

MRes in Rural Social Science

Newcastle University Programme Specification

1	Awarding Institution	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2	Teaching Institution	As above
3	Final Award	MRes
4	Programme Title	Rural Social Science
5	Programme Accredited	Not appropriate
6	UCAS	Not appropriate
7	QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)	Not appropriate
8	Date of production/revision	Last updated 09.09.03

9. Programme Aims

- (i) to meet the aims of the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level
- (ii) 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
- (iii) to contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates (Institutional Plan, 6.7 (ii) and (iii)) and enhancing their key skills and employability (5.7(iv))
- (iv) to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, or the private sector
- (v) to provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at Level 4 in the national qualifications framework.

10. Intended learning outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for the students to develop and demonstrate:

A General research skills

A1 Bibliographic and Computing Skills

- (i) the skills to identify and retrieve relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings and resources available electronically and on the www
- (ii) the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
- (iii) IT skills, including word processing and other basic computing skills, including spreadsheets and database management, SPSS and Nudist

A2 Ethical Issues

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
- (ii) an awareness of the political context of research
- (iii) an awareness of professional codes of practice
- (iv) a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research field work
- (v) an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

Teaching strategy

Bibliographic and computer skills are taught through workshops and practical classes. Ethical issues are taught by lectures and workshops.

Learning strategy

Students learn bibliographical skills (A1 (i - ii)) by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading.

Assessment strategy

General research skills will be assessed by means of unseen written exams and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess student abilities. The assessment for the information skills module 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. Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of team work assessment and 3,000 word written reports.

- This is a one year full-time or two year part-time modular programme.
- 70 credits are taught at a Faculty level (Humanities and Social Science) and 50 credits within the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

B Training in Research Methods

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

B1 Principles

- (i) to be able to define and formulate research problems and questions and hypotheses
- (ii) will understand the rationale for research methods, evaluate and select them
- (iii) will understand sampling, sampling error, and biases in results
- (iv) will understand and be able to apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability

B2 Data collection and analysis

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
- (ii) an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the

- development of a critical use of sources
- (iii) an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data
- (iv) proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

Teaching strategy

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the modules “Thinking about Research” and “Dissertation Preparation”. B1 (iii) and (iv) will be delivered through the Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods modules.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i) and (ii) is a combination of lectures, workshops and both discipline specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Students learn through preparation of a dissertation and team-based problem solving exercises. Teaching for B1 (iii) and (iv) will be through lectures and group discussions. Teaching for B2 (i - iv) will be delivered through the Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods modules. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals.

Learning strategy

For B1 (i - iv) students will learn through completing assignments and practical exercises. For B2 (i - iv) students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises and in the writing of their dissertations.

Assessment strategy

For B1 (i - iv) will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a 3,000 word written report. Assessment strategy for B2 (i - iv) will be a combination of data analysis practicals and 3,000 word reports and evaluation of the dissertation.

C Subject-related outcomes

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

C1 Research training in Rural Social Science

- (i) be able to develop a coherent dissertation research proposal
- (ii) will have experienced and discussed group projects
- (iii) will be familiar with rural research projects undertaken by the department
- (iv) will understand aspects of questionnaire design
- (v) will have an appreciation of the range of quantitative techniques applied in agricultural economics and marketing
- (vi) Will have an appreciation of appropriate qualitative research techniques

C2 Subject Specific Training

- (i) will receive additional subject specific training in agricultural economics, environmental economics, food marketing and rural sociology, as relevant.
- (ii) will appreciate the key research findings in their specialism and will be able to apply this in their dissertation.

