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Report of the Accreditation Inspection Committee (AIC)

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Report of the Accreditation Inspection Committee AIC

A two members committee comprising of Dr. Noshad Khan and Prof. ® Fazal Karim constituted by National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council, Islamabad visited University of Agriculture Faisalabad on 28 and 29 March, 2011 to carryout accreditation of B.Sc. and M.Sc.(Hons) Agriculture Extension degree Programs. Before visiting the university campus committee members reviewed the self assessment report prepared by department of Agriculture Extension and evaluation manual of NAEAC. The accreditation process was carried out by the committee as per TORs in a peaceful environment.

Dr. Sher Muhammad, Chairman Department of Agriculture Extension and his colleague DR. Khalid provided full support to the committee for conducting accreditation in a transparent, neutral and holistic manner. It took two full days to complete the process. Dr. Tanveer Ali Director Agriculture Extension Education Division also actively participated in deliberations as and when requested by the committee. The review process started with an elaborate presentation by Dr. Sher Muhammad who covered all important aspects of the academic programs. Dr. Sher Muhammad Informed the Committee that since beginning of degree programs in 1990 the department has produced 21 PhDs, 285 M.Sc.s and a large number of B.Sc.(Hons.) Agriculture Extension graduates. Many of the graduates were employed in both public and private organizations. Some of them were also employed abroad in international organizations.

The faculty also remained active in research work and has published about 27 research papers in the National and International journals. In addition the faculty also completed four research projects sponsored by HEC and ALP. Four on-going research projects are near completion and four research projects have been submitted for approval to HEC, ICCD and PARB for funding. The department is located in a block allocated to the division of agriculture extension education. The committee also visited the class rooms and spent some time with the students of B.Sc. and M.Sc (Hons.) agriculture extension to obtain their views about the adequacy and relevance of the curriculum to the objectives of the department and the effectiveness with which the faculty was delivering it. The students were of the view that the curriculum was deficient in areas like agronomy, entomology, plant pathology and plant protection. They also expressed that their was a need to include more English courses in the curriculum to improve their expression power. The students informed the committee that there was a shortage of class rooms, A.V lab. and computer Lab. The students had no access to the computers and internet facility. They also informed that there is shortage of books and journals relevant to the subjects included in the curricula in the departmental library.

The presentation by Dr. Sher Muhammad was followed by in depth review and elaborates discussion which revealed the following:

1. The Curriculum:

The department has designed its curriculum for B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Hons.) degree programs after the revised curriculum issued by HEC in 2005. The curricula were patterned to deepen the understanding of students in the areas of program planning, communication, cyber extension, agricultural technology transfer and community development. The curricula are prepared in accordance with goals and objectives of the program. The total credit hours for B.Sc. (Hons.) and M.Sc. (Hons.) programs are 70 and 58 respectively which meet HEC requirements. General courses are offered during first three semesters. Students are required to take two elective courses in the areas in which they intend to specialize along with core courses. The major courses are offered during 5th-7th semesters and 8th semester is devoted to internship with relevant public and private organizations.

Presently 76 students are enrolled in B.Sc. (Hons.), 42 in M.Sc. (Hons.) and 08 in Ph.D Programs respectively. Admission to both programs is strictly on merit. Students securing at least 50% marks in F.Sc. Examination are eligible to seek admission in B.Sc. (Hons.) and the students securing a minimum CGPA of 3.00 in undergraduate studies are considered for admission to M.Sc. (Hons.) program.

The committee was informed that National Curriculum Revision Committee constituted by HEC has conducted a thorough review of existing curricula and updated the content of each course. It is hoped that UAF will make necessary changes in the existing curricula in the light of revised curriculum of HEC.

2. Curriculum Delivery

The department of Agriculture Extension has a well qualified and highly experienced faculty comprising of 03 Professors, 05 Assistant Professors and 02 Lecturers. Out of 10 faculty members 8 are PhD and remaining two are near completion of their PhD degree. The faculty members have service experience ranging from 05-25 years and possess adequate capability to effectively deliver the curriculum to both B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Hons.) students.

Most of the teachers use interactive teaching methods and encourage student's participation in discussion. Most demanding courses are taught by highly qualified and experienced faculty. Multimedia and AV Aids are effectively used in the class rooms. The students are given small projects like tunnel farming and dairy farming etc. to present in the class room through model preparation and role playing. The presentations given by students are recorded by video camera and shown to the class to highlight their weak and strong points. The average teaching load per faculty member ranges from 6-20 credit hours which is more than that prescribed by HEC.

The junior faculty teaches courses to B.Sc. (Hons.) students and M.Sc. (Hons.) courses are taught by senior and experienced teachers. At the end of each semester the students are required to fill evaluation forms to evaluate the teacher's performance.

