

Programme Specification

Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)

and

Graduate Certificate in Agriculture (GCA)

**For Students Starting in Year One in Academic Year 2021-
2022**

NB

The information contained in this document is intended only as a guide to the programme. It does not constitute a legally binding document or contract between the individual and the Royal Agricultural University.

The information contained herein is correct at the time of going to print, but the University reserves the right to make changes to the structure of the programme, assessment methods, etc. at any time without prior notification. Any changes made however will be made known as soon as possible.

Programme Manager: Mr Nigel Warner

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| 1. Awarding Institution | Royal Agricultural University |
| 2. Teaching Institution | Royal Agricultural University |
| 3. Final Award Title(s) | Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) Graduate Certificate in Agriculture (GCA) |
| 4. Academic Level on FHEQ | GDA = Level 6 GCA = Level 6 |
| 5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points | Subject Benchmark for Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Sciences, Food Sciences and Consumer Sciences. |
| 6. Mode of study | The programme requires attendance at the RAU either on a full-time basis over one academic year or on a part-time basis spanning up to four years |
| 7. Language of study | Both the GDA and GCA are delivered and assessed in English |
| 8. Date of production/revision | May 2021 (AQSC approval June 2021) |
| 9. Educational Aims of the Programme | |

The aim of the programmes are to provide a coherent educational package of study, focussed on agriculture, for those students who have already graduated/qualified/have experience in another discipline and who now require additional study in the subject as part of their future career development

10. Intended Learning Outcomes

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) and the Graduate Certificate in Agriculture (GCA) are distinctive in that they offer additional study in agriculture at undergraduate degree level to those already possessing a BSc Honours or equivalent qualification on entry.

On joining either of the programmes, students are expected to have already acquired elsewhere a range of intellectual and transferable skills. However, these programmes enable them:

- to demonstrate their commitment to the notion of continuing learning,
- to utilise their existing skills in pursuit of new knowledge and understanding, and
- to develop new professional skills applicable to agriculture, farming and land management.

Specifically, on completion of their studies, students will have acquired the following key outcomes:

i. Knowledge and Understanding

On completion of both the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma award programmes, students will have acquired:

- A1: a well-grounded understanding of the scientific and technological principles applied to crop and animal production systems**
- A2: an ability to evaluate alternative approaches to the management of sustainable crop and animal production systems and the limiting factors affecting output**
- A3: an understanding of agricultural business management and an ability to evaluate key performance criteria**

All students on both the GDA award and the GCA award study three compulsory modules amounting to a total of 60 credits. The first, module 3227 Agricultural Management (30 credits), introduces students to the wide range of agricultural enterprises within the UK, highlighting the application of key production factors in practice through a combination of lectures, seminars and visits to a range of farm enterprises during the year; the second, module 3100 Farm Business Management (15 credits), provides an in-depth grounding in farm management including key production factors and variables and their importance in preparing future business plans and the third, module 2256 Applied Agricultural Science (15 credits), provides the underpinning knowledge of crop, animal and soil science required of students entering the agricultural and related industries.

In addition, students studying on the Graduate Diploma programme will have acquired:

- A4: an ability to identify, synthesise and evaluate an extended range of knowledge bases and theoretical concepts relevant to their future careers within the agricultural sector**

Those students studying the Graduate Diploma in Agriculture programme, and in addition to the core modules, select a further four modules (60 credits) from a wide range of modules available across the University in order to tailor the academic content of the programme to their individual interests and career goals. They may decide to focus upon learning about the modern agricultural industry in its entirety or to pursue a more specialist knowledge of particular aspects and enterprises. This offers an effective mechanism for building upon prior learning and for meeting specific educational needs prior to career re-direction.

ii. Intellectual Skills

Intellectual skills across both the GCA and GDA programmes will be developed and enhanced through guided study, including subject-specific reading and assignments. These skills include:

- B1: the application of subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles within learning and assessment environments**
- B2: the critical evaluation of appropriate literature sources to inform study**
- B3: information synthesis from a number of sources in order to gain a coherent understanding**
- B4: the identification of, and finding solutions to, problems**

iii. Practical / Professional Skills

Professional skills will be taught in lectures, tutorials, laboratory sessions and farm walks and developed and tested through a range of exercises. For both the GCA and GDA programmes, students will be able demonstrate the ability to:

