



**National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council**

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

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## **Introduction:**

The Chairman National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC) constituted an Accreditation Inspection Committee (AIC) comprising Dr. Abdul Salam, professor of Economics at the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Islamabad as convener and Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan, Chief Scientific Officer National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC) as Member. The AIC was tasked to carry out accreditation process of the BSc (Hons) and MSc degree programs of Department of Economics & Agricultural Economics at the Pir Mehr Ali Shah (PMAS) Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi. The AIC was provided a self assessment report prepared by the Department of Economics & Agricultural Economics and an Evaluation Manual for Agriculture Degree Programs.

The AIC visited the camps of PMAS Arid Agriculture University on May 19-20, 2011. Mr. Naseer Alam Khan, Secretary NAEAC also accompanied the AIC on these visits.

Department of Economics and Agricultural Economics at the Arid Agriculture University is located in the Faculty of Sciences. Accordingly, the AIC started its work with a meeting with the Dean Faculty of Sciences, Dr. Sarfraz Ahmed Mian, in his office on May 19, 2011. Dr. Sarfraz Mian welcomed the AIC, provided background information relating to the establishment of Arid university and also briefed on the composition of the Faculty of Sciences. Dr. Abdul Saboor, Chairman, Department of Economics and Agricultural Economics was also present in this meeting. After preliminary discussion in the Dean's office, meeting moved to the Committee Room of the Faculty of Sciences.

## **Study Programs:**

Dr. Abdul Saboor made a detailed presentation on the history and development of the Economics and Agricultural Economics department. Dr. Ikram Ali Malik, who earned his doctorate in Agricultural Economics from the Arid University and was working as advisor students affairs, and recently recruited as associate professor in the Economics department also joined the presentation midway and provided information about various students activities and programs in general and about the economics students in particular. Following information about the degree programs and related activities is gleaned from the presentation made by Dr. Abdul Saboor.

- Department originally started in the days of Barani College of Agriculture, forerunner of the University. It was then known as Department of Economics.
- First batch of B.Sc. (Hons) Agriculture, 5<sup>th</sup> semester students opted for majoring in Agri. Economics in 1989, era of Barani College of Agriculture.
- Barani College up graded to the University in 1995, and Department renamed as Department of Economics and Agricultural Economics.
- Admission to MSc.(Hons) Agricultural Economics program started in 1996.
- Study program for MSc. in Economics, morning as well as evening programs, launched in 1998.
- Ph. D programs in Economics and in Agricultural Economics started 2004.
- M. Phil program in Economics launched in 2006.

The degree programs, as mentioned above, were designed to meet the burgeoning requirements of trained manpower in the subjects of Economics and Agricultural Economics in various public and private sector organizations. The programs aim at imparting theoretical knowledge of modern economics and analytical skills for empirical analysis to the budding economists and agricultural economists for understanding the emerging economic problems, empirical examination and analysis thereof and to find out feasible solutions.

Since 2005, department has produced 880 undergraduate and 313 post-graduates, who are gainfully employed in various public and private sector organizations. Some of the alumni of the Department are also serving in international organizations and reputed universities. The department was also reported to have completed ten research projects in collaboration with national and international donors.

## **Degree Programs and their Requirements:**

### **BSc (Hons) Agriculture:**

**The Curriculum:** Department internally reviews and revises the curriculum on need basis through its Board of Studies, Board of Faculty and Academic Council Processes.

All students enrolled in BSc (Hons) Agriculture programs are required to complete 140 credit hours with a CGP of 2.5 to complete their degree requirements. It is a four year (8 semesters) program after two years of pre-medical/ pre-engineering intermediate level education. In the third year of the BSc (Hons) program, starting in 5<sup>th</sup> semester students after completing basic and general courses in agriculture related disciplines opt for various major subjects, including agricultural economics. The courses included for student majoring in Agri. Economics, tailored in line with those approved by the HEC, provide a good opportunity for acquiring understanding of the principles of microeconomics, macroeconomics, Pak economy, introductory mathematical economics and econometrics, theory of trade, production economics and basics of marketing principles.

Department chairman distributes the courses among faculty members with their consultation.

Faculty members provide course outlines to the classes at the beginning of the course/semester.

**Internship program:** Students have been required to undergo internship for one semester at various institutes. The Internship program started some years back to enhance students' understanding of the practical challenges and real issues confronting the sector and the economy has been quite popular with the faculty and students as it exposed the latter to the practical problems in real life situation.

The committee found students as well as the faculty concerned about the winding up of this useful program and recommends a revisiting and reversal of the decision on the subject.

Given the emerging trends and analytical requirements it would be useful to add a course on statistics for students majoring in Agri. Economics as the introductory course on statistics common to all students offered in 3<sup>rd</sup> semester may not provide sufficient basis and training for advanced courses on econometrics. Similarly, there is a need for enhancing computer and I. T related skills of the students.

