

Accreditation Report

Master's Programme

“Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security”

offered by

Sumy National Agrarian University/Ukraine

The Royal Agricultural University/United Kingdom



22nd Meeting of the ZEvA Commission on the 5th of November 2024

Agenda Item Nr. 04.04

Study Programme	Degree	Programme Duration	Type of Programme
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security	Master/ Master of Science	16 months (3 semesters)	Full-time

Date of online site visit: 6th of June 2024

Responsible Staff:

Iryna Skliar, Programme Coordinator, Sumy National Agrarian University

Dr. Svitlana Lukash, Programme Leader, Sumy National Agrarian University

Oleksandr Smyrnov, Director of the Ukraine Twinning Project, Cormac Consultancy Group

Expert Panel:

- **Prof. Dr.-Ing. Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. agr. Iryna Smetanska (academic expert)**
Full Professor for Growing and Processing of Plant Food
University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf, Germany
- **Prof. Dr. Andreas Thiel (academic expert)**
Head of International Agricultural Policy and Environmental Governance
Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences, University of Kassel, Germany
- **Sabine Huck (professional expert)**
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
- **Mariia Batsko (student expert)**
3rd year student of Landscape Design
O.M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy, Kharkiv

ZEVA Project Coordinator:

Anja Grube, Head of International Affairs, Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hanover (ZEVA)

Hanover, 17/09/2024

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	3
I. Findings of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission.....	4
1. Decision of the ZEVA Accreditation Commission (5 th of November, 2024)	4
2. Key Findings and Final Vote of the Expert Panel	5
2.1 Executive Summary: Key Findings.....	5
2.2 Final Vote of the Expert Panel.....	5
II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel	7
1. Introduction: Purpose and General Context of the Accreditation Procedure	7
2. Outline of the Study Programme	9
3. The Partner Universities and their Framework of Collaboration	10
4. Assessment of the Study Programme	12
4.1 Intended Learning Outcomes.....	12
4.2 Programme Concept and Curriculum.....	14
4.3 Teaching Faculty.....	15
4.3 Teaching Faculty.....	17
4.4 Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support.....	17
4.5 Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment	19
4.6 Quality Assurance.....	20
4.7 Transparency, Documentation and Public Information	21
Appendix	22
1. Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report	22

I. Findings of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Accreditation Commission (5th of November, 2024)

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts’ report and recommendations and takes note of the universities’ statement in response.

As no binding cooperation agreement for the programme has been provided so far, the two conditions proposed by the expert panel are upheld. Otherwise, all open questions included in the report have been answered by the university to a satisfactory degree.

The ZEvA Commission decides to accredit the Master’s programme “Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security” offered by Sumy National Agrarian University and the Royal Agricultural University with the following conditions:

- 1. The universities need to generate a detailed and binding agreement to underpin their collaboration in the context of the study programme.*
- 2. The PDCA cycles underlying the programme need to be described more transparently in a binding document.*

The conditions have to be fulfilled within a period of 12 months. Failure to comply with the conditions in due time will result in withdrawal of the accreditation.

The accreditation of the study programme is valid for a period of six years.

This decision is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and the recommendations of the ECTS Users’ Guide as referred to in the ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes.

2. Key Findings and Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.1 Executive Summary: Key Findings

The experts have gained the overall impression that the double degree programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security is based on a well-functioning collaborative relationship of two universities that are a good match for each other in terms of their profiles and overall strategy. Considering the significance of the agrarian sector for the national economy, the programme is of particularly high relevance for Ukraine. It is also potentially attractive for students from other countries, also as an alternative to enrolling in the Master’s programme at Royal Agricultural University which the double degree programme fundamentally builds upon.

As a central outcome of their quality assessment, the experts recommend further sharpening the profile of the Master’s programme. The intended learning outcomes should be formulated in such a way that the intended professional and academic profile of the graduates becomes more palpable. Concurrently, the very broad curriculum should allow for more specialization, for example by introducing several clear-cut elective pathways through the programme.

The partners share the responsibility for the quality of the programme and are in continuous close exchange. However, from the experts’ point of view a more detailed collaboration agreement is needed to underpin the collaboration. The universities also need to describe the PDCA cycles underlying the programme more transparently in a binding document.