- C1: establish relationships and communicate effectively within the agricultural industry**
- C2: critically evaluate verbal and written communications from a variety of sources to inform decision making**

In addition, student studying on the GDA programme will demonstrate:

- C3: the ability to identify and achieve specific career objectives through the successful completion of relevant elective modules**

iv. Transferable skills

Transferable skills will be developed and enhanced through the assessment processes and activities associated with the modular programme. For both the GCA and GDA awards, these skills will include:

- D1: communicating clearly and effectively**
- D2: information management skills**
- D3: maintaining good working relationship with others**

In addition, students studying on the GDA programme will demonstrate:

- D4: time management skills, including the ability to manage multiple, and occasionally conflicting, deadlines**

Full details of how the programme outcomes relate to the modules studied on the two award pathways are contained in annexe 1.

In addition, training in practical skills is available on an extra-curricular basis through the University's Rural Skills Centre. Courses available may include, for example, tractor and machine operation, pesticide application and lift truck training. Details are available on the RAU web pages or from the Director of the Centre.

11. Programme Structure and requirements

All full-time academic programmes at the RAU are constructed using a selection of modules, each of which requires engagement with a variety of learning activities. Successful completion of module assessments will result in the award of credits, with students required to achieve a total of 120 credits for each year of a full-time programme.

The credit system is used to ensure a balanced workload across each programme, with each credit point representing a notional learning time of 10 hours of student work. Thus a 15-credit module will require a notional input of 150 hours of work, and a complete academic year of 120 credits will require 1200 hours of work, or approximately 40 hours per week.

Within this total time, students can expect to participate in formal scheduled activities; such as guided on-line study; face to face lectures, seminars and tutorials; laboratory practicals and external visits; for approximately one quarter of the total time – usually around 3 hours per week for a 15-credit module studied over one semester. Thus the majority of module activities; such as reading around the subject, preparing for tutorials and seminars, preparing for, and completing, module assessments and revision for, and sitting, examinations; will take place outside of these scheduled activities, but are an essential part of a student's learning journey.

Students attempting to short-cut their learning activities may find themselves experiencing difficulties as each module progresses, and as the level of assumed understanding increases. Thus 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 examinations.

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture requires attendance at the RAU on either a full-time basis over one academic year or on a part-time basis over a maximum of four years.

In addition to the core modules, the GDA programme draws on a comprehensive range of modules offered from across the University's extensive provision, although it is expected that students will generally concentrate on key aspects of farm management, crop and animal production, agricultural science, farm mechanisation and estate management. Liaison with the programme manager is essential to ensure an appropriate mix of modules is selected to provide a coherent programme that is achievable within the constraints of timetabling and personal activities.

The Graduate Certificate in Agriculture requires attendance at the RAU for one day per week over one academic year or a half-day per week spread over

a maximum of two academic years. During this period, students will study only modules specifically designed for the GCA and GDA programmes.

Preparatory study

Students are advised to purchase a copy of *The Agricultural Notebook*, edited by Richard J Soffe, as a key general text to support their learning and understanding of agricultural issues. Students are also recommended to read copies of the popular farming press, such as Farmers Weekly, in order to maintain an up to date knowledge of current issues affecting agricultural production.

The modular programme and credit award

All students registered for both the Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate awards complete compulsory modules totalling 60 credits. The modules are;

- (i) **one 30-credit level 6 module in Agricultural Management**, which introduces students, through the means of lectures, seminars, and visits, to UK farming and the factors influencing profitable production in its broadest sense
- (ii) **one 15-credit level 6 module in Farm Business Management**, which provides an in-depth overview of the management factors involved in UK farming.
- (iii) **one 15-credit level 5 module in Applied Agricultural Science**, which will ensure students have a detailed understanding of crop, animal and soil science required to support their understanding and studies across the remaining modules of their award.

For students registered on the GDA award, the remaining credits are achieved through completion of a number of elective modules selected by the individual to meet their own personal and career objectives. These modules will be selected from a specified list of modules and will be chosen in consultation with the programme manager to ensure availability and coherence of the final programme. (See *Annexe 2 for details of the elective modules offered on the Graduate Diploma in Agriculture programme.*)

Students should be aware that, whilst the core modules are designed specifically for students on the Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate programmes, all electives modules offered to the GDA students will also be studied by students from a range of different programmes.

