6	15	Core	1
3300	Research Project/Dissertation	6	30	Core	1 and 2
<b>Plus, one elective module from each semester from the list below:</b>					
3339	Livestock System Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	1
3337	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Elective	1
3239	Crop Health and Protection	6	15	Elective	1
3338	Agronomy Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	2
3238	Advances in Livestock Nutrition	6	15	Elective	2
3210	Applied Agricultural Finance	6	15	Elective	2
	<b>Total Credits: BSc (Hons) Agriculture</b>		<b>360</b>		
	<b>Total Credits: BSc (Hons) with Placement Year</b>		<b>480</b>		

### Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims

The BSc (Hons) Agriculture degree programme is designed to develop the **professional agriculturalists and farm managers of the future**. This wide-reaching, industry-recognised programme is built on the latest applied research, informed by the RAU's extensive industry networks and delivered by world-renowned experts in their fields. It develops students that will make a difference and stand out as RAU graduates in the agriculture sector. This is through the applied understanding of science, practice, policy and innovation that underpins agricultural production, sustainability and resilient farm management.

The aim of this **flagship programme** is to inform, inspire and enable students to gain a fundamental understanding and critical awareness of the problems facing agriculture, particularly issues pertaining to the challenges of food production and its global impacts. We

have worked with our industry stakeholders, current and past students, and within our own research teams to ensure our programmes are inspiring, forward-looking, and linked to the needs of the industry and employers.

The design of the programme is centred around **four cornerstones**: 1) Technology and Innovation, 2) Environmental Sustainability, 3) Business and Enterprise and 4) Employability and Leadership.

