

## **INTERNATIONALIZATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES OF FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA**

### **Justification**

The Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya is the pioneer institute responsible for higher education in Agriculture in Sri Lanka. The Faculty presently offers three degree programs of 4-year duration namely B.Sc. (Agricultural Technology & Management), B.Sc. (Food Science & Technology) and B.Sc. (Animal Science & Fisheries). The academic staff of the Faculty of Agriculture is keen to inculcate the needed knowledge in diverse subject areas of agriculture, technology, communication skills, computer & IT skills, numerical skills and life skills (critical thinking, problem solving, team work, leadership skills, and ethnic harmony), and develop a right attitude among its undergraduate students to enable them to meet the needs of the modern society. In imparting the expected knowledge, inculcating needed skills, and developing the right attitude, the Faculty adopts multitude of strategies and offers numerous opportunities to the student population. One such strategy is internationalization of the undergraduate education at the Faculty of Agriculture to produce global graduants who can make impacts not only local but also international arena as well.

By definition, internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the goals of a higher education institute. It involves changes to the teaching and learning environment, research and service functions. An internationalized curriculum and co-curriculum ensure that all students are exposed to international perspectives and build global competencies. Internationalization takes many forms. The most common forms are co-taught courses, open online courses, collaborative research projects, student exchanges, study abroad programs, foreign language courses etc. The benefits of internationalization are many and varied. There are ample examples to conclude that internationalization helped universities to increase the quality and relevance of their education, research and service to society.

Being a state educational institute with a clear mandate, the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Peradeniya promotes internationalization as a strategy to achieve its own goals. It does not consider internationalization as a goal in itself. Rather, internationalization is used as a strategy to complement, harmonize and extend the local dimension. Within these limits, the Faculty has committed to internationalization since its inception. Over ninety five per cent of the academic staff of the faculty has been trained to Ph.D. level in well recognized universities in the developed countries. The academic staffs have been engaged in collaborative research with foreign partners in foreign universities, international organizations, NGOs etc. Time to time, groups of foreign students had joined some of the batches of students and followed courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture. Visits of research students and academic staff to participate international conferences, workshops etc. have been frequent. The Agriculture Education Unit of the Faculty offers study abroad programs for foreign students. The Agribusiness Centre of the Faculty involves with foreign organizations to conduct projects related to agribusiness whereas the Agricultural Biotechnology Centre conduct joint biotechnological research with foreign counterparts. At present a considerable number of students are being exposed to foreign exposure and experience. A limited number of undergraduate students also attend in-plant trainings and conduct research projects in foreign universities and institutes.

The Faculty of Agriculture wishes to strengthen existing internationalization activities and introduce new activities to bring an international dimension to all feasible aspects of the curriculum to achieve its institutional goals. The aim, objectives and internationalization activities planned are given below.

### **Activity Plan**

**Aim:**           **To produce high quality graduates with the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to cater to national and international demands through internationalizing the learning and teaching activities**

#### **Objective 1:**   **Enhance the knowledge base of the students on global issues**

##### **Activities:**

- 1.1.   Revise existing courses in the curriculum to include global issues where possible and introduce new courses to improve the knowledge base of the students on global issues to the existing curriculum keep in line with graduate profiles of B.Sc. degrees in Agricultural Technology and Management, Food Science and Technology and Animal Science and Fisheries and respective benchmark statements and graduate profiles
  - a.   Survey on developments that take place in internationally recognized institutions including site visits
  - b.   Provide in-plant training for students (continuation of existing programs)
  - c.   Develop new links with the industry to provide Industrial Training on a regular basis (the Rural Immersion Program, under the Student Exchange Program with Thiagarajar School of Management).
  - d.   Develop and sustain links with the cooperate sector organizations to provide vacation jobs for the undergraduates (continuation of existing programs)
  - e.   Improve the quality of the existing industrial training/in-plant program
- 1.2.   Revise the existing curriculum to add more flexibility to follow courses offered by foreign universities and obtain credit for them
  - a.   Establish linkages with international institutions for collaborative teaching and research programs
- 1.3.   Establish an e-international learning system for students to follow the free online courses offered by foreign universities and earn certificates
- 1.4.   Conduct seminar series focused on international topics
- 1.5.   Attract foreign nationals and expatriates as visiting Fellow/Professors on honorary basis
- 1.6.   Improve Faculty of Agriculture Undergraduate Research Symposium with foreign exposure and new innovations

