# The Royal Agricultural University

# Programme Specification:

## Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)

**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) | Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) | | | |
| Final Award and exit route(s) | Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) | | | |
| Programme title | Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) | | | |
| Location(s) of study | The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester | | | |
| Mode of study | Full time | 1 year | Part-time | 2 years |
| Language of study | English | | | |
| Programme start month | September | | | |
| Period of validation | September 2023 to 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) | An Undergraduate Honours Degree (2:2 or above) from a UK university or overseas equivalent, or a professional qualification and/or experience considered to be equivalent to the above. For information on international qualifications, please, see our country specific pages. For countries not listed please contact admissions@rau.ac.uk<br><br>Applicants may seek admission on the basis of work experience, but evidence of ability to study at degree level is essential. | | | |
| UCAS Code | Not applicable | | | |
| Quercus Code | GDA1 | | | |
| HECoS Code | 100517 - Agriculture | | | |
| QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points | QAA Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Sciences, Food Sciences and Consumer Sciences (2019)<br>QAA Subject Benchmark Statements | | | |
| Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) | Level 6 | | | |
| Approval at AQSC | May 2023 | | | |
| Version | 1.0 | | | |

## 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.

**Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (120 credits)**
Students are required to study four (4) compulsory 15 credit modules (1125, 2372, 2373 and 3337) to provide a focus for their studies and an appropriate framework to link to the individual choice of electives. Students must then select four further modules from the list of Level 6 electives, ensuring that their final programme includes modules totalling 75 credits.at level six, with the remaining three core modules being taken from Level 4 and Level 5.

| Module code | Module title | Level | Credit value | Core/ Elective | Semester |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 6** | | | | | |
| 1125 | Agriscience | 4 | 15 | Core | 1 |
| 3337 | Sustainable Farm Management | 6 | 15 | Core | 1 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 2372 | Animal Health and Welfare | 5 | 15 | Core | 2 |
| 2373 | Agronomy | 5 | 15 | Core | 2 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| | **Total Credits: Graduate Diploma in Agriculture** | | **120** | | |

**Students will choose level 6 modules available within Agricultural Science and Practice at the start of the academic year depending upon the focus they want their studies to take, as well as timetable and module availability. Students will have the choice of two Level 6 modules per semester.**

**Elective Modules for 2023-24**

| Module code | Module title | Level | Credit value | Core/ Elective | Semester |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3090 | Forestry and Woodland Management | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3098 | Countryside & Environmental Management | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3223 | Ecological Consultancy | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3238 | Advances in Livestock Nutrition | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3239 | Crop Health and Protection | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3329 | Climate Change and Natural Resource Challenges | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3339 | Livestock System Challenges and Solutions | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 3323 | Food Ethics and Governance | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| 3330 | Technology and Agroecological Innovations | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| 3331 | Food Supply Systems and Policy | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| 3333 | Wildlife Behaviour & Evolution | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| 3338 | Agronomy Challenges and Solutions | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| 4278 | Organic Systems | 7 | 15 | Elective | 1 |

**Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (120 credits) – Part time study**

Students are required to study four (4) compulsory 15 credit modules (1125, 2372, 2373 and 3337) to provide a focus for their studies and an appropriate framework to link to the individual choice of electives. Students must then select four further modules from the list of Level 6 electives, ensuring that their final programme includes modules totalling 75 credits at level six, with the remaining three modules being taken from Level 4 and Level 5.

| Module code | Module title | Level | Credit value | Core/ Elective | Semester |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 6 / Year 1** | | | | | |
| 1125 | Agriscience | 4 | 15 | Core | 1 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 2373 | Agronomy | 5 | 15 | Core | 2 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| **Level 6 / Year 2** | | | | | |
| 3337 | Sustainable Farm Management | 6 | 15 | Core | 1 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 1 |
| 2372 | Animal Health and Welfare | 5 | 15 | Core | 2 |
| | Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area | 6 | 15 | Elective | 2 |
| | **Total Credits: Graduate Diploma in Agriculture** | | **120** | | |

## Section 3 Programme overview and Programme Aims

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) programme is designed to develop the professional agriculturalists of the future equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and then address major challenges in our food systems. Our curriculum is a clear response to the current and future issues within our food system facing all citizens from all backgrounds.

The aim of the programme is to provide an inspiring and forward-thinking educational package of study for those students who have already graduated/qualified/have experience in another discipline, and who now want additional agricultural study as part of their future career aspirations. GDA is distinctive in that it offers additional study in agriculture at undergraduate degree level to those already possessing a BSc Honours or equivalent qualification on entry. The RAU recognises and encourages students to go onto varied careers in agriculture and as a result, alongside the core modules which provide the basis transitional knowledge into agriculture, students choose from the selection of Agricultural Science and Practice elective modules which allow students to deepen their knowledge in specialist subjects that match their career aspirations.

Based on the latest applied research, informed by the RAU's extensive industry networks and delivered by world-renowned experts in their fields, students will explore the science and practice that underpins agricultural production, sustainability and resilient farm management. The aim of this 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.

