

The Secretary  
National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC)  
NAEAC Secretariat  
Islamabad

January 10, 2013

Subject: **Report of Accreditation Inspection Committee for Accreditation of M.Sc. Forestry Extension Degree Program, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad**

Reference: Dy. No. 841-NAEAC/HEC/2012 dated 20.12.2012.

The Accreditation Inspection Committee (AIC) constituted by the Chairman NAEAC consisted of the following:

1. Prof. Dr. Sarwat N. Mirza           **(Convener)**
2. Dr. Ahmad Hussain               **(Member)**

The AIC carried out two days visit to the Department of Agricultural Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad from December 26-27, 2012. The AIC conducted evaluation of the degree program of **M.Sc. Forestry Extension** being offered by the Department of Agricultural Sciences. The AIC also carried out detailed visits to the infrastructure (faculty offices, teaching classrooms, laboratories, Library, Communication Center, studios, etc.) being employed for various learning processes of the Department. Based on the findings/evaluation, report is being submitted to NAEAC as per approved TORs for AIC.

(Prof. Dr. Sarwat N. Mirza)  
Dean FRW/Convener AIC

(Dr. Ahmad Hussain)  
Assistant Professor/Member AIC

Distribution:

The Dean/Chairman, Department of Agricultural Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University  
Islamabad

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Report of Accreditation Inspection Committee for Accreditation of M.Sc. Forestry Extension Degree Program, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad**

The AIC composed of Prof. Dr. Sarwat N. Mirza, Dean/Professor/Convener and Dr. Ahamd Hussain, Assistant Professor/Member carried out two days visit to the Department of Agricultural Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad from December 26-27, 2012 to conduct evaluation of the degree program of **M.Sc. Forestry Extension** being offered by the Department of Agricultural Sciences. The AIC also carried out detailed visits to the infrastructure (faculty offices, teaching classrooms, laboratories, Library, Communication Center, studios, etc.) being employed for various learning processes required for distance learning education. Ms. Fouzia Anjum, Program Coordinator of Forestry Extension Degree Program briefed the Accreditation Committee through presentation about the Department and Program history, faculty, students, courses curriculum, examination/evaluation system, classrooms, labs, major equipment, students strength, students completed education, etc. At present, Agriculture Sciences Department of AIOU is the only Department offering post graduate degree program in the field of Forestry Extension. The degree program in Forestry Extension was started in 2000. The Department of Agricultural Sciences has adopted program and courses of M.Sc. Forestry Extension from HEC National Curriculum related to various Extension programs. The degree in Forestry Extension comprises of 60 credit hours with two years duration. The university provides complete study material i.e., course books and other allied material required for distance learning degree programs. Workshop is a compulsory component of the degree program and provides an opportunity to the students to discuss issues raised in the courses as well as in research. Highly qualified faculty is arranged by the department from the related disciplines for workshop classes. As essential component of distance learning, the Directorate of Advanced Studies approves tutors for each course with the approval of the Vice Chancellor. The students are required to meet with the tutor on a pre-arranged schedule/time table and discuss the text/course difficulties with the tutor. M.Sc. Forestry Extension degree is awarded on submission of thesis based on the original research work in any area related to forestry extension in Pakistan. The thesis is evaluated by external examiner appointed by the Dean of the faculty followed by a viva examination by the external and internal examiners. The department has on its strength the services of seven qualified and experienced faculty including two Ph.D faculty members. Among them one is Professor, one Assistant Professor and five Lecturers.

The specific recommendations for the improvement of degree program include: **a)** revision of curriculum of Forestry Extension degree program including revision of some course contents by including latest issues and trends in the field of forestry extension. **B)** The research topic and synopsis of students should be finalized by the end of third semester to enable the students undertake research work during the fourth semester. **C)** There should be an objective analysis/effective control system in place for the evaluation of students assignments. It is recommended that the students should also present their assignments in an open seminar during the workshops or on a separate occasion attended by their tutor and teachers/Chairperson/Dean with question/answer sessions. **D)** Field visits be arranged for the students for practical demonstration of latest and innovative extension techniques being employed by the extension

wings of forestry departments and forestry wing of Ministry of Climate Change/other federal line agencies. **E)** To improve the graduate quality of education, faculty are to given opportunities for short and long term training in developed countries. **F)** The faculty should be encouraged to get competitive research grants in order to inculcate research culture in their academic career. **G)** Hostel residential facilities be enhanced to cover a large number of students attending workshops at the campus.

