# PROGRAM REVIEW 2017

University of Ruhuna
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
BA (Hons) Degree Programme
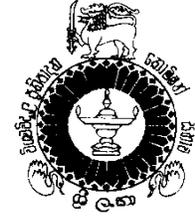
Programme Review Report

BA (Honours) Degree Programmes

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Ruhuna

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Section 1 - Brief Introduction to the Programmes

The history of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHS) of the University of Ruhuna (UOR) dates back to the establishment of the Ruhuna University College 1978 fulfilling the long felt need of the people in Southern Sri Lanka. FHS, which is one of the 4 faculties of the Ruhuna University College commenced its academic activities with four departments; Economics, geography, History and Sinhala, affiliated to the University of Colombo. After receiving the fully fledged university status in 1984, under the UOR, the FHS has expanded by the number of departments and the courses offered.

The FHS which is located in the main university has become the largest faculty of the UOR in terms of the number of students. Currently the faculty offers 12 Honours Degree programmes under 12 disciplines through 8 departments: Economics, English and Linguistics, Geography, History and Archaeology, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Public Policy, Sinhala and Sociology. Among them, the department of English was established recently and not included in the review.

The annual intake of students to the FHS is about 500. After the successful completion of the first year of studies, students are selected for the Honours Degree programmes based on their academic performance in the first year in the subject of their choice. The statistics provided in the SER indicates that about 60% of the students are registered in the Honours Degree programmes.

Figure 1.1: Number of students enroll for special degree programmes by discipline and academic year
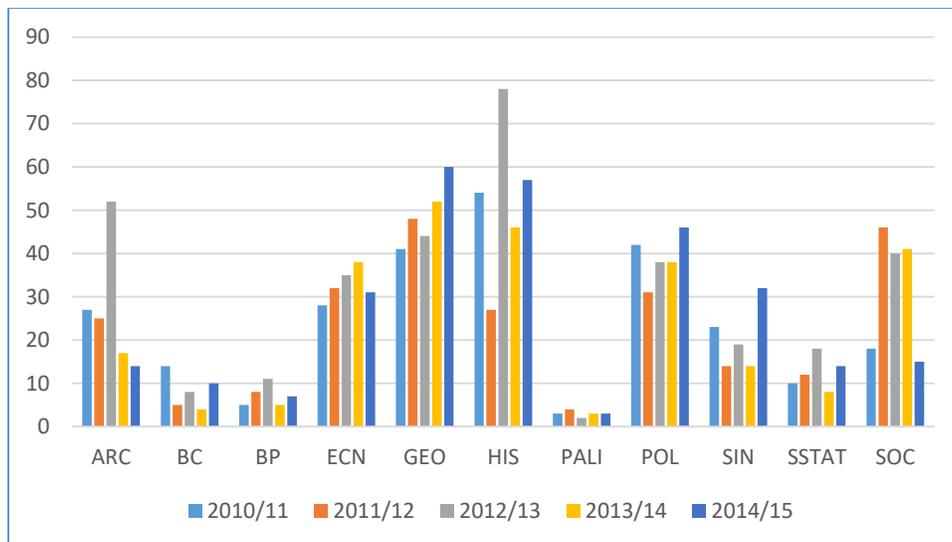
The academic staff strength of the FHS consisted of 96 permanent members; 9 Professors, 66 Senior Lecturers and 20 Lectures, 8 Temporary Lectures and 20 Temporary Demonstrators/Tutors. They are assisted by 6 members of academic support staff and 35 non-academic staff members. Among the academic staff members, 33 members are PhD holders. According to the data provided staff student ratio of the FHS is 21:1 which is higher than the norm of 18:1.

