



**National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council**

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**Report of the  
Accreditation Inspection Committee  
(AIC)**

**Department of Agricultural Economics  
University of Agriculture, Faisalabad**

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A two members Committee comprising Dr. Dilawar Ali Khan and Dr. Munir Khan Khattak visited the UAF campus on 28 and 29 December, 2010 to carry out accreditation of the B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Hons.) degree programs in the field of Agricultural Economics. Before undertaking the visit to the Campus, the Committee members had reviewed the Self-Assessment Report prepared by the Department of Agricultural Economics, and the Evaluation Manual of the NAEAC. The review and evaluation process was carried out as per the TORs provided to the Committee.

The accreditation exercise was ably facilitated by Dr. Muhammad Ashfaq, Chairman, Department of Agricultural Economics and his colleague, Dr. Sultan Ali Adil and conducted in a disturbance-free environment for two full days. Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Dean, Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology also participated in the deliberations as and when requested by the Committee. The review process began with an elaborate presentation by Dr. Ashfaq, who comprehensively covered all the important areas that weigh heavily in the accreditation of academic programs. Dr. Ashfaq informed the Committee that since its inception in 1962, the Department has produced 9 PhDs and 1545 graduates, who are gainfully employed in both public and private sector organizations. Some of them are also serving abroad in international organizations and reputed universities. The faculty has remained research active over the years and till-date has published 1000 research papers in national and international journals. In addition, the faculty has completed over 50 research projects sponsored by reputed organizations. The Department is accommodated in one of the premier sections of the block allocated to the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology in close vicinity to the main library, Computer Centre, Vice Chancellor's office and the main auditorium.

The Committee also visited various class rooms and spent some time in three classes that were in session. While taking a round of the premises, the Committee members had a brief interaction with the students and used the opportunity to obtain their views about the adequacy and relevance of the curriculum and the effectiveness with which faculty was delivering it.

The presentation by the Head of Department was followed by in-depth review and detailed discussion, which revealed the following:

- 1. The Curriculum:** The Department has patterned its curriculum for the B.Sc. (Hons.) and M.Sc. (Hons.) programs after the revised curriculum issued by the HEC back in 2005. The Curricula are properly packaged to deepen the understanding of students in economic theory, development and production economics, agricultural marketing, micro finance and agricultural policy. Strong emphasis is being laid on development of quantitative and analytical skills of the students. The curricula are well in harmony with the stated goals and objectives of both the programs and contain a healthy balance between theory and applied subjects. Total credit hours that B.Sc. (Hons.) and M.Sc. (Hons.) students complete are 150 and 40 respectively, which more than adequately meet the HEC requirements. Each semester, a maximum of 20 and 15 credit hours of courses are respectively offered to B.Sc.

(Hons.) and M.Sc. (Hons.) students. General courses in Mathematics, Statistics, Computer Science, English, Ethics, Agronomy, Forestry, and Plant Breeding and Genetics are taught during the first three semesters. The students are required to take two elective courses in the area in which they intend to specialize along with other core courses. The major courses are taken during the next three semesters (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>); the 8<sup>th</sup> and the penultimate semester is dedicated to practical work that students undertake at relevant organizations both in the public and private sectors.

Presently, 175 students are enrolled in the B.Sc.(Hons.) and 56 in the M.Sc. (Hons.) program. Admission to both the programs is strictly on merit. Pre-Medical students securing at least 50 % marks in their F.Sc. examination, are eligible to seek admission. Students earning a minimum CGPA of 3.00 in their undergraduate studies are considered for admission to the M.Sc. (Hons.) program. The Committee was informed that HEC has recently conducted a thorough review of the existing curricula with the participation of various stakeholders. Hopefully, the process would have also revisited and updated the contents of each course and addressed the issues of overlaps and redundancy. It is also hoped that in the revised curriculum for both the programs, new course on Creative Thinking, will find a place.