2.2 Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.2.1 Recommendations for Enhancement:

- The experts recommend further sharpening the programme profile in the medium run. The career prospects and skills of the graduates should become a little more concrete and clear-cut in the descriptions of the intended learning outcomes and programme aims.
- The research skills imparted in the programme should be outlined more precisely in the programme descriptions. Especially, it should be pointed out in which academic disciplines future graduates may acquire a doctoral degree.

2.2.2 Conditions:

- The universities need to generate a detailed and binding agreement to underpin their collaboration in the context of the study programme.
- The PDCA cycles underlying the programme need to be described more transparently in a binding document.

2.2.3 Recommendation to the ZEvA Commission:

The expert group recommends the accreditation of the Master’s programme “Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security” for the duration of six years with the conditions given above.

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

1. Introduction: Purpose and General Context of the Accreditation Procedure

In December 2023, ZEVA was commissioned with the international accreditation of six Master’s programmes that had been developed and launched within the framework of the EU Twinning initiative, an institution-to-institution partnership framework to support Ukrainian higher education, both through short-term aid and long-term activities that help sustain and rebuild Ukrainian universities, the economy and society.

The initiative is coordinated by Cormack Consultancy Group with the support of University UK, the President’s Fund of Ukraine for Education, Science, and Sports and different private and state organisations.

Each of the six Master’s programmes is jointly offered by one Ukrainian university and one partner institution in the United Kingdom. All programmes are fully taught in English and award a double degree, whereas the exact roles and responsibilities of the partners vary with each programme. At present, all programmes are primarily directed at Ukrainian students, but are, on principle, designed to be open to both international and domestic applicants.

As the programmes belong to a wide spectrum of different academic disciplines, they were assessed in six separate procedures across the year 2024. Each assessment procedure was organized as a peer review, involving an expert panel composed of two university professors in the discipline, one professional from outside academia and one student.

The quality assessment was based on the criteria laid out in the “ZEVA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes”. This framework is in turn fundamentally based on the “European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)” (ENQA 2015), the “Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area” (2005) and the “ECTS Users’ Guide” (European Communities, 2015).

For the purpose of the assessment, the universities were asked to submit a written self-report in English for each study programme. Each self-report contained detailed information on the higher education institutions and the programme and included an appendix of key documents, as e.g. the course syllabi, curricula, CVs of the teaching faculty and relevant regulatory documents (cooperation agreements, regulations for student assessment, graduation and recognition, quality assurance policies etc.). The main responsibility for the reports lay with the programme coordinators in Ukraine.

Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the ongoing war in Ukraine, the experts conducted online talks with the representatives of the universities instead of on-site visits. In addition, they were provided with concrete impressions of the premises and infrastructure on campus by means of picture and/or video material.

This assessment report refers to the Master’s programme “**Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security**” which is jointly offered by **Sumy National Agrarian University** (hereinafter: SNAU) in Ukraine and **the**

II Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

1 Introduction: Purpose and General Context of the Accreditation Procedure

Royal Agricultural University (hereinafter: RAU) in the United Kingdom. The report reflects the outcomes of the experts’ assessment of the written self-report and their impressions gained during the online talks with the students, the faculty and staff of both universities, Ukrainian industry representatives and the Twinning project coordinator.

The assessment report serves as a key document for the ZEvA Accreditation Commission to decide on the accreditation of the study programme with the ZEvA quality label. As ZEvA is a registered agency in Ukraine, the accreditation decision can be recognized as equivalent to Ukrainian national accreditation. In the United Kingdom, no external accreditation decision is required at programme level.

2. Outline of the Study Programme

The double degree programme “Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security” enrolled its first cohort of 20 students in September 2023. It is fundamentally based on a flagship Master’s programme of the same title which RAU has been offering since the year 2011 and is now transferring to SNAU based on a franchise model. SNAU contributes three additional modules to the curriculum (Management of Agrocentres, Psychology and Pedagogy in Higher Education and the Practical Placement) and is responsible for carrying out the teaching and assessment of students within the framework of the double degree. Otherwise, the programme contents and the assessment system are identical with those of the original RAU programme.

The programme aims at enabling participants to gain the specialised knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute effectively and ethically to strategic decision making, opinion forming and operational management for the development of sustainable agriculture and food supply systems in both developed and developing regions. Students are to be prepared for a wide range of careers in the private sector or for national Governments or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) including trade associations. The skills gained throughout the programme are to equip graduates for working in policy, advisory, food chain, management, retail, production, research, educational services or for further study in the higher education sector.

