

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)

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 (ASP)
Entry Award(s)	Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)
Final Award and exit route(s)	Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)
Programme title	Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA)
Location(s) of study	Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester
Full time study	1 year
Part-time study	2 years
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	September 2023 to 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, and include UCAS entry profile for UG programmes and IELTS)	<p>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</p> <p>Applicants may seek admission on the basis of work experience, but evidence of ability to study at degree level is essential.</p>
Non-standard applications	
English language	
UCAS Code	Not applicable
Quercus Code	GDA1
HECoS Code	100517 - Agriculture
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	May 2023
Version	V2 March 2024: Update to module 3337: teaching in S1 and submission in S2.

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 Agriculture (120 credits) – Full time

Students are required to study four (4) compulsory 15 credit modules (1125, 2372, 2373 and 3337A) 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 Level 6 electives, ensuring that their final programme includes modules totalling 75 credits at level six, with the remaining three core modules being taken from Level 4 and Level 5.

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Module map					
1125	Agriscience	4	15	Core	1
3337A	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Core	1 teaching 2 submission
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	1
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	1
2372	Animal Health and Welfare	5	15	Core	2
2373	Agronomy	5	15	Core	2
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	2
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	2
	Total Credits: Graduate Diploma in Agriculture		120		

Students will choose level 6 modules available within Agricultural Science and Practice at the start of the academic year depending upon the focus they want their studies to take, as well as timetable and module availability. Students will have the choice of two Level 6 modules per semester.

Elective Modules 2024-25

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
3090	Forestry and Woodland Management	6	15	Elective	1
3098	Countryside and Environmental Management	6	15	Elective	1
3239	Crop Health and Protection	6	15	Elective	1
3329	Climate Change and Natural Resource Challenges	6	15	Elective	1

3339	Livestock System Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	1
4744	Organic and Regenerative Systems	7	15	Elective	1
3323	Food Ethics and Governance	6	15	Elective	2
3330	Technology and Agroecological Innovations	6	15	Elective	2
3331	Food Supply Systems and Policy	6	15	Elective	2
3333	Wildlife Behaviour and Evolution	6	15	Elective	2
3338	Agronomy Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	2
4727	Managing global soils in a changing environment	6	15	Elective	2

Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (120 credits) – Part time

Students are required to study four (4) compulsory 15 credit modules (1125, 2372, 2373 and 3337A) 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 Level 6 electives, ensuring that their final programme includes modules totalling 75 credits at level six, with the remaining three core modules being taken from Level 4 and Level 5.

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Year 1					
1125	Agriscience	4	15	Core	1
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	1
2373	Agronomy	5	15	Core	2
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	2
Year 2					
3337A	Sustainable Farm Management	6	15	Core	1 teaching 2 submission
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	1
2372	Animal Health and Welfare	5	15	Core	2
	Elective from the Agricultural Science and Practice subject area	6	15	Elective	2
<p>Students will choose level 6 modules available within Agricultural Science and Practice at the start of the academic year depending upon the focus they want their studies to take, as well as timetable and module availability. Students will have the choice of two Level 6 modules per semester.</p>					
Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
3090	Forestry and Woodland Management	6	15	Elective	1
3098	Countryside and Environmental Management	6	15	Elective	1
3239	Crop Health and Protection	6	15	Elective	1

3329	Climate Change and Natural Resource Challenges	6	15	Elective	1
3339	Livestock System Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	1
4744	Organic and Regenerative Systems	7	15	Elective	1
3323	Food Ethics and Governance	6	15	Elective	2
3330	Technology and Agroecological Innovations	6	15	Elective	2
3331	Food Supply Systems and Policy	6	15	Elective	2
3333	Wildlife Behaviour and Evolution	6	15	Elective	2
3338	Agronomy Challenges and Solutions	6	15	Elective	2
4727	Managing global soils in a changing environment	7	15	Elective	2
	Total credits: Graduate Diploma of Agriculture		120		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) programme is designed to develop the professional agriculturalists of the future equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and then address major challenges in our food systems. Our curriculum is a clear response to the current and future issues within our food system facing all citizens from all backgrounds.

The aim of the programme is to provide an inspiring and forward-thinking educational package of study for those students who have already graduated/qualified/have experience in another discipline, and who now want additional agricultural study as part of their future career aspirations. GDA is distinctive in that it offers additional study in agriculture at undergraduate degree level to those already possessing a BSc Honours or equivalent qualification on entry.

