PROGRAM REVIEW 2017

University of Colombo
Faculty of Arts
Cluster - B

Programme Review Report
of

BA (Honours) Degree Programmes
in
Economics, Geography and Demography

(Cluster B)

Faculty of Arts

University of Colombo

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council

University Grants Commission

2018

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Section 1: Brief Introduction to the Programmes

The Faculty of Arts (FoA) is the largest faculty in the University of Colombo in terms of student enrolment and consists of ten academic departments and five teaching units offering courses in Humanities and Social Sciences. The Faculty offers two types of degree programmes: Bachelor of Arts General Degrees programme (BA General; SLQF Level 5) and Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree Programme (BA Honours; SLQF Level 6).

The BA Honours Degrees in Demography, Economics and Geography, included in Cluster B are four-year degree programmes offered by the Departments of Demography, Economics and Geography, respectively. Of the three departments, the Department of Geography is the first to be established in 1963, initially as a sub-department, which was upgraded as a department in 1967, followed by Department of Economics in 1967, and the Department of Demography in 1997. The honours degrees in the Departments of Economics and Geography were initiated in 1967 whereas the newer Department of Demography introduced their honours degree programme in 2007. The Department of Demography was upgraded by upgrading the Demographic Training and Research Unit (DTRU) and is the sole academic body of Sri Lanka which provides undergraduate and postgraduate level training in Demography and Population Studies.

All three study programmes under review have introduced internship programmes which are conducted in public and private sector organizations, student research project with a dissertation, and relevant field training components, as appropriate into all three honours degree programmes. The relevant industrial exposure, hands on experience in conducting research, report writing and research communication and various other core components included in the teaching and learning process have helped the student in these programmes to acquire essential academic, technical and social skills required to secure gainful employment upon graduation.

All three Departments have qualified and trained staff to conduct relevant degree programmes, both at undergraduate and post graduate level. As shown in the Table 1.1, though all three Departments have more than 50% staff with postgraduate qualifications, the percentages of PhD qualified staff are hardly satisfactory, especially in the Department of Geography.

Table 1.1: Qualifications of the Staff in Three Departments

Department	PhD	MPhil/ MS/MA	BA	%with PG qualifications	% with PhDs
DMG	6	2	7	53	40
ECN	14	8	6	79	50
GYG	4	9	8	61	19

The student enrollment into three study programmes is shown in Table 1.2. Assuming that the numbers given in the SER represent the data from the past year, all three honours degree programmes enroll reasonably higher number of students with largest number being admitted

into the BA Honours Degree Programme in Demography, offered by the smallest and the newest department, the Department of Demography.

Table 1.2: Student Enrollment into BA (Hons) Degree Programmes in Cluster B

Department	Study Programme	Student Enrollment
Dept. of Demography (DMG)	BA (Hons) in Demography	690
Dept. of Economics (ECN)	BA (Hons) in Economics	431
Dept. of Geography (GYG)	BA (Hons) in Geography	500

Section 2: Review Team's Observations on the Self Evaluation Report (SER)

The SER was prepared according to the guidelines prescribed by the PR Review Manual. However, the format and style of presentation, and hence the overall quality of SER were less than what were expected. The review team, decided to highlight some of the conspicuous shortcomings and discrepancies.

Section 1 consists of a brief introduction to the three Departments and their activities as well as information on common facilities made available.

The team noticed that there were instances where the information was incomplete and/or irrelevant.

Eg:

☐ Page 8: '*The Department (Economics) has received the University approval to deliver the following ten awards annually and the awards are funded by the self-generated funds of the Department of Economics itself*'.

    However, no mention of awards followed.

Similarly, some contradictions were also noted in the SWOT profile presented.

Eg:

☐ Having highly qualified academic staff members with expert knowledge was indicated as a strength but on the other hand, inadequacy of qualified senior staff to serve academic needs of special degree students of in the Department of Geography was indicated as a weakness.

☐ Having strong technical capacity in the use of modern technology was indicated as a strength, but on the other hand, out dated equipment for practical sessions in the Department of Geography was indicated as a weakness.

Also, some of the threats mentioned in the SER can be overcome fairly easily by minor policy decisions, and the review team believes that, they should not have been considered as actual threats and these could be easily rectified by simple course of action by the Department and Faculty.

Eg:

☐ Recruitment of best students from 1st year exam to Faculty of Arts (DMG, ECN and GYG).

☐ Students are keen to follow outside, certificate-based courses rather than attending university lectures.

□   Lack of awareness of the scope of demography field of studies in the public and private organizations.

