



DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME

COURSE SYLLABUS

UNIVERSITY CERTIFICATE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY DISTANCE LEARNING¹

(30 credits usually over 1 year or less)

UNIVERSITY DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY DISTANCE LEARNING

(60 credits over 1 or more years)

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY DISTANCE LEARNING

(On successful completion of the Diploma in Rural Development, students are eligible to progress to the BSc programme involving 120 credits over a further 2 years or longer period)

SPECIAL PURPOSE AWARDS¹:

PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY DISTANCE LEARNING

(20 credit award)

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY DISTANCE LEARNING

(10 credit award)

¹ University Certificate and Special Purpose Awards may be drawn from Stage 1 and Stage 2 modules dependent on availability.

Diploma in Rural Development (Stage 1 of BSc in Rural Development)

Students complete 60 credits from the following core and optional modules.

Core Modules

Introduction to Rural Development (5 Credits)

This introductory module provides a context for many of the ideas and concepts explored in later modules. The key content areas include: key concepts, approaches, theories and practices associated with rural development; evolution of rural development in Ireland and EU; Current issues of rural development in Ireland; and the role and functions of organisations and agencies involved in rural development.

Rural Organisation (5 Credits)

This module outlines the diversity of organisations that contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas. The module examines the different types of organisations that exist and explains the distinguishing features of these organisations. In addition the module explores the factors that led to the emergence of these organisations and how they contribute to sustainable rural development.

Rural Economy (10 credits)

This module develops an understanding of the economic elements of consumption, production and trade in rural areas and provides the tools to analyse them. It explores basic micro and macroeconomic concepts related to agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas, the role and impact of regional, national and international policies and the implications of the changing economic landscape for social and political development in rural areas.

Rural Society (10 credits)

This module introduces students to a sociological understanding of the changing nature of rural society. It includes an introduction to rural sociology and an examination of rural social change and the related consequences for rural society.

Rural Environment (10 credits)

This module develops an appreciation of the Irish rural environmental heritage and helps students to develop skills and tools for its analysis and management. It provides the tools for economic evaluation of the environment and of natural resources, and the rationale and impact of key environmental policies affecting rural areas.

Communications for Rural Development (10 Credits)

This module provides the student with an insight into the main communication methods used in rural development and will help in developing skills in presenting and disseminating information. The module examines the role of communications in rural development and presents the main theories related to communications. Particular communication media and methods are addressed in the context of rural development processes. Specifically skills related to the use of mass media; public speaking; group communications and written communications methods are developed due to their importance in enabling rural development.

Optional Modules – Students choose any one of these modules:

Community Education (10 credits)

This module provides an understanding of education and development in a rural community context; it gives the student an understanding of how community education is an integral part of community development and explores how to enhance community education. The module will define education and community education, the theory and skills of community education, the place of community education in rural development, and developing community education programmes.

Social Farming (10 Credits)

This module develops participants' awareness and understanding of the concepts, the applications and the policy environment that surround the use of Social Farming practices in an Irish and European context. The term Social Farming may cover all activities that use agricultural resources to promote, or to generate, social services in rural areas. Examples of these services may include day/residential social service supports on a farm, rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered workshops, life-long education and other activities that contribute to social inclusion.

Food Business (10 Credits)

This module provides an understanding of food business chains through an examination of the food business chain from producer to consumer with an emphasis on the roles and needs of the various stakeholders, particularly the rural producer and consumer. The module examines the roles and needs of stakeholders along the food chain, in the context of farmer viability, consumer demand and niche markets, retail structures, quality and traceability of food, environmental impact and sustainability. Both conventional and alternative approaches to addressing these issues will be addressed.

Stage 2 of BSc in Rural Development

Students complete 60 credits from the following core and optional modules:

Core Modules

Rural Research Methods (10 Credits)

This module develops students' capacity to undertake socio-economic research. The issues covered include: approaches to research; problem/topic identification; completing literature reviews; development of research objectives; sampling; questionnaire design; questionnaire delivery; data entry into computer; data analysis and presentation of research findings.

Integrated Rural Development Policy and Practice (10 credits)

The module examines and reviews contemporary integrated rural development policy within a European context. The key content areas include the development of a theoretical and policy context for the understanding of contemporary European rural development strategies, and case study analysis of contemporary European integrated rural development strategies.

Rural Enterprise (10 credits)

The module examines the unique characteristics of rural enterprises and the nature and importance of the rural business and policy environment in stimulating a thriving enterprise environment in rural areas. The module identifies the many ways in which rural SMEs can serve a variety of rural stakeholders as well as the role of socio-economic development agencies and policies conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation.

