

A Platform For Aspiring Professionals



By Ayesha Inoon

It is identified with academic excellence, professionalism and success: since 1990, The Informatics Institute of Technology (IIT) has been a launching pad for high-calibre IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Having been the pioneer in offering Internal British Degrees to Sri Lankan students, today, IIT has produced over 1,800 graduates, all of who are employed in key organisations both here and abroad.

Having been a part of its inception and growth, Associate Professor Alfred Perera, Dean, IIT, spoke of the strengths of the Institute, and why it should be the first choice of students who want an international-standard education to pave the way for a successful career in IT and Business.

The Institute was launched at a time when the university education system in the country was undergoing many upheavals in the recent past. There existed a period when universities were closed for long periods due to reasons beyond the control of the university authorities. It was during these days that Dr Gamini Wickremesinghe, Managing Director, IIT, conceived the idea of a private institute granting internal degrees.

IIT initially collaborated with Manchester Metropolitan University. A special feature of the University was its practically oriented courses as well as the fact that the programmes had one year of industrial placement: a key component of IIT programmes even today. Later, the University shifted its focus to other areas such as research and introduced the University of Westminster, UK, as the collaborator for IIT.

At present, IIT offers five undergraduate degree courses: BEng (Hons) Software Engineering, BSc (Hons) Information Systems with Business Management, BSc (Hons) Computing, BSc (Hons), BSc (Hons) Internet Computing and a MSc in Advanced Software Engineering, all from the University of Westminster. "When students complete these undergraduate degrees, they already possess a year's experience in the industry," explains Prof Alfred. The skills acquired whilst on placement make them readily employable in any organisation. Apart from industry experience, students acquire presentation and communication skills whilst on the degree course. The certificates awarded after the successful completion of these courses is identical to those received by students at the University of Westminster, at a fraction of the cost.

In programmes of this nature, maintaining academic quality is a challenge, which has been successfully met by IIT. There is close and ongoing supervision of the programmes conducted. For example, explains Prof Alfred, assignments set at IIT must be sent to Westminster for moderation. Furthermore, at the end of the examinations held in May the entire examination board arrives in Sri Lanka to overlook the marking of the papers.

From the human resources to the physical facilities at the Institute, everything at the Institute is of a high standard. Many of the lecturers have qualified overseas in their respective fields. Laboratories have state-of-the-art equipment, and there are separate labs for each year of study. The well-stocked library offers a range of books catered to the particular degree programmes offered at the Institute as well as for broader reading.

Apart from academic knowledge, IIT gives students the opportunity to develop their personalities and skills in other areas as well with a rich mix of cultural opportunities. They produce several events each year, which embrace music, drama and culture. Sports are encouraged, such as the inter-institute basketball tournament organised by IIT as well as the annual sports meet. An annual exhibition, Cutting Edge, is held every year where selected Final Year projects are displayed to academia, industry and the public. Since 2008 projects carried out by second and first year students too have been displayed.

Entering the latest trend in distance education, IIT has also launched an e-learning programme which leads to a Diploma in Computing. This programme can be followed by anyone, at any time, at a minimal cost, explains Prof Alfred, and comes under the distance education modernisation project programme, which is being conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education.

IIT continues to be a leader in IT and Business education in the country, upholding the high standards that were its cornerstones over two decades ago, to produce a new generation of professionals.