



Programme syllabus

Rural Development and Natural Resource Management - Master's Programme

Landsbygdsutveckling och naturresursförvaltning - masterprogram

120.0 hp

Programme code: NM009

Finalized by: Fakultetsnämnden vid fakulteten för naturresurser och lantbruksvetenskap,
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Programme board

The programme board for education in natural resources and agriculture

SLU ID

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Revised

2026-01-09

Revised by

The programme board for education in natural resources and agriculture

Entry requirements

Admission to the Rural Development and Natural Resource Management – Master's programme requires a first-cycle qualification comprising 180 credits and including specialised

studies within a main field of study comprising 90 credits within one of the following disciplinary domains:

- social science
- natural science
- humanities

Applicants with the equivalent qualifications obtained by means of a degree from another country, or with the equivalent knowledge obtained in some other way, may also be regarded as fulfilling the specific entry requirements.

This programme is taught in English. The applicant must further have a level of English equivalent to upper secondary school English, called English 6. An applicant with a first-cycle qualification from SLU comprising 180 credits automatically fulfils this requirement. Special rules apply for applicants with qualifications from one of the Nordic countries and some English-speaking countries.

Specific requirements apply for admission to the individual courses included in the programme.

Objectives

General objectives

The general objectives for first- and second-cycle courses and programmes are specified in the Swedish Higher Education Act (Chapter 1, Sections 8–9).

Objectives for a Degree

In accordance with the annex to the Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, for a degree of Master (120 credits) the student shall:

Knowledge and understanding

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both broad knowledge of the field and a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as insight into current research and development work, and
- demonstrate specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study.

Competence and skills

- demonstrate the ability to critically and systematically integrate knowledge and analyse, assess and deal with complex phenomena, issues and situations even with limited information
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues critically, autonomously and creatively as well as to plan and, using appropriate methods, undertake advanced tasks within predetermined time frames and so contribute to the formation of knowledge as well as the ability to evaluate this work
- demonstrate the ability in speech and writing both nationally and internationally to clearly report and discuss his or her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments on which they are based in dialogue with different audiences, and
- demonstrate the skills required for participation in research and development work or autonomous employment in some other qualified capacity.

Judgement and approach

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues and also to demonstrate awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and
- demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning.

Degree

Degree awarded on completion of the programme

Upon completion of the programme, the degree of Master of Science is awarded. Other general qualifications may be awarded, provided that the requirements for them are fulfilled. More information can be found in SLU's degree regulations.

Students who fulfil the qualification requirements for a degree will be issued a degree certificate upon request. The degree certificate will specify the qualification as *Degree of Master of Science (120 credits) with a Major in Rural Development*.

Degree requirements

A **degree of Master of Science (120 credits)** with a major in **rural development** is awarded to students who fulfil the course requirements (courses with a Pass grade) of 120 credits, of which at least 90 credits at second-cycle level, according to the following:

- at least 30 credits of courses with specialised study in the main field rural development (A1N; A1F),
- at least 30 credits from an independent project (degree project) in the main field rural development (A2E).

In addition, the student must hold a degree of Bachelor or professional qualification of at least 180 credits or an equivalent qualification.

Content

Programme description

The Master's programme Rural Development and Natural Resource Management is a multi-disciplinary programme aiming to teach the students to analyse, define and apply concepts, theories and practical skills from a variety of subjects connected to rural development and natural resource management. The theoretical base is social sciences, in order for the students to be able to use and assess how to create innovative and adequate ways of approaching various rural challenges.

Furthermore, the students will be trained in applying analytical thinking and in practical application, for facilitating and managing various kinds of rural development projects. They will also be equipped with tools for planning and conducting scientific research. The programme thereby offers students both theoretical and experience-based knowledge to enable them to work internationally within, for example, governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia and consultancy.

The programme aims to teach the students to analyse, define and apply approaches to subject areas such as: rural livelihoods, rural economic, social and cultural contexts, governance and sustainable management of natural resources, global food systems and food security, social theory and research methods. Sociological, developmental and political theories dealing with e.g. communication, power inequalities, poverty, social movements and democratic decision-making are taught in order for the students to define, use and evaluate them. The programme also teaches the students to explain and discuss different systems and practices for farming, food production and food security, which are ecologically, economically and socially important in all societies. Students on the programme also learn how to identify and investigate the social, economic and environmental barriers and opportunities for sustainable agricultural production, including activities in the production of livestock and food crops, forestry products, fisheries and non-commercial ecosystem services. Students will be trained in how to apply their knowledge in various rural settings.

The programme has an international focus and addresses students from Sweden and beyond, bringing together students with diverse cultural and academic experiences. Such an

environment will stimulate the students' learning. The international focus is reflected in the curriculum, which analyses problems of rural development and change as well as natural resource management in a global context. The programme is partly based on learning through experience, which means that the complexity of real-life situations is the starting-point for study activities. This also means that students are expected to actively participate through attendance, presentations, discussions and project work.

In the first year, students are introduced to the complex socio-economic and ecological contexts of rural development and natural resource management. They will develop an understanding of rural problems in their changing and complex socio-economic and ecological contexts and practise basic academic skills. In the second year, students are prepared for their independent project (degree project), which ends the programme. Students are trained in using, primarily, social science theories and in using scientific methods.

Courses in the programme

Main fields of study LU=Rural development, MX= Environmental science; ÖÄ=other subject

Year 1

Rurality, livelihood and gender, 15 hp, LU/MX, A1N

Governance of natural resources, 15 hp, LU, A1N

Conflict, dialogue and facilitation, 15 hp, MX, A1N

Internship - rural development, 15 hp, ÖÄ, AXX

Global food systems and food security, 15 hp, LU, A1N

Year 2

The context and process of research I: Theories and methods, 7,5 hp, LU/MX, A1N

The context and process of research II: Theories and methods, 7,5 hp, LU/MX, A1N

The process of research: Qualitative methods, data analysis and academic writing, 15 hp, LU/MX, A1N

Master thesis in rural development, 30 hp, LU, A2E

The courses offered may change during the course of the programme. Decisions on the courses offered are taken well in advance of the next academic year.

For each course, there is a course syllabus providing more detailed course information. Information on when courses are offered is available on the SLU student web.

Additional information about the programme

General regulations for first- and second-cycle courses and programmes

For more information on semester dates, examination and credit transfer, see the Regulations for education at Bachelor's and Master's level available on the SLU student web.

Possibilities for further studies

Students who complete the programme and are awarded a degree of Master have the option to continue their studies at doctoral level.