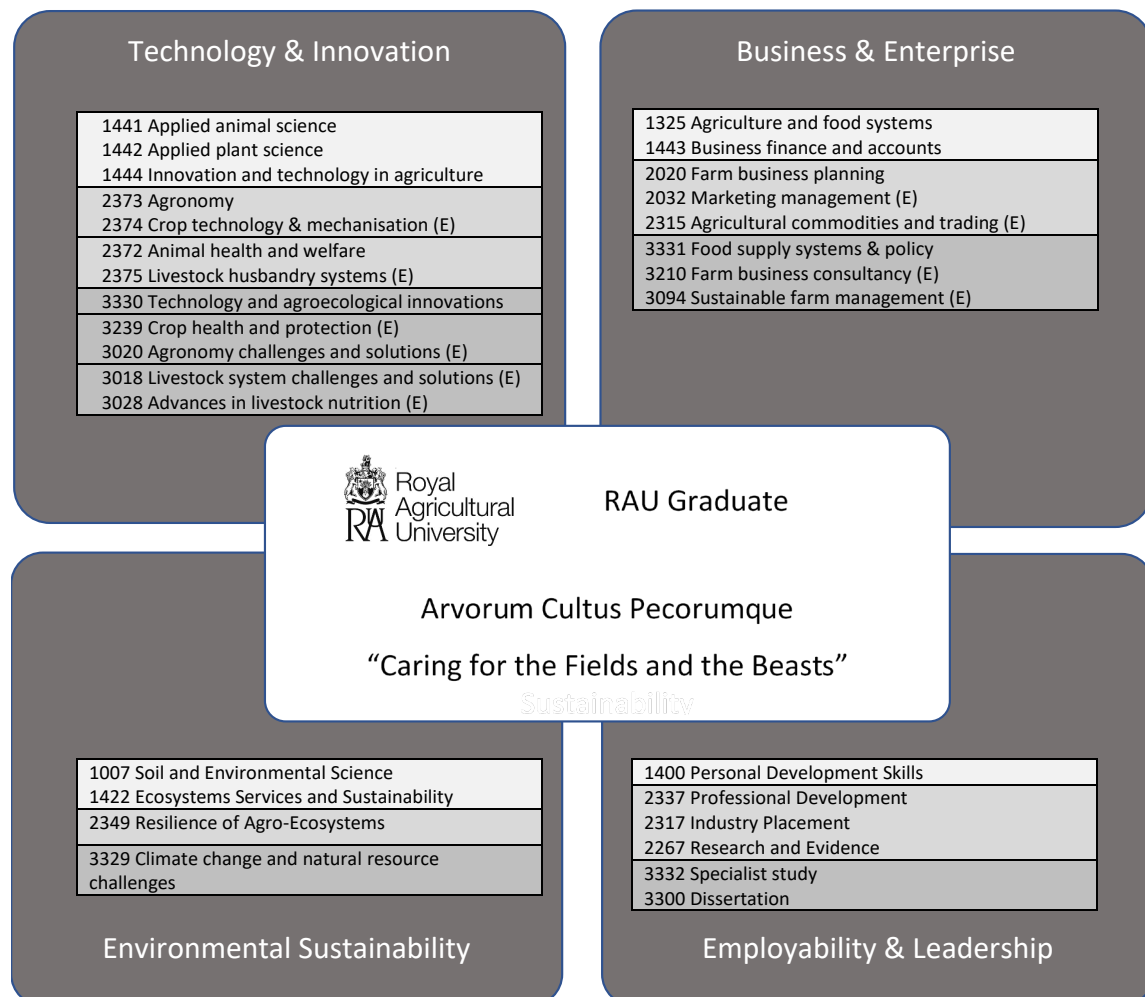


Figure 1: The 4 Cornerstones of BSc Agriculture

Within each of these cornerstones, there are modules at level 4, 5 & 6 that challenge the student to progress towards the goal of an RAU graduate that has acquired the technological knowledge and employability skills to help them thrive in workplace.

Examples of progression within the **technology and innovation** cornerstone are plant and animal science (level 4), followed by farming systems (level 5) and then critical evaluation of challenges and solutions for either cropping and livestock systems (level 6). The **employability and leadership** cornerstones, with personal development skills (level 4) including academic and practical core skills, progressing to professional development (level 5) including team working and leadership and finally in-depth critical analysis in a specialist area. The **business and enterprise** cornerstones include an introduction to business finance for small and medium sized businesses (level 4), a working knowledge of business planning (level 5) and a more critical review of business consultancy (level 6).

The **environmental sustainability** cornerstone aligns with the RAU strategic goals for sustainability. For agriculture this is a critical theme that involves an understanding of soil and environmental science and ecosystem services (level 4), progressing to resilience of agro-ecosystems (level 5) and finally critical evaluation of the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies relevant for agriculture (level 6).

This programme has also been specifically designed to foster greater knowledge and awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are also embedded within the ILOs of all modules. These are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" which was set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by the year 2030, are part of UN Resolution 70/1 - <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The farming industry needs new talent, and that means students are key. Here at the RAU, we're taking on the challenges and opportunities facing agriculture, nationally and globally, to include food security, climate change, environmental land management and shifts in market demand. Students do not need to have an agricultural or farming background; they simply need the passion and drive to make a difference in a rapidly evolving industry. Students will learn how to build sustainable, profitable and resilient agricultural businesses, which contribute to a thriving sector - whether as a farmer, land manager, rural entrepreneur, agronomist, economist, policymaker, researcher, scientist or consultant – career opportunities are diverse and eclectic.

All our new programmes provide practical skills and training opportunities, insights into global challenges and perspectives, a focus on innovation, personal development, and the prioritisation and integration of research-informed teaching. Throughout the Agriculture degree programme, students will learn about a wide variety of farm and land-based enterprises, a spectrum of farming approaches, the role of technology and data and how to address the challenges and realities of sustainable commercial farming, whilst prioritising environmental protection, the highest standards of livestock welfare and farm business resilience. The programme focuses on the role of the professional agriculturalist of the future, equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and then address major challenges in our food systems, from food security, climate change and land use to the imbalances in our food supply chains and environmental degradation from producing food. At the same time, the degree will develop students' understanding of the impact of a rapidly changing economic and political landscape on agriculture. Our curriculum is a clear response to the current and future issues within our food system facing all citizens from all backgrounds.

The extensive industry experience of lecturers and high-profile research-active academics will provide inspirational and critical support for students. Furthermore, the commercial facilities here at the RAU help demonstrate the real-world application of research and agricultural management theory into practical and innovative farm practice. Students will have access to 400 hectares of commercial farmland, real-world business cases and industry placements. In partnership with the commercial farm at Coates Manor and Kemble Dairy Farm, students will learn about farming systems on farms and our new partnership with the Gloucestershire's Bathurst Estate will provide students with access to 15,000 acres of farmland, forestry, environmentally managed land, real estate, heritage properties.

