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## SCREENING REPORT

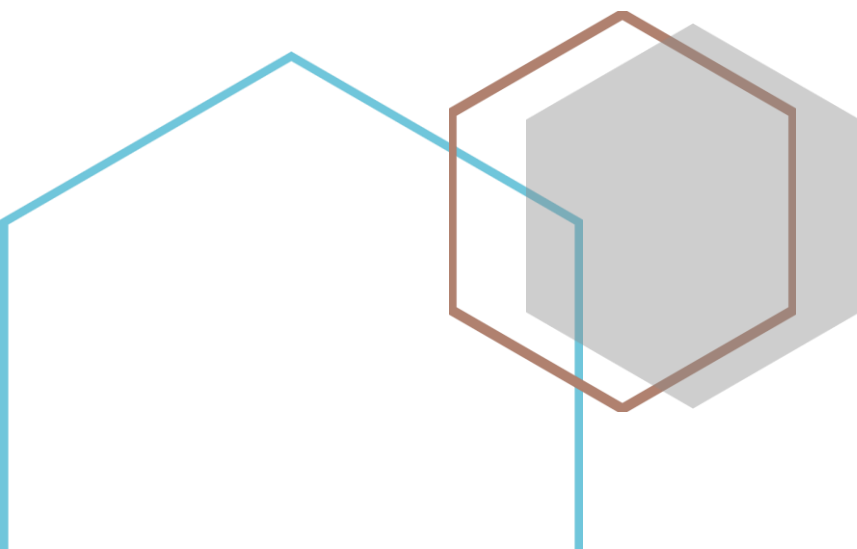
# ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION & STUDENTS TALENT DEVELOPMENT

**UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA, SRI LANKA**

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**Integrating Talent Development into Innovation Ecosystems in Higher Education**

**586227-EPP-1-2017-1-BG-EPP**



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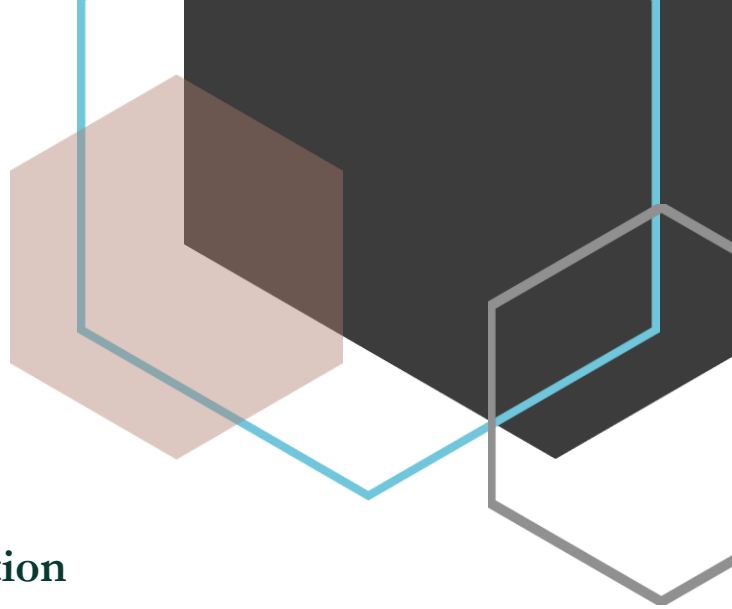
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The report aims at providing a clear picture of the University's starting conditions and capacities in the areas of graduates' employability, innovation capacity and talent development. The reports points out the strengths and weaknesses of the institution in these fields. It has been developed by external experts, representative of the INNOTAL partners.

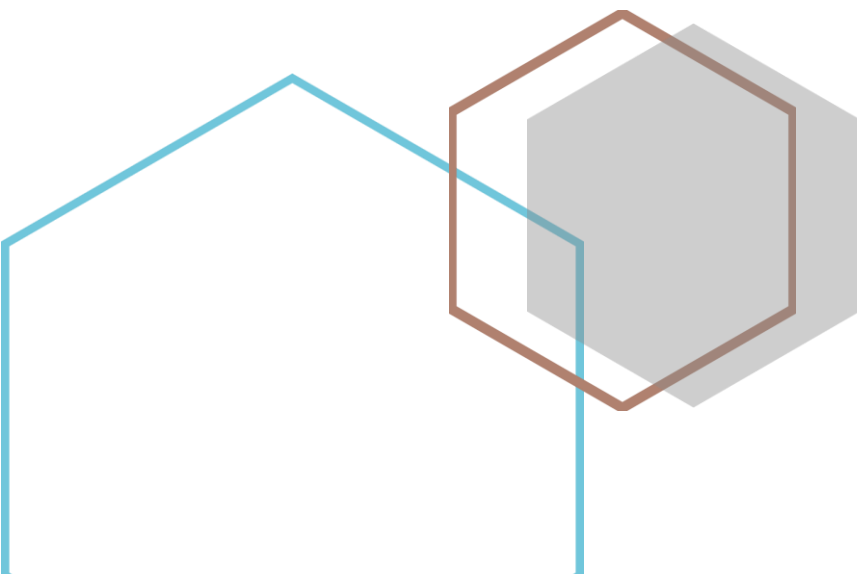
The report can provide insights into the following broad elements of organizational performance of the University:

- organizational motivation, including mission, prevalent culture, incentive structures and support structures
- organizational capacity (structure, physical and financial resources, technology resources, human resources
- leadership, decision-making process, management and inter-organizational linkages);
- c) organizational performance (financial viability, efficiency, effectiveness, relevance)
- external environment (administrative, legal, social, cultural, economic, political, etc.)





# Introduction



## CONTEXT

This report screens and assesses the capacity of the University of Ruhuna to promote graduates' employability and develop students' talent through innovation. It is developed on the basis of information provided by the Ruhuna University team itself. The scorecard developed in the frame of the project has been used as a structuring instrument to streamline the kind of data that was collected.