All three-degree programmes have developed and adopted appropriate graduate profiles, used student-centered teaching and learning approach, and aimed to inculcate the essential core as well as 'soft' skills in their graduands. The curricula of BA (Hons) in Geography and BA (Hons) in Demography are aligned with SLQF guidelines, and while the curriculum of BA (Hons) in Economics is in the process of revising the curriculum, which is almost nearing completion. However, none of the programmes made any reference to relevant SBSs during programme development.

Section 2 summarised the process of preparing the SER. This included information about the appointment of committees and writing teams and on the allocation of responsibilities. However, it appears that the SER writers had not been given any training on the preparation of the SER and review process; they have been requested to familiarize themselves with the PR Manual before coming to the first meeting of the committee on SER preparation. There was no mention about participation of IQAC and the IQAU in the SER preparation process, and the review team believes that it is through such interactions, the much-needed training could have been facilitated.

Section 3 of the SER, which addressed the degree of compliance by the study programmes with the prescribed best practices and level of achievement of standards under the respective quality criteria, had tabulated evidences against each standard of listed under the respective criteria. For each standard coming under respective criterion, evidences were listed in a separate column and coded using acronyms. In column 2, a brief narration on level of compliance with recommended best practices should have been given instead of just listing the available documents. Column 3 rather than in column 2, should have carried the lists of documents identified with reference codes. Further, in few instances, evidences were not in conformity with the standards, presumable due to lack of comprehensive understanding about some standards.

Nonetheless, the review team, in spite of the many lapses noted, decided proceed with the review.

Most of the documents indicated as evidence in the SER were provided for perusal by the review team during the site-visit. Similar evidences were submitted for each standard by the three Departments and it enabled to the review team to review three programmes offered by three respective Department as a cluster.

Section 3: A Brief Description of the Review Process

3.1 Pre-site visit Evaluation and Site Visit Schedule

The SER prepared by the three departments of the Cluster B of the FoA of University of Colombo was forwarded to the individual members of the review team for the desk evaluation. Members of the team conducted the desk-evaluation independently and sent the reports to the QAAC. A pre-site visit workshop cum meeting was held on 23rd of August, 2017 at the UGC, where the team members had a lengthy discussion on the contents of the SER. The tentative scores given by each member for each standard of all 8 criteria were discussed thoroughly and consensus on tentative scores were reached. Further clarifications and evidences required were discussed, and the responsibilities of individual members were agreed upon.

Two weeks before the site visit, a tentative schedule was agreed on by the Review Chair, the Dean/FoA and Director/IQAU for the 3-day site visit.

The review visit comprised the following aspects:

☐ Meetings and discussions with the senior management (VC, Dean, Heads of Departments, Director/ IQAU)
☐ Meetings and discussions with staff and students
☐ Scrutinizing documentary evidences
☐ Observation of teaching, learning and educational facilities
☐ Debriefing

3.2 Meetings and Discussions with Senior management, Staff and Students

The review commenced on 24th October 2017 at 8:00 am with the meeting with the Vice Chancellor at the Senate Room. The VC explained the current status of the university, with special reference to FA, and proceeded to explain in detail the current and planned reforms in academic affairs, research and development, and improvement in infrastructure and teaching resources. Key reforms and development initiatives ongoing and planned mentioned by the VC are listed below:

- Improve classroom facilities and all other infrastructure facilities required for all departments of the Faculty of Arts.
- Improve the facilities provided to differently – abled students.
- Take necessary actions to improve the quality and relevance of academic programmes and thereby the employability of graduates by;
    - reforming and modernizing curricula based on industry needs and stakeholder feedback and inputs,
    - improving students' soft skills by incorporating more outreach activities, and
    - strengthening Career Guidance Unit and activities such as "Job Fair" to promote improvement of students' 'soft skills' and employability opportunities.

- Create more opportunities through international links for young staff members to pursue their postgraduate studies in foreign universities.
- Make the training offered by the Staff Development Centre as a mandatory requirement for all new staff recruits.
- Appoint a Committee for the task of regular updating of University/Faculties web sites to enhance quality and make them more attractive and dynamic.
- Implement Research-Dash-Board to provide more opportunities to upgrade staff research profiles.
- Establish Research Centres and commence appropriate reward schemes such as Senate and VC's awards to recognize and reward academics for research excellence and also to reward those who are engaged in high profile research.