The RAU's new £5.8 million Land Laboratory Teaching Centre will provide integrated, state-of-art facilities for learning about Geomatics, land, soil and environmental analysis and train

students in climate-smart, resilient agriculture and land management, helping students have a positive impact in their future careers.

In addition to the commercial farm enterprises and teaching labs, our Farm491 Agri-tech hub will give students unparalleled access to tech start-ups as well as on-farm and applied product development schemes. Nearby farms conducting research trials with Farm491 give students the opportunity to discuss and develop their own research dissertation ideas. This will help students to understand what it takes to bridge the gaps between the laboratory, the field, the commercial market and the farm.

All our degrees have a 15 - or 52-week placement period to ensure that our graduates develop key technical, operational and management skills that add invaluable long-term benefits to their career and employability. Furthermore, students will have the chance to improve their employability through rural skills training at our John Oldacre Rural Innovation Centre. There will be opportunities to connect with one of our many industry partners through work placements across the country and abroad. Students will benefit from between 525 and 1200 hours working and applying knowledge as part of the degree programme – essential work-based skill development that counts as credits towards the degree meaning RAU students will graduate prepared and competitive for employment.

The RAU recognises and encourages students to go onto varied careers in agriculture and as a result there are a selection of elective modules. Students can choose one elective from level 5 and two from level 6, which allows students to deepen their knowledge in specialist subjects that match their career aspirations in either crops, livestock or farm business management.

### **Farm Business Management, Crops & Livestock systems**

The BSc Agriculture degree programme has three core elements reflected in the various modules – farm business management, crop systems and livestock husbandry systems. Each element will produce graduates who understand the complexity of modern agriculture and who are capable of working within and across the sectors in a variety of roles. Graduates will be exposed to a range of mixed agricultural practices and placements on arable and livestock farm businesses, with processors, supply chain companies and consultancies. They will be confident in the practical application of farming methods including agronomy, livestock husbandry and land management in the context of modern global food production. Graduates will also be able to evaluate the use of contemporary technology, apply agricultural business management practices and will be proficient applying their understanding of the diversity of the sectors so they can propose effective solutions to common industry problems in the real-world.

Students will become aware of the importance of the pillars of sustainability, animal welfare and soil management to the success of the agricultural industry. Students will learn about the complex interaction between different disciplines and elements within an enterprise, and how these can be utilised to produce sustainable performance that has a positive impact on the success of the parent business.

Students will be able to progress into a range of careers in:

- Farm and land management
- Unit operator on agricultural enterprises either domestically or internationally
- Agricultural consultancy
- Agronomy



- Livestock nutrition
- Herd/flock health planning
- Farm biosecurity
- Supply chain / farm liaison
- Food security and safety
- Commodity trading and marketing
- Agricultural policy
- Agricultural economy and accountancy
- Research

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

### Knowledge and Understanding

Knowledge and understanding will be acquired and developed through lectures, seminars, tutorials, visits, field work, guided independent reading and specific group work. Independent learning is encouraged by students spending time reading and studying to supplement and consolidate what is being taught in face-to-face sessions and to broaden individual knowledge of the subject. This is tested through a variety of assessment mechanisms, such as; timed examinations, essays, debates, assignment tasks based on real-world scenarios, technical and laboratory reports, group and individual presentations, individual study projects and industry-based case studies.

Students will also have access to specialist IT hardware and software including a virtual learning platform to supplement and reinforce lectures and encourage independent learning.

