

Q&A Summary from Growing Future Farmers On-line Webinar held on 25 July 2024 at 7pm.

Student Requirements, Application and Selection process

Q1. What are the selection criteria for applying to GFF?

- Attitude and ability to learn.
- Self-sufficiency
- Restricted drivers licence (preferably manual)
- Requisite level of numeracy and literacy (preferred NCEA L2)
- Empathy for animals
- Reference from school/character reference.

Q2. What gear/equipment do the students need?

- Smartphone
- Laptop
- Reliable vehicle
- All items on gear list (see website for list and discounts are available at selected providers)

Note: these need to be purchased by the student at their own cost.

Q3. How hard is it to get into the programme? How many places are available?

- On average 70% of applicants secure placements on the programme.
- The number of available placements depends on the number of Farm Trainers each year, however, as an indication we are aiming for between 80-90 placements for Y1's in 2025.

Q4. Do you need previous farm experience to get into the programme?

- No, the philosophy of the programme is to open pathways into the Ag-sector no matter their background, so no pre-farm experience is required.

Q5. What are the age requirements for entry into the programme? What is the average age range of students on your programme?

- We focus on an age range of between 16-20 for first year students. Generally, applicants are students who have finished Y12 onwards.
- However, we do consider (and have) students between the age of 21-24 across Y1 and Y2.

Programme – Qualifications, Course Content, Cost

Q6. Is there a course fee, and what are the associated costs?

- Currently the GFF Programme is a fees-free (zero fee) course.
- Students need to pay a NZ\$1000 bond which is returned at the point of graduation (*subject to certain conditions*)
- Students need to purchase (at their own cost) equipment/gear listed on the GFF Gear List.

Q7. What qualifications do students gain upon completing the GFF programme?

- NZQA Certificate in Primary Industries (L2&3)
- NZQA Certificate in Agriculture – Food and Fibre (L3)
- Land based Sustainability Practices L3
- GFF Essential Farm Skills Certificate
- First Aid Certificate

Q8. What is covered under the Essential Farm Skills / Friday training sessions?

- Fridays are allocated as focused learning days, either academic or practical.
- Students have Zoom calls with our Academic Training Provider
- Students attend trainings with industry experts across a range of topics e.g.
 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Rural First Aid
 - Pup Training
 - Vehicles (rural driving AWD, 4WD, tractors, ATV's, LUV's etc)
 - Chainsaw
 - Fencing
 - Shearing and handpiece
 - Financial Literacy and work readiness skills
 - Livestock welfare, management and stockmanship
 - Pasture and Soil Management
 - Ag-tech and innovation
 - Independent living and life skills
 - Beyond Farm Gate experiences to trace the supply chain
 - Community engagement

Q9. What is the duration of the programme? When does it start and finish?

- It is a two-year programme where the students live on-farm.
- The programme runs from late January to late November/early December each year.
- Students have semester breaks in July and December.

Student experience, living arrangements, support and allowances.

Q10. What are the student's accommodation and living arrangements?

- Students live on farm in accommodation provided as part of the student package, including power and unlimited Wi-Fi.
- Accommodation must meet NZ Healthy Home standards and is pre-checked before students go on-farm.
- Accommodation varies on each farm which could be shared, single or quarters.
- On farm accommodation arrangements consider gender and privacy considerations. In some cases, due to accommodation availability, we do have male and female students in a shared house.
- Students are expected to make their own meals and be self-sufficient. GFF provides some basic cooking training in the Orientation week.
- Farm Trainers provide meat for the students and will from time to time invite them for meals with the Farm team or their families.
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Q11. What kind of support is given to the students?

- Students are supported by Student Success Advisors who provide pastoral support, guidance in their academic progress and co-ordinate the various aspects of the student experience including regular communication and progress reporting with the Farm Trainers.
- Farm Trainers, the farm team and the farm whanau all play roles in supporting the students through their learning and life journey whilst on the programme.
- Students also get support and guidance from our expert industry and academic partners as they progress through their studies and learning experience.
- GFF provides access to EAP and local community/rural support services.

Q12. Do the students receive an allowance?

