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that the bridge-building process from the economist's side could well commence with a broadening of the options available in agricultural economics to include offerings from schools of behavioural sciences, history, philosophy and anthropology. Alternatively it would be more efficient if teaching of marketing were to incorporate the insights derivable from these disciplines as part of core courses.

The addition of new courses is not an open-ended process and some hard decisions will have to be made about the extent to which options become core elements or are linked in a structured way to achieve particular course objectives.

References

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Comment

Phil Simmons*

From my experience as a manager of economic research I believe that tertiary agricultural economics education has two major shortcomings. First, a large proportion of new graduates have poor writing skills. Their problems in this area revolve around ignorance of elementary grammar and lack of precision in written expression. The second problem that I perceive is that a significant proportion of economics graduates appear to lack any knowledge of economics. These individuals should have been failed from programs yet somehow have managed to get degrees.

Writing Skills

I am not an educator and thus do not know whether instruction in English expression should be in specific writing skills courses or integrated with existing courses. However, I believe that the university has a role in imparting such skills. If education is to work in the interests of the community, and not simply in the interests of educators, graduates with new degrees must be finished products that are useful to someone. In this vein, producing a graduate in economics who cannot express himself or herself in writing is the equivalent of producing a car without wheels. That is, it will not go anywhere until substantial further investment is undertaken and the employer is ill-equipped to make such investments effectively.

Unskilled Graduates

About 10 per cent of the pass level economic graduates with whom I have professional contact do not understand micro principles at all. (The law of demand is either a hazy academic riddle to them, or something they accidentally

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learnt about in the market place of life.) One cannot help wondering how these people convinced their examiners to grant them degrees. Having listened to academic colleagues discussing this problem, I believe that the awarding of degrees under these circumstances reflects either misguided kindness or, alternatively, the application of some private code of justice. About the latter I have nothing to say. However, as to misguided kindness, I would like to stress that from the standpoint of what happens to the unskilled graduate the kindness is truly misguided. No matter how powerful a union, or protective of its workers an employer is, a person who cannot work to his or her qualifications is always eventually moved into simpler work. This process can take up to 12 months during which time the employer has lost time and money and the employee has earned a reputation for poor performance. Such employees have been poorly served by their educators and would have been better off being failed early in their studies and thereafter pursued other interests.

Agricultural Economics at the University of New England

T. G. MacAulay and R. R. Piggott*

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management at the University of New England has been teaching for some 28 years. There are four qualifications in which students can specialise in the broad disciplinary areas of agricultural economics and business management (student numbers as at 31 March, 1988 appear in parentheses): Bachelor of Agricultural Economics (190), Diploma of Agricultural Economics (76), Master of Economics (37) and Doctor of Philosophy (23). Units taught by the Department also are taken, either compulsorily or as optional units, by students enrolled in certain other qualifications.

Within the teaching program of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management the courses offered by the Department can be classified into five main themes: mainstream agricultural economics, agribusiness management, agricultural development, farm management and natural resource economics. In addition, two courses relate to research methods. Support is provided by other Departments for courses in econometrics, economic theory, financial management and accounting (all within the Faculty of Economic Studies), agronomy and animal science (Faculty of Rural Science), resource engineering and ecosystem management (Faculty of Resource Management).

Students studying for the B.Ag.Ec. (a four-year degree) are required to complete 29 semester units of courses, 20 of which are compulsory. The compulsory units are in the areas of microeconomic theory (two), macroeconomic theory (three),

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