The University's current capacity was evaluated in the following main areas:

- current capacity to provide entrepreneurship education across various disciplines
- innovation capacity
- student talent development policies

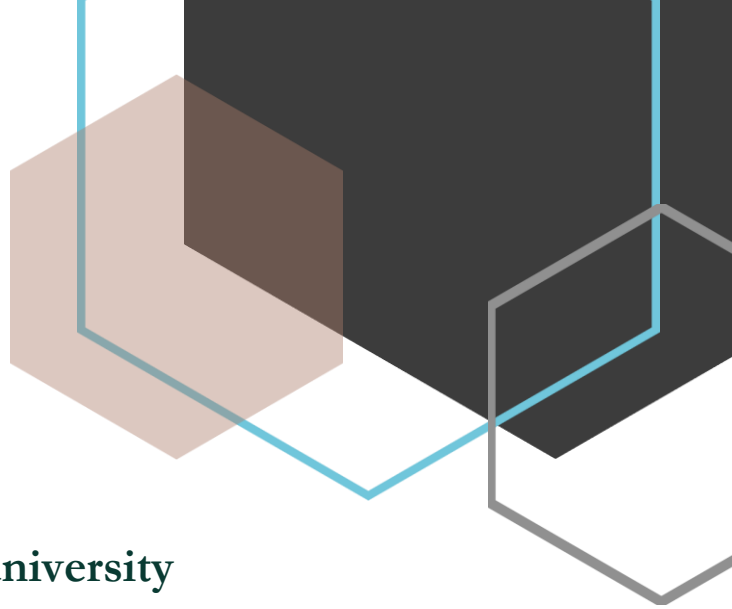
## SCOPE

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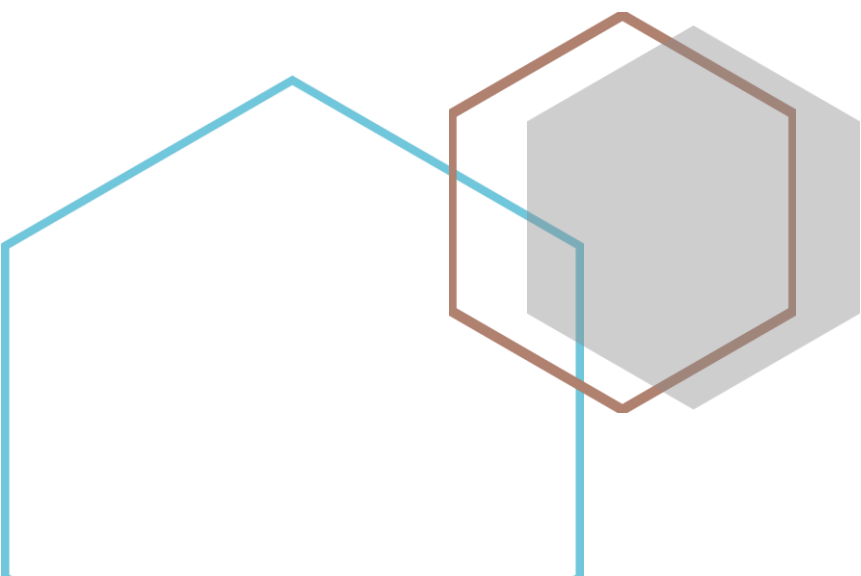
This Report is produced in the frame of the project's first stage, which is focused on preparatory research and understanding the context in which further capacity building activities shall take place. The purpose is to provide an external assessment of:

- University capacity to provide entrepreneurship education across various disciplines
- University capacity for innovation
- University capacity for promoting graduates' employability and developing students' talent

The reports aims to provide a clear picture of the University's starting conditions and capacities related to graduates' employability, innovation and talent development. The report has been developed on the basis of the scorecards developed in the frame of the INNOTAL project.



## Profile of the university



**ESTABLISHMENT****University name and major milestones of development**

The University of Ruhuna was established by a Special Presidential Decree in 1978, as Ruhuna University College. Initially, it started with four faculties: Agriculture, Arts, Medicine and Science. In 1977, the Government of Sri Lanka appointed a committee to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a university in the Southern Province. In January 1978, the committee recommended the City of Matara, the Commercial Capital of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, as the most suitable location for such an institution. As a result, on August 27th, 1978, the then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka declared open the Ruhuna University College at Meddawatta, Matara.

The Faculties of Agriculture and Science were located on the premises of the Technical College at Meddawatta, Matara, whereas the Faculty of Arts was located on the premises of the Teachers' Training College at Eliyakanda, Matara. These three faculties were initially affiliated to the Universities of Peradeniya, Kelaniya and Colombo respectively. The Faculty of Medicine was affiliated to the University of Colombo and the first batch of students who enrolled for the M.B.B.S. Degree were sent to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

The Ruhuna University College was shifted to the new premises in 1984 following which it was elevated to full university status. A new location was selected for the main campus at Wellamadama. The General Administration Offices, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Science were shifted to the Wellamadama Campus in 1985. A Faculty of Engineering was established in Hapugala (Galle) in 1999. The most recent additions to the list of faculties in the University of Ruhuna are Faculty of Management & Finance and the Faculty of Fisheries & Marine Sciences & Technology which were set up in 2003 and 2005, respectively. Thus, the University presently comprises seven faculties.

Currently, the Faculties of Science, Management & Finance, Fisheries & Marine Sciences & Technology, and Humanities & Social Sciences are located on the main campus at Wellamadama (Matara) and the Faculties of Agriculture and Medicine are located in Kamburupitiya (Matara) and Karapitiya (Galle), respectively. The central administration unit of the University is also located at the University Complex. The University offers basic degree programmes in the respective disciplines. Depending on the facilities available, M.A. M.B.A. M.Sc. M.Phil. and Ph.D Degrees are also offered. In addition, Diploma and Certificate Courses are offered in various disciplines.

**MISSION AND VALUES**

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**Vision of the University**

The vision of the University is *"to be the prime intellectual thrust of the nation"*.

**Mission of the University**

The University mission is *"to advance knowledge and skills through teaching, research and services to serve the society"*.