<b>ILO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
1.	Evaluate and apply scientific and technological developments to improve current and future agricultural systems. (SDGs 1,2,3)	2126, 2373, 3300, 3329,3332,3239, 3238, 3018, 3300
2.	Appraise the management of crop and livestock systems from a sustainable soil and environmental perspective. (SDGs 1,2,15)	2373, 2374, 2369, 2126, 2373, 3013, 3329, 3332, 3300
3.	Assess and evaluate the global food system in relation to sustainable food supply and consumption. (SDGs 8,11,12,17)	1325, 2315, 3329, 3331, 3209, 3006, 3300
4.	Acquire an in-depth knowledge of different farming systems and approaches currently employed on a range of agricultural enterprises. (SDGs 9)	1441,1442,10007, 1422,1443,2373,2372,2374,2375, 2020, 3094,3210,3329,330,3332,3300,3239,3238,3018

5.	Consider and assess the factors influencing conservation, ecology, climate change, land use, and environmental management in the context of food production (SDGs 7,12,13,15,17)	2343, 3006, 3013, 3209,3300,3300
6.	Understand and appraise the role of agricultural business planning, finance, human resources, and IT management within an effective business structure. (SDGs 8,9)	1443, 1440, 2337, 2020, 3210,3094,3330

### **Intellectual, Professional, Key skills**

Intellectual skills are developed both through the delivery of dedicated contextualised modules and via the embedding of the skills in the topical modules. These skills are practiced, assessed formatively, and used within summative assessments. For example, critical analysis and evaluation skills feature as a key element of Level 6 assessment but they are developed using staged assessments throughout the Foundation Year and level 4 of the Undergraduate Programme. Argument construction, evidence use, and reasoning skills are central to this.

There are also 2 specific modules in Level 4 and 5 which focus on personal and professional development skills to enhance student's employability and prepare them for the workplace.

<b>ILO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
1.	Evaluate problems, analyse alternatives and think creatively to develop solutions with reference to environmental, ethical, social and economic perspectives.	All
2.	Effectively self-manage and become a lifelong learner (independent study, time management & organisation).	1400,2337,2237,2020, 2317, PPY, 3300
3.	Organise themselves and groups of people, demonstrate teamwork skills by participating effectively in a team task.	1443, 2337,2020,3020,
4.	Apply numerical and statistical techniques, be able to identify problems and find solutions in varying contexts, as well as demonstrate the application of IT, digital and technical skills in their work.	1443, 1440, 2020, 2237, 2267, 2374, 2375, 3330, 3210, 3300
5.	Formulate and test concepts and hypotheses in context of sustainable farming.	2267, 3300

## Programme specific skills

Each module involves opportunities for interactive discussion on key subject topics and incorporates a degree of technology and digital platforms to assist in this. Information technology and computational skills are also developed through project work, presentations and assignments. Students are explicitly trained in digital skills in a number of modules.

Real-world farm management scenarios allow for the development of applied skills, such as collaboration, team work and communication skills, along with problem solving and analytical skills, which are further honed in research activities and the level 6 dissertation module. Student skills are assessed through assignments, coursework, oral presentation tasks, and written examinations in a number of modules and taught via a combination of lectures, seminars, tutorials, laboratory/technical work, group work, case studies and project work.

Guest lectures, conferences and field trips will also be used where appropriate as an important learning method for subject specific skills. The on-site research facilities and the RAU farms are used to enhance subject-specific learning.

<b>ILO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
1.	Design, conduct and interpret an investigative study.	2237,3300,3332,
2.	Identify key issues, themes and developments in areas of interest and concern.	2267,3300,3332, 3205, 3300, 3209
3.	Critically analyse and evaluate scientific papers and investigative work.	All
4.	Analyse a range of technical practices pertinent to the agriculture.	1444,1441,1442,2373,2372,2369,2374,2375,3329,3330, 3239, 3018
5.	Appraise the value and application of new technologies and science relating to agriculture and the environment.	3238,3239,3332,3300,3330,3329

## Section 5 – Learning and Teaching Approach

The teaching team are diverse and there has been extensive inclusion of all staff in developing and shaping the curriculum. The agricultural industry can be quite traditional (especially on small / medium sized family farms) and the team challenged 'traditional' views in the design, delivery and content of the curriculum. Global agricultural issues are examined alongside regional agricultural needs and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are embedded where appropriate within module descriptors and delivery methods.

The programme is normally of three years duration of full-time study (approximately 30 weeks per year). Study is undertaken at three levels on the FHEQ; Level four, five, and six (one for each year of study). However, it is possible to follow the programme on a part-time basis, over a longer time period, by gaining credits for the modules taken and achieved year-by-year. The time limits appropriate to part-time study are indicated in the University Academic Regulations available from the RAU website.