#### **Objective 2:**   **Enhance communication skills of students**

##### **Activities:**

- 2.1   Offer courses in Japanese, Korean, French, and Chinese language as supplementary courses while strengthening English language skills of the students

- 2.2 Liaise with the academic staff attached to the Departments of Languages in the state university system and obtain their services as resource persons
- 2.3 Establish partnerships with British Council, American Corner, Alliance Francaise de Kandy, KOPIA, KOICA and JAICA
- 2.4 Liaise with the national institutes on language education and training (i.e. National Institute of Language Education and Training) to obtain their services for effective language training

**Objective 3: Enhance attitudes of students through increased interactions with the foreign communities**

**Activities:**

- 3.1. Expand foreign visits in the existing courses to make visits to higher educational institutes in neighbouring countries (the Rural Immersion Program, under the Student Exchange Program with Thaigarajar School of Management).
- 3.2. Increase participation of the undergraduate students at student summits, conferences, final year undergraduate research, summer abroad programs and exposure visits
- 3.3. Strengthen the existing student exchange programs with the universities with whom MOUs are signed and sign new MOUs with relevant universities
- 3.4. Organize an Annual International Student Summit (long term goal)
- 3.5 Empower student's societies of the Faculty of Agriculture to organize international film and musical shows followed by discussion sessions with a resource person (this is to follow with the program organized with Transylvania University of Brasov, Rumania).

**Objective 4: Foster a conducive environment for foreign students and staff who visit the Faculty of Agriculture**

**Activities:**

- 4.1. Establish an international learning centre with Agriculture Education Unit (AEU) and ELTU
  - a. Continue to offer study abroad programs for foreign universities with AEU and develop new links
  - b. Advertise above courses with partner Universities and link to their web sites
  - c. Create awareness among foreign Universities of the programs offered by the Faculty
  - d. Advertise through the internet to promote foreign student intake to the Faculty as per guidelines adopted by the University council (16 students for 3 degree programs)
  - e. Establish a dialogue with embassies and foreign ministry to restart program for foreign students
- 4.2. Establish a tutor system to improve support services for international students
- 4.3. Formulate an alumni association of foreign students who made visits to the faculty

- 4.4. Identify a group of service providers who could provide off-campus housing facilities for foreign nationals at affordable rates

**Objective 5: Improve the staff strength**

**Activities:**

- 5.1. Facilitate probationary staff to conduct their postgraduate programs in world leading universities, and encourage them to comeback after completion of their higher studies.
- 5.3. Continue to encourage the academic staff to obtain their postgraduate qualifications from foreign universities with high ratings through development of link programs and external donor programs and facilitating such programs
- 5.2. Prioritize applicants with an international exposure in recruitment to the senior academic staff
- 5.4. Provide more opportunities for the permanent academic staff for short term academic training programs offered by foreign universities (through ERD).
  - a. Identify department requirements (academic and non-academic) for short term training (by HoDs)
  - b. Provide staff to short-term local and international training on modern technologies in specific disciplines (2 members per year)
  - c. Provide non-degree overseas training to selected staff on scientific writing/publishing
- 5.5. Increase staff presence at international conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. by simplifying leave application process (may be online) sharing information through web and emails.
- 5.6. Provide opportunities for the academic staff to try out good practices adopt in other universities for internationalization.
- 5.7. Promote research collaborations with international partners
  - a. Establish communications with international donor agencies to promote staff to apply for research grants
  - b. Encourage faculty staff to apply for national and international research grants
  - c. Develop partnership with corporate organizations, NGOs, and entrepreneurs on research and product development
  - d. Provide online access to research databases/journals/publications to staff and students
- 5.8. Develop program with Department of External Resources on training of academic and academic support staff.