Next meeting was held with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, from 9:30 to 11:00 am in the Board Room. The Dean highlighted following aspects:

- Faculty adopts the policy of reviewing the curricula of study programmmes every three years with consultation of all stakeholders.
- More priority and emphasis given for upgrading ICT facilities in the Faculty.
- Appointment of subject review committees and monitoring of progression with IQAU.
- Medium of instruction is not mentioned in the transcript of the study programme as it would be disadvantageous for students seeking postgraduate opportunities overseas.
- Even though 80% class attendance is mandatory for all courses, it is difficult to monitor and maintain due to large class sizes. Therefore, 10% bonus marks are added to the final marks of students with 80% attendance.
- Steps taken to expand and streamline teacher evaluation by students (student feedback) and peer observations on teachers to cover all study programmes and all teachers.

The meeting with the Dean was followed by the discussion with the Heads of the Departments from 11.00 am to 12.00 Noon. The Heads of Departments highlighted following aspects:

- Appreciate the external quality assurance review process as it would facilitate them to identify weaknesses, shortcomings and gaps.
- Highlighted that some criteria have similar standards which makes it difficult to identify necessary evidences.
- Steps taken to introduce a course module related to ethics.
- Programmes are aligned with educational objectives rather than focusing on employment market needs.
- Informal interdisciplinary teaching provided to facilitate students to gain knowledge in a broader area.
- No philosophy programmes but related secondary modules are introduced in other programmes.

- Fund allocation by considering University-based student ratio.
- Flexibility to introduce more modules into UG programmes.
- Places for internship programme are limited because of difficulties in finding willing partners from industries.
- Maintaining records and confidentially in counselling matters.

Following the meeting with the Heads of Department, the review team had a discussion with the academic staff of three Departments form 12.00 Noon to 1.00 pm. They highlighted following aspects:

- The curricula of BA (Hons) in Geography and BA (Hons) in Demography are in conformity and alignment with SLQF guidelines and OBE-SCL approach, and Department of Economics is in the process of revising curricula in accordance with SLQF guidelines ad OBE-SCL approach.
- Promote greater stakeholder participation in curriculum development.
- All staff members are encouraged to complete CCPDHE programme conducted by SDC, University of Colombo.
- All honours degree programmes conducted in English medium and Department of Economics conduct their honours degree programme in English medium after the 1st year of study.
- Paper moderation and 2nd marking are adopted and practiced.
- Though teacher evaluation by students and peer observations are carried out, the feedback from such assessments has not been considered for any intervention.
- Adopts fair distribution of marks between continuous and end-semester examination; 40% for continuous assessment and 60% for end of semester examination.
- Study programme curriculum include many group activities, but individual assessment is practiced for each student.
- All three departments encourage students to participate in undergraduate project conferences, symposia and seminars.
- Department of Economics organizes an annual international research conference.
- Final year research project is conducted as a group activity with individual student having specific objectives.
- Students Societies participate in community development projects and outreach activities.

The meeting with non-academic staff of three Departments was held next, from 3.00 to 4.00 pm. Deputy registrar, assistant bursar, two technical officers, IT Instructors and few academic support staff members attended meeting and expressed the following views on their responsibilities and also highlighted few shortcomings:

- Provide necessary support in ICT related matters as requested by academic staff.
- Update and upload all required educational material and information to LMS.
- Undergone local training programmes through SDC.
- Some administrative staff have got foreign training opportunities.
- Extend supports for postgraduate programmes.
- ICT related technical staff cadre is not sufficient to cater for the needs of the Faculty.

The meeting with students was held on day two, from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon. Unfortunately, as the University was out of bounds for undergraduates of the FoA, a complete and comprehensive discourse with students of all 4 years was not possible. Nevertheless, a meeting with a group of students was arranged and it enabled the review team to gain limited insight into their academic activities and obtain views and opinions on their academic experience. They expressed the following opinions, requests and grievances:

- Expressed their desire to see that all study programmes are conducted in English medium.
- All academic staff is very supportive of enhancing English language skills of students.
- Group activities are encouraged but individual assessments are carried out.
- Students are familiar with LMS.
- No awareness of the facilities and services of the counselling unit.
- No formal meetings with, such as through staff-student committees, but communication with staff members is not restricted.
- Sufficient number of field visits, industry related involvements and outreach community development activities.
- Satisfied with class room facilities; most of class rooms are air-conditioned, supported with multi-media projectors.
- Satisfied with ICT and library facilities available in the Faculty.
- Preferred a mid-semester break.
- Hostel and sport facilities are satisfactory.
- Delays in release of results; prefer to see examination results are released within three months rather than within 5 - 6 months.
- Satisfied with courses offered by ELTU but would prefer to see expansion of coverage to enhance essential language competencies.
- No indications of action taken based on their feedback given on matters of their concern.
- Usually any problems regarding grades and marks given at examinations and assignments can be discussed with the staff.
- Research and Research Methodology modules conducted in the 2nd year is useful and help them to engage in research project in the final year.
- Students have opportunities to participate in undergraduate seminars, symposia, conferences, etc.