Figure 1.2: Distribution of academic staff members by departments
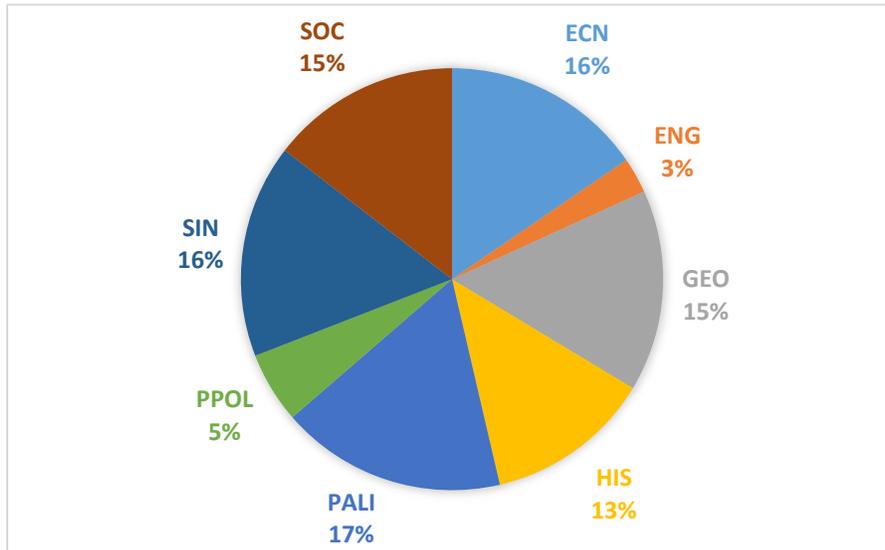
Infrastructure and facilities available are satisfactory and adequate for the delivery of academic programmes of the faculty. Lecture rooms are equipped with basic facilities and some of the departments have their own computer labs. There are a number of university and faculty centers and units to support the academic programmes. These include the ELTU, IT Centre, Centre for Modern languages and Civilisation, Centre for Conflict Studies, and the Career Guidance Unit.

Section 2 - Review Team's Observations on the SER

2.1 Preparation of the SER

The SER of the BA (Honours) Degree programmes of the FHS has been written according to the guidelines stipulated in the Manual for Review of Undergraduate Study Programmes of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the UGC. The key features of the SER are concise, readable, easily comprehensible, and represent all the degree programmes.

The SER has been prepared by a team appointed by the Faculty Board of the FHS and approved by the senate. The writing team represents members from most of the departments and chaired by a most senior member of the faculty. It was evident that the writing team has adopted a participatory approach in preparing the report. The team has had meetings/discussions with different stakeholders in addition to their weekly meetings. Two training workshops have been held during the process to provide training in writing the SER; one by the UGC and the other by the Chair of the team.

The writing team was divided into 8 sub teams and each was assigned with the responsibility of writing and compiling evidence for one of the criterion. The draft of the SER was discussed and adopted by a special Faculty Board meeting before submitting to the Director, IQUA. Further, the draft report was evaluated by an internal review panel appointed by the senate in order to identify any weaknesses, shortcomings or errors. It is evident that the faculty has taken preparation of the SER seriously and worked on it with commitment.

However, a few shortcomings were found in the report. Non-compliance of claims with the standards in some cases was found due to lack of understanding of some standards. In some other cases, documents provided as evidence for some standards did not match with the standards/claims. There were a few cases in which there were no evidence provided to support the claim.

2.2 Observations on the SWOT

The review team agrees with many of the SWOT identified in the SER. The SWOT had identified poor infrastructure as a weakness that affects in improving the quality of the study programmes. However, the review team noted that the existing infrastructure facilities are satisfactory but they are not fairly distributed among the departments. Another weakness listed in the SWOT is lack of facilities for students with special needs. We noted that the university has provided access to buildings and accommodation facilities for those students. We also noted that the FHS has not adopted any special teaching strategies for students with special needs according to their needs.

It was listed in the SWOT that poor attitudes of some of the staff members and students, resistance to change and poor commitment and competencies of some members of support staff as weaknesses. During the site visit, the review team noted the commitment and dedication of some of the academic staff members and non-participation of others. Students who are dominated by the members of the students' union had negative attitudes about the academic programmes, facilities provided and other activities. The enthusiasm shown by the academic staff who were involved in the review process was not shown by the non-academic staff members.

