The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management
(top-up)
2025-26

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26]

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) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top-up)
Final Award and exit route(s)	BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management
Programme title	BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management
Location(s) of study	The Royal Agricultural University
Full time study	1 year
Part-time study	2 years
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	September 2024 to August 2029
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)	A foundation degree or an HND award in a related subject, achieving 240 credits overall GCSE: no specific English and Mathematics requirements
UCAS Code	C1D4
Quercus Code	WCT
HECos Code	100998 - Sustainable Agriculture and Landscape Development 100864 - Ecosystem Ecology and Land Use
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	*Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food and Consumer Sciences (2019* *Bioscience (2019)* Agriculture, Rural Environmental Sciences, Animal Studies, Consumer Science, Forestry, Food, Horticulture and Human Nutrition (April 2024). QAA Subject Benchmark Statements Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 6
Approval at AQSC	16 May 2024

Version	3223 Ecological Consultancy moved to Semester 2;
	Removal of elective modules: 3239 Crop Health and Protection, 3331 Food Supply Systems and Policy, 3340 Farm Business Consultancy, 3323 Food Ethics and Governance, 3243 Statutory Valuations, 3314 Strategic Management;
	Added elective modules: 3332 Specialist Study, 3337 Sustainable Farm Management, 3342 Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Environment, 3346 Advocacy and Activism in Food and Farming

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.

BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up) (120 credits)

The accumulation of credits to include a minimum of 120 credits at Level 6 through the assessment of taught modules as detailed below.

Since the programmes key learning outcomes are met by the core modules, this gives students an opportunity to select their remaining elective modules from the wider RAU suite of module offerings. These are broadly grouped as follows:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
Level 6					
3098	Countryside & Environmental Management	6	15	Core	1
3300	Research Project / Dissertation	6	30	Core	1 +2
3333	Wildlife Behaviour & Evaluation	6	15	Core	2
3223	Ecological Consultancy	6	15	Core	2
Plus, two elective modules in semester 1 and one elective in semester 2 from the list below:					
3329	Climate Change & Natural Resource Management	6	15	Elective	1
3332	Specialist Study	6	15	Elective	1
3090	Forestry & Woodland Management	6	15	Elective	1
3337	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Elective	1
3080	Heritage Property	6	15	Elective	1
3342	Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Environment	6	15	Elective	2
3330	Technology and Agroecological Innovations	6	15	Elective	2
3346	Advocacy and Activism in Food and Farming	6	15	Elective	2

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
	Total Credits: BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up)		**120**		

Students studying the BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up) part time over 2 years will study the following modules in each year of study:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Year 1					
3098	Countryside & Environmental Management	6	15	Core	1
3333	Wildlife Behaviour & Evaluation	6	15	Core	2
Plus, one elective module in each semester from the list below:					
3329	Climate Change & Natural Resource Management	6	15	Elective	1
3332	Specialist Study	6	15	Elective	1
3090	Forestry & Woodland Management	6	15	Elective	1
3337	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Elective	1
3080	Heritage Property	6	15	Elective	1
3342	Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Environment	6	15	Elective	2
3330	Technology and Agroecological Innovations	6	15	Elective	2
3346	Advocacy and Activism in Food and Farming	6	15	Elective	2
Year 2					
3300	Research Project / Dissertation	6	30	Core	1+2
3223	Ecological Consultancy	6	15	Core	2
Plus, one elective module in semester 1 from the list below:					
3329	Climate Change & Natural Resource Management	6	15	Elective	1
3090	Forestry & Woodland Management	6	15	Elective	1
3337	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Elective	1
	Total Credits: BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up)		**120**		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme aims

The key aim of the BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (WCT) programme is to equip graduates with the necessary skills and attributes to become **professional conservation specialists with wildlife and countryside management and expertise working in the rural sector**. The one-year full-time programme is built on the latest research and developments in the land-based sector, incorporating the RAU's expertise. Extensive use of the various industry contacts is also made, exposing our students to current best practice enacted by practitioners on the ground. Part-time students will integrate into their year 1 and 2 core modules, these being structured to

progressively support students in their studies (e.g. Specialist Study module in year 1 building research ideas, followed by the Dissertation module in year 2).