Graduates are to receive a Master’s degree from Sumy National Agrarian University and a Master of Science from the Royal Agricultural University.

The programme comprises 90 ECTS and is taught completely in English. It is open for students from a wide spectrum of academic and national backgrounds. Even though the first cohort consists of Ukrainian students only, the partners expect to enrol students from other countries as soon as the programme has obtained accreditation in Ukraine.

Due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, the teaching within the programme is currently conducted online to a great extent, although on principle, the programme is designed as a face-to-face programme. Large-scale student or staff mobility is not possible at present but is to be facilitated as soon as the general political situation allows for this.

3. The Partner Universities and their Framework of Collaboration

Profile of the Universities

Sумы National Agrarian University has been existing as an independent higher education institution since 1977. The university focuses on the agricultural sector and related fields, but also offers study programmes in Economics and Management, Law, Architecture, Civil Engineering Veterinary Medicine. SNAU currently enrolls about 7.500 students. Through its teaching and research, the university aims at ensuring the sustainable use of land resources, safeguarding the environment, protecting animal welfare and, as a result, improving the well-being of communities.

The Royal Agricultural University has been at the forefront of agricultural education and a key contributor to the land-based sector in the UK for over 175 years. Today, it enrolls more than 1.100 students studying agriculture, business, environment, equine science, farm management, food, real estate and rural land management.

History and Framework of the Cooperation

The two universities signed a first statement of intent on their strategic partnership in December 2023. At that point in time, the universities had already set up a successful strategic collaboration, especially in the context of joint research projects, before deciding to take their partnership to a new level. A full-fledged collaboration agreement relating to the double degree programme did not exist at the time of the online talks. The agreement is now in development, but has not yet been disclosed to the experts.

Funding in the context of the Twinning initiative was granted to the programme upon application early in 2023. Additional funding has already been granted until February 2026, i.e. until the graduation of the second cohort of students.

Before the programme was finally launched, it successfully underwent the internal standard procedures of both SNAU and RAU for the validation and approval of study programmes.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners

In the process of developing the double degree programme, formal and legal requirements on both sides were accounted for, especially the national educational standards applying to Master’s programmes in Ukraine. As already outlined above, the curriculum builds to a large extent on the RAU Master’s programme in Sustainable Agriculture. SNAU added one compulsory module on Psychology and Pedagogy in Higher Education (as required by Ukrainian law), as well as the practical placement module. All other core modules and electives were contributed by RAU.

At present, the faculty of SNAU bears the prime responsibility for the delivery of the programme, while RAU lecturers take on a supporting role, especially in the context of thesis supervision. In order to prepare for their tasks, the SNAU staff and faculty received prior training by RAU colleagues.

II Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

3 The Partner Universities and their Framework of Collaboration

The responsible faculty of both universities meet once a month to discuss issues related to the delivery of the programme. In addition, the Sumy faculty holds a meeting with the quality assurance and administration staff of RAU in each term.

In line with general requirements for UK universities, there is an external examiner involved in the quality assurance of the programme. Also, RAU has appointed a link tutor who oversees academic support and works closely with the SNAU coordinator and guarantor on programme development.

4. Assessment of the Study Programme

4.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The official programme profile (Appendix 6 of the self-report) describes the contents, the didactic approach and the intended learning outcomes of the programme in detail.

According to the document, the **aim** of the programme is “to enable participants to gain the specialised knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute effectively and ethically to strategic decision making, opinion forming and operational management for the development of sustainable agriculture and food supply systems in both developed and developing regions”. In terms of **employability**, graduates are to be “prepared for a wide range of careers in the private sector or for national Governments or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) including trade associations. [...]. The skills gained throughout the programme will equip graduates for working in policy, advisory, food chain, management, retail, production, research, educational services or for further study in the higher education sector.”

The **intended learning outcomes of the programme** (PILOs) are described as follows in the programme profile and in the Diploma Supplement:

Knowledge and Understanding

PILOs 1. Critically evaluate the principles of agricultural production for both large- and small-scale systems.

PILOs 2. Critically evaluate issues of sustainable development considering people, place and planet.