Thorough the above discussions, the review got an opportunity to get a clear picture of the institution's processes in operation and also about the ongoing and planned improvement programmes. Moreover, they had got views and opinions, particularly from the students about

the strengths, weaknesses and gaps, as they perceive, in their study programmes and academic experience.

However, meetings with representatives of alumni and other stakeholders such as moderators, external examiners, visiting staff, employers, etc., involved with the Faculty activities were not held as prescribed in the PR manual. Direct observation of teaching and learning activities, and field and laboratory work was also not facilitated due to the same reason.

3.3 Scrutinizing Documentary Evidence

The aim was to appraise the evidences furnished by the institution to verify the claims made in the SER. The review team carefully perused the documents provided by the Faculty as evidences and made evidenced-based judgments on each and every standard. By taking into account a directive issued by Director of QAAC, all reviewers in the review team decided not to consider two standards (Standards 6.8 & 8.10), since they seemed to be irrelevant to the study programmes under review.

3.4 Observation of Teaching and Learning Facilities

Common facilities and support systems available to the students of FoA as well as those that are specific to each of the three-degree programmes were also observed by the review team.

3.5 Debriefing

Finally, at the conclusion of the 3rd day of the site visit, interactive wrap up meetings were held with the Dean of the Faculty, Director of the IQAU, Heads and academic staff members of three Departments. The chairperson of the review team highlighted the findings with the contribution of the team members and facilitated an interactive discussion.

The Faculty and, particularly the three academic Departments ensured that the review visit was conducted in a very conducive environment. The Heads and staff of all three Departments were enthusiastic and committed and were extremely helpful during the entire review process.

SECTION 4: Overview of the Faculty's Approach to Quality and Standards

The IQAU at University level was established in 2009 and subsequently, the IQACs were established in all faculties. Each IQAC is managed by a committee headed by a Coordinator. The IQACs are expected to liaise with the IQAU of the University and engage in quality enhancement activities as an enduring and ongoing process. However, in the FoA, the IQAC was not provided with an office space, and moreover, it is not clear as to what extent the IQAC is actively carrying out its obligatory functions, and whether the programmes and activities initiated by this unit, if any, percolate through different levels of management in the Faculty. Nonetheless, the Faculty has demonstrated their commitment towards quality enhancement by fostering the adoption of prescribed best practices and achieving respective standards in all spheres of its activities. It has put in place an appropriate organizational structure, namely the Information and Documentation Center (IDC) to coordinates administration of its study programmes.

All study programmes adopt a student-friendly administrative, academic and technical support systems that ensure a conducive and caring environment. Student prospectus is made available to all students at the time of registration, and it includes all the necessary information on academic programmes and respective courses as well as rules and regulations governing administration of academic programmes and examination procedures.

In addition, all three Departments have taken positive steps such as incorporating internship training component into the degree programmes, field studies and undergraduate research symposia. Further, appraisal of teachers by students and peers has also been practiced. These and many other initiatives, will undoubtedly enhance quality and standards of all three study programmes. However, these mechanisms can further be improved so as to reach even higher standards of quality in the academic programmes and allied activities.

Section 5: Judgement on the Eight Criteria of Programme Review

The review team has made an evidenced-based evaluation and judgements on all three study programme, by adhering to the guidelines provided and review criteria and standards defined by the PR Review Manual.   All three study programmes have secured good raw criterion-wise scores for all 8 criteria with highest being secured by Criteria 2 (Human and Physical Resources) and 8 (Innovative and Healthy Practices).

The summary of reviewers' assessment is given in Table 5.1, and the detailed observations made by the review team as regard to best practices and quality standards prescribed for 8 assessment criteria are listed below.

Table 5.1: Raw and Actual criterion - wise Scores for Each Study Programme

Assessment criteria	Number of standards	Maximum Score Possible	Raw criterion-wise score	Actual Criterion-wise Score
Programme Management	27	81	55	103
Huma and Physical Resources	12	36	34	94
Programme Design and Development	24	72	48	100
Course/Module Design and Development	19	57	39	103
Teaching and Learning	19	57	42	111
Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	23*	69*	47	68
Student Assessment and Awards	17	51	37	109
Innovative and Health Practices	13*	39*	37	47

***Note**: *Standards 6.8 and 8.10 have been considered as irrelevant for the programmes reviewed. Therefore, the total number of standards considered under criteria 6 is 23 and the maximum score is considered as 23x3=69. Similarly, the total number of standard considered under criteria 8 is 13, and the maximum score that could be achieved is considered as 13x3=39.*

5.1 Criterion 1: Programme Management

The Faculty has an organizational structure and institutional procedures that appear to be adequate for the effective management of its core functions. The vision and mission statements, strategic plan/action plans, and by-laws appear to be regularly updated. However, there was no evidence of review and use of annual internal and external audit reports in making administrative

decisions. Student participation in discourses on student matters is facilitated by allowing student representation at the Faculty Board meetings.

