

CHANGING THE DYNAMICS OF INT'L HIGHER EDUCATION LOCALLY

By Ruvini Jayasinghe

Every year, escalating batches of A level qualified students leave our shores for higher education in universities abroad that offer degree courses which prepare them for their future job aspirations.

Many of these students do not return to Sri Lanka as their foreign degrees are a passport to joining the international employment market in the profession of their choice. With high IQ levels, the best international professional qualifications, natural adaptability and desire to begin life in a developed country, most of these students settle down to a life in the adopted country where they completed their university degrees. Some even migrate to other developed countries depending on their job markets.

Although many local higher education institutions offer degrees in affiliation with top-level foreign universities, students who follow these courses have to go to the affiliated university abroad to finally complete the university degree.

But the astronomical cost of higher education in a foreign university, with the current rising currency conversion against the Sri Lanka rupee, is a heavy

financial burden on parents who want the best available education for their children.

Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) has played a pioneering role in facilitating world university degree courses accessible in Sri Lanka since its inception 22 years ago.

Throughout its existence, SLIIT has scored many “Firsts”. This year the institution will once again be among the pioneers in changing the higher education landscape in Sri Lanka.

For the first time in the history of higher education in our country, a complete Australian University degree will be offered by SLIIT in affiliation with Curtin University, Australia. SLIIT has also partnered with the prestigious University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, to offer three new business management degrees.

BMD spoke to the Dean of SLIIT Business School, Professor Samantha Thelijagoda, on SLIIT’s achievements in changing the dynamics of higher education for the youth of Sri Lanka.

Excerpts from the interview:



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Students of SLIIT Business School who have enrolled in Curtin University programmes will also be able to work on academic work with both lecturers and students of Curtin university. This will enable a smooth transition in adjusting to the culture for students when they do join Curtin University for on-campus lectures.

We have a long-term partnership with Curtin University and offered computing and engineering degree programmes through an articulation arrangement. The partnership has been expanded to offer the full Curtin curriculum on the above disciplines, including business degree programmes this year through SLIIT International.

Q: Is this the first-ever foreign university degree to be conducted totally in Sri Lanka?

Yes, it is our biggest achievement for 2022. For the first time in the history of our higher education, SLIIT takes pride in being the first higher education institution to offer a complete degree programme by Curtin University, Australia. Sri Lankan students can now complete a full Australian university degree in Sri Lanka for the first time.

Q: As a prestigious and well recognized higher education campus, what are the upcoming foreign collaboration programmes offered by SLIIT Business School for 2022?

SLIIT Business School has stepped up its high-quality business degrees courses for Sri Lanka's youth seeking qualifications from top universities in the world. A fresh BBA degree programme offered by the Business School of Curtin University in Australia will commence in February 2022, and the entire programme can be completed here in Sri Lanka. And also it recently established a very strong partnership with the University of Queensland to offer business and engineering degrees.

Q: What is the strength of the business relationship between Curtin Business School and SLIIT Business School? How do students benefit from enrolling in this foreign degree programme?

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Needless to say, this is a great benefit for Sri Lankan students at a time when overseas travel for higher education may not be an option due to health and security concerns. But when international travel becomes feasible, the option is also open for students to transfer to Curtin Campuses in Australia. In this partnership, we offer business degrees with three specializations: International Management, Innovation & Entrepreneurship and Digital Marketing. Students who enrolled for the first batch in 2022 will be given a 15% discount for all three years.

Curtin University is among the world's top universities and ninth in Australia according to the prestigious academic ranking of World Universities' 2021. It is only one of three

universities in Australia and one of only 13 in the world to achieve the "QS Five Stars Plus" recognition.

Q: What special benefits does SLIIT's partnership with the University of Queensland (UQ) offer our students?

SLIIT Business School recently made another huge leap forward in partnering with the University of Queensland in Australia for a wider scope in business degrees. Now, young Sri Lankan degree seekers can obtain business degrees in three areas, Business Management, Commerce and Economics. With this new UQ degree, students have the privilege of completing the first year of study in Sri Lanka, before they leave for UQ, Australia, to complete the next two years of the degree programme. With this new partnership, we can offer our students a very favourable discount on the course fee. They will be granted a 25% discount for their course fee while they study at UQ in Australia. For the first year of this world-class business degree, the student would have to pay only a local fee.

Q: How is the University of Queensland ranked amongst other Australian and global universities?

University of Queensland ranks among the world's top universities and one of Australia's leading research and teaching institutions. It is a founding

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member of the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, a member of "Universities Australia" and one of only three Australian members of the global "Universitas 21."

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Q: What is the level of interaction between students enrolled in the Curtin University programme with SLIIT Business School and their fellow students at Curtin University Australia?

Q: SLIIT Business School continues to inspire, serve and attract youth through well recognized foreign partnerships. Has SLIIT Business School recognized areas for improvement to better equip the students of tomorrow?

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We must appreciate the hard work and effort of our institute to shape the future of Sri Lanka. As a well-established higher education provider shaping the lives of the future of tomorrow, it is our responsibility to empower students with the necessary soft skills and professional skills. SLIIT Business School, being a pioneer in leading the digital transformation of education, will continue to improvise to nurture the students and empower them to leading roles. ^{bmd}



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