Another weakness listed was the limited number of course units offered in English medium. During the site visit, we were informed by the staff and students that students have requested to offer the study programmes in English. Review team noted that the FHS had responded to the request positively. However, it was not clear to the review team why gender imbalance of student intake has been identified as a threat.

2.3 Addressing the Deficiencies Identified in the Previous Reviews

The FHS has taken necessary action to implement the recommendations made at the institutional review conducted by the QAAC in December 2014. However, in some of the cases it is not clear whether the action taken is the appropriate action to achieve the objective.

Section 3 - A Brief Description of the Review Process

The preparation for the programme review (PR) by the review team involved the following steps. The first was the desk-based evaluation of the SER. After completion of this step the team had a meeting, organized by the QAAC at the UGC, to discuss the outcomes of the desk evaluation. Before leaving for the site visit, schedule prepared by the FHS for the site visit was circulated among members of the review team and necessary changes to it were made. The team had a brief meeting at the site to discuss the review process before commencing the review.

The review consisted of inspection of the documentary evidence for each criterion and standard, meetings with persons involved directly and indirectly with the study programmes under review and visits to each department of study, all centres and units cited in the SER in particular, and observation of the facilities provided for staff and students and environment within the university in general. Following is a brief record of the steps followed at the review process. The schedule of the site visit is annexed to the report.

3.1 Schedule of Meetings, Meetings held and Personnel Interviewed

The review consisted of three major areas of inspection and observation; inspection of the evidence for each criteria and standard, interaction with persons involved directly and indirectly with the study programmes under review and visits to the departments and to the centres cited in the SER in particular; and observation of the environment within the university in general.

The review team met and held discussions with the following persons during the three days of the review/site visit:

- Director, IQAU.
- Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellor.
- Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Heads of all Departments.
- Academic staff of all departments in the Faculty.
- Relevant Programme Coordinators and Curriculum Development Teams of the Faculty.
- Director and members of the IQAC.
- Administration staff of the university.
- Directors of the Centres.
- External members of the Faculty Board of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Student Councilors.
- Members of the Student Union of the University.
- Students of the Study Programmes under review.
- Non -academic staff members of the faculty.
- Technical Staff of the University.
- Academic support staff.
- Proctor and Chief of Security of the University.
- Registrar and Bursar of the University.
- Chief Medical Officer of the University.

In addition to these meetings, the review team also visited several centres mentioned in the SER contributing to the outcomes of the study programmes under review. In these visits, the review team held discussions with those involved with activities of the centers. The centres visited are as follows:

- English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU).
- IT Centre and all Computer labs.

- The Library.
- Centre for Soft-Skills.
- Cultural Centre.
- Centre for Student Counselling.
- The Gymnasium.
- The Student's Canteen within the Student's Centre.
- Main Auditorium of the University.
- Lecture halls of all departments.

All members of the team visited all departments and centres.

Only few students of the study programmes attended the meeting since the university had declared study leave for students prior to their examinations. Members of the Student's Union who were also students in the relevant study programmes also attended the meeting with students even though the review team had met them the previous day. These two meetings were scheduled on two different days.

3.2 Processes Observed

A major part of the review was the inspection of the documents relating to the evidence of the claims in the SER. The above mentioned meetings and interviews were held at intervals in the observation of the documented evidence. The documents were filed as per each standard in each criterion and the files were arranged according to criteria. Each file was labelled under each criteria and the standards were flagged. The reviewers worked together as a team to inspect each file to check the evidence with each claim and that, with what was mentioned in the examples provided in the manual. The authenticity of most evidence which appeared in the SER were also cross-checked at the meetings and interviews with groups and individuals. The deserving mark was then briefly discussed as against what had been awarded by each reviewer at the desk evaluation. The adjustments to the mark given previously was made when and where necessary. Any issues arising from this was noted for further discussion at the end of each day. All adjustments to marks were discussed at the end of day 1 and 2 by the reviewers once again and the final mark was awarded to each standard of each criterion. For the wrap up session, the review team prepared a power point presentation which included strengths and weaknesses of the study programmes under review as observed by the review team and a member of the team made the presentation. A cordial discussion followed.

