

SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

**DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**



***FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE
UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA***

26th to 28th May 2008

Review Team :

Prof. R. S. Gunatunge, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Prof. H. M. Bandara, University of Kelaniya

Mr. Ranjith Wijewardena, Rajarata University of SL

CONTENTS

	Page
1. Subject Review Process	2
2. Brief History of the University, Faculty and the Department	3
3. Aims and Learning Outcomes	4
3.1. Aims	5
3.2. Learning Outcomes	6
4. Findings of the Review Team	7
4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review	7
4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	8
4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	10
4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	10
4.5. Postgraduate Studies	10
4.6. Peer Observation	12
4.7. Skills Development	12
4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling	13
5. Conclusions	14
6. Recommendations	14
7. Annexes	15

1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Subject review process evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. It is focused on the student learning experience and on student achievement. It is designed to evaluate the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However, the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the institution itself, since it alone has the power to control and to change existing practices.

Review process was conducted according to the guidelines given in the quality assurance handbook for Sri Lankan universities, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The Department of Agricultural Economics & Business Management, University of Peradeniya submitted a self evaluation report consisting of ten sections, namely: aims, learning outcomes and programme details; staff, students, and facilities; curriculum design, content and review; teaching, learning and assessment methods; student admission, progress and achievements; the extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative; postgraduate studies; peer observation; skills development; and academic guidance and counseling. The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the self evaluation report.

The following eight aspects of education were reviewed at the subject level:

1. Curriculum design, content and review.
2. Teaching learning and assessment methods.
3. Quality of students including student progress and achievements.
4. Extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative.
5. Postgraduate studies.
6. Peer observations.
7. Skills development.
8. Academic guidance and counseling.

The review team visited the department from 26th - 28th May, 2008. The agenda of the three day visit is attached (see annex 1).

The evaluation of eight aspects was based on:

- Meetings held with the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of Department, academic staff including the senior professor, non-academic staff, Senior Assistant Librarian of the Faculty Library, two former counselors of the Department, undergraduates representing second and fourth years, few postgraduate students representing four postgraduate programs, systems designer of the main computer center, and supportive staff in the Department.
- Observation of physical facilities of the Department, Agribusiness Center (AbC), Department's computer center, class rooms, Faculty library, and Faculty computer center.
- Observation of teaching classes of undergraduates and students' presentations.
- Reviewing available documents at the Department.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good / satisfactory / unsatisfactory, based on strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each. Considering the judgment of the eight aspects, an overall judgment was given as confidence / limited confidence / no confidence.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, THE FACULTY AND THE DEPARTMENT

The University of Peradeniya is the oldest university tradition in Sri Lanka as the successor to the University of Ceylon, the first institution of its kind in the country. It's founding on July 1, 1942 as an autonomous corporation was the fulfillment of hopes and expectations of many who had been campaigning for a university in this country. The University shifted to the present site of great natural beauty at Peradeniya on 6th October 1952. In 1967, it was made a separate university with the name "University of Ceylon - Peradeniya" and it became the independent "University of Peradeniya" in 1979. Today, the university stands as a prominent educational institution in the country, catering to the needs of students from a variety of academic streams, ethnic groups and Religions. The University consists of eight academic faculties. About 1800 undergraduates enter the university annually, to make up an undergraduate student population of 6600, and the total number of postgraduate students registered is over 1200. Out of the total undergraduate student population, about 5100 are provided accommodation on and around campus.

In the Parliamentary debates on the establishment of a local university it was conceptualized as one being designed on local culture to meet the manpower needs of an agricultural economy. However, the agriculture degree programme was launched only five years after establishing the university. Establishment of the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science at Peradeniya was approved by the then Minister of Education, on 5th April 1947. Following this, the first batch of 16 students to study agriculture was admitted after completing the GSQ examination in 1947. Those students followed another two years of study program in Agriculture to be conferred the B.Sc. Agriculture degree.

A separate department for Agriculture together with departments of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science was set up in the newly established Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science, in 1948. In 1973, an independent Faculty of Agriculture was established with six departments of study. The Faculty of Agriculture at University of Peradeniya today developed into a fully-fledged Faculty with eight departments of study, namely Agricultural Biology, Agricultural Economics and Business Management, Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Extension, Animal Science, Crop Science, Food Science and Technology, and Soil Science.