The Student Handbook/Prospectus provided to students at the time of entry into the University adequately communicates the required information regarding study programmes, programme and course curricula, examination by-laws, student disciplinary by-laws, student support services, etc. The Faculty conducts a fairly comprehensive orientation programme for new entrants. Nonetheless, this programme could further by improved by broadening its scope by incorporating, sessions on personal and academic counselling, and gender related issues.

The Faculty and the academic Departments appear to have taken committed efforts to internalize the prescribed best practices under 8 review criteria. One of the key institutional entity established is this regard is the IDC, which is given the task of setting the annual academic calendar and time tables, monitoring the implementation of course unit system, maintaining student records including student registration into study programmes and courses, and coordinating many other functions pertaining to management of academic affairs. Adherence to the annual academic calendar was not evidenced (other than the time tables set by the IDC), and sometimes this may be difficult due to circumstances beyond the control of the Faculty. There was no evidence as regard to existence of formal mechanism for the analysis and use of student feedback and staff appraisals for pogramme improvement. Moreover, there was no evidence as regard to conduct of student satisfaction or graduate exit surveys, employability surveys, and employer feedback surveys. Furthermore, there appears to be no clear strategy to deal with gradual discontinuation of previous curricula.

The academic and academic support staff are provided with induction training programme and subsequent training through regular CPD programmes conducted by the SDC. Effective student welfare measures, and SGBV policy and programmes are in place. Moreover, there exist a number of national and international collaborative partnerships which are in operation.

5.2 Criterion 2: Human and Physical Resources

The three Departments have adequate number of competent academic staff and physical resources to ensure effective delivery of academic programmes. Academic staff includes young, mid-career and highly experienced lecturers and researchers. However, the number of academic support and technical staff is not adequate to cater for the needs of the three departments, especially in ICT related facilities.

Staff Development Centre (SDC) of University of Colombo offers numerous training programmes for academic and other categories of staff. A few training programmes are also focused on SLQF and OBE-SCL approach on curricula design and development, teaching and learning and assessments. However, the reviewers could not get the details of the technical aspects of the training (other than some evidence produced by departments) as they did not get an opportunity to meet the director of the SDC.

Available infrastructure appears to be effectively utilized for the provision of teaching and services facilities; classrooms, computer units, Wi-Fi facilities, GIS and soil laboratories, ELTU, library resources and student welfare facilities.

5.3 Criterion 3: Programme Design and Development

The Faculty does not have a standing committee for curriculum planning and development, and it appears that faculty or department level committees are appointed for curriculum development and related matters, as and when required.

The FoA has taken a policy decision to adopt outcome-based and student-centered approach in programme design and development, and in this regard, course specifications, and examinations by-laws and rules and regulations were provided as documentary evidences. Moreover, the Faculty ensured that the degree awarded and the name of the degree complies with the guidelines (qualification descriptor), credit requirements and competency levels (level descriptor) as detailed in the SLQF. And, industry needs and employability of graduates were identified, and graduate profiles for respective study programmes have been developed. However, no evidences were presented as regard to conduct of tracer studies, and hence continuous improvement of relevance and quality of study programmes, based on the results from such studies. Moreover, the extent of external stakeholder participation at key stages of programme planning design, development as well as in programme reviews was not evident.

Though student feedback on course modules and internship programmes was obtained, several shortcomings were noted. Scope of such feedback forms was limited to teacher evaluation, quality of lecture materials/hand-outs and evaluation of discussion classes, but there was no provision to obtain feedback on module contents, ILOs' and assessments.

Curricula of study programmes have been designed by adopting the OBE-SCL approach; course/module outcomes are clearly aligned with the programme outcomes, and the teaching and learning activities and assessment strategies are in turn are aligned with the course learning outcomes.