Integrated Rural Community Planning (10 credits)

The module provides an understanding and critique of the processes, procedures and requirements of effective and sustainable rural planning and development. It includes stakeholder and consultative processes, as well as sustainable planning and development in rural areas.

Professional Placement (10 credits)

The module develops professional and transferable skills and experience by working in a rural development environment/organisation. It provides students with exposure to, and experience in, a rural development environment/organisation relevant to the degree and to a working environment. Performance will be monitored by both the employer and academic staff.

Optional Modules – Students choose any one of these modules:

Rural Tourism (10 credits)

Tourism is a key lever of economic development in a growing, dynamic but uncertain sector. This module seeks to locate opportunities and provide analysis tools for rural tourism. The module provides indepth knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of rural tourism and tourism policies, the set of complex challenges and relevant solutions faced by the sector, as well as applied research methodology appropriate to the study of rural tourism.

Community & Co-operative ownership of Renewable Energy (10 Credits)

This module informs students of this emerging area and the opportunities for economic, social and environmental development of rural areas presented through community and co-operative ownership of renewable energy. The module provides an understanding and critique of the changing European and global environmental policy framework. The key technologies and their application in Ireland will be discussed through the use of case studies highlighting the strategic options available, the support needed to develop this sector and the benefits for sustainable rural development.

Social Economy (10 credits)

The module discusses the key concepts, role of and policy considerations for the social economy in a rural context.

Stage 3 of BSc in Rural Development

Students complete 60 credits from the following core and optional modules:

Core Modules

Marketing & Business Skills for Rural Enterprise (10 Credits)

This module provides students with an understanding of the key role that enterprise plays in the rural economy, the importance of stimulating a thriving enterprise environment in rural areas, the role marketing plays in the rural enterprise and how this supports sustainable rural development. The content addresses the importance of a positive enterprise culture in the development of rural areas; different types of rural enterprise; stimulating rural enterprise; financial aspects of rural enterprise; marketing and the small rural enterprise; marketing and the marketing concept; the marketing strategy and marketing planning; market information and business development.

Financial Management (10 credits)

The module gives participants an understanding of financial accounting systems and presents the student with a methodology for the preparation and interpretation of financial plans and final accounts. Content includes preparation of annual reports, financial statements, profit and loss accounts and balance sheets with particular relevance to rural development projects and rural based enterprises, as well as financial management and accounting tools, financial proofing and risk assessment.

Project Planning and Development (10 credits)

The purpose of this module is to introduce the student to the concept and practice of Project Planning and Management. Project Planning and Project Management are two practices that are critical to the successful implementation of rural development programmes and projects. The module deals with: definitions and concepts of planning and management; composition of projects factors that affect project success; types of planning and approaches to planning; the process of planning and the planning cycle.

Research Project/Minor Thesis (20 credits)

The module includes researching and writing of a minor thesis under academic supervision.

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to: conduct an analytical review of relevant scientific literature in a national and international context; develop specific research questions and present a research proposal; conduct comprehensive secondary and primary research; design, develop and deliver a quantitative study and a qualitative study; complete detailed interpretation and analysis of data; co-ordinate and manage a research project; analyse data using appropriate techniques with supporting statistics; and present the outcomes of data analysis in appropriate formats.

Optional Modules – Students choose any one of these modules:

Marine and Natural Resources (10 credits)

The module covers the study of the marine environment, with a focus on Ireland, in the context of understanding the nature of marine resources and how these are impacted. It integrates economic, social and natural sciences. The module describes and analyses the economic utility of the marine environment (e.g. transportation, recreation) and ecological value (e.g. fisheries, aquaculture) derived from the productivity of associated ecosystems and associated policy, planning and management approaches.

ICT and Rural Development (10 credits)

This module provides participants with an understanding of how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) contribute to sustainable rural development. The module allows students to explore the European, Irish and International policy environment governing the development of ICT; examine issues relating to current ICT infrastructure in rural areas; assess the contribution of ICT to Rural Development; and examine development and management of community portals and websites.

Conservation and Management of the Rural Landscape (10 credits)

Students will be introduced to the principles of ecology and the evolution of the Irish agricultural landscape. Topics covered include: definition and components of biodiversity; importance of biodiversity and contribution to sustainable rural development; threats to biodiversity; current and prospective legislation to protect biodiversity within the rural landscape; relationships between farm management practices and the resultant ecological status of rural ecosystems; current issues in agri-environmental research.

The Eco-Politics of Food and Nutrition (10 Credits)

The purpose of this module is to inform students of the contemporary issues in the food system and provide an understanding of the impact of internal and external factors guiding the debate. The changing European and global food industry along with a rapidly evolving policy environment provides the context for this module. The contribution of the various stakeholders is explored and the issues are discussed.