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management was established in 1972 as the Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management. The curriculum development focused on the national need of increasing farm level agricultural production and consisted of courses in Principles of Economics, Agricultural Development and Policy, and several other subjects related to Farm Management.

By 1980s the need to impart agricultural extension subjects to the curriculum was nationally felt. Accordingly, curriculum was revised in order to incorporate subjects related to agricultural extension. Subsequently the name of the Department was changed in 1983 to 'Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension'. Since then, subjects offered in both disciplines grew, particularly as a result of the introduction of the course unit system.

In 1996 the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension branched out as two separate departments namely, Department of Agricultural Economics and Department of

Agricultural Extension to allow for the growth and development of specialized academic disciplines. Since then, the Department of Agricultural Economics has introduced many changes to its curricula to reflect the national and global changes.

Keeping in line with the needs of private sector, the Department introduced a number of new subjects starting from 1996 such as Agribusiness Management, Applied Agribusiness, Entrepreneurship, Marketing Management, International Business and Trade, Business Creation and Management, Research Methods for Business and Economics, Quantitative Techniques for Business and Economics, Business Psychology, Financial and Management Accounting, Financial Management and Business Strategy as a part of the curricula revision process conducted by the Faculty of Agriculture.

The Department renamed as Agricultural Economics and Business Management from Agricultural Economics in 2003. Following reasons are given in justification of the changing of the name.

1. The new name better reflects the changes of the curriculum, particularly the continued introduction of the subjects related to Business and Management.
2. It reflects the knowledge and skills gained by students related to applied aspects of Business Management so that the potential employers would be better informed about the competencies of the students.
3. The proposed name was congruent with national and international changes and corresponded with the names of similar departments of reputed international universities.

The advanced course module offered by the Department was renamed in 2006 as “Applied Economics and Business Management”. This was in order to reflect the changes made to the curriculum of B.Sc. Agricultural Technology and Management. The renaming of the module was done in keeping with the trends observed in leading Universities in the world where the term “Agricultural Economics” is being replaced by “Applied Economics” to reflect the range of subjects covered in applied areas of natural resources and environmental sciences.

3. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROGRAMME DETAILS

Being the Economics and Business Management arm of the Faculty of Agriculture, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management offers a wide spectrum of subjects in related fields, mainly to undergraduate students of the Faculty of Agriculture and to the graduate students of the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA). In addition, the academic staff members are involved in inter-institutional teaching as well. Some of the examples for such institutions are the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, Postgraduate Institute of Science and Department of Agricultural Economics of the University of Ruhuna. The Department is committed to the creation of competent professionals via regular uplifting of the quality of the training provided to the students. This has been enabled by the collective effort of the internationally qualified academic staff members who are also involved with a variety of research and outreach activities through extensively developed local and international collaborations. Hence, the programmes of study combine the richness of theory and practice offered in the form of attractive academic packages that are designed to make the students’ experience more fulfilling and rewarding.

3.1 Aims

Focusing on Academic Excellence

The Department, keeping in line with the well-respected academic tradition of Peradeniya, makes every attempt to combine the theoretical and practical aspects of Agricultural Economics and Business Management. The forte of the Department is its committed and well qualified academic staff that works in close contact with students. This is with the sole objective of offering the best Agricultural Economics and Business Management study programme in the country.

Focusing on Business Outreach

The Department alone and also through its involvement with the Agribusiness Centre (AbC), the main outreach arm of the Faculty of Agriculture aims at providing institutional support for forging linkages between the academia and, public and private sector organizations. This, on the one hand enables the faculty to assist such organizations in solving their problems through carrying out consultancies and applied research and on the other hand to effectively utilize the feedback gained in updating its teaching programme.

An extensive exposure to industrial settings is also provided to students via seminars, workshops, mentoring and internship training. The Department is supposed to be one of the first in the faculty to initiate a mentoring programme for its specializing students in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Kandy and MBA Association of the University of Peradeniya where students are provided with opportunities to get an exposure to real life work settings over a period of two weeks prior to their graduation. This was initiated well before the formal one month in-plant training programme currently being carried out under the scope of the IRQUE project which is mandatory for all the undergraduate students. These, while enhancing the relevance and the quality of the academic programme increases the employability of the graduates who specialise in Agricultural Economics and Business Management.

