

# Developing a farm management curriculum fit for the future – a **personal view**

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# 1. The core FBM topics

- **Planning & Control**
  - whole farm & enterprise budgeting
  - partial budgeting
- **Borrowing & lending**
  - cash flow management, affordability
  - investment appraisal, IRR
- **Buying & selling**
  - negotiation game
- **Hiring & firing**
  - motivating staff
  - legal issues

## 2. in doing so we are able to cover

- economics (e.g., profit max when  $MR=MC$ )
- business appraisal/financial vulnerability
- enterprise appraisal/profitability
- benchmarking
- decision making
- change management
- risk management
- rotations & production decisions
- business differentiation and enterprise diversification
- working together as a team work
- leadership & team building
- succession planning

### 3. And by integrating the “FBM perspective” into other modules (i)

- soil science
- law & land use
- environmental management
- marketing – futures markets
- agricultural economics
- food business economics
- agronomy
- forage utilization
- precision technologies
- livestock nutrition & reproduction
- livestock production systems
- study skills & dissertation
- research methods & computational skills
- **And more**

# 4. and integration by (ii)

- **active teaching**
  - set real world problems
    - “Tender for rental”
    - “Accounts exercise”
    - “Enterprise and business appraisals”
    - Student dissertations
  - get out on farms
    - But only with specific learning objectives
  - invite experts “in”
    - selected alumni!

## 5. and integration by (iii)

- **synoptic assessments**
  - require assessments to integrate information from different elements of the subject, e.g.,
    - material taught on other modules
    - their practical experience

## 6. But is this enough? Not it is not!

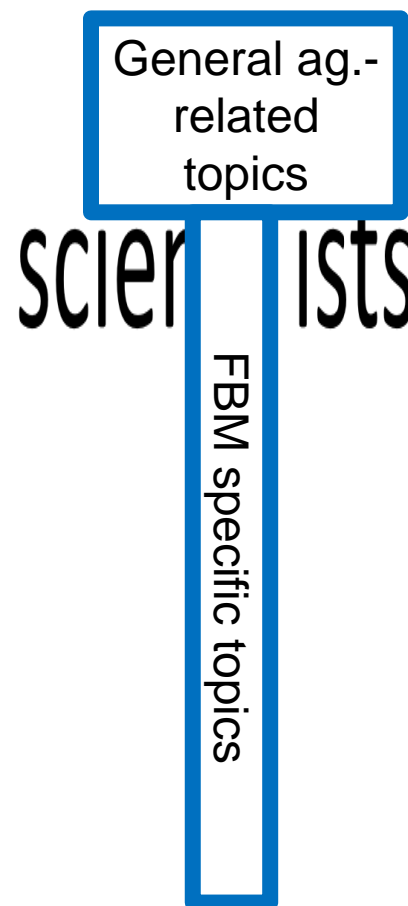
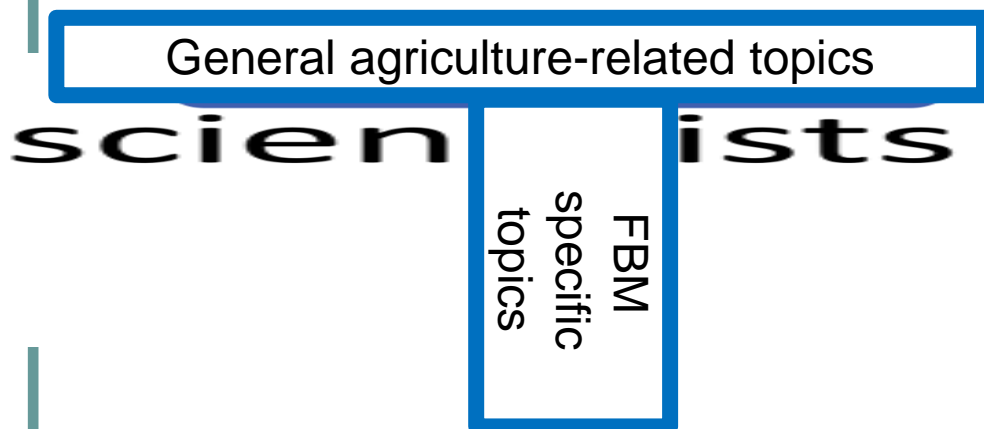
- What are we missing?
  - Appraisals of
    - business opportunities
      - creating differentiated diverse farm businesses “producing rare, distinctive and original products”
    - new technologies
      - computer literacy
      - information technologies (e.g. AI)
    - experts and expertise
  - The company and estate perspective - as different to the family farm perspective
    - agricultural tax & finance allowances
  - Environmental impact assessments

# 7. The “shoehorn trade-off”

- **Its not possible to shoehorn all these topics into a FBM curriculum**
  - given the current structure of agriculture degrees and constraints we face a trade-off between *“doing a little well and in-depth or glossing over a lot of topics”*
- **Or could we**
  - create dedicated FBM degrees?



