Royal
Agricultural
University

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (September start)

2024-25

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25]

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 he/she takes 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

Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University
Subject Area	Agricultural Science and Practice
Entry Award(s)	MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
Final Award and exit route(s)	MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Postgraduate Diploma Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Postgraduate Certificate Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
Programme title	MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
Location(s) of study	Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester Campus with some visits or case study demonstrations off site
Full time study	1 Year
Part-time study	2 Years
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	September 2021 – August 2028
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)	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
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 Manager on a case-by-case basis and applicants can expect that an interview may be required as part of the admissions process.
English language	If English is not your first language, you will need to reach the requirements outlined in our English language requirements for the level of study. For postgraduate taught programmes this is IELTS Academic min. overall 6.5 with no element below 5.5 (or equivalent). English language tests usually have a validity of 2 years from the date the test is taken.
Interviews	Interviews are usually required for non-standard applications.
UCAS Code	Not applicable
Quercus Code	SAFS

HECoS Code	100998 - Sustainable Agriculture and Landscape Development
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). Master's Degree Characteristics Statement (Feb 2020)
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 7
Approval at AQSC	30 July 2021 (v2)
Version	V1 – July 2022: Removal of module 4415 V2 – January 2024: Replace 4278 with 4744

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.

MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (180 credits)
The accumulation of 180 credits to include a minimum of 60 credits from a dissertation / project and research skills module at level 7, through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Level 7					
4038A	Integrated Agricultural Systems	7	15	Core	1
4413	Research Skills	7	15	Core	1
4250	International Rural Development	7	15	Core	1
4201	Poverty and Food Security	7	15	Core	1
4263	Entrepreneurship and Business Planning	7	15	Elective	1
4755	Environmental Science and Technology in Agriculture	7	15	Elective	1
4262	Sustainable Business Strategy	7	15	Elective	1
4744	Organic and Regenerative Systems	7	15	Elective	1
4414	Dissertation	7	45	Core	2
4727	Managing Global Soils in A Changing Climate	7	15	Core	2
4409B	Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture	7	15	Core	2
4726	Livestock Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
4722	Climate Change and Sustainability	7	15	Elective	2

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
4203	Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply	7	15	Elective	2
4723	Crop Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
	Total credits: MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security		**180**		

PG Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (120 credits)
The accumulation of 120 credits (or more) at level 7 through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Level 7					
4038A	Integrated Agricultural Systems	7	15	Core	1
4250	International Rural Development	7	15	Core	1
4201	Poverty and Food Security	7	15	Core	1
4263	Entrepreneurship and business planning	7	15	Elective	1
4755	Environmental Science and Technology in Agriculture	7	15	Elective	1
4262	Sustainable Business Strategy	7	15	Elective	1
4744	Organic and Regenerative Systems	7	15	Elective	1
4727	Managing global soils in a changing climate	7	15	Core	2
4409B	Facing the global challenges in food and agriculture	7	15	Core	2
4726	Livestock Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
4722	Climate Change and Sustainability	7	15	Elective	2
4203	Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply	7	15	Elective	2
4723	Crop Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
	Total Credits: PG Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security		**120**		

PG Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (60 credits)
The accumulation of 60 credits (or more) at level 7 through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Level 7					
4250	International Rural Development	7	15	Core	1
4201	Poverty and Food Security	7	15	Core	1
4727	Managing global soils in a changing climate	7	15	Core	2
4409B	Facing the global challenges in food and agriculture	7	15	Core	2

	Total Credits: PG Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security		60		

Students studying the programme part-time will study modules in the following order:

Year 1 – Semester 1 (September)					
Module code	**Module title**	**Level**	**Credit value**	**Core/ Elective**	**Semester**
4038A	Integrated Agricultural Systems	7	15	Core	1
4413	Research Skills	7	15	Core	1
4201	Poverty and Food Security	7	15	Core	1
Year 1 – Semester 2 (January)					
Module code	**Module title**	**Level**	**Credit value**	**Core/ Elective**	**Semester**
4727	Managing Global Soils in A Changing Climate	7	15	Core	2
4409B	Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture	7	15	Core	2
4203	Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply	7	15	Elective	2
4723	Crop Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
Year 2 – Semester 3 (September)					
Module code	**Module title**	**Level**	**Credit value**	**Core/ Elective**	**Semester**
4250	International Rural Development	7	15	Core	1
4263	Entrepreneurship and Business Planning	7	15	Elective	1
4755	Environmental Science and Technology in Agriculture	7	15	Elective	1
4262	Sustainable Business Strategy	7	15	Elective	1
4744	Organic and Regenerative Systems	7	15	Elective	1
Year 2 – Semester 4 (January)					
Module code	**Module title**	**Level**	**Credit value**	**Core/ Elective**	**Semester**
4414	Dissertation	7	45	Core	2
4726	Livestock Production Technology and Innovation	7	15	Elective	2
4722	Climate Change and Sustainability	7	15	Elective	2
	Total credits: MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security		**180**		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims

Over the past year, the impact of climate change and concerns about food security have risen up the global agenda as many people continue to experience the fragility of food value chains and the devastating impact of environmental, social and economic crisis. The

M.Sc. programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (SAFS) is specifically designed to address sustainable agriculture and food security globally. The programme is relevant to local and international graduates, and engages with theory, concepts and approaches to food production, while looking for viable solutions to sustainable agriculture and food security in various contexts and scenarios.

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

The MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (SAFS) 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, quality and security, Environment and soil health. The programme modules and the style of delivery encourages students to reflect upon the discipline's content and to apply the concepts learnt to real, and practical situations. The use of examples, opportunities to discuss and debate theory and current issues with peers and the use of industry experts provide students with a multitude 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 food security at various scales i.e., locally, nationally and internationally.
Reflect	Apply to your situation	Critically and logically review and apply knowledge to specific contexts.
Innovate	Use evidence-based approaches	Review existing knowledge systems, evaluate innovations, and propose alternative solutions to challenges at various scales i.e., locally, nationally and internationally.
Lead	team work and group activities	Take account of team motivation, skills, experience and mind-set in the potential adoption of sustainable innovation plans.

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

The programme design including its content has been framed around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Modules within the programme critically engage with the SDGs, including a critical view of sustainability as a concept within food production systems. This holistic approach to sustainability within the programme allows students and lecturers to engage in theories, ideas and practices which empowers them to

make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet.

Through constructive discussions, debates and field visits, modules within the programme critically engage with crosscutting goals such as: No poverty, Zero Hunger, Good health and Well-being, Gender Equality, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, Reduced inequalities, Climate action, Life on land, Peace, justice and strong institutions and Partnerships for the goals. Such an approach aligns with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which gives learners 'the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address today's emerging and overlapping challenges, including climate change, geopolitical crises, natural resource depletion and inequality.

At the institutional level, the design of the SAFS programme feeds into the RAU's Food and Farming Strategy which supports the UN's Envision 2030 agenda of no poverty, zero hunger, quality education and climate action.

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

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 on it. The programme is made up of the modules listed in section 2 and these have been mapped against the following programme learning outcomes.

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	The ability to critically evaluate the principles of agricultural production for both large- and small-scale systems	4038, 4203, 4250, 4278
2.	Critically evaluate issues of sustainable development considering people, place and planet.	4250, 4723, 4409, 4727
3.	Appraising the complex issues of sustainable management of natural resources.	4262, 4723, 4278,4722
4.	Decipher and evaluate the impacts of climate science and change on agricultural systems and food supply.	4755, 4409, 4723, 4201
5.	Determine factors influencing the provision of food quality, supply and security.	4234, 4038, 4203, 4250
6.	Ascertain and evaluate the processes of policy formulation in agriculture and food production.	4409, 4250, 4722, 4203
Intellectual, Professional, Key skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**

