

## **MSc (Research) Agricultural and Food Economics.**

### **For students entering in 2006**

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Life Sciences
Programme length:	6 month Postgraduate Certificate, 9 month PG Diploma, 12 month MSc
Date of specification:	May 2006
Programme Director:	Dr. C. S. Srinivasan
Board of Studies:	Graduate Institute of International Development and Applied Economics
Accreditation:	Economic and Social Research Council
Web site:	

### **Summary of programme aims**

The aim of the programme is to prepare students for doctoral studies in agricultural and food economics and marketing. The programme aims to provide rigorous training in research methods to prepare students for research careers in academia or in non-academic organisation. The programme combines training in the skills of applied economics and marketing – including quantitative and qualitative research techniques – with an opportunity to apply them to a diverse range of contemporary farm, food and rural issues in both developed and developing country contexts

### **Transferable skills**

The University's Strategy for Teaching and Learning has identified a number of generic transferable skills that all undergraduate students are expected to have developed by the end of their BA/BSc programme. In following this MSc programme, students will have had the opportunity to further enhance their skills relating to communication (both written and oral), information handling, problem-solving, team working and use of information technology.

### **Programme content**

#### **Postgraduate Certificate:**

The Certificate programme is a flexible programme comprising any 60 credits drawn from the MSc taught modules subject to agreement by the Programme Director.

#### **Postgraduate Diploma:**

The Diploma programme is a flexible programme comprising any 120 credits drawn from the MSc programme subject to agreement by the Programme Director.

#### **MSc**

Students take the core modules (80 credits) (EDMES1, EDMES2, APME41, APME51, APME40, APME54 and APME22) and select a further 40 credits from an approved list (or as determined by the Board of Studies). The MSc then additionally involves a dissertation project worth 60 credits.

<b>Module code</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Core Modules (80 credits)</b>			
EDMES2	General Research and Transferable Skills	20	M
EDMES1	Essentials of Research Methods	10	M

APME41	Quantitative Methods	10	M
APME40	Qualitative Research Methods	10	M
APME54	Marketing Research Methods	10	M
APME22	Consumer and Producer Theory	10	M
<b>Optional Modules</b> Students select 40 credits from the following list (or as determined by the Board of Studies)			
APME21	Policy Analysis	10	M
APME20	Market and Trade Analysis	10	M
APME29	Advanced Marketing	10	M
APME52	Agricultural Policies for Developing Countries	10	M
APME53	Economics of International Food Markets	10	M
APME58	Resource and Environmental Economics	10	M
APME59	Consumer Behaviour and Food Marketing	10	M
APME60	International Regulation of Food and Farm Policies	10	M
APME63	Food Issues in Developing Countries	10	M
APME90	Dissertation	60	M

### **Part-time and Modular arrangements**

The MSc, Diploma and Certificate programmes may be taken on a part-time basis by accumulating modular credits over an extended period. Arrangements must be agreed on a case by case basis with the Programme Director.

### **Degree Certification and Assessment**

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)

#### Failing categories:

40 – 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%	Unsatisfactory Work

#### *For Masters Degrees*

To pass the MSc students must normally gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.\*

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

#### *For PG Diplomas*

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must normally gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.\*

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

#### *For PG Certificate*

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must normally gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.\*

\*The provision to permit a candidate to be passed overall with a profile containing marks below 40 is made subject to the condition that there is evidence that the candidate applied his or herself to the work of those modules with reasonable diligence and has not been absent from the examination without reasonable cause.

### **Summary of teaching and assessment**

Teaching is organised in modules that typically involve a combination of lectures and seminars. Some lecture based modules are supported by workshops or computer lab sessions. Modules are assessed by a combination of course work and/or formal examination. Examinations will normally take place at the beginning of the Summer Term.

### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have an undergraduate honours degree at upper second or first class level (or equivalent from a University outside the UK) in Economics, Agricultural Economics or another subject with adequate training in economic principles and quantitative methods. Students whose first degree is not deemed suitable for direct entry may be allowed entry after following a 4-week pre-session course in economics.

Admissions Tutor:                      Professor Alan Swinbank

### **Support for students and their learning**

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

All students are issued with a comprehensive 'Programme Handbook' at the beginning of the degree which includes a detailed outline of the programme, its constituent modules and assessment guidelines. Day to day queries regarding academic matters (e.g. time-tabling) should be addressed in the first instance to the Student Office in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development or, where necessary, the Programme Director.