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**ORGANIZATIONAL  
STRUCTURE**

The University of Ruhuna operates under the provisions of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and the Universities (Amendment) Act No. 7 of 1985. Accordingly, it has a Chancellor, a Vice Chancellor, Officers and Authorities to draw plans, make decisions, and monitor the implementation of such decisions in the overall management.

- Chancellor

The Chancellor, the ceremonial and titular head of the university, presides over at the university convocation. The President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka nominates the Chancellor for a period of five years.

- Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor is the Principal Executive Officer, Principal Academic Officer, and Chief Accounting Officer of the University. The President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka appoints the Vice Chancellor out of three nominations made by the University Council for a period of three years. The Vice Chancellor is the Chairman and ex-officio member of both the Council and the Senate of the University and is responsible for the maintenance of discipline.

- Deputy Vice Chancellor

The Deputy Vice Chancellor is appointed by the UGC on the approval of the Council of the University. The Deputy Vice Chancellor is responsible for student affairs and substitutes for the Vice Chancellor as and when it is necessary.

- Deans

The Faculty Board elects a Dean for each faculty from the Heads of Departments for a period of three years. The Deans are the academic and administrative heads of their respective faculties.

- Registrar

The Council of the University appoints the Registrar. The Registrar is the ex-officio secretary of both the Council and the Senate. The Registrar is responsible for the general administration, for conducting examinations, for the publication of results, and for the non-academic staff. The Registrar functions subject to the direction and control of the Vice Chancellor. The Registrar is also the Assistant Accounting Officer of the University and is responsible for the custody of the records and the property. In this connection, the Deputy Registrar, the Assistant Registrars, and the general administration with its many departments and divisions assist the Registrar.

- Librarian

The Council, subject to the direction and control of the Vice Chancellor, appoints the Librarian and s/he is responsible for the administration of the libraries of the university. The Librarian is an ex-officio member of the Senate and usually the Chairman of the Library Committee unless the Vice Chancellor himself chairs the committee.

- Bursar

The Bursar, appointed by the Council of the University following a selection process, is responsible for financial administration and the maintenance of accounts subject to the direction and control of the Registrar. He is also the custodian of the funds of the university, in addition to being responsible for the procurement of supplies and the arrangement of all payments. The preparation of the annual statements of accounts is a key function of the Bursar.

#### Authorities

#### **The Council**

The Council is the chief executive body and governing authority of the University. It consists of the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Deans of the Faculties, two elected Senate Members, and outside representatives whose number should be greater than the number of members from the University. A Council Member serves for a period of three years and is eligible for reappointment.

#### **The Senate**

The Senate, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, is the academic authority of the University. The Senate consists of the following members:

- The Vice Chancellor
- Deputy Vice Chancellor
- Deans
- Heads of the Departments
- Permanent Professors
- Librarians
- Two permanent lecturers elected from each faculty

#### **The Faculties**

The university has the following seven faculties:

- Faculty of Agriculture
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Fisheries Marine Sciences and Technology
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Management and Finance
- Faculty of Medicine
- Faculty of Science

**The Faculties are managed by a Faculty Board.** Each Faculty Board consists of:

- The Dean of the Faculty



## SIZE OF THE UNIVERSITY

- All permanent Professors
- All permanent Associate Professors
- All permanent Senior Lecturers
- All permanent Lecturers
- Two student representatives nominated by the Faculty Student Union
- Three outside members of high academic standing whose expertise is relevant to the faculty.

- 
- Number of students (bachelor, master and PhD)

The University of Ruhuna has more than 400 highly qualified academics and over 7,000 on-campus students. The academic staff provides instruction to students in the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences, Pure Sciences, Agriculture, Fisheries, Marine Sciences, Management Studies, Medicine and Engineering. The faculty also provides guidance to undertake research in those fields. The University is continuously reassessing itself and its programs in order to develop and improve courses in view of meeting the ever-changing demands of the world and in view of preparing graduates that are able to meet high professional standards. At present over 800 students are registered at the Faculty of Graduate Studies for postgraduate studies.

Number of undergraduate students = 9,230

Number of postgraduate students = 1,368

Total number of students = 10,598

- Number of academic staff (teaching and research)

The number of academic staff (both teaching and research) engaged in University of Ruhuna is 521.

- Budget

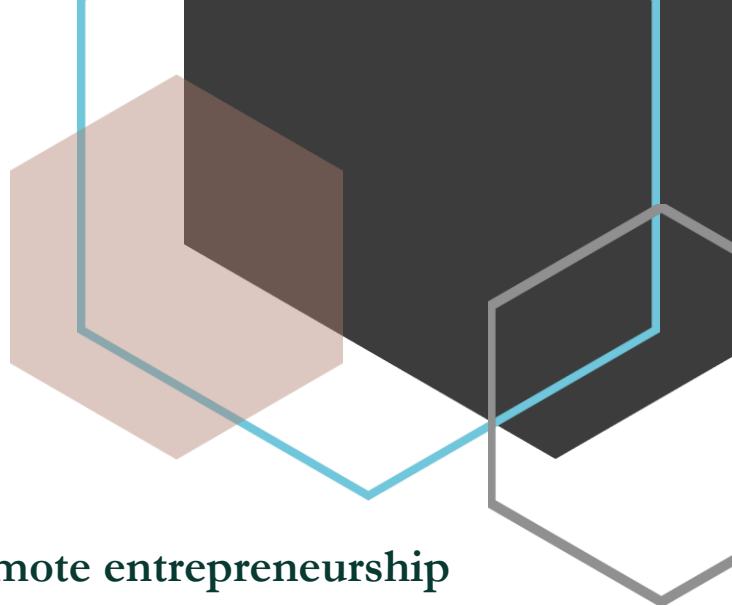
The total budget of the University is 2,900,000,000 Sri Lanka Rupees (LKR) which amounts to approximately 15,740,000 euros.

## ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN ITS REGION

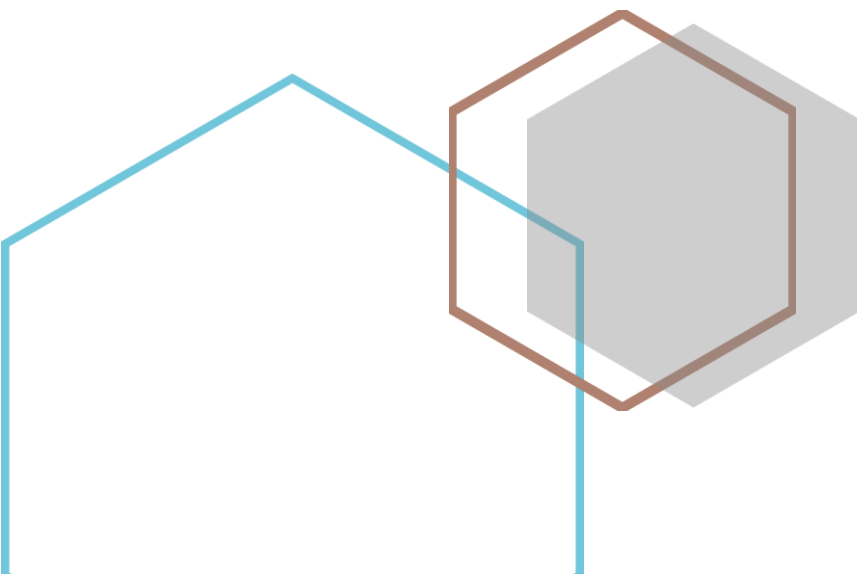
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The University of Ruhuna is striving to assist its region (as well as the society in Sri Lanka in general) in achieving sustainable growth and social and gender inclusion, in fighting youth unemployment, underemployment and precarious employment, in eradicating poverty, in improving access to universal services and in improving quality of living.





**Capacity to provide and promote entrepreneurship education**



#### PERFORMANCE IN THE AREA OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The University of Ruhuna has 9,230 undergraduate students and 1,368 postgraduate students, adding up to a total of 10,598 students. As far as entrepreneurship education is concerned, the University offers one BBA (Hons) and two BSc., as well as one Project Management module. The Faculty of Management & Finance offers BBA (Hons) in Entrepreneurship and the Faculty of Agriculture offers a BSc. in Agribusiness Management and a BSc. in Green Technology. In addition, the Faculty of Engineering offers an Entrepreneurship and Project Management module for their BSc Engineering Degree.

The number of students in bachelor/master/post-graduate entrepreneurship programs is 174, in a total of 10,598 students (i.e. 1.64% of all students), while the number of staff teaching entrepreneurship courses is 13, in a total of 521 staff members (i.e. 2.49% of total staff). The number of bachelor/master/post-graduate entrepreneurship courses in which case studies or study visits are used to enhance learning is 15 out of 17 (88.23% of total). There are no entrepreneurship-related research projects implemented at the University of Ruhuna.

#### ENTREPRENEURSHIP -SUPPORTING POLICIES AND CULTURE

Entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurship support are included in the core strategy of the University. There is an institutional strategy on entrepreneurship education, manifested as a separate objective in the Strategic Plan of the University: inculcating invention and innovation culture within the University and promoting entrepreneurship.

The university involves employers in curriculum development and teaching, as well as in decision-making and consultative bodies at the institutional level.

#### HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The number of staff that has participated in entrepreneurship training is two persons (i.e. 0.38% of total staff). The number of industry or business practitioners involved in delivering entrepreneurship courses in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate degree in the University of Ruhuna is 4, which is bigger than the number of faculty teaching entrepreneurship courses in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate degree (3). The relative number of industry or business practitioners involved in delivering entrepreneurship courses in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate degree divided by the number of faculty teaching entrepreneurship courses in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate degree is  $4/3$ , or 133.3%.

The number of University employees who also have (temporary) work contracts in industry/business is zero, as there is no such practice to offer temporary contracts in industry/business. At the same time, there are no opportunities for staff mobility (including adjunct faculty) across the university-business divide.



**SUPPORT  
STRUCTURES AND  
LINKAGES  
FACILITATING  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
EDUCATION**

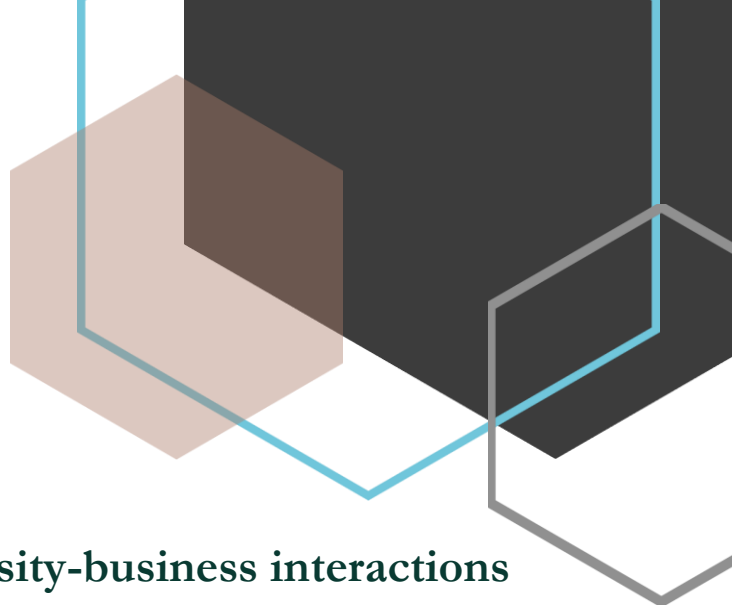
**ADAPTATION OF  
TEACHING METHODS  
TO FACILITATE  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
EDUCATION**

There are no entrepreneurship centres supporting university-business relations and entrepreneurship in general at University level. However, support is provided to bachelor/master/post-graduate students for access to internship and /or placement schemes.