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture is awarded by the Royal Agricultural University to candidates who successfully complete a total of 120 credits, of which 75 must be at final year honours level (Level 6) – see Table 1 below.

The Graduate Certificate in Agriculture is awarded by the Royal Agricultural University to candidates who successfully complete all compulsory modules, equivalent to 60 credits, where a minimum of 45 credits are at final year honours level (Level 6).

Table 1: Programme requirements: levels, credits and awards. [Each whole module is equivalent to 15 credits.]

| Qualification | FHEQ Qualification level | Min. overall credits | Levels at which credits are taken | Minimum credits at Level 6 and above |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Graduate Diploma | 6 [†] | 120 credits | 4,5,6 | 75 |
| Graduate Certificate | 6 [†] | 60 credits | 5,6 | 45 |

[†] Where Level 4 = Year 1 of the Honours degree programme, Level 5 = Yr. 2 and Level 6 = Yr.3

12. Student support services

The programme manager for the 2021-2022 academic year is Nigel Warner whose office can be found in the Emrys Jones Building, first floor.

To assist with the transition into academic life at the RAU, the following is available to all students:

- a) Induction programme for orientation and introduction of study skills.
- b) Student Handbook
- c) On-line module information and lecture notes
- d) Study Skills packages
- e) Library and other learning resources
- f) Email and Internet facilities

In addition to the programme manager, students also have access to the following people should they require advice, guidance or assistance of any nature:

- a) Student's Personal Tutor for advice on personal and pastoral issues;
- b) Module leaders and subject tutors for advice on specific modules;
- c) Registry and accounts staff for general advice on programme registration and finance issues;
- d) Teaching and Learning Support Services located in the Emrys Jones Building for disability and dyslexia support;
- e) The Student Services Support Manager and Student Counsellor and Wellbeing Officer, also located in Emrys Jones, for all general support issues;
- f) Access to a confidential local counselling service.

Details of all support services are available from the University's VLE: 'Gateway'.

13. Criteria for admissions

Both the Graduate Diploma in Agriculture and the Graduate Certificate in Agriculture require graduate (Honours Degree) level entry or its equivalent, and have learning outcomes that match qualifications at Honours degree level. As a result, the programme is affected by the UK Governments' policy on Equivalent and Lower Qualifications [ELQ] whereby such students are not eligible for funding support through the student loans company, either through the undergraduate or postgraduate loan schemes.

Candidates will normally have a first degree from a discipline other than agriculture, awarded at upper second level. Equivalent overseas and other UK qualifications may be accepted at the discretion of the University.

More mature applicants may seek admission on the basis of a curriculum vitae, but evidence of ability to study at degree level, such as proven managerial level experience, is essential.

A period of relevant practical work experience within the agricultural industry is recommended as a means of enhancing understanding of the industry and the relevance of specific modules towards future career goals, but is not a prerequisite of joining either of the programmes.

14. Teaching, learning and assessment

This programme is inclusive of disabled people (e.g. hearing impaired, vision impaired, speech impaired, dyslexic and mobility impaired) with particular regard to teaching, learning and assessment, in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy and the Equality Act 2010. Students are encouraged to disclose any impairment to the Disability Officer so that the appropriate support can be provided. Students have the right to request that the nature of their impairment be treated as confidential.

Depending on the range of modules selected for their programme, students will be taught using a mixture of lectures, seminars, tutorials and practical instruction. It is helpful to make clear distinction between these methods of teaching and to consider the role and purpose of each.

Lectures

Lectures are not intended to be seen as the founts of all knowledge. Effective higher education should be seen as a partnership between a student and their tutor. The purpose of lectures is to interest students in a particular subject matter in order that they can research it further.

Lectures are normally presented to a large group of students. Usually students listen to the lecturer for most of the session, as the organisation of

these sessions, combined with the numbers attending, does not lend itself to generalised debate. There may be question times offered at various intervals.

Lectures can be helpful to study by:-

- Stimulating interest in the subject matter
- Giving information
- Offering different perspectives on a subject
- Explaining difficult concepts and theories
- Showing students how to deepen their knowledge
- Providing an opportunity to listen to specialist guest lecturers

Seminars & Tutorials

Seminars (student presentations and discussion) and tutorials (informal tutor sessions) should be primarily interactive and will only work if students put in some effort. They provide an opportunity for students to discuss topics with each other in an academic context. They are an occasion for the exchange of ideas and information under the guidance of a lecturer/tutor.

