

Achievements of School of Agricultural Sciences

The school of Agricultural Sciences (SAS) established in 1989 has received massive response and unprecedented success in distance education in agriculture. Enrolling just 81 students in 1990 and over a period of time the enrollment has been sky rocketed to more than 20,000 every year within the first decade of our existence and the cumulative enrollment till date has been reached to more than 2,60,000 students in the last 24 years of our existence.

The school has practiced a vision to provide vocational and employment generating mass education in regional language i.e. Marathi with a mission of reaching the unreached section of population such as dropouts of the conventional education system, practicing farmers, farm women and rural youth in Maharashtra.

Achievements, Innovative Concepts and Best Practices:

The SAS has developed 16 academic programs right from the Certificate Program in Gardening to Post Graduate and Research Program in Agricultural Extension, recognized 59 Agriculture Education Centers in Maharashtra, nominated more than 600 Teacher Councilors imparting instructions to more than 20,000 students in Maharashtra.

The list of academic programs covers Certificate in Gardening, Foundation in Agriculture, Diploma in Horticulture, Diploma in Agri-business Management, Diploma in Agro-Journalism, Diploma in Fruit Production, Diploma in Vegetable Production, Diploma in Floriculture & Landscape Gardening, B.Sc. Agriculture, B.Sc. Horticulture and M. Sc. and Ph. D. program in Agricultural Extension. These programmes are truly relevant to the needs of both the masses and the classes; and they have meaningfully changed the lives of millions of families. Moreover, we are very conscious for the content creation, the program delivery mechanism and the end product.

Vertical Mobility in Admission: All Programs in Agricultural Sciences under the School offers full Vertical Mobility and Credit Transfer from Certificate level to Diploma level programs. Thus a 10th class passed student when enrolled for Certificate Program can reach up to post graduate level programs in Agricultural Sciences. The pace, time and course load can be decided by the student thus giving him a chance to work out his own capacity and time for learning.

Online Admission System: Admissions of all agricultural programs are done online since 2016. It has highly benefited the students as well as all the study centres, avoiding all the tedious tasks of manual form filling and making it more transparent, easy and student friendly. Due to this Online Admission process, all the authentic database of students enrolled is available and can be accessed instantly.

Online Entrance Test: This School designed and conducted Online Entrance Test necessary for admission to B. Sc. (Agriculture) & B. Sc. (Horticulture) Programmes of the School. It has facilitated the instant result declaration process and thereby leading to quicker admissions.

Online Project submission and online Viva-Voce Exam : School of Agriculture Sciences have created online project submission system. With this system student can upload the soft copy of his degree project through his own login and then concerned study centre approves, recommends those projects through centre login. Through this online system, near about

5000 degree projects are submitted every year to the School of Agriculture Sciences. Students receive system generated online project completion certificate immediately.

It has reduced the hecticness and drudgery of being present physically at the University campus 2-3 times for submission of degree projects as well as its viva-voce examination. The viva-voce examination of the students are also conducted through online mode at respective study centres. It has lessened the financial burden on students and saved their time, too.

Online Counselling: During Covid-19 pandemic period, all the agriculture study centres conducted counselling sessions through online platform to avoid academic loss of students during the lockdown period. Near about 60 counselling sessions were conducted at all the study centers during the pandemic period.

Online Assessment: Since 2017, the School has shifted from manual to online mode for assessment of all the agriculture programs. Near about 88000 answer sheets are evaluated online every year with the help of 600 counselors at the study centres all over Maharashtra. It has speeded up result declaration process and reduced result declaration period from 45 days to 20 days only.

Excellent Self Instructional Learning Material: All these programmes are disseminated through highly qualitative Self-instructional Learning Material (SLM) developed totally in-house by the university involving various experts in the field. The school has developed 158 Text Books and Work Books so far in the Self instructional format. All the programmes are disseminated through highly qualitative Self-instructional Learning Material (SLM) developed by the university.

Development of Supplementary Textbooks: The School decided to provide supplementary textbooks to students to update and enrich the content of each programme and thereby knowledge of students. In 2015-16, the School developed 11 supplementary textbooks totally in-house with the help of experts from SAUs.

Development of MOOC: The school has developed the first MOOC in YCMOU, Nashik with a grant of 3.3 lakhs from IGNOU-SWAYAM, New Delhi. A MOOC on “Commercial Fruit Production: Pomegranate and Guava” was offered in 7 runs to the students on SWAYAM platform, MHRD, Govt. of India during March 2019 to March 2022 which has attracted 6200+ students in total and got rating of 4.6 out of 5 for the course.