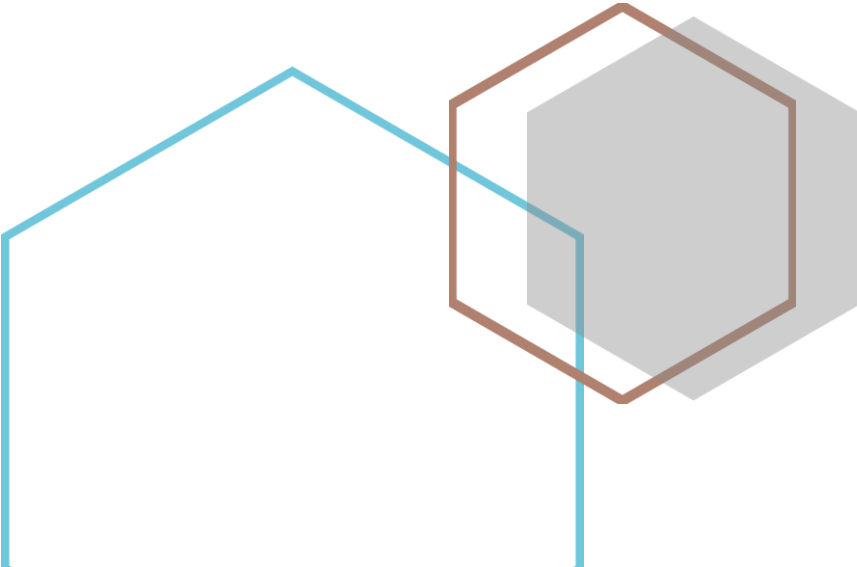
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As far as entrepreneurship teaching is concerned, real case studies provided by business and enterprises are included in entrepreneurship teaching. A competence-based approach is not used to assess the results and impact of studies, but the university monitors the development of students' soft skills (leadership, teamwork, communication, etc.).





**Innovation capacity and university-business interactions**



PERFORMANCE IN  
THE AREA OF  
INNOVATION AND  
UNIVERSITY-  
BUSINESS  
INTERACTIONS

R&D expenditures reach 3.28% of the total University budget (95,255,723 LKR out of 2,900,000,000 LKR). The ratio between total funding to external funding is 85.5% (81,464,613/95,255,723 LKR).

There are no spin-off firms supported by the university. The proportion of academic staff holding international and national research grants is 14% (number of full-time employed academic staff at the university holding international and national research grants / total number of full-time employed academic staff). The proportion of academic staff holding industry research grants is much lower, since only two out of 521 staff members hold such a grant, reaching a low 0.38 %.

The performance of the University in terms of publications and citations is far more positive, with the number of weighted publications per full-time employed academic staff reaching 438 (84% of total staff) and the number of citations in Scopus and Google Scholar database per full-time employed academic staff reaching 260 (averaged over the last 3 academic years)

The number of intangibles in the form of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks, policy recommendations, etc. is very low and only comes up to 0.6% for the total number of staff members.

INNOVATION-  
SUPPORTING  
POLICIES AND  
CULTURE

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The support for innovation and regional development is included in the mission and core strategy of the university and a strategy on innovation, innovation support or knowledge transfer to the external environment is formulated by the University of Ruhuna.

On the other hand, there is no research and research training planning and policy. The University does not provide financial resources in the form of seed funding. There is also no clear IPR policy followed by the university in its relations with economic agents.

The faculty attestation rules envisage rewarding of applied research for industry/local development. Rules about modernization of curricula according to new challenges, national priorities and business needs are present.

SUPPORT  
STRUCTURES AND  
LINKAGES  
FACILITATING  
INNOVATION AND  
UNIVERSITY-  
BUSINESS  
INTERACTIONS

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Regarding the existence of University structures facilitating links with industry and local community or structures in which the university is collaborating with external economic actors or the local community, the University of Ruhuna has a technology transfer office and offers incubator facilities and/ services. The University does not have any research laboratories (owned or shared with other entities), it does not have or participate in any technological parks, it does not offer accelerator services, and it does not have any applied research centres or research and development units. The legal possibility for researchers to become engaged in research supported by industry is available.

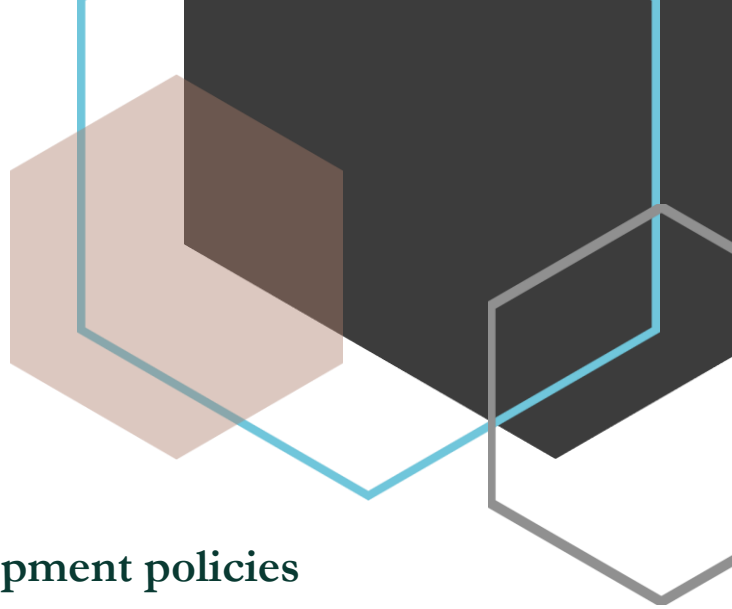
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HUMAN RESOURCES  
CAPACITY FOR  
INNOVATION AND  
UNIVERSITY-  
BUSINESS  
INTERACTIONS