- 2. Curriculum Delivery:** The Department of Agricultural Economics has a well qualified and experienced faculty comprising two Associate Professors, three Assistant Professors and four Lecturers. Most of the faculty members have received their higher education in UK and Australia; two faculty members have earned their graduate degrees from USA. Exposure of the faculty to various teaching methods had largely been during the course of their Masters degree studies; only one faculty member completed his PhD studies with course work in the USA. The faculty members have a service experience ranging between 4 and 25 years and possess reasonably adequate capacity to effectively deliver the curriculum both to the B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Hons.) students. The pool of resources to effectively deliver the prescribed curriculum in order to achieve better academic standards can easily be enhanced by lowering the departmental boundaries. In the existing departmental set up within the Faculty, precious human resources get consumed in handling administrative responsibilities and in running virtually overlapping academic activities.

Most of the faculty uses interactive pedagogy and encourage students' participation in discussion. More demanding courses like economic theory, agricultural policy, development economics and research methodology are usually taught by more experienced faculty. Multi-Media are only selectively used; main reliance is on the oral mode of lecturing combined with the use of white boards. Course allocations is done by the Departmental Chairman and approved by the Dean of the Faculty. The average teaching load per faculty member ranges from 6 to 12 credit hours. The junior faculty generally teaches courses to the B.Sc. students; for M.Sc. degree courses greater reliance is placed on senior and experienced faculty. Course

outlines are issued by the faculty on first day of each semester. However, the practice of conducting an intra-departmental review of the course outlines for quality assurance purposes does not exist. The issuance of course packs (containing important journal articles and papers) to the students, is also not an established practice. Progress on the coverage of various modules included in the course outlines, is closely monitored by the Chairman of the Department.

3. **Grading System:** The scheme of relative grading is used by all faculty members. The numerical scores are divided into five slabs across the board on the basis of which letter grades (A, B, C, D and F) are given. In the grading scheme, the mid-term and final examinations carry 30 % and 60 % weight. Class assignments, presentations, quizzes and class projects carry the remaining 10 % weight. Use of the Mean and Sigma of the numerical score distribution for the entire class for converting numerical scores into letter grades, is not in vogue. Each student is shown the numerical score both for the mid-term and final examinations and has the right to seek a review in case of any omission or commission on the part of faculty. The final examination results are reviewed by the Departmental Chairman separately with each class teacher before forwarding these to the Controller of Examination. The system of a collective review by the Faculty Board of Studies, with the participation of the Controller of Examination or one of his/her representatives, is not in vogue. The capacity and understanding for the application of the relative grading system is acquired through experiential learning and mutual consultations; special training of the faculty in this area has thus far not been organized.
4. **Internship and Thesis Research:** While an internship, carrying 10 credit hours, is compulsory for the B.Sc. (Hons.) degree; the students enrolled in the M.Sc. (Hons.) program have to complete thesis research and successfully defend it before an external examiner. Thesis research carries 6 credit hours and helps in building analytical skills of the students and in nurturing a research culture among them. Research topics are generally selected without adequate guidance by the supervisor or identified through a collective reflection process. As a result, students' research during their graduate studies, generally do not adequately focus on the contemporary issues. In the absence of adequate experienced and senior faculty to supervise thesis research, the analytical rigor and methodological procedures, quite often get compromised. The healthy practice of treating research and knowledge acquisition as a value is gradually losing currency. Instead, the culture of completing course work and research formalities, in a ritualistic manner, is gaining ground.
5. **Class Tutorials.** Presently, there is no formal system of running tutorials for the students, even in the case of more demanding quantitative and or theory subjects. The students are, however, encouraged to seek additional assistance from the faculty, as and when required.

The faculty does not observe any particular schedule (consultation hours) for extra coaching of the students enrolled in their classes.

