

Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode

CONSULTANCY PROJECT REPORT

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) contacted Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK) for reassessment and revitalization of their MBA (Agri Business Management) Program in the Faculty of Agriculture to address some pressing concerns like low subscription, and possibly low relevance curriculum, which was resulting in moderate employability. Specifically, KAU wanted:

- a. review of its present institutional and administrative structure of the programme,
- b. probe the possibility and plan for academic-industry linkage,
- c. suggestions for avenues/action for employability of the MBA graduates, and
- d. review of the syllabus of the programme.

Based on discussions with KAU, IIMK set out on the consultancy contract and asked for published materials like admissions records, placement records, internship records, course structure, course outlines, magazines published by institution, placement brochure, evaluation structure and so on to understand what was underlying the MBA programme, which is offered as one of the flagship programmes of College of Cooperatives, Banking and Management, Thrissur (CCBM), which is a constituent college of KAU, since 1985. After a careful examination of furnished documents, IIMK requested the Director of CCBM (the point of contact for the project) to organize some focus group discussions between various stakeholders to get an in-depth understanding of the current status as well as the aspirations of the organization. Six focus group discussions, with an average of two hours each, were organized on zoom online platform that brought in various stakeholders to talk on the issues of course structure and evaluation schemes, admission processes, placement of students and industry linkage, entrepreneurship and incubator linkage, student aspirations and so on. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed – the analysis of various facets is represented in the chapters dealing with each element while the focus group discussions form an annexure of this report along with the furnished documents. Finally, physical visits to KAU were undertaken by IIMK faculty to meet all important relevant stakeholders. This ensured that the conclusions that were drawn from earlier processes were verified. They give robustness to this report.

The first section of this report focusses on the vision and mission of KAU and CCBM to explore how the objectives of the MBA program is aligned with them. On a careful analysis of vision-mission-objectives of the three hierarchical levels of KAU, CCBM and Management Program (MBA Agribusiness Management), it is found that while the space of making a contribution through creation and dissemination of knowledge in agriculture sector remain unequivocal

across the three levels, there are significant misalignments in how it is built in the shared understanding at each level. The first chapter of this report deals with the analysis of this shared understanding at these hierarchical levels. Since, there are significant misalignments, it is imperative that the overall structure in place to deliver the MBA program is not optimal and needs to be changed.

The MBA programme envisions creating agripreneurs and agribusiness managers with state of art knowledge that fosters group creativity and excellence. On analysis of data collected, it is found that the presence of 3-tier structure in a tightly controlled university system, which largely draws its student pool from agriculture sciences and runs undergraduate, post-graduate and PhD programmes, is not flexible enough to cater to the needs of the MBA programme. Specifically, the mandate and mission of CCBM significantly differs from the requirements of the MBA programme. As this report focused on each element of the MBA programme from admissions, placements, internships, entrepreneurial training, course structure, and so on, it becomes increasingly clear that the administrative structure of the programme should change to accommodate these elements in a good manner. Further, this report proposes imparting more autonomy to the MBA programme, so that it can work with private organizations, non-governmental organizations and other entities to create a vibrant environment that is characteristic of a good management institution.

The proposed administrative structure for MBA programme is to create an independent programme called the School of Agribusiness Management under KAU and be given significant autonomy in decision-making. The autonomy is required to be able to deviate from the normative expectations about course structure and evaluation schemes, admissions, placement activities and so on of KAU and follow what would matter for delivery on its vision, mission and objectives. The MBA programme might be headed by director, who might be a senior officer of the University and supported by two associate directors, who might be appointed on contract by KAU. The portfolio of the first associate director could be those of all internal program management matters, curriculum and its delivery and evaluation, website management and so on, while those of the second associate director could be those of admissions, placement, entrepreneurship, internship, public relations and so on. A few posts of permanent faculty might be shifted from CCBM and created afresh for the school. All processes of admissions might be delinked from the directorate of education of university and entrusted to the director of the school. These changes in autonomy and structure are needed to create a vibrant management institution that the university is desirous of having. The chapter on Administration and Autonomy deals with this issue in greater depth.

This chapter also deals in-depth about the provision of creating a public relations office that would be entrusted with the responsibility of creating industry-academia linkage at various levels. The pool of guest faculty should be expanded to invite more managers from industry and alumni networks. These guest faculty should be energised to undertake workshops wherein employability of the MBA graduates could be enhanced. Entrepreneurs and incubators could be also invited. An annual festival might be conducted to felicitate some of them and bring their insights and internship projects into the school from that association. The curriculum should be revised to include industry internships and/or entrepreneurship internships that contribute directly to advance job and entrepreneurship prospects of the students. The new administrative structure should also be charged with responsibility of budgeting for these activities. The fee structure hasn't been revised and could be looked into. Additional fundraising activities can be looked into by the school. The classroom infrastructure should be upgraded to represent an appealing picture of the institution to these important constituencies. On the issue of admissions, data was made available for the last 5 years, wherein it was observed that neither the sanctioned strength of 40 seats were filled up nor they were filled up in time in any of these years. In fact, admissions were done with several revised notifications prolonging the entire admissions process. These issues signal to prospective students that the institution is not serious about imparting education and churning out agripreneurs and agribusiness professionals armed with state of art knowledge and creativity, which is the vision of the program. The diversity of students is also an indicator that it is not taken seriously by students – stakeholders stated that it was seen as a compromised program as serious students move to other places while the processes of admissions get prolonged. In addition, the pool is highly devoid of international students and students from other states though provision for the same is there in the admission policies.

The entrance examination for the admissions and the percentage of marks allotted for GD and PI, which is currently at 20% of the total marks obtained, should also be revised to ensure better screening of participants. Specific arrangements should be made in the new structure to ensure that a more diverse pool of applicants are invited and enrolled into the program. Finally, this chapter envisions that in the revised structure of the school, the profile of students being taken in should be in sync with the feedback received from PR and placement teams to ensure that right profiles are admitted into the program that can be absorbed in the market in a good manner after the completion of their studies. This chapter envisages how market signal of seriousness of the program might boost overall quality and quantity of seats filled in the program.

Accreditation of the MBA programme by good national and international agencies would also bring in best practices into the institution. It would also signal about the seriousness of the program to the prospective students. It would signal to industry about the prevalence of a sincere programs as well. The agribusiness industry and other supportive institutions are the primary recipients of MBA graduates from the institution; a relative dearth of accredited management institution in this space would provide the competitive edge that MBA programme can build for a long term. The second associate director can be charged with the institution getting accredited to reputable agencies.

The chapter on strengthening industry-academia linkage and entrepreneurship-academia linkage has been some of the most emphasized ones in the online interviews by all stakeholders. Currently, the guest faculty carry out over half of the teaching requirements as full-time faculty recruitments have not happened as much as required to run the institution. During interviews it was revealed that some of these guest faculty belong to various management associations or business organizations and they bring in not only practical insights to classrooms but also industry linkage to the students. Therefore, this report envisions inviting more guest lectures and workshops from people from industry; management is a practice-oriented field and more practical insights make students better prepared for a role in organizations.

The current students as well as those in the placement team were interviewed and it was found that there were significant structural gaps that could hinder the engagement of industry professionals on campus, should they came in. The school lacks student club activities that generate ownership and ideation among students – the students consider the school relevant only for classroom teaching and come prepared as day scholars for spending only those hours in the institution that are required for attending classes. To bring vibrancy and ownership among students, it is necessary that off-class co-curricular activities, workshops, talks, debates, club activities and other such avenues be given significant importance for holistic development of students in the institution. These are important to turn them into employable candidates. Therefore, this report proposes that the MBA program be made an on-campus residential program. In the revised structure, the second associate dean and the PR office should be made in charge of these activities and their promotion in the institution. The PR team should ensure that placement brochure, websites and other such linkage elements are state of art. Currently, placement activities are student-run and they can be continued as such; however, the placement committee should be charged with more funds, avenues and autonomy while being controlled through feedback from students and industry stakeholders. They could be an elected body having students from both the campus years. The senior students should be charged with

creating internship opportunities for the junior batch while the junior batch should be charged with the responsibility of bringing in companies for final placements of the senior batch. The targets for the committee should be fixed at the beginning of the first year and second year respectively. The committee should be charged with expanding the portfolio of companies to about five times of current number in one to two conceivable years with the support of the second associate director and the PR office.

In line with above, an entrepreneurship committee of students should be created. The committee should closely work with the KAU incubator and other incubators in the region under the guidance of the second associate director and PR office. They should also keep close contacts with entrepreneurs / resource providers in the area or with entrepreneurs, who are graduating out of these incubators. Incubator managers/entrepreneurs/resource providers should be encouraged to undertake guest faculty positions at the school and teach entrepreneurship courses in the curriculum. Entrepreneurship seminars, workshop and festivals should be made a regular part of academic calendar as well. The student committee should be charged with building upon these linkages and creating avenues for minor and major projects with these linkages that get created. There are issues of trust and property rights that typically prevent entrepreneurs from hiring student interns on live projects; entrepreneurship committee should be charged with creating such a trust-based environment, wherein the ecosystem supports creating internship opportunities for students. Currently, students are fearful about exploring entrepreneurship and state that they would rather join an organization as an employee to learn the ropes before taking a plunge into starting their own ventures. After undergoing the revamped minor and major internship in a new start-up, it is expected that student would learn competencies required to start a new venture and develop an attitude for risk-taking that can create agripreneurs from among them. Therefore, should students choose to start a new venture after the completion of their graduation, then such students might also be encouraged to connect with the resource providers that the entrepreneurship committee has developed a linkage with. Additionally, students might be given a three-year break from placements, such that if they fail in their new ventures, then they would be given a chance to explore alternative placements through university placement committee.

A database of alumni of KAU, who have started their new ventures or who have risen in their respective organizations, should be created by the PR offices. The PR office should assist alumni committee of students in organizing yearly management festivals for alumni, who would enjoy coming back and engaging with the institution in developing curriculum, organising workshops, helping students prepare for interviews by organising career clinics for

them and so on. Developing alumni relationships is a soft work; as far as possible, placement committee and entrepreneurship committee members should not try to milk alumni relations in a very direct manner, as it might backfire. Only when an alumnus is themselves willing to support placement/entrepreneurship committees should they be exposed to these committees. Alumni committee should be charged with building a strong alumni network with most alumni participating in these festivals irrespective of their direct contribution to placement or entrepreneurship activities of the program.

Finally, the fourth chapter of this report deals with the revised curriculum structure, course delivery mechanisms, course outlines, teacher evaluation systems and physical infrastructure in the classroom. IIMK explored these deeply and understood current competency gaps through published materials as well as through interviews with relevant stakeholders. While current internship structure of minor and major internships might be retained, their semesters could change to ensure that the learnings are reflected in placement activities and in taking an entrepreneurship plunge. Currently, the students scout for these internships. In the revised administrative structure, the scouting for internship opportunities might be entrusted to student placement and entrepreneurship committees, who would directly work under the guidance of the second associate director and their PR offices, to ensure that such internships be made available to all students. This change would enhance their employability and risk taking abilities. Further, the number of elective courses that focus on several aspects of entrepreneurship might be increased viz. marketing for start-ups, financial management for new ventures and so on.

The current competency gaps also indicate that the school relies heavily into theoretically teaching concepts in classrooms. This is despite having a built-in provision for practical learning in most offered courses. It was revealed that the spaces for practical learning as given in approved course outlines are taken up by theoretical teaching, in practice. This practice should be strictly dealt with. To ensure that teachers deliver as per expectations, a student feedback system might be designed. Guest faculty, who bring in more practical insights into the classroom, should be encouraged and their numbers might be enhanced. The first associate director should work in close association with the second associate director to invite more courses and workshops from industry professionals. Specifically, all the courses should have to revise course outlines to reflect more readings from academic publications as the current emphasis is only on textbook based teaching. Case studies, simulations and other pedagogical tools should be brought in significantly. The revised course outline format should contain an overview of the course, details about the instructor, learning objectives of the course, reading

list and cases, textbook and reference books, evaluation components with weightages to demonstrate how learning objectives would be tested in the evaluation of students, additional information, if any. A revised curriculum structure is also proposed in this chapter to address competency gaps.

The objective of these changes are to build an ecosystem that supports the vision as laid out for the MBA programme. These changes are proposed based on a comprehensive study of real-time situation on ground for KAU Agribusiness MBA program and their aspirations to take the program to build and sustain a unique management Institute of International Standards capable of churning out a new breed of agripreneurs and Agribusiness managers kindled with fire and endowed with state-of-the-art management knowledge and competencies to serve the nation devoutly in a climate that fosters personal and group creativity and excellence. We sincerely hope that these propositions are in line with what KAU had desired for when they approached IIMK.

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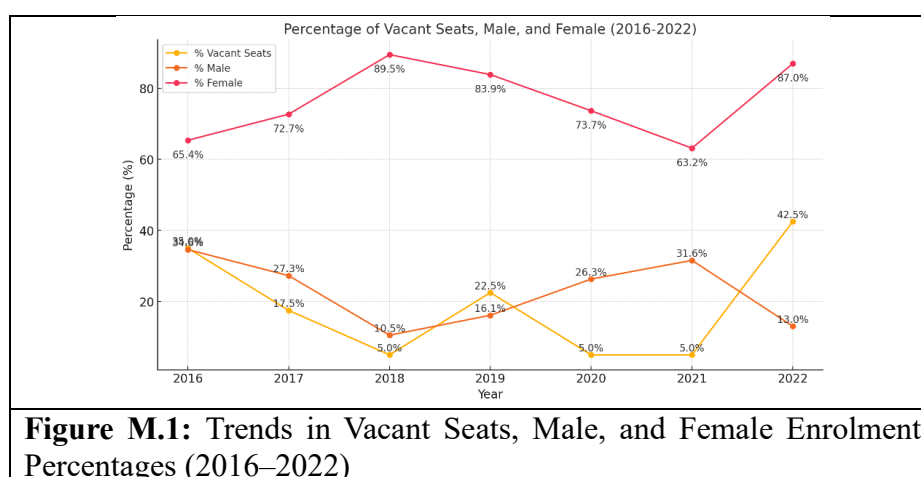
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METHODOLOGY

IIMK asked for published materials like admissions records, placement records, internship records, course structure, course outlines, magazines published by institution, placement brochure, evaluation structure and so on to understand what was underlying the MBA program, which is offered as one of the flagship programs of College of Cooperatives, Banking and Management, Thrissur (CCBM), which is a constituent college of KAU, since 1985. After a careful examination of furnished documents, IIMK requested the Director of CCBM (he is the point of contact for the project) to organize some focus group discussions between various stakeholders to get an in-depth understanding of the current status as well as the aspirations of the organization. Six focus group discussions, with an average of two hours each, were organized on zoom online platform that brought in various stakeholders to talk on the issues of course structure and evaluation schemes, admission processes, placement of students and industry linkage, entrepreneurship and incubator linkage, student aspirations and so on. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed – the analysis of various facets is represented in the chapters dealing with each element while the focus group discussions form an annexure of this report along with the furnished documents. Finally, physical visits to KAU were undertaken by IIMK faculty to meet all important relevant stakeholders. This ensured that the conclusions that were drawn from earlier processes were verified. They give robustness to this report.

We have collected documents from previous years, the minor project topics, and the organization where students secured their internships. We have assessed the institute's research partnerships, detailing their scope, nature, impact, joint projects, publications, and funding outcomes. We have done a programme assessment. A summary of course descriptions and their alignment with the program's learning objectives is provided, alongside an assessment of content alignment with educational and placement goals, identifying gaps or redundancies.



For example, by analyzing the records, we observed the total admissions of 189 students and the placement of only 73 students. During the qualitative interview, the stakeholders responded that

"....We are looking at revamping the entire thing to brand it in a better way, so that we get more takers, in a nutshell..".

As part of this project, we have done field visits and multiple rounds of interviews to get feedback from the administration, incubation centers, faculties, students, alumni, and industry professionals. Multiple Zoom meetings were conducted from October 2023 to December 2023. The field visit was carried out in 2024. The following themes were the major focus while scheduling the data collection.

- 1) Profile of the Department
- 2) Effectiveness of Courses and Programmes Currently Offered
- 3) Turnover of Students, Faculty, and Staff
- 4) Governance and Management
- 5) Admission Policy
- 6) Programme Diversity
- 7) Service Schemes and Other Community Engagement Activities
- 8) Alumni Network and Placement Preferences

The stakeholders reached out for the responses that were

Stakeholders -

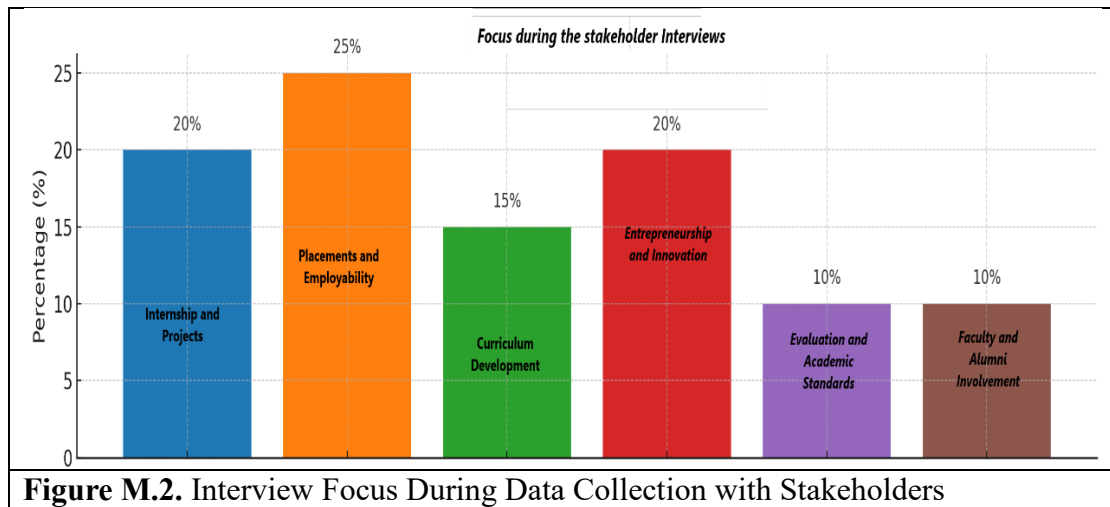
Administration

1. Teachers whose course outlines are shared with us
2. Program head
3. Admissions head
4. Placement head
5. Marketing and PR head
6. Entrepreneurship head

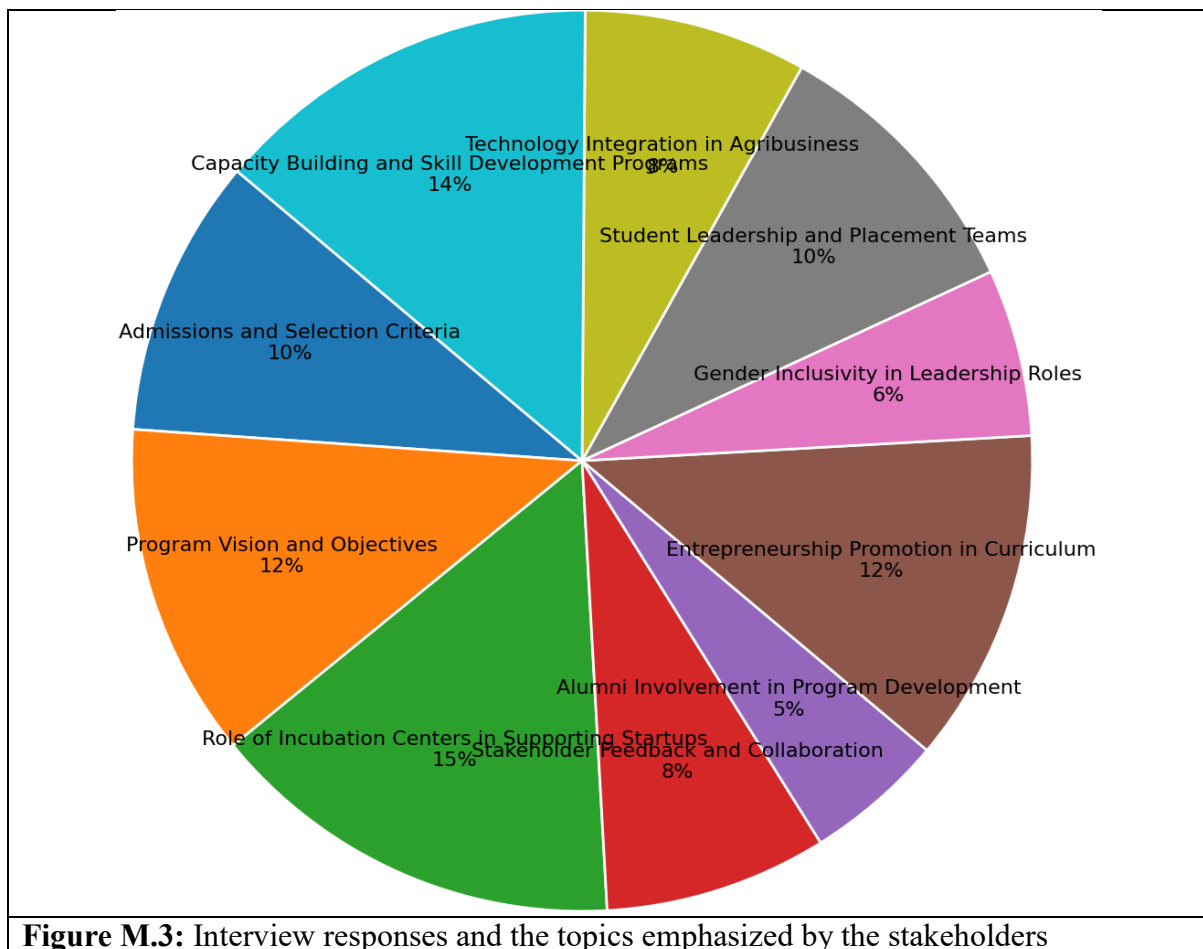
Students Representatives

7. Placement & Internship Coordinators
8. Magazine editorial board
9. NSS and community engagement activity heads
10. Other activity heads

The duration of each Zoom meeting ranged from 1 hour and 40 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes.



In these meetings, several topics were emphasized by stakeholders. The pie chart below wxpresses how different stakeholders prioritized different subjects during these meetings.