Focusing on Research Expertise

The final semester of study is designed to train students to apply the theoretical knowledge that they gained over a period of three and half years to their research project. This training is given with the expectation that it would enable them to carry out fundamental and applied research independently. In addition, the Department provides students with opportunities to participate in research and outreach programmes carried out by the academic staff members individually and through their involvement with the Agribusiness Centre, most of which are collaborative research carried out with external organizations, both local and international. This, whilst improving the capacity of the Department to carry out research via provision of necessary equipment such as computers and other assets also leads to the increased employability of graduates. The Department, for the very first time in the Faculty took an initiative to introduce a competitive research grant scheme for undergraduate students of the Department and for those specializing in Agricultural Extension. This was sponsored by the American Institute for Lankan Studies and administered by the AbC upon a proposal submitted by the Department.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the courses offered by the Department (See Section 3.1.3) students should:

- Acquire basic knowledge on Agricultural Economics and Business Management during the core programme and an in-depth knowledge of the specialized subject areas during the advanced programme together with their applications.
- Gain problem solving and technical skills to identify and critically examine the micro and macro environmental contexts within which policies are implemented and businesses are carried out.
- Gain interpersonal skills such as oral and written communication skills, team skills, and leadership skills
- Develop the aptitude to apply the knowledge and skills that they have gained:
 - a. in formulating proposals and conducting basic research in related fields
 - b. in designing, monitoring and evaluation of projects and policies in governmental, non-governmental and private sector settings
- Develop the propensity to start-up and run their own business ventures.

On successful completion of the core programme (See Section 3.1.3) the students should be able to:

- Explain how a competitive market works and how supply and demand analysis can be used to determine the effects of changing market conditions, including government interventions.
- Gain knowledge on the determination of national income and explain the causes and impact of unemployment and inflation.
- Develop a farm plan, maintain farm records and accounts and, carry out farm budgeting.
- Define and describe the process of economic development and identify factors that affect economic development.
- Apply theoretical and practical knowledge gained on principles of business management to carry out a target oriented business project in a team setting.

On successful completion of the advanced courses (See Section 3.1.3) offered by the Department, students should be able to:

- Explain the theoretical and analytical concepts underlying consumer and producer behaviour and workings of markets.
- Explain the macroeconomic theory that deals with aggregate economic quantities such as the level and growth rate of national output, interest rate, unemployment, and inflation rate.
- Explain the environmental and resource economics concepts and apply them to real world environmental issues.
- Apply theoretical concepts in analysing the structure, conduct and performance of agricultural marketing systems.
- Develop and simulate market models to assess economic impacts of various agricultural policies.
- Develop and economically estimate demand and supply models and, production functions using computer software.
- Explain the gains from trade and analyze the impacts of agricultural trade policies on the economy.

- Explain the theoretical concepts of project analysis and carry out cost benefit analysis.
- Explain the concepts and methodological tools that are required in acquiring and using capital.
- Explain the theoretical concepts of marketing management and apply them in practical setting.

Programme Details

The BSc degree in Agricultural Technology & Management consists of core program and advanced program. The core program is offered jointly by the eight departments in the faculty whereas advanced programs are offered individually or jointly by the department. The core program is compulsory for all students, whereas a student has a freedom of selecting one of the twelve advanced modules of his/her choice during the advanced program. The core program is offered in the first two years and comprises of 108 compulsory credit units including the project. Advanced module is offered in the third and fourth years and comprises of a series of compulsory courses, which offers a minimum of 12 credit units unique to that module. A minimum of 6 six credits should be obtained from a series of optional courses offered in the third and fourth years. The total number of credits needed for a student to be eligible for the degree is 126 credits.

In addition to the above mentioned credit courses, a set of supplementary and complementary courses are offered to impart satisfactory proficiency in English, Sinhala, Tamil, mathematics, physics, information and communication technology (ICT) and laboratory skills among all the students. It is mandatory for every student to pass the supplementary courses before the six semester and the complementary courses before the eight semesters. While these courses are not credited for the degree program, separate certificates will be awarded for English and ICT, upon successful completion.

The Department offers courses for the core programmes of the B.Sc. in Agriculture, B.Sc. in Agricultural Technology and Management, and B.Sc. in Food Science and Technology degrees as well as an advanced module for the students who specialize in Agricultural Economics and Business Management.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

Based on the observations made during the study visit by the review team, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Presently two undergraduate degree programs are running, old and new programs by the Department. In curriculum development and revision, the Department usually has to comply with the policies set by the curriculum development committee of the Faculty that comprises of members of each department. There were two major curriculum revisions in addition to the changing of the name of B.Sc. Agriculture degree carried out by the Faculty prior to the latest curriculum revision in 2006.