The RAU recognises and encourages students to go onto varied careers in agriculture and as a result, alongside the core modules which provide the basis transitional knowledge into agriculture, students choose from the selection of Agricultural Science and Practice elective modules which allow students to deepen their knowledge in specialist subjects that match their career aspirations.

Based on the latest applied research, informed by the RAU's extensive industry networks and delivered by world-renowned experts in their fields, students will explore the science and practice that underpins agricultural production, sustainability and resilient farm management. The aim of this programme is to inform, inspire and enable students to gain a fundamental understanding and critical awareness of the problems facing agriculture, particularly issues pertaining to the challenges of food production and its global impacts.

The farming industry needs new talent, and that means students are key. Here at the RAU, we're taking on the challenges and opportunities facing agriculture, nationally and globally.

Students do not need to have an agricultural or farming background; they simply need the passion and drive to make a difference in a rapidly evolving industry. Students will learn how to build sustainable, profitable and resilient agricultural businesses, which contribute to a thriving sector - whether as a farmer, land manager, rural entrepreneur, agronomist,

economist, policymaker, researcher, scientist or consultant – career opportunities are diverse and eclectic.

The extensive industry experience of lecturers and high-profile research-active academics will provide inspirational and critical support for students. Furthermore, the commercial facilities here at the RAU help demonstrate the real-world application of research and agricultural management theory into practical and innovative farm practice. Students will have access to 400 hectares of commercial farmland as real-world business cases. In partnership with the commercial farm at Coates Manor and Kemble Dairy Farm, students will learn about farming systems on farms and our new partnership with the Gloucestershire's Bathurst Estate will provide students with access to 15,000 acres of farmland, forestry, environmentally managed land, real estate, heritage properties.

On joining the programme, students are expected to have already acquired a range of intellectual and transferable skills in their previous careers and study. However, this programme enables them:

- to demonstrate their commitment to continuing learning within agricultural science and practice,
- to utilise their existing skills in pursuit of new knowledge, understanding and career opportunities, and
- to develop new professional skills, specific to their areas of interest and focus applicable to a wide range of careers in agriculture.

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. The programme places some emphasis on SDGs – 1) No Poverty, 2) Zero Hunger, and 3) Good health and Wellbeing.

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

The Graduate Diploma in Agriculture (GDA) programme is designed to develop the professional agriculturalists of the future equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and then address major challenges in our food systems. The aim of the programme is to provide an inspiring and forward-thinking educational package of study for those students who have already graduated and have experience in another discipline, and who now want additional agricultural study as part of their future career aspirations. GDA is distinctive in that it offers additional study in agriculture at undergraduate degree level to those already possessing a BSc Honours or equivalent qualification on entry. The RAU recognises and encourages students to go onto varied careers in agriculture and as a result, alongside the core modules which provide the basis transitional knowledge into agriculture, students choose from the selection of Agricultural Science and Practice elective modules which allow students to deepen their knowledge in specialist subjects that match their career aspirations. The aim of this programme is to

provide students with an academically rigorous and professionally relevant education that will serve their career needs throughout their personal and professional development. The degree combines essential management knowledge with relevant practical and professional skills to prepare students to be part of the transitions we need to see in our food and farming system.

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Understand the basic scientific principles and practices of animal and crop production systems	1125,
2.	Evaluate the scientific principles and practices applied in regenerative, integrated, conventional and sustainable animal and crop production systems	2372, 2373,
3.	Develop sustainable farm management skills to improve net zero GHG emissions, biodiversity and farm profitability and resilience	3337A
4.	Critique the opportunities and challenges of emerging agricultural science and practice relevant to the future of food and farming and their career within it.	Elective Modules

Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Apply subject specific agricultural science and practice within a range of learning and assessment environments, for continuous professional development	1125, 2372, 2373, 3337A
2.	Critically evaluate appropriate literature and other credible sources to inform their study and the application of knowledge in practice within future careers	All modules
3.	Develop critical thinking, self-reflection and thought leadership to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities for the future of food and farming	All modules

Programme specific skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Demonstrate both leadership and management skills in addressing current and future social, economic and environmental challenges in agriculture, towards humane and sustainable food systems	All modules
2.	Develop and apply a sustainable farm management business plan which applies all learning from across the programme, to make the case for an innovative and viable new food and farming enterprise(s).	All modules

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 core agricultural modules on this programme. These prerequisite modules are developing academic skills, applied animal and plant science, and business finance and accounts. Furthermore, throughout the study programme students, as well as support from module leaders, students will have access to a designated academic personal tutor.