- Students receive a weekly allowance (not wage as they are not employees) which on average across the 2-year programme equates to \$200/week. This is tiered and progressive over the 4 semesters.
- It is important to remember that the total package the student receives is quite substantial, and the allowance is over and above the total investment that GFF/the Farm Trainers put into the student which is:
 - Fully paid for accommodation, power, water, Wi-Fi for 2 years.
 - NZQA qualifications with no student loan/debt
 - Investment of time/effort from Farm Trainers, Expert Trainers to upskill them at no cost to the student.
 - Contribution towards weekly living expenses such as meat, eggs, vegetables, diesel/fuel (contributions are variable dependent on farm situation)
 - Ownership of the 2 dogs the student has trained is transferred to student upon graduation (subject to certain conditions)

Q13. How often do students get together as a cohort? What opportunities are for them to socialise or interact with the local community?

- Students get together as a regional cohort or hub fairly regularly depending on the regions, for some this will be weekly, for others in more remote areas it may be fortnightly.
- Students are encouraged to participate in rural community activities to feel part of a community and often become part of a local sports club or interest groups and enjoy weekend

activities such as hunting, dog trialling or earning extra money by joining local fencing or shearing groups.

Q14. What kind of support is available for students with learning difficulties or disabilities?

- Through our tertiary education partner, students have access to learning support both on-line and in-person (where available).
- Living, working and learning on-farm requires a certain level of physical ability and fitness so whilst we would like to accommodate people with disabilities, it would need to be on a case-by-case basis with an assessment of the feasibility of the student being able to fully participate in the programme curriculum.

Q15. What are the potential career pathways for GFF graduates? Do they all get jobs at the end of course?

- Graduates of GFF have taken a range of different career pathways such as
 - General hand
 - Shepherds
 - Fencing Contractors
 - Junior Tractor operators
 - Ag-retail salesperson/advisor
- GFF aim for 100% of our graduates to go into work following the programme and we have largely met that target over the last 2-years.
- Students go through pre-employment skills training, get their CV's up to date, learn about negotiating employment contracts/arrangements, and have mock interviews.
- GFF graduates are widely sought after based on the quality and credibility of the programme with future employers knowing the students come our work ready, with the right work ethic and well-rounded skill set.

Geographic split, programme numbers

Q16. What are the student numbers per region?

- Student numbers vary between regions from 2 in some regions to 30 in other regions.
- On average we have a split of 75% of our student on the North Island and 25% in the South Island.

Q17. Are some regions harder to get placements in than others?

- Yes, it is dependent on the locations of our approved Farm Trainers.
- More concentrated areas such as Gisborne, King Country and Taihape have more capacity to take on students than some of our other regions.
- Students are asked for their placement preferences as part of the application process, and we do our best to accommodate these requests.

Q18. What type of farms are students placed on – mixed cropping farms, dairy or traditional sheep & beef?

- Our primary focus is currently on Beef and Sheep and the programme is designed based on this part of the Ag-sector.
- However, our students may be on a farm that has dairy, citrus, crops etc. Whilst they may get exposure to these different elements on farm, the GFF programme does not cover the wider scope and the Farm Trainer is expected to focus the student learning on the Sheep and Beef part of their business.
- We are intending to look at an evolution of the programme to cover other aspects of the Ag-sector as part of our strategic growth aspirations, with dairy being in our sights as the next phase.

Q19. How many trainers are there, and what is the student-to-trainer ratio?

- Currently we have 106 Farms/Farm Trainers (FT) across New Zealand.
- The ratio is generally either 1:1 or 1:2 students per FT.
- Some Fts prefer to have a Y1 and Y2 on farm which means it is a 1:2 ratio, other Farm Trainers may only have 1 x Y1 or 1 x Y2.

Q20. What is the female to male ratio?

- On average we have a 50:50 female: male split across our students.

Miscellaneous

Q21. Can students bring their own animals, such as dogs or horses, to the programme?

- We don't encourage students to bring their own animals into the programme.
- Students are provided with a heading pup in the first semester which they need to train. And if they are ready, they get a huntaway pup in the second semester to train/break-in. A professional dog trainer teaches and supports the students on how to care for and train their dogs.
- On a case-by-case basis, and with prior agreement with the Farm Trainer, there may be an opportunity for discussions on whether other animals will be allowed.

Q22. Does the course include learning about horses/ working on horses?

- Some farms have horses, and the students will get exposure to working with, and learning about horses but this is not consistent throughout the programme.

Q23. How robust is the feedback loop for applicants that don't make it through?

- We aim to give valuable feedback on the process, but we have heard we could do better in some cases so that people can learn from the experience.
- We will focus on continuous improvement as part of the 2025 application process.

Q24. When do applications close?

- 27 September 2024