

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	<b>Awarding Institution</b>	Newcastle University
2	<b>Teaching Institution</b>	Newcastle University
3	<b>Final Award</b>	MSc
4	<b>Programme Title</b>	Food and Rural Development Research
5	<b>Programme Code</b>	4801
6	<b>Programme Accreditation</b>	N/A
7	<b>QAA Subject Benchmark(s)</b>	N/A
8	<b>FHEQ Level</b>	7
9	<b>Last updated</b>	7/5/2014

### 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 in the environmental planning Doctoral Training Centre pathway.
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 food and rural development 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. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for (subject).

#### 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 and food social research.
- A4 appreciate the key research findings in their specialism (food marketing, agricultural and environmental economics, rural development and rural sociology, as appropriate).

<b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>
<p>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 development and food examples, small group discussions, group exercises and staff seminars where examples of research are given from a range of perspectives.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
<p>A1 is by a combination of team work assessment and written reports.</p> <p>A2 is assessed by teamwork assessment, practical assessments, data analysis practicals, written reports and evaluation of the dissertation.</p> <p>A3 is assessed by means of literature reviewing, dissertation proposals and plans, and student's final Dissertation.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Intellectual Skills</b>
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>B1 define and formulate research problems, questions and hypotheses</p> <p>B2 plan and conduct research projects</p> <p>B3 critically evaluate research findings</p> <p>B4 synthesise key findings and knowledge from across the social sciences, in particular their specialism in rural development or food social science</p>
<b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>
<p>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.</p>
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
<p>B1 and B2 are assessed through group research proposals and through individual Dissertation proposals.</p> <p>B3 and B4 are assessed through unseen exams, oral presentations and assessed essays, mainly in optional modules.</p> <p>B1-B4 are assessed through the Students' Dissertations.</p>
<b>Practical Skills</b>
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>C1 demonstrate bibliographic and key computing skills appropriate to research at masters level</p> <p>C2 collect secondary and primary data using a variety of methods</p> <p>C3 analyse a range of quantitative and qualitative data using appropriate tools</p> <p>C4 apply their knowledge and understanding to rural development/food specific problems</p>

<b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>
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.
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
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 and Qualitative Methods modules.
<b>Transferable/Key Skills</b>
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
<b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>
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.
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
Key skills are not independently assessed. However, D1 - 4 are indirectly assessed through coursework, team presentations, data practicals, research papers and the dissertation.

<b>12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features</b>
<b>Basic structure of the programme</b>
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 (HaSS) Postgraduate Research Training Programme research training modules, and 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 HaSS. 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 (i.e. organise and attend seminars and reading groups, contribute to research meetings).

Students may choose (through optional modules) to specialise in one of the wide range of areas (including researching the food consumer, innovation and new food product development , agricultural 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/>

**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 An upper second class honours degree from a UK university or its overseas' equivalent. Preferred subjects include agricultural economics, economics, planning, marketing, management, sociology, geography and other social science based degrees.

*Admissions policy/selection tools*

Applicants are invited to apply online through the University's admission service at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/>. An offer of a place may be conditional on an 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 and references.

*Non-standard Entry Requirements*

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

*Additional Requirements*

A commitment to research in social sciences, particularly in the fields of rural development and food social science.

*Level of English Language capability*

Applicants whose first language is not English require IELTS 7.0, TOEFL 100 (Internet-based), or equivalent

## 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.

### *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 and help with academic writing is available from the Writing Development Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

### *Academic and Pastoral support*

Each undergraduate and taught postgraduate student will be assigned a personal tutor.\* A personal tutor is one part of a wider network of advice and guidance available to students to support their personal and general academic development. The module leader acts as the first point of contact for subject-specific academic advice. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Student-Staff Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies. Within the academic unit, students may also receive additional academic and pastoral advice from a range of other student-facing staff including degree programme directors, dissertation/project supervisors, and administrative support staff.

\*Arrangements may vary for students taking special types of provision.

The University also offers a wide range of institutional services and support upon which students can call, such as the Writing Development Centre, Careers Service and Student Wellbeing Service. This includes one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Student Union operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

### *Support for students with disabilities*

The University's Disability Support team 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.

### *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.

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-session 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.

<b>15</b>	<b>Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning</b>
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*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 and/or the School Teaching and Learning Committee. Student opinion is sought at the Student-Staff Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

*Programme reviews*

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee. The FLTSEC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

*External Examiner reports*

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

*Student evaluations*

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Student-Staff Committee, and the Board of Studies. The results from student surveys are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review of the programme and any arising actions are captured at programme and School / institutional level and reported to the appropriate body.

*Mechanisms for gaining student feedback*

Feedback is channelled via the Student-Staff Committee and the Board of Studies.

*Faculty and University Review Mechanisms*

Every six years degree programmes in each subject area undergo periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a review visit by a review team (normally one day in duration) which includes an external subject specialist and a student representative. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further six year period.

*Accreditation reports*

*Additional mechanisms*

## 16 Regulation of assessment

### *Pass mark*

The pass mark is 50%

### *Course requirements*

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. There are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40% is possible for candidates who commenced their programme in 2013/14 or earlier. For students starting their programme in 2014/15 or later, no compensation is possible.

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

#### **Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes**

<50	Fail
50-59	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit
70 or above	Pass with Distinction

#### **Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes**

<50	Fail
50 or above	Pass

### *Role of the External Examiner*

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- i. See and approve assessment papers
- ii. Moderate examination and coursework marking
- iii. Attend the Board of Examiners
- iv. Report to the University on the standards of the programme

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

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>

The School Brochure: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/marketing/services/print/publications/ordering/>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

The Degree Programme Handbook:

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

Either

Intended Learning Outcome	Module codes (Compulsory in Bold)
A1	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003, HSS8004</b>
A2	<b>HSS8004, HSS8005</b>
A3	ACE8047, ACE8050, ACE8082, ACE8083, ACE8088, ACE8100 plus other optional modules
A4	ACE8047, ACE8050, ACE8082, ACE8083, ACE8088, ACE8100 plus other optional modules
B1	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003, ACE8095</b>
B2	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003, ACE8095</b>
B3	ACE8047, ACE8050, ACE8082, ACE8088, ACE8100 plus other optional modules
B4	ACE8047, ACE8050, ACE8082, ACE8088, ACE8100 plus other optional modules
C1	<b>HSS8002, HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095</b>
C2	<b>HSS8002, HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095</b>
C3	<b>HSS8002, HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095</b>
C4	<b>ACE8095</b>
D1	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003</b>
D2	<b>HSS8003, HSS8004, HSS8005, ACE8095</b> , ACE8047, ACE8050 plus other optional modules
D3	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003, ACE8095</b>
D4	<b>HSS8001, HSS8003</b>