Some of the opening statements shared during the Zoom interviews were :

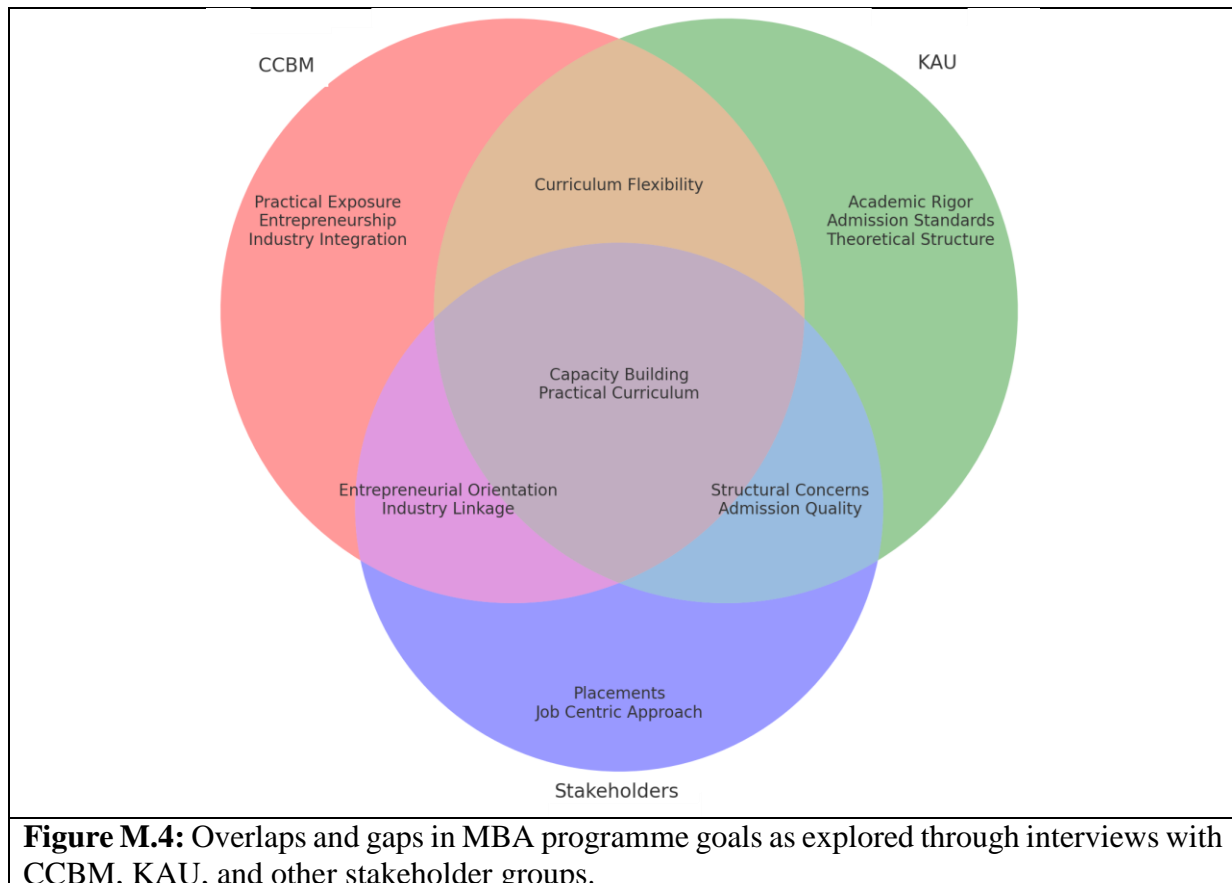
"The MBA program intends to produce job providers rather than job seekers, focusing on agri-entrepreneurship."

"Our graduates should be capable of managing their own organizations and contributing to society, ideally as job providers."

".....Basically, what our university intends is not to have some job seekers after the completion of the program. We want our students to be job providers..."

"The mandate of the course is that along with being capable of manning their own organizations, students should contribute to society by taking up jobs in good organizations."

Our interviews through Zoom and field visits covered a range of interconnected themes, including curriculum design, practical exposure, industry integration, placement support, entrepreneurial orientation, and administrative processes within the MBA program at CCBM under KAU. The details of these interviews are provided in Appendix II. Each stakeholder group brought distinct yet overlapping perspectives. Figure M.4 provides Overlaps and gaps in the MBA program goals discussed during the interviews.



The above gap analysis done as part of this project shows that CCBM emphasizes practical exposure, entrepreneurship, and industry integration, whereas KAU shares its expectations regarding academic rigor, admission standards, and theoretical structure. Students discussed more about placements. The interview response shows an overlap in capacity building, practical curricula, entrepreneurial orientation, and industry linkages during the interview. However, the gaps identified were KAU's academic rigidity (such as ICMR approval) versus students' practical and placement-centric expectations. This report provides a detailed analysis for addressing these gaps, aligning both MBA programs with stakeholder needs, and improving overall program effectiveness.

This study employed a qualitative analysis to examine the alignment, strengths, gaps, and stakeholder expectations regarding the MBA program at the College of Co-operation, Banking, and Management (CCBM) under Kerala Agricultural University (KAU). Figures M.5 to M.6 provide sentiment analysis of multiple interview data to understand areas of concern among the CCBM's MBA stakeholders.

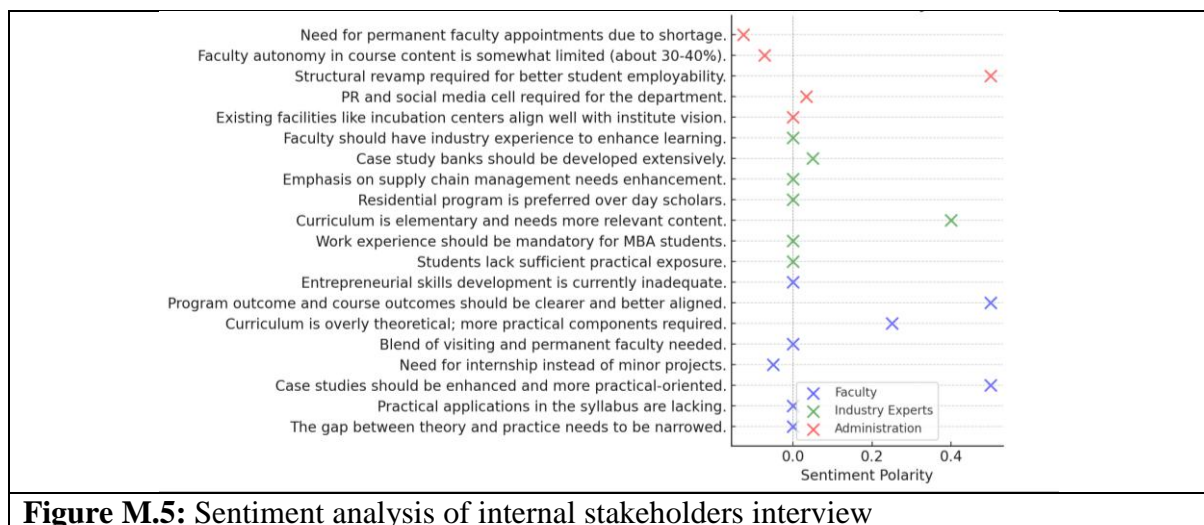


Figure M.5: Sentiment analysis of internal stakeholders interview

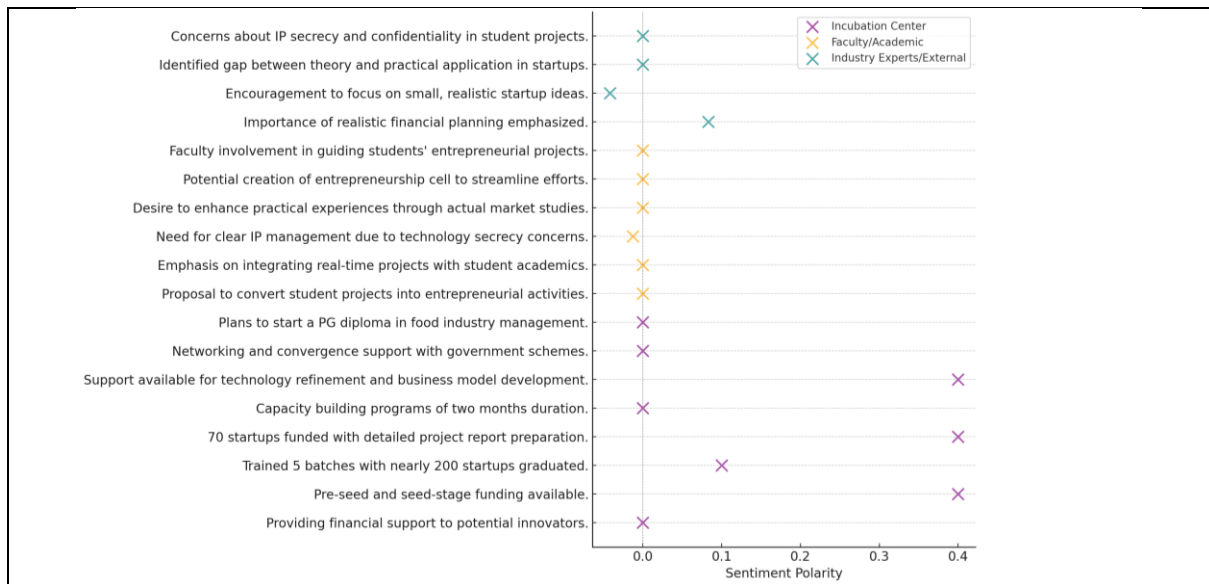


Figure M.6: Sentiment analysis of incubation center interview

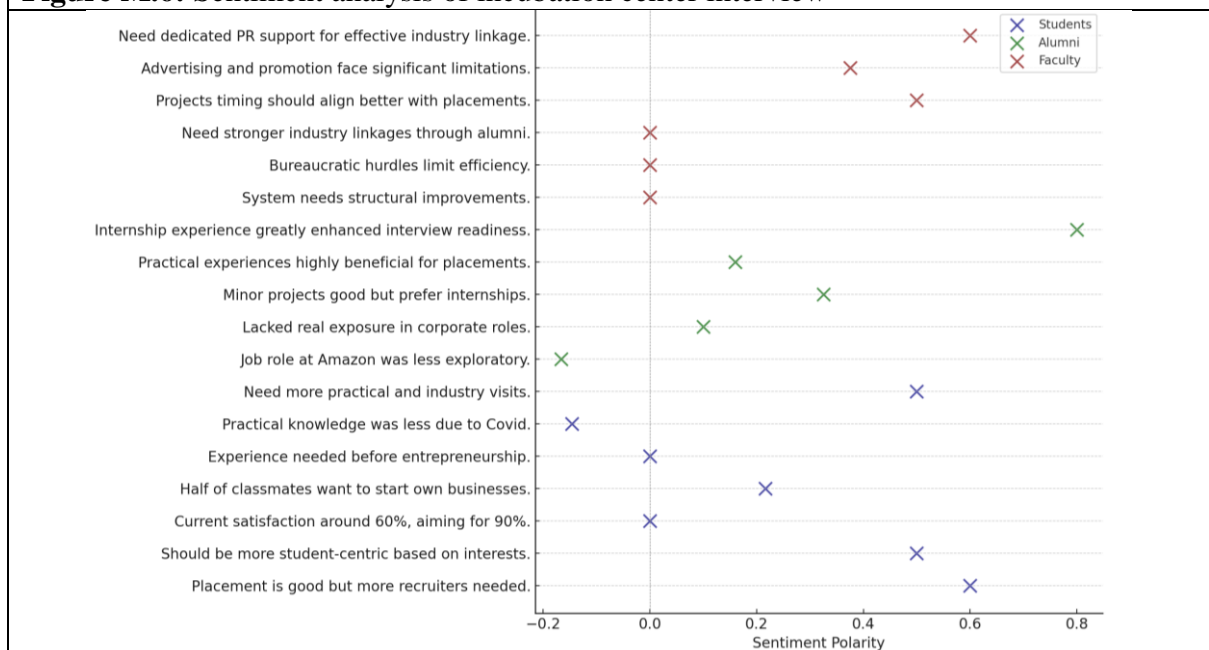


Figure M.7: Sentiment analysis of placement and student interview

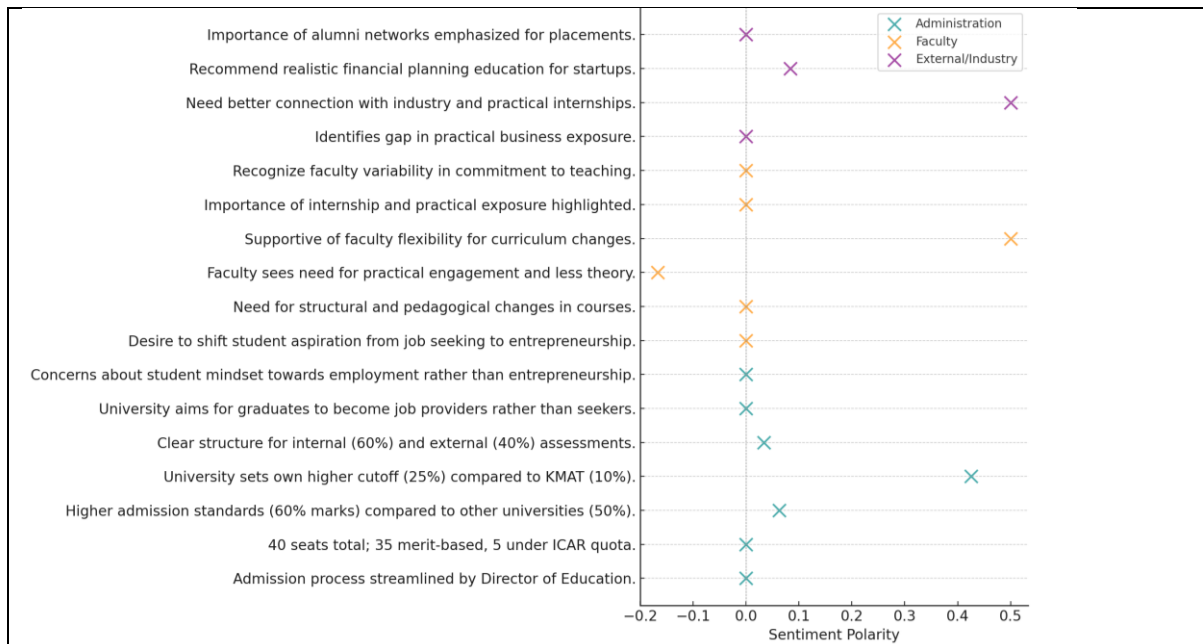


Figure M.8: Sentiment analysis of admission and curriculum interview

On the positive polarity side, the interview responses show happiness about initiatives such as the requirement of faculty flexibility in curriculum design, support systems for startups, pre-seed and seed-stage funding, practical internship experiences, and the ambition to produce job providers rather than seekers. The high sentiment scores were reported when industry experts and alums provided practical exposure and industry linkage.

In contrast, the negative polarity points to areas of concern that require CCBM's attention. Faculty and students expressed dissatisfaction with the overly theoretical nature of the curriculum. Issues like limited PR support, inadequate industry-alumni engagement, rigid structural processes, and shortage of permanent faculty appointments also have concerns. Further, negative polarity for limited practical courses, outdated pedagogical methods, and admission rigidity under KAU' were also noted through the interviews. Overall, there is a positive sentiment toward evolving entrepreneurial and practical reforms. However, the deep-rooted structural and systemic challenges call for deep analysis and recommendations for reforms.

Student and alumni interviews show a strong demand for internships, hands-on learning, and startup readiness, as well as the limitations in placement and mentorship processes. The incubation and funding session has a robust ecosystem for entrepreneurship support, which is positive for the opportunities for alignment with academic objectives. The dynamic nature of our interviews was conversational yet purpose-driven, with participants actively building on

each other's inputs and opening remarks to institutional norms while remaining constructive and solution-oriented. Figure M.9 gives stakeholder expectations of key areas for revamping the MBA program at CCBM.

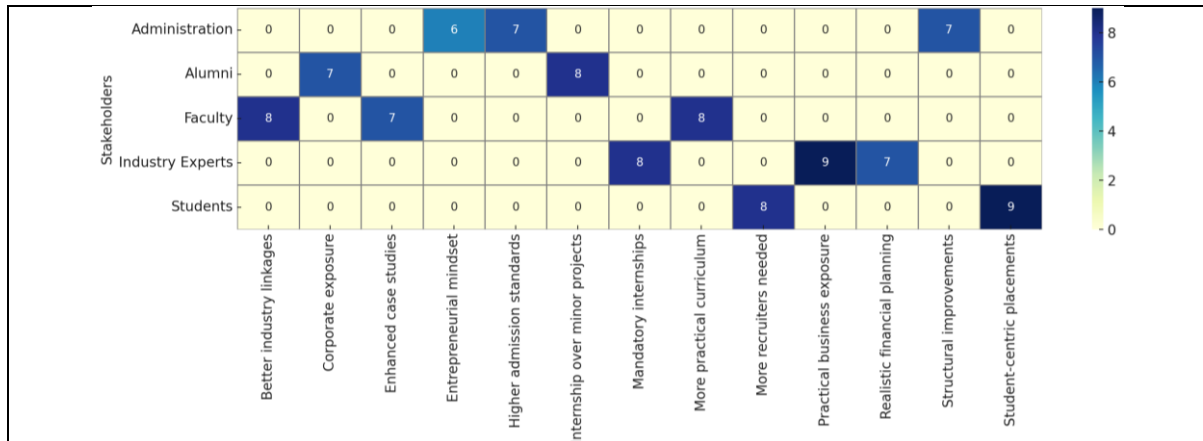


Figure M.9: Stakeholder Prioritization of Key Areas for Revamping the MBA Program at CCBM

The relative importance (on a scale of 0 to 9) among different stakeholder groups of Administration, Alumni, Faculty, Industry Experts, and Students to key improvement areas within the MBA program at the College of Co-operation, Banking and Management (CCBM) shows areas for focusing. The most emphasized needs include student-centric placements (Students), practical business exposure a more practical curriculum (Industry Experts and Faculty), and enhanced case studies (Alumni and Faculty). Both Industry Experts and Faculty strongly prioritized the mandatory internships, while structural improvements were a significant concern for the Administration. The matrix highlights shared priorities across stakeholders and unique expectations, serving as a foundation for our study to assess the possibilities of the MBA programme reforms.

In addition to qualitative interview data, this study analyzes the historical academic and administrative records related to the MBA program at the College of Co-operation, Banking and Management (CCBM). Apart from the report and information available on CCBM and KAU websites, a total of 14 other documents were collected from CCBM and examined. These internal records include internship and minor project summaries (2017–2021), detailed admission records, placement records, course outlines, programme overviews, and examination structure and evaluation components. The details of these documents are provided in Appendix I. These documents provided information about the program's structural design, student intake statistics, placement outcomes, and academic and internship details. Findings

from the data collected from records are analyzed and triangulated with interview findings to provide a detailed understanding of the evolution, consistency, and gaps within the MBA program. This multi-source approach ensured both the reliability of interpretations and a comprehensive view of MBA performance over time. Based on the combined and triangulated insights from historical records and stakeholder interviews, this report reassessed the ongoing process and recommended revitalizing CCBM's MBA programme.

CHAPTER 1 – VISION AND MISSION

The vision of an organization gives direction and focus to the organization; it is futuristic and inspiring in nature for all stakeholders to have a shared understanding of what the organization unequivocally lives for. Additionally, the vision statement embodies the mandate of the organization; it also embodies how this mandate came to the organization, historically. The underlying mission and thereby the goals and directives of the organization are the operationalization of this vision statement in real time; they help the stakeholders understand how this vision is intended to be achieved. Therefore, whenever a strategy has to be designed to achieve a particular target, then the role of the vision statement is paramount. The organization draws its strategy from these. In this chapter, we shall try to understand the vision of the MBA Program. This entails looking at the administrative structure of the organization. We shall delve into each part of this structure with their mandate and history. Thereby, we shall analyse the vision and the underlying mission, goals and objectives of the three tiered structure as given in the paragraph below. As we delve into these, we wish to unravel how the focal MBA program is aligned with them.

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has eight colleges in its fold (four Agriculture, one Agricultural Engineering, one Forestry, one Co-operation Banking & Management, one Climate Change and Environmental Sciences) (Source: KAU website). The College of Co-operation, Banking & Management (CCBM) is one of these eight colleges that was created in 1981 in accordance with Section 5 of the KAU Act (Act 33 of 1977). CCBM was granted an independent status in 1985. As management sciences continued to gain greater acceptance, the mission of the college was broadened to include agribusiness in it. Accordingly, in the year 1996 the college was rechristened as College of Co-operation, Banking and Management (Source: CCBM website). MBA (Agribusiness Management), one of the flagship programmes of the University, is being currently offered from the College from the year 2006. Seventeen batches of students have successfully completed the MBA (ABM) programme till date (Source: MBA Agribusiness Management Prospectus 2025-26). Thus, the MBA (Agribusiness Management) is a three-tiered administrative structure; each structure has its own mandate and history.

In this chapter, we evaluate the vision and the underlying mission, goals and objectives with the mandates and history of the three-tiered structure viz. the university KAU, the college CCBM and the program MBA agribusiness management. We have collected data from secondary sources like websites, notifications in public domain etc., as well as from primary

data as discussed in the methodology section of this report. The aim of this analysis is to understand whether the direction and focus of the focal MBA program is in alignment with its superior organizations to be able to draw support for the program in a manner that enhances the excellence in academic activities and fulfilment of the vision of the program.

In the next section we compare these details from KAU, CCBM and the MBA (Agribusiness Management). We see the direction of their vision statements. We understand the history and mandates for each one of them and how they lead to the vision statements, and their underlying mission statement, goals and objectives.

1.1 Comparing Vision and Mandate Of KAU, CCBM And MBA Program

1.1.1 Kerala Agricultural University: *History from KAU website*

The history of agricultural education in Kerala can be traced back to the year 1896 when a scheme was evolved in the erstwhile Travancore State to train a few young men in scientific agriculture at the Demonstration Farm, Karamana, Thiruvananthapuram, presently, the Cropping Systems Research Centre under Kerala Agricultural University. Agriculture was introduced as an optional subject in the middle school classes in the State in 1922 when an Agricultural Middle School was started at Aluva, Ernakulam District. The popularity and usefulness of this school led to the starting of similar institutions at Kottarakkara and Konni in 1928 and 1931 respectively.

Agriculture was later introduced as an optional subject for Intermediate Course in 1953. In 1955, the erstwhile Government of Travancore-Cochin started the Agricultural College and Research Institute at Vellayani, Thiruvananthapuram and the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences at Mannuthy, Thrissur for imparting higher education in agricultural and veterinary sciences, respectively. These institutions were brought under the direct administrative control of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Animal Husbandry, respectively. With the formation of Kerala State in 1956, these two colleges were affiliated to the University of Kerala. The post-graduate programmes leading to M.Sc. (Ag), M.V.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees were started in 1961, 1962 and 1965 respectively.

On the recommendation of the Second National Education Commission (1964-66) headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari, the then Chairman of the University Grants Commission, one Agricultural University in each State was established. The State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) were established in India as an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System to give the much needed impetus to Agriculture Education and Research in the Country. As a result the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) was established on 24th February 1971 by virtue of

the Act 33 of 1971 and started functioning on 1st February 1972. The Kerala Agricultural University is the 15th in the series of the SAUs.