PILOs 3. Appraise the complex issues of sustainable management of natural resources.

PILOs 4. Decipher and evaluate the impacts of climate science and change on agricultural systems and food supply.

PILOs 5. Determine factors influencing the provision of food quality, supply and security.

PILOs 6. Ascertain and evaluate the processes of policy formulation in agriculture and food production.

Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

PILOs 7. Lead and manage time and resources appropriately in both individual and team situations to enable successful project delivery.

PILOs 8. Develop lifelong skills which enable the synthesise and analyse of data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evaluate solutions to complex practical problems and policy challenges.

PILOs 9. Evaluate, cite and reference sources of data and information with academic integrity in an appropriate manner whilst ensuring the avoidance of plagiarism.

PILOs 10. Critically and creatively think, design and analyse an investigation to test a hypothesis. collect appropriate results, analyse data and present conclusions using a variety of methods.

PILOs 11. Develop and recognise leadership skills to critically analyse situations for addressing diverse organisational, business and social issues.

Programme specific skills

PILOs 12. Appreciate the role of self-reflection and critical analysis in one’s own and others’ personal attributes for a range of situations including resilience, open-mindedness, reflection, ethical consideration, motivation, professional behaviours, and employability.

PILOs 13. Understand and evaluate complex information analysis to influence decisions and policy within a range of political, economic, and social systems and institutions for strategic decision making.

PILOs 14. Appraise and develop project management solutions for sustainable agricultural and food assessments by effectively and creatively analysing and reporting on results and findings.

The programme also explicitly allows graduates to continue their academic studies at doctoral level. It is also targeted at professionals and Master’s graduates seeking an additional, job-related qualification.

Experts’ Appraisal

The experts find that the intended learning outcomes of the programme adequately reflect the Master’s qualification level and the taxonomies of the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. The learning outcomes equally address academic research skills as well as specific knowledge and typical key competencies, as e.g. leadership skills.

Regardless of that, the intended qualification profile of the graduates does not yet become sufficiently palpable for the experts in the descriptions of the ILOs and programme aims. The official programme profile and the self-report mention a large number of possible fields of employment for graduates. From the experts’ point of view, this large variety appears neither realistic nor concrete enough to give the reader a clear idea of the graduates’ career options and the specific skill set that may set them apart from graduates of other Master’s programmes in the field. The ILOs themselves are comprehensive, but too generic to clarify this somewhat blurry and diffuse overall picture.

This also applies to the research methods imparted, which are not specified in the programme descriptions, but seem to depend very much on the students’ chosen focus of study.

The experts understand that it has never been the intention of the two universities to create a highly specialized, in-depth programme, but rather a curriculum that covers a wide spectrum of topics, disciplines and methods and hence attracts students with different interests and backgrounds. Legitimate as this may be, the experts recommend further sharpening the programme profile in the medium run. All in all, the career prospects and skills of the graduates should become a little more concrete and clear-cut in the descriptions of the intended learning outcomes and programme aims. This may also be achieved by introducing separate pathways in the programme that students may follow based on their personal goals and research interests (cf. Chapter 4.2). This option should be considered especially in case of a further significant growth in student numbers.

4.2 Programme Concept and Curriculum

Student Admission: Process and Criteria

The roles and responsibilities of the two partners as regards the selection and admission of students have not yet become fully clear to the experts. For instance, it is not yet clear whose procedural regulations apply and who takes the final decision on student selection. Neither has it become fully clear to the experts where the students are actually enrolled (SNAU, RAU or both). **The experts ask for more information regarding this aspect.**

Applicants to the programme must hold at least a Bachelor’s degree or equivalent academic qualification. In addition, they need to prove that they have sufficient knowledge of English and have to hand in a motivation letter with their application. An academic and/or professional background in Agriculture is recommended, but not compulsory, as long as applicants can demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to enter the programme by means of an entrance examination or an interview.

During the online talks the experts had the opportunity to interview some students of the first cohort. The interviewees proved to be diverse in terms of their academic and professional backgrounds, age, personal circumstances and career goals, which seems to be in line with the relatively open admission policy and the curricular design of the programme.

