

BOARD OF STUDIES OF RURAL SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE REGULATIONS

A. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND WORK EXPERIENCE

The purpose of "Practical Experience" is to provide students with opportunities to examine how properties are managed, identify the factors which limit production, develop skills in the assessment of management and relate components of the curriculum to agricultural practice. The development of manual skills - though important - is secondary.

B. ADMINISTRATION

The regulations are administered through the Board of Studies of Rural Science and Agriculture and by the Chair of the Practical Experience Committee, Associate Professor Geoff Hinch.

Mrs Penny Purvis, in the Faculty of The Sciences, is responsible for matters relating to candidates for the BRurSc and BAgr and maintains records of completed practical work but the Committee may reject any claims which do not meet requirements. Students are able to appeal against a decision made by the Committee. A copy of the Academic Appeals Policy is available from the Faculty of The Sciences Administration Office.

The Committee shall endeavour to build up a file of potential employers, this file being available to students upon request. As far as possible the Committee shall endeavour to maintain records, provided by students, relating to the educational value of work experience on each property.

C. REGULATIONS

1. Each candidate for the BRurSc shall complete 24 weeks approved practical work and each candidate for the BAgr will complete 16 weeks. Not less than four and not more than 10 weeks must be spent on rural properties (**other than home properties** - see paragraph D3) in at least **two** of the five areas (climatic zones) designated as follows:

Arid, Tropical, Sub-Tropical, Temperate and Mediterranean.

Enterprises

BRurSc students are required to complete work on a minimum of five enterprises and **BAgr** students on a minimum of four enterprises. At least two weeks work must be completed on each enterprise.

"Major Enterprises" are to be declared by the student and could be on a single-enterprise property or as part of a mixed farm (e.g. sheep could be a major enterprise on a wheat/sheep farm in some seasons; wheat at other times).

- Dryland cropping
- Irrigation cropping
- Grazing sheep
- Grazing beef
- Dairy

- Horticulture
- Alternate industries
- Pigs
- Poultry
- Feedlot beef

A maximum of 8 weeks can be aggregated as "Other Enterprises" category and will include such work as:

- Agricultural contracting
- Approved special courses e.g. Wool classing
- Research Stations
- Agribusiness
- With Consultants

Various approved courses may also be credited as long as **prior** approval is given by the Chair of the Practical Experience Committee.

For example:

Sheep Judging Course	1 week
Meat Judging Course	2 weeks
Artificial Insemination Course	1 week
Farm Chemicals Course	1 week

2. Students who have been employed full-time for at least 12 months in the agricultural sector before initial enrolment may be credited with practical experience, normally for a maximum of 12 weeks. In the case of external students working full-time in the agricultural sector this may be increased.
3. Students who consider that they have a case for individual treatment should make a written application to the Administrative Officer, Faculty of The Sciences. **Verbal claims for exemption from any part of these regulations will not be considered.**
4. Claim forms, obtainable from the Faculty of The Sciences Administration Office, which seek details of local environment , property location, size, production statistics and work undertaken, shall be completed by the **student**, signed by the property owner or manager and returned to the Faculty of The Sciences Administration Office. **Claim Forms must be submitted within twelve months of completion of the work.**

Unsatisfactory Claim Forms will be returned to the student for rewriting but if the standard remains unacceptable, the relevant period will not be credited towards the practical work requirements.

D. DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL POLICY

1. A "Week" shall be interpreted as any 7-day working period irrespective of weekend work requirements.

Work of shorter duration than one week will not normally be accepted. Where **prior** approval has been granted, in writing, by the Committee, part-time work may be aggregated.

2. **Zoning** demarcation is as indicated on the maps displayed outside McClymont lecture theatres 2 and 3.

- a) Overseas work shall be zoned where appropriate (e.g. Indonesia "Tropical", and New Zealand - "Temperate").
- b) In special circumstances (e.g., personal hardship) the enterprise requirements may be relaxed.

Students wishing to claim under (a) or (b) above must first seek the approval, in writing, addressed to Associate Professor Geoff Hinch, Chair, Practical Experience Committee.

- 3. BRurSc students may work on their own family properties for a maximum of **four** weeks and BAgr for **three** weeks. **This work cannot be used as the basis for property reports.**

E. STATUTORY DECLARATIONS

The Committee requires each final year student to complete a Statutory Declaration to validate all of their completed practical experience claim forms. **Practical Experience requirements have not been completed until the Statutory Declaration has been completed.**

F. FRAUDULENT MISREPRESENTATION

Where the student is detected in fraudulently misrepresenting the time worked on a property or is found to have given deliberately misleading information in Claim Forms the following **minimum** penalties shall apply:

- a) The time claimed shall be disallowed, and
- b) A period equivalent to that disallowed shall be added to the total time required of the student. Such additional work may be subject to restrictions imposed by the Practical Experience Committee.

Where a student is shown to have falsified a Property Report, the following minimum penalties shall apply:

- a) The Property Report shall not be accepted, and a further report will be required.
- b) The new Report must be equivalent in standard and length to that originally required and must be relevant to a Property:
 - i) upon which the student has worked for at least three weeks after the imposition of the penalty, and
 - ii) in other than an "home zone".
- c) A period of six calendar weeks shall be added to the total time requirement of the student. Such additional work may be subject to restrictions imposed by the Practical Experience Committee.