In accordance with the provisions of KAU Act of 1971, the Agricultural College and Research Institute at Vellayani, and the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy, were brought under the Kerala Agricultural University. In addition, twenty one agricultural and animal husbandry research stations were also transferred to the KAU for taking up research and extension programmes on various crops, animals, birds, etc.

During 2011, Kerala Agricultural University was trifurcated into Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) and Kerala Agricultural University (KAU).

Now the University has eight colleges (four Agriculture, one Agricultural Engineering, one Forestry, one Co-operation Banking & Management, one Climate Change and Environmental Sciences), six RARSs, seven KVKs, 15 Research Stations and 16 Research and Extension Units under the faculties of Agriculture, Agricultural Engineering and Forestry. In addition, one Institute of Agricultural Technology offering Diploma in Agricultural Sciences respectively is also functioning in Kerala Agricultural University.

Vision and Mission as well as Goals and Objectives of KAU from KAU website

Vision & Mission of KAU

Mission

Excellence in Agricultural Education, Research and Extension for Sustainable Agricultural Development and Livelihood security of farming community.

Vision

- Kerala Agricultural University is well poised to meet the challenges ahead that transforms agriculture sector into the engine of growth of Kerala's economy by providing the human resources, and skills and technology for the sustainable development of state's agriculture, all economic activities put to the production of biomass based land and water including crop production (agriculture) and forestry .
- Realisation of this objective renders imperative; on the one hand, the fostering the natural strengths and advantages emanating from resource endowments such as abundant rainfall, and sun shine and tropical year round biomass production capability as well as the literate and well informed human population; and on the other hand

sharpening the competitive edge of Kerala's agriculture through a package of appropriate strategies, public policies, programmes technology services and investment support.

- In the specific context of Kerala's highly heterogeneous resource base and societal values, for ensuring livelihood security of the dependent population a paradigm shift in optimisation of the biophysical resource base for agriculture development is called for from the maximisation of production of specific commodities in contrast, to the maximisation of income and employment on a sustainable basis.
- The Kerala Agricultural University would strive to fulfill its commitment by reorienting and restructuring its programmes. **In education at the graduate level, professionalism would be strengthened with entrepreneurship**; and at the post graduate level, training would be imparted in emerging areas integrating relevant disciplines such as biotechnology, natural resource management, environment, IPR and biodiversity, WTO and global trade to mention a few.
- Research would be reoriented on pursuing a system approach to technology generation systems rather than specific commodities and focused on integrated agro-silvi-pastoral-aqua production systems and resource based livestock production; emphasis would be on product conversion and value addition rather than ending production alone.
- Extension and technology transfer would focus on group approach and area approach, and technology for production systems rather than commodities; training for entrepreneurship rather than adding skills; and support services to be rendered by the single window.

Goals & Objectives of KAU

Goals

To Provide human resources, skills and technology required for sustainable development of agriculture, including crop production, co-operation, forestry, agricultural engineering, community science and other allied disciplines by integrating education, research and extension.

Objectives

The University focuses its strategy on synergizing multi-disciplinary education and strengthening problem-specific research relevant to the state and help building innovative extension systems for sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable agricultural production and overall improvement of rural livelihoods.

To achieve the Mission and Goal, the University propose to adopt the following programmes:

- Provide quality education in Agriculture, Horticulture, Co-operation, Forestry, Agricultural Engineering, Home Science and other allied disciplines.
- Undertake basic, applied and adaptive research to address current and future challenges of farming community and to provide management options relevant to the prevailing agroclimatic and socioeconomic situations.
- **Generate appropriate technologies to support sustainable growth of agricultural entrepreneurship and agri-business.**
- Develop innovative extension strategies and formulate effective mechanisms for Transfer of Technology to institutions and farmers for enhanced and sustainable agricultural production leading to improved rural livelihoods.
- Locate and protect biodiversity to preserve agro-ecosystem of the state and to document traditional knowledge and technologies.

Analysis of Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives of KAU

The analysis of Vision and Mission statements (the nomenclatures are interchanged in KAU website currently) suggests that the University has significant focus on development of agriculture for farming community – rightly so, as their mandate as per history is about bringing in more scientific knowledge and technology to agriculture. Historically, the state agriculture universities (SAUs) were built to give impetus to Agriculture Education and Research – KAU is not an exception. There are several mission statements that focus on agriculture but no one focusses on management in general or general management, in particular. The one mission statement that does capture agriculture as a business and development of agricultural entrepreneurship, thereby, is highlighted in bold above, viz. *“In education at the graduate level, professionalism would be strengthened with entrepreneurship...”*. On the level of Goals and Objectives as well, an oblique reference is made in the statement, *“Generate appropriate technologies to support sustainable growth of agricultural entrepreneurship and agri-business”*.

Firstly, when agribusiness and agricultural entrepreneurship is talked about, it is only talked about with reference to development of appropriate technologies. However, management and entrepreneurship are more of an Art rather than Science; the philosophical school of thought for a management program is significantly different from those of physical sciences, on which Agricultural Science and Technology is premised upon. A significant departure in the

philosophical roots is not possible until it is recognized and consciously grown in the psyche of the larger organization viz. KAU, in whose fold the MBA program is housed. It is highly recommended that such a requirement is understood and followed through for the objective of strengthening the MBA program holistically. Secondly, management program is only envisaged in the current objectives for graduate level teaching and not for research. This is unlike that of agriculture, where research is a primary focus as highlighted in the mandate of KAU and the history of development of this mandate, which is aptly covered in Vision and Mission statement as well as in goals and objectives of the university – there the mission and mandate is congruent of agriculture teaching and research. No program can develop beyond a certain self-imposed boundary, if provisions for research is not adequately built into the system. Therefore, we are of the view that if adequate focus on management program is not a focal area for KAU to be reflected in its vision and underlying mission, goals and objectives, then it might result in an impoverished management (and entrepreneurship) program.

1.1.2 College of Co-operation, Banking and Management (CCBM)

The College of Co-operation, Banking and Management, a constituent institution of the Kerala Agricultural University was established in the year 1981 in accordance with Section 5 of the KAU Act (Act 33 of 1977). CCBM's nearest city/town is Thrissur, located 9 km from the station. The College is the brainchild of great visionaries, who had foreseen the need for a multi-disciplinary innovative management institution to impart education and undertake research and extension in the field of Agriculture and related institutional support sector by blending agricultural input supply chain, post-harvest activities and managerial talents for the benefit of the Agricultural sector and rural development.

The College was granted an independent status since April 1985. The College has grown many fold since its inception and has an excellent academic record with committed faculty. The College has been recognized as a resource centre by several national level institutions for hosting training programmes, Workshops, Summer Institutes, Seminars and Short Courses. Presently the College is offering a four-year Professional Management Degree, B.Sc. (Hons.) C&B, Post graduate Programme, M.Sc. (C & B) with three specializations (Co-operative Management, Rural Marketing Management, Rural Banking and Finance Management), a Doctoral Programme in Rural Marketing Management, and a MBA in Agribusiness Management. The graduates and post-graduates of the College hold coveted managerial

positions in leading banking, financial services, co-operative, agribusiness, retailing institutions and Universities in India and abroad.

History of CCBM from website

The Kerala Agricultural University Act (Section 5 of Act 33 of 1977) provides for teaching, research and extension in Co-operation along with different branches of study, under a Faculty for Co-operation. Accordingly, a proposal for starting a new four-year degree programme in Co-operation and Banking was presented in the 21st meeting of the General Council held on 20-21 November, 1980. Accordingly, the proposal for starting a new four-year degree programme in Co-operation and Banking under the Faculty of Agriculture was presented and approved in the 22nd meeting of the General Council held on 30-1-1981. The first batch was admitted in November 1981 and classes began on 16th November 1981. The programme was attached to College of Horticulture. The Government sanction for the programme was received in the year 1982. The Academic Council had earlier accorded the provisional approval for the Syllabi of the programme.

As part of institutionalizing the programme, the senior most Faculty member was appointed as a Special Officer whose Project Report for establishment of a College of Co-operation and Banking was placed before the Academic Council. The Mandate of the College was to carry out teaching, research and extension programmes in domains that will enhance the better access to inputs and markets of the farming community through the creation of smart agricultural value chains. The meeting of the Academic Council held on November 1, 1982. Following the approval of the revised objectives of the programme of the College by the Academic Council, a Special Officer was appointed in 1983 with the aim of completing the process of redrafting the B.Sc (C&B) syllabi in consonance with the mandated objectives. The draft syllabi designed accordingly was vetted and reviewed by a committee including experts from outside, appointed by the Academic Council. The revised syllabus was approved by the Board of Studies in Agriculture at its 19th meeting held on 8-5-1985. The syllabus was further refined to fit into the semester system and the final approval was received at the 39th meeting of the Academic Council. The programme was delinked from the College of Horticulture on 1st of April 1985 and started functioning as an independent College under the name of College of Co-operation and Banking at the building of Communication Centre, Mannuthy. The first batch of students, who were admitted in 1981 graduated in 1985.

The College of CCBM comes under the Faculty of Agriculture, Kerala Agricultural University. The Agricultural Faculty is headed by the Dean of the Agriculture and each College coming under the Faculty of Agriculture is headed by Associate Deans. The Associate Dean of the CCBM is being assisted by four department heads of the College viz., Head of Co-operative Management, Rural Banking & Finance, Rural Marketing Management & Development Economics. The function of the Dean is again supported by the Administrative section of the College headed by Administrative Officer & his staffs.

Mandate

The Mandates of the University as defined in The Agricultural University Act, 1971 ,are:

1. Making provision for Imparting education in different branches of study, particularly in Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry including Veterinary and Dairy Science, Co-operation, Fisheries, Forestry, Agricultural Engineering, Home Science and other Allied branches of learning and scholarship.
2. Furthering the advancement of leadership prosecution of research, particularly in Agriculture and Allied Sciences.
3. Undertaking an Extension education Programme; and
4. Such other purposes as the University may from time to time determine.

Mission

The Original Mission of the College was to grow up as a premier national institution in the domain of Agricultural support systems management. As management sciences have continued to gain greater acceptance in the arena of Agriculture production and supply chains, the Mission of the College was broadened to include agribusiness. Accordingly, in the year 1996 the College was rechristened as College of Co-operation, Banking and Management.

The Current Mission of the College is to grow into a premier management Institute of National eminence to foster the Managerial and Entrepreneurial manpower and management technology needs of the rural community and ecosystem.

Goals

- Facilitating professionalisation of the management of formal and informal co-operatives, Financial institutions, **Agribusiness enterprises** and other rural development organisations.
- To build up additional Academic programmes to fulfil the mission of the College.

- To play a pro-active role in the promotion and strengthening of farmer friendly support system institutions to remove resource constraints confronted by the farming community.

Objectives

- To provide thorough bred graduates for the Professionalisation of the management of the departments and the institutions involved in providing support services for Agricultural development.
- To undertake research on Functional, Organisational, Institutional, Managerial and Operational issues relating to the support services in Agricultural development and Agri-business Management.
- To offer training programmes for policy makers, members of the Board of Directors and Managerial personnel of the support services in order to upgrade their managerial and professional skills and capacities.
- To impart education and training to young men and women for managing income generating activities through self-employment.

Analysis of CCBM's Vision, Mission, and Objectives

It is interesting to observe the historical development of CCBM from 1981 to 1985 as an independent college under KAU and then being rechristened to include the “M” for Management in the name, as in CCBM. This rechristening to include “Management” in the name became important in view of the growing prominence of the MBA Program that the college housed. However, historically, the mandate of CCBM didn't include Management (please see the mandate section as given above). Accordingly, the mission statement even today includes – *“As management sciences have continued to gain greater acceptance in the arena of Agriculture production and supply chains, the Mission of the College was broadened to include agribusiness”*. Clearly, CCBM has grown to include the following in its mission statement, *“The Current Mission of the College is to grow into a premier management Institute of National eminence to foster the Managerial and Entrepreneurial manpower and management technology needs of the rural community and ecosystem”*. However, the goals of CCBM misses the management program from a mile. This is interesting! It is interesting to note that the goals do not say a word about management or entrepreneurship except for a mention of agribusiness (highlighted above). Ironically, the 3 out of 4 objectives have

management development focus (including training the top management, board of directors and policy makers for upgradation of their managerial and professional skills and capabilities) as highlighted above. The fourth objective is about development of self-employment through income generating activities (probably including both farm and non-farm activities?). This objective, though unclear, is also housed in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the objectives of CCBM are all drawn for management and entrepreneurship programs, which is a significant departure from its rooting in its mandate and overarching vision of the organization, in its current form. Therefore, CCBM is a confused organization today, especially in relationship to its vision and its alignment to MBA program. This is evident in the underlying goals and objectives. While the higher order shared understanding of all stakeholder is that “management” is just an addition to the original mandate and therefore the goals of the organization, the lower order shared understanding, as reflected in objectives of CCBM cover management of agribusiness. In fact, all 4 of 4 objectives are either from general management or from agribusiness or both! There is no mention of cooperatives or financial institutions etc. in objectives while the higher order shared understanding is related to those subjects! In a way, there is a huge confusion today regarding what the real vision of CCBM is – where did cooperatives, banking and other organization feature? and where did management and entrepreneurship feature in the overall scheme of CCBM?

1.1.3 MBA Agribusiness Management

Vision, Mission and Objectives of MBA Agribusiness Management as obtained from websites and notifications for admissions to the program are as below:

Vision

To build and sustain a unique management institute of international standards capable of churning out a new breed of Agripreneurs and agribusiness managers kindled with fire, endowed with state-of-the-art management knowledge and competencies to serve the nation devoutly in a climate that fosters personal and group creativity and excellence.

Mission

To mould a new breed of globally competent and socially committed agripreneurs and agribusiness managers capable of owning and operating domain Agribusiness Enterprises effectively by imparting value-based education in a tech-savvy environment.

Objectives

- To build core management competencies among technically competent agricultural and other graduates.
- To own and manage sustainable Food and Agri-business Enterprises.
- To develop entrepreneurial spirit, skills, and capacities among students.
- To implant core management competencies among prospects to own and manage sustainable agri-food value chains.
- To nurture a culture and climate of entrepreneurship and innovation among future leaders.
- To expose students to best-in-class management practices in the industry.
- To implant high ethical and moral standards in future leaders.

Vision, Mission and Objectives from notifications for admissions to the program

Vision (From Admission Notification)

To build and sustain a unique management institute of international standards capable of churning out a new breed of agripreneurs and agribusiness managers kindled with fire and endowed with state-of-the-art management knowledge and competencies to serve the nation devoutly in a climate that fosters personal and group creativity and excellence.

Mission (From Admission Notification)

To mould a new breed of globally competitive and socially committed agripreneurs and agribusiness managers capable of owning and operating domain agribusiness enterprises effectively by imparting value-based education in a tech-savvy environment.

Objectives (From Admission Notification)

- To implant core management competencies among the prospects to own and manage sustainable agri-food value chains.
- To nurture a culture and climate of entrepreneurship and innovation among the prospective managers.
- To expose the students to best-in-class management practices in the industry.
- To ingrain high ethical and moral standards in future managers.

Analysis of MBA Agribusiness Management Vision Mission and Objectives

The vision of the MBA Agribusiness Management is to evolve as a premier management institute of national eminence and international standards, addressing the managerial and entrepreneurial manpower and technological needs of the rural community and ecosystem with state of the art management knowledge and competencies to serve the nation in a climate that fosters personal and group creativity and excellence. This is a tall order to achieve and would need a rethink into what would be required to achieve the mission statement of – To mould a new breed of globally competitive and socially committed agripreneurs and agribusiness managers capable of owning and operating domain agribusiness enterprises... The current consultancy project awarded to IIMK covers some of these important goals that the program has identified in its mission and objectives. While the MBA Agribusiness Management started as a management program housed in CCBM along with focus on cooperatives and banking etc., there is a clear need for outgrowth into a fully developed Management school in itself that is aptly given space under the current architecture. As discussed in the previous segment, originally CCBM was established to lead in agricultural support systems development; the college expanded its vision in 1996 to include agribusiness, reflecting the growing role of management sciences in agriculture and supply chains. The goals of CCBM focus on professionalizing the management of cooperatives, financial institutions, agribusiness enterprises, and rural development organizations, while proactively promoting farmer-friendly support systems to alleviate resource constraints. Additionally, the college aims to develop academic programs aligned with its mission to drive sustainable rural and agricultural advancement. However, as discussed in the last section on CCBM, in a departure from its goals of serving all kinds of support needs for agriculture supply chains, objectives of CCBM include producing skilled graduates to manage agricultural support services, conducting research on operational and managerial challenges in agriculture and agribusiness, and offering training programs to enhance the skills of policymakers, board members, and managerial personnel. Furthermore, the college is committed to empowering young men and women by providing education and training for income-generating activities and self-employment, all while promoting farmer-friendly support systems to address resource constraints. ***We fail to understand how the Mandate, Vision and Goals of CCBM speak of all kinds of agriculture support systems and their development viz. cooperatives, banking, financial institutions, agribusiness and so on, but its objectives be focussed in management development?*** A systemic rethink is required to understand how MBA Agribusiness Management supports the mandate, vision and goal of CCBM and thereby incorporated as such to give the right alignment

for all the programs housed in CCBM. Alternatively, if MBA Agribusiness Management needs to be spun off as a more autonomous organization under the tutelage of CCBM and KAU, then such a structure and autonomy would need to be provided to the MBA Agribusiness Management Program that it can deliver what it has set out to deliver in its current vision, mission and objectives. The next chapter delves into these issues in greater depth.

CHAPTER 2 - ADMINISTRATION AND AUTONOMY

In this chapter, we continue to build from the last chapter on the mismatch of requirements of MBA Agribusiness Management with respect to its vision and underlying mission, goals and objectives, thereof, with those of the CCBM and KAU, who form the second and the first tier of its organizational structure, respectively. In the last chapter, we discussed in detail how the vision and mission of KAU has been centred on agriculture and its development, both at graduate and research levels, based on KAU's history and mandate – in pursuing these, however, they work with their object as a matter of Physical Science rather than as that of a matter of Social Science – a philosophical grounding that is unsuitable for an MBA program. On the other hand, the history of CCBM is that “management” as a discipline was brought in later, as an afterthought, into the name of CCBM as well as into its scope. This was because it was felt that management, as a discipline, was gaining ground and should be included in the college. This conflict is evident in its vision, mission, goals and objectives as one can observe that while the higher order determinants of shared purpose of stakeholders of institution as reflected in its vision, mission and goals are focussed at cooperatives, banking and so on, the lower order determinant of its objectives are mostly focussed on agribusiness management and entrepreneurship. We assume that this conflict would have happened as inclusion of “management” has remained as an ad hoc addition, and “management” could not find its due place in the overall philosophical and structural scheme of CCBM. We, therefore, believe that a systemic rethink is required if the requirements of the MBA Program are to be fulfilled in the expected manner as envisaged in the consultancy requirements.

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) is an autonomous public funded institution incorporated in the State of Kerala. KAU has an administrative structure, where Governor of Kerala is the Chancellor and the Minister for Agriculture, the Pro-Chancellor of the University. The supreme authority of the University is the General Council and the chief executive body is the Executive Committee. The Vice-Chancellor is the principal executive and academic officer of the University, who is assisted by the Registrar, the Comptroller, Deans of the Faculties, the Directors of Research, Extension, Physical Plant, Students' Welfare, and the Librarian holding tenurial positions, and recognised as the Officers of the University. In addition, the Director of Academic and Post Graduate Studies assists the Vice-Chancellor in academic affairs. The Vice-Chancellor is also the ex-officio Chairman of the General Council, Executive Committee and the Academic Council. The Academic Council, the Boards of

Studies of the faculties and the four-member Finance Committee are the other statutory authorities. These details about current administrative structure are obtained from KAU website.

Further, the College of Co-operation, Banking, and Management (CCBM), established in 1981 as a constituent institution of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) under Section 5 of the KAU Act (Act 33 of 1977), functions with administrative autonomy since April 1985. It was conceptualized by visionaries to create a multidisciplinary management institution integrating agricultural supply chains, post-harvest activities, and managerial expertise for advancing agriculture and rural development. Recognized nationally as a resource centre, CCBM offers a robust academic portfolio, including a B.Sc. (Hons.) C&B, specialized M.Sc. programs, a doctoral program, and an MBA in Agribusiness Management. With its independent status, the College has grown significantly, maintaining a strong academic record, committed faculty, and producing graduates, who excel in managerial roles across industries in India and abroad.

Therefore, as explained in the last chapter and as mentioned above, the MBA Agribusiness Management is housed in the College of Cooperatives, Banking and Management (CCBM). The College of CCBM comes under the Faculty of Agriculture, Kerala Agricultural University. The Agricultural Faculty is headed by the Dean of the Agriculture and each college that comes under the Faculty of Agriculture is headed by Associate Deans. The Associate Dean of the CCBM is being assisted by four department heads of the College viz., Head of Co-operative Management, Rural Banking & Finance, Rural Marketing Management & Development Economics. The function of the Dean is again supported by the Administrative section of the College headed by Administrative Officer & his staffs. The MBA-ABM Directorate is managed by a Director. These details have been taken from CCBM website. Clearly, at the level of CCBM, there is a loose conglomeration of three disciplines (as in the name of the college) viz. cooperatives, banking and management. The point to be noted is that it doesn't include entrepreneurship – also it includes just “Rural Marketing Management” and not general management. In fact, general agribusiness management and agricultural entrepreneurship is very loosely established under a Director, separately from the conglomeration. On closer inspection, we found that the current structure doesn't empower the cause of agri-business management and entrepreneurship. It does, however, force the program to run in a confused manner with a very confused philosophical underpinnings and under the direct structural controls of CCBM and KAU, with little scope to do much under this structure.

The program would, therefore, benefit hugely from separation as a separate autonomous college housed under KAU.