6. **Class Visits by the Dean and/ or the Chairman:** A culture of visiting classes by the Dean or Chairman of the Department to observe the quality of teaching and effectiveness of curriculum delivery, particularly of the junior faculty, does not exist. The absence of such a practice denies the young faculty opportunities of benefitting from the feedback and advice from their senior and more experienced colleagues. Mentoring of junior/new faculty by their senior and experienced colleagues to enhance their pedagogical skills is also not formally practiced. Informal consultations do take place, which normally have only limited impact.
7. **Class assignments:** Though class assignments weigh in the final score/grade, these are less frequently given both at the B.Sc. and M.Sc. levels. Restricted use of such a practice, limits the positive effect of class lectures in deepening the understanding and grasp of the students on the subject matter and in improving their analytical and presentation skills. Class assignments are of great significance particularly for Agricultural Policy, Production Economics and Econometrics courses and deserve to be adopted as a regular practice. The topics for class assignments should be carefully selected and feedback to the students provided at the earliest.
8. **Focus on developing application skills/undertaking hands on practices.** This objective is largely being achieved through the internship and thesis research components of the two programs. Special class assignments or industrial/organizational visits are still not a part of the curriculum delivery process. Due to funding constraints, the Department is unable to invite even subject specialists from national organizations to impart hands on practice to the students in important areas, such as the estimation of GDP/GNP /crop acreage and production.
9. **Class attendance and class discipline.** Attendance is regularly taken by the faculty towards the beginning of each class; students failing to meet the minimum requirement (75%) are barred from appearing in the end- semester examination. Improved quality of teaching and a regular practice of giving class assignments and quizzes will make a healthy impact on students' interest in attending classes.
10. **Availability of teaching aids/equipment.** Class rooms are only equipped with white boards and benches. Multi-media equipment is not permanently installed in the class rooms due to security concerns and maintenance issues. Multi-media are, however, available to the faculty on demand, which is rarely made since most of the faculty prefers to use the oral mode of lecturing. The class rooms also do not have proper heating and air conditioning facility- a problem which can hardly be addressed by the University authorities due to the poor state of

national economy and frequent budgetary cuts. Absence of a conducive physical environment in the class room, however, has serious detrimental effect on the teaching-learning process. Cleanliness level of the class, faculty and conference rooms was found to be below par; dust was seen to have gathered on the ceiling fans, lights and windows. Most of the white boards have lost their utility and need to be changed. The use of microphones should also be adopted in large-sized classes.

**11. Faculty Evaluation/Student Feedback System.** Faculty evaluation is done by the students towards the end of each semester. For this purpose, UAF has developed a course evaluation form, which is manually completed by each student. Compilation of the information in the feedback form is also manually done for each course. The use of digital forms for soliciting student feedback will greatly reduce the drudgery of compiling useful information. It will also increase student participation in the process, enhance objectivity, confidentiality and credibility of the feedback and also expeditiously make the results available to the Dean for providing necessary counseling to the faculty.

**12. Library and computer labs.** The University and Faculty libraries have a rich collection of text and reference books on all the subjects that form a part of the curriculum. New books, prescribed by the faculty are acquired and added to these libraries well before the start of the new academic year. Book fairs are periodically organized on the University campus by the main vendors. Efforts to attract the reputed publishers to publish and sell less costly additions of text and reference books authored by the Western scholars, should be intensified. Budgetary allocations should be enhanced to further expand the faculty library by adding adequate copies of the latest text and reference books. The libraries and computer labs opening and closing hours should be adjusted to more effectively meet students' needs close to the mid and final semester examinations. Familiarization sessions for the students should be also be organized so that they could make a better use of the digital journals and books that HEC has made available to the universities.

Apparently, the existing computer lab facilities, are adequate both for the under graduate and graduate students. However, to meet the growing demand due to the rapidly rising student strength, computer labs should be expanded and upgraded on a regular basis. Special care needs to be given to the maintenance of computers and up loading of relevant and new soft wares. Refresher courses should periodically be organized to enhance the computer literacy of both faculty and support staff.