3. Grading System.

The system of relative grading is adopted by all faculty members. The numerical scores are divided into four slabs on the basis of which grades (A, B, C, and D) are given. The mid term and final examinations carry 30% and 60% weight. The class assignments, presentations and class projects carry the remaining 10% weight. The students are shown numerical scores and they have the right to seek review in case of any omission or commission on the part of faculty members. The final examination results are reviewed by the chairman of the department with each faculty member before forwarding it to the Controller of Examinations.

4. Internship and Thesis Research

Internship carrying 10 credits is compulsory for B.Sc. (Hons.) degree. The students of M.Sc. (Hons.) degree program have to complete thesis research and they have to defend it before a panel of Internal and External examiners. Thesis research carries 6 credit hours and it helps in building the analytical skills of the students. Research topics are selected by the students under the guidance of research supervisor or senior faculty members. The research topics and Synopsis are approved by the board of studies of the department. The student carries out research under the guidance of Supervisor and co-supervisors.

For internship program the students are attached with field staff of Agriculture Extension Department or other relevant organization to practically apply the knowledge acquired during their course of studies, under field condition.

5. Class Tutorials

Tutorial classes for students are conducted by the faculty to provide assistance in case of more demanding theory subjects. The students are also encouraged to seek assistance from senior faculty members as and when required. The faculty have a schedule (consultation hours) for extra coaching of students enrolled in their classes.

6. Class visits by Dean/Chairman

Dean of the faculty or Chairman of the department do not visit on going classes regularly to observe quality of teaching and effectiveness with which the curriculum is delivered. Due to absence of such practice the junior faculty remains deprived of feedback and advice from the senior and more experienced colleagues. However informal consultations with the senior faculty members do take place which have a limited impact.

7. Class Assignments

Class Assignments are given to both B.Sc. (Hons.) and M.Sc. (Hons.) levels which weigh in the final examinations. Preparation of assignments by the students has a positive effect in deepening the understanding of theory lectures delivered in class rooms by faculty

members and improve their analytical and presentation skills. The assignment topics should be carefully selected feedback provided to the students.

8. Developing application skills

This objective is achieved through internship and thesis research components of the two programs. Visits and study tours to different agricultural and other relevant organizations is not a part of curriculum delivery. Due to lack of funds the department is unable to arrange visits of students to various national organizations to provide opportunity to see on-going programs in the country. However this objective is achieved during internship,

9. Class attendance and discipline

Attendance record of students is regularly maintained by all faculty members. A minimum of 75% attendance is compulsory for eligibility to appear in the final examination for both the programs. Students failing to meet the criteria are detained from appearing in the examination. Quality teaching and practice of giving class assignments makes a good impact on students' interest in attending classes.

10. Availability of teaching aids/equipments

Multimedia and audio-visual aids are effectively being used by the faculty members in the class rooms. The equipment is not permanently installed in the class rooms due to shortage of space and maintenance problems. However it is made available on demand. The class rooms do not have proper heating or air conditioning facility. The problem may not be addressed by the university authorities due to lack of funds and frequent cut on the budget.

11. Faculty Evaluation/ Students Feedback.

At the end of each semester students are required to fill a course evaluation form. The form is manually completed by each student. Compilation of feedback form is also done manually for each course. Use of digital form for students' feedback has greatly reduced the labor of compiling useful information. It is also helpful in increasing participation of students in the process, enhance objectivity, credibility and confidentiality of the feedback and quickly pass on students' feedback to the Dean for giving necessary instruction to the faculty. The university central library has a good collection of text and reference books on the subjects included in the curriculum. However the faculty library does not have books relevant to the subjects that form a part of curriculum. New books prescribed by the faculty need to be added to faculty library. Book fairs should be periodically organized at the university campus and main vendors may be invited to participate. Efforts should also be made to invite reputed publishers to publish less costly additions of text books written by western scholars. The opening and closing hours of libraries should be adjusted to effectively meet students' requirement.

12. Faculty morale, working environment and opportunities.

During meetings of the committee with individual faculty members a positive impression about overall morale and commitment was discerned. All faculty members were working with a team spirit for professional development of the department. The teachers were found punctual in conducting their theory and practical classes. Effective use of multi-media and audio-visual aids was made in the class rooms. Students were also given small projects like dairy farming, tunnel farming and role playing to be presented in the class. The committee was impressed with performance of students' in role playing.

The faculty seemed to be satisfied with the available opportunities for participation in professional conferences, undertaking study visits and improving their academic qualifications by pursuing further studies abroad. The faculty had full support from the Vice Chancellor and the Dean in improving the academic slandered and performance.

13. In-service training for developing pedagogical and research skills

Little attention has been given to in-service training of newly inducted staff. The university should plan special training programs for the faculty to improve their pedagogical skills. Services of senior and experienced university teachers may be utilized for conducting such trainings. Resource persons may also be invited for organizing short courses on pedagogical skills and research methods during vacations.

