

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

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

2026-27

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2026/27]

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	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 years
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
UCAS Code	D450
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	100998 - Sustainable Agriculture and Landscape Development 100864 - Ecosystem Ecology and Land Use
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (2020) Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies (2022) Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food and Consumer Sciences (2019)
Approval at AQSC	08 October 2025 When printed this programme specification becomes an uncontrolled document. Please visit the RAU's website for the most up to date version of the programme specification: https://www.rau.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate-
Version	16 May 2025 V2 08 October 2025

Entry requirements for the BSc (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 subject related to the Honours degree. Depending on previous studies, students may be required to complete additional 'bridging' studies prior to enrolling on the Honours course in order to cover gaps identified in previous learning. Flexible entry 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. International students will also need to achieve IELTS Academic or equivalent at the appropriate level for student programme of study UKVI IELTS - Academic band score 6.0 overall or above with no less than 5.5 in each component of the 'academic' IELTS test
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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:

Level 6

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
6W001	Countryside & Environmental Management	6	20	Core	1 + 2
6M001	Research Project / Dissertation	6	40	Core	1 + 2
6W003	Wildlife Behaviour and Evolution	6	20	Core	1 + 2
6W004	Environmental and Ecological Consultancy	6	20	Core	1 + 2

Elective choice (1 selection)

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
6W005	Climate Change & Natural Resource Management	6	20	Elective	1 + 2
6L003	Forestry and Natural Resources in Estate Planning	6	20	Elective	1 + 2
6A002	Agri-Food Systems and Policies	6	20	Elective	1 + 2

Total Credits: BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up)	120
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Students studying the FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management part time over 4 years will study the following modules in each year of study:

Year 1 – Level 4

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
6W001	Countryside & Environmental Management	6	20	Core	1 + 2
6W003	Wildlife Behaviour and Evolution	6	20	Core	1 + 2
6xxxx	Elective module choice	6	20	Core	1 + 2

Year 2 – Level 4

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
6W004	Environmental and Ecological Consultancy	6	20	Core	1 + 2
6M001	Research Project / Dissertation	6	40	Core	1 + 2
	Certificate of Higher Education Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management		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 1-year full-time programme (or 2 year part-time) 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.

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. 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.

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:

- Apply creative, critical and compassionate thinking processes to social and organisational issues
- Develop communication abilities using people, ideas, texts, media and technology
- 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
- Acquire and apply appropriate management, technical and practical skills and knowledge
- Recognise and accept continuing learning as being central to one's capacity to realise potential
- Develop, express and be able to defend personal values, beliefs and ethics
- Hold a perspective which acknowledges local, national and international issues
- 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:

- 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

- Provide the opportunity for the individual study of particular interest and for self-expression through the Honours dissertation
- Further develop critical learning skills and transferable skills to prepare the learner for graduate employment
- Enhance and develop the learner's communication and interpersonal skills

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

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. 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

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 environmental policies and pressures affecting the countryside and landscape (SDGs 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15)	6W001, 6W004, 6M001, 6W005, 6L003, 6A002
2.	Identify and assess appropriate solutions to environmental problems (SDGs 7, 11, 13, 17)	6W004, 6W001, 6M001, 6W003
3.	Apply an in depth understanding of sustainability in justifying environmental management and conservation of environmental resources (SDGs 15, 16, 17, 13)	6W001, 6W004, 6L003, 6W005, 6A002
4.	Consider and assess the interface between ecological conservation and farming and development. (SDGs 15 16, 17)	6W001, 6W003
5.	Critically evaluate the roles and responsibilities of regulatory and advisory bodies (SDGs 16, 17)	6W001, 6W004, 6A002

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	6W003, 6M001, 6W001
2.	Demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of the skills necessary for academic study and enquiry	6W003, 6M001, 6W001
3.	Critically assemble, evaluate and research a wide variety of types of information and evidence	6M001, 6A002
4.	Develop and utilise problem-solving skills	6W001, 6M001

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	6M001, 6W003
2.	Conduct an environmental/ ecological assessment	6W004, 6W003
3.	Identify key issues, themes and developments in areas of interest and concern	6W001, 6M001, 6A002
4.	Critically evaluate verbal and written communication to inform environmental/ ecological decision making	6W001, 6W004

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 with a subject related 2-year foundation degree or HND (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.