**M.Sc (Hons) Agricultural Economics:** This study program is open to B.Sc (Hons) Agriculture with major in Agri. Economics and spans over two years (4 semesters) with a total credit requirements of 36+10 for thesis. The core and optional courses offered in the department provide a balanced combination of theoretical and applied courses to provide requisite training in important sub disciplines of the subject and analytical skills for empirical estimation to future economists. But much depends on the instructors teaching these courses and the background and commitments of the students as to what extent the program objectives are realized. Senior faculty members generally teach the graduate classes. Visiting faculty is also involved in teaching courses like macroeconomics, econometrics, and international economics. The chairman, inter alia, arranges for the visiting faculty in line with the departmental requirements. The process of courses allocation among faculty by the department chairman is quite collegial.

The students in the M.Sc. (Hons) program have to submit a thesis and successfully defend it before an external examiner. Research topics are generally selected by the students and then supervisors are allotted. Thesis research helps in training the student in undertaking research, familiarizing with and building analytical skills which should serve them well in practical life. Heavy work load of courses on faculty however leaves too little time for conducting their own research or allocate sufficient time in the helping students to peruse creative research. M.Sc. students are required to simply pass in thesis research as compared to the previous practice marks for the thesis. This was reported to have relegated thesis research to low priority, affecting the quality of thesis adversely. In the absence of experienced and senior faculty the analytical rigor in thesis research has taken a back seat. The objective of research to gain and add to the body of knowledge under these circumstances does not figure prominently but the mechanical and formal aspect of completing degree requirements has become the sole objective of M.Sc thesis research.

Presently, 46 students are enrolled in the B.Sc. (Hons) Agri. Economics, 71 in M. Sc. Economics evening program, 73 in M. Sc. Economics morning program, 19 in M. Sc. (Hons) Agricultural Economics, 28 in M. Phil. Economics and 12 in Ph.D Economics/Agri, Economics programs. In a total of 249 students, 110 are male and 139 female.

The Committee on the bases of its discussions with students and faculty and its own experience is of the views that core courses like micro and macro economics, quantitative methods, production economics and research methods ought to be conducted by the regular faculty of the department rather than by the visiting faculty. Accordingly, University authorities are recommended to take steps to recruit and develop human resource base geared towards this goal.

### **Admission Criteria:**

Admission criteria for B.Sc (Hons.) study program is intermediate science certificate in pre-medical or pre-engineering with at least 2<sup>nd</sup> division or 45 percent marks. The candidates domiciled in the barani areas are eligible for admission. The admission is determined on prescribed formula: that provides 10% weight to marks obtained in matric, 50 % weight to the intermediate and 40% weight to entry test 40%. Students earning a minimum CGPA of 3.00 in their undergraduate studies are considered for admission to the M.Sc. (Hons.) program.

### **Students Evaluation and Discipline:**

#### **Attendance, Examinations, Assignments and Discipline**

Achieving 75 % attendance, regularly taken by teachers, is mandatory for appearing in the examinations. Those not meeting this criterion are not allowed to take the exam. University authorities strictly monitor the conduct of students during examinations and strictly enforce a code of conduct by penalizing those found indulging in unfair means.

There is a general culture of quizzes and mid term exams in evaluating the performance of students. However, class assignments have not attracted the attention they deserve in enhancing the understanding of the subject among the students.

Grading of students is based on the marks obtained with following distribution: 30% for mid-term, 10% for quiz/ assignment and 60% for the final exam. The marks obtained are divided into letter grades: A, B, C, D, etc.

The students are shown their evaluated answer papers and numerical scores for the mid-term and final examinations and may request for a review in case of any errors of omission or

commission by the teacher. Final results are reviewed by the Departmental Chairman separately with each class teacher before forwarding the same to the Controller of Examinations.

## **Human Resource Base**

### **Regular and Visiting Faculty:**

As per information available there were in all eight regular faculty members available for conducting various study programs, undertaking and supervising students' theses research. There is a skeleton supporting staff in the form of stenographers, clerks and "naib qasids".

The department supplements its regular faculty with visiting faculty, nine at present, drawn from different academic and other professional institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Visiting faculty mostly teaches either evening classes or during weekends and in long sessions of 2-3 hours in one go. Judicious use of visiting faculty to supplement teaching activities of the regular faculty especially for teaching specialized courses and supervising student research can be an economical source for strengthening the teaching programs in the short run but must not be allowed to become a regular and permanent feature and that too at the cost of development of regular faculty resources.

Given the number of programs and courses offered and requirements of various graduate and undergraduate programs the faculty resources seem to be quite stretched and under stress.