Teaching strategy

C1 (i) to (v) will be delivered through the module Research Methods and Project management and a 15000 word Dissertation. C2 (i) and (ii) through the specialist modules (Rural Society and Development, Rural Environmental Planning, Environmental Impact Assessment, GIS and Remote Sensing, Environmental Economics, Rural Environmental Policy Evaluation, International Agricultural and Food markets, International Marketing, Markets and Market Analysis, Agrifood Industry Management, Central and East European Agri-food Markets, Quantitative Techniques for Marketing, International Trade, Marketing Strategy, Supply Chain Management, Food Policy in the EU and Marketing Management) and through Research Methods and Project Management and their Dissertation.

The teaching strategy for C1 (i) to (v) includes lectures to set out research principles using rural social science examples, small group discussions, group exercises and staff seminars where they give examples of research from a range of perspectives. Each student will be allocated a Dissertation supervisor who will discuss draft chapters and a final draft of the whole dissertation.

The teaching strategy for C2 is more difficult to characterize given the range of modules and subjects involved. However, most modules include a mixture of lectures and seminars. Those in quantitative methods include computer based practicals.

Learning strategy

For C1 (i) to (v) students will learn through completing their dissertation proposal, completing the group project and applying the qualitative and quantitative techniques in their dissertation.

For C2 (i) and (ii) each module emphasises the importance of independent reading. Some modules include short tests, problem-solving exercises student-led seminars. Others include practical classes and field visits.

Assessment strategy

C1 (i) to (v) are assessed by means of (i) group review of past-students' Dissertations, (ii) group literature review, Dissertations, (ii) group research project proposals, (iii) Dissertation proposals and plans, (iv) Student's final Dissertation.

C2 (i) to (ii) are assessed in various ways which include unseen exams, assessed essays and numerical assignments.

D Key skills

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

- D1 the skills to communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- D2 the skills of effective written communication and presentation
- D3 the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time
- D4 the skills to work effectively as a member of teams both subject specific and multi-disciplinary

Teaching strategy

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 iterative written assessments.

Learning strategy

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.

11 Programme features

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, 20 credits compulsory SAFRD research training module (Research Methods and Project Management) and 30 credits of optional subject specific modules. The Research Training modules and Research Methods and Project Management are continuously assessed, other modules are examined in the Semester 1 and 2 examination periods.

Dissertation topics are developed during the year through the Research Methods and Project Management. Topics include desk based literature reviews and analyses, studies involving fieldwork and case studies where the student works with a particular firm or organization.

12 Criteria for Admission

Entrance Criteria

Most 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 degrees in rural social science.

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.

Applicants with Non-Standard Qualifications

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

Admissions Policy

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 Department or the Faculty are on a competitive basis and may take into account degree grades, experience, references and interview performance.

13. Support for students and their learning

Coherence and coordination will be assured at the faculty level by the Director of the inter-faculty postgraduate training programme. This will be provided by the faculty.

Induction

There will be an induction meeting at inter-faculty level for the students from all the MA/MRes programmes where the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and all the module leaders of the generic modules to be delivered at inter-faculty level would be present. This would complement Departmental induction procedures, and serve to introduce the students to the inter-faculty part of their programmes and also to each other and to the idea of a multi-disciplinary learning environment.

Study skills support

Provided by the student's tutor, liaison librarians in the Robinson Library and the Computing Service

Academic support

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme will have overall responsibility for ensuring coherence and continuity in the inter-faculty delivered modules and also for their administration and management. All students will have access to the Director and all the module leaders for advice and discussion of academic issues arising.

Pastoral support

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and the module leaders will be available to discuss pastoral issues arising from the inter-faculty delivered modules. The overall responsibility for pastoral issues, however, will lie within the Department. The Postgraduate Sub-Dean and Faculty Postgraduate tutors will also be available for consultation on pastoral issues.

The HSS Postgraduate Training Room provides an ideal environment for the teaching of the inter-faculty delivered modules. The room has comfortable chairs and kitchen facilities for refreshments and can be used by the students for social, as well as self-organised academic, events.

Support for special needs

The requirements of disabled students will be fully considered in the delivery of the programme and its assessment processes.