Curriculum

The focus of the programme is described as follows in the official programme profile:

The programme explores five key challenges, namely:

- 1) Balancing future demand and supply sustainably.*
- 2) Ensuring that there is adequate stability in food supplies – and protecting the most vulnerable from the volatility that does occur.*
- 3) Achieving global access to food and ending hunger. This recognises that producing enough food in the world so that everyone can potentially be fed is not the same thing as ensuring food security for all.*
- 4) Managing the contribution of the food production to the mitigation of climate change.*
- 5) Maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services while feeding the world.*

By focusing on sustainable resource management within the agricultural sector, students will explore a series of food-producing strategies, including large-scale conventional agriculture, organic farming, small-scale production and linkage with policy and development. The programme allows students to specialise through electives in innovative and technological solutions or methods that are more traditional.

The curriculum comprises a total of 90 ECTS (30 ECTS per semester). During the first year, students take a number of compulsory modules on the core topics of the programme (as e.g. *Integrated Agricultural Systems, Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture, Soil Management and Climate Change, International Rural Development*), complemented by a module on Research Skills and a total

of five elective modules which may be freely selected. Possible topics include Environmental Science in Agriculture, Crop and Livestock Production Technology or Entrepreneurship and Business Planning.

Most of the core and elective units are based on existing modules from the RAU Master’s programme. Only the core module on “Psychology and Pedagogy in Higher Education”, as well as the practical work placement were added to the curriculum to fulfil national Ukrainian requirements for Master’s programmes.

In the third and final semester students absolve one more core module as well as a practical work placement. In addition, they work on their Master’s thesis, which is called “dissertation” in this programme.

All parts of the curriculum, apart from the dissertation, are described in detail in module specifications based on the RAU template. The module descriptions contain basic information on the teaching contents and the skills imparted in each unit, on the methods of teaching and assessment applied and on how the module relates to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The following Table contains a survey of the curriculum:

Module code		Module title	Credit value		Semester	Assessment
SNAU	RAU		SNAU	RAU		
Core (mandatory) modules						
CPU 1	4038a	Integrated Agricultural Systems	5	15	1	Coursework
CPU 2	4409	Facing the Global Challenges in Food and Agriculture	5	15	2	Coursework
CPU 3	4413	Research Skills	5	15	2	Coursework
CPU 4	4727	Managing Global Soils in a Changing Climate	5	15	2	Coursework
CPU 5	4753	International Rural Development	5	15	1	Coursework
CPU 6		Management of agrocenoses	5	15	1	Coursework
CPU 7		Psychology and pedagogy in higher education	5	15	1	Coursework
CPU 8	4725	Environmental Technology and Innovation	5	15	3	Coursework
CPU 9		Work placement	10	30	3	Coursework
CPU 10	4414	Dissertation	15	45	3	Coursework
Total core			65	195		
Plus FIVE Electives from (1 in 1 semester and 4 in 2 semester)						
EPU 1	4722	Climate Change and Sustainability	5	15	2	Coursework
EPU 2	4203	Small Scale Farming and Local Food Supply	5	15	2	Coursework
EPU 3	4724	Environmental Science in Agriculture	5	15	1	Coursework
EPU 4	4278	Organic Systems	5	15	1	Coursework
EPU 5	4723	Crop Production Technology and Innovation	5	15	2	Coursework
EPU 6	4726	Livestock Production Technology and Innovation	5	15	2	Coursework
EPU 8	4263	Entrepreneurship and Business Planning	5	15	1	Coursework
Total elective from the list			25	75		
Total credits			90	270		

Student Mobility and Recognition

As physical mobility is currently very difficult to realize for Ukrainian students, there is no “mobility window” reserved in the curriculum. However, this could easily be achieved once the general conditions change, as the programme is run in a largely identical way at RAU. In addition, virtual mobility is always a possibility.

The general study regulations of SNAU allow for the recognition of credits obtained at other universities and also for the recognition of informal prior learning (within the limits of Ukrainian national law). Credits are recognized based on achieved learning outcomes as recommended by the ECTS Users’ Guide (cf. Regulation on the Organization of the Educational Process, Chapter 19). In case recognition is denied or only partly granted, the recognition commission needs to define which learning outcomes still need to be achieved by the applicant for the successful continuation of studies.