2.1 Parameters of Academic Institutions: Need for Structural Ambidexterity for MBA in Agribusiness Management

Research: One of the parameters that measures the focus of an academic institution is its areas of research. A deeper understanding of areas of research of KAU suggests that there is one journal of KAU namely, *Journal of Tropical Agriculture*, which is an international publication of the Kerala Agricultural University, devoted to publication of research findings on all branches of agricultural science. There are several areas of research given under “Thrust Area of Research” in KAU website, but a closer look reveals that the underlying philosophical underpinning of nearly all of these areas is that of Physical Sciences. As given in the website, under the thrust areas of research of KAU, under topic heading 15 of “Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Statistics and Agribusiness Management”, we find some mention of management research; but, on closer inspection, these topics are not housed in the areas of mainstream management education! Further, when we look into the research of CCBM, we find that the focus of research of CCBM has largely been into cooperatives, financial institutions and banking as well as rural marketing – the larger focus on general management research or entrepreneurship research is found rather missing. A look at the research profile as given in CCBM website is thus – *The College serves as resource centre for research in the broad area of rural development focusing on local level agricultural planning, revitalizing financing institutions and rural marketing that would suit farming community. The research programmes of the College consist of PG research and Faculty research. The Faculty of the College are actively engaged in a number of research projects funded by internal and external agencies.* Continuing from chapter 1, we feel research focus of a discipline advances in the discipline’s interest in the institution. A systemic approach to include research profile of management into KAU’s charter would be a starting point in this case. An option of creating a separate management college with significant autonomy to chart a philosophically distinct path for itself that does more justice to the management discipline than it is currently being done in a more straight-jacketed thinking might be a way to create structural ambidexterity¹ in the organization. Under structural ambidexterity, the KAU

¹ Structural Ambidexterity: Ambidexterity means being adept with both right and left hands (herein it implies that the organization is adept at both Physical Science and Social Science). Organizational ambidexterity can be attained through structural ambidexterity. Structural ambidexterity uses dual organization structure and strategies to differentiate efforts towards

organization can maintain its larger philosophical underpinning of Physical Sciences for most of itself and its constituent colleges. However, a structural separation would ensure that an autonomous college built on philosophical underpinnings of Social Sciences can simultaneously be housed and can thrive.

Extension Programs and Outreach Activities: Another parameter of measurement of focus of an academic institution is its extension activities. The KAU website states thus about its extension programs – *The Extension Education Programmes of the Kerala Agricultural University are planned, organised, and coordinated by the Director of Extension at the University level. The Extension Advisory Committee constituted by the University with the Vice-Chancellor as Chairman renders advice and guidance in formulating the extension education policies and programmes of the University. The basic objective of the extension education programme of the university is to make, useful information based upon the findings of research, available to the farmers and others through the Government Departments concerned. The extension education activity of the University is implemented through the Communication Centre, Farm Advisory Service, Central Training Institute, Advanced Centre of Training in Plantation Crops, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and Village Adoption Programme. In addition, the educational institutions and research stations of the University are also implementing extension education programmes.* Clearly, the university envisages itself to be a conduit between the government departments and the farmers to ensure that government plans of reaching the benefits of agriculture research to the farmers in villages is fulfilled. Very little has been planned through KAU extension programs to utilize or build upon management and entrepreneurship education. Further, if we look into the extension program of CCBM as stated in their website - *The College has been recognised as resource centre by several National level institutions for conducting Training programmes, Workshops, Summer institutes, and Short-term courses. The College had the rare privilege of hosting the National Seminar on Youth Co-operatives sponsored by the International Co-operative Alliance and National Co-operative Union of India in October 2008. Besides, the Faculty is in close association with SIRD, Rubber Board, MSME Institute, ICM, KILA, ETC, and KVIC for imparting training to elected representatives, local leaders and other stakeholders in local self-governance organisations and rural development activities.* These extension activities are rarely about disseminating agribusiness or agripreneurship knowledge to their stakeholders, which is the focus of MBA

maintaining the philosophical underpinnings of both physical sciences and social sciences by creating structural separation.

Program. In fact, we would envisage the MBA Program to be hosting international and national level management education conferences and seminars, inviting luminaries from social science fields who could help translation of physical science benefits of KAU into social science benefits of working with communities and individuals such that to drive entrepreneurship and so on. Similarly, we would expect an MBA institution to have a distinguished alumni and industry linkages that are mainstays of any MBA programs and so on. The current focus of extension programs of CCBM doesn't give adequate structure to build an industry linkage. It also promises little to returning alumni to the college. It gives very little support, if any, to students who would want to start as entrepreneurs. Therefore, if we need to build a strong and enviable management program, we need to revamp its extension and outreach activities, which can be enabled by structural ambidexterity – to separate MBA Program as an autonomous program under the aegis of KAU.

Student Activities and Pedagogy: A third important parameter to measure the focus of an academic institution is the student activities carried out by different student bodies like student councils, clubs, meets and so on. KAU and most of its colleges focus on imparting knowledge about agriculture at intermediate, bachelors, masters and doctorate levels in a university system. Therefore, the larger student pool has one kind of profile – students who are interested in agriculture as a physical science and pursue higher education in that area. Classroom education with assisted laboratories would be the main requirements for their pedagogy. Unlike that, the students of an MBA program would be ones, who would want to hold managerial and administrative positions in organizations – their education would be in the realm of social sciences. For these students, peer learning, industry interactions, alumni interactions, internships, entrepreneurship incubation and so on would not only be an extension activity – rather they would be a central part of their pedagogy. But, to develop the latter, students would need to be more engaged outside the class rather than inside the class – from group assignments, to meets, to organization of club activities, placement and alumni activities, internship activities and so on. This kind of difference in pedagogy can only come if KAU and CCBM understand how a grounding in physical sciences might make the requirements of an MBA Program so non-aligned with the psyche of students. The students of MBA program show a similarity in behaviour with KAU agriculture stream students in that they look forward to coming to class to attend lectures and go back home. This defeats the needs of pedagogy required for an MBA program. We can see how such a focus has acted in not-so-good manner on the profile of students and their activities in the MBA program. On the issue of admissions, data was made

available for the last 5 years, wherein, it was observed that neither the sanctioned strength of 40 seats were filled up nor they were filled up in time in any of these years. In fact, admissions were done with several revised notifications prolonging the entire admissions process. These issues signal to prospective students that the institution is not serious about imparting education and churning out agripreneurs and agribusiness professionals armed with state of art knowledge and creativity, which is the vision of the program. The diversity of students is also an indicator that it is not taken seriously by students – stakeholders stated that it was seen as a compromised program as serious students move to other places while the processes of admissions get prolonged. In addition, the pool is highly devoid of international students and students from other states though provision for the same is there in the admission policies.

The MBA program envisions creating agripreneurs and agribusiness managers with state of art knowledge that fosters group creativity and excellence. On analysis of data collected, it is found that the presence of 3-tier structure in a tightly controlled university system, which largely draws its student pool from agriculture sciences and runs undergraduate, post-graduate and PhD programs, is not flexible enough to cater to the needs of the MBA program. Specifically, the mandate and mission of CCBM significantly differs from the requirements of the MBA program. As this report focused on each element of the MBA program from admissions, placements, internships, entrepreneurial training, course structure, and so on, it becomes increasingly clear that the administrative structure of the program should change to accommodate these elements in a good manner. Further, we propose imparting more autonomy to the MBA program, so that it can work with private organizations, non-governmental organizations and other entities to create a vibrant environment that is characteristic of a good management institution.

2.2 Proposed Structure of the MBA in Agribusiness Management

Given this analysis of the present situation, the proposed administrative structure for MBA program is to create an independent program called the School of Agribusiness Management under KAU and be given significant autonomy in decision-making. The autonomy is required to be able to deviate from the normative expectations about course structure and evaluation schemes, admissions, placement activities and so on of KAU and follow what would matter for delivery on its vision, mission and objectives. The MBA program might be headed by director, who might be a senior professor of the University and supported by two associate directors, who might be appointed on contract by KAU. The portfolio of the first associate director could

be those of all internal program management matters, curriculum and its delivery and evaluation, website management and so on. We speak about these at length in the subsequent chapters. A few posts of permanent faculty might be shifted from CCBM and created afresh for the school. All processes of admissions might be delinked from the directorate of education of university and entrusted to the director of the school. These changes in autonomy and structure are needed to create a vibrant management institution that the university is desirous of having.

The second associate director might be charged with duties of managing industry linkage, extension and outreach activities, alumni networks, entrepreneurship incubators and entrepreneurs, international presence, internships, accreditation and public relations office and so on. The need for public relations office with a dedicated staff cannot be underestimated in this proposed structure. The MBA program needs to strengthen its industry linkage with utmost priority. It is important that PRO have a good depth of knowledge and experience of connecting with industry partners and should be tasked with carrying out workshops, seminars, industry professional visits and talks with students and so on to create an ongoing relationship with various companies. The student placement committee should work with the PRO to work out student internships and placements. The details of these activities are worked in the later chapters. Similarly, PRO should work towards creating an active alumni database with alumni engagement activities. The pool of guest faculty should be expanded to invite more managers from industry and alumni networks. These guest faculty should be energised to undertake workshops wherein employability of the MBA graduates could be enhanced. Entrepreneurs and incubators could be also invited. An annual festival might be conducted to felicitate some of them and bring their insights and internship projects into the school from that association. These are also covered in later chapters. Finally, PRO should also work with inside stakeholders of KAU like KAU incubator. They could create mutually beneficial engagements including student internships in entrepreneurship through engaging with incubated entrepreneurs. The curriculum should be revised to include industry internships and/or entrepreneurship internships that contribute directly to advance job and entrepreneurship prospects of the students. The new administrative structure should also be charged with responsibility of budgeting for these activities. The fee structure hasn't been revised and could be looked into. Additional fundraising activities can be looked into by the school. The classroom infrastructure should be upgraded to represent an appealing picture of the institution to these important constituencies.

Student activities should be another focus area for the second associate dean. The office should ensure that students psyche need a transformation – they need to identify themselves as future management graduates and behave as such. Rather than being a passive audience in a classroom setting, they should actively engage themselves in group activities, form different student interest groups and invite luminaries from their interest areas to conduct workshops, meets or seminars and so on. The student placement committee, alumni committee and entrepreneurship committees should directly report to the second associate director to ensure that all outside classroom pedagogy structure are well coordinated. We speak about each of them at length in the subsequent chapters.

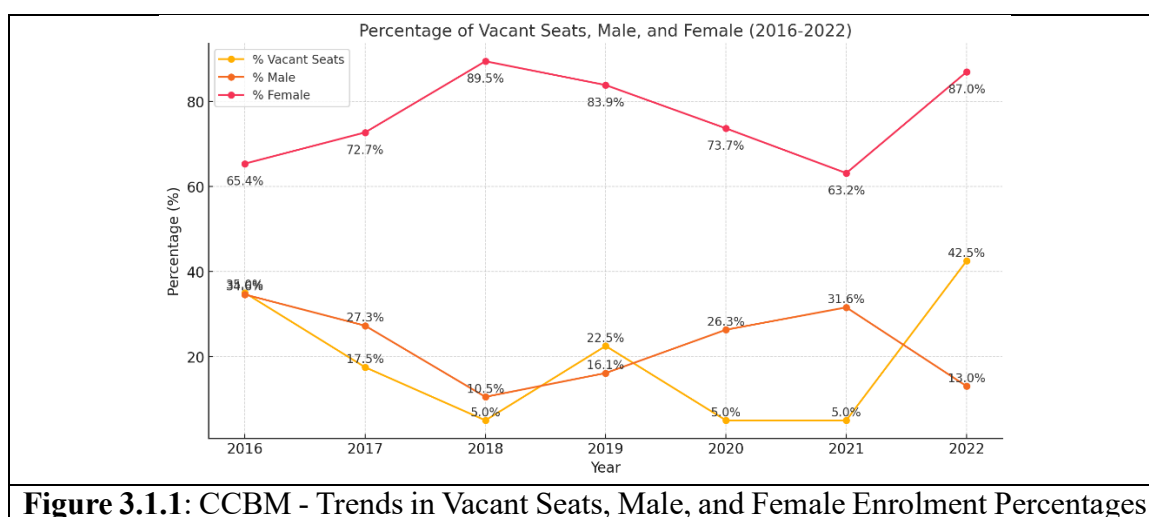
Accreditation and Rankings exercises as well as Internationalization Efforts shall also be overseen by the second associate director. In MBA schools, these carry a much higher significance than they do in the university systems – they signal to prospective students, faculty, industry stakeholders and others that engaging with the school would be a value added activity for them. Finally, we envisage that admissions should also be brought under the purview of the second associate director. We speak about accreditation, internationalization and admission in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 – ADMISSION, INTERNATIONALIZATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCREDITATION

This chapter provides an analysis of the admission process, students' life in class room and their interactions with campus and business units, the infrastructure, and university support for attaining students' academic goals. Along with the admission process and free structure, we have thoroughly reviewed Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) collaborations and College of Cooperatives, Banking, and Management, Thrissur (CCBM) initiatives to engage students with local and international business events. Interviews with Thrissur Management Associations bearers, guest faculties, university incubation center, students, and other stakeholders were also considered to assess the CCBM's students' life during their MBA period and its effectiveness in increasing the student's learning experience.

3.1 Admission Process

The College of Co-operation, Banking, and Management admission record from 2016 to 2022 shows a consistent intake capacity of 40 students per year. However, the number of enrolled students, excluding attrition, varies, with the highest enrolment of 38 students in 2018, 2020, and 2021 and the lowest at 23 in 2022. A significant observation is the gender distribution, where females consistently outnumber males across all years. The highest female enrolment occurred in 2018, with 34 out of 38 students, while male enrolment was the lowest at 3 in 2022. Figure 3.1.1 gives CCBM - Trends in Vacant Seats, Male, and Female Enrolment Percentages.



The admission records data highlights a declining trend, and since the beginning, enrolment has never attained a hundred percent, which shows that the admission process requires serious reconsideration. Table 3.3.1 gives the admission record of CCBM. The consistent dominance

of female students raises questions regarding the program's relevance, outreach strategies, or demographic trends affecting the low enrolment of male applicants. Thus, declining enrolment and a lack of balance in gender representation should be some of the reformation requirements for future admissions.

Table 3.1.1: Admission record of CCBM				
Year	Intake Capacity	Enrolled excluding attrition	Male	Female
2016	40	26	9	17
2017	40	33	9	24
2018	40	38	4	34
2019	40	31	5	26
2020	40	38	10	28
2021	40	38	12	24
2022	40	23	3	20

The CCBM maintains a consistent intake capacity of 40 students per year, and 38 students were enrolled in 2018, but this number dropped to 23 in 2022. The scope for increasing the intake of students per year on par with the other Agribusiness colleges or sustaining enrolment is a concern due to the fluctuating enrolment trend of CCBM.

Thus, the *admission process should look into the following challenges*

1. Declining enrolment and limited scope for increasing the intake of students.
2. Gender imbalance and inadequate efforts to increase interest in CCBM programs among men.
3. Lack of diversity in student demographics by attracting students from across Kerala and outside Kerala.

Recommendations for improving the admission process

1. Make an adequate effort to plan and increase the admission timeline, reduce multiple revised notifications, and spot admission requirements.
2. Increase promotional materials and outreach programs to attract talented and interested students.
3. Facilitate targeted marketing among the male and social sectors who engage in Agribusiness activities and agricultural law and policy making.
4. Make yearly ranking and screening criteria changes, including % of marks, GD, and PI that may bring the balance among male and female intake.

5. Increase short-term certification in diverse areas like agricultural laws, start-ups, technology, etc., to bring visibility to the CCBM and the long-term programmes offered by CCBM.
6. Project available scholarships and social inclusion policies during the programme promotional events facilitate industry sponsorship.
7. Dedicate seats for identified banks and agribusiness unit employees.

3.2 National and International Partnerships

The national and international partnerships are predominantly Kerala Agricultural University-driven and not specific to projects undertaken by the CCBM. For example, the data reveals the following partnership initiatives.

International Collaborations and Faculty Involvement: currently, the Agribusiness Incubation Centre has engaged with faculty from IIMs, IITs, and international universities such as Cornell University (USA) in their capacity-building programs for start-ups. The collaborations include mentorship, expert consultation, and project collaboration for students and entrepreneurs seeking to develop business models and refine their innovations.

National Partnerships in Funding & Incubation: The Kerala Agricultural University's Agribusiness Incubation Centre has partnerships with various central and state government institutions like Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food Processing, Agricultural Infrastructure Fund, Indian Institute of Packaging, Marketing & Agri-related Research Institutions across India. These partnerships help in funding, technology transfer, and business model development for incubated start-ups.

Even though the university assists entrepreneurs in identifying suitable government schemes for funding and helps applicants prepare Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to access these funds, the discussion shows these initiatives are less likely to gain attention among CCBM students.

Institutional & Industrial Collaborations: For KAU, the key resource of industry professionals is its institutional membership in the Indian Management Association (IMA) and the Thrissur Management Association (TMA). CCBM has organized various guest interactions and events in association with the Management forums. These collaborations brought various scholarships for the students.

Partnerships in Student Placements and Training: The university collaborates with corporate organizations for student placement and internships, emphasizing increasing recruiter

participation. A significant focus is on entrepreneurship support, where KAU is working to ensure students receive hands-on exposure to business development via incubators.

Academic Collaborations in Course Development: The KAU often taps the knowledge of CCBM faculties into the incubation programs. This allows MBA students to participate in start-up discussions, conduct business case research, prepare marketing plans for new businesses, and help business owners. During our interviews, the respondents mentioned that future course development for certification courses in food industry management, in collaboration with academics and industry experts, might also help the MBA students and CCBM at large.

The national and international partnership initiatives should address the following gaps.

1. Limited number of international students in CCBM's MBA Programme.
2. International exposure partnerships, if any, originate from the incubation or university level, and the CCBM's partnership is limited in the number of entities.
3. Sustainable models for systematic and structured industry-academia partnerships are not well established.

Recommendations for improving the national and international partnership initiatives

- Establish student exchange/immersion programs with international universities.
- Utilize KAU Incubation expertise and its relationships for developing agripreneurs
- Strengthen MoUs with global institutions for faculty exchanges.
- Enhance collaborative projects with IIMs, IITs, and foreign universities.
- Develop flexible internship leave for students and mandatory industry visits/internships every semester.

3.3 Fee Structure

The fee structure of the CCBM's MBA programme is provided in Table 3.3.1

Table 3.3.1: Fee Structure of CCBM's MBA Programme					
Sl. No	Description of Fee	1st Semester (₹)	2nd Semester (₹)	3rd Semester (₹)	4th Semester (₹)
1	Admission Fee	5,000	-	-	-
2	College Caution Deposit	2,500	-	-	-
3	Tuition Fee	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
4	Library Fee	800	800	800	800
5	Medical Inspection Fee	160	160	160	160
6	Stationary Fee	480	480	480	480
7	Annual Subscription Fee of Kalpadhenu Magazine	125	-	-	-
8	Sports/Athletic Fee	320	320	320	320
9	Association Fee	160	160	160	160
10	Magazine Fee	160	160	160	160
11	University Union Fee	400	400	400	400
12	Exam Fee	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,000
13	Degree Certificate	-	-	-	2,400*
14	Provisional Degree Certificate	-	-	-	320*
15	Transcript	-	-	-	480*
Total	Course Fee Per Semester	36,605	28,980	28,980	32,680
	<i>*Subject to revision every year.</i>			Total	₹1,27,245

The fee structure of the KAU's accommodation charges for Table 3.3.2

Table 3.3.2: Accommodation charges at KAU		
Sl. No	Head	Amount (₹)
1	Hostel Admission Fee (One-Time)	500
2	Rent & Water (Per Semester)	1,200
3	Hostel Caution Deposit (Refundable)	3,000
4	Other Miscellaneous Charges (Per Semester)	500
Total	Hostel Fee (One-Time + Semester-wise Charges)	5,200

The mislentious fee structure of the CCBM's MBA programme is provided in Table 3.3.1

Table 3.3.3: Misllenoius fees of CCMB's MBA programme		
Sl. No	Contribution Type	Amount (₹)
1	Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)	1,000 (One-Time)
2	Placement Cell Contribution	5,000 (One-Time)

A comparative fees analysis of CCMB's MBA programme and other Agribusiness Management Programms in India is provided in Table 3.3.4.

Table 3.3.4: Comparative fees analysis of CCMB's MBA programme and other Agribusiness Management Programms in India					
Rank	Institution	Program	Total Fee (INR)	Entrance Exam	Hostel Fee (INR) per year
1	Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad	MBA in Food and Agri-Business Management	₹25 Lakhs	CAT	₹2.5–₹3.5 Lakhs
2	Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow	MBA in Agri-Business Management	₹12.6 Lakhs	CAT	₹2–₹2.5 Lakhs
3	Symbiosis Institute of International Business (SIIB), Pune	MBA in Agri-Business	₹16 Lakhs	SNAP	₹1.92 Lakhs
4	Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), Gujarat	PGDM in Rural Management (Agribusiness-focused)	₹16.15 Lakhs	CAT/XAT + IRMASAT	₹65,000
5	KIIT School of Rural Management (KSRM), Bhubaneswar	MBA in Agribusiness Management	₹8.97 Lakhs	CAT/XAT/CMAT	₹80,000
6	National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad	PGDM in Agri-Business Management	₹8.5 Lakhs	CAT	₹80,000
7	Amity University, Noida	MBA in Agri-Business	₹6 Lakhs	CAT/CMAT/MAT/XAT/NMAT/GMAT	₹1.2–₹1.5
8	School of Agribusiness Management (SABM), Lucknow	MBA in Agribusiness & Rural Management	₹5.5 Lakhs	CAT	₹50,000
9	Kerala Agricultural University (KAU)	MBA in Agribusiness Management	₹1.27 Lakhs	CAT/CMAT/KMAT	₹5,200
10	Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	MBA in Agribusiness Management (Distance Learning)	₹62,000	IGNOU OpenMAT	NA

The fee structure remains static and lower than other Agribusiness Management programs across India.

The following gaps in fee structure strategy is observed.

- KAU's **MBA in Agribusiness Management** has the lowest fee among top institutes nationwide. It promises affordable education but may hamper the infrastructure and supportive environment other institutes may offer in Agribusiness.
- The fee structure has not been revised for years, and there are fewer financial alternatives to bring more infrastructure to the program.
- The hostel and student tuition fees are minimal and less adequate for a residential program structure.

Recommendations for optimal fee structure.

- Considering the infrastructure requirements and that of leading Agri-MBA programs, the current fee structure needs to be revised.
- Differentiated fee structures for sponsored international students and those who are admitted through competitive exams should be initiated.
- Alternative revenue sources, such as corporate-funded scholarships, industry sponsorship programs, etc, need to be put in place for incremental development of infrastructure as well as the quality of education services provided.
- Short-term courses such as executive education and consulting services should be introduced to cater to financial input requirements.

3.4 Classroom Technology and Infrastructure

We have conducted the interviews to assess the availability of case study materials, Technology AI/ML labs, subscriptions to statistical tools, and journal articles. The interview responses in this direction are provided below.

Faculty Autonomy & Curriculum Flexibility: Faculties expressed concerns regarding how much autonomy they have in structuring the course content. The syllabus is already predefined, and while adjunct faculty members can introduce new concepts, the overall structure is rigid.

A faculty member introduced the Business Model Canvas as a tool to give students a more practical perspective, even though it was not part of the official curriculum.

Blended Learning & Pedagogical Innovations: There was a discussion about incorporating a case study bank for each subject to improve application-based learning

Suggestions were made to revise the course sequencing so that subjects like Management Information Systems (MIS), which currently appear in the first semester, are taught after students have acquired foundational knowledge in strategic management.