14. Hostel accommodation

Hostel accommodation and other physical infrastructure facilities in UAF are far better as compared to other public universities. Rapid increase in students' enrollment has started creating inadequacy issues. Local donors may be approached to mobilize resources for construction of new hostels. Public and private sector should also be approached for funding to make addition in the existing infrastructure.

SWOT Analysis

1. Strengths:

- Highly qualified and experienced faculty comprising of 8 PhDs and 2 M.Sc. teachers who are also near completion of their PhD.
- Team spirit of the faculty members for professional development of the department,
- Demand driven and need based educational programs.
- Effective use of multi-media, audio-visual and effective pedagogical skills in the class rooms.
- The department undertakes field projects in the adjoining rural communities to develop linkages between farmers and the department

2. Weaknesses

- Shortage of space for class rooms, AV Lab., computer lab. and departmental library
- Average teaching load is much higher (1:20) as compared to HEC criteria
- Non-availability of funds for study tours and field trips of the students
- No financial support for the students during internship
- Insufficient operational budget (0.11m.) for the department
- Lack mobility for the students within university premises.
- Canteen facilities for students are below standard.

3. Opportunities

- Up gradation of the department to the status of faculty
- Initiation of demand-driven and need based educational programs such as B.Sc. (Hons.) Journalism, M.Sc. (Hons.) Mass Communication, M.Sc. (Hons.) Forestry Extension and M.Sc. (Hons.) Livestock Extension.
- Focus on new research avenues: Social Mobilization, Human Resource Development, Cyber Extension, Gender Mainstreaming, Poverty Alleviation, food security and Information System.

4. Threats

- Budgetary constraints for faculty and infra structure development
- Limited incentives for creativity and scholarly pursuits
- Bureaucratic control of academic institutions operating in the provincial setting
- Brain drain of highly educated and skilled faculty due low salaries as compared to many other countries.
- Discipline, security, job ethics and law and order situation in education institutions.

AIC Recommendation:

1. Regarding Faculty:

Faculty Development:

Faculty development plan should be effectively implemented so that highly qualified and experienced faculty remains available to provide quality teaching and carrying out analytical research on contemporary issues. In view of increased work load at least four new lecturers should be appointed to smoothly run theory and practical classes.

The Department Infrastructure:

At present the department has two class rooms, one audio-visual lab., one computer lab and 8 offices for faculty members. The department needs more lecture rooms, one audio-visual lab for post graduate students, one computer lab for undergraduate student and at least three more offices for newly inducted faculty members.

Departmental Library:

The departmental library is located in a small room with a little technical collection relevant to the academic programs. The department needs sufficient space for a full-fledged library with up to-date collection of latest books and journals for undergraduate and post graduate students.

Faculty Restructuring:

The department should focus on new research avenues such as Social mobilization, Human resource development, Cyber Extension, Poverty Alleviation, food security and information system. The department should also initiate demand driven and need based educational programs such as B.Sc Hons Journalism, M.Sc. (Hons.) Mass Communication, M.Sc. Forestry Extension and M.Sc. Livestock Extension etc. Plans should be developed to upgrade the Division of Agriculture Extension to the status of full-fledged faculty. Two programs: Continuing Education and Bed. Are already running under the Division.

Monitoring and Capacity Building:

A system monitoring for the newly appointed young faculty must be introduced and implemented to improve the quality of teaching. Refresher trainings in pedagogical skills should also be organized by experienced resource persons on regular bases.

Faculty should be provided opportunities to attract research grants and participate in professional conferences/study visits to reputed universities in the country and abroad.

A recognition scheme for giving performance awards should be introduced. Without recognizing merit at the time of recruitment and promotions high academic standards may not be achieved.

Curriculum related:

The department should continue the healthy practice of periodically reviewing and revising the curricula. Overlaps, duplication and redundancy of contents should be removed. This will improve the value and relevance of contents should be removed. This will improve the value and relevance of the curriculum and create space for adding new courses on communication skills and creative thinking.

Curriculum Delivery

The teaching and research work presently being done by the faculty is appreciable. However to improve the faculty's capacity to effectively deliver curriculum, monitoring and refresher training in pedagogy skills will be of immense value. Team teaching approach should be adopted for more demanding courses such as program planning, communication in agricultural technology transfer systems. CDS on latest teaching methods are available; the faculty should be encouraged to view these to improve the teaching skills.

Faculty Research

The research work presently being done by the faculty should be strengthened and more attention should be given to the topics relevant to current issues. The topics for students and faculty research should be identified carefully and collectively through brainstorming session, for which experienced hands could be invited to moderate the process.

Suitable software should be developed by system administrators of UAF and students, feedback should be digitalized. Computer generated report should be submitted to the dean regularly in sealed envelopes.

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