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. 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.

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 as real-world business cases. 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.

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.

On joining the programme, students are expected to have already acquired a range of intellectual and transferable skills in their previous careers and study. However, this programme enables them:

- to demonstrate their commitment to continuing learning within agricultural science and practice,
- to utilise their existing skills in pursuit of new knowledge, understanding and career opportunities, and
- to develop new professional skills, specific to their areas of interest and focus applicable to a wide range of careers in agriculture.

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

**Knowledge and Understanding**

| **LO no.** | On successful completion of the named award, students will have: | **Module Code/s** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Understand the basic scientific principles and practices of animal and crop production systems | 1125, |
| 2. | Evaluate the scientific principles and practices applied in regenerative, integrated, conventional and sustainable animal and crop production systems | 2372, 2373, |
| 3. | Develop sustainable farm management skills to improve net zero GHG emissions, biodiversity and farm profitability and resilience | 3337 |
| 4. | Critique the opportunities and challenges of emerging agricultural science and practice relevant to the future of food and farming and their career within it. | Elective Modules |

**Intellectual, Professional, Key skills**

| **LO no.** | On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to: | **Module Code/s** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Apply subject specific agricultural science and practice within a range of learning and assessment environments, for continuous professional development | 1125, 2372, 2373, 3337 |
| 2. | Critically evaluate appropriate literature and other credible sources to inform their study and the application of knowledge in practice within future careers | All modules |
| 3. | Develop critical thinking, self-reflection and thought leadership to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities for the future of food and farming | All modules |

## Section 5 Learning and Teaching Approach

All students on this course, but particularly for those returning to studies after a period of break from formal education will be supported in a number of ways, to facilitate as best as possible, a smooth transition into their core and elective modules. This is be underpinned by a bespoke induction week programme which is specifically designed to support students returning to formal

study. At this point, all students will be given direct online access to the content of prerequisite modules, as part of the online gateway platform, which they can utilise in their own study time, to address study gaps, or revise the basic subject areas pertinent to a smooth transition into the core agricultural modules on this programme. These prerequisite modules are developing academic skills, applied animal and plant science, and business finance and accounts. Furthermore, throughout the study programme students, as well as support from module leaders, students will have access to a designated academic personal tutor.

To further aid students who seek to study part-time, the GDA timetable is organised so that delivery of the core modules is set to one day per week. This allows the maximum amount of flexibility for students in managing their studies around part-time jobs or other key responsibilities and time commitments. The time limits appropriate to part-time study are indicated in the University Academic Regulations available from the RAU website.

This programme is accessible to all students in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy and the Equality Act 2010. In the case of a disability, students are encouraged to disclose this to the Disability Officer so that the appropriate support can be provided. Students have the right to request that the nature of their disability is treated as confidential. With regards to practical sessions and study visits, adjustments are made so that visits are accessible to all students.

The programme will be delivered using the RAU blended learning approach that is designed as an efficient and effective method of teaching by allowing students to work individually at their own pace, as well as in a group seminar setting to benefit from peer to peer discussion and synthesis knowledge and understanding.

Students will be expected to watch pre-recorded lectures online, and/or engage with other preparatory material 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, and 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. To further support students who have other key responsibilities, the main visits to

farms and agricultural businesses take place in the afternoon of the core study day, to compress study time for all students.

Students will also be expected to undertake private study as an important learning method within the programme, particularly at the beginning of their studies to support any knowledge gaps associated with a transition into agricultural science and practice. Throughout the whole study period this will normally involve reading to explore the breadth and depth of the syllabus, preparation of tutorial/seminar work, and preparation of coursework/assignments.

The use of the RAU's e-library is very important for the effective use of private study time. Thorough guidance in private study will be included in the induction week programme, however the library staff are on hand throughout your studies to provide further advice and assistance on both finding and utilising relevant resources. Furthermore, with regards to the specific areas of study covered in the programme, modules have a resource list and signpost to further online resources to facilitate your focused private study and research around the module content.

Students attempting to shortcut their learning activities may find themselves experiencing difficulties. It is particularly vitally important that new students returning from a study break 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 which can lead to unnecessary stress, and ensure knowledge and understanding gradually develops throughout the semesters and year in readiness for end of module assignments**.**

## Section 6 Assessment Approach

The full GDA programme comprises four core modules which provide a baseline for a transition into the agricultural sector. In addition, the four elective modules build on this to contextualise and facilitate students self-determined continuous professional development. Modules are assessed by one or two pieces of applied coursework which are designed to replicate real world tasks pertinent to the current challenges and opportunities in food and farming, building students core critical thinking and problem-solving skills required for the future. One core module (Agronomy) also includes an end of module test. Throughout modules students will receive formative feedback to support their own reflective learning process and progress towards their final assessment(s).

