

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management

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	Detail
Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University
Subject Area	Agricultural Science and Practice (ASP)
Entry Award(s)	Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management (GDE)
Final Award and exit route(s)	Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management (GDE)
Programme title	Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management (GDE)
Location(s) of study	Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester
Full time study	1 year
Part-time study	Not available
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	2025-2031
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not applicable
Type of Accreditation	Not applicable
Accreditation due for renewal	Not applicable
Entry requirements (this should be the standard University entry requirements unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board, and include UCAS entry profile for UG programmes and IELTS)	An Undergraduate Honours Degree (2:2 or above) from a UK university or overseas equivalent, or a professional qualification and/or experience considered to be equivalent to the above. For information on international qualifications, please, see our country specific pages. For countries not listed please contact admissions@rau.ac.uk Applicants may seek admission on the basis of work experience, but evidence of ability to study at degree level is essential.
Non-standard applications	
English language	
UCAS Code	Not applicable
Quercus Code	GDBP
HECoS Code	TBC
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	Agriculture, Rural Environmental Sciences, Animal Studies, Consumer Science, Forestry, Food, Horticulture and Human Nutrition (April 2024).
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 6
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	V2

Section 2 - Programme Structure

The structure of all University awards complies with the University's [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) which includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a programme;
- Consequences of failure for referrals, compensation and exist awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards.

Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management (120 credits) – Full time only

Students are required to study a combination of level 4, 5 & 6 core modules as described below

Academic Year 2026-27 onwards (20 credit points)

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
4Q002	Equine Breeding and Genetics	4	20	Core	n/a
5Q001	Bloodstock Production *	5	20	Core	n/a
6Q004	Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation	6	20	Core	n/a
6Q002	Advances in Equine Training and Performance	6	20	Core	n/a
6Q003	Breeding and Stud Management	6	20	Core	n/a
6Q005	The Global Bloodstock Industry **	6	20	Core	n/a
	Total Credits: Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management		120		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims

The Graduate Diploma has been designed to support students interested in a career in UK's world leading bloodstock & performance horse industry.

The UK equine industry is responsible for ~£8 billion per year into the UK economy in comparison to UK agriculture which contributes to ~£9 billion. While these two industries differ in that agriculture is focussed on food production, the equine sector combines sport and leisure within an agricultural environment. Almost half of the equine industry annual contribution to the economy comes from horseracing with the remainder coming from a combination of the Olympic disciplines and leisure side of the industry.

The equine industry in the UK is diverse and includes many larger and small business that require graduates with a passion for the equine sport. The industry itself covers a range of different sectors including horse racing and bloodstock production, the sport horse sector including the Olympic disciplines and the leisure sector. Each of these areas of the equine industry are served by a range of organisations providing goods and services, and the sport side of the industry also supports wider industries such as leisure, tourism and hospitality.

The modules for this unique one-year programme have been carefully selected to give students a deep understanding of the bloodstock and performance horse industries.

A graduate diploma is UK qualification that is recognised higher education FHEQ Level 6 qualification equivalent to final year undergraduate programme that is often used as a conversion degree supporting students to develop a new disciplinary focus in this case the UK bloodstock and performance horse industry.

Prior to the start of the programme students will be given some underpinning anatomy and physiology sessions as part of a non-credit bearing introduction to ensure they are prepared for the rest of the course. Within the programme students will study Breeding and Genetics which is further explored in Stud Management and principals from these modules are applied in the Bloodstock Production and Global Bloodstock Industry modules both of which include industry study trips to major UK and Ireland horseracing centres. There is also a focus of sports biomechanics and training practices looking at approaches to train elite athletes that are also applied during study visits. Part of the management of performance horses is understanding health and disease with a focus on injury prevention which can also be linked to training.

The extensive industry experience of lecturers and high-profile research-active academics will provide inspirational and critical support for students. Students who have studied equine programmes at the RAU have progressed to a range of careers following graduation. The key elements to this degree programme are the transferable skills to broader science and business, as well as those directly relevant to the horse industry. Students have gone on to work in the horse feed industry, to the Darley Godolphin Flying Start programme and work at the British Racing School, as Bloodstock Agents and studs.

Several study visits are embedded within the modules. Previous study visits, included in the modules, have included Cheltenham Racecourse and top local trainers such as Fergal O'Brien. Also, the Bloodstock Production module has included a visit to Newmarket that has included visits to The National Stud, Tattersalls, National Horse Racing Museum and Juddmonte Stud. The Irish study tour embedded in Global Bloodstock Production will allow students to contextualise the science theory and consider of the bloodstock industry and compare to the Irish equine industry with a bloodstock focus as a comparison to the UK. This study tour has an additional cost of approximately £700. Together these study visits and tours provide essential career networking opportunities to our students.