The review team noticed that when developing curricula the Department has considered views of various stakeholders such as current students, past graduates of the Department,

employers, and teaching staff. The courses offered by the Department for the core programme is designed in such a way to provide both basic theoretical and practical understanding of Economics and Business Management for all the students who follow the degree in Agricultural Technology and Management. At the end of the core programme, students who select Agricultural Economics and Business Management as their area of specialization will follow advanced courses offered by the Department along with selected optional courses from other departments.

The students follow the entire course in English medium. To support students learning, several supplementary courses such as English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), basic mathematics, basic physics, and basic laboratory skills are being offered by the Faculty. Additionally, Sinhala language for Tamil students and Tamil language for Sinhala students are offered to acquire minimum verbal communication skills. This can be considered as a positive step taken by the faculty to maintain social harmony within the university.

The review team is of the opinion that the content of the courses offered are adequately covered for the requirements of a degree programme of this nature. Three year circle of curricula revision is appropriate to incorporate changes. The curricula review committee and curricula monitoring committee established at the faculty level are positive steps taken by the faculty to strength the programs in each department. The team also has noted that a significant effort has been made by the staff members of the Department to ensure high quality graduates in the overall programme. However, the review team views that course outlines of advanced course module should be improved by linking overall learning outcomes of the degree programme and assessment methods.

In relation to the curriculum design, content and review, the judgment of the team is good.

4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods.

A range of teaching methods are presently being used by the Department staff. The most common method is lectures. As indicated by students as well as staff members, the teaching takes place in an interactive environment. This was evidenced by the review team during the observation of teaching sessions. In addition, a range of interactive methods such as case studies, individual and group presentations, field studies and computer practical, tutorials, presentations, field visits, guest talks, workshops and seminars, assignments, report writing, debates, and group activities are being used. Most of the lectures are conducted according to a carefully prepared format. The group business projects carried out by the students who follow the course on Principles of Agribusiness Management and Farm Management are provided a lucid example for experiential learning by students in real life-setting. The final year research project provides students with an opportunity to carry out a research in chosen areas and settings independently. This develops their self-confidence and critical thinking.

The lectures are conducted by the senior academic staff of the Department and visiting lecturers. However, extra attention is provided as and when necessary for students by temporary staff members under the guidance of the lecturer-in-charge. The Department has well qualified and experienced teaching staff including a senior professor and an associate professor who is based at Maha Illuppallama. Six out of nine lecturers in the Department has acquired PhDs from developed countries such as USA, Canada, UK, Hawaii, and New Zealand. Other three are pursuing doctoral studies in USA, Canada and UK. The review team observed that the lecturers were successful in attracting the attention of almost all students in

the class. Lecturers use examples and metaphors to explain theories. The team is pleased with the friendly teaching and learning environment maintained in class rooms.

The Department has a well qualified and credible research team. They acquire research funds through local and foreign sources and managed through an independent unit namely; Agribusiness Unit (AbC) in the faculty. Some present and past students are involving in staff research. Outcome of research conducted by lecturers are used to enhance the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Most of the lecturers are affiliated to various associations and professional bodies such as Sri Lankan Agricultural Economics, American Association for Lankan studies, American Psychology Association, Institute of Management of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing and Sri Lanka Institute of Training and Development. All senior lecturers are involved in teaching and research supervision of postgraduate courses conducted by Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA). The Department has signed an MOU with SAGA University for exchanging students and staff members.

The supportive staff consists of two trained technical officers, a clerk and an office assistant. They are also happy with the prevailing environment in the department and support the academic administration of the department.

The department is equipped with modem teaching aids such as OHP, whiteboard and multimedia. Handouts, lecture summaries, and explanatory notes are provided when necessary. Multimedia and video demonstrations are used in most of the situations. Certain lecturers share their own text books and Journal articles with students. All the students have unlimited access to internet facilities in the computer centers of the Department, Faculty and the University. The Faculty has a separate library with some collection of 35000 books, reputed Journals and a collection of CD ROMs. The library adds about 200 new books each year.

