

MSc in Agricultural Economics

For students entering in 2012/3

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s):	
Faculty:	Life Sciences Faculty
Programme length:	180 credits (12 months) for the full MSc programme, 10 credits for the Diploma, 60 credits for the Certificate
Date of specification:	May 2012
Programme Director:	Dr Francesco Areal
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Graduate Institute of International Development and Applied Economics
Accreditation:	Not applicable

Summary of programme aims

With an ever increasing world population, and growing pressure on the world's finite resources, the analytical skills of agricultural economists are as relevant as ever. The programme is designed to provide a rigorous, stimulating and enjoyable training in applied economics and quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

Transferable skills

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

Compulsory modules (80 credits):

<i>Code</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
APME20	Market and Trade Analysis	10	7
APME21	Policy Analysis	10	7
APME22	Consumer and Producer Theory	10	7
APME53	Economics of International Food Markets	10	7
APME58	Resource and Environmental Economics	10	7
APME71	Econometrics	20	7
IDM071	Research and Study Skills for Independent Learning	10	7

Compulsory module (for MSc)

IDM072	Dissertation	60	7
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Optional modules (40 credits)*

APMA41	Agriculture in the Tropics	10	7
APME29	Advanced Marketing	10	7
APME40	Qualitative Research Methods	10	7
APME54	Marketing Research Methods	10	7
APME59	Consumer Behaviour & Food Marketing	10	7
APME65	Advertising and Branding	10	7
APME66	Consumer Policy	10	7
APME72	Agricultural Project Planning and Management in Developing Countries	20	7
APME70	Quantitative Methods	20	7
APME61	Appraisal of Agricultural & Rural Development Projects	10	7
ECM160	Macroeconomics for Developing Countries	20	7
IDM063	Macroeconomics for Developing Countries	10	7
IDM077	Food Security and Development	10	7
AP3EE2	Economics and Management of the Food Chain	10	6
RE3RD	Rural Diversification	10	6

**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.*

Postgraduate Diploma

The Diploma programme is a flexible programme comprising any 120 credits drawn from the MSc taught modules (excluding the dissertation) subject to agreement by the Programme Director.

Postgraduate Certificate

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

Part-time or 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.

Progression requirements

N/A

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.

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 the Masters Degree

To pass the MSc students must 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 at least 60 in 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 at least 50 in the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For the PG Diploma

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must 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 the PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must 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 a good degree (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 an appropriate period of preparatory study as prescribed by the Admissions Tutor.

The University requires all overseas students whose first language is not English to take either an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL proficiency in English test. A minimum test score of 6.5 (with no significant weakness in any area) in IELTS, or 590 (243 computer based test) in TOEFL, is required.

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

A comprehensive Programme Handbook, which includes a detailed outline of the programme, its constituent modules and assessment guidelines, can be found on the Graduate Institute's Blackboard site. Day-to-day queries regarding academic matters (e.g. timetabling) should be addressed in the first instance to the Postgraduate Student Office in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, or where necessary, to the Programme Director.

A research and study skills module (IDM071) 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

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 developing economic strategy in a government department, or working as a policy analyst in an NGO, a buyer for a food retailer or as an economist in agribusiness.

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.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

- How economic forces impact upon agricultural production and the food chain, and on the rural economy; and how markets work (or sometimes do not work) to co-ordinate economic activity.
- The issues that arise when considering the likely economic impact of government intervention, and of the framework, and constraints, within which policy is formulated.
- Quantitative and qualitative techniques, including econometrics

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The compulsory modules in the programme provide the professional 'tool kit' of the applied economist. Various optional modules allow this 'tool-kit' to be expanded, reflecting the individual student's background and interests.

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.

Assessment

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.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - *able to:*

- Assimilate, evaluate and synthesise knowledge from a variety of academic and other sources
- To discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information
- Think logically
- Develop and present coherent, structured and well balanced arguments
- Analyse problems and to apply appropriate problem solving techniques
- Plan, conduct and report on a research project

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Critical evaluation of the literature and the application of economic and business method are developed through a variety of modules. Skills 5 and 6 are addressed explicitly by the dissertation.

Assessment

Most parts of the programme assess these skills through a combination of coursework and formal examination.

C. Practical skills - *able to:*

- Collect, analyse and interpret economic data
- Understand survey techniques, and statistical appraisals
- Assess the role and impact of government intervention
- Plan and execute a research project
- Draft written reports and, depending on the options chosen,
- Construct marketing and business plans
- Appraise investment projects

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Development of these skills feature in the 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 'Policy Analysis'; and skill 4 is 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:*

- Use IT (word processing, spreadsheets, statistical packages and databases).
- Communicate ideas in a variety of written

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

- styles and lengths
- Give oral presentations to small and large groups
- Make effective contributions to group discussions and ask well considered questions
- Effectively use library and WWW resources to search and retrieve information
- Manage time effectively

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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.