

Evaluation and Benchmarking of the Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management from Chengdu Agricultural College

Context and scope

Chengdu Agricultural College commissioned Ecctis for an independent evaluation and benchmarking of its Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management, which was completed in November 2024.

The Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management is one of over 40 qualifications delivered by the College in areas such as agriculture, forestry, civil engineering, finance, and tourism.

The main aims of the benchmarking were to:

- Establish comparability in the context of the UK through reference to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), and by extension, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)¹
- Assess the extent to which the College's underpinning quality assurance meets a set of international standards.

Key findings

The Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management seeks to develop students' knowledge in tourism service etiquette, modern agriculture, marketing, horticulture, and rural culture and creative design. In line with national requirements, the Diploma also encompasses "public basic courses" which include topics from arts, social sciences and science domains.

The general entry requirement for the programme is the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE, popularly known as the *gaokao* 高考) – comparable to GCE A Level / RQF Level 3 in the UK – or suitable marks in one of the College's own tests.

The Diploma is a three-year full-time programme equating to approximately 2776 hours' guided learning time. Reflecting its vocational focus, the Diploma combines classroom-based study with practical-based simulated learning and a 576-hour internship in which students develop their practical skills within a real-world enterprise.

Upon completion, many students enter the workforce²; however, some students will be eligible

¹ To date, a total of 36 countries have now referenced their national education systems to the EQF.

² The employment rate of graduates is typically 95%.

to apply for top-up Benke (本科) / Bachelor degree programmes. These require a minimum of two years of further study, which shows that the Diploma has similar academic progression routes to that of HNDs, Diplomas of Higher Education and other UK Level 5 awards.

The study revealed several strengths of the Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management, namely it demonstrated that:

- The Diploma offers a wide selection of elective modules such as 'Tea Art Practice', E-Commerce and Internet of Things technology, which allow students to tailor their learning to align with their career goals.
- Students experience far more contact time with tutors than is seen within similarly focused UK qualifications, arguably leading to more instruction and feedback.
- The Diploma makes good use of experiential learning, and students spend a substantial amount of time engaged with the agricultural tourism and hospitality industry. Having experienced different settings during the learning process allows students to draw on a range of experiences when entering employment.
- The wide range of innovative and varied modes of learning is commendable and will accommodate every style of learner.
- Participation in a variety of competitions, access to networking events, and guest speakers further deepen the Diploma's close links with industry.
- The College affords great attention to cybersecurity measures.

In terms of international comparability, the Diploma in Leisure Agriculture Operation and Management has been found comparable to Level 5 of the RQF and EQF. It has also met international quality standards in the following five areas:

- **Admission**
There is a pre-defined and published admissions policy ensuring transparency in the admissions policy and supporting consistency in admissions decisions
- **Programme development, approval, monitoring and review**
There is a clear, process in place for the design, approval and monitoring of programmes
- **Teaching and learning**
There is a formalised process for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of delivery, relevant to the modes of study employed
- **Assessment**
Assessment provides a sufficiently fair, valid and reliable evaluation of the intended knowledge, skills and competencies
- **Information**

The information available to prospective students, current students and other interested stakeholders is accurate, transparent and clear for the intended audience.

Engagement

Chengdu Agricultural College has committed to further development and engagement encompassing:

- Writing new learning outcomes at programme and module level, ensuring these are specific, measurable, and feasible. Ensuring that learning outcomes explicitly target higher level of knowledge and critical thinking skills, in line with RQF Level 5 descriptors.
- Developing a programme assessment framework/plan. Adopting assessment and marking approaches that sufficiently test critical thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation.
- Ensuring that there is a clear policy on programme assessment plans. Assessments should be developed so that they are clearly linked to intended learning outcomes. There should be clear limits on the use and weighting of attendance as part of the assessment.
- Developing a unified internal quality assurance 'handbook' for the College to bring together all existing written policies and processes, and formalise any unwritten policies or processes.
- Maintaining and ensuring adoption by all staff of the unified quality assurance handbook.

Ecctis is a gold-standard provider of services in international education, training, and skills, and in the development and recognition of globally portable qualifications. We are an internationally trusted and respected reference point for qualifications and skills standards.

We are UK-based and operate worldwide, with a global network and client base spanning 62 countries and 5 continents. We have a 20-year track record in international consultancy and development.

Ecctis provides official UK national agency services on behalf of the UK Government in qualifications, skills, and migration – including UK ENIC, formerly UK NARIC.

UK ENIC is the UK National Information Centre for global qualifications and skills. Following the UK's leaving the EU, the former UK NARIC recognition agency function changes from a NARIC (which is an EU-only title) to an ENIC (the wider European title for national recognition agencies) in order to meet the UK's continuing treaty obligations under the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#).

Since 2019, through our China representatives and Beijing office Nalike, we have conducted qualification benchmarking in China and fostered educational links between China and other countries, to support the internationalisation efforts of China's higher vocational colleges.