5.4 Criterion 4: Course Module Design and Development

Course curricula have been constructed in compliance with OBE-SCL concept and approach by a team of internal academic staff members. However, participation of external experts during the process was not evident. Course specifications have been developed by adopting faculty-approved course specification templates. Teaching and learning have incorporated ICT-based technologies and tools, and other teaching and learning methods, particularly, appropriate for those students with special needs. Furthermore, courses are aimed at not only imparting core

knowledge and skills, but also at inculcating wide array of 'soft skills'. Moreover, the courses have integrated hands on experience through fieldwork and laboratory exercises, where relevant.

5.5 Criterion 5: Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning strategies adopted are in alignment with the University's mission and curriculum requirements. All course outlines, time tables, lists of teachers, examination schedules, student registrations, etc., are provided to students before the commencement of the respective courses. These activities are coordinated by IDC and the respective Heads of Departments.

Teaching and learning activities has been facilitated by the use of Learning Management System (LMS); delivering supplementary learning material, administering assignments and quizzes, and in certain cases, end-semester course evaluation by students are done through LMS platform. Moreover, sufficient evidences were provided to indicate the use of blended-learning approach with the use of ICT-based tools and innovative practices. Most class rooms are fitted with air-conditioners, modern ICT facilities and multi-media, and sound systems, thus creating very conductive teaching environment.

Teachers appear to encourage students to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and discovery of knowledge to relate theory and practice appropriate to their programmes. Students are engaged in community development activities, field activities, guest lectures and training activities. All study programmes provide students with opportunities to present their research findings in annual symposia and conferences. Students and staff are encouraged to get involved in research and communication, and high performers are amply rewarded. Sufficient opportunities are provided for students to work in study groups to promote collaborative learning. All group assignments are evaluated individually.

The Faculty provides adequate infrastructure and human resource facilities to assist differently-abled students. The Ability Centre is equipped with modern technology and served by a well-trained and innovative staff member. Presently, the centre supports the academic activities of around 65 differently-abled students. Though, the Faculty appears to provide wide array of learner support services, no evidences were presented on student feedback assessment on the services provided.

Although minutes of course development committees were available, there were no evidences presented to show the external stakeholder participation in these exercises and use of feedback from students in improving teaching and learning process. Further, there were no documentary evidences/reports available on peer observations, and work-norms for academic staff. Though, no document(s) were provided, the review team was informed that the work load for the academic year and semesters was discussed and determined, and then distributed among the staff before the commencement of each and every semester. Moreover, although sufficient

documentary evidences for recognition of achievements and awards were provided, there was no indication of existence of Senate/Faculty approved indicators for evaluating teachers for excellence in teaching.

5.6 Criterion 6: Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression

The three study programmes adopt a student-friendly administrative, academic and technical support system that ensures a conducive and caring environment, and greater interaction among students and staff. The IDC which functions under the Dean's office is instrumental in the management of many of the academic activities of the FoA. However, there was no documentary evidence available at the IDC as regard to curriculum implementation monitoring, and stakeholder feedback assessments obtained through student satisfaction survey, which would have certainly facilitated further improvements of learning environment and student support system.

The Faculty conducts orientation programmes for new entrants at the time of enrollment as well as career guidance programmes throughout their stay. Students expressed positive views about the 'Job Fair' and training programme for students organized by the CGU, which they felt was extremely helpful for them to seek gainful employment.

The three Departments promote active academic interaction between the faculty and the students and the students felt that the academic staff members were supportive and attentive of their needs. However, there is no formal mechanism in place for the students to discuss problems pertaining to academic matters, and their progression in the study programmes and grievances.

A Faculty level Student Counselling unit is operative with a part-time Senior Student Counsellor. However, students did not seem to be fully aware of the services available to them through student counseling unit.

The Faculty has internalized the policies on SGBV and ensures that there were no direct or indirect evidences to incriminate presence or occurrence of any kind of sex discrimination or harassment. Faculty has also established an institutional arrangement, called Ability Centre with modern ICT- based technologies to cater for the needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, departmental level libraries and computer units are established and operated to facilitate the student access and use of information effectively for academic activities. Some of these facilities are supported through generated funds. Main library and department libraries appear to be used by the students and staff effectively.

There were no documentary evidences to show the actions taken and activities undertaken by the Faculty, as regard to monitoring the retention, progression, completion/ graduation rates, employment rates, cost of training per student in relation to national targets where available, and remedial measures taken, when required. Further, none of the study programme offer fall back and exist options for students who do not complete the programmes successfully. Moreover, no

documentary evidence was available to indicate active University/Faculty alumni participation in Faculty activities.