**13. Faculty morale, working environment, opportunities for professional development and growth, support of the Dean and Vice Chancellor:** From the brief interaction that the Committee had with the faculty, positive impression about their overall moral and commitment was discerned. Faculty salaries, under the tenure- track system are quite attractive; opportunities for earning additional income through consulting and teaching

services also exist. The faculty appeared to be quite satisfied with the available opportunities for participation in professional conferences, undertaking of study visits, attracting research grants and improving their academic qualifications by pursuing further studies abroad. The Vice Chancellor and the Dean also were providing full support to the faculty in improving their academic credentials and work performance. A performance-based system of promotion is serving the faculty in good stead for their career advancement through quality teaching and research.

- 14. Faculty Development Plan:** UAF has put in place a faculty development plan to upgrade the academic qualifications of the young faculty. Occasional budgetary cuts, however, have been constraining its smooth implementation. The University should continue to explore new opportunities (e.g. USAID funding) for sponsoring higher education of young faculty/toppers in M.Sc. degree program in the reputed American universities. For regaining the academic excellence of the 70s, schemes like WSU-UAF exchange program needs to be put in place. Mass scale departure of the highly educated faculty over the past 35 years, has made a big dent on the capacity and standing of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. Patch-work will only be of partial significance and impact. A bold, albeit costly, initiative for building and expanding its human resource base, will have to be taken by UAF with the support of HEC and interested donors.
- 15. In-house training for developing pedagogical and research skills of the faculty.** Little evidence was found of such a practice. UAF should give a serious consideration to the organizing of special training programs for the faculty to upgrade their pedagogical skills. The services of teachers of better professional standings and repute could be utilized for conducting such trainings. Suitable resource persons may also be attracted for organizing short courses on pedagogical skills and research methods during summer breaks through the HEC.
- 16. Hostel accommodation:** Although UAF enjoys a far better standing in terms of hostel facilities and other physical infrastructure compared with many other public sector universities, rapid increase in student enrolment and corresponding expansion in faculty and support staff, has started creating the inadequacy issues. Local philanthropists need to be approached to mobilize resources for constructing new hostels, class rooms and seminar/conference halls. Public sector funding should also be solicited to make further addition to the existing physical infrastructure.
- 17. Cultural and Co-Curricular activities.** Tutorial groups have been constituted to encourage students' participation in cultural and sports activities. Since a large body of the students comprise the scions of low/medium income rural families, their grooming in cultural

activities, including adequate exposure to drama and arts is seen critical to their success in the real world.

**SWOT Analysis:** Discussions with the faculty revealed the following:

**1. Strengths.**

- The legacy of the seventies and early eighties, when the faculty had the services of highly qualified, well motivated and deeply committed faculty working in healthy and inspiring environment with limited concern for monetary rewards/compensation. The legacy is still keeping the present-day team going and producing reasonably good results.
- Willingness on the part of the faculty and its leadership to receive and implement constructive suggestions in order to improve its performance and the overall academic standards.
- The active and alive research culture, which can yield better dividends by adopting more rigorous analytical techniques and focusing attention on contemporary issues.

**2. Weaknesses.**

- Rapid turnover/high drop out in the faculty.
- Intra-faculty division of the limited and well educated human resources due to over departmentalization.
- Erosion in academic values/ passion for knowledge acquisition among students and level of commitment to scholastic pursuits in the faculty largely due to the negative effect of the societal malaise and growing insecurity.
- The practice of conducting an intra-departmental review of the course outlines for quality assurance purposes does not exist.
- The issuance of course packs (containing important journal articles and papers) to the students, is also not an established practice.
- The capacity and understanding for the application of the relative grading system is acquired through experiential learning and mutual consultations; special training of the faculty in this area has thus far not been organized.
- Research topics are generally selected without adequate guidance by the supervisor or identified through a collective reflection process. As a result, students' research during their graduate studies, generally do not adequately focus on the contemporary issues.
- Mentoring of junior/new faculty by their senior and experienced colleagues to enhance their pedagogical skills is also not formally practiced.