The response shows there is a need for flexibility while offering the courses, while the current infrastructure and knowledge resources are limited in nature to bring innovative pedagogy or, introduce new labs, or subscribe to course content.

University Infrastructure for MBA in Agribusiness

Currently, the incubation centre and technological infrastructure cater to the needs of business incubators and provide students and start-ups with access to technology. These facilities support students with technological innovations, training programs, and funding assistance for refining business ideas.

There are physical limitations, as the university incubator can accommodate limited (ten) start-ups physically at a time. Though virtual spaces are available, usage statistics and effectiveness are unclear. Table 3.4.1 gives details of the KAU infrastructure shared with CCBM.

Table 3.4.1 KAU Infrastructure Details		
Infrastructure	Facilities Available	Capacity
Computer Centre & Communication Lab	High-speed internet, Wi-Fi, Communication skills training	NA
Central Library	Acquisition, Technical, IT & Circulation Divisions, 41,000+ books	41,000+ Books & Digital Resources
Central Auditorium	700-seater auditorium with advanced acoustics and lighting	700 seats
Conference Hall	50-seater air-conditioned hall with modern AV equipment	50 seats
Sports Facility	Basketball, Table Tennis, Cricket, Badminton, Gymnastics, Athletics	Multiple indoor & outdoor courts
Cultural Activities	Performing Arts, Competitions, Talent Shows, Music, Drama	Open participation
Online Agricultural Courses	E-learning platform, Online tutorials, Practical Agri-training courses	NA

We have explored any Hybrid and Remote Learning Possibilities, and the following response was received.

Members mentioned online-based teaching as an option, particularly for adjunct faculty. There was a proposal to involve alums in teaching via remote sessions to add industry-oriented perspectives.

Some visiting faculty members were happy with the campus and technological infrastructure at KAU and mentioned that it is on par with reputed institutions in many ways. However, facility comparisons and infrastructure standards have a scope to improve.

Some faculty emphasized the need for more practical applications, suggesting that students should have access to interactive platforms, entrepreneurship cells, and real-world simulation tools to prepare them for the industry-better

These insights indicate that while KAU has a strong infrastructure, flexibility in expanding it to the CCBM students, especially the rigor of incubation support, is challenging, and the exclusive centers and labs for MBA students are limited.

Infrastructure gaps observed in the classroom and business incubation

- The limited subscriptions to case repositories and the lab infrastructure lead to faculties autonomy in structuring innovative course content.
- The technology-driven subjects are limited due to the lack of AI and incubation labs.
- University-shared resources restrict the exclusive events scheduling as per the business requirements.

Recommendations to improve the infrastructure for class room and business incubations.

- Case study banks and business simulation labs should be integrated with CCBM.
- The budget required for course resources should be available to ensure faculty autonomy to bring more innovations to the curriculum.
- CCBM may introduce more technology courses and procure statistical tools to improve the ICT infrastructure and skills.
- Exclusive virtual class rooms should be initiated for hybrid learning facilities.

3.5 Attendance and Automation

The attendance requirements for the faculties and the students were required during our interviews. The following responses were collected -

Students attending management fests or national-level programs receive attendance credit. Participation in such events is encouraged as it helps in academic and professional development.

The system ensures that students participating in external events such as Threshold Management Association activities and Student Councils receive attendance.

Student participation in professional networking events is integrated with their attendance records.

Faculty and students are encouraged to participate in various business and industry networking clubs. For example, some faculty members are members of different business clubs, which serve as student networking opportunities.

However, tracking their presence in external events and industry-related projects is minimal.

During the alumni and professional engagements, efforts were reported to ensure a structured mechanism for student involvement. Overall, the faculties and students mentioned there were initiatives to promote extracurricular participation, industry networking, and professional associations.

Gaps identified in ensuring students' participation

- For study activities outside the campus and non-academic engagement, the quality of involvement is not measured at present
- Joint faculty-student level collaborative efforts in events were less.

Recommendations to improve student engagement

- Automate students' attendance system and develop a dashboard for attendance tracking
- Develop maximum and minimum attendance criteria for academic and non-academic contributions.
- Adopt an attendance credit system for students' participation in institute-building activities.

3.6 Accreditation and Ranking

The CCBM's syllabus for the MBA program set by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which standardizes the curriculum. The accreditation of the program is a key criterion considered by ICAR. Further, the autonomy of faculty members to make changes to the syllabus is limited, but they are encouraged to bring in contemporary topics within the structure. The university's **Director of Education** acts as the nodal officer for **ICAR**, ensuring that the institution is represented in accreditation discussions. Individual departments do not directly participate in accreditation but are represented at the university level.

Challenges in CCBM's Accreditation and Ranking:

- A limited number of permanent faculty in CCBM and no new faculty recruitment for last few years.
- Limited number of faculties with specialization in core management areas and less autonomy in syllabus changes.
- The fixed examination and the non-aligning course outline structure with management course accreditation agencies like AACSB, etc.
- Limited staff strength for carrying out the accreditation documentation and procedures.
- CCBM has high admission standards, criteria, and passing thresholds.

Recommendations to improve the Accreditation and Ranking

- Pursue MBA accreditations such as AACSB, EQUIS, NAAC A++, etc.
- Recruit permanent faculties to meet accreditation benchmarks.
- Establish an Accreditation and Ranking Committee to develop strategies and documentation for enhancing program visibility.

3.7 Conclusion

To attain excellence and enhance faculty and the students' life cycle experience in CCBM's MBA program in Agribusiness Management program, this chapter considered the admission, internationalization and accreditation elements. This chapter assessed internationalization, industry collaborations, effectiveness of club activities, curriculum flexibility and faculty autonomy, classroom infrastructure, and residential MBA programme facilities, etc., and recommendations to improve those components were provided.

The following action points are reiterated to attain excellence, provide a professional education to students, and increase stakeholder engagement with the university.

1. Make it a residential program. Develop a culture of student engagement in curricular and non-curricular activities, such that students are made owners of their activities and the resulting placement, training, entrepreneurship, enjoyment that is worthy of a management institution.
2. Revamp the admission process to ensure timely enrolment and avoid multiple revised notifications.
3. Develop strategies to tap the candidates from remote cities of India and the international candidates.
4. Dedicate industry-sponsored seats for candidates aspiring to participate in the MBA programme.
5. Revise the fee structure regularly to meet the growing infrastructure requirements and business school standards.
6. Identify sponsorship, and scholarship programs for meritorious and needy MBA students.
7. Increase faculty autonomy to frame courses and align curriculum with global best practices to meet accreditation standards.
8. Invest in digital libraries, and subscribe to case study repositories and management-related journals.
9. Upgrade classrooms with modern teaching aids, including smartboards, video conferencing tools, and simulation-based learning.
10. Develop virtual studios and interactive learning management system (LMS) to support hybrid learning.
11. Improve outreach programs to attract diverse students, including national and international applicants.
12. Establish an Accreditation and Ranking committee to monitor accreditation requirements, continuously improve program quality, and get accredited for international and national MBA standards.
13. Strengthen public relations and placement teams to align student intake with market needs.
14. Establish exchange programs with international universities specializing in agribusiness management.
15. Forge collaborations with national and global institutions for joint research, guest faculty, and internship opportunities.

16. Create MoUs with top management institutions to facilitate knowledge exchange and shared resources.
17. Transform the MBA program into a full-fledged on-campus residential program.
18. Strengthen industry-academia linkages, by inviting more guest faculty from industry and give credits for participating in industry summits.
19. Implement an automated attendance tracking system for classroom and outside academic activities.
20. Establish structured student clubs and co-curricular activities to encourage holistic development.
21. Provide mental health counselling and career guidance services.

CHAPTER 4 – CURRICULUM, INTERNSHIP, RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we first analyse course content, structure and delivery – we first understand what courses are offered being and how they are being offered to understand their alignment with the program objectives of the **MBA programme**. To do this, we obtained programme overview, course outlines and evaluation schemes/ assessment methods used for the different CCBM courses offered in the MBA program. We matched how the learning objectives of each course fit with the program objectives and prepare the students in line with the vision of the college and the university they were part of.

Then, we assess the **Program Structure** (semester system – credits required and the logical breakdown of why the semesters were broken the way they were. This includes analysis of two internships /minor projects undertaken by the students). Lesson plans for each course offered were collected. These documents are then used for a **curriculum review** to understand the curriculum's structure and content comprehensively. We evaluate how they fit together to form a cohesive programme and whether these align with the institute's overall educational and placement goals. Collection and analysis of curriculum documentation such as course catalogues, program handbooks, and syllabi, along with a detailed analysis of the curriculum structure, covering course sequencing, prerequisites, specialization tracks, and the categorization of core, elective, and mandatory courses, were carried out during the project to assess the program structure and content.

As we mentioned in the chapter on Methodology, we carried out several zoom meetings and then met all stakeholder in face to face meetings to understand in-depth what was the problem, if any, with the current Program and Curriculum Structure. These form a significant part of our analysis and therefore the recommendations. Some of these discussion/interview quotes are as follows:

Some of the quotations and discussion points as highlighted below, brought out concerns with current program and curriculum structure.

"We need to narrow down the gap between their academics and their employability, and more practical applications in the syllabus should be introduced."

"We should focus more on the placement, internship, project, and entrepreneurship side of it."

“Though, we have given space for practical teaching in most courses, how it happens is that even in credits assigned for practical part, actually theory is being taught and even evaluated”

“Most of our faculty are guest faculty. Some of them belong to Management Associations and Industry. Some of them bring industry learning to class. They also bring industry associations for internships etc.”

"We expect the MBA graduates and faculties to handle one or two courses in the management aspects, particularly in marketing and project report preparation."

"Where you attach them—that institute is very crucial also. Now that is one thing they do again, even regarding the type of work, little work that they do, or small dissertation, or whatever they have to prepare."

"We are planning to start a PG diploma in food industry management and quality control, a one-year program to equip start-ups and industry professionals."

Through these program and curriculum evaluations, this chapter depicts the curriculum’s ability to develop specific skills and knowledge, a comprehensive list and analysis of learning outcomes for each course and the overall program, and an assessment of their clarity, relevance, and alignment with institutional goals. In this chapter these inputs were also considered while providing actionable insights and recommendations to enhance the curriculum’s structure, content, and alignment with educational and placement objectives. Table 4.1 provides Programme Objectives as per the CCBM records.

Table 4.1.: Programme Objectives as per the CCBM records.

- To implant core management competencies among the prospects to own and manage sustainable agri-food value chains.
- To nurture a culture and climate of entrepreneurship and innovation among the prospective managers.
- To expose the students to best-in-class management practices in the industry.
- To ingrain high ethical and moral standards in future managers.

In this analysis, at first we assess the learning objectives as stated in the program. Then we delve into Curriculum and Specialization, Competency Gaps and Recommendations:

4.2 Curriculum and Specialisation

The 1st semester of the MBA (Agribusiness Management) program offers foundational courses aimed at building a strong base in management (See Table 4.2.1). The lesson plan includes content pertinent to Principles of Management, Managerial Economics, Financial Accounting and Analysis, Business Statistics, Agricultural Marketing, and Business Communication and IT knowledge.

Table 4.2.1: Semester 1 - Courses offered		
Course Code	Course Title	Credits
FC 1	Principles of Agribusiness Management	2+0
FC 2	Accounting for Management	2+1
FC 3	Managerial Economics	1+1
FC 4	Agri-business Marketing	1+1
FC 5	Organisational Communication	2+1
FC 6	Quantitative Methods for Management	2+1
FC 7	Soft Skills for Agribusiness Management	1+1
FC 8	Management Information System	1+1

The courses typically have theoretical and practical components divided in components n+m, wherein, n is the theoretical credits and m is the practical credits, as given above. These courses provide students with critical insights into management principles, economic concepts, financial practices, statistical analysis, marketing strategies, and effective communication, ensuring a comprehensive introduction to agribusiness marketing.

However, the lesson plan shows less content on exploring the technology interface of agriculture and the influence of technology in other domains of agribusiness management.

The 2nd semester of the MBA (Agribusiness Management) program (See Table 4.2.2) includes a well-rounded set of courses designed to build core competencies in agribusiness.

Table 4.2.2: Semester 2 - Courses offered		
Course Code	Course Title	Credits
GM 1	Research Methodology	2+1
GM 2	Financial Management for Agribusiness	2+1
GM 3	Macro-economics for Agribusiness Management	2+1
GM 4	Legal Framework of Agribusiness	2+0
GM 5	Agribusiness Entrepreneurship	1+1
GM 6	Agribusiness Production and Operations Management	2+1
GM 7	Human Resource Management in Agribusiness	1+1
GM 8	Tax Planning for Agribusiness	1+1
GM 9	Strategic Management	1+1

The courses offered are Principles of Agribusiness Management, Consumer Behavior, Agribusiness Marketing, Financial Management in Agribusiness, Production and Operations Management, Organizational Behaviour, and Research Methods for Agribusiness.

The first introduction to entrepreneurship happens in second semester through Agribusiness Entrepreneurship. We advise to introduce a basic course on entrepreneurship (1+1 credits) along with an entrepreneurship workshop (0-1 Credits) with KAU incubator be initiated in the first semester itself. The workshop and the foundational course on entrepreneurship, which should deal with creating entrepreneurial mind-set, should be oriented in such a manner that some students start exploring avenues with KAU incubator and the entrepreneurs housed in it at the beginning stage of their studies itself. Also, it is observed that currently the number of elective courses that focus on several aspects of entrepreneurship are low. They might be increased by providing more specialized courses viz. marketing for start-ups, financial management for new ventures, Legal aspects of entrepreneurship and so on.

The third semester of the MBA (Agribusiness Management) program has the following courses (See Table 4.2.3):

Table 4.2.3: Semester 3 - Courses offered		
Course Code	Course Title	Credits
CFM 1	Organizational Behaviour	2+1
CFM 2	Agribusiness Project Management	1+1
BS 6	Managing Conflict and Negotiation	1+1
BS 10	Total Quality Management in Agribusiness	1+1
BS 11	New Venture Management	1+1
BS 13	Media and Communication Management for Agribusiness	1+1
FM 2	Cost Planning and Control for Agribusiness	1+1
FM 5	Agricultural Commodity Derivatives	2+1
FM 6	Security Analysis and Portfolio Management	2+1
MM 2	Supply Chain Management in Agribusiness	1+1
MM 5	Marketing Communication for Agribusiness	2+1
MM 15	Consumer Behaviour	2+1

Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Communication for Agribusiness, Supply Chain Management in Agribusiness, Security Analysis and Portfolio Management, Agricultural Commodity Derivatives, Cost Planning and Control for Agribusiness, Media and Communication Management for Agribusiness New Venture Management.

In this semester, a new course and workshop on career development and interviewing skills must be offered to make the students ready for attending placement interviews, negotiate with entrepreneurship enablers and so on. It is not clearly understood why so many courses are being offered in this semester with significant overlaps. An overlaps and necessities assessment for

the modules of each course offered in third semester might be carried out. A rationalization of courses to include more courses on entrepreneurship and career development and exclude courses that have too many repetitive or less useful content is needed.

The fourth semester consists of the following courses:

Table 4.2.4: Semester 4 - Courses offered		
Course Code	Course Title	Credits
AM 1	Strategic Quality Management Systems for Agribusiness	2+0
AM 2	International Trade	3+0
AM 3	Information Technology in Agribusiness	1+1
AM 4	Leadership Skills	1+1

Courses such as "Strategic Quality Management Systems for Agribusiness," "International Trade," "Information Technology in Agribusiness," and "Leadership Skills" focus on integrating specialized topics to prepare students for dynamic challenges in agribusiness and related fields.

Courses on Strategic Quality Management Systems for Agribusiness and International Trade do not have practical content. These might be changed to include such content and evaluation.

Further, the minor project in Semester II and the major project in Semester IV constitute the curriculum.

Table 4.2.5: Credit distribution of Projects and overall Programme		
Semester	Particulars	Credits Per Semester
Semester I	1. Foundation Courses	19
Semester II	1. General Management Courses	21
	2. Work Experience Programme - Minor Project Work	05
Semester III	1. Functional Management Courses	05
	2. Functional Elective Courses	16
Semester IV	1. Advanced Management Courses	09
	2. Management Experience Programme - Major Project Work	09
Total		84

While the curriculum is robust, there is scope to expand its focus on entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability to address emerging global challenges.

Table 4.2.6: The distribution of credits and hours		
Course Type	Theory Hours	Practical Hours
Core Courses	14-18 hours	0-8 hours
Specialized Courses	18-36 hours	Variable

The MBA (Agribusiness Management) curriculum has several limitations that warrant attention. The biggest problem in the current courses (as they are being offered) and those that were identified are as follows:

1. Too much focus is on theoretical content in the course outlines and in the delivery and evaluations. In fact, students and teachers said that most of the teachers were using the practical credits in teaching subjects in a theoretical manner. Thus, credits for practical were not being utilized in giving any real world problem solving or exposure to the students. In fact, even from exam papers can be verified that their test of practical was also a theory test. This makes courses dull and uninteresting. Learning from such courses are minimal
2. Pedagogical tools like case study teaching method, simulations, role play, gamification, industry interactive problem solving and so on are rarely used. Only textbook teaching method is dominant in most courses. This needs to urgently be addressed.
3. While entrepreneurship is addressed in some courses like Agribusiness Entrepreneurship and "New Venture Management," the focus could be expanded with workshop and more courses in first and third semester on start-up ecosystems and innovation, specialized courses on entrepreneurship. We propose harnessing relationship with KAU incubator for these workshop, courses and internship.
4. Sustainability is underrepresented, with little emphasis on green technologies and climate-resilient practices.
5. Though "International Trade" covers global issues, a broader perspective on global agribusiness, including trade agreements and supply chain challenges, is needed.
6. Practical exposure through internships and industry collaborations is insufficient, particularly in specialized semesters.
7. Emerging technologies like block chain and AI are not adequately integrated into the curriculum.
8. Overlap in topics such as marketing and consumer behaviour leads to redundancies, and leadership development, introduced late, could be distributed more evenly.
9. The curriculum lacks sufficient focus on agricultural policies and legal frameworks, critical for managerial roles in the sector.
10. Most importantly, in the third semester a new course and workshop on career development and interviewing skills must be offered to make the students ready for attending placement interviews, negotiate with entrepreneurship enablers and so on. It is not clearly understood why so many courses are being offered in this semester with

significant overlaps. An overlaps and necessities assessment for the modules of each course offered in third semester might be carried out. A rationalization of courses to include more courses on entrepreneurship and career development and exclude courses that have too many repetitive or less useful content is needed.

4.3 Internship and Projects

The minor and major projects are expected to contribute to students' practical exposure to the MBA in Agribusiness Management Programme. These internship experience often influence their placement prospectus and understanding of the market opportunities. We have analyzed the project carried out by the students and the organizations they chose for their internship work. Table 4.3.1 summarizes and analyses Major Project Trends in CCBM's MBA program.

Table 4.3.1: Summary and Analysis of Major Project Trends in CCBM's MBA					
Year	No. of Projects	Specializations	Key Themes	Observations	Recommendations
2017	33	MM, FM, HR	Consumer behaviour, financial performance, HR practices, socio-economic studies	Balanced focus across specializations ; projects mostly centred on Kerala.	Expand geographic scope to include national and international markets.
2018	20	MM, FM	Financial inclusion, working capital management, consumer behaviour	Focused heavily on financial topics and marketing-related themes.	Encourage more diverse topics like sustainability and green agriculture.
2019	18	MM, HR	Consumer preferences, social media marketing, employee satisfaction	Emphasis on marketing and HR, focusing less on finance and interdisciplinary studies.	Foster interdisciplinary projects, combining specializations like marketing and finance.
2020	24	MM, FM, HR	Branding, digital inclusion, adoption behaviours	Emerging themes like digital transformation are evident; the majority remain Kerala-centric.	Increase focus on emerging technologies (e.g., IoT, AI) and diversify industry focus beyond agriculture.

2021	22	MM, FM, HR	E-commerce, financial inclusion, mechanization	Significant focus on current trends like e-commerce; limited international perspective.	Promote global agribusiness perspectives and collaborations with international organizations.
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The results show that information technology (IT) related agribusiness projects have been minimal throughout the history of the CCBM. Finance, Legal, and policy internships are also not so frequently done by the students. The analysis shows that the total number of projects across all competency areas is 123, and the total number of credits available across all competency areas is only 58. Table 4.3.2 provides the Alignment of Projects, Courses, and Placement Record Competencies.

Table 4.3.2: Alignment of Projects, Courses, and Placement record Competencies					
Project Topics students have undergone	Key Competency Areas	Total Projects Available	Total Course Credits Available	Total Hours Available	Number of Relevant Courses
Consumer Buying Behaviour, Marketing Strategies	Marketing and Sales	25	10	30	4
Job Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance	Human Resource Management	20	6	18	3
Financial Inclusion, Cost Analysis	Financial Management	18	9	27	4
Supply Chain Management, Process Optimization	Operations and Project Management	15	7	21	3
Agribusiness Branding, Farm Management	Agribusiness Expertise	12	8	24	3
Digital Financial Inclusion, Technology Adoption	Technology and Digital Inclusion	10	4	12	2
Quality of Services, Product Testing	Quality Control and Assurance	8	3	9	2

Organizational Strategy, Competitive Positioning	Strategic Planning	6	5	15	2
Skill Development, Training Effectiveness	Teaching and Training	5	3	9	2
Export Opportunities, Trade Barriers	International Trade	4	3	9	1

The analysis reveals that the number of courses and the student's chosen project topics are similar and lack emerging agribusiness areas. Thus, approval of the project work topic needs to be introduced to ensure students' practical exposure allows them to explore various agribusiness areas. Further, during the interview process, respondents emphasized the importance and efforts the stakeholders gave for projects and internships.

"One is the type of internship means that they get in between, and also the final placements. That is the month, for the internships also are important, so that they get an exposure for exploring other avenues."

"Currently, we are providing financial support to potential innovators in two categories: pre-seed stage funding and seed stage funding."

"We also support and prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) to help obtain funding from government sources, identifying suitable schemes from ministries like Agriculture or Food Processing."

"The capacity-building program includes a two-month training session involving IIM and international faculties, aiming to equip selected start-ups with practical skills."

".... Currently, we are going through the project works like the minor project and major projects. What we are doing is somewhat similar to what you mentioned—understanding the problem, analysing it, and giving a solution after thorough analysis..."

"Half of my classmates want to start their own business, like an entrepreneur."

The analysis shows that the projects are less likely to be carried out in start-up or premier academic institutions. The scholarship drawn and the internship fellowships are also not significantly high during their project period. Students also did not choose to work on their own project ideas or do agribusiness research during the project period. Figure 4.3.1 provides the Curriculum and Specialization requirements that emerged during the interviews.