The teaching and learning environment is conducive. The review team observed that the students are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Both academic and non-academic staff displayed a high level of commitment. Both summative and formative assessment methods are being used. At the beginning of each semester session planning workshops are conducted. These provide opportunities for all the lectures to discuss their course outlines and assessment methods. Examination papers are set by the academic staff individually and are scrutinized in scrutiny meetings, chaired by the Head of Department to ensure that questions are clear to the students and the syllabus is adequately covered. These meetings are attended by the academic staff members of the Department. The visiting lecturers are also invited to the scrutiny meetings as a means of externally validating the question papers. Final year research project is assessed on a continuous basis. Initially, the students present their research proposals to be evaluated by the academic staff of the Department and feedback is obtained for further improvement. Supervisors constantly guide the students and they also carry out a continuous assessment of the progress of each student. Once the project is completed students produce written reports and make final presentations before the internal and the external supervisors. A final grade to the research project is allocated based on the supervisor's continuous assessment, the written report and on the average mark received for the final presentation. However, the team noted that answer scripts are not doubled marked and the first examiners marks are taken as final.

In relation to the teaching, learning and assessment methods the judgment of the team is good.

4.3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

At present, the student intake into the specialization programme is largely based on their choice. Throughout the program, various measures have been taken to ensure students' progress to achieve expected learning outcome of the programme. Curricula monitoring committee provides a coherent opportunity for monitoring and evaluating students' learning outcomes, teachers, and student performance and make corrective actions if intended learning outcomes are not achieved by students. Other measures include monitoring performance through continuous assessments, advising and counseling of weaker students etc. During the discussions held with the students as well as teaching sessions observed by the review team, the students were found to be quite confident and demonstrated good communication skills in English. The team observed that the students in the second year demonstrated outstanding capabilities in student presentation in the subject of agricultural policy.

The final results of the last five years indicate a high proportion of students obtaining classes with zero level failures. All of the graduates of the Department are able to secure employment opportunities both in the private and public sector organizations within one to four months after their graduation.

In relation to the quality of students, student progress and achievements the judgment of the team is good.

4.4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback

The team observed that both formal and informal feedback is obtained to improve teaching and learning environment. The formal teacher evaluations are conducted by an independent body appointed by the Faculty of Agriculture and the feedback is collected on the last date of lectures. Based on the student comments received informally during the course of lectures, handouts are prepared, discussion classes are arranged, delivery speed is adjusted, and every attempt is made to modify teaching styles as appropriate. Based on the student comments received after the series of lectures, improvements are made to the course material and overall teaching style of the course if necessary.

The department uses structured questionnaires to obtain student feedback on teaching of academic staff members and the course content of the subjects. The independent body established at the faculty level to undertake the formal evaluation process is a positive step. The discussions with staff members and students revealed that the feedback has been effectively used by the lecturers in improving their teaching capabilities. This was evidenced in the existence of a close rapport with students by the staff and available documents in the department.

In relation to the extent and use of student feedback the judgment of the team is good.

4.5. Postgraduate Studies

Postgraduate education in Agricultural Economics is aimed at providing advanced training on theory and applications of the subject area. Therefore, the degrees offered by the Board of

study in Agricultural Economics are tailored to meet the local and global human resource needs in Agricultural Economics, Natural Resource Management, and Environmental Economics while training them for rewarding careers in academia, industry, government institutions, and local and international NGOs. In addition, a diploma in Development Practice and Management is offered by the Board of Agricultural Economics to meet the needs of the mid career professionals working in the development field.

The Board of Study in Agricultural Economics offers three Masters of Science (M.Sc.) degree programmes in Agricultural Economics (AE), Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Environmental Economics (EE). Advanced research degrees, i.e., M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees are offered in the field of Agricultural Economics.

M.Sc. in Agricultural Economics is tailored to provide a sound knowledge in all aspects of Agricultural Economics by providing a comprehensive coverage of subject areas such as Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Econometrics, Production Economics, Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Policy Analysis, Development Economics, Agricultural Finance, Mathematical Programming, Project Analysis, and International Trade.

M.Phil. and Ph.D. Degree Programmes in Agricultural Economics are targeted at producing high quality academics/researchers to fit into Universities, Research Institutions, and International Organizations. The students are required to undertake productive research leading to possible publications in scholarly journals.

