

## **Assessment of Interests, Attitudes, Future Aspirations and Socio- Economic Background of First Year Students of the Faculty of Agriculture**

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Students who are selected to the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya to follow the Agriculture Technology and Management degree programme (AgTec & Mgt), may have different aspirations to reach at the end of the study period. The level of satisfaction and attitudes after getting selected to the Faculty of Agriculture, and their motivation to study can vary depending on the expectations they had when they sat for the Advanced Level examination (A/L). Students come from various regions of the country representing different socio-economic backgrounds. Under the AgTec & Mgt degree programme students need to follow the first semester at Mahalluppallama Sub Campus located in Anuradhapura District. This study was conducted to assess (i) the level of satisfaction of students on their selection to the AgTec & Mgt degree programme, (ii) their preference to stay at Mahalluppallama, (iii) socio-economic background of students and their future aspirations, and (iv) possible associations (i.e. number of times A/L attempted, level of satisfaction, and intention for migration) with gender.

Students who entered in 2010 to follow the AgTec & Mgt degree programme were selected for the study (n = 180). Data were collected using a questionnaire survey and 151 students responded.

There were more female students (62%) in the batch than male students (38%). Most of the parents of these students were A/L qualified (42%) and monthly family income of 74% was below Rs. 20,000. A significant association was found between gender and level of satisfaction after selection to the AgTec & Mgt degree program. Among male students, over 67% was 'highly satisfied' while 28% was 'satisfied' regarding selection to the AgTec & Mgt degree program. Among female students, only 41% was 'highly satisfied' while 56% was 'satisfied' for their selection. Z scores of the students at the G.C.E. A/L examination was poorly correlated with their first semester Grade Point Average (G.P.A.,  $r=0.182$ ,  $p<0.026$ ). Percentage of male students who entered the University through their first attempt was higher (18%) than that of female students (7%). Irrespective of gender, over 70% of the students liked the program at Mahalluppallama while the rest (~30%) had a neutral feeling. A significant association between gender and intention for migration was observed. Among male students, 66% preferred local jobs while 34% preferred to migrate. However, for female students only 25% preferred migration over local jobs. Majority of the students (59%) preferred employment in the government sector while 34% preferred the private sector and only 5% preferred self employment. Therefore; it is important to develop attitudinal changes towards the private sector employment in university students while encouraging them to acquire the necessary technical and soft skills. Since Z score of the students was poorly correlated with their first semester G.P.A. it needs further attention.