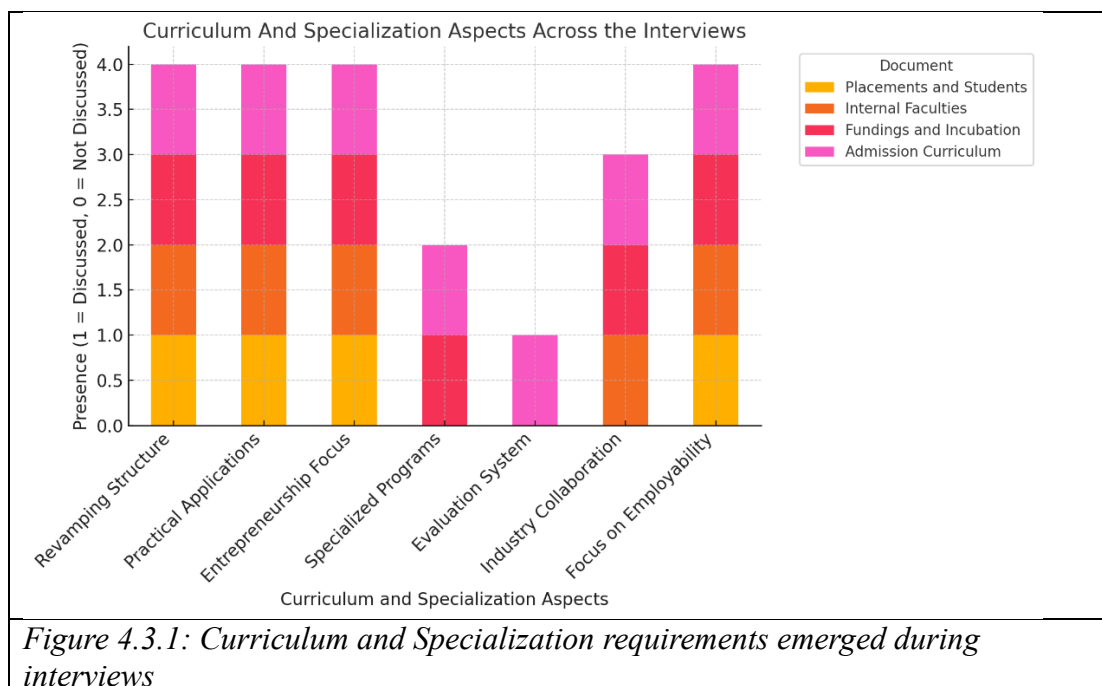


Figure 4.3.1: Curriculum and Specialization requirements emerged during interviews

The analysis shows that the admission and curriculum discussion often pointed out the limitations of the evaluation system, such as the limited hands-on and lack of autonomy in the curriculum. The incubation and admission-related discussion highlighted the program's specialization requirements, and all the interviews reflected the importance of revamping the structure, practical components, entrepreneurship, and placement outcomes.

Gaps Identified in Internship and Projects

- Beyond marketing and human resources, interdisciplinary or agribusiness-focused projects are limited.
- The project work reinforces the course offered in the classroom, and there are fewer incentives for choosing topics that bring more practical exposure to various domains of agribusiness.
- Minor and major projects often focus on similar topics, and areas like global agribusiness, agricultural laws, agricultural technology firms, etc., are attempted less often.
- The approval and quality of internship organizations are less rigorous, and start-up agribusiness organizations are chosen less often.

Recommendations to improve projects and internships

- Facilitate an industry-driven internship resource centre with dedicated faculty mentors to ensure the quality of the students' internship opportunities and variety.

- Realign minor and major project topics and enable the students to be ready with their project report before the placement starts.
- Promote interdisciplinary projects combining agribusiness, tech, and finance topics and improve the rigor of the project work.
- Explore short-term international emersion and global internship opportunities for MBA students.
- Encourage students to choose different organizations than their classmates chosen this is to encourage

4.4 Competency Development Modules

The courses offered, lesson plan, project, and internship are assessed to understand whether they help build the required skill for the placement offered to CCBM students. Table 4.4.1: provides competency requirements based on the placement history of CCBM.

Table 4.4.1: Competency requirements based on placement history of CCBM			
Domain of Placement	Number of Placements	Designations	Key Competency required
Human Resource Management	10	HR Recruiter (4), HR Officer (3), HR Manager (3)	Recruitment, employee engagement, conflict resolution
Sales and Marketing	15	Sales Executive (6), Marketing Executive (5), Digital Marketing Associate (4)	Communication, CRM, digital marketing skills
Financial Management	8	Finance Officer (4), Finance Intern (3), Cost Planning Officer (1)	Budgeting, financial analysis, cost control
Operations and Project Management	12	Project Manager (5), Project Coordinator (4), Logistics Officer (3)	Project planning, execution, logistics management
Agribusiness Management	7	Agri Development Officer (4), Agribusiness Manager (3)	Agricultural knowledge, risk management, market trends
Technology and Data Management	6	IT Support (2), e-Commerce Executive (2), Business Analyst (2)	IT systems, data analytics, problem-solving.
Quality Control and Assurance	4	Quality Manager (2), Inspection Officer (2)	Quality standards, inspection, regulatory compliance
Strategic Planning	3	Strategic Manager (2), Procurement Officer (1)	Decision-making, strategic alignment, leadership
Teaching and Training	5	Faculty (3), Talent Acquisition Intern (2)	Instructional skills, leadership, communication

International Trade	3	Export Manager (2), International Sales Officer (1)	Trade regulations, negotiation, foreign market insights
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Analysis shows that human resources, sales and marketing, and operations and project management areas receive more placement opportunities for CCBM students. The job offers requiring quantitative skills were 13, those requiring qualitative skills were 12, and 10 required both skills. Table 4.4.2 provides relevant courses based on the Placement History of CCBM.

Table 4.4.2: Relevant courses based on Placement History of CCBM		
Required Competency Areas	Competency Modules and Total Credits Available Now	Number of Relevant Courses
Human Resource Management	6 (CFM 1, GM 7, BS 6)	3
Sales and Marketing	10 (MM 2, MM 5, MM 15, FC 4)	4
Financial Management	9 (FM 2, FM 5, FM 6, GM 2)	4
Operations Management	7 (CFM 2, AM 1, AM 3)	3
Agribusiness Expertise	8 (FC 1, GM 5, AM 2)	3
Technology and Data Skills	4 (FC 8, AM 3)	2
Strategic Planning	5 (GM 9, AM 2)	2
Quality Control	3 (BS 10, AM 1)	2
Teaching and Training	3 (GM 4, BS 13)	2
International Trade	3 (AM 2)	1
BS: Behavioral Sciences; GM: General Management; AM: Advanced Management; CFM: Core Functional Management; MM: Marketing Management; FM: Financial Management; FC: Foundation Course		

The results of Table 4.4.1 and Table 4.4.2 show that there is a shortfall of courses covering both skills, and only 2 courses meet the requirements of technology and data skills. International trade has only one course and is insufficient to meet the change in demand in the agribusiness market. Figure 4.4.1 provides Competency Module Gaps and courses provided by CCBM.

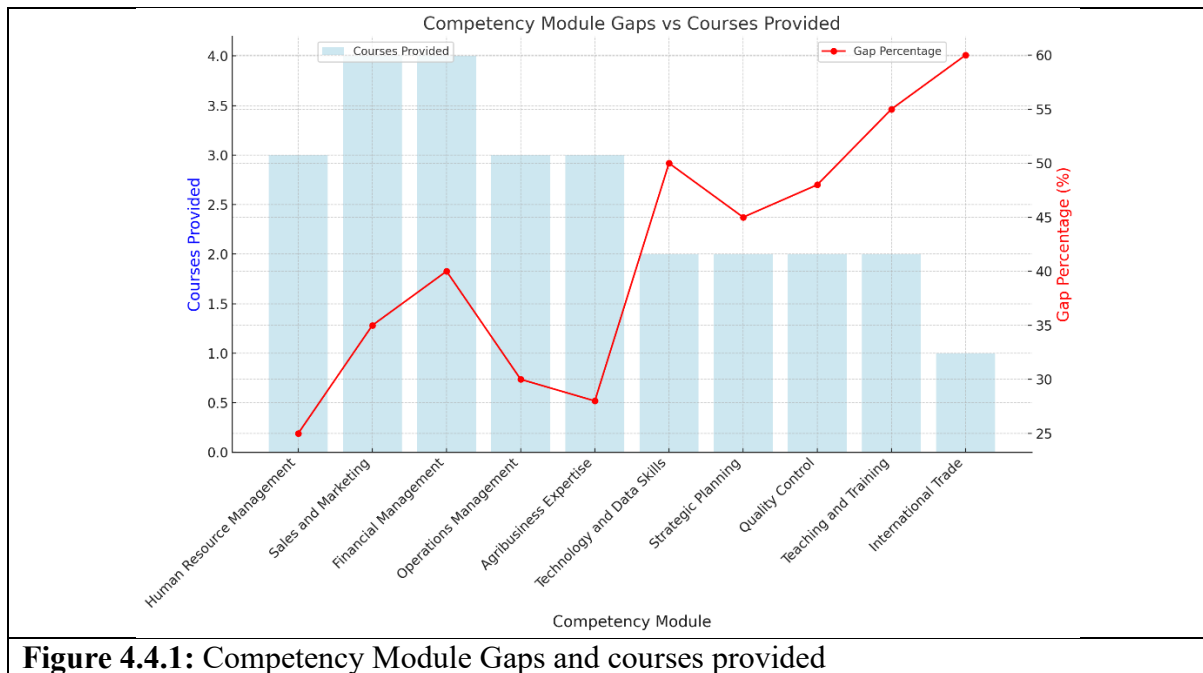


Figure 4.4.1: Competency Module Gaps and courses provided

The data analysis shows a competency module gap in placements where high-paying jobs are available. The interview responses reflect the contribution of minor and major projects that might fulfill the competency module requirements.

"Currently, we are going through the project works like the minor project and major projects. So what we are doing is like somewhat similar to that."

"We have to understand the problem, analyse it, and then provide a solution after thorough analysis. That is the essence of both the minor and major projects."

"In our case, the major project was aligned with placement activities, and the sequence of projects contributes to placement readiness."

"Minor projects involve two students working together, while major projects are individual and based on the student's specialization."

"For human resource management projects, we were instructed to visit companies, collect data, and gain practical experience."

"Some practical applications in the syllabus are lacking, especially in financial management and accounting."

"We have to internally make some of our students go and subscribe to the Incubation Centre, and we also have to give them a kind of a backup."

"In the capacity-building program, realistic case studies will come to students, providing a win-win situation for both students and the agribusiness incubation centre."

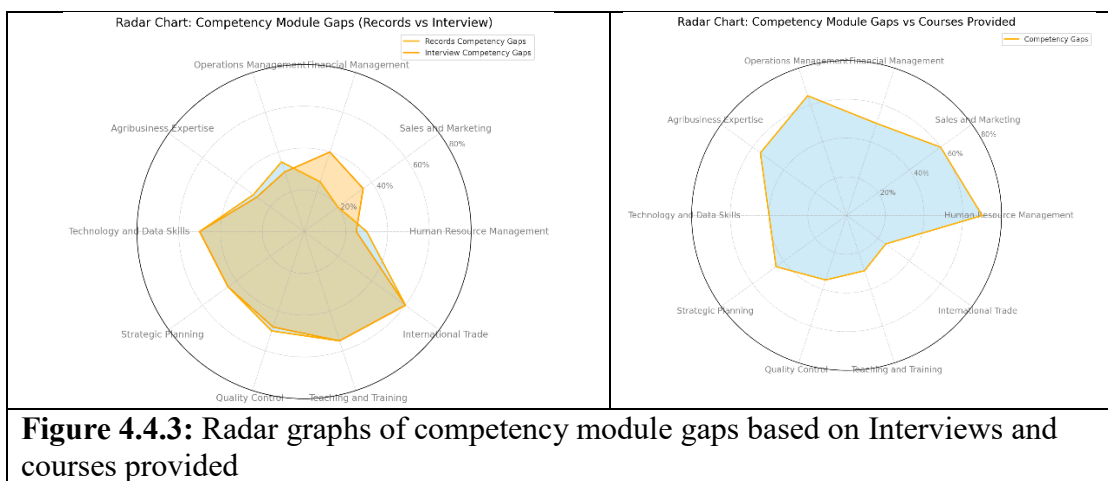
The data shows that the minor and major projects of CCBM have a great role in the competitive building and placement of the company. Based on the available records and interview responses, we further attempted to determine the gap percentage in each competency module. The gap percentage (GGG) for each competency module was calculated as follows:

$$G = \left(1 - \frac{C_a}{C_e}\right) \times 100$$

Figur 4.4.2: Gap Percentage Formula

Where:

- CaC_aCa: Number of actual courses provided for the competency module.
- CeC_eCe: Number of expected courses required to address the competency module fully.



The assessment of the interview data and alignment records shows respondents reported significant discrepancies in sales, marketing, and financial management. Respondents perceive technology and data skills as being closely related. Quality Control and International Trade are the areas with the highest gaps in interview responses and the courses offered. Meanwhile, financial management and agribusiness expertise show moderate gaps. The interview responses show that further practical applications and case studies are required in law competency gap areas like human resource management.

Gaps identified in the Competency Development

- There is a shortage of courses promoting qualitative and quantitative skills, resulting in limited placement opportunities for high-paying job offers.
- Courses on IT and data analysis, quality control, and international trade are minimal enough to meet the placement requirements.
- Beyond coursework grades, the competency evaluation of projects, internships, and other student activities is not adequately available during placement.

Recommendations to improve the Competency Development Process

- Introduce more contemporary and industry-relevant courses that are in line with Agribusiness Management.
- Frequent revamping of the lesson plan and overlap assessment of the courses offered by CCBM and implementing student feedback system for the course being offered.
- Increase classroom assessment of students' hands-on activities and case components rather than traditional quizzes and written tests.
- Introduce courses that build both quantitative and qualitative skills among the students.

4.5 Class participation

The current MBA guidelines include class participation as an evaluation component exclusively for practical exams, not for theory subjects. Table 4.5.1 provides Marks Distribution for Practical Examination Components.

Table 4.5.1 : Marks Distribution for Practical Examination Components	
Component	Marks Allocated
Assignment	20
Class Participation and Presentation	20
Viva-Voce Examination	10
Final Practical	50
Total	100

The class participation and how the students' engagement converted to their learning outcomes and over all MBA programme effectiveness is discussed during the interview process. The respondents mentioned -

"Students work on smaller one-month projects or major projects, with some converted into entrepreneurship projects depending on the requirements."

"The incubation process includes continuous support for technology refinement, business plan preparation, and marketing strategy development."

"There is a proposal to link minor projects with start-ups through the Entrepreneurship Cell, enabling students to work closely with incubators on real-time problems."

"Internships and projects should include market surveys, cash flow analysis, and strategic business planning to bridge the gap between academic concepts and practical applications."

"A structured mentorship program with MBA faculty and industry professionals helps refine projects and align them with industry standards."

"Case studies should be geared up, and more practical-oriented stuff needs to be included in the syllabus."

"Some students suggested replacing the minor project with summer internships arranged by the college for better industry exposure."

"The placement team finds it challenging to coordinate when students are away for major projects, which sometimes overlap with placement activities."

"There is a need to strengthen industry linkages and alumni connections to improve the internship and project experience."

The analysis shows that class participation helps the students develop insight into the industry expectations and provides feedback for improving the program. It also motivates the faculties to strengthen the industry linkage and work with students frequently.

Gap-identified in-class participation

- The class engagement model is not adequately present in many lesson plans, and the courses are more textbook-oriented than the case or hands-on engagement.
- Class participation is only explicitly evaluated in the practical exam, and currently both the students and faculty have significant tangible achievement from a highly engaging classroom environment.
- Due to the non-residential program structure, overall uneven student involvement in classroom discussions and student clubs.

Recommendations to improve class participation

- Implementing participation grading (15-20%) in all theory and practical courses.
- Every session in the lesson plan should provide engagement models (e.g., debates, case studies, role-play, etc.) and should be conscious of the submission being made.
- Student club activities can be attached to each semester's evaluation component.

4.6 Semester Calendar and Exams

The evaluation scheme for the MBA (Agribusiness Management) program is a combination of internal and external assessments, with a 60:40 ratios. Internal assessments include quizzes, mid-term exams, assignments, and viva voce, contributing 60 marks for theory papers. External assessments conducted by the university, account for 40 marks. Practical examinations are evaluated entirely through internal assessments, divided into assignments (20 marks), class

participation and presentations (20 marks), viva voce (10 marks), and final practical exams (50 marks), totalling 100 marks. Figure 4.6.1 gives Current Evaluation Framework for MBA.

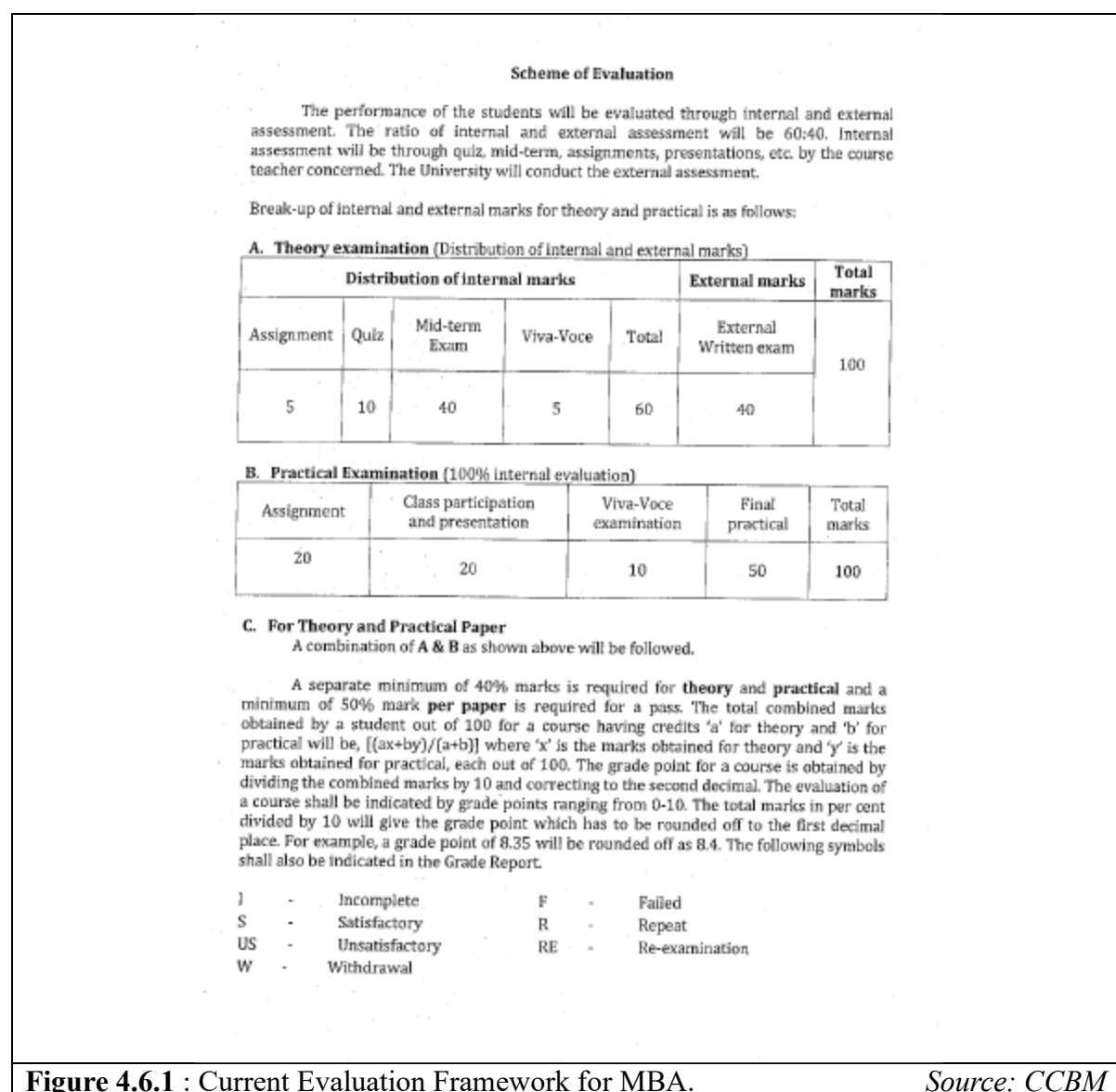


Figure 4.6.1 : Current Evaluation Framework for MBA.

Source: CCBM

To pass, a student must achieve a minimum of 40% marks in both theory and practical evaluations and an overall 50% combined score. Grades are calculated on a 0-10 scale based on the weighted average of marks in theory and practical components, rounded to the nearest decimal. Symbols like 'I' (Incomplete), 'S' (Satisfactory), 'U' (Unsatisfactory), and 'RE' (Re-examination) are used to indicate performance.

The data shows that the examination system is a theory-heavy evaluation, potentially limiting applied learning. The practical exams are 100% internal, and the external organization cannot provide feedback about the student's contribution. Classroom engagement and activity outcomes are not evaluated in a structured format, and courses like marketing and sales have

higher credits than international trade. Table 4.6.1. provides analysis of Credits, Hours, and Examination Structure with Identified Gaps.

Table 4.6.1. Analysis of Credits, Hours, and Examination Structure with Identified Gaps				
Component	Credits	Total Hours	Examination Pattern	Potential Mismatch/Drawback
Theory Examination	3	45	60% Internal, 40% External	No class participation component; limited interactive assessment
Practical Examination	2	30	100% Internal	No external validation; may lack standardization
Assignment (Theory)	-	-	5 marks	Low weightage may not reflect a comprehensive understanding.
Mid-Term Exam (Theory)	-	-	40 marks	Heavy weightage could penalize students with single poor performance.
Class Participation (Practical)	-	-	20 marks	It is not considered for theory and lacks alignment with core objectives.
Final Written Exam (Theory)	-	-	40 marks	Heavy focus on written exam; may not assess applied skills
Viva-Voce (Both)	-	-	5 (Theory) + 10 (Practical) marks	Minimal weightage; insufficient emphasis on communication skills

Analysis of our interview data shows outcome and value addition from each of the courses offered are less documented other than the grades attained by the students. Some of the interview responses are as follows:

"What structural change is possible in terms of the course, minor and major project that is placed?"

"If more practical-oriented stuff is included in the syllabus, more particularly on the projects, preparation of the projects, and analysis of the balance sheet.

"How prepared are students to be able to take that exam? If they are asking for a concept or an idea, are our students in that position to build a concept and/or an idea?"

"We maintain a 60-40 evaluation system—60% internal and 40% external—and emphasize practical components, such as project work and case studies."

"The semester system includes 105 working days, with practical and theoretical components, aimed at a comprehensive learning experience."

