

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

Integrated Foundation Year

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 they take 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

Criteria	Details
Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University
Subject Area	ASP/LPM
Entry Award(s)	N/A
Final Award and exit route(s)	Degree programmes with an Integrated Foundation Year are accessed as an extended programme of study, and students are enrolled on the full integrated degree programme.
Programme title	Integrated Foundation Year (IFY)
Location(s) of study	RAU, Cirencester
Full time study	1 year
Part-time study	N/A
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	September 2025 to August 2031
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	None currently but full programmes of study will include accreditation as applicable to the 3-year degree awards.
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>Required: 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-Level: (Example grades EEE) – minimum of 48 UCAS tariff points from level 3 qualifications • C&G Advanced Technical/BTEC - Level 3 Extended Diploma (1080) at Pass-Pass-Pass • International Baccalaureate: 24 points • Access to Higher Education: Pass course with 45 credits at level 3 (Pass in Functional Skills level 2 are accepted in lieu of GCSE English & Mathematics) <p>Flexible entry</p> <p>The University welcomes interest from applicants who may not have the standard entry requirements. A wide range of qualifications and experience are accepted in order to join University degree programmes. The University always considers evidence of personal, professional (APL) and educational experience, (APEL), which show an ability to meet the demands of their intended programme of study.</p>
UCAS Code	<p>L8N3: BSc/BA (Hons) Environment and Sustainability with IFY</p> <p>D701: BSc (Hons) Agriculture with IFY</p> <p>DN83: BSc (Hons) Agricultural Business Management with IFY</p>

	N503: BSc (Hons) Business Management with IFY D323: BSc (Hons) Equine Science and Business with IFY N209: BSc (Hons) Real Estate with IFY N230: BSc (Hons) Rural Land Management with IFY
Quercus Code	IFY0
HECos Code	N/a
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	The design and development of the IFY has been informed by review of a range of equivalent programmes offered nationally. Each complete programme is devised with reference to the subject benchmarks relevant to the discipline to which students enrol and to which they will progress. As the IFY provision is common to all programmes, the subject specific content will be directed but student-led. The Integrated Foundation Year is benchmarked to be broadly consistent with level 3 and BTec equivalents but no credit at that level is awarded.
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Introductory to level 4
Approval at AQSC	27 Nov 2024 (Chair's action)
Version	V1 V2 – accessibility amendments

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.

Integrated Foundation Year (120 credits)

Level 0

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
0IFY20	Land-use and Management	0	20	Core	1&2
0IFY21	Countryside Evolution and Development	0	20	Core	1&2
0IFY22	Enterprise and Marketing	0	20	Core	1&2
0IFY23	Land-based Data Handling	0	20	Core	1&2
0IFY24	Food and Farming	0	20	Core	1&2
0IFY25	Developing your Skills	0	20	Core	1&2
	Total credits: Integrated Foundation Year		120		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme aims

The RAU's Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) aims to provide an entry level course of study for students equipping them with the necessary skills to enable them to go on to excel on their chosen honour's degrees. The programme offers a stepping stone to students that do not meet the entry requirements for their chosen degree and also an opportunity to students who wish to return to study if they earned their qualifications a while ago.

Aligned to the University's Farm and Food Strategy the IFY enables and supports students that are looking to change professional or study direction and move into land and rural based subject areas. The IFY programme is integrated across all of the RAU's parent degrees thus students that enrol to the IFY with a degree course in one subject, are able to change their degree course after completion of the IFY to another subject area. For example, students enrol on to the BSc (Hons) Agriculture and change to BSc (Hons) Real Estate. This flexibility is unique to the IFY at the RAU and provides students with the assurance that they are not tied to studying a particular honours degree when they start the foundation year.

All degrees at the RAU require the development of a range of skills including analytical, scientific and business skills, understanding the complexities of markets, navigating the changes occurring in the countryside, sustainability and the environment, innovation and creativity and the development of IT skills. The range of modules provided by the IFY helps students to develop these skills by offering a diverse and broad array of teaching content in the context of agriculture, business, enterprise, environment, equine, real estate and land management. The programme aims to support students so that by the end of the programme they are confident people and learners. We aspire to harness the existing passion and drive of our foundation year students so that by the time they begin the level four modules of their honours degree programmes they are well equipped, able and identifiable having completed the foundation year at the RAU.

