

# The Royal Agricultural University

## Programme Specification:

### **Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology**

**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 Specifications.

## Section 1 – Material Programme Information

| Criteria   | Details  |
|--|--|
| Validating body  | The Royal Agricultural University  |
| Teaching Institution   | The Royal Agricultural University  |
| Subject Area   | Shenyang University  |
| Entry Award(s)   | Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology   |
| Final Award and exit route(s)  | Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology   |
| Programme title  | Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology   |
| Location(s) of study   | Shenyang University (SYU)  |
| Part time study  | 24 months  |
| Part-time study  | N/a  |
| Language of study  | English  |
| Programme start month  | September  |
| Period of validation   | September 2024 – 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) | <p>A minimum of GPA 2.6 which is equivalent to 2.2 honours degree from a UK university.</p> <p>Mature candidates with significant relevant work experience and lower academic qualifications may also be considered for entry, following interview with the programme leaders. English language at or above equivalent IELTS score of 6.5 average with no element below 5.5.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Obtained first degree in an English-speaking country.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Pass RAU internal integrated English language proficiency (EAP reading and writing) test 60%.</p> <p>English language tests usually have a validity of 2 years from the date the test is taken.</p> |
| Non-standard application   | We welcome applications from applicants with non-standard qualifications who are able to demonstrate knowledge, experience and skills developed in the workplace or elsewhere and which are relevant to the programme of study. Applicants will need to use their personal statement to provide further details supported by a CV. All non-standard applications will be considered by the Programme Leader on a case-by-case basis and applicants can expect that an interview may be required as part of the admissions process.   |
| Interviews   | Interviews are usually required for non-standard applications.   |
| UCAS Code  | N/A  |
| Quercus Code   | SYURM  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points          | This Postgraduate Certificate programme has been designed to meet <u>Subject Benchmark Statements</u> :<br>Master Degree- Characteristic Statement (Feb 2020)<br>Earth Sciences, Environmental Science and Environmental Studies (March 2022)<br><br><a href="https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements">https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements</a> |
| Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) | Level 7  |
| Approval at AQSC   | May 2024   |
| 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.

This programme has been designed for 24 months, a part time mode, to accommodate the situation of candidates who are either running their own businesses or employed. In the first semester of year one, students will focus on learning English for Academic Purpose (EAP) to improve their English proficiency.

### Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology (60 credits)

The accumulation of 60 credits through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

#### Year 1 Semester 1 (Feb – July):

Students will undertake English language studies

#### Year 1 Semester 2 (Sept – Dec)

| Module code | Module title                    | Credit value | Semester | Level | Core/ Elective |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| SY4000      | Research Skills for Publication | 15           | 2        | 7     | Core           |

#### Year 2 Semester 1 (Feb – July)

| Module code | Module title | Credit value | Semester | Level | Core/ Elective |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------|-------|----------------|
|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------|-------|----------------|

|        |  |    |   |   |      |
|--------|--|----|---|---|------|
| SY4001 | Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture | 15 | 1 | 7 | Core |
| SY4002 | Climate Change and Sustainability                    | 15 | 1 | 7 | Core |

### **Year 2 Semester 2 (Sept – Dec/Jan)**

| <b>Module code</b> | <b>Module title</b>  | <b>Credit value</b> | <b>Semester</b> | <b>Level</b> | <b>Core/ Elective</b> |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| SY4003             | Integrated Agricultural Systems                              | 15                  | 2               | 7            | Core                  |
|                    | <b>Total Credits: PG Certificate in Research Methodology</b> | <b>60</b>           |                 |              |                       |

### **Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims**

The PGCert programme will equip the students with the knowledge and expertise needed to produce scientific publications and their understanding of the research process. The certificate course comprises four modules: SY4000 Research Skills for Publication; SY4001 Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture; SY4002 Climate Change and Sustainability; and SY4003 Integrated Agricultural Systems. The summative assessments of the latter 3 modules (SY4001, SY4002, SY4003) are closely related to the expectations set out in SY4000 Research Skills for Publication.

To achieve this SY4000 will introduce students to the standard journal submission expectations including but not limited to: article format (e.g. we will use Introduction, Background, Methodology, Data, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliography); referencing styles (we will use APA 7 for assessment); ethics in research (e.g. plagiarism, falsification, the use of ai); and writing the complete submission in English. Then the 3 modules (SY4001, SY4002, SY4003) will adopt these expectations for their assessment.

It is important to understand that the research proposal in SY4000 Research Skills for Publication, is an academic exercise at the start of their studies. The 3 modules (SY4001, SY4002, SY4003) are designed to then broaden the students understanding of global issues allowing students to gain perspective when they publish papers. The final paper they publish may consequently have no relationship to their initial research proposal developed in SY4000.

The course will cover the key topics in recent years, using examples and case studies to foster students' engagement through real-world issues. On successful completion of this programme, not only will students have learned the theory, knowledge, tools and techniques required to embark on publication, but they are also awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology, a significant University award in its own right.