Seminars and tutorials can be helpful to study by:-

- Offering the chance for students to express their views
- Allowing academic interaction
- Giving students valuable practice in making presentations
- Facilitating discussions
- Encouraging structured research
- Sharing and diversification of information and experience
- Introducing group work

Practicals

Student practicals, visits and demonstrations will take a variety of forms on farms, agricultural businesses and laboratories. They form an important part of overall programme provision and help to reinforce and apply the subject principles received in the lecture room.

Directed and private study

Students are 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, case study submissions and preparation of major projects. The use of the University library is very important for the effective use of private study time. The library staff provide advice and assistance on both finding and using relevant material. Guidance in private study is also given by the academic staff.

15. Quality Assurance Procedures

The procedures in place at the University are described in the student Handbook. Students are urged to read the handbook and be aware of its contents.

Two representatives from the programme(s) will be elected to act as representatives to sit on the programme committee, at which issues pertinent to the programme(s) can be raised formally with the programme manager and Head of School. This committee will meet twice each year. More immediate issues can be raised directly with the programme manager as they arise.

Annual student satisfaction surveys are carried out for all students on these programmes and for the individual modules studied. This information, together with the minutes of the programme committee meetings and external examiner reports, are used as the basis for compiling the annual programme report. This report, approved by the Head of School, is submitted to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee by the Programme Manager, and subsequently made available to students and staff.

16. Marking Guides and Assessment Regulations

Each module is assessed by up to two pieces of coursework and / or examinations. The core modules for the GDA and GCA programmes are assessed mainly by coursework. Elective modules selected by GDA students may be assessed by a combination of coursework and an end of module examination.

Full details of all assessments are given on individual module sheets, available on the RAU Website, and from the individual module pages on the University's VLE, *Gateway*.

To gain credits for a module, the student must achieve a final module average of at least 40% from all assessments for that module.

The Graduate Diploma award is graded based on the following overall average for all modules studied:

| <i>Award Class</i> | <i>Overall Average</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Pass | 40% - 59% |
| Merit | 60% - 69% |
| Distinction | 70% and above |

The Graduate Certificate award is graded based on the following overall average for all modules studied:

| <i>Award Class</i> | <i>Overall Average</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Pass | 40% - 64% |
| Commendation | 65% and above |

Examinations will normally take place at the end of each Semester, either in mid-January or at the end of May. Students on the GDA programme should therefore ensure that they are available at these times. Examinations are generally unseen, written papers.

Students are responsible for ensuring that coursework assessments are submitted on time and that coursework is retained for subsequent resubmission if required.

The opportunity to undertake referral assessments will be determined by the University Examination Boards. Resit examinations will be normally completed during August, and referred coursework must normally be submitted by the second week of August.

Referral assessments will allow students who have failed to reach an overall pass mark of 40% to re-take elements, (examinations and/or coursework assessments) of modules totalling a maximum of 50% of an individual's registered module credits for the year, or 30 credits, whichever is the greater. A maximum module mark of 40% is available following referral.

Full details of the assessment regulations for the University, and generic marking guidelines for coursework and examinations can be found on the RAU website.

17. Ownership of programme specification

This document has been agreed by the School of Agriculture Food and Environment and has been approved through the Academic Quality and Standards Committee of the Royal Agricultural University.

18. Curriculum Map

The curriculum map, detailing how the outcomes for the core modules relate to the programme outcomes is given in annexe 1.

19. Career prospects

Students will often enter practical farming after completing the programme, although it should be noted that proven practical farming abilities may be required by some employers prior to engaging in direct production agriculture.

Graduates with a degree and/or career experience in other fields are attractive candidates for commercial or administrative posts in industries ancillary to agriculture. Examples of past graduate employment includes:

Farming as either Owner or Manager
Farm Assurance Schemes
Agricultural Sales
Livestock feed analysis
Crop Agronomy
Agricultural commodity trading
Agricultural Research

Alternatively, students may qualify for progression to a Master's programme either at the RAU or elsewhere.

20. Further information

Further information about both the Graduate Diploma in Agriculture and the Graduate Certificate in Agriculture is available on the University's web site and from the Programme Manager.