Students may appeal to Faculty against penalties, or other restrictions, imposed by the Committee under the Faculty's Academic Appeals Policy.

G. INSURANCE

Students completing practical experience work are covered by the University of New England's Public Liability insurance. Copies of the "Confirmation of Cover" are available from the Faculty of The Sciences Administration Office.

H. PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

BAgr - A 1500 word Extended Report is required of BAgr and the format is outlined on the prac forms available from the Faculty of The Sciences Administration Office.

BRurSc - A 3000 word Major Property Report is required of students at the commencement of the semester in which they are enrolled for AGSY 410. Major sub-discussions of the report should include:

1. Name and address of the property, name and address of the owner or manager.
2. District summary: climate, soils, topography, vegetation, main district activities, availability of marketing and service facilities.
3. Farm plan: situation, area and tenure, managerial organisation, water supply, pasture resources, soils present, improvements, fertiliser requirements, transport, farm map.
4. Farm activities. Areas of crops, types of crops grown, numbers of livestock, types of livestock (Explain why these activities occur on the farm).
5. Managerial analysis. Objectives, company structure, delegation of authority, decision making processes, management of employees, activity management, annual calendar, pest management, market management (where applicable). Include an appreciation of the managerial technology present on the farm and its use in decision making (budgeting, computers, etc.). Include also in this section an appreciation that the farm is a series of sub-systems which are controlled by management. What you are trying to do is analyse the property in terms of a series of benchmark measurements.
6. Farm business analysis. Construction of Benchmark Whole Farm Budget. Interpretation of the measures calculated with respect to the farm as a business unit.
7. Suggested plan for development of property. Include here either a partial budget or a cash-flow budget that will improve the farm as a business unit. Include some sensitivity analysis on prices and yields.

The discussion should include not only farm management but also the reason behind these decisions. Each of the various operations should also be considered in the light of local practice since this may lead to productivity increases for the property being studied.

Possible changes in technology and the improvements in managerial techniques are important when analysing the property as a business unit in terms of efficiency. For the purpose of the Practical Experience Requirements the Major Property Report should be aimed at a prospective property buyer- hence the need for a clear concise description of current resources, management practices and an assessment of managerial efficiency. Finally suggestions for improvement reflect your understanding of the property.

While there are no hard and fast rules about the best way to approach the analysis of the property, the approach in ECON 223 is adequate for the scope of this report. From the gross margins (GM) calculated for the whole farm budget, a comparison can be made to Department

of Agriculture gross margins. If the GM is low there may be several reasons for this (for example, a bad season, low prices, or managerial problems).

For the section on alternate plans of the farm, remember it is not necessary to always include a new activity. Re-organisation of the farm should include issues such as selling in the paddock, increasing the area under legumes, changing the pasture composition, changing the time of lambing, changing the structure of the farm labour force, increasing/decreasing the stocking rate of the property or leasing machinery instead of purchasing it.

The evaluation of a change should be analysed by use of a partial budget with some explanation of the non-monetary benefits or costs of the proposed change.

NOTES:

- Direct questioning of the farmer on debt levels is often resented, and is unnecessary.
- If full financial details are not available, it is expected that reasonable estimates be substituted by the student.
- Some time must be dedicated to looking at the integration of managerial decisions to the conditions that are present in the macro-environment (for example, growing lupins due to high prices and due to their nitrogen fixation ability).
- Some decisions undertaken by the management have no direct monetary benefit but they are important in terms of the objectives that the farmer has.
- In agriculture, the returns to equity or capital are often not as good as could be gained from bank deposits. Students must have an appreciation or feeling for this factor even though it may not be stated in their report.
- To add weight to your discussion, you may like to include other sources of information besides the manager but remember to reference these sources in the approved way.
- A good property report requires careful observations of resources and management policies. It also demands a critical evaluation of current practices and possible methods of improving the business. Exercise lateral thinking, use your imagination and powers of enquiry to ask why some practices are followed and others not. The types of questions that could be asked are:
 - what is the long-run objective of the property?
 - why have an activity present on the property when it seems that environmental factors are against it?
 - why is there no fodder conservation when there is ample fodder to conserve?
 - why lamb at the present time of the year when there is no more pasture and better prices if lambing occurs later in the year?

The answers to these types of questions will involve the economic and scientific aspects of your four year syllabus.

SUBMISSION:

The Report is due for submission on the Monday of the second week of Second Semester. The full Report should be submitted to Associate Professor Geoff Hinch, Chair of the Practical Experience Committee. Failure to submit the report by the due date will result in a 10% penalty per day for lateness. Extensions will not be granted except for exceptional circumstances.

Students are reminded that at least three weeks work must have been completed on the property used for the Major Property Report and that a Practical Experience Claim Form **must** be submitted for this work. The Major Property Report **does not** substitute for a Claim Form.

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Board of Studies in Rural Science and Agriculture

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Correct as at 1 April 2002