Provision of Supportive Learning Materials: Though the school develops qualitative learning material developed in-house, it recognizes the significance of new knowledge and research based production system. Therefore, in addition to the in-house study material, it also archives quality publications and uses them for the development of new learning materials. The school addresses academic issues through proactive consultation with peer groups. It develops framework and curricula inherent with high-end self-employability skills. It provides learning materials in quality assured compact modular format.

YouTube Channel: The Director, School of Agricultural Sciences has developed YouTube Channel to provide the supportive audio-visual learning material. For the purpose, 24 video films are created on fruit and flower crops based on diploma curriculum. These video films are uploaded² on YouTube channel of Dr Madhuri

Sonawane. Some video films are created in regional language i.e. Marathi. The channel has received tremendous response all over the country and even outside the country with 2020+ subscribers.

Network of Agriculture Education Centers: The school believes that to run qualitative programs, we need committed people who respect quality academic practices and shared values. We have established a network of 59 Agriculture Education centers in reliable, authentic and resourceful learning centers such as 15 ICAR Affiliated Krishi Vigyan Kendras and 44 State Agricultural University Affiliated College of agriculture and Horticulture in Maharashtra. More than 600 Professors, Scientists and Agriculture Extension Officers working as Teacher Councilors on these 59 recognized Agriculture Education Centers in Maharashtra.

Teaching-learning for theory, practical conduction and project work, etc for the learners is held as per the UGC norms in face-to-face mode by the qualified and experienced counsellors working at the recognized Study Centers.

Periodical Accreditation of Study Centers: The school has developed 100 points Evaluation Report/Format based quality parameters and benchmarks for reorganization of new center or continuation of existing center. It ensures academically healthy and resourceful institution capable of imparting agricultural education. Then a professional team from the university headed by the Director of the school visits the institution. This team assesses the infrastructural capabilities of the institution before signing the Memorandum of Undertaking (MOU). In the process, after assessing the criteria, a MOU is signed with the partner institution; which results in it being recognized as an authorized and recognized study centre of the university. The study centre is bound to deliver mutually agreed upon services to the students enrolled at the study centre. Annual/periodic re-visiting of the partner institutions by the director of the school or the responsible authority delegated by the Director of the School ensures continuance of delivery of quality education.

Practical and Face-to-Face Counseling Sessions: In addition to the self-learning books, regular face-to-face counseling sessions for theory, practical and interactive learning are held 6 days in each month from August to February month on the study center, where theory and practical including Field component are being conducted to ensure hands on learning. There are 33 counseling Sessions in one academic year, each of 6 hours duration (3 hours for theory and 3 hours for practical) devoted to practical fieldwork at the respective study centers.

Social Opportunity Programs: It is painful to see that some of the students that fail in 10 th. 12 th. Class board examinations commit suicide owing to ends the opportunity of hope for the betterment in the life. Our school tries to offer some simple, feasible solutions to these suicides through its educational programs. The foundation courses offered by the school are achievable by students who have been frustrated with the conventionaleducation system. In addition, all the programs of the school are relevant and employable in the world of work and thus the school has given renewed hope to the dropouts of matriculation/post matriculation examinations shouldering the social responsibility of rehabilitation of School and College drop outs in Maharashtra.

Employment & Self Employment Generating Programs: The School attaches utmost value to Vocational, Professional and Employment generating Programs which can also serves as entry points into many of the government jobs in addition to private jobs and self

employment. Till dates, More than 20,000 students are absorbed in government jobs and more than 40,000 are engaged in Self-employment, the remaining 70,000 are engaged in farming with new outlook and progressive vision. Thus out of 230,000 enrolled till dates, 100,000 are again dropped out from the system while 130,000 are sincerely contributing to National Agriculture Development Program.

Collective Approach in Program Planning & Development: The school adopts quality practices in all its processes. Agriculture and agriculture business management is constantly influenced by new research, uncertain climate and market conditions. The school is committed to providing latest knowledge to its students, and abreast them with the new cost effective and relevant options based on research findings in agriculture. Therefore, it also goes through a periodic revision of its course content and implementation mechanism. The school is committed to providing latest knowledge to its students, and keeping them informed about the latest cost-effective options.

Future Plans in Agriculture Education:

The road map pertaining to the development of the School of Agricultural Sciences for the next five years has already been chalked out. The school plans to revisit, revise and consolidate all its programs in consistence with the new ICAR and UGC guidelines. It also proposes to monitor and evaluate all agriculture education centers in line with NAAC accreditation.