21. Module Reference Sheets

The module reference sheets for the compulsory modules are contained in annexe 2. Module reference sheets for all elective modules offered to GDA students can be obtained from the RAU website.

Annexe 1: Curriculum Map

| Graduate Certificate in Agriculture | 3227 Agricultural Management | 3100 Farm Business Management | 2256 Applied Agricultural Science | GDA elective modules |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Graduate Diploma in Agriculture | | | | |
| Knowledge and Understanding | | | | |
| A1: an understanding of the underlying scientific principles applied to crop and animal production systems | X | | X | |
| A2: an ability to evaluate alternative approaches to the management of sustainable crop and animal production systems and the limiting factors affecting output | X | | | |
| A3: an understanding of agricultural business management and an ability to evaluate key performance criteria | | X | | |
| A4: an ability to identify, synthesise and evaluate an extended range of knowledge bases and theoretical concepts relevant to their future careers within the agricultural sector | | | | X |
| Intellectual skills | | | | |
| B1: the application of subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles within learning and assessment environments | X | X | | X |
| B2: the critical evaluation of appropriate literature sources to inform study | X | X | X | X |
| B3: Information synthesis from a number of sources in order to gain a coherent understanding | X | X | X | X |
| B4: the identification of, and finding solutions to, problems | X | X | X | |
| Professional Practical skills | | | | |
| C1: establishing relationships and communicating effectively within the agricultural industry | X | X | | |
| C2: critically evaluating verbal and written communications from a variety of sources to inform decision making | X | X | | X |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C3: the ability to identify and achieve specific career objectives through the successful completion of relevant elective choices | | | | X |
| Transferable skills | | | | |
| D1: communicating clearly and effectively | X | X | X | X |
| D2: information management skills | X | X | X | X |
| D3: maintaining good working relationship with others | X | X | x | x |
| D4: time management skills, including the ability to manage multiple, and occasionally conflicting, deadlines | | | | X |

Annexe 2:**(a) GDA modular structure**

Students are required to study three compulsory modules (3227 Agricultural Management, 3100 Farm Business Management and 2256 Applied Agricultural Science) to provide a focus for their studies and an appropriate framework to link to the individual choice of electives. Students must then select four further modules from the list of electives, ensuring that their final programme includes modules totalling 75 credits, at level six, with the remaining three modules being taken from any academic level.

(b) GCA modular structure

Students are required to study all three compulsory modules (3227 Agricultural Management, 3100 Farm Business Management and 2256 Applied Agricultural Science)

| Module Code | Academic Level | Module Title |
|---|----------------|---|
| Compulsory Modules for GCA and GDA (Students must study all three) | | |
| 3227 | 6 | Agricultural Management (30 Credits) |
| 3100 | 6 | Farm Business Management (15 Credits) |
| 2256 | 5 | Applied Agricultural Science (15 Credits) |
| Elective Modules for GDA students (All 15 Credits) | | |
| 3006 | 6 | Emerging Agricultural Issues |
| 3008 | 6 | Advanced Livestock Production |
| 3013 | 6 | Sustainable Management of Soil & Water |
| 3020 | 6 | Advanced Crop Production |
| 3067 | 6 | Farm Machinery Management |
| 3090 | 6 | Forestry and Woodland Management |
| 3092 | 6 | Countryside Management |
| 3093 | 6 | Farmland Ecology |
| 3097 | 6 | Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply |
| 3104 | 6 | Food and Agri-business Strategies |
| 3205 | 6 | Management Information Systems for Farming Businesses |
| 3207 | 6 | Farming and Integrated Environment: Local Delivery |
| 3210 | 6 | Applied Agricultural Finance |
| 3218 | 6 | Sustainable Business and Agrifood Supply Chains |
| 3237 | 6 | Agricultural Technology |
| 3239 | 6 | Crop Health and Protection |
| 3240 | 6 | Contemporary Media Studies |
| 3325 | 6 | Rural Entrepreneurship |
| 4278 | 7 | Organic Systems |

Details of module content and assessment may be found by searching for the module on the RAU website. [Note there may be issues of timetable availability on elective modules, particularly for those wishing to study full-time. Please liaise with the Programme Manager to ascertain availability and schedules prior to finalising module choices].