The option with a Foundation Year is normally four years of taught full-time study and the option with a Placement Year is normally three years of taught full-time study with one year based in industry.

A credit system is used to ensure a balanced workload across the programme, with each credit point requiring approximately of 10 hours of student work. Thus a 15-credit module will require a notional input of 150 hours of work, and a complete academic year of 120 credits will require 1200 hours of work, or approximately 40 hours per week.

The programme will be delivered using the RAU blended learning approach that is designed as an efficient and effective method of teaching large classes, by allowing students to work individually at their own pace, as well as in group settings. Students will be expected to watch pre-recorded lectures online, which aims to:

- Stimulate interest in the subject matter
- Give information
- Offer different perspectives on a subject
- Explain difficult concepts and theories
- Show how to deepen knowledge
- Provide an opportunity to listen to specialist guest lecturers

Students must also attend face to face seminars and tutorials which will:

- Allow students to express their views
- Enables academic interaction
- Facilitates discussions
- Provides opportunities to practice presentations
- Encourages structured research
- Enables sharing and diversification of information and experience
- Introduces group work and develops team works skills

Practical activities, visits and demonstrations will take a variety of forms on farms, at agricultural businesses and in laboratories. They form an important part of overall programme provision and help to reinforce and apply the subject principles received through lectures and seminars.

Students will also be expected to undertake private study as an important learning method within the programme. This will normally involve reading to explore the breadth and depth of the syllabus, preparation of tutorial/seminar work, preparation of coursework/assignments, case study submissions and preparation of major projects. The use of the RAU's e-library is very important for the effective use of private study time. Guidance in private study will be given by post-doctoral teaching fellows.

Students attempting to shortcut their learning activities may find themselves experiencing difficulties as each module progresses, especially as the level of assumed understanding increases from year to year. Therefore, it is vitally important that new students establish an effective routine for their studies as soon as possible. Maintaining a balanced workload from the start of the programme will help to avoid intense periods of activity and ensure knowledge and understanding gradually develop throughout the year in readiness for any end of module examinations and/or assignments.

## Section 6 – Assessment Approach

Modules include formative assessments which are not used in the grading of a module but to identify strengths and weakness in subject knowledge and to provide opportunities to become accustomed to different techniques used in the final assessments within each module.

A range of assessment techniques will be applied throughout the programme to test learning outcomes of each module. These will be clearly identified on the International VLE for each module, but could include:

- Formal (time constrained) examinations
- Essays
- Reports – either academic research or professional
- Case studies
- Group work exercises
- Oral presentations
- In-class / in-lab / in field tests – e.g., multiple choice, short answer
- Practical assessments – e.g., livestock performance assessments, health and welfare diagnosis, analysis of agricultural crops, produce and animal feed, laboratory analytical and diagnostic experiments
- Portfolio / e-portfolios
- Skills observation
- Peer review
- Professional practice report
- Subject specific exercise
- Academic poster
- Research proposal
- Dissertation

Assessments are normally set at the start of each module with a date for submission before the end of each module. Students are responsible for ensuring that assessments are submitted on time. Any non-submission or non-attendance will be recorded as zero and a note placed against the individual assessment and against the module.

Students who are unable to complete assessments to the appropriate standard by the due date because of exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness, family bereavement) must submit a request to the RAU Registry for an extension for ten working days or for a deferral to the next assessment period, together with appropriate supporting evidence. Details of this procedure are available in the Student Info – Examinations and Assessment section on the Gateway VLE. Once a claim for an extension has been accepted, work will be assessed without prejudice (as if for the first time) and marks will not be capped at 40%.

	<b>Year 0</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<b>Coursework</b>	100	80	90	95
<b>Exam</b>	0	10	5	0
<b>Practical</b>	0	10	5	5

## 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:

First Class Honours	70% and above
Second Class Honours upper division	60% - 69%
Second Class Honours lower division	50% - 59%
Third Class Honours	40% - 49%
Fail	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 – Placement Module (2317) and Placement Year

### The work placement

In the second year of the programme, students are required to undertake a 15-week self-employment placement (or in an organisation) between end of March / early April and September of that year (Module Code: 2317).