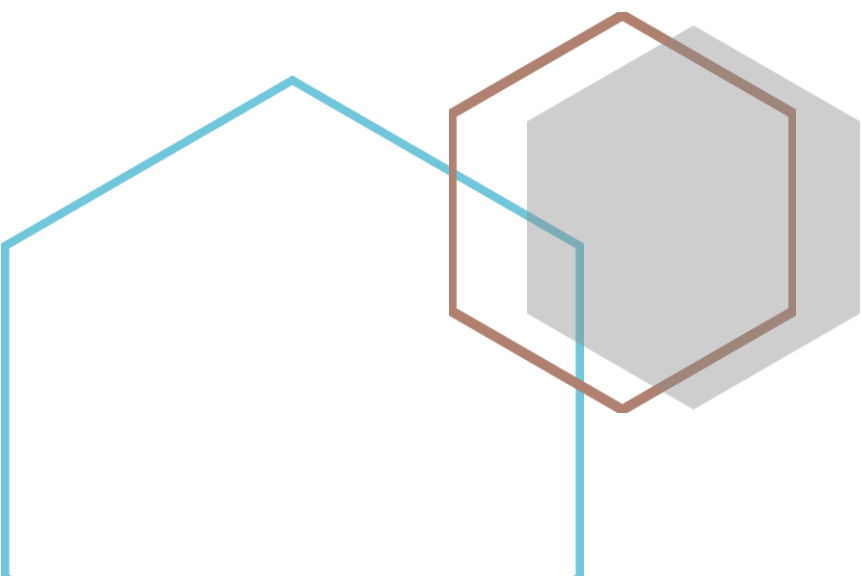
The proportion of students in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate programs involved in research projects is very high (75%), taking an average over the last 3 academic years. It reaches 7,948 out of a total 10,598 students.

The percentage of PhD degree completions per full-time employed academic staff (averaged over the last 3 academic years) comes up to 42% (218 completions for a total of 521 staff members). The percentage of PhD completions within planned schedule (averaged over the last 3 academic years) is 50%, with 35 within schedule completions out of 70.





## Student talent development policies





**CAPACITY TO  
ATTRACT AND RETAIN  
TALENT**

At the moment, there is no marketing strategy for attracting talented students at the University of Ruhuna. The quota of students is set by the University Grants Commission (UGC) as per the Z-score of students performed at their Advanced Level Examination. However, in order to attract talented and interested students, the University advertises the degree programmes offered and the key features and benefits of the University in National Newspapers.

The share of foreign students in the total number of students enrolled at the University is very low, reaching only 0.31%, with 12 undergraduate foreign students and 21 postgraduate foreign students enrolled out of the total of 10,598 students. The share of students that started work in their field of study within 6 months after graduation/or board exam exceeds 50% (50.8%), with 1134 students out of a total of 2232 that graduated during last academic year starting work in their field of study within 6 months after graduation/or board exam.

There is a Student Enrolment and Services Office at the University of Ruhuna, but there is no existing quality management system for academic excellence. However, an Internal Quality Assurance Unit has been established and the Unit has introduced an Accountability Framework to evaluate the performance and the academic excellence of the staff. There is currently no option for part-time or flexible learning at the university. However, the University offers Distance Learning degrees.

**STUDENT WELFARE  
SUPPORT**

In terms of the University's strategy for residential environment improvement, there is a policy document that specifies the provision of dormitory facility for students for two years - the first and the final year, out of four years. However, based on the request and justification of students, additional years may also be considered.

During the past two years, three new hostels were built with a capacity for hosting 1,200 students. The Student Affairs branch is actively engaged in student welfare and facilities, and the Department of Physical Education consisting of all the physical resources and instructors is actively involved in promoting sport. There is also an existing health service at the university premises.

The share of approved applications for university dormitories or students supported in finding living premises is slightly more than 50% (50.4%), accounting for 4,635 out of a total of 9,230 undergraduate students.

There is no support service for reducing the debt load of students. However, students enjoy financial assistance with two types of scholarships that are not treated as a debt or loan, where monthly payment is made for a period of ten months a year.

The share of students who receive some kind of financial support (scholarships, student loans, etc.) is 9,538 out of 10,598 total undergraduate and postgraduate students, reaching a proportion of 90%. There are no existing options for legal advice for students.



**CAPACITY TO  
ATTRACT AND RETAIN  
STUDENT TALENT  
FROM  
DISADVANTAGED  
GROUPS AND THE  
GROUP OF NON-  
TRADITIONAL  
LEARNERS**

**PERFORMANCE IN  
DEVELOPING  
STUDENT TALENT**

**POLICIES/STRUCTURE  
S FOR DEVELOPING  
STUDENT TALENT**

There are no mature students currently enrolled at the University. Mature students do not enter for Bachelor Degrees. Some mature students register for the Distance Learning Degrees and postgraduate degrees.

There are 15 students with disabilities, which amounts to a share of 0.14% of total students. The University provides specialized support for disadvantaged groups of students (students with disabilities, mature students, minority groups, etc.), as well as built environment with universal design for students with disabilities. There is also an adapted teaching process for disadvantaged students and an adapted assessment and examination process for disadvantaged students

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The share of students engaged in practicing entrepreneurship skills (e.g. teamwork, leadership, project management, business plan development and competitions, idea competitions for solving community and social issues, elevator pitch contests, public speaking, network creation) in the total number of students is 1.64%, which amounts to 174 students.

The Faculty of Management and Finance offers the Bachelor of Degree specialized in Entrepreneurship, and currently 108 students are enrolled. In addition, 66 students are attached to the programmes offered by the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Engineering.

The share of students who participated in internships in professional settings is 30%. Internships are a necessary component of the bachelor degrees of the faculties of Agriculture, Engineering and Management and Finance. Thus, around 3,500 undergraduate students are engaged in internships.

The share of students included in coaching/mentoring programmes is 100%, as is the share of students who participated in study tours. While no specific courses have been developed, all faculties have included components of coaching and mentoring in their course modules for the purpose of producing well-skilled and prepared graduates. In addition, a course module for soft skills was introduced at the Faculty of Technology for the first time.

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Public financial support is provided to (partially) cover the costs of practical training and internships. Financial support is provided by the University for practical trainings. In addition, private business organizations also sponsor practical trainings where requested.

The existing policies and structures in support of student talent development include:

- A Centre for Intellectual Property and Commercialization
- At Faculty level, students are encouraged to develop their product or business ideas through various sorts of projects.
- A platform was established for displaying and demonstrating student talents; an example is the 'Invention and Innovation Exhibition organized by the Faculty of Science'

There is, however, no dedicated physical space to showcase and collect

**EMPOWERING  
STUDENTS AS  
STAKEHOLDERS IN  
UNIVERSITY  
GOVERNANCE**

innovative ideas from students, staff, faculty, community members.