Degree Programs of Allama Iqbal Open University are unique in nature as their academic programs are based on distance learning. As such, they do not have an academic set up of regular classes and other requirements needed for such degree programs in other universities. Hence, they cannot be fully compared and judged on the basis of criteria set for other universities. In view of the above narrated findings, AIC unanimously recommends that the Degree program of M.Sc. Forestry Extension offered by the Department of Agricultural Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad be graded as “X” category of National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council/Higher Education Commission i.e., the classification of degree program with **minor** shortfalls expected to meet the criteria as set by the Council for Accreditation with scope for up-gradation to category “W” after appropriate improvement in due course of time.

**EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION REPORT OF ACCREDITATION**  
**INSPECTION COMMITTEE (AIC) FOR ACCREDITATION OF DEGREE PROGRAMS**  
**OF THE DEGREE OF M.Sc. FORESTRY EXTENSION, DEPARTMENT OF**  
**AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD**  
**(DECEMBER 26-27, 2012)**

## **SECTION-1 Introduction, Mission and Objectives**

### **1. Terms of Reference of the Committee**

The team visited Agriculture Sciences Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad for external assessment and evaluation of M.Sc. (Forestry Extension) degree programme from December 26-27, 2012 with the following mission.

1. To validate the self-Assessment Report of M.Sc. (Forestry Extension) degree programme.
2. To bring external evaluation of the academic program of the Department for rating and accreditation.
3. To prepare consolidated report about the degree programme after meeting with Dean/Chairman of the Department, faculty members, students and visit to classrooms, laboratories and library, etc.
4. To submit recommendations about the degree programme to NAEAC chairman.

### **1.2. M.Sc. Forestry Extension Programme, Department of Agriculture Sciences**

Ms. Fouzia Anjum, Programme Coordinator of Forestry Extension Degree Programme briefed the Accreditation Committee through presentation about the Department and Programme history, faculty, students, courses curriculum, examination/evaluation system, classrooms, labs, major equipment, students strength, students completed education, etc. At present, Agriculture Sciences Department of AIOU is the only Department offering post graduate degree programme in the field of Forestry Extension. The degree programme in Forestry Extension was started in 2000 along with other programmes of the Department of Agricultural Sciences. The Department's main focus is to impart higher education through distance learning in various fields related to agriculture sciences including Forestry Extension. The mission of the department is in line with the overall strategic plan of the government to uplift the poor rural communities by providing them extension services through qualified and trained personnel.

### **1.3 Mission of the Programme**

Provision of the quality education to the learners/farming community through problem solving skills and research oriented methodologies in the field of forestry extension through bridging gap between research and end users.

#### **1.4. Programme Objectives**

- To acquire greater understanding of the role of forests and trees in the context of changing environment.
- To achieve sustainability in agro-forestry and other land uses.
- To develop approaches which optimize the involvement of communities in extension processes of forestry and other natural resources and for their own development.
- To perceive the knowledge of existing approaches in forestry extension.
- To develop linkage with other institutions like forest projects, etc.

### **Section-2 Criterion Wise Analysis**

#### **2.1 Curriculum Design and Development**

The Department of Agricultural Sciences has adopted program and courses of M.Sc. Forestry Extension from HEC National Curriculum related to various Extension programs. The degree in Forestry Extension comprises of 60 credit hours with two years duration.

#### **2.2 Teaching Methodology**

The university provides complete study material i.e., course books and other allied material required for distance learning degree programs.