Experts’ Appraisal

The experts appreciate the very generous admission policy of the programme, which allows for a high degree of diversity among the students. It became clear during the online talks that the students strongly benefit from this during their learning process. Nevertheless, the programme coordinators should take good care to select those students which are best suited to the programme and its goals and thus strike a good balance between openness and flexibility on the one hand and a clear-cut programme profile on the other. It will also remain important to **carefully monitor the applicants’ English skills.**

The experts have not yet understood how potential applicants learn about the admission and selection criteria, i.e. how these criteria (and the selection procedure) are made transparent or where they are published. **The experts ask for additional information about this aspect.**

The design of the curriculum is well in line with the broad profile reflected in the intended learning outcomes, i.e. the programme does not have a particular focus on a specific issue, but rather covers a wide spectrum of topics from Agriculture, Sustainability, Environmental Science and other fields. Research skills are clearly imparted, although it is not specified in the module descriptions what kind of methods from which academic disciplines these actually are (Biology, Chemistry, Sociology, Economics etc.). **The experts recommend describing this aspect more transparently in the documentation of the programme.** Especially, it should be outlined more clearly in which academic disciplines future graduates may acquire a doctoral degree.

Otherwise, the experts see a good balance between research and application/practice-oriented elements in the programme.

Even though the broad programme profile is no deficiency in itself, the experts would be in favour of introducing a more tangible structure into the programme, not least to give the students more orientation regarding their choice of courses and research topics with a view to their desired career paths. One way of achieving this would be laying out several possible pathways through the

programme which still have a common basis, but lead to different qualification profiles.

The general regulations of SNAU for the recognition of credits are acceptable from the experts' point of view. However, they recommend always involving the partners of RAU in recognition decisions.

4.3 Teaching Faculty

As already explained above, the delivery of the programme is up to the teaching faculty of SNAU, with continuous assistance and support from the RAU staff. All relevant learning materials for the modules are provided by RAU via their online platform.

Hence, a series of workshops were held at RAU before the start of the programme in order to familiarize the SNAU lecturers with the learning resources and the Virtual Learning Environment at the British partner university.

The standard language of teaching is English, although lecturers may also teach in Ukrainian as long as there are Ukrainian students only.

The SNAU faculty undergo professional training on a regular basis. In particular, all members of faculty have to continuously enhance their teaching skills. The university has established its own centre for retraining and advanced training which offers special programmes, workshops and courses for the continuous professional development of the faculty. Alternatively, lecturers may participate in professional development programmes at other universities. In Ukraine or abroad.

CVs of the faculty members involved in the Master's programme (both at SNAU and at RAU) were submitted to the expert panel as part of the self-report. The self-report also describes in detail the staff selection process and the research activities of the SNAU faculty.

Experts' Appraisal

Based on all information provided, the experts conclude that the double degree programme benefits from excellent human resources. The teaching faculty is composed of highly experienced senior lecturers and scholars who possess all academic expertise required for the programme.

The online talks have also confirmed that communication, exchange and support between the two universities work very well, to the mutual benefit of both faculty and students.

4.4 Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support

Financial Resources and Funding

The programme is supported out of Twinning project funds until February 2026. During this period, the funds cover part of the study fees that are charged by both partner universities. As soon as funding runs out, the programme is expected to continue on a regular fee-paying basis.

Learning Infrastructure and Resources

Even though the programme presently relies a lot on remote teaching, in-class delivery is supposed to be the standard. This includes the use of laboratories, of which there are numerous ones at SNAU. The self-report names the following labs that are open to students: *Laboratory of Ecological Agriculture and Nature Management; scientific and practical laboratory of in-vitro biotechnological research; Ecology Training Laboratory; Electron Microscopy Laboratory; Centre for Precision Agriculture; SMART-polygon; Educational and scientific PCR laboratory; TOPAS Educational and Scientific Laboratory data management collection; Mass Spectrometry Laboratory; educational and scientific laboratory of distance education; Virtual Reality Laboratory; specialized computer classes.*

Students have access to the university library on campus and can access all information relevant to them via the SNAU Moodle platform and the Virtual Learning Environment of RAU.

Student Support Services and Equal Opportunities Policies

For support in all academic matters, students can turn to their lecturers or the SNAU guarantor of the programme. All students at SNAU can receive psychological counselling and legal advice if needed.