Students undertake a range of trips and visits to embed their learning, such as visiting land reforestation schemes that highlight changes to land management and the impact on the environment. Similarly, students will undertake visits to local farms enabling them to explore how these enterprises are responding to the changing requirements of markets. Or, right on our doorstep, a visit to the RAU's own equestrian centre will provide insight and learning into how this commercial unit is run on a day-to-day basis.

The use of information technology runs through the heart of the IFY modules aiming to equip students with the skills they need for their careers when they graduate from the RAU. We aim to ensure students are able to use Microsoft office suite packages (word, excel, PowerPoint) and Panopto video software, in addition to the ethical application of AI. We develop these skills in class through a range of activities e.g. by researching a given case study (using AI software for example) and reporting back to the class using one of the tools described above (e.g. PowerPoint), or developing an infographic to communicate key information on a subject/topic.

The range of assessment criteria utilised in the IFY modules lead to students building skills that they require to excel in their parent degrees. Assessments include self-recorded video presentations equipping students with important presentation skills both for their degree but also as an important part of the job application process. Students will undertake group work in teams as part of their assignments, developing core team working skills. The collection

and presentation of data is also a key component of assessment reflecting the need for students to develop analytical and criticality skills.

Students are taught together from across the parent degree programme cohort and as a result there is significant opportunity for cross-subject learning.

Modules are backed by research-informed teaching enabling students to assimilate the essential skills they will need for employment, including problem solving and decision making, critical thinking and analysis, communication, collaboration and teamwork.

Students on the IFY programme will have ample opportunity to explore their individual interests to develop projects that will develop both their skills and their scholarship. There are numerous opportunities and ways for students to develop their own projects including talking to the range of academic specialists that we have at the RAU as well as visits to the RAU's own equestrian centre and vineyard.

The IFY programme enables the university and its students to work together to broaden and diversify our reach and develop an inclusive student community. This accords with one of the University core aims of quality across our teaching, research and engagement.

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

Being a broad introduction to a number of the foundation principles related to the parent honours degrees at the RAU, the IFY stitches together a number of key elements that are aligned to several of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDG's). For example, the module, agriculture and farming introduces students to the core principles of animal and plant science which are the building blocks for the development of practices for sustainable food production and resilient agricultural practices (target 2.4) while the module, changes in the countryside explores changes in land use and what this means for the development of rural businesses (target 8.2). The land related studies module explores specifically SDG 15 – life on land – and introduces students to the many and diverse ways in which land is utilised. Across the programme the aim is to offer quality education to students reflecting SDG 4, specifically, target (4.3).

Section 5 – Programme intended learning outcomes

The aim of the integrated foundation year is to prepare students for study at level 4 of their chosen parent honours degree programme. The specific objectives to achieve that aim are to:

- provide a common core of academic and study skills sufficient to prepare students for subsequent study and academic success at undergraduate level;
- provide students with core underpinning knowledge, skills and understanding in key areas of contemporary issues;
- provide underpinning subject-related skills and knowledge in key areas required for undergraduate study;
- provide generic skills and academic knowledge to support student confidence and discipline as appropriate for HE study;

- provide some level of appropriate subject-specific grounding, in terms of research topics and study focus, to support progression into degree level study in the specialist subject area of the intended degree award.

On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to demonstrate the following Learning Outcomes (LOs):

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key factors influencing the management of the rural landscape	0IFY20
2.	Describe how to collect and apply data in the decision making and management process of both semi-natural and human made environments	0IFY23
3.	Explain the business skills necessary to enable the development of rural enterprises	0IFY22
4.	Explain the role of land utilisation within the rural economy and its impact on the stakeholders	0IFY20
5.	Describe the factors affecting countryside management and changes in land use	0IFY21
6.	Explain the factors affecting successful enterprises and how to make sound marketing decisions	0IFY22
7.	Interpret and describe the factors influencing conservation, ecology, climate change and the environment	0IFY23
8.	Interpret and communicate knowledge of key scientific principles underpinning animal and plant science	0IFY24

Intellectual, Professional, Key Skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Communicate and present the results of studies accurately and reliably	0IFY23
2.	Interpret and make arguments to support the use of evidence to justify differing viewpoints	0IFY20
3.	Record and explain the different approaches to solving problems	0IFY24
4.	Accurately and reliably record and handle data and information as a part of the decision-making process	0IFY23
5.	Select appropriate resources and materials and accurately record them	0IFY21
6.	Participate in team working and interpret the necessary skills to be a team member	0IFY21

