

MSc (Research) in Agricultural and Food Economics
For students entering Part 1 in 2012/3

UCAS code:

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:	17/Aug/2012
Programme Director:	Dr Chittur Srinivasan
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Graduate Institute of International Development and
Applied Economics	
Accreditation:	

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

During the course of their studies at Reading, all students will be expected to enhance their academic and personal transferable skills in line with the University's Strategy for Learning and Teaching. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to develop such skills, in particular relating to and will have been encouraged to further develop and enhance the full set of skills through a variety of opportunities available outside their curriculum.

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 MA/MSc 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

Compulsory modules (160 credits):

<i>Code</i>	<i>Module title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
	Reading Researcher Development Programme	10	7
GSM008	Essentials of Research Methods	20	7
APME70	Quantitative Methods	20	7
APME40	Qualitative Research Methods	10	7
APME22	Consumer and Producer Theory	10	7
APME71	Econometrics	20	7
IDM071	Research and Study Skills for Independent Learning	10	7
IDM072	Dissertation	60	7

Progression requirements

N/A

Assessment and classification

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.

Degree Certification and Assessment

The University's taught postgraduate

<i>Mark</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
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 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 including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For Postgraduate Diploma

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

For Postgraduate 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 a good honours 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 following a 4-week pre-session course in economics.

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. Further details on English tests and pass requirements can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/Study/international/study-english.aspx detailed requirements will be outlined in the applicant's offer of admission.

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-session 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. time-tabling) should be addressed in the first instance to the Postgraduate Student Office in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development or, where necessary, the Programme Director.

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

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.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

- Research methods and skills in social sciences in general and in economic and management studies in particular
- Principles of research design and strategy including their ethical and legal implications
- The theoretical, political and legal implications of different research approaches
- Agriculture, food and farm issues in the context of developed and developing countries
- Economic theory for undertaking applied economic work related to these issues
- Consumer behaviour, marketing and research methods of relevance to the food industry

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- Modules on general and transferable Research skills and research methods and skills provide general research methods training for the social sciences.
- The core modules on quantitative methods, qualitative methods, econometrics and marketing research methods provide subject specific research methods training. They also provide the professional tool-kit of the applied economist.
- The module and consumer and producer theory provides the necessary theoretical foundations in microeconomics.
- 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.
- 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.
- Critically assess the social science literature on a particular topic.
- Present a coherent, structured and well balanced argument using research data.
- Present and / or verify qualitative and quantitative arguments.
- Identify interesting and feasible research questions.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

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.

Assessment

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

C. Practical skills - *able to:*

- Design a programme of research.
- Collect, analyse and interpret economic and marketing data.
- Understand survey techniques and statistical appraisals.
- Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems.
- Select and use appropriate methods for analysing data.
- 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:*

- Use IT (word processing, spreadsheets, statistical packages and databases).
- Communicate ideas in a variety of written styles and lengths
- Give oral presentations to small 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

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Many of the transferable skills are embedded within a 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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.