The programme will be delivered using a blended learning approach combining lectures, seminars, tutorials, site visits, fieldwork, lab practicals, guided independent reading, specific group work and student-led activities. Each module will generally have a 2-hour face-to-face seminar each week engaging students in various ways to reinforce teaching and learning experience. All modules also follow active learning approaches, focusing on interactive, student-centred and student-led approaches. The 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, including on campus activities and surveys, hosted visits to nature reserves and 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. Support is provided for this.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The programme is based on six modules per academic year, each of which has a 20-credit allocation. The 20-credit modules are spread across the academic year (Sep-Jun) with most having interim assessments alongside the final, end of year submissions. A credit system is used to ensure a balanced workload across the programme, with each credit point requiring approximately 10 hours of student work. Thus a 20-credit module will require a notional input of 200 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.

Whilst exams and in class tests do feature, there is more emphasis on a range of coursework type. The emphasis on a range of different assessment types stems from the need for students to have the skills and outcomes to make a difference. A wide range of assessment techniques will be applied throughout the programme to confirm learning outcomes. These 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

Level 6 assessments involve a greater emphasis on independent research and critical evaluation to develop, for example, industry relevant management recommendations and research proposals. These are used to develop skills and to differentiate between the levels of attainment of individual students. Analytical and research skills are assessed through the research project at Level 6 for the **Research Project module**.

Assessments are normally set at the start of each module with a date for submission generally at the middle and before the end of each module. Modules include formative assessments which are not used in the grading of a module but to identify strengths and weaknesses in subject knowledge and to provide opportunities to develop students' skills and support improvement to the summative assessments within each module.

Students will be provided with written feedback on all assessed coursework. Where appropriate, this may be supplemented by oral feedback. Individual feedback will be provided within 20 working days of the submission of the assessment. 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.

Overall, the programme is assessed through*:

Learning and Teaching				Assessment		
Year	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Coursework	Practical
Year 1	23.33%	76.67%	0.00%	8.33%	86.67%	5.00%

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 \(paragraphs 137 – 153\)](#).

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

Grade	Equivalent mark
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 Examiner(s). 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.

Section 11 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

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

Disability and Neurodivergent support

We support disabled & neurodivergent students and students with long-term health conditions. These disabilities include dyslexia, mental health diagnoses, ADHD, autism, mobility challenges, sensory impairments and many more. Students are encouraged to make contact with Student Services as early as possible by emailing: studentservices@rau.ac.uk. 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.
- Access to assistive technology (AT), which helps remove barriers to learning, communication and participation. The AT can help students who face difficulties with taking notes, organisation and time management.

Mental Health Support

Student Services has a dedicated team who are here to support you with the emotional challenges that can crop up during university life. They take a wide-ranging approach to mental health support, and the team ensure they are available for informal chats as well as providing in-depth support for students with emerging or existing mental health conditions.

The team also offer mental health support in the form of daily drop-in sessions, weekly group Time to Talk sessions, mental health workshops, awareness and campaign days and 1:1 confidential meetings for when students face challenges to their wellbeing.

Student Services can also refer students for counselling sessions with an external agency if they are required. They can also signpost you to our Student Assistance Programme, providing 24/7 care, support and advice.

Academic Support Tutor Programme

All students have access to the Academic Support Tutor (AST) programme, which provides high-quality academic support for students. ASTs provide timetabled group tutorials and individual support for students who are 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 (in line with the AST Handbook). Individual support focuses on continuation 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