The Agriscience module is designed to establish a professional grounding in the knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to agriculture and is therefore assessed through the compilation of a student led practical portfolio showcasing their learning. Students are given the flexibility to develop their own areas of interest in agriscience, which they will then go onto develop further in elective modules. Opportunities for individual formative feedback are therefore provided to support the individual's self-motivation and reflection through the learning process.

Building on core knowledge and skills developed within Agriscience, the Animal Health and Welfare module provides students with the opportunity to apply theory and practice, work as a team, and develop research skills, communication, and strategy, relevant to key animal health and welfare science, ethics and policy development fit for the future of agriculture.

Within the Agronomy module, a group report is an opportunity to demonstrate via collaborative group work the ability to demonstrate and contextualise the key concepts and factors influencing cropping decisions, and an end of module test is designed to cover the breadth and depth of students' comprehension of soil management and crop production developed during the module.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Farm Management module will examine the current approaches to farm management and the increasing economic, social and environmental demands within agriculture while moving towards Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. Throughout the module students work towards one large, practical, applied assessment bringing toward knowledge from previous modules, to construct a sustainable farm management plan.

Within module seminars, formative exercises will be used to develop the student's confidence and competence in progression and completion of assessments. For example, students may take part in peer-to-peer learning activities, group-critiques of work in progress, presentations to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, and sessions on understanding and incorporating feedback/feed-forward. Where relevant, students will also be provided with 1-to-1 formative feedback to maximise the active learning process.

The content and skills developed over the course of the four core modules will be contextualised, enhanced, broadened and specialised by the students self-selected elective modules, comprising (one or two pieces of) subject specific, applied coursework.

Electives are designed to provide students with an opportunity to focus their studies around their future career aspirations and fine tune their expertise, but also select a broader diversity of subjects. The major agricultural challenges and opportunities are covered in depth within the elective modules as a real time response to the current and future issues within the food and farming system. This will prepare and equip students for their future career aspirations.

Students will select 4 from a large and diverse choice of Agricultural Science and Practice electives. This will deepen their knowledge and understanding of science, practice, policy and innovation that underpins humane and sustainable agricultural production resilient for the future. Indicative topics include but are not limited to emerging agricultural issues, sustainable soil management, organic systems, management of woodlands and the natural environment, and livestock system challenges and solutions.

Advice and guidance in selecting elective modules is available from the programme leader.
This programme is designed as a stepping-stone into the agricultural sector. Assessments are therefore designed to encourage students to develop and showcase their critical thinking, reflective, problem solving and thought leadership skills in evaluating and applying emerging agricultural science and practice relevant to their career aspirations in food and farming.

## Section 7 Course work grading and Feedback

Assessment is an integral part of the learning experience of students, by supporting an active and reflective learning process through formal feedback. 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. This is indicated on the assessment brief.

In addition to assigning a percentage mark to the work, the tutor adds comments; focusing on the strengths and areas for improvement. Tutors may also use probing questions to encourage self-reflection by the student. 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.

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

Candidates for the award of graduate diploma who have achieved the required credits as specified above and whose average score in the final assessment is 40% or above will be awarded a diploma.

The awards are based on overall average scores in the final assessment, as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Distinction | 70% and above |
| Merit | 60% - 69% |
| Pass | 40% - 59% |
| Fail | 0% - 39% |

## Section 8 Employability

There are many diverse career opportunities available to students in agriculture. 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.

Irrespective of the different specialisms chosen by students through their elective modules, the programme provides students with skills in critical thinking and problem solving for current and future agricultural practice. This diploma will enable students to not only acquire the most up-to-date knowledge relating to their chosen subject areas, but fundamentally use that knowledge with confidence to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing industry.

To further support and enhance student's employability, The Royal Agricultural University Enterprise and Employability team offer guidance and training events for all students. Furthermore, the Enterprise and Employability pages on gateway offer advice and resources to help plan your career and employability, including advice on creating CVs, interviews, and presentations. Sign up for the weekly e-news letter to keep up to date with part- time, full time, and temporary vacancies. A series of events are planned throughout the academic year to helped develop student's enterprise and employability skills, focused around networking, interview techniques and how to get a job in the farming sector. In addition, if you are interested in starting your own business, funding, mentoring and our Grand Idea Competition (£5,000 prize fund for the 2022/23 academic year) are also available.

Students may enter practical farming after completing the programme, although it should be noted that proven practical farming abilities may be required by some employers prior to engaging in direct production agriculture. This can be supported by accessing rural skills training at our John Oldacre Rural Innovation Centre.

Graduates with a degree and/or career experience in other fields are attractive candidates for commercial or administrative posts in industries ancillary to agriculture. Examples of past graduate employment includes:

- Farming as either Owner or Manager
- Farm Assurance Schemes
- Agricultural Sales

- Livestock feed analysis
- Crop Agronomy
- Agricultural commodity trading
- Agricultural Research
-

Other opportunities for students also include but are not limited to:

- Agricultural consultancy
- Agricultural policy makers
- Farm assurance assessors
- Sustainable agriculture in non-government organisations

## 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