Over recent years, the impact of climate change and concerns about the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture have risen on the global agenda, as many people continue to

experience the fragility of food supply chains and devastating environmental, social and economic crises. The Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology course, along with research skills training, is specifically designed to address complex issues associated with food security, food transformation and sustainable food production in a global context. The programme uses case studies to develop knowledge and understanding of research methodology, with modules which will be grounded in specific teaching of the skills for focus, editing and comprehensive theme development throughout an article. It engages with theory, concepts and approaches to food production; explores viable solutions to sustainable agriculture and food security from alternative contexts and scenarios; and is relevant to local and international graduates.

The programme attracts students from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and ages. Participant diversity is an important dynamic in this programme and plays a key role in discussing and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related to food, farming and environment. This diversity encourages new and alternative ways of rethinking agricultural and food systems, improving livelihoods and protecting the environment. Students within the programme learn key competencies that are relevant to public administration, international development/funding agencies, research and business sectors.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology programme benefits from research-led teaching from key members of the following RAU's research groups: Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture, Livestock Health and Welfare, Food Safety, Environment, and Soil Health. The programme modules and the delivery styles encourage students to reflect upon the discipline content and to practically apply the concepts learnt to real-world issues. The use of global examples, opportunities to discuss and debate theory and current issues with peers, and the use of industry experts provide students with a plurality of opportunities and challenges in today's changing world.

| Each module will address the following pillars: |                               | Assessment criteria   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Inspire   | Peer-to-peer learning         | Awareness of existing best knowledge systems and practice, and identification of opportunities to improve sustainable agriculture and environment management at various scales i.e., locally, nationally and internationally. |
| Reflect   | Apply to your situation       | Critically and logically review and apply to specific contexts.   |
| Innovate  | Use evidence-based approaches | Propose innovative solutions to challenges at various scales i.e., locally, nationally and internationally through review of existing knowledge systems and evaluation of innovations.  |
| Lead  | teamwork and group activities | Practice team motivation, skills, experience and leadership mind-set in the adoption of innovation plans  |

## Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

This programme design is incorporating emerging technologies, and the modules contents are covering 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Food and Farming Strategy which support the UN's Envision 2030 agenda of no poverty, zero hunger, quality education and climate action.

## Section 5 – Programme intended learning outcomes

The aims and objectives of the programme align with the RAU's vision to support a world where all communities thrive in harmony with nature; and a mission to equip a new generation of scholars to thrive through change. In all, our purpose is to cultivate care for the land and all who depend upon it. The programme is made up of the modules listed in section 2 and these have been mapped against the following programme learning outcomes.

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.     | Critically evaluate the principles of agricultural production for both large- and small-scale systems    | SY4003, SY4001         |
| 2.     | Critically evaluate issues of sustainable development considering people, place and planet.              | SY4003, SY4001, SY4002 |
| 3.     | Appraise the complex issues of sustainable management of natural resources.                              | SY4003                 |
| 4.     | Classify and evaluate the impacts of climate science and change on agricultural systems and food supply. | SY4003, SY4002, SY4001 |
| 5.     | Establish and evaluate factors influencing the provision of food quality, supply and security.           | SY4001, SY4003         |
| 6.     | Ascertain and evaluate the processes of policy formulation in agriculture and food production.           | SY4003                 |

### Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

| LO no. | On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:  | Module Code/s  |
|--------|---|----------------|
| 1.     | Lead and manage time and resources appropriately in both individual and team situations to enable successful project delivery.  | SY4000, SY4003 |
| 2.     | Develop lifelong skills of synthesis and analysis of data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evaluate solutions to complex practical problems and policy challenges. | SY4000         |

|    |  |                   |
|----|--|-------------------|
| 3. | Evaluate, cite and reference sources of data and information with academic integrity in an appropriate manner whilst ensuring the avoidance of plagiarism.   | SY4000            |
| 4. | Critically and creatively think, design and analyse an investigation to test a hypothesis, including collecting appropriate results, analysing data and presenting conclusions using a variety of methods. | SY4000            |
| 5. | Demonstrate leadership skills to critically access situations for addressing diverse organisational, business and social issues.   | SY4000,<br>SY4001 |
| 6. | Demonstrate time and resource management skills in both individual and team situations to enable successful project delivery.  | SY4000,<br>SY4003 |

### Programme specific skills

| <b>LO no.</b> | On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:  | <b>Module Code/s</b> |
|---------------|---|----------------------|
| 1.            | Appreciate the role of self-reflection and critical analysis in one's own and others' personal attributes for a range of situations including resilience, open-mindedness, reflection, ethical consideration, motivation, professional behaviours, and employability. | SY4000,<br>SY4003    |
| 2.            | Demonstrate understanding of complex information analysis to influence decisions and policy within a range of political, economic, and social systems and institutions for strategic decision making.   | SY4000,<br>SY4003    |
| 3.            | Appraise and develop project management solutions for sustainable agricultural and food assessments by effectively analysing and reporting results and findings, within the scope of research.  | SY4000,<br>SY4001    |
| 4.            | Design effective communication tools and strategies through a variety of mediums on food and agricultural topics for a wide range of audiences.   | SY4000,<br>SY4001    |

### Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

The format of the programme is a mixture of residential learning and flipped classroom learning approaches supported by a range of learning materials and supporting activities provided on the RAU International Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), including videos, webinars, quizzes, podcasts and other relevant presentations.

