

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY An Authentically Australian Education



Functioning for the past eleven years as a higher education institute that effectively moulds students who are able to take on the corporate world, Australian College of Business and Technology stands for a tried and tested quality education. Dr P M C Thilakaratne, College Director of ACBT speaks of the Institute as providing nothing less than a wholly Australian education through its affiliation to the well renowned Edith Cowan University.

By Prasadini Nanayakkara

There are three programmes that have been on offer since its inception; Bachelor of Business in Marketing and Management, Bachelor of Computer Science and Information Technology and Master of Business Administration. “We are running these programmes under BOI approval and ACBT is the only Institution offering a purely Australian education in Sri Lanka,” says Dr Thilakaratne, College Director of

ACBT.
ACBT affords an education no different to that, which is offered at Edith Cowan University of Australia. Yet the added benefit of studying locally makes a quality education accessible through its greatly reduced cost. The models of these programmes offer many advantages. Firstly through their flexibility the students may complete all three years of the degree programme locally or may transfer credits after the first or second year and continue the balance of the education in Australia. These are inviting options for those hoping to apply for a PR status in future.

Straying away from the conventional path of obtaining the local Advanced Level qualification following the Ordinary Level qualification students can opt for the University Foundation Programme offered at ACBT. This programme is an equivalent substitute to the A Levels and can be completed within just one year of 2 semesters comprising of 8 course units. This fast track programme also confers eligibility to apply for a student visa to Australia. Following A Level qualification or the University Foundation Programme, students can enroll in the degree programmes. On successful completion of the first year of the Business Management Degree Programme, students can obtain a Diploma in Business Studies. Armed with this qualification descriptor, students can enter the workforce and rejoin the Degree Programme in the second year at a later date, if they wish to do so.

The programmes are structured to afford further flexibility to the students through the trimester system where intake of students occur thrice in one academic year; March, July and November. Students also have the freedom to select course units through a student portal by logging in to the system with a username and password. While the maximum number of units per semester is limited to 4, the programme accommodates those who wish to work while studying by allowing selection of fewer course units per semester.
Dr Thilakaratne stresses on the importance of accreditation, which certifies the high quality of education at ACBT. “The advantages of coming to ACBT are several, one is the quality of education, where one cannot get the accredited Australian degree programme anywhere else in Sri Lanka.” ACBT is accredited by various organisations and regulatory bodies that leave no doubt of its authenticity. Edith Cowan University degree programmes are listed in the Association of

Commonwealth Universities, International Handbook of Education and The World of Learning. ACBT also has the Industry Advi-sory Committee accreditation and the Vice Chancellors Committee accreditation assuring a completely legitimate education. This ensures that the students do not encounter any obstacles in furthering their education or seeking employment.

This high standard of education at ACBT is assured by the direct involvement of the Edith Cowan University. Moderation of the Institute's functions are carried out by Australian lecturers who visit intermittently each semester. The Institute adopts a one to one teaching and learning method in a highly disciplined atmosphere. The visiting lecturers provide continuous assessment by facilitating these lectures and giving feedback to the local lecturers on lecturing and better designing of evaluations. Apart from these motivational visits, academic meetings are also held to uphold the quality of education. A separate project office is in place to facilitate support from the Australian University.
Aside from the strict guidelines followed, ACBT is also subjected to a quality audit to assure the quality of the programmes at every instance. "The higher education of Australia is under AUQA; Australian Universities Quality Audit guidelines. They identify sections to audit and ACBT conforms to that requirement in order to deliver the Edith Cowan University degree right here in Sri Lanka," says Dr Thilakaratne. Examinations for every course unit held at ACBT are also strictly monitored through the coordination between the ACBT lecturer approved by the Edith Cowan University and the Unit Coordinator of Edith Cowan University. The Unit Coordinator at the University sets the unit plan, assessment system, key text for reading, power point slides and other relevant study material. The examination papers are couriered to receive on the day of the examination and all answer scripts are marked by the Edith Cowan University lecturers. These steps avoid unnecessary bias or room for malpractice. The students may formally appeal to the ECU project office for reassessment in the event the student is unsatisfied with the results and the final certificate received is directly from the University.

The MBA programme differs from the other programmes offered at ACBT, as there is far greater involvement of the ECU. The registration procedure is conducted under strict regulation where the certificates of candidates are scanned and sent to ECU for their approval. Once admitted ACBT provides support by facilitating Internet search for research purposes, academic writing and preparatory workshops. The

students also have access to the ECU library online enabling them to coordinate with the University. The lectures are held on evenings and weekends to accommodate those who are already in employment and the programme also offers the flexibililty of 2-4 course units per semester.

Highlighting the requirements for employability Dr Thilakaratne stresses the importance of delivering education in English. If necessary a two-week course is offered to the students, free of charge, that aims to brush up English language, mathematics and computer skills. The courses themselves offer a training that moulds students to suit the industry needs. Apart from developing communication skills, the ECU programmes strive to be different as it focuses on the practical aspect of the programmes.

Three courses, namely, Business Edge 1,2, and 3 are developed to teach students within the classroom to deal with real practices in the corporate world, how to manage human resources, prepare a marketing plan, a business plan and other practical aspects. “When a student is employed he won’t feel any difference between his education and work place, he is simply going to apply what he has studied. That is, the classroom simulations at ACBT match with the industry expectations,” assures Dr Thilakaratne. This is exemplified by the success stories of students being absorbed into the work-force immediately after graduation.

Recently the Institute has been acquired by Navitas, a company listed in the Australian Stock Exchange. This in turn has broadened horizons for students enrolled at ACBT. The company has colleges situated in Australia, Canada, UK, Singapore, India, Kenya and Zambia affiliated to prestigious universities of those countries. An ACBT student may transfer to any of these colleges after their first year of education at ACBT. Additionally, the Institute also conducts an English Language Learning Centre that offers IELTS, the international English language testing service. The IELTS is conducted at the centre under the Canberra license and the Institute further provides a seminar series and preparatory classes for those who wish to acquire the qualification.

Looking to the future of the Institute, ACBT hopes to introduce new programmes in emerging areas such as Bachelor of Business in Accounting, Finance, Human Resource Management and Tourism and Hospitality Management, to provide for the needs of the country in the coming years. The Institute has already expanded their operations to Kandy and student recruitments are in progress for the first intake for July.