SNAU commits itself to supporting students with special educational needs in its *Regulation on the Organization of the Educational Process*. The university has also published a separate *Regulation on the Organisation of Integrated Education for People with Special Educational Needs*. To put these regulations into practice, an educational and rehabilitation commission has been set up at SNAU. Typical measures taken by the university include allowing for an extended time frame during exams or adapting the educational environment to the individual students' needs.

Students may also turn to the SNAU student union for advice and support in various matters.

Experts' Appraisal

Based on the oral and written information provided, the experts regard the on-campus infrastructure and the electronic resources available to the students as sufficient for the purposes of the study programme. In spite of difficult circumstances, SNAU does everything in its powers to enable in-class course delivery, including the provision of shelters on campus. Even though blended learning seems to be a viable alternative at present, the experts find that in the long run, the programme could not be taught in a distance-learning mode only. In particular, laboratory classes and field trips cannot take place online. It has therefore not become fully clear to the experts how students can currently achieve all intended learning outcomes, as at least some of them have left the country and seem to be studying online only. The experts kindly ask the programme coordinators to provide further explanation on this issue.

SNAU offers a wide range of services and support measures to all its students, including students with special needs. These services are also open for the students of the double degree programme.

The experts have gained the overall impression that the programme will have a promising future even

without external project funding. Both partners are clearly committed to maintaining the cooperation beyond the current funding period. Even though the cooperation agreement is only valid until February 2026, it can be prolonged beyond that point in time. Furthermore, the agreement stipulates that in case the cooperation ends, all efforts will be taken to ensure that the students who are still enrolled can finish the programme.

Also, the programme coordinators reported that there was a high international interest in the programme, which increases the chance of its long-term establishment.

4.5 Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

The delivery of the programme is carried out by the academic staff of SNAU based on learning materials presented on the RAU Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The delivery is through a combination of lectures, seminars, speakers, case studies, workshops and with activities presented through the VLE which is also used to host other supporting material including videos, webinars, quizzes, podcasts and other relevant presentations. Teaching includes group discussions, tutorials, facilitated discussions, workshops, farm walks and field visits, guided independent study and a research project (final thesis/dissertation).

Some of the modules also include compulsory laboratory work on campus, as e.g. the core module “Integrated Agricultural Systems” and the elective module “Organic Systems”.

As mentioned above, the programme is currently strongly reliant on a blended learning/distance learning approach due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. It has not yet become entirely clear to the experts if any in-class teaching is actually taking place, and if so, in which modules. More information is required here for the purpose of the assessment.

In all modules, “Coursework” is the chosen form of assessment. A wide range of different assessment methods is summarized under this term, as e.g. critical reports, written examinations, essays, poster presentations, sustainability plans, policy summaries, oral presentations and critical reflections. Both individual and group work is possible.

Students also develop research proposals and a final thesis/dissertation. On principle, the dissertation is supervised by a SNAU faculty member, while a RAU co-supervisor moderates and supports the process.

The entire assessment and grading system is based on the rules and regulations of RAU. In case students do not agree with their grades, they have a right to appeal as stipulated in the general RAU study regulations.

Experts’ Appraisal

The experts conclude that the chosen forms of teaching and student assessment are well-aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the programme and the goals of the individual modules. All in all,

the programme shows a good balance of theory-based input, application-oriented lab work and practical phases. During the online talks the students pointed out that they were highly satisfied with the didactic approach of the programme and regarded the blended learning concept as very helpful.

However, some more information is required on whether there is presently any compulsory in-class teaching, and if so, in which parts of the programme.

4.6 Quality Assurance

The responsible faculty of both universities meet once a month to discuss issues related to the delivery of the programme. In addition, the SNAU faculty holds a meeting with the quality assurance and administration staff of RAU each term.

In line with general requirements for UK universities, there is an external examiner involved in the quality assurance of the programme. Also, RAU has appointed a link tutor who oversees academic support and works closely together with the SNAU programme coordinator and guarantor.

The students are asked to evaluate each module by means of online questionnaires at the end of the semester. These surveys follow the general standards of SNAU and, according to the self-report, also include questions for the monitoring of student workload.

Based on the RAU regulations there is an additional, short mid-term evaluation of each module, consisting only of two or three questions on especially strong or weak aspects of the educational unit.