The programme also aligns with the fundamental RAU core purpose of 'care for the land' emphasizing the significance of the 'environmental' pillar of sustainability in our curriculum provision (Figure 1). The effective conservation of species, ecosystems and natural resources is vital for future sustainable development and regenerative management. On this programme you will gain the academic knowledge, applied ecological theory and extensive hands-on field experience needed to evaluate and manage habitats, conserving its wildlife. It will also give an in depth understanding about how wildlife and conservation can work alongside farming and agricultural systems exploring ways of achieving win-win outcomes, benefitting all.

This programme has also been specifically designed to foster greater knowledge and awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each of which have been embedded within the learning outcomes of all modules. The 17 SDGs have been set by the United Nations General Assembly and are designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" to be achieved by 2030. In addition, the programmes have been designed and are delivered in ways that widen diversity opportunities, enabling us to access the best talent. As such equality, diversity and inclusivity are integral both in the recruitment process, as well as in the teaching and learning. Staff undertake regular CPD to reinforce and support such approaches.

Specifically, the programme incorporates a range of core and elective modules. Each of these give in depth insights into why the countryside is as it is today, how this has come about and why, what is special about key aspects of the countryside and why such things are worth preserving and conserving. The modules give students an understanding of what it is like to work and operate in this land-based sector, building an appreciation of how dynamic and changeable it can be, and how they need to keep up with a multitude of ongoing problems and issues which can be quite changeable. These can include issues related to policy (e.g. implications of Brexit on environmental legislation), biophysical issues (e.g. challenges of ecological connectivity at the landscape scale), climate change (e.g. effects of a changing climate on wildlife and habitats), efficacy of management (e.g. finding the best ways to manage special ecosystems), social issues (e.g. exploring how different people can get the best from the countryside), development (e.g. steering ways through building projects with minimal environmental impact) etc.

The University intends that the following capability statements will provide an overarching framework for all its graduates, and inform specific course aims and outcomes. Thus, the University expects that all graduates will:

- (a) Apply creative, critical and compassionate thinking processes to social and organisational issues
- (b) Develop communication abilities using people, ideas, texts, media and technology
- (c) Work with, manage and lead others in ways which value their diversity and equality and which facilitates their contribution to the organisation and the wider community
- (d) Acquire and apply appropriate management, technical and practical skills and knowledge
- (e) Recognise and accept continuing learning as being central to one's capacity to realise potential

(f)   Develop, express and be able to defend personal values, beliefs and ethics

(g)   Hold a perspective which acknowledges local, national and international issues

(h)   Value a citizenship role which is connected to and responsible for the social, environmental, political and economic systems in which we live

In relation to the above general capability statements, the BSc Honours in Wildlife and Countryside Management aims to:

(a)   Develop the learner's interest in and knowledge and understanding of the policies and drivers for change affecting the natural landscape, ecosystems and species, and influencing the businesses, organisations and agencies associated with the management, conservation and utilisation of natural resources

(b)   Provide the opportunity for the individual study of particular interest and for self-expression through the Honours dissertation

(c)   Further develop critical learning skills and transferable skills to prepare the learner for graduate employment

(d)   Enhance and develop the learner's communication and interpersonal skills

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

The programme content and module detail has been carefully aligned to the 17 Sustainability Development Goals, each of which are addressed throughout. As might be expected there is particular emphasis on the SDG 14 'life on the land, SDG 13 'climate action', SDG 4 'quality education', but other SDGs also strongly feature across the programme content too (see also Section 5 for examples). Students are asked to develop thought processes that evaluate how the things they are taught and are learning about sit within the economic, environmental and social sustainability framework.

Section 5 – Programme intended learning outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	Critically evaluate environmental policies and pressures affecting the countryside and landscape (SDGs 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15)	3098, 3223, 3300, 3329, 3090, 3346
2.	Identify and assess appropriate solutions to environmental problems (SDGs 7, 11, 13, 17)	3223, 3098, 3300, 3333
3.	Apply an in depth understanding of sustainability in justifying environmental management and conservation of environmental resources (SDGs 15, 16, 17, 13)	3098, 3223, 3090, 3330

	Knowledge and Understanding	
4.	Consider and assess the interface between ecological conservation and farming and development. (SDGs 15 16, 17)	3098, 3333, 3330 3337
5.	Critically evaluate the roles and responsibilities of regulatory and advisory bodies (SDGs 16, 17)	3098, 3223, 3346

