	PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION	Newcastle University

1	**Awarding Institution**	Newcastle University
2	**Teaching Institution**	Newcastle University
3	**Final Award**	MSc
4	**Programme Title**	Rural Social Science
5	**UCAS/Programme Code**	4801F
6	**Programme Accreditation**	N/A
7	**QAA Subject Benchmark(s)**	N/A
8	**FHEQ Level**	7
9	**Date revised**	24.02.10

10	**Programme Aims**

1	to meet the aims of the ESRC's Postgraduate Training Guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level
2	to provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and in Rural Social Science in particular
3	to contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates
4	to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector or the private sector
5	to provide a qualification which meets the FHEQ at Masters level

11	**Learning Outcomes**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:
- A1 understand the range of ethical issues relating to social science research, and the ethical responsibilities of the researcher
- A2 have knowledge of the range of quantitative and qualitative methods that can be used in the social sciences, their rationale and their strengths and weaknesses
- A3 understand the breadth of application of social research methods in rural social science
- A4 appreciate the key research findings in their specialism (food marketing, agricultural and environmental economics, rural sociology, as appropriate)

Teaching and Learning Methods

A1-A4 are taught by lectures and workshops. In the case of A2 these are accompanied by computer practical sessions in data handling and quantitative analysis. The teaching strategy for A3 and A4 includes lectures to set out research principles using rural social science examples, small group discussions, group exercises and staff seminars where examples of research are given from a range of perspectives.

Students acquire knowledge through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading. For A3 and A4 each module emphasises the importance of independent reading. Some modules include short tests, problem-solving exercises and student-led seminars.

Assessment Strategy

A1 is by a combination of team work assessment and written reports.

A2 is assessed by teamwork assessment, practical assessments, data analysis practicals, written reports and evaluation of the dissertation.

A3 is assessed by means of literature reviewing, dissertation proposals and plans, and student's final Dissertation.

A4 is assessed in various ways depending on the optional modules taken. These include oral presentations, unseen exams, assessed essays, assessed portfolios and numerical assignments.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:
B1   define and formulate research problems, questions and hypotheses
B2   plan and conduct research projects
B3   critically evaluate research findings
B4   synthesise key findings and knowledge from across the social sciences, in particular their specialism in rural social science

Teaching and Learning Methods

B1-B4 are taught by lectures, workshops and seminars. They are practised through group work (including the development of research proposals B1 and B2), through reading for seminar sessions and assessed essays and presentations (B3-B4) and through undertaking the Dissertation (B1-B4). Each student will be allocated a Dissertation supervisor who will discuss draft chapters and a final draft of the whole dissertation.

Assessment Strategy

B1 and B2 are assessed through group research proposals and through individual Dissertation proposals .

B3 and B4 are assessed through unseen exams, oral presentations and assessed essays, mainly in optional modules.

B1-B4 are assessed through the Students' Dissertations.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:
C1   demonstrate bibliographic and key computing skills appropriate to research at masters level
C2   collect data using a variety of methods
C3   analyse a range of quantitative and qualitative data using appropriate tools
C4   apply their knowledge and understanding of rural social science to specific problems

Teaching and Learning Methods

Bibliographic and computer skills (C1) are taught through workshops and practical classes, including a dedicated information skills module. Students learn bibliographical skills by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. C2 and C3 are taught through lectures, workshops and data practicals. They are learned in practice mainly through the Dissertation. C4 is taught and practised through group research proposal development and through the development of individual dissertation projects. Students learn C4 through seminar and workshop discussions and mainly through undertaking their Dissertation, guided by their Dissertation supervisor.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment for the information skills module (C1) will be constructing a bibliography, incorporating bibliographic search strategies and professional design and layout. IT skills will be assessed by the bibliographic exercise and data practical assessment.

C2- C4 will be assessed primarily through the Dissertation. C3 will also be assessed through the Quantitative Methods module.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

D1   communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences

D2   produce effective written communication and presentation

D3   manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time

D4   work effectively as a member of teams both subject specific and multi-disciplinary

Teaching and Learning Methods

D1, D3 and D4 are taught through teamwork and individual presentations which provide opportunities to cooperate, develop ideas, improve problem-solving capacity and work to deadlines. D2 is taught through a range of written assessments.

Students acquire the key skills through active participation in large and small multidisciplinary and discipline-specific groups. The dissertation project provides specific opportunities of skill development through the construction of a research plan, through synthesizing knowledge and by participating in dissertation workshops and individual meetings with supervisors.

Assessment Strategy

Key skills are not independently assessed. However, D1 - 4 are indirectly assessed through coursework, team presentations, data practicals, research papers and the dissertation.

12	Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

This is a one year full-time or two year part-time programme. It consists of two parts: a *taught component*, which runs from later September until May, and a Dissertation submitted in early September. Successful completion of the taught component is required in order for a student to progress to the dissertation.