To further aid students who seek to study part-time, the GDA timetable is organised so that delivery of the core modules is set to one day per week. This allows the maximum amount of flexibility for students in managing their studies around part-time jobs or other key responsibilities and time commitments. The time limits appropriate to part-time study are indicated in the University Academic Regulations available from the RAU website.

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 on farms, and at agricultural businesses and in laboratories. They form an important part of overall programme provision and help to reinforce and apply the subject principles received through lectures and seminars. To further support students who have other key responsibilities, the main visits to farms and agricultural businesses take place in the afternoon of the core study day, to compress study time for all students.

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.

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.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The full GDA programme comprises four core modules which provide a baseline for a transition into the agricultural sector. In addition, the four elective modules build on this to contextualise and facilitate students self-determined continuous professional development. Modules are assessed by one or two pieces of applied coursework which are designed to replicate real world tasks pertinent to the current challenges and opportunities in food and farming, building students core critical thinking and problem-solving skills required for the future. One core module (Agronomy) also includes an end of module test. Throughout modules students will receive formative feedback to support their own reflective learning process and progress towards their final assessment(s).

The Agriscience module is designed to establish a professional grounding in the knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to agriculture and is therefore assessed through the compilation of a student led practical portfolio showcasing their learning. Students are given the flexibility to develop their own areas of interest in agriscience, which they will then go onto develop further in elective modules. Opportunities for individual formative feedback are therefore provided to support the individual's self-motivation and reflection through the learning process.

Building on core knowledge and skills developed within Agriscience, the Animal Health and Welfare module provides students with the opportunity to apply theory and practice, work as a team, and develop research skills, communication, and strategy, relevant to key animal health and welfare science, ethics and policy development fit for the future of agriculture.

Within the Agronomy module, a group report is an opportunity to demonstrate via collaborative group work the ability to demonstrate and contextualise the key concepts and factors influencing cropping decisions, and an end of module test is designed to cover the breadth and depth of students' comprehension of soil management and crop production developed during the module.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Farm Management module will examine the current approaches to farm management and the increasing economic, social and environmental demands within agriculture while moving towards Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. Throughout the module students work towards one large, practical, applied assessment bringing toward knowledge from previous modules, to construct a sustainable farm management plan.

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.

The content and skills developed over the course of the four core modules will be contextualised, enhanced, broadened and specialised by the students self-selected elective modules, comprising (one or two pieces of) subject specific, applied coursework.

Electives are designed to provide students with an opportunity to focus their studies around their future career aspirations and fine tune their expertise, but also select a broader diversity of subjects. The major agricultural challenges and opportunities are covered in depth within the elective modules as a real time response to the current and future issues within the food and farming system. This will prepare and equip students for their future career aspirations.

Students will select 4 from a large and diverse choice of Agricultural Science and Practice electives. This will deepen their knowledge and understanding of science, practice, policy and innovation that underpins humane and sustainable agricultural production resilient for the future. Indicative topics include but are not limited to emerging agricultural issues, sustainable soil management, organic systems, management of woodlands and the natural environment, and livestock system challenges and solutions.

Advice and guidance in selecting elective modules is available from the programme leader.

This programme is designed as a stepping-stone into the agricultural 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*:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 1	25.20%	74.80%	0.00%	0.00	2.50%	97.50%

**Based on elective modules 3330, 3331, 3323 and 3338.*

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

There are many diverse career opportunities available to students in agriculture. 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.

Irrespective of the different specialisms chosen by students through their elective modules, the programme provides students with skills in critical thinking and problem solving for current and future agricultural practice. This diploma will enable students to not only acquire the most up-to-date knowledge relating to their chosen subject areas, but fundamentally use that knowledge with confidence to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing industry.

To further support and enhance student's employability, The Royal Agricultural University Enterprise and Employability team offer guidance and training events for all students. Furthermore, the Enterprise and Employability pages on gateway offer advice and resources to help plan your career and employability, including advice on creating CVs, interviews, and presentations. Sign up for the weekly e-news letter to keep up to date with part-time, full-time, and temporary vacancies. A series of events are planned throughout the academic year to help develop student's enterprise and employability skills, focused around networking, interview techniques and how to get a job in the farming sector.

Students may 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. This can be supported by accessing rural skills training at our John Oldacre Rural Innovation Centre.

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

Other opportunities for students also include but are not limited to:

- Agricultural consultancy
- Agricultural policy makers
- Farm assurance assessors
- Sustainable agriculture in non-government organisations

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. 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 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