The respondents reported the feasibility of the semester system with the university norms. However, the course evaluation structure is less flexible in capturing the unique skills of an MBA graduate.

Gaps Identified in the Semester Calendar and Exams

- Applied learning activities are less evaluated, and exams are theory-heavy assessments.
- Feedback and grading provisions for the external project mentor are minimal; thus, students' contributions to the organization they engaged in are not often documented.
- Courses of different credit values are evaluated similarly, and practical components and activity outcome scores are not measured explicitly.

Recommendations to improve Semester Calendar and Exams

- Ensure the practical component and the theoretical components are evaluated every semester.
- External assessment scores for the minor and major projects can be introduced, and the sponsoring agencies can give feedback for the students' club activities.
- Courses that upskill quantitative and qualitative skills can be given more credit, and all courses should provide application-based evaluation components, irrespective of the credit.
- For mid-term and end-term exam assessments, program objectives, course objectives, and Bloom's Taxonomy components—such as remembering, understanding, and analysing—can be measured.

4.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the academic part of the MBA program at CCBM. We reviewed the course content, internship, project, industry interactions, and research activities at CCBM. Students' class participation and the evaluation process are also assessed as part of this report. Curriculum, student engagement, and evaluation process are studied in detail to explore the areas of improvement of CCBM and the student's overall learning experience.

The curriculum and specialization were found to rely heavily on textbook teaching, while application-oriented classroom activities, case discussions, simulations, and industry-term projects were not explicitly assessed in the lesson plans of theoretical courses. Number of entrepreneurial and agribusiness-specific electives is less, and the quantitative courses that attract high placement offers are minimal. The students explore internships and projects themselves, and faculty mentor assessment for the approval of selected topics is minimal. The focus of many projects carried out is restricted to marketing and human resources, not technology innovations, start-ups, or strategic decision making. Students' feedback on identifying elective courses is minimal, and the lesson plans did not explore agribusiness, technology, applications of AI/ML, block chain, IoT, etc.

Students' engagement is not measured or evaluated as part of the class activity outcome. Beyond class hours, students' club activities are minimal and were not assessed by the credit systems. Individual and group assessment components of students' activities with each domain of the courses are missing. External project guides' feedback is not included in the evaluation of students' contributions to the thesis, and the sponsors of club activities do not provide ratings for the activities conducted.

The following action points are reiterated to improve academic activities, course evaluation, and students' learning experiences at CCBM.

1. Incorporate assessment of students' class activities and term projects as evaluation components in all the theoretical courses.
2. The lesson plan should reflect the program learning objectives and course learning objectives, and the evaluation must reflect the Bloom's taxonomy of remembering, understanding, and analysis.
3. Feedback from students and industry experts should be taken into consideration for a minimum of 10% changes in the lesson plan of all the courses in every academic year.

4. Guest faculty teaching the courses should submit recommendations to improve their course in the next academic year.
5. Student club activities and other classroom engagements can be evaluated to incorporate minimum credit requirements.
6. Project work should get feedback from the external guide, and his evaluation should be incorporated in the grading of the project report.
7. More technology and agri-entrepreneurship courses should be provided in the first year.
8. Courses that upskill the students' quantitative and qualitative competency should get more credit points, and for all the courses, practical activity should be an evaluation component.
9. There must be a short internship period each semester, and the effort should make the students choose various topics for their internship work.
10. Continuous assessment throughout the semester should be in place, and the midterm and end-term should have application-oriented questions.

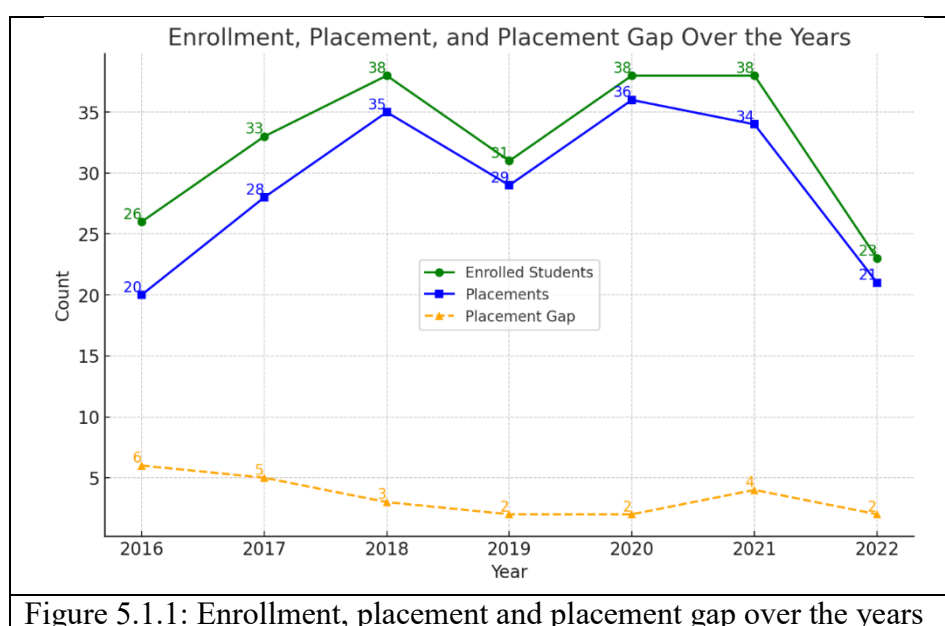
CHAPTER 5. PLACEMENTS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INDUSTRY LINKAGE

One of the objectives of the consultancy request from KAU for its MBA Agribusiness Management Program in CCBM is to suggest avenues/actions for employability of MBA graduates while a closely related other objective is to probe the possibility and plan for Academic-Industry-Alumni linkage. In these lines, the next two chapters focus on a. Placement, Entrepreneurship and Industry Linkage development b. Alumni, Network and Visibility of the program.

The outcome and impact of MBA program in terms of placement, entrepreneurship, and industry linkage are assessed in this chapter. A detailed analysis of developing innovative and entrepreneurial skills, was carried out during the project. The placement opportunities immediately after the MBA and the entrepreneurship motive among the students are reviewed using our interview data. We also assessed the role of KAU's Agribusiness Incubator and students' engagement with the incubation centre.

5.1 Placement Cell

The placement records from 2016 to 2020 for the College of Co-operation, Banking & Management (CCBM) demonstrate a consistent trend of successful student placements across diverse sectors such as banking, agribusiness, marketing, finance, and HR management. Figure 5.1.1 shows the enrolment, placement, and placement gaps over the years.



The placements indicate strong industry linkages, with graduates securing roles in reputed organizations such as Federal Bank, HDFC Bank, Saint Gobain, Amazon, and other service industries. The diversity of job designations, including Agribusiness Officer, HR Manager, Project Coordinator, and Finance Officer, highlights the multidisciplinary skill set developed through the college's programs. Notably, students are also employed in emerging domains like e-commerce support and digital marketing, reflecting the adaptability of the curriculum to contemporary industry needs. Table 5.1.1 gives industries and number of recruiters.

Table 5.1.1: Industries and number of recruiters	
Industry Sector	Number of Recruiters
Food & Agriculture	12
Retail & Consumer Goods	3
Finance & Banking	14
Textiles & Apparel	3
Miscellaneous Industries	3
Total	35

This robust placement record underscores the institution's effectiveness in fostering employability and building industry-relevant competencies, making it a key contributor to the professional success of its graduates.

While placement outcomes remain strong, the declining admission numbers (details in Chapter 3) highlight a potential disconnect in attracting students. The placement record, with students' designations in organizations, suggests a need to market the college's success stories and career opportunities to prospective applicants in a better manner. However, it also demands assessing students job level during the placement. Table 5.1.2 provides job levels and industry sector offers from placements.

Table 5.1.2: Job level and industry sectors			
Job Level	No. of Positions	Companies	Industry Sector
Officer/ Trainee	5	ESAF, ICICI, Federal Bank, Vodafone, Jio Mart	Banking & Finance
Executive	6	Amazon, Catholic Syrian Bank, Indocert, Tata Consultancy, EY India, HDFC Bank	Retail & E-commerce
Assistant Manager	3	NSL Sugars Ltd., Rubber Board, Canara Bank	Banking & Finance
Manager	4	Promise Educational Services, Manappuram Finance, South Indian Bank, Federal Bank	Education & Research
HR Roles	5	EY India, EY-GDS India LLP, ESAF, ICT Academy, HR Recruiter	HR & Consulting

Finance Roles	6	Finance Officer, Block Technology Manager, Finance Intern, Product and Process Officer, Financial Analyst, Cooperative Bank	Banking & Finance
Marketing Roles	4	Marketing Executive, Digital Marketing Associate, Sales Coordinator, Retail Process Associate	Marketing & Sales
Project Coordinator	3	Project Officer, Inspection and Certification Officer, Development Manager	Project Management
Educational Roles	4	Academic Councillor, Faculty, Assistant Manager, HR Assistant	Education & Research
Intern	5	Research Assistant, Administrative Executive, Procurement Intern, Marketing Intern, Sales Coordinator	Internships
Technology Roles	2	Software Development, IT Specialist	Technology & IT
Business Analyst	3	Business Development Associate, Procurement Manager, Business Operations Specialist	Business & Trade

It is evident that some of the designation and the salary package is not supportive for long term career transition. During the interviews participants responded about the placement process at CCBM.

“Students expect high-paying or executive-level jobs immediately after graduation”

“Placement should be more student-centric, considering their interests and abilities”

“50% of students wish to become entrepreneurs, but prefer gaining corporate experience first before venturing into start-ups”

“The mind-set of risk aversion is common among students; many prefer stable jobs over entrepreneurship”

“Past coordinators were alumni who served in placement-related roles while they were students”

“The Placement Cell is managed by both students and faculty coordinators”

“Entrepreneurship is perceived as risky, which influences placement trends, The need for a shift in mind-set towards risk-taking and innovation”

CCBM's objective of fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set is less likely to resonate with students aspiring for stable jobs in public sector banks, as they are often less attracted to the challenges or high-paying opportunities in the Agri-tech and start-up sectors.

Gaps identified in the placement process:

- Expectations from alumni to co-ordinate or support the placement process often do not result in expected outcomes.

- Faculty coordinators and institutes' expectations may not reflect students' aspirations and placement preparation level.
- The placement brochure is isolated, and the other sources of information about CCBM do not reflect the students' achievement or CCBM's unique offerings.
- Industry-linkage is not adequately reflected in the student participation. Residential student clubs and a vibrant atmosphere is a must to bring in this linkage in an effective manner
- There is no placement deferral process currently in place to inspire students to take up entrepreneurship for a few years. In case of failure of their venture, they would get placement support up to a three-year period.
- The current major and minor projects and/or internship, as highlighted in Chapter 3 and 4 earlier, do not adequately prepare students for placement/ entrepreneurship
- The activities of Student Placement Club and Student Entrepreneurship Club is not adequate or supported enough in the current system
- The administrative structure needs to accommodate a dean especially driving placement, entrepreneurship and industry-linkage with their PR office as suggested in Chapter 2 and in other chapters is needed to increase visibility of the program

Recommendations to improve the placement process

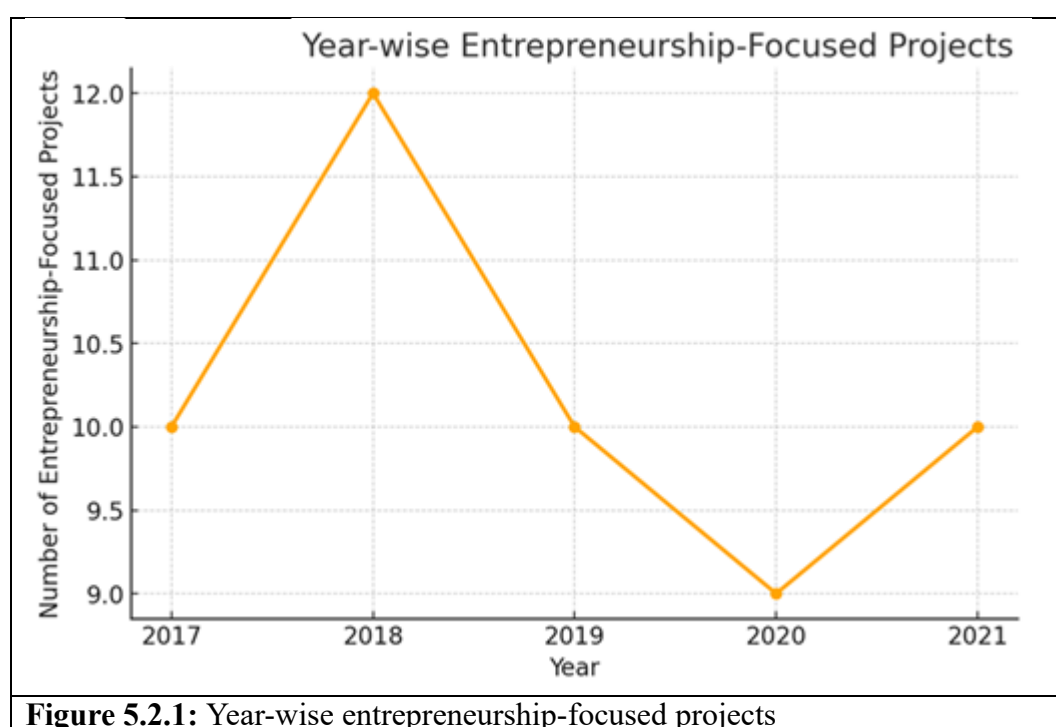
- As discussed in earlier chapters (Chapter 2: Administrative Structure and others), The administrative structure needs to accommodate a dean especially driving placement, entrepreneurship and industry-linkage with their PR office to support student club activities and visibility of the program
- The placement club needs to be empowered to have a say in the internships and student major and minor projects such that they are in sync with industry requirements. They should be empowered to drive enthusiasm with other student club activities.
- The entrepreneurship club needs to be empowered to have a say in the internships and student major and minor projects such that they are in sync with entrepreneurship requirements. They should be empowered to drive enthusiasm within students to ensure greater participation with KAU incubator, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ecosystems that surround agribusiness.
- A partnership with KAU incubator in a systemic manner is envisaged. At least 50% of students could be given minor and major projects of assisting incubated entrepreneurs. Sufficient intellectual property rights protection might be needed to be built in this

system, such that incubated entrepreneurs feel safe to use the skills and efforts of students in their start-ups during their internships/ minor or major projects.

- The MBA Agribusiness Management should be made a residential program to enable a thriving atmosphere where the above mentioned activities can take place.
- More entrepreneurship and technology-focused courses should be introduced in the first year, with increased credit allocation for courses that enhance both quantitative and qualitative skills.
- Students should have short-term internships every semester and be motivated to work in various locations in India and abroad. During the evaluation of projects, grace marks can be given to outstation internships and engagement in promising start-ups.
- The placement process should be student-driven, and the structured involvement of first- and second-year MBA students must be mandated.

5.2 Entrepreneurship

Agribusiness entrepreneurship was often a major point of discussion during the field visits and interviews with the CCBM officials. The university emphasizes the need to promote start-ups, and we have assessed the extent to which it is transferred to students' aspirations level. Figure 5.2.1 gives year-wise entrepreneurship-focused projects at CCBM.



There is a declining tendency for entrepreneurship characteristics in student projects. The absence of entrepreneurship or business clubs and emerging technologies projects such as AI/ML in agricultural business or the limited credits for courses such as e-commerce or entrepreneurship misaligned with fostering start-up culture. Simulations or applications-oriented class activities, including business model innovations and case studies, are also less in the MBA program.

Recommendations to improve Entrepreneurship activities

- Set high priority for activities that promote start-up culture in agribusiness.
- Introduce more courses covering entrepreneurship and business model innovations.
- Encourage more students' engagement with agri-business start-ups – more significant relationships with KAU incubator needs to be established systematically.
- Introduce an entrepreneurship club and newsletter for agribusiness start-ups.

5.3 Agribusiness Incubator

Established in 2012, the Agribusiness Incubator promotes agribusiness, post-harvest technology, and food processing. Entrepreneurs can approach the incubator with raw ideas refined into business models. Around 400-600 applications are received each year, which are screened down to 100, then 70, and finally 40 selected start-ups. The selection is based on four factors: Innovation – 30% weightage, commercial scalability – 30% weightage, sustainability, and environmental friendliness. The Agribusiness incubator provides pre-seed stage funding of ₹5 lakh grant for idea-to-prototype projects and a seed stage funding of ₹25 lakh grant for start-ups. The incubator has provided financial support to 70 out of 200 start-ups. Table 5.3.1 provides the agribusiness incubation centre and possible alignment with the MBA program.

Table 5.3.1: Agribusiness incubation centre and possible alignment with MBA program			
Category	No. of initiatives	Details	MBA Agribusiness Management
Number of Entrepreneur Support Initiatives	9	Supports food processing industries (rice mills, banana-based products, spice powders, etc.)	Entrepreneurial and business plan formulation skills
Number of Training Programs Conducted	50	Conducted 50+ EDP training programs for entrepreneurs	Industry exposure, case studies, and real-world projects

Number of Processing Industries Supported	9	9 industries supported including rice mills, banana-based products, and spice powders	Project work in Agribusiness corporates
Number of Gender-friendly Processing Tools Developed	6	Developed jackfruit slicer, banana slicer, edible wax applicator, coconut scraper, etc.	Leadership and strategic decision-making skills
Number of Key Product Innovations	7	Innovations like vacuum impregnated fruits, GABA enriched rice flakes, retort packaging	Market analysis, supply chain management expertise
Number of Successful Ventures Supported	4	Supported Ready-to-eat noodles, Jackfruit processing, and Banana flour-based industries	Integration with the Agri-Business Incubator for practical exposure

The Agribusiness Incubation Centre collaborates with MBA faculty and students in areas like marketing surveys, project report preparation, and DPRs (Detailed Project Reports) . During the interview, participants responded that there is potential for an Entrepreneurship Cell (E-Cell) where 5-6 students form a start-up team with at least one or two female members. The data shows MBA programme can significantly contribute to the Agribusiness Incubation Centre, and many faculty members are actively involved in the centre's activity. However, the structured engagement of MBA students in this centre has not been reported, and very few students have submitted business model proposals to the incubation centre.

Recommendations to leverage the potential benefits of the Agribusiness Incubation Centre for the MBA programme:

- Encourage interdepartmental club activities within the university, focusing on Agri-technology, entrepreneurship, and business initiatives.
- Implement a mandatory short-term immersion program for MBA students at the incubation centre.
- Introduce a high-credit business project proposal course in MBA program in collaboration with the incubation centre.
- Make MBA students submit a compulsory field visit report on start-ups mentored by the incubation centre.

5.4 Students' Life and Support Services

During the interview, the participants expressed that their students' lives and support services met their expectations. For example, some of the respondents mentioned -

KAU's Agribusiness Incubation Centre provides financial support for student-led start-ups. Students can access seed funding up to ₹25 lakhs, depending on the stage of their business idea.

The incubation centre also helps us to refine business ideas and market strategies.

CCBM students are actively involved in Thrissur Management Associations and professional networking clubs.

The CCBM provides a blend of in-house faculty and guest lecturers from industry to enrich learning opportunities. Table 5.4.1 provides the faculty strength of CCBM from the industry and from the university.

Table 5.4.1: Faculty strength of CCBM from the industry	
Category	Count (~Yearly)
Total KAU Faculty Members	20
Total Guest Faculty Members	12
Professors & Associate Professors	7
Assistant Professors (Permanent)	5
Assistant Professors (Contract)	8
Guest Lecturers & Industry Experts	7

It shows the students have the opportunity to interact with industry professionals and university professors regularly during their course work. Further, students responded that

Alumni also participate in mentoring and networking events to support current students, and the university offers 100% placement support, but we need more recruiters and diverse job opportunities.

Many students aim to become entrepreneurs but prefer to gain corporate experience first before launching their ventures.

Faculty members consider integrating entrepreneurial projects into coursework to encourage students to develop their businesses during their MBA, which will help to improve their leadership skills apart from the students' led initiatives.

CCBM's student Placement Cell is managed by faculty and student coordinators. However, respondents said it needs to be more student-centric, focusing on individual interests and

capabilities. Student coordinators actively connect with recruiters, facilitate job placements, and engage with alum networks. Thus, academics, placements, and industry expectations are pressured, with some indicating the need for better mental health support services. A faculty member suggested formalizing mentorship programs to support students in managing stress and career decisions.

CCBM has multiple club activities that are in line with course modules. Table 5.4.2 provides various clubs and their contribution to the previous years' placement.

Table 5.4.2. Club Activities vs. Curriculum, Internships, and Placements Alignment					
Club Name	Relevant Course Modules	Club Activities	Curriculum alignment with Club activities	Internship Skill Divergence from club activities	Gap in Placement requirements from club activities
Academic Club	Business Strategy, Agribusiness Management, Research Methodology	Networking, Seminars, Panel Discussions, Summits	85%	15%	25%
Finance Club	Financial Management, Investment Analysis, Risk Management	Case Competitions, Workshops, Speaker Sessions	75%	22%	20%
Marketing Club	Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing	Summits, Workshops, Industry Networking Events	90%	10%	15%
Human Resource (HR) Club	Organizational Behaviour, Leadership Development, Talent Management	Leadership Development, Role Plays, Case Studies, Group Discussions	80%	18%	22%

The events organized by these clubs helped the CCBM students to

- Increase industry Collaboration - Partner with companies for guest lectures, live projects, and industry visits to improve internship skill alignment.
- Integrate More Practical Training – Conduct simulation exercises, case studies, and hands-on workshops to reduce internship skill divergence.

- Strengthen Placement Readiness – Offer resume-building sessions, mock interviews, and soft skills training to bridge the gap in placement requirements.
- Cross-Club Collaboration – Encourage joint sessions between clubs (e.g., Finance & Marketing for FinTech topics) to provide holistic exposure.

However, data analysis in Table 5.4.2 shows that the Academic Club (MBA - ABM) needs better practical applications and real-world problem-solving activities. This can be done by organizing business simulation challenges to reinforce strategic decision-making, introducing student-led research projects with faculty mentorship to bridge theory-to-practice gaps, and collaborating with incubation centres to expose students to real start-up challenges.

Finance Club data shows a higher internship skill divergence (22%), suggesting a need for more technical finance exposure. They could conduct financial modelling boot camps to cover valuation, investment strategies, and data analytics. Host more trading simulations to provide hands-on experience in stock market analysis and invite more finance professionals for risk management and corporate finance mentorship.

Marketing Club shows the most substantial alignment (90%) but could enhance digital marketing and data analytics skills in their activities. They can introduce real-time digital marketing campaigns for students to apply their skills, organize brand-building competitions with real-world case studies, and partner with marketing agencies or startups to offer live consulting projects.