Learning resources

The HSS Postgraduate Training Room has space for up to seventy students to engage in group discussion and teamwork exercises. There are also overhead and Powerpoint facilities available.

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Section 14 – Methods for Evaluating and Improving the Quality and Standards of Teaching and Learning.

Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and output standards

- Student opinion is gathered by means of student questionnaires which are issued on completion of the programme .
- Module questionnaires will be issued to all students on completion of each module. Summaries of the module and programme questionnaires will be considered at both the School Board of Studies and the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies, although the latter will be particularly concerned with evaluations arising from the generic component of the linked Masters programmes.
- Feedback from past graduates
- External examiner reports (A report following consideration of the comments from the external examiner appointed to oversee the faculty generic modules will be forwarded annually to each School Board of Studies)
- Taught Programme Review
- Internal Subject Review
- Periodic feedback from ESRC monitoring visits
- Consideration of annual programme monitoring statistics

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience

- Staff Student Committee
- Student representation on Boards of Studies
- Student evaluation questionnaires

Committees Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating Quality and Standards

There will be separate but linked forums at Inter-faculty and School level for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

Inter –Faculty Level

- A separate Board of Studies will monitor and evaluate quality and standards of the generic modules on the MRes programme which are delivered in common across the faculty. This Board will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub- Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, DPDs of all the linked Masters programmes, module leaders of the five generic modules, and all teachers on these modules delivered at an inter-faculty level. The Board will also include appropriate student representation.
Overall responsibility for assuring quality and standards of the MRes programme will lie with the Departmental Board of Studies.
- A Board of Examiners will also exist to consider issues related to examinations and marks for the five modules delivered at an inter-faculty level to all linked Masters programmes. An external examiner will also be appointed for the 5 modules delivered at an inter-faculty level, who will also report on the standard of, and coherence between, the generically- taught modules.
- This Board of Examiners will meet before the meetings of the School Board of Examiners who will consider the marks from the inter-faculty Board alongside the marks from the subject- specific modules. Overall responsibility for the award of the degree will lie with each Departmental Board of Examiners.

Departmental Committees.

- An MRes Board of Studies including representative(s) from the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies. Membership will consist of the main course teachers and a student member nominated by the student body.
- Examination Board which will include one representative from the generic Board of examiners.
- Staff Student Committee
- School representation on Faculty Postgraduate Committee

15. Regulation of assessment

(i) Assessment rules and degree classification are set out in the degree regulations attached .

(ii) Role of the external examiners

An external examiner is being appointed to oversee the generic modules that are being delivered to all of the linked Masters programmes. The role of this external examiner is to moderate these modules. He/she will attend the June Board of Examiners and will be concerned with maintenance and comparability of standards of this aspect of the MRes programme.

(iii) Board of Examiners

An inter- Faculty Board will be held in June. It will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, the module leaders of the 5 generic modules, and the DPDs of all the linked Master's programmes. This board will report back to the subject-specific Board of Examiners.

Degree of Master of Research in Rural Social Science

1. The degree of Master of Research in Rural Social Science shall be awarded to candidates who satisfy the examiners in the assessments specified for the programme.
2. An applicant may be approved for admission as a candidate for the degree of Master of Research in Rural Social Science by the Degree Programme Director provided that such an applicant satisfies the requirements of the University *Taught Postgraduate Masters' Degree Entrance and Progress Regulations*.