- Absence of a conducive physical environment in the class room, however, has serious detrimental effect on the teaching-learning process.

### 3. Opportunities.

- Fast expanding demand for quality education in the field of agricultural economics/economics.
- Numerous MOUs that UAF has signed with national and international organizations.
- Globalization and expanding market for quality expertise in economic analysis and policy formulation.

### 4. Threats.

- Continuing brain drain of the better educated and skilled faculty.
- Negative societal values and externalities.
- Growing complacency and burgeoning of a ritualistic culture.
- Limited premium and reward for creativity and scholarly pursuits/engagements.
- Budgetary constraints for faculty and infrastructure development.
- Bureaucratic controls of academic institutions operating in the provincial settings.
- Negative fallout of the demographic tsunami, which is making a serious dent on discipline, work ethics, security and law and order situation.

### Actionable Recommendations

- **Faculty development.** Priority attention needs to be given to effectively implement the plan for faculty development so that highly qualified and skilled faculty remains available for providing quality teaching and carrying out analytical research on contemporary issues.
- **Faculty restructuring. The Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology has already done some restructuring.** Further work in this direction to achieve consolidation and merger of the existing departments should continue. While the existing and new specialization areas deserve full support, adequate capacity to effectively run programs of professional credibility, require more judicious use of limited human and financial resources. Pooling of faculty by lowering/removing departmental boundaries requires a serious consideration. In academic institutions, scholastic caliber and accomplishments matter the most; administrative titles are of least significance. Empirical evidence shows that renowned academicians/ professions show least interest in holding administrative

positions. UAF should take lead in addressing such issues by adopting the healthy practices of notable institutions like LUMS.

- **Mentoring and capacity building.** A system of mentoring for the new/young faculty must be instituted and strictly implemented. Refresher trainings in pedagogical skills/ innovative and creative teaching methods should also be organized on a regular basis.
- The healthy practice of providing opportunities to the faculty to attract research grants and participate in professional conferences/ study visits to reputed universities, should be continued and further strengthened.
- A recognition scheme, patterned after the HEC system of giving performance awards, should be put in place. Without recognizing merit at the time of recruitment and during service, high academic standards will not be achieved. Subjective and parochial considerations in recruitment and promotions have done great disservice to the HEIs and Pakistani society. Individual and collective efforts will be required to nurture a healthy system for faculty recruitment and promotion. Best performing faculty and students should be given a place of prominence on the University website and in the promotional documents.
- The healthy practice of periodically reviewing and revising the curricula should continue. An effort should be made to remove overlaps, duplication and redundancy of contents. Courses on quantitative techniques of economic analysis, economic policy, environmental and demographic issues, and research methodology, should weigh heavily in the M.Sc. (Hons.) degree program.
- Duplication in the existing courses on quantitative methods (mathematics) should be removed through a consolidation process. This will not only improve the value and relevance of the curriculum but also create space for adding urgently required new courses on communication skills and critical thinking.
- Cover relevant software applications under the Research Methodology course; Reorient the course on Operations Research to the field of economics/agricultural economics. The courses in Mathematics/quantitative tools of economic analysis should be offered before offering the courses in economic theory and econometrics.
- For improving faculty's capacity to effectively deliver curriculum, mentoring and refresher training in pedagogy will of immense value.
- The existing culture of faculty research should be further nurtured and strengthened with greater attention to analytical and the relevance of topics to the present day issues.
- Student Feedback form should be digitalized and its use facilitated by the System Administrator of UAF by developing a suitable software. Computer generated reports should be submitted to the Dean in sealed envelopes to maintain confidentiality.

- Since a number of courses in the curricula require comprehension of quantitative tools of economic analysis, preference should be given to the pre-engineering instead of pre-medical students for admission to the B.Sc. (Hons.) program.