For students enrolled on the BSc (Hons) with Placement Year, students are also required to undertake 120 credits (1200 hours, i.e. 35 weeks with a minimum 35 hrs per week) professional placement year. The Professional Placement Year (Module Code: PPY) is taken between Levels 5 and 6 of the academic programmes from September of that year, having completed the placement requirement for 2317.

The compulsory work placement module is a very important element of the Year 2 programme. It has a large and important educational value, in terms of the ability to provide a bridge or link for the learning aims of many individual programme modules, between the formal 'academic' activities, in-university, and the specific practical work-based experience and organisational reality to which they often ultimately relate. It is especially important in the whole programme as it represents an opportunity for students to locate their final year dissertation topic (with the agreement of the employing organisation) in a real-world organisation, and thus focus the research study on an area where empirical data-gathering is feasible. Students are strongly encouraged to consider this aspect in advance, and discuss this with the link tutor (see below).

Failure to secure a work placement, and to submit a satisfactory report within the time scale laid down (normally mid-October in each academic year), will normally result in a failure in the 15-credit module, and thus a failure in Year 2.

The placement opportunities are generally viewed very favourably by potential employers and provide student with the chance to experience real organisational life at first hand. It is not uncommon, in some situations, for students to find that a placement may also result in a job offer, for take-up after graduation. It is particularly important that students undergoing placements keep alive to the possibility of using their experience as the basis for a research project in Year 3, and thus basing a dissertation on a 'real-life' organisation.

The opportunity is open to a variety of organisations, and also country of placement. It is certainly important for students to remember the many types of organisation that may usefully provide opportunities; including those in the public and private sector, the for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, charities, co-operatives, and so on.

The Placement Coordinator is assisted by the subject Academics. Their role is specifically to provide support for students during the search process, and while the placement is underway, and he will be pleased to talk to students about possible placements. It is important for students to give thought to the placement in good time in order to arrange the best possible opportunity.

### **Approval process**

It is the University's responsibility to ensure that learning opportunities during a placement are appropriate. However, it is at the same time obviously desirable that students secure a self-placement (or in an organisation) which is suitable for their needs as well as amenable to them. For this reason, as well as for others, the **responsibility** for developing and securing a placement rests with the individual student. However, to ensure that the University's responsibilities are carried out, all placements are subject to **approval** by the University, **in advance** of the placement commencing.

This means that no placement can be considered to be in place and accepted until such time that appropriate checks have been made, and the placement has been approved for this purpose, by the placement coordinator. Students must submit relevant details of their desired placement on the appropriate form (including dates, name of organisation, outline job description, and so on) well in advance of the placement commencing, and at least by the date laid down, to ensure that checks can be carried out, and in case subsequent difficulties emerge.

Criteria for approval will include:

- The nature and function of the placement organisation, in relation to the student's learning programme (considering the student's interests, for example).
- The placement organisation's ability to provide appropriate learning opportunities, (which must include the likely nature of the tasks and responsibilities that students may be expected to undertake during the work-based placement)
- Whether and how the University is able to support students on placements, and;
- The extent to which the placement organisation can fulfil its responsibilities under Health & Safety legislation.

It is in the interests of students, as well as the RAU, in this approval process, if students are able to gain an outline job description indicating the likely content of the job role during

the placement, and submit this for approval. The University must be in a position to assess whether placement providers know what their responsibilities are during the period of placement learning, both in terms of the provision of learning opportunities, and in relation to their role on the assessment of students, and thus have the organisation and prospective job role approved, before any placement commences.

### **Prior to placement**

Before placements commence, it is important that students familiarise themselves with the guidance available in the module handbook. In particular, they must be aware of student responsibilities and rights

Responsibilities include those:

- As representatives of the University as a Higher Education Institution (as the placement provider might well be asked to offer equivalent opportunities to other students in future years)
- Towards the placement provider; their customers or clients; and to their other employees. In effect students are acting as employed persons within the organisation, subject to the normal employer/ employee mutual obligations, to fulfil the contract of employment.
- For managing their learning & professional relationships
- For recording progress and achievements (very important in terms of the final reporting process, as documented in the module handbook and assessment brief)
- For alerting both the placement provider and the Royal Agricultural University to any problems experienced during the placement. In the latter case, the expectation is that students maintain an ongoing communication with the University, in most cases through the designated tutor.