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Students participate in official decision-making bodies at the university, which includes student representation at Faculty Board Meetings, active contribution in study circles and other societies established at Faculty level and Department level. In addition, Student Unions regularly discuss topical issues with the administration of the University.

The existing procedures for student involvement in decision-making bodies at the University are clear and transparent. Students are members of quality assurance bodies at the University. A Mechanism has been created to get students involved in quality assurance - Student Ambassadors.

Students are asked to provide information (e.g. through surveys) on core or additional aspects of student experience that include:

- design of the curriculum
- quality of teaching
- student learning
- assessment methods
- student support resources
- student support services
- university social life

Information about quality assurance is published and is available to students. There is no motivation provided for student involvement with quality assurance. No training and support materials about quality assurance are provided to students, but arrangements for this are being made at the moment. Events (briefings, discussions, quality forums) are organised to inform students about the practice of quality assurance.

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**SUPPORTING  
STUDENTS' CAREERS**

The University does not currently monitor the career paths of former students. It does not carry out or use student and graduate surveys to collect information on graduates' transition to the labour market.

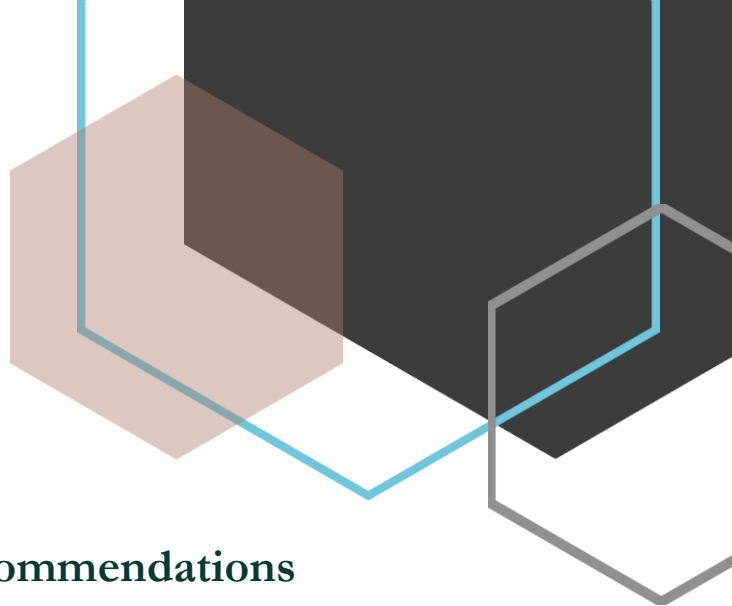
On the other hand, career guidance is available throughout the whole student lifecycle - the Career Guidance Unit provides services throughout the university life of students. Special attention is paid to student admission in order to train students on how to manage university life and make use of resources and available opportunities at the university. During the students' final year, students are trained in CV writing, job interview participation and finding internship and job opportunities.

Career guidance is available to all students but there is no career guidance specifically targeted at disadvantaged students. The Career Guidance Unit is open for all students and organizes various types of programmes, workshops, and training sessions to motivate students to join with the unit. These activities are not specifically targeted at disadvantaged students. However,

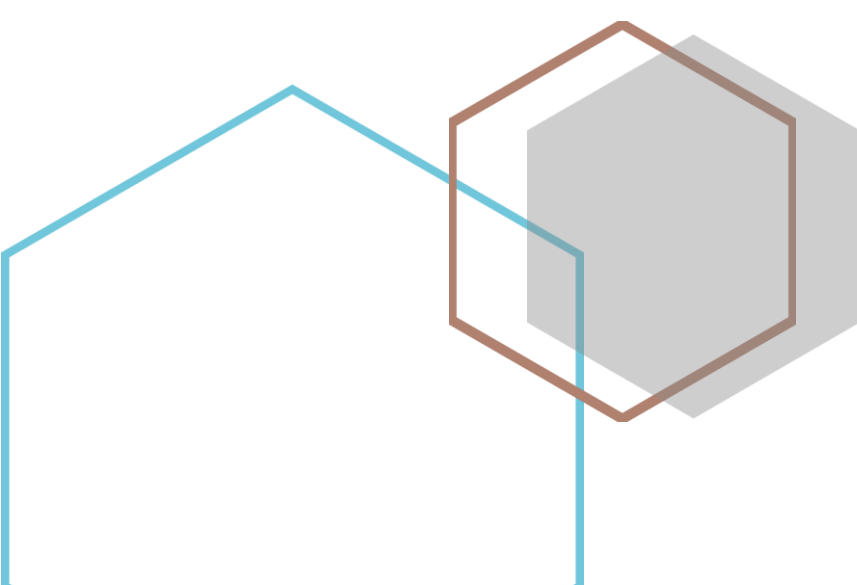


Career Guidance Counsellors are available to provide services for any student who needs special attention and care. Career guidance services are not available to graduates/alumni.





# Conclusions and recommendations



## CONCLUSIONS

University of Ruhuna is a large University, with more than 10,000 students, and has a rich history. It offers a variety of degrees in different disciplines. It also offers some entrepreneurship education options. However, the percentage of students engaged in entrepreneurship programmes and the members of the teaching staff teaching in entrepreneurship programmes is very low, less than 2% of total students and 3% of total staff respectively. Even lower is the percentage of teaching staff that has participated in entrepreneurship training (less than 1% - 3 persons). The number of industry or business practitioners involved in delivering entrepreneurship courses in bachelor's/master's/post-graduate degree is also very low (only 4 persons).

University of Ruhuna has objectives and goals related to entrepreneurship. A strategy on entrepreneurship education is defined as a separate objective in the Strategic Plan of the institution – inculcating invention and innovation culture within the University and promoting entrepreneurship. However, this is just a nascent strategy. The University involves employers and labour market institutions in curriculum development, teaching and University governance.