## 8. So what shape our “T-shaped” graduates?



- what should the relative dimensions of the “bar” (wider coverage of agricultural topics) and the “stalk” (FBM specific perspective & curriculum) be?

## 9. Do we have T-shaped lecturers?

- Necessary to
  - set synoptic assessments?
  - provide synoptic feedback?
  - setting and using an appropriate marking criteria?
  - stand up to the students' wishes!

## 10.1. Can we convince our heterogeneous students?

- **students come to university with widely different expectations due to their**
  - educational qualifications
  - interests
  - backgrounds
  - experience
  - commitment
  - motivations
  - expected future careers

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*Heterogeneous  
Students*

## 10.2. heterogeneous students (ii)

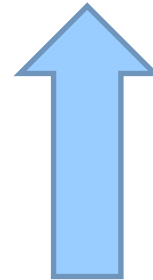
- **students expectations differ due to their**

- educational qualifications
- interests
- backgrounds
- experience
- commitment
- motivations
- expected future careers

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*Heterogeneous  
Students*

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- university “efficiency” policies mean we teach larger more diverse classes

## 10. 3. heterogeneous student (iii)

- **Drivers of student different expectations**

- educational qualifications
- interests
- backgrounds
- experience
- commitment
- motivations
- expected future careers

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*Heterogeneous  
Students*

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- **Determines how what we teach is valued by the students**

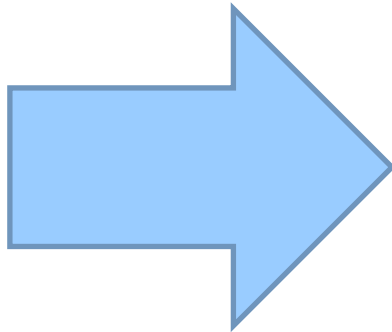
- what we are able to teach
- how we are able to teach it