Walking through the faculty to its departments, the review team observed the surroundings and noted the ramps built to students with special needs and the special toilet built for them. The team also noted the salubrious setting of the university and the sea breeze that kept the

whole area cool. However, it was also observed that this caused all equipment to diminish much faster than in many other institutions.

3.3 Evidence Examined

The documents that was evidence to the claims made in the SER were filed as per each standard in each criterion and the files were arranged according to each criterion. Each file was labelled under each criterion and standards and the relevant sections were flagged or high-lighted. In this manner all documents provided as evidence for the claims of the SER were examined.

Visits to the departments and the centres were also occasions to observe the claims made in the SER as to learning environment, space and facilities available to deliver each study programme. The meetings with the personnel further helped to cross-verify and to clarify points made at meetings as well as claims in the SER.

3.4 Meetings of the Review Team

As mentioned above, in addition to consultations while engaged in the review itself, the team had internal meetings before leaving the university to review each day's experience and findings. On the final day, the team was able to meet to finalize that day's observations and to prepare a brief report for the wrap- up session after lunch.

3.5 Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction with Arrangements made to facilitate the Conduct of the Review Visit

The University of Ruhuna was well-prepared for the visit of the review team. The team was warmly welcomed by senior members of the faculty. The vehicle was sent with ample time to reach the destination on time and it was made available at any time for the team to visit any centre that was at a distance from the faculty itself. All arrangements made by the university to facilitate the review process was nothing short of precise and excellent.

The Faculty Board Room was arranged for the team to inspect files and to meet with the different groups which was found to be very convenient. Two junior members of the academic staff coordinated with all centres and departments so the team did not have any delays or snags in the arrangements. It was observed that the university has attempted to utilize the available built space in an eco- friendly manner. The two young academics were present unobtrusively in the boardroom throughout to assist the team in every way needed and it was

often observed that a senior member of the staff too was present to answer any questions that arose or to send for any additional information that was required by the review team. The enthusiasm and collective work shown by the academic staff in the review process was commented upon by the team in their wrap-up comments as a feature rarely found among staff of institutions.

The team was quite satisfied with all arrangements made by the University of Ruhuna for the site visit.

Section 4 - Overview of the Faculty's Approach to Quality and Standards

4.1: Key Features of the Faculty's Approach to Quality Assurance

The following can be cited as the key features for the faculty's very positive approach to QA:

- The establishing of an Internal Quality Assurance Unit which is very active.
- The IQAU has already made several adjustments to function in accordance with the UGC's instructions of 2015.
- The computation of workload for academic staff as part of the university's procedure to maintain the current QA standards within the faculty.
- It is currently in the process of creating a Strategic Plan for quality assurance.
- It is also in the process of formulating guidelines for a new student's Handbook.
- This unit has already prepared an excellent examination manual according to the present examination by-laws of the university.
- The IQAU sends circulars to faculties and departments on the need to update curricula as and when it is called for.
- The Curriculum Development Committee functions as a sub- committee of the FHS which conducts monthly meetings.
- The majority of the standards in the 8 criterion that refer to QA and standards in the SER have gained a value not less than 3. Where it has got less is where feedback from students is not evident and not based on a shortfall in QA or standards.
- Appreciating this fact the review team also made a special mention of it in the wrap up session with the members of the Faculty of HSS.

However, it was also noted by the review team that course content in many study programmes needs to be modernized.

4.2 Review Team's Observations/Impressions of the Faculty's commitment towards Quality enhancement and excellence

The review team had a very positive impression of the faculty's commitment towards enhancement of quality and excellence on the following evidence:

- Having in place a very committed and active IQAU.
- Facilitating postgraduate studies and research among the members of the faculty.
- The commitment of the members of the faculty towards the university and the study programmes.
- The facilities provided to departments and their study programmes.
- Incorporating field work and soft skills into the study programmes.
- Demand of the students and the readiness of the faculty to conduct study programmes in the English medium.
- The readiness to engage in constructive criticism and the positive attitude of the faculty to the findings of the review team.