The delivery is through a combination of lectures, seminars, speakers, case studies, workshops and with activities presented through the VLE.

Teaching will include group discussions, tutorials, facilitated discussions, workshops, guided independent study, and a research project. Assessment will be a combination of written exam and coursework, ranging from formative group presentations and summative individual essays.

Each module is supported by a comprehensive resource list that is maintained through the RAU Library Talis system.

### **Teaching mode:**

As indicated by the survey of the Ministry of Education in China, the target students of the course are those who are running their own businesses or employed. Therefore, face to face teaching has been carefully designed to teach at the weekends to accommodate the needs of these students.

In the first semester of year one, students will focus on learning English for Academic Purpose (EAP) to improve their English proficiency.

In semesters two (year one) and three (semester one of year two), the teaching mode will be conducted over an 8-week period per module, i.e., Preparation (2wks), teaching (3 weekends, Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday), formative assessment (2wks) and summative assessment (1wk).

During preparation weeks, based on the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), lecturers will provide assessment briefs, set up all reading materials, pre-recorded videos, and tasks on international VLE module page, and prepare students for self-study.

The aim of the three weekends face to face teaching is to ensure students have understood and learnt all intended learning outcomes following the structured preparation weeks. There are 14 hours face to face teaching each weekend, i.e. Friday evening 2 hours, Saturday 6 hours and Sunday 6 hours. Teaching will include group discussions, tutorials, facilitated discussions, workshops to meet intended learning outcomes of each module.

During the formative two weeks, students will discuss questions with fellow students and lecturers through module page forum, email and/or face to face communications. During this period, lecturers will set up proper formative assessments to monitor student learning and provide ongoing feedback that can help students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas to achieve the course intended learning outcomes. More importantly, a series of module content-relevant seminars will be scheduled and delivered by members of SYU industry partners who are all local, national or international successful entrepreneurs. In addition to supporting achievement of the students ILOs, these will also support their future career development.

In the last week students will be able to complete their summative assessments ready for submission.

### **Section 7 – Approach to Assessment**

Assessments are designed to appraise individual capabilities fairly and consistently, using clear, descriptive assessment guidelines (made available to students) to grade coursework and examinations and to aid classification. Lecturers communicate their expectations clearly to students and use explicit schema to facilitate consistency of marking within and between modules and to provide constructive feedback on individual performance. All examinations and coursework assessments that contribute to degree classifications are subject to scrutiny by the External Examiners.

Assessments are designed to test analytical and other cognitive capabilities in relation to each module's aims and content. Coursework assignments such as individual essays, reports,



case study analyses, individual and group-based reports, presentations, and various technique-oriented assessments are used to examine these skills.

In every module, high value is placed on students demonstrating effective communication in its various forms. This priority is reflected not only in how assignments are specified, but also in how they are marked. A good command of written and spoken English is vital for work-based projects and graduate employment.

The standard journal expectations concerning submission (e.g. format, referencing, etc) taught in SY4000, will form the basis of any large scale written summative expectations in the other 3 modules (SY4001, SY4002, SY4003).

Some modules may have a teamwork requirement and/or formative group assignments, and these will be assessed via presentations and reports. All group assignments allow for an element of individual assessment, to recognise differences in individual performance, which will be weighted at 10%, and will help to demonstrate individual contributions. Peer feedback can also play a significant part in team activities and is encouraged.

Overall, the programme is taught and assessed through\*:

|        | <b>Learning and Teaching</b> |             |           | <b>Assessment</b> |           |            |
|--------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
|        | Directed                     | Independent | Placement | Exam              | Practical | Coursework |
| Year 1 | 29.0%                        | 71.0%       | 0.0%      | 25.0%             | 0.0%      | 7.0%       |

## **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 116-129).

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

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

In addition to assigning a percentage mark to the work, 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 - Progression

The skills gained throughout the programme will equip graduates to work in the following sectors:

- ✓ International organizations
- ✓ Government departments
- ✓ Local NGOs, and charities
- ✓ Research institutes
- ✓ Universities, including further studies at PhD level

Commercial companies worldwide

SYU has established industry partnerships with over 150 local and national enterprises which could not only provide employment opportunities for those who need jobs, but also provide learning opportunities from successful entrepreneurs, through seminars or site visits.

Given the aim of this Postgraduate Certificate leading to more skilled researchers publishing in these key fields, RAU would encourage successful graduates to build up a substantial portfolio of publications in the years following graduation and seek recognition through a PhD by publication.

## Section 10 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

Shenyang 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 11 – 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