

## **MSc/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in Agriculture and Development For students entering in 2010**

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Life Sciences 6 months Certificate, 9 months PG Diploma, 12 month MSc
Date of specification:	May 2010
Programme Director:	Dr Alistair Murdoch
Board of Studies:	Graduate Institute of International Development and Applied Economics

### **Summary of programme aims**

The aim of this MSc course is to enable students to explain the role of agriculture and of agricultural research for development in the context of the research-to-development continuum. More specifically, students will be able to:

- Explain the role and contributions of agriculture to human development as: an economic activity, a source of food and livelihood security, a provider of ecosystem services, and a way of life
- Describe the different physical, economic and social environments in which the agriculture of developing countries is managed and improved
- Elaborate the recent developments in agricultural research in response to international challenges such as climate change, environmental sustainability, ecosystem services, and globalization
- Describe the factors and processes that influence the use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology for development, and explain how to enhance the relevance, quality and impact of agricultural scientific research.

### **Transferable skills**

The programme requires a substantial amount of independent reading, research and study and students are expected to take personal responsibility and show initiative in developing their knowledge and understanding of the field of study. In following this programme students will enhance their professional capability in working effectively in their chosen field of expertise along the research-to-development continuum. Students will learn to work independently, under time pressures, and will learn to set priorities and manage their time in order to meet strict deadlines. Students will also have the opportunity to enhance and develop their skills relating to communication (both oral and written), presentations, information handling, data analysis and interpretation, problem solving, teamwork, and the use of information technology.

### Programme content

Postgraduate Certificate:

Students take a choice of compulsory modules (APMA41, APMA92, BIMHA1, IDM001, IDM071 and IDM067 or ASCM01) to total 60 credits.

Postgraduate Diploma:

Students take six compulsory modules (APMA41, APMA92, BIMHA1, IDM001, IDM071 and IDM067 or ASCM01) to total 70 credits and select a further 50 credits from a wide range of modules, subject to satisfying any module pre-requisites, to total 120 credits

MSc in Agriculture and Development:

Students take six compulsory modules (APMA41, APMA92, BIMHA1, IDM001, IDM071 and IDM067 or ASCM01) to total 70 credits and select a further 50 credits from a wide range of modules, subject to satisfying any module pre-requisites, to total 120 credits from the taught component of the programme. The MSc then additionally involves a dissertation project (IDM072) worth 60 credits.

Module code	Module Title	Credits	Level
<b>Compulsory Modules</b>			
IDM001	Perspectives on Development	20	7
IDM071	Research and Study Skills for Independent Study	10	7
APMA41	Agriculture in the Tropics	10	7
APMA92	Rethinking Agricultural Development	10	7
BIMHA1	Tropical Environments	10	7
<i>And <u>one</u> of the two following modules:</i>			
IDM067	Research Methods for Communication and Development	10	7
ASMC01	Quantitative Methods for the Life Sciences	10	7
<b>Optional Modules</b> (students select 50 credits)*			
APME55	Agricultural Project Planning and Management in Developing Countries	10	7
APMA90	Climate Change and Food Systems	10	7
IDM066	Communication and Innovation for Development	10	7
IDM073	Environment and Development: Problems and Policies	10	7
IDM074	Environment and Development: Case Studies	10	7
APMA62	Nematodes as Pests and Beneficials	10	7

IDM013	Participatory Interventions in Development	10	7
ASMC01	Quantitative Methods for the Life Sciences ( <b>if not taken as a specialist module</b> )	10	7
IDM067	Research Methods for Development and Communication ( <b>if not taken as a specialist module</b> )	10	7
APMA89	Water, Agriculture and Irrigation	10	7
<b>Dissertation Module (for MSc)</b>			
IDM072	Dissertation	60	7

**\* the modules listed above are a sample of the modules available – students may select widely from the modules in the module guide subject to timetabling constraints.**

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

All students have the modular flexibility described in the ‘Programme content’ section above. Part-time students may build up their modular credits towards a Certificate, Diploma or MSc over an extended period.

### **Progression requirements**

N/A

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

Teaching is organised in modules. The delivery of materials takes a variety of forms including lectures, classes, seminars and group exercises.

Assessment is modular and involves coursework and for some modules unseen examinations. The nature of the assessment is determined by the aims of the module.

A dissertation supervisor is appointed for each student.

### **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 *and have no mark below 40 in Compulsory modules* (APMA41, APMA92, BIMHA1, IDM001, IDM071 and IDM067 or

ASCM01). 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 not exceed 55 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 *and have no mark below 40 in Compulsory modules* (APMA41, APMA92, BIMHA1, IDM001, IDM071 and IDM067 or ASCM01). 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 not exceed 55 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.

### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained an honours degree or its equivalent in agriculture, forestry, botany, biological, soil, environmental, or social sciences; in rural development, development planning and management or a related subject. Applicants with other qualifications and who have at least 2 years' professional experience in a relevant field of agriculture and development are also eligible to apply for admission to this programme. References are also taken into account.

Admissions Tutor: The programme director is responsible for admissions

### **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 Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and includes the Careers Advisory Service, the Disability Advisory Service, Accommodation Advisory Team, Student Financial Support, Counselling and Study Advisors. Student Services has a Helpdesk available for enquiries made in person or online ([www.risisweb.reading.ac.uk](http://www.risisweb.reading.ac.uk)), or by calling the central enquiry number on (0118) 378 5555. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions on everything from accommodation to finance. The Carrington Building is open between 8:30 and 17:30 Monday to Thursday (17:00 Friday and during vacation periods). Further information can be found in the Student Diary (given to students at enrolment) or on the Student website ([www.reading.ac.uk/student](http://www.reading.ac.uk/student)).

A Research and Study Skills (IDM071) module is available to support learning throughout the taught component of the programme and to develop independent learning skills required for successful completion of the Dissertation.

### **Career prospects**

Graduates from the MSc in Agriculture and Development are well suited to careers in agricultural research within international and national institutions, in governmental and non-governmental organisations operating in the tropics, and in international development and humanitarian assistance agencies.

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

With the agreement of their dissertation supervisor, students may be allowed to study abroad or take up placements during the Summer Term as part of their dissertation work.

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

The Agriculture and Development programme is designed to provide an understanding of the different physical, economic and social environments in which the agriculture of developing countries is managed and improved. It also describes the processes of agricultural production and the ways in which they are modified and constrained by environmental characteristics. The focus is on agriculture in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the developing world, principally in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

## Programme Outcomes

### Knowledge and Understanding

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The historical and ideological forces which have shaped the theory and practice of planned development interventions</li><li>2. The influence of economic, physical, social and political environments in which planned development interventions take place</li><li>3. Agricultural development in tropical regions and the contribution of crop science to development.</li><li>4. The effects of environmental and soil factors on the growth, development and yield of crops</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Mixture of lectures, seminars, directed reading, group and individual project work, individual and group presentation, guided readings and guidance on key sources of reference material. Feedback and guidance are important elements complementing and emphasis on self-directed study</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>By coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; coursework to include essay assignments and presentations</p>
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*Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills</b> – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Structure, analyse and evaluate theoretical and conceptual issues and the bases for their relevance in the context of planned development intervention</li><li>2. Think logically and analytically and to understand the difference between positive and normative statements relating to development processes</li><li>3. Identify key development approaches and evaluate them with reference to practice and outcome</li><li>4. Comprehend the rapidly evolving discourse of development and the factors influencing both the change and the pace of change</li></ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Students are frequently challenged in all teaching situations to complete logical arguments, analyse problems, seek and evaluate alternative explanations, and justify held beliefs. Long essay, debate, group work and presentations provide the principle vehicles by which intellectual skills are developed</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> By formative tests and presentations. Other assignments, including coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; dissertation</p>
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<p><b>C. Practical skills</b> – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate the bases of alternative development policy approaches</li> <li>2. Evaluate the bases of the multiple meanings of key concepts in the discourse of planned development intervention</li> <li>3. Evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of alternative development implementation strategies</li> <li>4. Effectively apply a range of frameworks useful in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development interventions and processes</li> <li>5. Identify, access, evaluate, synthesise, analyse, collate and represent data relevant to the critical evaluation of development policy and practice</li> </ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>Students are required to undertake and understand a wide range of reading, from traditional published sources, web-based material and other grey literature relating to development policy and practice. This includes both directed reading and through researching their own sources of information. Discussion in lectures and seminars emphasises the use of empirical evidence, and the strengths and weaknesses of alternative theories, methodologies and practices.</p> <p>1-5 are achieved through lectures, seminars, presentations, case studies, group work, and dissertation</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>Long essays, presentations and unseen examinations</p>
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<p><b>D. Transferable skills</b> – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communicate knowledge and opinions effectively to a wide range of people through choosing and using among a variety of means</li> <li>2. Reflect and evaluate his/her own academic progress and its implications for emerging/changing professional practice</li> <li>3. Identify, access, evaluate, synthesise, analyse, collate and represent data relevant to the issue at hand</li> <li>4. Manage time and prioritise workloads in the context of changing demands</li> </ol>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>The presentation of well-researched written work is a fundamental element of the programme and requires the application of all the skills listed in 1-5. This is complemented and reinforced by enhanced oral skills, developed through lecture and seminar discussions, tutorials and group activities.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>By formative tests and presentations. Other assignments, including coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; dissertation</p>
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**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.**