3. Programme Structure

- (a) A candidate may be admitted as a full-time student, in which case the student shall pursue a programme of full-time study comprising modules to a credit value of 180 studied over a period of 12 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of a single academic year.
 - (b) A full-time candidate shall study modules to a credit value of not more than 70 and not less than 50 in each of the first two semesters, such that the total credit value of the modules studied in Semester 1 and Semester 2 shall be 120.
 - (c) A candidate may be admitted as a part-time student, in which case the student shall pursue a programme of part-time study, comprising modules to a credit value of 180 studied over a period of 24 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of each of two academic years.
- 4 (a) All candidates shall take the following compulsory modules:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Descriptive title</i>
LES803	(10)	Dissertation preparation
LES802	(10)	Introduction to Information Skills
LES801	(10)	Thinking About Research – Puzzles, Paradoxes and Problems
LES804	(20)	Qualitative Methodology in Social Sciences
LES805	(20)	Quantitative Methodology in Social Sciences
AEF801	(20)	Research Methods and Project Management
AEF899	(60)	Dissertation

- (b) All candidates shall select further modules to a credit value of 30 from the following list. Candidates are required to consult with the Degree Programme Director with respect to their choice of modules. Modules available may vary, taking into account demand and staff research leave.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Descriptive title</i>
AEF884	(30)	Rural Society and Development
AEF874	(10)	Rural Environmental Planning
TCP846	(10)	Environmental Impact Assessment
AES806	(10)	GIS and Remote Sensing
AEF804	(10)	Environmental Economics
AEF805	(10)	Rural Environmental Policy Evaluation
AEF811	(10)	International Agricultural and Food markets
AEF812	(10)	International Marketing
AEF813	(10)	Markets and Market Analysis
AEF825	(20)	Agri-food Industry Management
AEF802	(10)	Central and East European Agri-food Markets

AEF835	(20)	Quantitative Techniques for Marketing
AEF832	(10)	International Trade
AEF833	(10)	Marketing Strategy
AEF803	(10)	Supply Chain Management
AEF830	(10)	Food Policy in the EU
AEF834	(10)	Marketing Management

Note: the University Taught Postgraduate Masters' Degree and Progress Regulations contain a general substitution provision in regulation 14 of those regulations.

5. Assessment

- (a) The following assessment methods may be used in this degree programme: unseen written examinations; seen written examinations; 'open book' examinations; take-away examinations; in-course assessment of practical, field and seminar work; assessment of essays; written and oral assessment of project work including group work; written and oral assessment of dissertation; oral examinations.
- (b) Candidates must obtain a mark of not less than 50 per cent to satisfy the examiners in any assessment.
- (c) Candidates must satisfy the examiners in the assessment specified for each module of the programme.
- (d) Before proceeding to the second year, part-time student must satisfy the examiners in the assessment specified for each module at the end of the first year.
- (e) Candidates who satisfy the examiners in the assessment specified for a module may not enter again for that assessment.

6. Submission of Dissertation

The dissertation shall be submitted at the end of the research semester by a date specified by the Programme Director.

7. Consequences of Failure

- (a) A candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners in the assessment of taught modules to the credit value of not more than 60 at the first attempt may be referred for re-examination on one further occasion only. Re-examinations will be held in September
- (b) A candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners in the assessment of taught modules to the credit value of more than 60 at the first attempt shall be deemed to have failed the examination as a whole and have no right of reassessment.
- (c) A candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners in the dissertation element of the programme may, on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, be referred for re-examination on one further occasion only, which shall be within 12 months of the original examination.
- (d) A candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners in the dissertation element of the programme and is not referred for re-examination by the Board of Examiners, or who fails to satisfy the examiners in the dissertation on re-examination, shall be deemed to have failed the examination as a whole.

8. Award of Qualification

- (a) A candidate for the Master's degree, who completes the programme and submits a dissertation but fails to satisfy the examiners in all the required modules, may be awarded the Diploma provided they have satisfied the examiners in not less than 120 credits worth of study.
- (b) A candidate shall be entitled to the award of the degree with Distinction where the average mark yielded for all modules is 70 per cent or more; or where in the opinion of the Board of Examiners the candidate's performance justifies the award.
- (c) A candidate required to be re-examined in any component of the programme may not be considered for the award of the degree with Distinction.

9. Scale for the Return of Marks

The standard levels of award and the marks applicable to them are as follows:

Distinction 70 - 100 per cent

Pass 50 - 69 per cent