Regular faculty is relatively young with varying teaching/service experience, ranging from 4 to 30 years. With the impending superannuation of Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad Mian, the most experienced professor and Dean of the Faculty, in June 2011 average teaching experience of the faculty would be sharply reduced.

All faculty members except one (who has a degree in economics from Arid University) have had Masters' level training in agricultural economics. Four of the faculty members have earned Ph. Ds, all in agricultural economics: one Ph. D from USA, one from Germany, one from the University of Agriculture at Faisalabad with post doctorate from the Oxford, U.K., and one from the Arid University itself. Out of the remaining three faculty members one is enrolled in doctoral studies at the Arid University and one in M. Phil program.

In view of the current situation: faculty resources tilting in favor of agricultural economists but several courses requiring academic background and research experience in disciplines of pure economics, it would be a prudent policy to recruit new faculty with diversified background in terms of academic qualifications; Ph. D in economics from renowned institutions to achieve a judicious mix of faculty trained in various fields of economics.

The faculty members have also been engaged in research and each one of them has a number of publications to their credit. However, most of these papers are published in the low esteem journals in the context of economics/agricultural economics profession. Nevertheless, publishing research papers by the Faculty in Pakistani universities, given their prescribed heavy teaching load, especially at the junior levels (lecturer and assistant professor) and other chores, is a notable achievement and merits appreciation.

**Class Tutorials:** The AIC did not note any formal system of running tutorials for the students, even in the case of courses relating to quantitative methods and micro and macro or production economics. The students were however, reported to be encouraged to seek additional assistance from the faculty, as and when required. In this context it would be helpful to provide the senior faculty with teaching assistants to assist in their teaching and also provide practical help to students.

### **Consultations: with Faculty and Students**

On May 20, 2011, the AIC visited the class rooms, computer lab and departmental library to acquire a first hand assessment of the facilities available to the department. The Committee also met with the regular faculty members of the Department, discussed various academic and research programs and solicited their views and suggestions for the improvement and development of the degrees programs at the university.

The Committee visited two classes in session and interacted with the students. The Committee members had detailed discussions with students relating to the kind of courses, course contents, relevance of their courses and training to the job market. The Committee also enquired from the students about the availability of academic infrastructure and other facilities such as library, computer and internet facilities, hostel accommodation, future prospects and job markets for

economists/agri. economists, their comparative assessment of the programs of their department viz. a viz their counterparts in other disciplines/departments.

### **Academic Infrastructure, Computer lab and Library facilities:**

The interaction with students was useful in ascertaining the strengths of the academic programs and related activities and looking for areas of improvement. The students were genuinely concerned with the limited class room, computer lab and library facilities. There are only two class rooms available to the department. Two class rooms at the disposal of the department are obviously inadequate to cater for the requirements of 6 degree programs. The students complained of a lot of waste of their time in waiting between two classes. Departmental Library and computer lab neither have enough space for students, waiting in between the classes nor the requisite books and computers to engage students gainfully in their spare time.

Departmental library has hardly any worthwhile resources. The computer lab has too few resources, 6 desk computers to cater for 250 or so students, 50% of whom are enrolled in graduate studies. Access to internet was also reported inadequate and made worse by power outages.

The students though appreciative of the contribution of the visiting faculty to their learning process emphasized the need for strengthening the departmental resources through recruitment of qualified teachers especially in the areas of quantitative, macroeconomics and international economics. **Students enrolled in M.Phil programs suggested revising some of the courses to higher levels to avoid repetition of their old courses.**

### **Teaching and Use of Modern Equipment:**

Most of the faculty members, especially in graduate classes, were reported to encourage interaction and participatory discussion of the students. Teaching at undergraduate levels remains lecture oriented, with not much emphasis on student participation, discussion and dialogue. The class rooms have only white board and lack multimedia facilities. Obviously in the absence of such supporting aids teachers rely on the use of old methods and techniques to deliver their lectures.

The Committee strongly recommends to strengthen the department by providing at least one more class room, tripling the number of computers in and housing the computer lab in a spacious and well furnished room hall, providing multi media facilities in the lecture rooms, expanding internet facilities, provision of funds for acquiring new titles and subscribing to at least all the HEC recognized national journals in the field o Economics for the departmental library. The Committee also recommends to strengthen the economics/agri. economics section of the central library.

## **SWOT Analysis:**

### **Strength of Degree Programs**

- Strength of the B.Sc (Hons) and M.Sc (Hons) programs in Agricultural Economics at the PMAS Arid University of Agriculture program lies in its competitiveness with the corresponding programs at other agricultural universities.
- Work load on teachers is around 14 credit hours per week and average number of students per teacher is also more than 30
- The graduates of Arid University of Agriculture have successfully competed for employment opportunities in both public and private organizations. Many were reported to be employed with NGOs and also in international organizations.
- An important strength of the department at present is the interactive and collegial environment provided by the department leadership with the active involvement of faculty members.