	Intellectual, Professional, Key skills	
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	Apply an in depth understanding of subject-specific theories, concepts and principles	3222, 3333, 3332
2.	Demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of the skills necessary for academic study and enquiry	3333, 3300, 3300
3.	Critically assemble, evaluate and research a wide variety of types of information and evidence	3333, 3300, 3300, 3332
4.	Develop and utilise problem-solving skills	3098, 3300

	Programme specific skills	
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	Design, plan and execute an independent research enquiry	3300, 3332
2.	Conduct an environmental/ ecological assessment	3223, 3333
3.	Identify key issues, themes and developments in areas of interest and concern	3098, 3300, 3332
4.	Critically evaluate verbal and written communication to inform environmental/ ecological decision making	3098, 3223, 3332

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

This is a one-year only level 6 BSc (Hons) programme, sometimes referred to as a 'top-up', designed as a progression pathway for those aligned and subject related 2-year foundation degrees or HNDs (e.g. the RAU's FdSc Wildlife Conservation & Countryside Management). As well as the 1-year full-time option, the programme can also be studied part-time over a 2-year period. The academic year is between September and June and is split into two semesters.

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 group settings. For each week every module has a teaching allocation of 3 hours which is split between 1 hour online and 2 hours of

face-to-face teaching. Students will be expected to engage with the upfront, online material posted on the virtual learning environment (VLE, known as the module Gateway pages). This can include online pre-recorded lectures, reference papers for consideration, example case studies to evaluate in advance, Q&A exercises etc. This upfront material 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

The 2-hour face to face seminar, also in the same week, then follows up with the online material, engaging students in various ways to reinforce teaching and learning experience. These seminars:

- Allow students to express their views
- Enable academic interaction
- Facilitate discussions
- Provide opportunities to practice presentations
- Encourage structured research
- Enable sharing and diversification of information and experience
- Introduce group work and develop team works skills

In addition, visits and demonstrations also take a variety of forms on campus activities and survey, hosted visits to nature reserves, farms, and laboratory practicals. These form important parts of overall programme provision and help to reinforce and apply the subject principles received through lectures and seminars.

Students are also 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.

Students attempting to shortcut their learning activities may find themselves experiencing difficulties as each module progresses, especially as the level of assumed understanding builds over time. 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 assessments.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The programme has six modules each of which has a 15-credit allocation, except for the 3300 Research Project/ Dissertation module which is 30 credits and is taught across both semesters. The 15 credit modules are split between semesters with 12 weeks teaching periods and 2 weeks of assessment for each. 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 for full time, and half of this for part-time.

A range of assessment approaches are applied throughout the programme to test learning outcomes of each module. Alongside the actual assessments, provision is made to support students in how they tackle each of the assessments. This includes formative assessment work and the evaluations of example assignments in which critical assessments are made. All assessments will be clearly identified on the VLE/ Gateway pages for each module, and could include:

- 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
- 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 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%.

Overall, the programme is assessed:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 3	20.67%	79.33%	0.00%	0.00%	2.5%	97.50%

Section 8 – 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, tutors provide written feedback for all assessments which normally includes the strengths and weaknesses of the piece as well as advice about improving the work. Individual feedback is provided within 20-working days of the deadline for submission. 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 9 – RAU Graduate Framework

At the RAU we have chosen five values to underpin our learning community. These are the values which we will all work by and for which we want the RAU to be known for. We aim for our graduates to be:

Collaborative
We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.

Open-minded
We are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.

Resourceful
We adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.

Responsible
Individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.