Students should be aware of their rights;

- To a safe working environment, with all that this entails
- To be treated in accord with the law, for example in relation to discipline and grievance issues, redundancy, and equal opportunities.

Before placements commence, all students will be called to a pre-placement advice session, to begin the process of providing them with appropriate guidance and support in preparation for, during, and after their placements.

### **During placements**

It is important that students keep in touch with University throughout their placement period, and for this purpose all students are allocated a tutor who will provide for liaison, and a point of contact during the placement.

The student is encouraged to keep in touch with this tutor throughout the placement period, by email or telephone as appropriate, both before and after the visit. If all is going well a weekly email may well be sufficient. Thus, it is crucial that all student email addresses, mobile telephone numbers, etc., that are relevant to the placement period, are recorded by University and maintained as up-to-date as possible. However, if problems occur during placements, as sometimes happens, please ensure student make contact as soon as possible, if necessary with the Programme Manager, or the Placement Coordinator, if the link tutor is not available at the time. Students must not wait for a visit if the problem is an urgent one.



This tutor will normally visit the student on at least one occasion during the period of the placement, normally before the end of July. For the PPY contact will be scheduled as; X3: 1-1 tutorial in person/online with academic teaching team 3 x 30 mins and 3 x 15 mins online interactions by placement team. The purpose of the visit is to ensure that all is satisfactory from the viewpoint of both student and placement provider, to counsel all parties if difficulties emerge, and to remind students of the requirements of the reporting process required of students to fulfil the module criteria. In some rare instances no visit will be possible, in which case alternative arrangements will be made to fulfil this function of monitoring.

## **Section 9 – Employability**

Employability of RAU agriculture graduates is excellent at 98.2% employed or in professional training after 6 months, and there are many diverse career opportunities available to the students in all sectors of the food chain. The applied nature of the programme, research-led teaching methods and close links with industry provides students with the academic, technical and professional employment skills, which are highly valued by employers.

As an example, the crop and agronomy focused part of the degree aligns with BASIS training through the selection of the modules 1442, 2373 and 3239. Subject to academic performance in specific modules and undertaking an appropriate placement, students will be eligible to undertake and apply for BASIS and / or FACTS training and exams, following successful completion of the degree programme.

The livestock focused part of the programme is aligned with 3 AMTRA RAMA SQP level modules - 1441, 2372 and 3018. Depending on which species, or combination of species students will be working with (farm animals, companion animals, and/or equine), they can choose any number of SQP qualifications to complete post-graduation. After completing the AMTRA assessments, they will become RAMA accredited (Registered Animal Medicines Advisors, or SQPs) and able to prescribe and/or supply certain veterinary medicines overseen by a professional body and according to professional Rules, Regulations and a Code of Practice.

Students will also be provided with access to Land Based Skills Programme, either free of charge or at a reduced rate, to enable them to obtain relevant competency certificates, typically to include Tractor Driving, Telehandler, Pesticide Application (Pa1 and Pa2) and Animal Handling. The programme is a suite of courses aimed at giving students industry recognised qualifications in a variety of practical skills, in preparation for the workplace.

The BSc (Hons) Agriculture programme can open the door to a range of career opportunities on a local, national and international level. RAU graduates go into a wide variety of sectors, including business, environmental science and policy, technology and engineering, research and consultancy and food safety and processing. This programme provides professional agriculturalists of the future with the specific skills required to achieve change across the sectors and tackle the global challenges facing agriculture. This programme will be particularly attractive to students who wish to pursue a specialist career (e.g., as a technical adviser in the food supply chain, agronomist, nutritionist, breeding/health consultant, entrepreneur, researcher or unit operator on production-based enterprises either domestically or internationally). Studying agriculture also develops the skills needed for other graduate careers, such as accountancy, teaching, journalism and the

civil service. Alternatively, students may qualify for progression (e.g., MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, Agri-Tech, MSc Rural Estate Management, MRes, MPhil and PhD studies) either at the RAU or elsewhere.

## **Section 10 – 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