Programme Specific Skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Identify and communicate the key academic and personal skills necessary for the pursuit of an undergraduate programme of study	0IFY25
2.	Work independently, demonstrating their initiative	0IFY20
3.	Work collaboratively as part of a wider team	0IFY21
4.	Plan and undertake an independent project on a topic relevant to their area of interest	0IFY25
5.	Demonstrate time and priorities/organisational management skills	0IFY23
6.	Review their own skills set and identify the gaps for future development	0IFY25

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

The programme is delivered according to the current model for teaching at the RAU through the availability of online content to prepare for a range of face-to-face mixed methods of teaching, with the introduction of a new theme or topic each week although sometimes single topics can be spread over more than one week. This can be via pre-recorded Panopto lectures, journal articles, chapters or parts of chapters of books to read, and relevant videos. The remaining two thirds of teaching is delivered in weekly, 2 hourly face-to-face seminars where students are engaged in a range of activities or tasks/discussions/independent or group work. The materials for both the 1-hour asynchronous teaching and 2-hour face-to-face seminars are provided via the RAU's Gateway or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Some parts of modules are also taught via the use of laboratory practicals and this will be further enhanced from the 2025/26 academic year with the construction of our new land laboratory teaching centre.

A range of visits and trips are also organised enabling students to embed their learning in real world environments. The RAU is in the fortunate position of being able to access a large range of farm and rural businesses, and has access to a number of different landscapes on our doorstep.

Academics use a wide range of technology to support their teaching and learning, whether that is the use of specific software for the handling of data or the use of technology such as Vevox, mind mapping and Padlett.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The breadth of the IFY programme means that there are a range of assessments. These vary from individual and team presentations, reports, essays and problem sheets, infographics and recorded video pitches and individual e-skills portfolios and independent project work.

Students are prepared for assessments via formative activities to help them develop their skills ahead of the summative assessments. For example, where an assessment requires a team submission, activities practising teamwork are undertaken prior to the formal assignment deadline. Students are provided with individual feedback to support them in the

development of the skills necessary for the completion of the summative assignments. The programme also encourages and supports students to undertake continuous assessment of their skills via assessment, enabling students to reflect on the development and progress of their knowledge.

The summative assignments lead to a grade (0-100 %) and formal written or verbal feedback via the Turnitin or Moodle software. Where live presentations are undertaken, students can be given 'instant' feedback. Students are required to pass the modules by obtaining a grade of 40% or above. Students acquiring a grade of 50-59% are awarded a good pass; 60-69% a very good pass; 70-79%, excellent and 80-100%, outstanding. Students failing a module without extenuating circumstances will be able to re-sit the module. Students passing all of their modules will be considered as passing the programme and given an automatic place on their parent honours degree programme of choice.

Overall, the programme is assessed through*:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Coursework	Practical
Year 1	35.50%	64.50%	0.00%	8.33%	91.67%	0.00%

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).

Though students' individual module assessments are marked based on criteria for pass, merit and distinction, students attain the programme on a pass/fail basis.

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. The Integrated Foundation Year programme embeds these values by the way in which we approach our teaching and learning on the programme as we work collaboratively with students as co-learners, ensuring that we take an open-minded approach to exploring the subjects and topics on the programme as well as enabling creativity. The programme encourages students to listen to each other to enable successful engagement by all on the

programme without fear nor favour. Accordingly, 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.

The values described above are embodied in our graduate framework where we inspire our graduates to have developed, by the time they leave the RAU, a professional approach; to have a sustainable mindset; to be innovative thinkers and to be technically skilled. All of the IFY programme's modules have the graduate framework embedded in their design and we aspire to introduce our foundation year students to this framework as they begin their academic journey at the RAU.

The Graduate Framework



Section 10 – Progression

As the IFY provides the bridge to all of the RAU's parent undergraduate degrees the range of graduate destinations is broad but a small selection includes agronomists, nutritionists, geneticists, farm managers, food supply chain account managers, traders, climate strategists, sustainability consultants, stud managers, journalists, land and property consultants and auctioneers.

All of the undergraduate honours degree programmes of study have been separately and successfully validated to prepare students for progression into the labour market, postgraduate study and/or enterprise after leaving higher education.

Section 11 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

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. AST 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