The taught component of the course comprises 70 credits compulsory Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Postgraduate Research Training Programme research training modules, 50 credits of optional subject specific modules. The Research Training modules and most options are continuously assessed; other modules are examined in the Semester 1 and 2 examination periods.

The dissertation comprises 60 credits. Dissertation topics are developed during the year through the Dissertation Preparation module in HSS. Topics include desk based literature reviews and analyses, studies involving fieldwork and case studies where the student works with a particular firm or organization.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

This programme is recognised by the ESRC as a Research Training masters. Students may take it as the 1 of an ESRC 1+3 PhD studentship. Students are encouraged to participate fully in the research culture of the Centre for Rural Economy, an active University Research Centre.

Students may choose (through optional modules) to specialise in one of the wide range of rural social science disciplines (including food marketing, rural and environmental economics, rural sociology, rural policy or science and technology studies).

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/2010-2011/sage.php

13	Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications Some applicants to this programme will have an ESRC Studentship and will therefore satisfy the prevailing ESRC conditions for studentships.

Other applicants will have, at least, a 2nd class degree from a UK University or its overseas' equivalent. Preferred subjects include, agricultural economics, economics, marketing, management, sociology, geography and other social science based degrees.

Admissions policy/selection tools
Applicants are invited to visit SAFRD to meet current students and attend an interview with the DPD. An offer of a place may be conditional on the interview, but is typically on the basis of information given in the application form. Students with non-standard qualifications may be required to attend an interview. Funding awards either from the School or the Faculty are on a competitive basis and may take into account degree grades, experience, references and interview performance.

Non-standard Entry Requirements
Applicants who hold non-standard qualifications, and/or have relevant experience, will be considered on an individual basis.

Level of English Language capability
Applicants for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English preferably by means of a TOEFL score of 600 or greater or an IELTS score of 7.0 or greater.

14	Support for Student Learning

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: *http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/*

Induction
During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/

Study skills support
Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid. Further details are available at:

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/about/campus/facilities/list/maths-aid . Help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre. Details can be obtained from Alicia.Cresswell@ncl.ac.uk

Academic support
The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

Pastoral support
All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. Details of the personal tutor system can be found at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/support/tutor.htm
In addition the University offers a range of support services, including the Student Advice Centre, the Counselling and Wellbeing team, the Mature Student Support Officer, and a Childcare Support Officer, see
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/about/campus/facilities/list/disability+support+service

Support for students with disabilities
The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies. For further details see
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/about/campus/facilities/list/disability+support+service

Learning resources
The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities, see
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/facilities/index.htm

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-sessional language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange. See
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/langcen/index.htm

15	Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Module reviews
All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the Board of Studies. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme reviews
The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

External Examiner reports
External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

Student evaluations
All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The National Student Survey is sent out every year to final-year undergraduate students, and consists of a set of questions seeking the students' views on the quality of the learning and teaching in their HEIs. Further information is at www.thestudentsurvey.com/ With reference to the outcomes of the NSS and institutional student satisfaction surveys actions are taken at all appropriate levels by the institution.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback
Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms
The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process, see
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/aqss/qsh/internal_subject_review/index.php

Accreditation reports
None of the programmes are accredited.

16	Regulation of assessment

Pass mark
The pass mark is 50 (Postgraduate programmes)

Course requirements
Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research (http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/tpmdepr.pdf) and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees (http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/tpmdeprexamconv.pdf). Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40 is possible and there are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

Common Marking Scheme
The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes		**Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes**	
<50	Fail	<50	Fail
50-59	Pass	50 or above	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit		
70 or above	Pass with Distinction		

Role of the External Examiner
An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, after recommendation from the Board of Studies.
The External Examiner is expected to:
    See and approve examination papers
    Moderate examination and coursework marking
    Attend the Board of Examiners
    Report to the University on the standards of the programme

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In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/)

The School Brochure (contact enquiries@ncl.ac.uk)

The University Regulations (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/)

The Degree Programme Handbook (see : http://www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd/postgrad/)

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Intended Learning Outcome	Module codes (Comp/Core in Bold)
A1	**HSS8001, HSS8003, HSS8004,** ACE8054, ACE8054
A2	**HSS8004, HSS8005,**
A3	ACE8059, ACE8047, ACE8054, ACE8050, ACE8015 plus other optional modules
A4	ACE8059, ACE8047, ACE8054, ACE8050, ACE8015 plus other optional modules
B1	**HSS8001, HSS8003**
B2	**HSS8001, HSS8003**
B3	ACE8059, ACE8047, ACE8054, ACE8050, ACE8015 plus other optional modules
B4	ACE8059, ACE8047, ACE8054, ACE8050, ACE8015 plus other optional modules
C1	**HSS8002, HSS8005**, **ACE8095**
C2	**HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095**
C3	**HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095**
C4	**ACE8095**
D1	**HSS8001, HSS8003**
D2	**HSS8003, HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095,** ACE8046, ACE8047, ACE8054, ACE8050 ACE8015 plus other optional modules
D3	**HSS8001, HSS8003**
D4	**HSS8001, HSS8003**