

MSc Agricultural Economics

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Life Sciences
Programme length:	180 credits (12 months) for the full MSc programme, 120 credits for the Diploma, 60 credits for the Certificate.
Relevance and applicability:	For students entering in 2003
Date of specification:	July 2003
Programme Director:	Professor Alan Swinbank
Board of Studies:	MSc Agricultural Development Economics, Agricultural Economics, Food Economics and Marketing
Accreditation:	NA

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

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.

MSc Programme content

<i>Module Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Term</i>
Core Modules (70 credits):				
APME20	Market and Trade Analysis	10	M	1
APME21	Policy Analysis	10	M	1
APME22	Consumer and Producer Theory	10	M	1
APME40	Qualitative Research Methods	10	M	1
APME41	Quantitative Methods	10	M	1
APME01	Study Skills for Postgraduates (AFE)	—	—	1
APME51	Econometrics	10	M	2
APME50	Dissertation Preparation	10	M	2

Option Modules (50 credits)

Select modules to the value of 50 credits from the following list (or as determined by the Board of Studies)

<i>Module Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Term</i>
APME29	Advanced Marketing	10	M	1
APME25	Strategies in Agricultural and Rural Development	10	M	2
ECM26	Macroeconomic Policy for Developing Countries	20	M	1

ECM33	EU Economic Relations with Developing Countries	20	M	2
APME52	Agricultural Policies for Developing Countries	10	M	2
APME54	Marketing Research Methods	10	M	2
APME53	Economics of International Food Markets	10	M	2
APME55	Agricultural Project Planning and Management in Developing Countries	10	M	2
APME61	Appraisal of Agricultural & Rural Development Projects	10	M	2
APME60	International Regulation of Food & Farm Policies	10	M	2
APME58	Resource and Environmental Economics	10	M	2
ECM27	Macroeconomic Policy and Structural Adjustment for the Developing Countries	20	M	
APME62	Multinational Food Business in the UK & N America	10	M	2
APME63	Food Issues in Developing Countries	10	M	2
Sub-total (taught modules):				120 credits
APME90	Dissertation 10,000 to 12,000 words, submitted by 20 September			60 credits
Total				180 credits

Diploma Programme content

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

Certificate Programme content

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

Part-time/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.

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)
<u>Failing categories:</u>	
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 be less than 60 credits.*

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 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 60 or more for 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 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 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.*

*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 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 an appropriate period of preparatory study as prescribed by the Head of School.

The University requires all overseas students whose first language is not English to take either a 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: 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

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.

Educational aims of the programme

The programme enables students to:

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

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of: 1. 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. 2. the issues that arise when considering the likely economic impact of government intervention, and of the framework, and constraints, within which policy is formulated. 3. 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. <i>Assessment</i> 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.
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Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to: 1. Assimilate, evaluate and synthesise knowledge from a variety of academic and other sources 2. To discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information 3. Think logically 4. Develop and present coherent, structured and well balanced arguments 5. Analyse problems and to apply appropriate problem solving techniques 6. 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. <i>Assessment</i> Most parts of the programme assess these skills. through a combination of coursework and formal examination.
C. Practical skills – able to: 1. Collect, analyse and interpret economic data 2. Understand survey techniques, and statistical appraisals 3. Assess the role and impact of government intervention 4. Plan and execute a research project 5. Draft written reports - and, depending on the options chosen, 6. Construct marketing and business plans 7. 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. <i>Assessment</i> 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 and large 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’. <i>Assessment</i> 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 expect 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 module and programme handbooks.