The Graduate Diploma in Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management programme is designed to develop the equine professionals of the future equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and then address major challenges within the equine performance industry.

In addition to the study visits embedded in modules we are also offering the graduate plus programme which includes cultural visits, professional experiences, and subject-specific sessions. Students will have the opportunity to visit major UK equine events including flat and national hunt racing, show jumping, eventing, dressage and other events. The programme is non-credit bearing and has an additional cost of £20 000.

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

The programme places a strong emphasis on SDGs – **12) Responsible consumption and production, 13) Climate Action**, and **15) Life on the Land**, these SDGs all form a part of the focus on the production, training and management of performance horses. The programme places some emphasis on **SDG 3) Good health and Wellbeing** as this part of the horse industry is also connected to the leisure sector promoting good health and wellbeing.

Section 5 – Programme intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Explain the structure of the bloodstock and performance horse industry and the inter-relationships between its key components	Bloodstock Production The Global Bloodstock Industry
3.	Critically appraise equine training, health and rehabilitation for a range of horses and equestrian disciplines	Advances in Equine Training and Performance, Equine Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation
4.	Appraise the equine genetic resource and understand its tailoring to market demand.	Breeding and Genetics, Breeding and Stud Management
5.	Explain the structure of the bloodstock industry	The Global Bloodstock Industry

Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Synthesise information from a number of sources to develop a coherent understanding of the subject	All modules
2.	Apply problem solving skills to theoretical concepts	All modules
3.	Manage time and tasks, seek advice when appropriate, prioritise work.	All modules

Programme specific skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
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1.	Identify appropriate and evidence based management strategies for optimal bloodstock production	Breeding and Genetics, Bloodstock Production, Breeding and Stud Management, The Global Bloodstock Industry
2.	Apply equine science theory into the equine performance horse industry	Bloodstock Production, The Global Bloodstock Industry

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

All students on this course, but particularly for those returning to studies after a period of break from formal education will be supported in a number of ways, to facilitate as best as possible, a smooth transition into their core and elective modules. This is underpinned by a bespoke induction week programme which is specifically designed to support students returning to formal study. At this point, all students will be given direct online access to the content of prerequisite modules, as part of the online gateway platform, which they can utilise in their own study time, to address study gaps, or revise the basic subject areas pertinent to a smooth transition into the modules on this programme. These prerequisite modules are developing academic and practical skills and equine anatomy and physiology. Furthermore, throughout the study programme students, as well as support from module leaders, students will have access to a designated academic personal tutor.

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

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

Students must engage with preparatory material before weekly seminars which aims to:

- Stimulate interest in the subject matter
- Give information

- Offer different perspectives on a subject
- Explain difficult concepts and theories
- Show how to deepen knowledge
- Provide an opportunity to listen to specialist guest lecturers

Students must also attend face to face seminars and tutorials which will:

- Allow students to express their views
- Enables academic interaction
- Facilitates discussions
- Provides opportunities to practice presentations
- Encourages structured research
- Enables sharing and diversification of information and experience
- Introduces group work and develops team works skills

Practical activities, visits and demonstrations will take a variety of forms. They form an important part of overall programme provision and help to reinforce and apply the subject principles received through lectures and seminars.

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

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

Students attempting to shortcut their learning activities may find themselves experiencing difficulties. It is particularly important that new students returning from a study break attend the induction and engage with preparatory material and establish an effective routine for their studies as soon as possible. Maintaining a balanced workload from the start of the programme will help to avoid intense periods of activity which can lead to unnecessary stress and ensure knowledge and understanding gradually develops throughout the semesters and year in readiness for end of module assignments.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The full GD programme comprises a number of core modules which provide a solid baseline for a transition into the UK equine sector.

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

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

Overall, the programme is taught and assessed through a mixture of coursework assessments and exams. The coursework will include elements such as breeding plans or training plans specific to bloodstock and performance horses, alongside other written pieces such as grant applications or academic posters.

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 1	26.17%	73.83%	0.00%	38.33%	61.67%	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).

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

Grade Title	Equivalent Mark
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 – 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

This programme has been developed based upon prior industry feedback on the development of our equine courses.

On completion of the degree students will have gained the fundamental skills for the industry. Some examples are students that have progressed to working for Bloodstock agents within the racing sector or Clerk of the course. Many of our past graduates have progressed to masters and PhD studies here at the RAU and in other institutions. We have also had students following completion of postgraduate study who have gone on to become lecturers in other universities. The Royal Agricultural University has a reputation for developing students' entrepreneurship through the Enterprise department. Many of our previous students have progressed to setting up their own businesses following completion of our courses. An example of this is Gillian Higgins business Horses Inside Out, which started by winning the annual Royal Agricultural University Grand Idea competition proving the start-up capital for this now successful equine enterprise.

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. ASTs 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 focuses 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