##### **2.2.1. Workshops**

Workshop is a compulsory component of the degree program and provides an opportunity to the students to discuss issues raised in the courses as well as in research. The workshop of each course is conducted at the end of each semester at main campus of the university in Islamabad. Attendance in the workshop is mandatory for each student. The duration of each semester workshop is generally 7-8 days with about two days to cover the contents of each course. Highly qualified faculty is arranged by the department from the related disciplines for workshop classes.

##### **2.2.2 Tutorial Meetings**

As essential component of distance learning, the Directorate of Advanced Studies approves tutors for each course with the approval of the Vice Chancellor. The students are required to meet with the tutor on a pre-arranged schedule/time table and discuss the text/course difficulties with the tutor. On average, nine tutorial meetings are held in each semester twice a year on Saturdays/Sundays.

##### **2.2.3 Thesis**

M.Sc. Forestry Extension degree is awarded on submission of thesis based on the original research work in any area related to forestry extension in Pakistan. The students prepare synopsis on research topic approved by the concerned Dean and choose supervisors who have expertise in the area of research of the student. The initial period allowed to complete the thesis work is one year. However, the students may submit the thesis after a minimum of six months. The thesis is evaluated by external examiner appointed by the Dean of the faculty followed by a viva examination by the external and internal examiners.

### **ANNUAL STUDENT'S INTAKE & PASS OUT IN LAST THREE YEARS**

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Students intake</b>	<b>Annual pass out</b>
01	2010	15	04
02	2011	17	08
03	2012	17	03

### **2.3 Strength and Quality of Faculty**

There are seven faculty members in the Department of Agricultural Sciences including a full time Faculty Coordinator for M.Sc. Forestry Extension program. The Department invites experts in the field of Forestry from other collaborating academic and research institutions for the workshop to teach and interact with the students regarding their course work. The evaluation committee met with each faculty of the Department to know about their qualification, professional background, research field, salaries, allowances, teaching workload, research supervision, record of course, students attendance, examination result, papers setting, grading systems, opportunities for trainings, facilities available, facilities required, strengths & weakness, existing problems in the degree programs of the Department, etc. The committee also met with the visiting faculty members and discussed their experiences and feedback regarding course workshops. The outcomes of the meetings with the faculty were evaluated/marked in the evaluation manual (toolkit).

### **2.4 Students Feedback regarding Degree Program**

The inspection committee also met with a group of students pursuing their degree in M.Sc. Forestry Extension program. The Students showed their satisfaction regarding various components of degree programs including scheme of studies, course material, tutorial meetings, etc. The students especially mentioned the efficacy of holding course workshops and their interaction with the highly qualified and experienced visiting faculty. The students however, suggested that field visits should be a regular part of

the workshops to give them a chance to visit project sites and forest plantation activities, etc. Students also showed their satisfaction regarding classroom facilities, curriculum & teaching standard, teachers' behavior, library and computer laboratories, etc.

## **Section-3 Overall Analysis of the Degree Program (SWOT ANALYSIS)**

### **3.1 Major Strengths**

#### **(A) Admission Criteria and Curriculum**

- Admission criteria; B.Sc. or M.Sc Forestry degree with at least second Division, B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture degree or B.Sc or M.Sc. Botany with three years field experience in Forestry.
- Curriculum designed and selected from HEC approved guidelines for extension related degrees
- An excellent opportunity for in-service personnel to improve their education level through distance learning while keep serving in their respective Departments.

#### **(B) Faculty, Lab & Office staff**

- The department has on its strength the services of seven qualified and experienced faculty including two Ph.D faculty members. Among them one is professor, one Assistant professor and five Lecturers.
- The teaching staff is well versed and trained in their respective field of studies and various modules of distance learning and student counseling.

#### **(C) Infrastructure**

- The department has the facility of spacious classrooms equipped with multimedia projectors and screens, fully equipped research laboratories, computer laboratories, faculty offices, a central library with adequate number of books and computers.
- All classrooms have been equipped with audio/visual and multimedia.
- The Department has 03 classrooms, 2 computer labs and 06 offices and 2 large size meeting and seminar rooms.
- Each faculty has official computer with printer. There is computer lab for students containing sufficient number of computers and linked with Wi-Fi internet.
- Because of internet facility in the Computer laboratories, the faculty and students can utilize HEC digital library for research and linkages development with other institutions.

