

SLIIT degree sets benchmark for shaping in-demand and skilled Quantity Surveyors

As one of the most respected quantity surveying programs in Sri Lanka, SLIIT's BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying, awarded by the University of Liverpool John Moores UK, equips students with in-demand skills nurturing the quantity surveyors of the future. Tilanka Wijesinghe, Head of the Department of Quantity Surveying, Faculty of Engineering, SLIIT provides insights into the degree's curriculum design, graduate outcomes, global mobility opportunities, benchmark assessments enabling success for graduates in Sri Lanka and overseas, the global mobility SLIIT graduates enjoy thanks to the program's LJMU partnership, skill development for the future, SLIIT's industry-academia links, in addition to why SLIIT remains a top pick for this competitive profession.

Q: Can you give an overview of the Quantity Surveying program offered at SLIIT and its significance?

A: SLIIT offers a 3-year BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying degree in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) in the UK. LJMU awards the degrees which have six academic semesters plus a 12-week industrial placement. It aims to produce graduates with expert knowledge in quantity surveying to meet the local and global demand. The programme is conducted by SLIIT's Department of Quantity Surveying under the Faculty of Engineering, and it is highly recognised with many SLIIT QS graduates now working overseas, bringing reputation to the Institute and the nation.

Q: Why do students choose SLIIT for this degree and how does the curriculum align with industry needs?

A: SLIIT has the best academic staff to teach this program versus other non-state universities. Students also benefit from visiting lecturers from industry and from reputable public sector Universities. The curriculum is closely monitored by LJMU but also adapted to suit local and Middle East contexts, where most graduates work. We understand that the construction industries evolve constantly, especially in terms of technology and it is highly dynamic. We must be very prompt in adapting changes to ensure students are prepared for the industry as they graduate. The department is vigilant to changes



and constantly interacting with the industry. Therefore, the curriculum offered is very comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge and skills.

Q: What are some emerging trends and technologies relevant to the program?

A: SLIIT has dedicated laboratories equipped for quantity surveying such as measurement lab and the digital quantity surveying lab. We see that the construction industry is more focused on virtual collaboration now. These labs have the necessary software and licenses for virtual collaboration such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) which is a key trend. Furthermore, we also share other laboratories in the Faculty of Engineering specially the structural, surveying, and environmental labs to offer hands-on experience to the student while exposing students to the latest industry technologies. Therefore, our graduates are up to date in terms of knowledge and they are highly welcomed by the industry.

Importantly, among the non-state universities, our lab facilities are the best in terms of state-of-the-art, and students are given the ability to explore the full potential of licensed software.

Q: What specific skills and knowledge areas will be crucial for quantity surveyors in future?

A: Traditional quantity surveyors dealt with costs, cost management, procurement, contract administration, which also involves dispute areas, etc. Demand for these skills will continue to grow. However, latest trends indicate of the growing demand for digital skills specially in BIM management, sustainability skills such as carbon accounting and lifecycle assessments, technical auditing, and dispute resolution. This diversification makes quantity



Tilanka Wijesinghe

surveyors highly adaptable even during industry disruptions.

This was proven during the Covid-19 and the economic crisis, whereas quantity surveyors were able to apply their diversified competencies in adapting themselves to prevail and flourish even in challenging environments.

Q: How does SLIIT help students face industry challenges?

A: We conduct the Department Industry Consultative Board meetings regularly and collaborating well with the industry. Therefore, we are aware of the upcoming trends and demands. SLIIT is able to take prompt action by accommodating those requirements in our curriculum. We also expose our students to the industry experts to enable the students to be benefited out of their knowledge and experience. For example, our final year students undertake a module on business, management, and entrepreneurship module where the students involved with a project based on the forthcoming trends and issues offering a positive learning experience combined with special sessions by the relevant experts in the industry on the respective trading subjects.

Q: How does SLIIT prepare students for the 12-week industrial training?



A: Pre-training workshops are organised to equip students for this intensive period preparing them for the industry placements. For many students it is the first time being exposed to industrial experience and they need to understand organisational culture. Additionally, a false perception of quantity surveyors is that it is field job only. Careful placement enables students to apply their learning of two years of learning. They are given the opportunity to study documents and frameworks related to quantity surveying during their placement. The knowledge during the industry training helps the students synchronise with the theoretical practice increasing their knowledge and learning speed, creating a more fruitful third year.

Q: What types of job roles do quantity surveying graduates pursue?

A: This is a highly skilled, professional, and office-based career where fresh graduates often advise stakeholders on technical matters. SLIIT focuses on building maturity in conduct and ethics alongside subject knowledge so graduates act as responsible, disciplined consultants.

They have been transformed into more responsible citizens by the time graduate. Clients and the industry can depend on their expertise and knowledge.

Q: Does the SLIIT BSc Science (Hons) in Quantity Surveying provide a transfer pathway?

A: Students, if willing can transfer to LJMU for their final year after having completed the first two years at SLIIT.

Q: What are the current opportunities available for Quantity Surveyors?

A: There is a perception, especially among parents, that there is low demand and fewer opportunities in quantity surveying job roles. However, this

outlook does not consider future projections. The post Covid revival in global construction sectors has begun, creating massive upcoming potential. As an example, Saudi Arabia alone requires 3,000 additional quantity surveyors right now. Other countries in the Middle East are also witnessing a major resurgence.

Globally, annual construction investment which stood at USD 7 trillion in 2020 is set to expand by 50 percent by 2024 and by further 50 percent growth form that within next six years. Therefore, graduates entering the industry are bound to benefit from the demand surge. As the country is currently affected by the lack of foreign reserves, it also makes sense to motivate students towards a specialisation that will positively contribute to the foreign remittance.

Q: For students considering Quantity Surveying at SLIIT, what advice would you give them?

A: In today's context, knowledge is available from many sources - including the internet which offers various learning opportunities. However, for a professional qualification to be recognised as reliable, you require a rigorous assessment methodology.

At SLIIT, our quantity surveying program is facilitated by highly qualified staff and excellent quality control system. More importantly, we have a reliable assessment process which ensures students are assessed effectively throughout their learning journey. It builds credibility and reliability into the SLIIT qualification. Once qualified from our program, you gain instant recognition because the industry acknowledges SLIIT graduates have been through comprehensive evaluations. SLIIT graduates as well as trainees are highly valued and well-compensated within the industry.

Sunday Best From The Observer No1

KJ Lindholm-Leary



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