Section 5 - Judgment on the Eight Criteria of Programme Review

5.1: Criterion 1- Programme Management (68/81)

Most of the UGC circulars covering the area have been adopted by university and the faculty. Faculty has set up an IQAC in liaison with University IQAU. The organizational structure that supports the management of the study programmes is adequate and website is up to date and it contains all necessary information.   Faculty Handbook is prepared annually and made available to new students at the time of orientation programme and all necessary information including details of all courses offered, academic calendar, facilities provided for students, rules and regulations governing study programme are given.

Feedback about the orientation program was not found. Usage of ICT platform for programme management called Management Information System was not found and usage of Learning Management System (LMS) is at minimum level. There was lack of evidence of a performance appraisal system, work norm and duty lists of all categories of staff and student feedback. Peer evaluation is not practiced. There is no proper mechanism to analysis and use student feedback to implement the program.

5.2: Criterion 2- Human and Physical Resource (28/36)

All the departments in the faculty except the newly established English and Linguistic department have an adequate number of academic staff to conduct the degree programmes. Faculty has adequate, well equipped with audio-visual aids and well maintained lecture rooms, staff rooms, computer labs, office for administration and auditoriums. Computer/ICT facilities are also adequate.

Evidence for the implementing the staff performance appraisals was not found. Guideline/manuals or evidence for use of teaching facilities was not found. No any evidence of obtaining stakeholder feedback and use of such information to implement the programme.

5.3: Criterion 3-Programme Design and Development (57/72)

Faculty has managed to offer 120 credit in total for the four year Honours Degree programme which is aligned with SLQF. Programme design and development has been carried out by a Curriculum Planning and Development Committee (CPDC). However, evidence to support the composition of the CPDC, minutes of committee meetings and regularity of meeting were not found. There was no evidence for use of employees, external parties and stakeholders' feedback in design and development of degree programmes. Peer review is not practiced and there is no mechanism to obtain feedback from students for evaluation of teaching in regular basis and utilize such information to improve teaching and learning process. Although, ILOs were defined for subjects, there was no evidence to support that ILOs of courses are align with programme ILOs.

5.4: Criterion 4-Course/Module Design and Development (50/57)

Course modules have been developed with specified objectives, ILOs, detailed course contents, credit value, assessment methods and recommended reading using standard formats. Programme design and development has been carried out by a curriculum planning and development committee. However, evidence to support composition of the committee, minutes of committee and regularity of meeting were not found. Use of students' feedback, stakeholders' feedback and external parties' feedback for the design and implementing process is not practiced. Utilization of the external and internal examiners reports for the designing/evaluating courses is not practiced.

5.5: Criterion 5-Teaching and Learning (39/57)

Faculty has provided course specifications and timetables before the commencement of the programmes. Teachers integrate appropriate research and scholarly activities into their teaching. Student research activities were very much promoted. Teachers provide necessary encouragement and support for the students to carry out their research and they are provided the opportunity to present and publish their research in conferences organized by the faculty. There was no evidence to suggest that teaching and learning activities were monitored routinely for their appropriateness and effectiveness. There was no evidence of external examiners reports, students' feedback, peer review, stakeholders' comments and utilization of such information for improving teaching and learning process. Faculty is not having a defined set of indicators of excellence in teaching to evaluate performance of teachers, Identify champions of teaching excellence and promote adoption of excellent practices.

5.6: Criterion 6-Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression (39/72)

All the new students were provided with an induction programme and the students were guided to comply with the code of conduct for students, discharge rights and responsibilities and utilize services available. The students are provided with facilities of ICT in Faculty IT Lab as well as in well-equipped University ICT Center. Faculty has provided ample opportunities to improve active social interaction among the students and co-curricular activities were very much promoted. However, teaching learning strategies are mainly teacher centered and use of blended mode techniques and student centered techniques are not promoted.