Experts' Appraisal

It has become apparent to the experts in the course of the assessment procedure that the two universities are already taking strong joint efforts to assure the quality of the Master's programme. There is regular and close communication between the partners about quality issues, and there are several instruments of quality assurance in place, as e.g. course evaluation and annual monitoring reports.

The experts have not yet fully grasped how these instruments interplay to form a systematic PDCA cycle. Quality-related data is collected on a regular basis, and there is continuous reporting and personal exchange between the partners. However, to the experts' knowledge the responsibilities for drawing conclusions from the data, for taking measures in response and for monitoring those measures are not clearly stipulated in the collaboration agreement or in any other document.

The experts therefore see the need for a more structured and transparent approach as regards the quality assurance of the programme. The PDCA cycles underlying the programme and the responsibilities of the partners within these cycles need to be laid out more clearly in a document that is binding for both partners, as e.g. the cooperation agreement.

4.7 Transparency, Documentation and Public Information

Students can retrieve all information relevant to them on the websites and the virtual learning platforms of the two partner universities. This includes the module specifications, assessment requirements, deadlines and all other general academic policies and regulations that apply.

A Diploma Supplement is issued upon graduation. A sample of this document was included in the self-report.

Basic information on the programme is available to the general public via the university websites.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts confirm that students, potential applicants and the general public have full access to all necessary information and documentation regarding the Master's programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security. However, as already mentioned above, it is not yet clear if and where the selection and admission criteria are published.

In the course of the online talks, the students expressed **the wish to have long-term access to the learning material of previous semesters, especially to recordings of lectures**. From the experts' point of view, this wish should be fulfilled, regardless of the general recommendation to offer in-class teaching whenever possible.

The Diploma Supplement is designed as recommended, but should point out more clearly that this is a double degree programme jointly offered by two partner universities. In the sample document provided, this is not yet made transparent.

Appendix

1. Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

Dear experts,

We appreciate the rigorous analysis of the study programme and the recommendations for its improvement. We would like to give some explanation to clarify a few aspects mentioned in the accreditation report. We believe that they are important for making a decision on accreditation.

1. Student admission (pages 14, 16 and 21).

SNAU Admission Rules are published on the SNAU website <https://vstup.snau.edu.ua/entrance/vstup-do-magistraturi/>

SNAU Admission Rules are used for student admission since there are strict requirements of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, while RAU requirements <https://www.rau.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/applying> are also included in the admission rules, in particular, RAU entry requirements for the level of the English language - a list of certificates recognized by RAU for foreign students is added as a specific requirement for this https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rDmyz2VnSTfo_tLXGB4Lz_KnPgGXgf4B/view, page 30.

In accordance with the rules of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, entry requirements in 2024 provided for compulsory passing of a single professional entrance test - SPET. SPET is a form of examination for admission to master's degree programmes based on NQF6 or NQF7, aims to assess the level of readiness of the applicants to obtain a master's degree in the relevant specialty. SPET is conducted by the Ukrainian Centre for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education according to the legislation. This requirement has been included in the SNAU Admission Rules in 2024.

So, all applicants passed SPET in Agronomy before applying to the programme.

2. In-class teaching and learning (pages 18 and 19).

All students registered in the modules with lab-based sessions are expected to attend the lab sessions. Labs is integral part of the educational process. All labs are planned in the schedule face-to-face. So, students should attend labs excluding the situations of air alarm when all students must go to shelter.

For example, in the 1st semester lab-based classes were required for the module “Integrated Agriculture Systems”. Seminar 7 Grass and forage systems. Lab "Determination of silage acidity and qualitative composition of its microflora". Mastering the methods of titration and light microscopy in the immersion system (microbiological research). Four labs we delivered in the module “Integrated Agriculture Systems”. The lab-based classes were delivered in the module “Organic Systems” as well.

0 Appendix

1 Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

We acknowledge the importance of the detailed collaboration agreement for successful programme design, periodical review and delivery. We have developed the draft of the detailed agreement but have not signed it due to the unforeseen circumstances, unfortunately. We assure ZEvA commission that the agreement will have been signed and provided to ZEvA till 30th October.

We would like to confirm that RAU and SNAU are committed to improving the student experience and determined to quality enhancement. We have considered all recommendations thoroughly and will take them into account during the next review and validation of the programme.

Faithfully,

RAU and SNAU team