Despite the strategic orientation, there are no entrepreneurship centres supporting university-business relations and entrepreneurship in general at University level. There is no practice of offering temporary contracts to staff members in industry/business. Additionally, there are no opportunities for staff mobility across the university-business divide (including adjunct faculty).

Most of the entrepreneurial learning is thus included in the teaching process - some support is provided to bachelor/master/post-graduate students for access to internship and/or placement schemes, and case studies are a commonly used tool. Students' soft skills are being monitored and developed, which is also positive.

The University's performance, in terms of R&D expenditure and spin-offs, is at a rather low level, with R&D expenditure amounting to less than 4% of the University's total budget and no spin-offs generated. The percentage of staff members holding national grants is 14%, but the percentage of staff holding industry grants is much lower (less than 0.5%). The University's performance in terms of publications and citation is significantly better. While support for innovation and regional development is included in the mission of the University, there is no research and research training planning and policy.

The University does not provide financial resources in the form of seed funding. There is also no clear IPR policy followed by the University in its relations with economic agents, which might be one of the reasons behind the non-existence of spin-offs.

University of Ruhuna has a dedicated technology transfer office and offers incubator facilities and services. On the other hand, it does not have any research laboratories, it does not have or participate in any





technological parks, it does not offer accelerator services, and does not have any applied research centres or research and development units. This lack of systematic research structures makes it difficult for the University to reach out and develop collaborations with industry or other actors. In terms of HR development, the percentage of students involved in research projects is very high (74%) and the percentage of timely completed PhDs exceeds 50%. The question that remains to be answered in upcoming project activities is: What is meant by a student research project?

There is an enrolment and services office in the University of Ruhuna available for students. However, there is no comprehensive quality management system for academic excellence, despite the existence of an Internal Quality Assurance Unit which tries to evaluate the performance and the academic excellence of the staff.

The University's options for trying to attract talented students at undergraduate level are limited since – as a state University – it has to follow the quota and specifications of the University Grants Commission. There is some effort to attract post-graduate students though. The efforts to attract foreign students are apparently limited, which resulted in foreign students accounting for less than 0.5% of total students. But this is expected to change in the next years, as in 2014 the government announced plans to “...open up its higher education system to private overseas investors” as part of an effort to “attract 50,000 international students and 10 foreign university campuses by 2020.” Sri Lanka's Ministry of Higher Education hopes to transform the country into the “most cost-effective and quality higher education hub in Asia”, and has substantially increased the number of student seats and scholarship opportunities for incoming international students since 2011 (Justine D'Souza and Thomas D. Moore, 2017).

In terms of student welfare support, the University provides housing for a limited number of students. About 50% of housing applications are approved. There is a health service at the University premises. There is no support service for reducing the debt load of students. However, students enjoy financial assistance with two types of scholarships that do not represent any debt or loan. The share of students who receive some kind of financial support (scholarships, student loans, etc.) is very high, reaching a proportion of 90%.

There are no mature students enrolled for Bachelor level studies. The share of students with disabilities in the total number of students is also very low (0.14%). On a positive note, the University provides specialized support for disadvantaged groups of students, as well as built environment with universal design for students with disabilities. There is also an adapted teaching process for disadvantaged students and an adapted assessment and examination process for disadvantaged students.

The share of students engaged in practicing entrepreneurship skills amounts to a relatively low percentage of 1.64%. The share of students who participated in internships in professional settings is 30%.



Internships are a necessary component in the bachelor degrees of the faculties of Agriculture, Engineering and Management and Finance. The share of students included in coaching/mentoring programmes is 100%. The question that remains to be investigated in this regard is what is considered “mentorship”, as the indicated percentage is extremely high. The university also reports that 100% of the students participate in study tours. In addition, the University operates a number of student talent support structures.

Student participation in decision-making bodies at the university includes student representation at Faculty Board meetings, active contribution to study circles and other societies established at Faculty level and Department level, Student Union activities. Students are members of quality assurance bodies in the university. The information about quality assurance is published and is available to students.

The University does not monitor the career paths of graduates. On the other hand, career guidance is available throughout the whole student lifecycle by the Career Guidance Unit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based on the above conclusions a number of recommendations can be made:

- Even though some entrepreneurship education options and support are offered at University of Ruhuna, the number of students engaged in entrepreneurship programmes and the members of the teaching staff teaching in entrepreneurship programmes is very low, as is the level of industry or business practitioners’ involvement in entrepreneurship courses. Steps should be taken to improve the offer of entrepreneurship courses, to increase their attractiveness for students (if this is the source of the problem) or to generally improve student access to those courses (e.g. engage more teaching staff, provide courses of different difficulty and duration and in different Departments, etc.)
- A strategy should be developed for reaching out to and engaging business practitioners and involving them in the entrepreneurship education process. In order for any strategy to be effective, a framework and some kind of support structure for this purpose should be in existence.
- Research funding is low. No spin-offs, licences or patents exist at the University which can be – in part – explained – by the lack of IPR and spin-off policies. Development of a clear and modern strategy for IPR and commercialising research results in general, as well as a set of guidelines, could go a long way into remedying this situation.
- The University should develop a better defined strategy for supporting innovation and regional development to help provide





guidance, support and incentives, and to keep research and education in line with the most recent national policies.

- While some structures facilitating links with industry and local community in University of Ruhuna do exist, other structures such as research units / laboratories are missing, making it difficult for the University to reach out and offer services to the private sector. Creation of different support structures or revision of existing policies can lead to a much better performance and make the education offered at the University more relevant to the needs of the economy and society.
- The University has limited options to attract and retain talented students at undergraduate level, but it could benefit from attracting more postgraduate and foreign students, as well as from improving the possibilities for international mobility of students. The University could also benefit from a more active involvement with alumni.

## References

D'Souza J and Moore T.D (2017), *Sri Lanka's pioneering entrepreneurial university churning out 'confident' entrepreneurs*, The Sunday Times (<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/130728/business-times/sri-lankas-pioneering-entrepreneurial-university-churning-out-confident-entrepreneurs-54054.html>)

University of Ruhuna website: <http://www.ruh.ac.lk/index.php>