5.7 Criterion 7: Student Assessment and Awards

The three study Programmes use diverse assessment strategies effectively. During the review process close observations were carried out to examine how these assessments are linked to the ILOs and to assess whether their assessment practices are fair, valid, reliable and feasible, and whether the students are provided with regular and prompt feedback on assessments and their progression in the respective study programmes. In general, there were no documents available to show as evidence to show the assessments are linked to the ILOs. Sample assignments, course content documents and undergraduate prospectus are produced to show that weightage relating to different components of assessments specified in the programme. Before commencement of the semester, all study programme have approved documents for appointing teachers, examiners, external examiners and moderators for each course. Departmental level Pre-examination Board meetings take up all issues related to the examinations. Even though the staff members of the three Departments claimed that they release examination results within three months, the students stated that there were long delays in releasing results, usually by 5 ~ 6 months. As communicated by the students, they are provided with opportunity to discuss their answer scripts, and grades/marks on assignments with the staff enabling to obtain individual feedback to promote student learning.

5.8 Criterion 8: Innovative and Healthy Practices

The team was happy to note the Faculty has initiated several innovative and healthy practices into all three programmes.

The FoA has established and operates an ICT- based platform (i.e. LMS) to facilitate multi-mode teaching and learning. All course outlines, assessments and additional resources are regularly uploaded into the system by all three study programmes. Open Educational Resources (OER) are also used for teaching and learning.

There were many documentary evidences to demonstrate the extent of research and development, and innovations, outreach activities and industry engagement carried out by the academics and students. However, a formal mechanism or an institutional entity is not in place for coordinating, managing and supporting such activities.

Moreover, the Faculty has implemented a staff reward scheme to promote academic and research excellence and documentary evidence of too were produced to that effect. Though, students are engaged in internship programme during the semester, no attempt has been made to obtain feedback from such external training organization on student conduct, commitment and performance.

Several international collaborations with foreign Universities are operationalized through signed MoUs to exchange students, staff and engaged in research and development activities. All three departments are involved with income-generating activities to generate funds. Department of Economic has highest strength in this regard through its fee-levying postgraduate programmes.

Documentary evidences were produced as regard to by-laws relating to examinations; mechanism of appointing external examiners through Faculty Board and Senate. And external examiners for moderation and second marking are also appointed in all three departments.

SECTION 6: Grading of Overall Performance of the Programme

Table 6.1: Criterion-wise Assessment, Overall Score and Grade and Interpretation

Criterion	Weightage on Thousand Scale	Weighted Minimum Score	Number Standards	Maximum Score Possible	Raw-criterion-wise Score	Actual Criterion-wise Score
Programme Management	150	75	27	81	56	103
Human and Physical Resources	100	50	12	36	34	94
Programme Design and Development	150	75	24	72	48	100
Course / Module Design and Development	150	75	19	57	39	103
Teaching and Learning	150	75	19	57	42	111
Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	100	50	23*	69*	47	68
Student Assessment and Awards	150	75	17	51	37	109
Innovative and Healthy Practices	50	25	13*	39*	37	47
Total on a Thousand Scale						735
Study Programme Score as Percentage						73.5%
Overall Programme of Study Score is greater than 70% and each criterion score is more than the weighted minimum score for all eight criteria. Therefore, Study Programme Grade						**B**
Interpretation						
Satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of a program of study; requires improvement in a few aspects.						

*__Note__: *Standards 6.8 and 8.10 have been considered as irrelevant for the programmes reviewed. Therefore, the total number of standards considered under criteria 6 is 23 and the maximum score is considered as 23x3=69. Similarly, the total number of standard considered under criteria 8 is 13, and the maximum score that could be achieved is considered as 13x3=39.*

SECTION 7: Commendations and Recommendations

The review team was impressed with extent of progress made by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo in improving quality and relevance of study programme that they offer. There are several commendable attributes achieved and practices adopted by the three study programmes reviewed. However, a few aspects need further improvement and review team hopes that the recommendations made herein will be considered as constructive suggestions made merely for the further improvement of the programmes so as to make them more relevant and of high standard.

Academic staff strength of all three Departments is adequate to conduct the Honours Degree Programmes with well qualified senior staff in the category of Senior Lecturer and above (Economics 17, Geography 08, and Demography 06). However, the staff of the Department of Geography, specially the young members should be encouraged to pursue studies leading to doctorates as many senior members have settled down with only masters' level qualifications.

The grades obtained by students for the Level 1 course units are not considered for the final GPA which seems to undermine their efforts taken by the students during the first year of the programme. The review team were of the opinion that grades/marks of these course units also should be considered at least with a lesser weightage for the final grade.