M.Sc. degree in Natural Resource Management focuses on ecological, socio-economic, political, and legal aspects of natural resource management. The degree provides a broad training by covering courses such as Environmental Policy, Social Impact Assessment, Geographic Information Systems, Resource Planning, Economics, Ecology, Agriculture, Watershed Management, Environment and Industry, Aquatic Resource Management, and Project Analysis.

M.Sc. in Environmental Economics is aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of Environmental Economics with a sound theoretical background in economic theory. Students are required to follow courses such as Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Econometrics, Mathematical Economics, Resource Economics, Environmental Valuation, Resource Planning and Management, and Sustainable Development.

Additionally the Board of studies also offers PhD in Business Administration degree with three year duration and DBA for those who are particularly coming from the industry.

All the postgraduate courses involve taught courses and a research component. The team noted that all the senior staff members are involved in postgraduate work such as teaching, supervision, and assessment. However, the team noted that some students in the MBA program do not complete the degree though they are performed well in the taught components mainly due to the research component in it. Offering Master of Business Management for those who are not progressing towards the MBA is commendable. The MBA alumna is an additional strength of the Department.

In relation to the postgraduate studies the judgment of the team is good.

4.6. Peer Observations

Apparently, peer observation is practiced to some extent in an informal way with mutual understanding. The tutorials conducted by temporary assistant lecturers have been observed by the senior academic staff. The continuous guidance is provided to them on all aspects of teaching. Scrutiny meetings can be given as another example. There, question papers set by course coordinators are reviewed by peers in order to make sure that the syllabus is adequately covered and questions are clear to the students. However, lack of a formal mechanism for peer observation was noted as a weakness by the review team. The review team is in view that establishing a formal mechanism for peer observation would further help to enhance the quality of teaching.

In relation to peer observations the judgment of the review team is satisfactory.

4.7. Skills Development

The curricula are designed in a way to develop problem solving, technical, interpersonal, self-directed learning skills, communicative and critical thinking seem adequate for degree in this nature.

Students are trained to gain efficient and effective problem solving skills by engaging in various individual assignments and group activities and case study analysis. The final year research project could be given as one of the best examples where students gain problem solving skills including analytical skills by carrying out independent research projects in which students are encouraged to identify research problems, determine the appropriate learning resources to address the research issues, refining learning issues based on new knowledge acquired through review of literature, determine the appropriate methodologies for carrying out field work to gather necessary data and relate the findings to the existing body knowledge.

The group business activity carried out as a partial fulfilment of the Principles of Agribusiness Management can be given as a lucid example for group activities where students collectively generate business ideas, assess resource requirements and mobilise them to capitalise the identified business opportunities. This can be cited as an instance where students constantly engage in solving problems that are encountered in their way to achieve given profit targets. Hands on experience given to students on application of linear programming, estimation of econometric models and policy simulations also develop students' problem solving skills.

Opportunities are provided for students to develop various technical skills such as skills that are required to analyse data, and to carry out linear programming, econometric model building and simulations using computer software, through provision of class room instructions, demonstrations and hands on experience. SPSS, MINITAB, STATA, GAMS, TSP, EXCEL LINDO can be given as examples for some of the software used. Students are also provided with opportunities to develop skills required to prepare effective Power Point presentations.

Interpersonal skills such as communication skills, team work skills are imparted on students through group activities, mentoring and internship programmes. In group activities members are given the opportunity to solve problems through brainstorming, discussing, learning and receiving and giving constructive feedback on self and peer as a group. Presentation/communication skills are imparted on students by necessitating them to do presentations. The mentoring and the internship give students the opportunity to acquire necessary interpersonal in real life work setting. Farm Practice course offered in Maha-Illuppalama gives students the opportunity to interact with farmers and to effectively communicate. In addition the Department also organise various training programmes for students mainly to develop their interpersonal skills on various job related areas such as facing interviews, preparation of curriculum vitae and business etiquettes.

In self-directed learning skills, students are trained to determine what needs to be learnt, identification of learning resources and seeking information, critiquing learning resources and applying the synthesised knowledge to the problem at hand. The final year research could be given as a lucid example for this.

Some students are often worked as temporary enumerators during week-ends, holidays and vacations for the field data collection, data entry and analysis for the research programs of staff members. By doing so, students are able to develop their skills in data collection, entry and analysis under the close supervision of staff member and scientists in other institutes.