The Human Resource (HR) Club of CCBM needs better leadership development and soft skills integration program. They conduct role-play scenarios for conflict resolution and negotiation skills, implement behavioural assessments and emotional intelligence workshops and Organize HR analytics and AI in recruitment training to align with modern industry needs.

These clubs should incorporate more real-world applications to reduce internship skill divergence. Ensure industry involvement and practical exposure should be expanded for higher placement readiness, and cross-club collaboration can enhance interdisciplinary learning for a well-rounded MBA experience and placement.

Gaps identified in club activities' effectiveness

- Currently, clubs that focus on mental health and career planning are minimal in CCBM.
- Credit system to club activities and co-curricular activities is minimal
- Some club activities are not strategically aligned with placement outcomes.

Recommendations to improve Students' Life and Support Services.

- Introduce credits for career counselling services and mentorship initiatives from the clubs, exclusively for CCBM students.
- Conduct a periodic review of wellness workshops and psychological counselling services available to CCBM students.
- Ensure mandatory participation in student clubs. Prepare a yearly calendar and strategic planning for club activities.

5.5 Residential programme Structure

Our interviews and data show that the university ensures full-time faculty mentorship for students living on campus, and there is a need to integrate entrepreneurship-focused projects into the final-year residential curriculum to encourage students to build ventures while studying. Further, the MBA program follows a two-year semester system with a 60:40 internal-external evaluation ratio, ensuring a structured academic schedule with a minimum of 105 working days per semester, excluding exams and study leave. However, students leave the campus after class hours, and the study leave is mostly spent in their home town. This leads to limited involvement in the agribusiness incubation centre, which offers funding, mentorship, and training within the residential structure and students' interaction level with other academic communities on campus. The student club activities are impoverished due to non-availability of students beyond class hours. Industry interaction requires being available at all times with competitive mind-set to showcase best talent as and when required; this is not possible with students not available on campus. The opportunity for Associate Director to use their personal relationship manager and offices to support placement and entrepreneurship committee can only be possible if the committees have the power to convene meetings with students at a very short notice. A residential program needs to build a culture of management institution – most comparable institutions as shown in **Table 3.3.4** (Comparative fees analysis of CCMB's MBA programme and other Agribusiness Management Programmes in India) have a residential program in management. We feel that this is one of the most important transformation that is needed to achieve what the institution aspires for.

Gaps identified in the time students spend at the university campus

- MBA is not a fully residential program, leading to limited faculty engagement with students outside of class hours.

- Students' discussions with incubation centres and entrepreneurship activities are limited.
- Less adequate time for planning club activities and assessing its effectiveness.

Recommendations to improve students' time spent on campus activities.

- Spread the club activities across the academic years and organize events after class hours.
- Transform the MBA program into a full-fledged residential program.
- Conduct regular Faculty-student interaction sessions and mentorship sessions.
- Introduce MBA student-led incubator programs to engage other student communities on the university campus.

5.6 Industry and Research Collaborations

Our study shows that the university has a strong industry collaboration. For example, the Agribusiness Incubation Centre at KAU actively collaborates with industry partners for technology transfer and start-up funding, and it has capacity-building programs from industry experts from IIMs, IITs, and Cornell University (USA). The CCBM faculty members emphasized the need for more structured industry tie-ups to enhance students' real-world exposure. The university has a strong research culture and multiple research scholarships in place. Table 5.6.1 gives the research infrastructure and scholarships at KAU availed by CCBM.

Table 5.6.1: Research Infrastructure and Scholarships at KAU Availed by CCBM	
Category	Count (~ Yearly)
Total KAU Faculty Members	~ 20
Total Guest Faculty Members	~ 14
Scholarship Programs	~ 4
Junior Research Fellows	~ 3
National Talent Scholars	~ 2
FedBank Hormis Scholars	~ 10
Scholarships Awarded	~ 15
Awards & Achievements	~ 11
Competitions Won	~ 7
Industry Collaborations (Scholarships)	~ 3

Further, KAU offers start-ups with Pre-Seed (₹5 lakhs) and Seed-Stage (₹25 lakhs) funding, particularly in agri-tech, supply chain, and food processing sectors. Over 200 start-ups have graduated from the incubation centre, with 70 receiving financial support. The university helps

start-ups refine their business models, marketing strategies, and project reports to tap into government funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Processing.

The respondents to interview pointed out -

If the virtue of resources inside the university is adequately tapped, MBA students will gain more practical exposure to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry expectations.

Faculty members proposed integrating live case studies, business simulations, and guest lectures by industry leaders in collaboration with university initiatives.

There was a suggestion to allow students to work on industry-sponsored projects as part of their curriculum.

However, to expand CCBM research collaborations needs to formalize with industry bodies like FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry), NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development), ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) with a focus on emerging areas like climate-smart agriculture, digital agribusiness, and AI-driven supply chains , etc.

Gaps identified in CCBM's Industry and Research Collaborations

- At the university level, industry-research linkage exists but needs scaling up to meet CCBM focus domains.
- KAU incubation centre offers funding and mentorship for start-ups. However, no explicit percentage is allocated to CCBM.
- The incubation and internship opportunities for CCBM students can be revamped by engaging in more practical learning and industry-sponsored student projects from KAU.
- CCBM has limited structured research partnerships with government and private institutions.

Recommendations to improve CCBM's Industry and Research Collaborations

- Establish a cell to facilitate more research partnerships and corporate sponsorship towards CCBM.
- Formalize the CCBM's research collaborations with NABARD, FICCI, and ICAR
- Initiate an Agribusiness Research lab focusing on sustainable business strategies in Agriculture.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

The chapter assesses the placement process in CCBM and points out the importance of increased annual placement offers, the designation of students, and the career prospectus of the company. Our assessment identified the importance of companies' participation, which demands the students' qualitative and quantitative skills in the placement process of CCBM. The limited entrepreneurship and technology courses and their impact on the start-up culture of the CCBM are also highlighted in this study. The assessment also revealed the potential areas where MBA students could collaborate with university infrastructure, such as incubation centers, as well as the current gap in this system.

We reiterate the following action points to enhance the placement profile, promote entrepreneurship, and leverage the university's agribusiness infrastructure.

1. Revamp the placement process to future-oriented and transform MBA students into a specialized resource pool in the agribusiness industry.
2. Implement a filtering mechanism for campus placement companies with a threshold package and the carrier progressive industry profile.
3. Facilitate a breakup option from the placement sitting, allow students to establish their business ideas, and sit through the placement after a 1-2-year gap if required.
4. Mandatory outstation short internships every semester should be in place to make the students competent for placement across cultures and locations.
5. Students who have not secured their desired placements should get an opportunity to engage in the incubation/business centre for one year.
6. Foster a start-up culture among the students and introduce more entrepreneurship and business project proposal courses in the first year.
7. Interdepartmental clubs, including robotics, agri-tech, entrepreneurship, and business, should be promoted to engage MBA students and help them explore university resources.
8. MBA students must conduct field visits to incubation centre start-ups and submit a managerial assessment report as part of the program.
9. Ensure the placement brochure, entrepreneurial activities, and agribusiness club newsletters are available on the CCBM webpage and social media handles.

CHAPTER 6. ALUMNI NETWORK, EVENTS AND VISIBILITY

In continuation with chapter 6, and especially with the objective of the KAU Consultancy project of its MBA Agribusiness Management Program in CCBM to suggest avenues/actions for employability of MBA graduates while a closely related other objective is to probe the possibility and plan for Academic-Industry-Alumni linkage, this chapters focusses on Alumni relationships and network development, enhancing visibility of the program and conducting events to increase adequate knowledge creation, employability and PR of the program. Many of these things have been extensively spoken about in preceding chapters and shall be built further upon in this chapter.

We have assessed the existing industry partnerships and collaborations of CCBM, detailing their nature, scope, and focus areas, such as joint projects and research. Evaluating the CCBM's alumni network programs provides insights into the MBA program's availability, variety, suitability, and relevance in fostering industry-specific skills. Guest lectures and expert engagements are assessed to gain insights into alumni network frequency, relevance, quality, and impact on students' learning experiences. A detailed assessment of alumni mentoring programs from the interview data to get structure, effectiveness, resources, and participant feedback about the Alumni network. CCBM's associations with local businesses and professionals are a major source for guest lectures, mentorship programs, and networking events.

6.1 Alumni Network

The interview response shows that the alumni network is a major requirement, with expectations for placement fulfilment and industry interactions. The participants mentioned -

There is an Alumni Association, but it is not very active. There is a need to revitalize and institutionalize alumni engagement, similar to the Placement Committee.

Celebrations and events, like Onam and Dussehra, could be organized to reconnect alumni with the institution and foster networking.

Suggestion to create an Alumni Committee to improve institutional engagement

Alumni should play a role in linking the university with industries. Strengthening alumni networks can enhance placement opportunities and industry collaborations.

Alumni engagement is seen as crucial for building connections between students and industries.

Alumni can contribute as guest lecturers in specialized topics, especially practical industry-related subjects such as supply chain management.

The Placement Cell and Alumni Network should work together to track alumni in different industries and create job pipelines for students.

Proposed that the Alumni Cell should take an active role in organizing industry visits, job fairs, and networking events.

Alumni should be encouraged to support the university financially or through mentorship.

Some alumni have already secured positions in major companies, which could be leveraged for better placement opportunities.

Alumni's exact involvement in the placement and other development activities has not been recorded. We have observed no significant sponsorship event or funding was received to CCBM for its infrastructure development from the Alumni network.

Gap identified in Alumni Network

- The placement information about the Alumni is available. However, many of the alumni members' current designation and other achievements is not updated.
- The expectations from the alumni are heavily based on placement support and industry engagement; however, CCBM has yet to form a strategy for facilitating continuous learning and growth opportunities for the alumni. In fact, we believe that just taking placement support from alumni and not being simultaneously interested in their development is counterproductive.
- The alumni's interactions are not the outcome of structured planning and mostly take place as an individual faculty or student effort.
- Too much focus on seeking support from alumni for placement is not a good strategy as it would exert extreme pressure on relationships with them. Relationship building and strengthening activities are very few currently

Recommendations to improve the alumni network

- Facilitate an email newsletter service with an alumni network for significant events at CCBM.
- Provide continuous learning opportunities for the alumni and facilitate incubation facilities for their business ideas.
- Report the alumni contribution on the CCBM webpage and other social media platforms.

6.2 Website management

The CCBM website provides basic information about various programmes offered, the mission and vision of CCBM, and links to official documents. Figure 6.2.1 gives the official webpage of CCBM, KAU- <https://ccbm.kau.in/>.

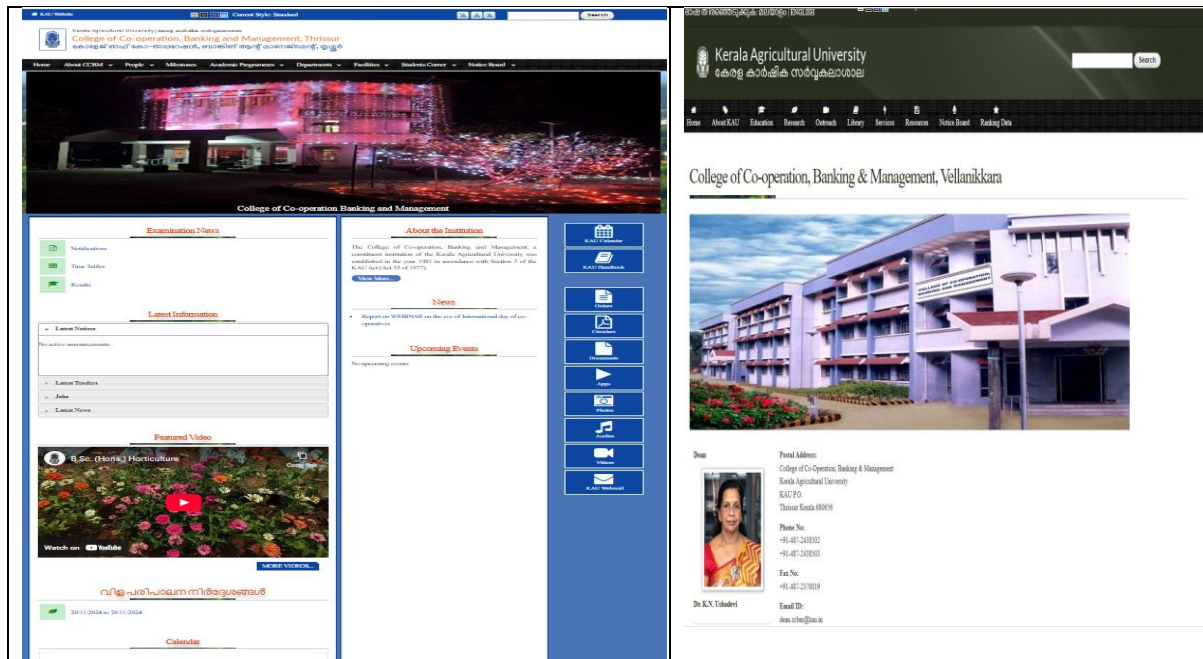


Figure 6.2.1: The official webpage of CCBM, KAU- <https://ccbm.kau.in/>

Currently, the webpage is not optimized for mobile devices, some links do not provide any content, and most links are not updated regularly. The website is static and does not provide less information that needs to be highlighted.

Recommendations to improve the webpage:

- A professional web development service needs to be established to maintain web content and ensure frequent updates.
- The website must be optimized for mobile devices, and the links should provide updated information.

6.3 Clubs and Events

The placement brochures showcase the events organized by various student clubs of CCBM. These clubs closely align with the MBA coursework and fill the gap in placement requirements for students' soft skills. Table 6.3.1 gives various student clubs at CCBM.

Table 6.3.1: Various students clubs at CCBM	
Club Name	Club Activities
Academic Club	Networking, Seminars, Panel Discussions, Summits
Finance Club	Case Competitions, Workshops, Speaker Sessions
Marketing Club	Summits, Workshops, Industry Networking Events
Human Resource (HR) Club	Leadership Development, Role Plays, Case Studies, Group Discussions

During the interview, respondents mentioned that participation in these clubs is not evaluated and is often voluntary. For example, some of the responses are as follows:

“Students do not participate in certain business events”

“Students participate in conclaves such as "Shaping in My Mind's Program" and "Women in Business Conclave..."

“Annual celebrations such as Onam and Dussehra are held...”

Gaps in club activities: The functions of these clubs are not highly structured, and they do not have a calendar plan or credit systems. Objectives of CCBM and placement requirements can be fulfilled by expanding the club activities to include the Entrepreneurship Club, Arts & Culture Club, Business Club, Tech Club, etc.

Recommendations to improve club activities:

- Integrate details about club activities into the CCBM webpage for better visibility and engagement.
- Actively promote club social media handles and highlight their achievements, managed by student communities.
- Ensure sponsoring agencies receive proper recognition and visibility in club-organized activities.
- Facilitate club activities that actively engage students in agricultural-related university events.

6.4 Social Media Strategy

CCBM website (<https://ccbm.kau.in/>) provides links to audio, videos, and photos. However, the verified social media page is not found in the Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook portals. Figure 6.4.1 gives CCBM webpage link to videos and other social media pages tagging CCBM



Figure 6.4.1: CCBM webpage link to videos and other social media page tagging CCBM

Gap Identified in Social Media Strategy

- Verified social media pages are not listed on the CCBM webpage.
- The available content does not reflect the latest activities of MBA students or the achievements of CCBM.
- Social media pages carrying the CCBM brand are not actively monitored, posing a risk of problematic or objectionable content.

Recommendations to improve the social media strategy

- Facilitate a Public Relations Office (PRO) to enhance the visibility of CCBM activities.
- Promote the sharing of MBA student club activities through CCBM's dedicated and verified social media handles.
- Train MBA students on social media content creation strategies and responsible posting in public forums.

CHAPTER 7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Every chapter in this report carries specific recommendations for the chapter in discussion. Therefore, it is important to look at each chapter in-depth. However, for major recommendations to be in one place, we have put them together as below:

Focus

- 1) Restructuring the MBA Agribusiness Management as an autonomous structural entity under the aegis of KAU, such that structural ambidexterity is achieved, wherein, while KAU has the philosophical underpinning of Physical Sciences, MBA Agribusiness Management has the philosophical underpinning of Social Sciences. The carved out entity could have an administrative structure, wherein, the director is the head of the entity who is supported by two associate directors viz. First associate director responsible for curriculum, program, faculty, student affairs and so on while the Second associate director is responsible for industry linkage, alumni linkage, admissions, internationalizations, placements, accreditation, outreach and extension activities of personal relations office and so on.
- 2) An Independent advisory board (Associate Directors, members from Media Academy, and international academician) should be constituted to ensure the transformation of CCBM to a centre of excellence or a separate institution as envisaged in this report.

Curriculum

- 3) The faculty should be provided autonomy to float elective courses and follow the best practices to design the course outline so that the content delivered is market-relevant and updated every year. The course outlines should be benchmarked with the best management schools in that area across the management schools.
- 4) Currently, 70% of the course content in core subjects is generic high school topics. The pedagogy utilised is classroom lectures. Both of these need to change. More engaging pedagogy like case studies, simulations, role play, problem solving etc. should be encouraged. Also, focus should be towards moving classroom discussions to application based topics.
- 5) In many courses there are theory and practice components. But, it is observed that even under practice component, theory questions are asked. This should be strictly discouraged.

- 6) The subject requires multiple skill sets that can be jointly taught by faculty members with industry experience and an internal faculty member. More guest lectures from alumni/industry experts should be encouraged.
- 7) Minor and Major internships with entrepreneurs incubated in KAU incubators should be designed. More courses and workshops on entrepreneurship should be designed.
- 8) Courses offered by the institution should be open for credit by students from other academic programmes to encourage students' immersion in the university.
- 9) Students must be encouraged to undergo online/offline internships in foreign universities or institutes of national importance.
- 10) The Centre should explore possibilities for diverse partnerships with institutes like - National Centre for Earth Science Studies, ISRO, and other smart farming /AgriTech private companies through student internships, which foster innovations in Agribusiness education.
- 11) Industry-relevant courses can be introduced, including AI, block chain, IoT IoT-driven agribusiness management specialization.
Innovative specialization streams should be introduced to the MBA program, including Environment Protection and Sustainability, AgriTech and Digital Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Agricultural Finance and Investment, Agri-Entrepreneurship and Rural Development, Urban Agriculture and Vertical Farming, Agri-Supply Chain Management, Agricultural Policy and Advocacy etc.

Visibility

- 12) A digital version of Agri-Leadership magazine should be published quarterly with students' interviews with CEOs of agribusiness industries.
- 13) A Public Relations Officer with deep knowledge and extensive experience should be appointed to facilitate development of industry linkage, extension and outreach programs to engage professionals, international experts, alumni networks and so on.
- 14) A research journal should be started for the dissemination of faculty articles along with others in the field
- 15) Host and participate in industry conferences and events that take place outside the university campus.
- 16) Create more opportunities for enhancing alumni relationships.
- 17) Host and Participate in International forums of Agribusiness Leadership and Management

- 18) A special focus on student club activities – make the program residential such that these activities can become a base for creating industry linkage and alumni network activities
- 19) Establish an online *Agribusiness Library Museum* to bring international perspectives of leadership in agriculture.
- 20) Promote virtual technologies like AR/VR/Metaverse in the centre's leadership training.

Partnership

- 21) Possibility for a Joined MBA program with a foreign university should be attempted. Faculty from foreign universities can also be given the option to offer courses online.

Placement

- 22) The second associate director along with PRO shall ensure that student placement committee functions in a focussed manner to utilize the industry-linkage created by them. They should ensure adequate participation of student clubs and other student activities that support extension and outreach activities that are carried out by the PRO.
- 23) The placement committee members shall be enabled by the director's office to demand participation of all students when industry professionals or alumni or international experts come to deliver lectures, attend seminars or conferences and so on.
- 24) The first year students of placement committee should ensure that the second year students are all placed within the stipulated time before their graduation.
- 25) The second year students of placement committee should ensure that the first year students desirous of industry internships as their major projects get an opportunity in good companies.

Alumni Relations

- 26) The second associate director along with PRO should ensure that a good database of alumni is created – this should be the starting point of creating several interaction points with the alumni
- 27) The student alumni committee should ensure that annual alumni function is conducted and well attended. Student clinics should be organized where alumni could guide each student one on one based on their individual requirements.
- 28) Direct linkage with placements should be avoided to avoid giving out an impression that alumni is only needed for placements

- 29) Alumni should be invited for lectures, seminars, workshops etc. They should feel invited and at home with the institution.

Entrepreneurship

- 30) More courses, immersive workshops and invited lectures from seasoned entrepreneurs on entrepreneurship should be conducted under the aegis of second associate director.
- 31) KAU incubator houses a number of entrepreneurs. PRO should be charged with developing trust with incubated entrepreneurs, who could place some students for their minor internships. If sufficient trust is gained by the said student, then that student could be encouraged to look for the major internship with the same entrepreneur. This extended interaction is expected to drive confidence and experience in the said student to try their hand at starting a venture after the end of their studies.
- 32) To support students starting a venture, institution could have a policy that if a student failed at their venture within 3 years of their graduating from the institution, then such students would be supported through the placement cell of the students to get an employment in the industry with that batch of students.

Performance Measures

- 33) An academic calendar should be in place to ensure the centre is a happening place on campus. Centre should focus on ensuring every week is occupied with programs that contribute to students' development and core focus areas.
- 34) To ensure the interaction of students and faculties after normal working hours, every two working day in a week must be scheduled for evening class in hybrid /online mode.
- 35) An anonymous feedback system with absolute marks for each subject offered should be introduced.
- 36) Experience certificates provided to guest/contract faculties should indicate the feedback score for the subjects they offered.
- 37) The feedback marks obtained for the guest/permanent faculties should be confidentially communicated to respective faculties. Any guest faculty member who scores below the prescribed score should be discontinued.
- 38) Student recommendation letters shouldn't be subjective or general, using terms like "motivated" or "hardworking." The recommendation letter may show the class participation score as well as the actual participation level in departmental activities.

- 39) Attendance Automation and a mechanism for quality checks of website content and updating should be in place.

Internationalization

- 40) Admission to international students should be encouraged, and faculty should be in charge of ensuring an increased intake of international students.
- 41) The international relationship office/ embassy staff/study abroad consultants may be available to identify the international student pool who are interested in agribusiness.
- 42) A panel of international experts should be established to inspire and assist students and faculty in developing policies, launching social ventures, and securing funding within the *agribusiness consultancy hub*.

Autonomy and Fee Structure

- 43) The institution should identify the operational cost for their program from varying fee structures considering social commitment, international intake, and industry sponsorship.
- 44) The surplus amount of the institution should be transferred to the university after every short-term program offered / financial year.
- 45) Expenses for the guest talks and events organized in the institution should be through student contributions and sponsorship.