It is indeed highly commendable, that programme reviews are carried out regularly at every three years and necessary revisions are made based on the review findings and recommendations. The reviews are carried out by a Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) appointed at the time of need. The review team wishes to suggest that the CDC should be a permanent entity of the Faculty with well-defined TOR, comprising the Dean, as the chair, professors/senior members of each Department and any other members, deemed suitable, and regular meetings of CDC should be held to monitor and ensure that programmes remain current and valid. There was no evidence to indicate external stakeholder participation or consideration of input from the alumni in programme and course/ module design and development, and this is something that the Departments should consider. Feedback from employers and/or results of a graduate satisfaction survey should also be considered during programme design and development.

Also, there is no formal mechanism to get student participation, their views and concerns on the academic programme as well as for revision of programme and course curricula. The formulation of Staff-Student Committees for each department is recommended for this purpose. During the discussion with even a small group of students, the review team noted that they had suggestions and comments that could have been addressed, had the regular and formal meetings were held with the staff and students.

Sessions on personal and academic counseling as well as insight into gender issues do not seem to be included in the orientation programme. It is recommended that academic

advisers/counselors are appointed by the FoA to each study programme which will help students of each year to resolve problems pertaining to academic activities and other personal matters.

The students undergo Internships during the final year of each programme which is very useful for them to experience the workings of a company or a state institution as well as to acquire a diverse array of 'soft skills'. Evaluation of internship programmes by both students and trainers would provide a very useful feedback, and therefore it is suggested to conduct such feedback assessments to obtain better insight into the exercise.

Peer review and student feedback are merely a formality. It seems that feedback has not been used properly to make improvements in the study programmes or to address student concerns since there is no evidence to indicate any follow up actions taken.

Learning environment and student support services are satisfactory. The three programmes adopt a student-friendly administrative, academic and technical support system that ensures a conducive and caring environment. Information and Documentation Centre (IDC) plays a considerable role in creating such an environment to students in the Faculty of Arts. However, there should be a monitoring system and student satisfaction surveys should be conducted that would facilitate improvement of the support system.

The standard of ICT facilities is high and the facilities are optimally utilized for teaching by all three Departments. Students have access to computers, Wi-Fi and software and they are assisted, as and when required by the limited number of technical and support staff available. LMS is used successfully in the teaching learning and assessments. Some teaching material is uploaded and some of the assignments and their evaluation are managed through the LMS.

The Ability Centre is an excellent example to show how the Faculty policy, strategy and activities are aimed at students with special needs, it is indeed a highly commendable effort.

Collaborations have been established with several foreign universities. There were two MoUs signed with foreign universities to exchange students, staff and engaged in research and development activities. A formal mechanism or body such as a Research Council to manage and support such activities would be helpful for enhancement as well as streamlining such efforts.

The staff is provided with the opportunity for engaging in continuing professional development through training workshops conducted by the SDC. However, it is recommended to provide more intensive training programmes, particularly for younger staff members, on application of SLQF Guidelines, Subject Benchmark Statements and OBE-SCL approach in curricular design and development and on modern teaching and learning and assessment methods so as to ensure that these best practices are internalized across all spheres of academic affairs.

Section 8: Summary

The desk evaluation of the SER provided by the Cluster B (BA (Honours) degree programmes in Geography, Demography and Economics, offered by the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo was carried out independently by each team member and the findings of individual assessments were subsequently discussed at the pre-site visit meeting held. Following that, the site visit was conducted for a period of three days. During the site visit, the review team members were able to peruse documented evidences, observe facilities as well as to hold discussions with key stakeholders. Unfortunately, the team could meet only a small group of students and also did not get an opportunity to observe the teaching and learning sessions. Both these were due to unavoidable circumstances and were not considered unfavourably when scoring the programmes. Similarly, two standards were not considered for the scores (6.8 and 8.10) as the review team felt that they were irrelevant to the programmes under review.

The SER was formulated as a composite document for all three study programmes and three Departments provided similar evidence for all standards of all 8 criteria. Thus, the review and assessments were done by considering the three Departments as a cluster. The staff of all three Departments should be commended and congratulated for their commitment towards maintaining high quality and standards in most of the activities observed. However, there were a few shortcomings and these are mentioned in the section on commendations and recommendations.

The three study programmes earned an overall of score of **73.5%,** and the grade of 'B', which is interpreted as *"satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme of study; requires improvement in a few aspects".* The review team firmly believe that it can be easily achieved by the three Departments by addressing the recommendations made herein in this report.

The review team wishes to thank the Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Director/ IQAU, the administrative staff of the Faculty, Heads and members of staff of Departments of Geography, Economics and Demography for their hospitality and support rendered in making the review process a success.

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