Inclusive
We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.
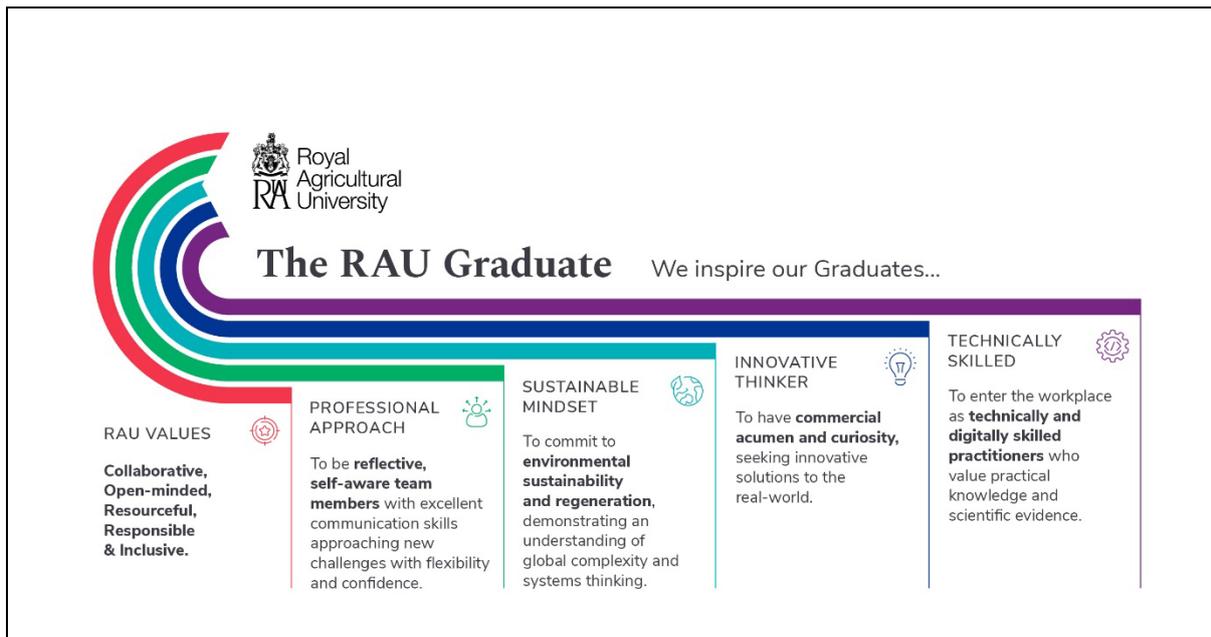
Section 10 - Progression

Employability of RAU graduates is excellent and there are many diverse career opportunities available to the students across the land-based sector. 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.

Our graduates have gone on to pursue careers with nationally recognised organisations and in roles such as:

- Countryside Ranger
- Wildlife Reserve Manager
- Ecological Surveyor/ Consultant
- Conservation / Biodiversity Officer
- Farming and Wildlife Advisor
- Environmental Education Officer

The programme has developed strong linkages with a wide number and range of conservation and environmental organisations including the Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Cotswold Conservation Board (AONB), Butterfly Conservation, various Ecological Consultancies, Local Authorities, amongst many others. Students have multiple opportunities to meet with representatives from the sector during field visits and guest lecture presentations etc.

The programme also provides a step towards higher-degree study and research levels such as MSc and PhD, research programmes, and other opportunities in academia.

Students also have access to the RAU's Rural Innovation Centre which provides accredited practical land-based skills training courses, either free of charge (bursary dependent) or at a reduced rate, to enable them to obtain relevant competency certificates, for example Tractor and Quad Bike Driving, Telehandler, Chainsaw and Brushcutter courses,

Hedgelaying and Drystone Walling courses etc. Such accredited courses are highly valued by employers working in the land-based sector.

Section 11 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

The University is offering a wide range of support to all RAU students including practical advice & guidance as well as emotional support.

Disability & neurodiversity support

We support students with a range of disabilities, learning difficulties, and other health and mental health conditions, helping them to access funding via the Disabled Students Allowance .

When you tell us about a disability, you will be offered support based on your specific needs which can include:

- **Alternative exam arrangements** such as extra time, rest breaks, or a smaller room.
- **Access to support workers** such as study skills tutors, specialist mentors, readers and scribes.

Mental health Support
We are also here to support students with the ups and downs of university life, offering drop-in sessions, providing expert advice and support for students in crisis or with more complex needs, and together the team runs events and campaigns throughout the year to encourage positive wellbeing.

We also can help students to access external counselling sessions and these are generally delivered in collaboration with our long-term partners at Cotswold Counselling.

Academic Support Tutor Programme
Students have access to the Academic Support Tutor (AST) programme which provides high quality academic support for students. ATS provide timetabled group tutorials, and individual support for students most at risk. Group tutorials focus on providing high quality academic support at the appropriate academic level; advice and guidance in relation to the course; and advice about making study choices on the course (commensurate with the supporting AST Handbook). Individual support focus on student continuation (commensurate with The Team around the RAU Student spheres of integration student retention model) and may be in person or online.

Section 12 – 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 Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Delegates from programme committees
- Feedback from Student-Staff Liaison committees
- Annual Programme Monitoring