1.	Demonstrate leadership, time and resource management appropriately in both individual and team situations to enable successful project delivery.	4263, 4250, 4262, 4413
2.	Develop lifelong skills which enable the synthesise and analyse of data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evaluate solutions to complex practical problems and policy challenges.	4413, 4414, 4409, 4250, 4722, 4203
3.	Evaluating, citing and referencing sources of data and information with academic integrity in an appropriate manner whilst ensuring the avoidance of plagiarism.	4413, 4409, 4250, 4722, 4203
4.	Critically and creatively think, design and analyse an investigation to test a hypothesis. Collect appropriate results, analyse data and present conclusions using a variety of methods.	4413, 4414
5.	Demonstrate skills to critically analyse situations for addressing diverse organisational, business and social issues.	4262, 4263
Programme specific skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
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.	4413,4414, 4278, 4723, 4250, 4201
2.	To understand and evaluate complex information analysis to influence decisions and policy within a range of political, economic, and social systems and institutions for strategic decision making.	4409, 4250, 4722, 4203, 4262, 4263
3.	To appraise and develop project management solutions for sustainable agricultural and food assessments by effectively and creatively analysing and reporting of results and findings.	4250, 4413, 4409, 4250, 4722, 4203
4.	To effectively communicate through a variety of mediums on food and agricultural topics to a wide range of audiences.	4038, 4203, 4755, 4409, 4723

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

mixture of residential learning and blended learning approaches supported by a range of learning materials and activities presented on the RAU International VLE. The programme is available over 1-year full time or 2 years part-time. There are two entry point, the start of Autumn (September) and the Spring (February).

A Postgraduate Certificate can be obtained by accumulating 60 credits through successful completion of any4 taught core modules.

A Postgraduate Diploma can be obtained by accumulating 120 credits through successful completion of 8 taught modules without the Dissertation and Research skills modules.

The delivery is through a combination of lectures, seminars, speakers, case studies, workshops and with activities presented through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

which is also used to host other supporting material including videos, webinars, quizzes, podcasts and other relevant presentations.

Teaching will include group discussions, tutorials, facilitated discussions, workshops, guided independent study and a research project. Assessment will be a balance between individual and group work and will consist of a range of critical reports, written examinations, poster presentations, sustainability plans, policy summaries, oral presentations, critical reflections and dissertation / applied project.

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

Here at the RAU, we are always looking for ways to support our students. We recognise that a number of our UK domiciled students may be working or have caring responsibilities alongside studying which can sometimes make it difficult to attend all lectures in person. As such we have the ability for you to join lectures and seminars through a live stream, and if you are unable to do this, recordings of lectures will be available after they have been held. Please note that this type of study participation is only available to registered UK based students due to UKVI visa restrictions.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

Assessments are designed to appraise individual capabilities fairly and consistently. We use 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 ensure good 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 particular module 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 test these skills.

The Dissertation is the capstone demonstration of postgraduate skills, requiring students to conceive, justify, design in detail and execute a substantial piece of academic research. For the most able postgraduate students, the Dissertation can generate work of a standard appropriate for submission to practitioner and academic journals in business and management.

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

Some modules have a teamwork requirement and in some, there are group assignments, assessed via presentations and reports. All group assignments allow for an element of individual assessment, in order to recognise differences in individual performance where

appropriate. Peer feedback can also play a significant part in team activities and is encouraged.

Overall, the programme is taught and assessed through*:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 1	19.00%	81.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	97.50%

*based on the following elective modules; 4744, 4203 and 4755.

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:

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

The University has links with a wide range of businesses, through our local Growth Hub, Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise partnership and 177 years of successful Alumni who are local, national or international successful entrepreneurs.

Students may also choose to further their academic studies with an MSc by Research and/or PhD.

Section 10 – 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. 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