Having a panel of visiting staff from various institutions is a positive approach taken by the department to further strengthen students' skills in the industrial sectors.

There is no subject specific society. The review team viewed that having a subject society helps to improve their skills by organizing different activities such as publishing a magazine, guest lecturers, excursions, etc.

In relation to the skills development the judgment of the team is good.

4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling.

The department has taken adequate measures to ensure effective academic guidance through formal and informal manner. From the first year, every three students in the faculty have a supervisor from the faculty to help student's academic and personal life. During the research project period, the internal supervisors provide guidance for students. The faculty appoints student counselors on rotation basis from all the departments. Presently there are no academic members of the department working as student counselors, however, last year two members of the department worked as senior students' counselors. Sometimes students have personal problems that could have an effect on their studies and, in such instances members of the academic staff do assist them. The student-staff relationship is satisfactory.

In relation to academic guidance and counseling the judgment of the team is good.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the observations made during the study visit by the review team, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

Aspect	Judgment
Curriculum design, content and review	Good
Teaching learning and assessment methods	Good
Quality of students including student progress and achievements	Good
Extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative	Good
Postgraduate studies	Good
Peer observation	Satisfactory
Skills development	Good
Academic guidance and counseling	Good

The overall judgment is suspended

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The course outlines in the advanced module should be improved by including learning outcomes for each course, comprehensive description of evaluation method, breakdown of the total time among individual topics, reading list under each topic, and relationship of learning outcome of each course with the overall learning outcome of the degree programme.
2. Change the name of the title of research project to dissertation.
3. Increase present duration of one and a half month internship training to three-to six months and introduce some credits for the training. However, the training component should be well designed and coordinated by a senior academic member of the department.
4. Encourage academic staff to develop and use teaching dossiers (profiles) in their teaching and learning environments.
5. Introduce a formal mechanism for peer observation.
6. Promote subject associations allowing students to involve in more activities such as Journal publication, organizing guest lectures, workshops etc.
7. Introduce new subjects such as disaster management and risk management courses for postgraduate degrees.
8. Allocate sufficient space for class rooms for students' teaching and learning.

7. ANNEXES

Day 1 - May 26, 2008

Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE REVIEW VISIT

08.30-09.00	Private Meeting of Review Panel with QAA Council Representatives
09.00-09.30	Meeting with the Vice Chancellor, Director-Academic affairs and Head of the Department
09.30-10.00	Meeting with the Dean and Head of the Department
10.00-10.30	<i>Tea</i>
10.30-10.45	Meeting with the Head of the Department to finalize the Agenda for the visit
10.45-11.00	Observe teaching Course: AEC 4102 - Agricultural Project Analysis Activity: Lecture Venue: Department Lecture Room Lecturer-In-Charge: Dr. Anoma Ariyawardana
11.00-12.00	Presentation by the Head of the Department and discussion (All members of the academic and non-academic staff to attend)
12.00-13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30-14.30	Meeting with the academic staff of the Department
14.30-16.00	Observing Departmental facilities and other facilities (Library, Computer Centre)
16.00-17.00	Private meeting of Reviewers

Day 2 - May 27, 2008

09.00-10.00	Observe teaching Course: AEC 2202 - Principles of Agribusiness Management Activity: Lecture/Practical class Venue: PGIA New Building, Room No. 02 Lecturer-In-Charge: Dr. Sarath Kodithuwakku
10.00-11.00	Observing documents (<i>Working Tea</i>)
11.00-12.00	Observe teaching Course: AEC 4104 - Agricultural Policy Analysis/ Activity: Students' presentation Venue: Department Lecture Room. Lecturer-In-Charge: Dr. Jeevika Weerahewa
12.00-12.30	Meeting with Postgraduate Students
12.30-13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30-14.30	Meeting with Technical Staff and Other Non-Academic Staff
14.30-15.30	Observe teaching Course: AEC 410 I-Econometrics and Mathematical Programming Activity: Lecture Venue: Department Lecture Room Lecturer-In-Charge: Dr. L.H.P.Gunaratne
15.30-16.30	Meeting with students specializing in Agricultural Economics and Business Management
16.30-17.30	Private meeting of Reviewers

Day 3- May 28,2008

09.00-09.30	Document Observation
09.30-10.00	Meeting with the Counselors
10.00-10.30	Reviewer's Private Discussion
10.30-11.30	Meeting with Head and staff for Reporting