

MSc in Agriculture and Development

For students entering Part 1 in 2011/2

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s):	
Faculty:	Life Sciences Faculty
Programme length:	1 years
Date of specification:	09/Sep/2011
Programme Director:	Dr Alistair Murdoch
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Graduate Institute of International Development and
Applied Economics	
Accreditation:	

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.

In addition, the MSc Agriculture and Development 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.

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, experimental design for both crops and animals, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, problem solving, teamwork, and the use of information technology.

Programme content

Postgraduate Certificate:

Students take a choice of compulsory modules (excluding the dissertation) to total 60 credits.

Postgraduate Diploma:

Students take a choice of compulsory modules (excluding the dissertation) to total 70 credits and select a further 50 credits from a wide range of optional modules, subject to satisfying any module pre-requisites, to total 120 credits

MSc in Agriculture and Development:

Students take the seven compulsory modules (including the dissertation) and select a further 50 credits from a wide range of modules, subject to satisfying any module pre-requisites, to total 180 credits.

Compulsory modules for MSc

<i>Code</i>	<i>Module title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
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
APMA93	Experimental Agriculture	10	7
IDM072	Dissertation	60	7

And either

IDM067	Research Methods for Communication and Development	10	7
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or

ASMC01	Quantitative Methods for the Life Sciences	10	7
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Optional modules

APME72	Agricultural Project Planning and Management in Developing Countries	20	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 (if not already selected)	10	7
IDM067	Research Methods for Communication and Development (if not already selected)	10	7
APMA89	Water, Agriculture and Irrigation	10	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 or 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

Assessment and classification

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:

Mark Interpretation

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 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. 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.

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 is provided by a wide array of services across the University, including: the University Library, the Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre (SEEC), In-sessional English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support Centre teams, IT Services and 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 advisers in the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and offers advice on accommodation, careers, disability, finance, and wellbeing. 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 and runs workshops and seminars on a range of topics. For more information see www.reading.ac.uk/student

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.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. The historical and ideological forces which have shaped the theory and practice of planned development interventions
2. The influence of economic, physical, social and political environments in which planned development interventions take place
3. Agricultural development in tropical regions and the contribution of crop science to development.
4. The effects of environmental and soil factors on the growth, development and yield of crops

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

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

Assessment

By coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; coursework to include essay assignments and presentations

Skills and other attributes**B. Intellectual skills - able to:**

1. Structure, analyse and evaluate theoretical and conceptual issues and the bases for their relevance in the context of planned development intervention
2. Think logically and analytically and to understand the difference between positive and normative statements relating to development processes
3. Identify key development approaches and evaluate them with reference to practice and outcome
4. Comprehend the rapidly evolving discourse of development and the factors influencing both the change and the pace of change

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

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

Assessment

By formative tests and presentations. Other assignments, including coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; dissertation

C. Practical skills - able to:

1. Evaluate the bases of alternative development policy approaches
2. Evaluate the bases of the multiple meanings of key concepts in the discourse of planned development intervention
3. Evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of alternative development implementation strategies
4. Effectively apply a range of frameworks useful in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development interventions and processes
5. Identify, access, evaluate, synthesise, analyse, collate and represent data relevant to the critical evaluation of development policy and practice

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

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. 1-5 are achieved through lectures, seminars, presentations, case studies, group work, and dissertation

Assessment

Long essays, presentations and unseen examinations

D. Transferable skills - able to:

1. Communicate knowledge and opinions effectively to a wide range of people through choosing and using among a variety of means
2. Reflect and evaluate his/her own academic progress and its implications for

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

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

- emerging/changing professional practice
3. Identify, access, evaluate, synthesise, analyse, collate and represent data relevant to the issue at hand
 4. Manage time and prioritise workloads in the context of changing demands

discussions, tutorials and group activities.

Assessment

By formative tests and presentations. Other assignments, including coursework and, in some cases, formal examinations; 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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.