**(D) Library, Books & Research Journals:** There is a central library of the university where the students and faculty has access to a large number of books, journals and e. library facilities. AIOU Library has over 1,60,000 books and 332 books related to agriculture and 72 books related to Forestry. The university has adequate budget to order any book on demand by the department through library book collection policy. Few faculty members have published books and monographs related to their specialization and also produced some publications in HEC recognized journals.

### **3.2 Major Weaknesses**

- There is a lack of senior cadre of faculty in the department as a whole and for the subject of Forestry extension in particular.
- Faculty needs to get research projects in order to keep up with the research culture and latest innovations and developments in their field of specializations.
- Lack of field visits for the students to various forestry extension projects/operations as part of the degree requirement during workshops or other appropriate occasions.
- The degree program of M.Sc Forestry extension is designed for two years duration. However, the research topic is allotted to the students at the end of course work in 4<sup>th</sup> semester after which the students undertake their research and submit thesis well beyond two years required period for completion of degree requirement.
- Submission of two assignments for each course is a mandatory requirement during the course work evaluated by the respective tutors. However, students generally do this exercise as a formality rather than a healthy exercise by copying the material from books or peers assignments.
- Curriculum of Forestry Extension degree program needs revision, especially in case of a few courses, the text books needs to be revised by focusing on current trends and local conditions.

### **3.3 Major Opportunities**

- The Department of Agricultural Sciences of AIOU is the only institution in the country awarding the degree of M.Sc. Forestry Extension. Through this degree, in service personnel from various departments especially provincial Forestry Departments improve their qualification for career development.
- The Department is well placed to impart quality education through distance learning by adopting effective and innovative tools of communication.

### **3.4 Major Challenges**

- The department should place more focus on training opportunities of faculty in distance learning innovations and techniques for imparting better and quality education to its graduates.
- Outreach exposure to the students is another challenge for the department which can be carried out with collaboration of Forestry Extension Wings of Forest Departments for demonstration and learning of latest practical knowledge.



## Section-4 Recommendations

### 4.1 General Recommendations

- The curriculum of Forestry Extension degree program needs to be revised by either revising the text books of a few courses with more focus on local knowledge and also revision of some course contents by including latest issues and trends in the field of forestry extension.
- The research topic and synopsis of students should be finalized by the end of third semester to enable the students undertake research work during the fourth semester. The course load during the first three semesters can be enhanced a bit to reduce the course load during fourth semester.
- There should be an objective analysis/effective control system in place for the evaluation of students assignments. It is recommended that the students should also present their assignments in an open seminar during the workshops or on a separate occasion attended by their tutor and teachers/Chairperson/Dean with question/answer sessions.
- Field visits be arranged for the students for practical demonstration of latest and innovative extension techniques being employed by the extension wings of forestry departments and forestry wing of Ministry of Climate Change/other federal line agencies.
- To improve the graduate quality of education, faculty are to given opportunities for short and long term training in developed countries.
- The faculty should be encouraged to get competitive research grants in order to inculcate research culture in their academic career.
- Hiring of qualified and experienced faculty and promotion/up-gradation of existing faculty would improve the quality of education in the department.
- To promote students interest and competition spirit towards their study the department should award medals or cash prizes to position holders in examinations.
- Hostel residential facilities be enhanced to cover a large number of students attending workshops at the campus.

### 4.2 Rating Recommendations for Accreditation

Degree Programs of Allama Iqbal Open University are unique in nature as they do not have a set up of regular classes and other requirements needed for such degree programs in other universities. Hence, they cannot be fully compared and judged on the basis of criteria set for other universities. In view of the above narrated findings, AIC unanimously recommends that the Degree program of M.Sc. Forestry Extension offered by the Department of Agricultural Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad be graded as “X” category of National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council/Higher Education Commission i.e., the classification of degree program with **minor** shortfalls expected to meet the criteria as set by the Council for Accreditation with scope for up-gradation to category “W” after appropriate improvement in due course of time.