- university “efficiency” policies mean we teach larger more diverse classes

# 11. Do we focus sufficiently on the future?

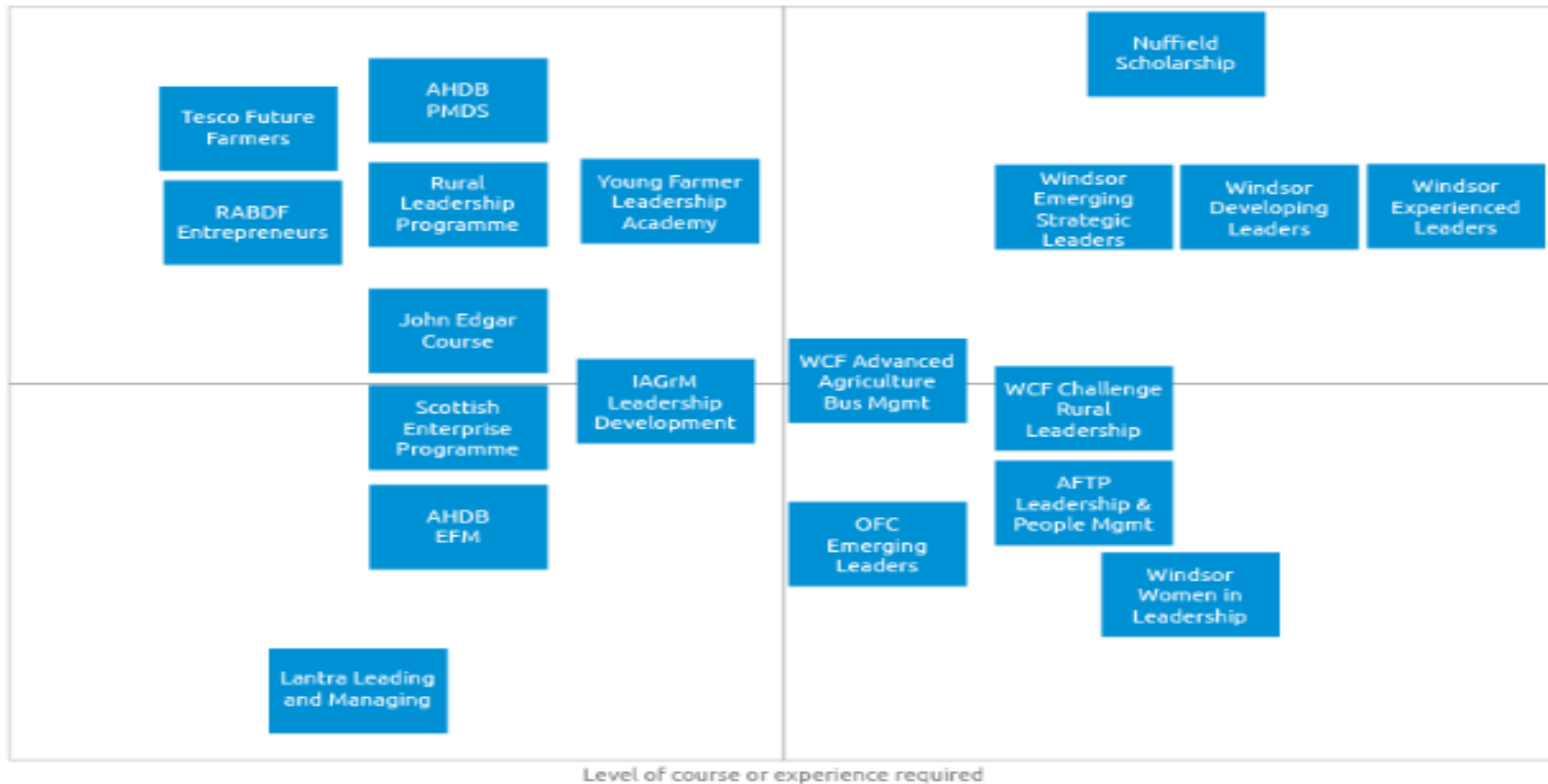
- **Do we know what they will need to know?**
  - How to adjust to once-in-a-generation policy reforms
    - get bigger/work cooperatively/go part time/exit ?
  - Specialisation - the enemy of agility (which is more important than resilience)
  - Should we worry about GHG emissions given the net zero target is 2050?
  - Appraisal of new land using opportunities
    - forestry
    - agroforestry options
    - EIA

## 12. Our graduates **MUST** be interested in life-long learning



- We are not competing with the CPD market
- but we should graduate students who expect to participate in life-long learning and CPD
- **Do we?**
  - There's lots of courses and scholarships available

# 13. Do we direct graduates towards business & leadership courses?



- [Business & leadership courses for farmers and growers | AHDB](#) (accessed July 2022)



# 14. Final comment

- Farm management is becoming more difficult and therefore what we teach is becoming more important

**Questions**



My notes

# Dansk Landbrugs Management (DLM)

- DLM employs: four farm managers, 18 full time employees and all the machinery required to farm over 5,000 ha on 10 farms, which are over 140 km apart.
  - overseen by a 32 year old BSc Agriculture and FBM Masters graduate
    - expertise in businesses outside ag
- **Each of DLM's four farm managers has their own speciality:**
  - IT and GPS
  - fertilizer and pesticides
  - organic production systems; and
  - EU regulations.
- Business model
  - Each land owner receives all the EU area payments
  - Thereafter the land owners and DLM each pay 50% of all the costs and receive 50% of the output on a farm-by-farm basis
    - recording keeping – which is based on technology and manual records – is given a high priority

- **WCofF “core competencies for the successful agri-business manager of the future”**
- **Business acumen and commercial acuity skills**
  - Managing a land asset which may or may not include farming
  - Identify and develop commercial opportunities to create a portfolio of assets
- **Flexibility/adaptability/resilience**
  - Must be comfortable with and have the ability to adapt to constant change, new realities, new markets and new technologies
- **People and people management skills**
  - Recognition of staff under mental stress
- **Leadership skills**
  - Ability to lead and motivate teams in businesses with diverse skill sets
- **Communication skills**
  - Ability to communicate with staff, neighbours, customers, regulators, politicians and the wider international business community