There is no mechanism of obtaining peer review. Student feedback is not obtained on regular basis. Even in the cases that student feedback is obtained, no analysis of the feedback is done. Therefore, feedback has not been utilized in making improvements in the study programmes or to address concerns of the students.

There was no fall back option for those students who were not able to complete the study programmes successfully. Faculty has not monitored retention, progression, completion/graduation rates, and employment rates. A formal committee is appointed for handling students' appeals on examination issues; however, it was noted that it takes long time duration to complete the process placing students in a difficult situation.

5.7: Criterion 7-Student Assessment and Awards (43/51)

Assessment strategy of student learning was considered as an integral part of programme design with a clear relation between assessment and programme outcomes. Faculty has taken

action to review and amend the assessment strategies periodically as appropriate. However, appointing external examiners are not practiced and there was no evidence of external examiners reports and hence utilize such to improve the assessment criteria. Faculty has a well-established policy for examinations. However, the long delays in releasing results and not conducting make up examinations for the students who were unable to sit for examinations due to acceptable reasons are key issues.

5.8: Criterion 8-Innovative and Health Practices (27/42)

By introducing a credit bearing course on soft skill development to enhance the capacity of students, the faculty has initiated innovative practices. A research committee is established for fostering research and innovation and promoting community and industry engagement. Vice Chancellor's awards and annual research sessions are carried out to encourage academics in achieving academic excellence in research.

Use of ICT facilities and LMS for teaching and learning process is at a minimal level and not practiced by most of staff members. There was no evidence for the use of OER by staff and students. Any kind of credit transfer mechanism and fallback options are not available.

Section 6 - Grading of Overall Performance of the Programmes

Based on the guidelines given in Chapter 3 of PR manual, grading of overall performance of the study programmes under review is given below[1].

Table 1: Raw and actual criteria-wise score and the final grade

No	Criteria	Weightage	Weighted minimum score	Raw Marks	Actual criteria-wise score
1	Programme Management	150	75	68	125.93
2	Human and Physical Resources	100	50	28	84.95
3	Programme Design and Development	150	75	57	118.75
4	Course/ Module Design and Development	150	75	50	131.58

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[1] Standard 2.6 was left out in calculation of criterion wise score. The review team agreed that the standard is not applicable to the relevant degree programme.

5	Teaching and Learning	150	75	39	102.63
6	Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	100	50	39	54.17
7	Student Assessment and Awards	150	75	43	126.47
8	Innovative and Healthy Practices	50	25	27	32.14
	Total on a thousand scale				776.52
	%				**77.65**

Based on the judgment on the eight criteria, BA (Honours) degree programmes of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Ruhuna scored 77.48 percentage overall. Actual criteria-wise scores for all criteria exceed the weighted minimum score. **Therefore, the overall performance of the study programmes is "B" and performance descriptor is "Good".** The overall score of the study programmes indicate a satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme of study and requires improvement in a few aspects.

Section 7 - Commendations and recommendations

7.1 Commendations

- Preparation of Faculty Handbook which contains all necessary information annually and made available to new entrants at the time of orientation programme.
- Faculty has provided course specifications and timetable before the commencement of the programme.
- Provision of ample opportunities to improve active social interaction among the students and co-curricular activities.
- Adoption of well-established policy for examinations.
- Introduction of a credit bearing course on soft skill development to enhance the capacity of student.
- Having a career guidance unit with well-trained qualified staff and conduct of programmes on regular basis.
- Establishment of a research committee for fostering research and innovation and promoting community and industry engagement.