### **Career prospects**

In addition to providing skills for career in research, the broad scope of the MSc programme

provides a suitable basis to enter posts in industry, government and non-governmental organisations. After some years of work experience, graduates might be a buyer for a food retailer, involved in business strategy or marketing for a food manufacturer, an economist in agribusiness, developing economic strategy in a government department or working as a policy analyst in an NGO.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

Not relevant during the taught component of the MSc, but with the explicit agreement of the Programme Director the Dissertation may be researched and written away from the University.

### **Educational aims of the programme**

The programme enables students to:

- To proceed to a career in research.
- Acquire skills that will enable them to work as professional agricultural economists /food and marketing economists in industry or government, Develop a capacity to undertake research in the economic and social sciences.
- Develop critical, presentational and inter-personal skills.

## Programme Outcomes

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Research method and skills in social sciences in general and in economic and management studies in particular.</li><li>2. Principles of research design and strategy including their ethical and legal implications.</li><li>3. The theoretical, political and legal implications of different research approaches.</li><li>4. Agriculture, food and farm issues in the context of developed and developing countries.</li><li>5. Economic theory for undertaking applied economic work related to these issues.</li><li>6. Consumer behaviour, marketing and research methods of relevance to the food industry.</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Modules on general and transferable Research skills (EDMES2) and research methods and skills (EDMES1) provide general research methods training for the social sciences.</li><li>2. The core modules on quantitative methods (APME41), qualitative methods (APME40), econometrics (APME51) and marketing research methods (APME54) provide subject specific research methods training. They also provide the professional “tool-kit” of the applied economist.</li><li>3. The module and consumer and producer theory (APME22) provides the necessary theoretical foundations in microeconomics.</li><li>4. Various optional modules allow the professional tool kit to be expanded, reflecting the individual student’s background and research interests. They are also designed to build an awareness of sector specific issues. The areas covered are agricultural policy, agricultural development, consumer behaviour marketing and the international food industry.</li></ol>
<p>Knowledge and understanding is gained through a framework of lectures, seminars, and practical classes reinforced and extended by guided reading. A variety of course work gives further opportunities for building knowledge and the application of techniques. The dissertation is a significant opportunity for the student to use these skills.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>Combinations of coursework and formal examinations are used to assess basic knowledge. The dissertation is seen as a major test of the successful application of these skills</p>	

### *Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills - able to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Assimilate, evaluate and synthesise knowledge from a variety of academic and other sources.</li><li>2. Critically assess the social science literature on a particular topic.</li><li>3. Present a coherent, structured and well balanced argument using research data.</li><li>4. Present and / or verify qualitative and quantitative arguments.</li><li>5. Identify interesting and feasible research questions.</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Critical evaluation of the literature and presentation of arguments on the basis of research data are developed through a variety of modules. Skills 4 and 5 are explicitly addressed through the dissertation.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>Most parts of the programme assess these skills through a combination of coursework (including essays) and formal examination.</p>
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**C. Practical skills - able to:**

1. Design a programme of research.
2. Collect, analyse and interpret economic and marketing data.
3. Understand survey techniques and statistical appraisals.
4. Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems.
5. Select and use appropriate methods for analysing data.
6. Plan and execute a research report

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Development of these skills feature in the general and transferable skills module, the research methods module, compulsory modules, and in preparing the dissertation. For example: skill 2 is addressed by 'Qualitative Research Methods' and 'Quantitative Methods'; skill 3 is the focus of "Marketing Research Methods"; and all the skills are addressed in 'Dissertation Preparation' and reflected in the execution of the dissertation.

*Assessment*

These skills are assessed by a combination of course work and examination, and in the dissertation.

**D. Transferable skills - able to:**

1. Use IT (word processing, spreadsheets, statistical packages and databases ).
2. Communicate ideas in a variety of written styles and lengths
3. Give oral presentations to small groups
4. Make effective contributions to group discussions and ask well considered questions
5. Effectively use library and WWW resources to search and retrieve information
6. Manage time effectively

**Teaching/ learning methods and strategies**

Many of the transferable skills are embedded within a wide variety of modules within the degree. Use of IT data management and analysis occurs within individual modules, for example 'Econometrics'.

*Assessment*

Transferable skills are largely assessed through course work assignments; but skills 5 and 6 are particularly reflected in writing the dissertation.

**Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the 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 learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.**