### **Weaknesses of Degree Programs**

- Involvement of already limited faculty resources in the administrative and projects implementations
- Heavy work load on teachers is around 14 credit hours per week and average number of students per teacher is also more than 30.
- Limited faculty resources are spread rather thinly over 5 levels of different degree programs

- Involvement of large number of visiting faculty could be counter-productive in teaching courses in a coherent manner with the requisite inter-disciplinary consultation
- Faculty mainly represented and built through inbreeding culture and less emphasis in inducting hybrid vigor
- Education infrastructure including classrooms, library, computer labs and internet access is substantial week

### **Opportunities for Degree Programs**

- High demand for the trained economists by the expanding agri-businesses sector, development agencies and NGOs
- Future opportunities in the demand for the managerial cadre to be involved in high tech agriculture with commercial orientation like tunnel farming, conservation agriculture, propagation of olive culture, value added agriculture etc.
- Employment opportunities for recruiting new faculty for the expanding degree programs
- Involvement of students as teacher assistant program.

### **Threats to Degree Programs**

- Rapid expansion in degree programs while compromising on quality of manpower development.
- Reduced focus on quality graduate research as a result of large number of students to be supervised by each faculty.
- Non-availability of qualified faculty from the market and recruitment of under-qualified academicians.
- Element of cast and creed preferences in the faculty selection processes.
- Reducing or curtailing internship program similar to the abolition of marks for thesis research.

## **Recommendations:**

- Department is currently implementing new degree programs while blending regular and visiting faculty services while delivering heavy course work load. Minor differences found in the Master and M.Phil degree programs mainly due to limited faculty issues. Faculty with agriculture background had to teach pure economics courses as well that give rise issues in delivering courses effectively and equitably. Recruitment of a blend of faculty for teaching diversified nature of courses is recommended on urgent basis. Teachers assistance ship recommended to be offered to resolve faculty availability issues in the short-run.
- Internship program for the B.Sc (Hons) Agricultural Economics reduced from exclusive full semester program to courses-cum internship program. This would seriously affect the level of concentration and devotion to follow practical research orientation needed during internship periods. Therefore the current practice of allocating whole semester for internship program may be continued.
- Interdisciplinary research concepts are rarely implemented which had negative implications on focusing crucial socio-economic aspects during research processes. The real issues of rain-fed agriculture like natural resources degradation. Climate change impact, drought effects, water scarcity required to be the predominant areas of graduate research in collaboration with the relevant subject specialists.
- Department is situated in the complex of many other departments with few lecture rooms. Departmental library, computer lab, multimedia, common room facilities are either very limited or available not at all in the department. The arrival of economics related journals in the man as well as departmental library is almost non-existent. These facilities need immediate up-gradation. No air-conditioning facility is even available in the main library which is a hindrance in pursuing studies under harsh climatic conditions.
- In the scholarship schemes only agricultural economics students are consider whereas students of pure economics are ignored. This need rectification for providing equal opportunities to students following different degree programs.

- Teachers evaluation procedures currently followed during final exam sessions and in the presence of teachers need further evaluation for devising approaches to get these evaluation conducted under free and peaceful environment.
- Research topic are first developed by the graduate students and then supervisors are allocated which need re-consideration to involve teacher and students from the very initial stages of exploring researchable issues and relevant research topics.
- There is need to rationalize the courses to be taught by the regular and visiting faculty. It is recommended that courses like micro and macro economics, quantitative methods, production economics and research methods ought to be conducted by the regular faculty of the department rather than by the visiting faculty. Accordingly, University authorities are recommended to take steps to recruit and develop human resource base geared towards this goal.
- Given the emerging trends and analytical requirements it would be useful to add a course on statistics for students majoring in Agri. Economics as the introductory course on statistics common to all students offered in 3rd semester may not provide sufficient basis and training for advanced courses on econometrics. Similarly, there is a need for enhancing computer and I.T related skills of the students.

### **Final Recommendations:**

On the basis of the on-site visit and interaction with faculty, students and support staff. The AIC decides to rate the degree programs (B.Sc and M.Sc(Hons. Agricultural Economics)) of the Agricultural Economics department in the middle band (68.5%) of 'X' category of accreditation of QAA/HEC with the expectation that accreditation rating shall improve in due course of time.

## Signatures of AIC Members:

**Name/ Designation of Reviewer**

**Signature**

**Prof. Dr. Abdul Salam** (Convener)  
Federal Urdu University  
Khyban-e-Suharworthy Near Zero Point,  
Islamabad.

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**Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan** (Member)  
Chief Scientific officer/ Sr. Director SSI  
National Agriculture Research Center

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**Chairman**  
Department of Agricultural Economics,  
PMAS Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi

**I agree with the contents of the Peer Team Report.**

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