7.2 Recommendations

- Improvement of the usage of ICT platform for program management (MIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) to provide quality, efficient and effective teaching and learning environment.
- The request of students to change the medium of teaching to English has been considered positively by the FHS. The transition should be planned carefully considering the human and physical resources required and implemented with a suitable mechanism that include necessary student support system..
- Adoption of mechanisms to conduct make-up examinations in justifiable cases, credit transfer and to avoid delays in releasing examination results.
- Establishing a committee to consider appeals from students related to examination matters is commendable. Expedite the process of considering appeals will help students to complete the study programmes on time and reduce the mental stress.
- Introduction of a defined set of indicators of excellence in teaching to evaluate performance of teachers, identify champions of teaching excellence and promote adoption of excellent practices.
- Introduction of a suitable performance appraisal system which would also incorporates a process for peer observation of teaching.
- Adoption of suitable mechanisms to carry out peer evaluation on regular basis and to obtain student feedback for all courses at the end of every semester. Analysis of outcomes of the above can be used in improving the study programmes and teaching and learning process and to address concerns of the students.
- Introduction of a mechanism to obtain stakeholder feedback, carry out annual graduate satisfaction surveys at exit points, employability studies and employer feedback surveys and utilize information in programme development.
- Adoption of a routine monitoring mechanism of teaching and learning activities for their appropriateness and effectiveness.
- Conduct workshops and training programmes for teachers to introduce blended learning strategies and promote use of them in teaching.
- Introduce fall back options for those students who have not completed the study programme successfully and monitor retention, progression, completion/graduation rates, and employment rates.
- Use of ICT facilities and LMS for teaching and learning process is at a minimal level and not practiced by most of staff members. There was no evidence for the use of OER by staff and students. No any kind of credits transfer mechanism and fallback options are not available.

Section 8 - Summary

The site visit of the BA (Honours) degree programmes of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Ruhuna from 2-4 October 2017 was completed successfully. The visit was consisted of meetings with university and faculty administration, academic staff members, Heads of the Centers and Units, non-academic staff members and students, evaluation of documentary evidence, visiting departments, and observation of facilities. It was not possible to observe teaching and learning as students were on study leave during the visit.

The SER of the BA (Honours) Degree programmes of the FHS which has been written according to the guidelines is concise, readable, easily comprehensible, and represent all the degree programmes under review. The SER has been prepared by a team appointed by the Faculty Board of the FHS adopting a participatory approach. The few shortcomings that were found in the report include non-compliance of claims with the standards in some cases was found due to lack of understanding of some standards. In some other cases, documents provided as evidence were not in line with the standards/claims. There were a few cases in which there were no evidence provided to support the claim.

As indicated in Section 3, the faculty was well prepared for the programme review. Dean, Coordinator, IQAC, Heads of the Departments and the staff members extended their fullest cooperation during the site visit. It should be especially mentioned the enthusiasm and dedication of the two most senior members of the faculty and some young members which showed their commitment to give their best to the faculty.

The IQAU of the FHS is active and has made several adjustments to function in accordance with the UGC's instructions of 2015. The activities to maintain the QA standards within the faculty include the computation of workload for academic staff, process of creating a strategic plan for quality assurance and preparation of an excellent examination manual according to the present

There were many evidence to support the faculty's commitment towards enhancement of quality and excellence of the study programmes. Incorporation of field work, internships and credit bearing course of soft skills into the study programmes are among the steps taken by the faculty. At the university level, research among academics is promoted through a Research Committee and university provides both a platform and encouragement through grants, etc.

The areas that need improvements include use of ICT in teaching and learning, obtaining feedback from students on regular basis and the use of the findings in curricular development, etc. peer evaluation, adoption of student centered teaching practices, introduction of make-up exams and avoid delays in releasing results.

According to the Section 5, which presents the **judgment on the eight criteria of the programme review, the degree programmes under review has attained the grade B which implies "satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality attained expected of programmes of study"** and requires improvement in a few aspects. The strengths, weaknesses under each criterion are listed under section 5. Based on the strengths and the weaknesses under each of the criterion, recommendations are given in section 7. The review team is of the view that the FHS will take this as an opportunity to identify their strengths and deficiencies and take necessary steps to improve the quality of the degree programmes in the aspects that requires improvement.

The review team wish to acknowledge the cooperation and support extended by the Dean, Heads of Departments, Heads of the Centers and Units, Director, IQAC, Coordinator, FQAC and all academic and non-academic staff members and students of the faculty during the site visit.