



PROGRAM REVIEW 2017

South Eastern University of Sri Lanka
Faculty of Arts and Culture
General Degree



Programme Review Report
BA (General) Degree Programme
In
Arts and Culture

Faculty of Arts and Culture
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka
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Section 1 – Brief introduction to the programme

Faculty of Arts and Culture of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka was established at Addalaichenai on 26th July 1995 and it is one of the pioneering faculties of the university. However, the faculty was relocated at Oluvil in 1997. At present, the faculty has six academic departments; Social Sciences, Languages, Geography, Political Science, Economics/ Statistics and English Language. Besides, the faculty runs an Information Technology Unit. In addition to BA (General) Degree programme the faculty offers seven BA (Honours) Degree programmes in Economics, Geography, Philosophy & Psychological Counselling, Politics & Peace Studies, Sociology, Tamil and Hindu Civilization.

The BA (General) Degree programme offers thirteen subjects out of which the students need to select three subjects. The thirteen subjects are: Bureaucracy & Public Policy, Economics, English, Geography, Geographic Information System, Hindu Civilization, History, Philosophy & Psychological Counselling, Politics & Peace Studies, Sinhala, Sociology, Statistics and Tamil. The Students have the freedom to select any combination of three subjects. A subject is offered only if there are at least five students registered. Each of the subjects are offered through course units of three credits each. Accordingly, during six semesters, 18 credits are offered under each subject, totaling 54 credits (3 X 18). In addition to these main courses (subjects) students need to follow two compulsory course units and one auxiliary course unit in each semester worth two credits each. The two compulsory course units are General English and Information Technology. The auxiliary courses consist of two credits and the pool of subjects include Social Harmony, Basic Mathematics, Logic & Scientific Method, Human Resource Development, Basic Sinhala, Principles of Management & Research Methodology and Writing Skills. Among them, the Writing Skills course unit is not offered to the students of BA (General) Degree programme. Further, students can select either Basic Mathematics or Logic & Scientific Method. Consequently all remaining auxiliary course units become compulsory. These compulsory and auxiliary course units combined add up to 36 credits. Hence with the 54 credits of subjects, the total number of credits of BA (General) Degree programme will total to 90 credits, meeting the minimum requirement of a degree programme at SLQF level 6. Though the programme consists of 90 credits, the requirement to cover 4,500 notional hours in the study programme (1500 notional hours/year) as per SLQF has not been considered.

Some of the subjects are unique and represent faculty's locational specificity such as Hindu Civilization, Politics and Peace studies, while others being traditional with a national demand such as Economics, English, Geography, History, Philosophy, Sinhala, Sociology and Tamil. There are some subjects catering to modern social requirements such as Geographic Information Systems, Psychological counselling and Statistics. Therefore, it can be concluded that the BA (General) Degree programmes have addressed the development needs of the nation. However, course units related to all subjects need modifications to meet the competitive challenges of the corporate world. It is suggested to improve the course units to train students to be competent to meet the challenges posed as a result of globalization.

The faculty is strong in human resources due to the availability of 13 academics with PhDs and 50 staff demonstrators. Statistically, there is one academic with a PhD for each subject. Staff / student ratio is almost 1:18, exactly meeting the UGC recommendation. Accordingly, the faculty has the required teaching staff strength to offer quality study programmes.

The faculty possesses sufficient infrastructure facilities such as buildings, modern technology and library facilities. There are 13 lecture halls of varying sizes and eight computer laboratories to meet the requirements of all students. However, to facilitate the use of LMS to improve Student Centered Learning (SCL) and prepare students for future technological challenges, there is a need to improve the technology facilities, particularly staff training for continuous improvement and to upgrade internet access for students. In this context, the faculty has to enhance the provision of technology based courses to students by all possible and available staff. This needs to be supported with appropriate training for staff and proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems.

The faculty has addressed some of the recommendations of the previous subject reviews. As examples; a 'Blue Book' has been drafted containing the course specifications, external and postgraduate programmes have been introduced. Faculty approach in this regard is positive. However, provision of practical training to address the needs of the students have to be improved.

Section 2 – Review team’s observation on the Self-Evaluation Report

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) gave the impression of being hastily prepared as evident by the wrong alignment of cells for many standards and wrong numbering in many sections which created confusion and was a time consuming exercise for the reviewers to match for the relevance. It may be due to lack of cooperation among the members of the writing team, SER writers’ experience, and lack of guidance from the senior academic staff. The inappropriately provided evidence for relevant standards further supported the above impression. In spite of appointment of members appropriately, the conduct of periodic meetings and documentation of minutes of meetings were below expected standards. The Section 4, one of the main sections of the SER, was missing thus the SER has considerably deviated from the template.

Although the SER claimed that SWOT analysis was done, the data collected from the stake holders were largely missing. They have not identified key threats to the degree programme and have indicated that the natural disasters as a threat. Therefore it is essential to perform a proper SWOT analysis in an organized manner in the future, as it provides very valuable data to address issues which may be useful to improve the degree programme.

It was observed that Corporate Plan and Action Plan of the faculty is in accordance with the University Corporate Plan. However, they have not laid down a graduate profile for BA (General) Degree study programme. It has been observed that the degree programme has been designed in accordance with agreed national guidelines of SLQF but some subjects did not utilize SBS though available.

Subject review was performed in 2008 and it was noticed that some of the new measures, such as improving physical resources, learning environment and other appropriate facilities, have been implemented as recommended in the review. However, a formal and effective mechanism for peer observation, practical training or internships, shifting to the English medium, and introducing income-generating courses are still lacking.

Section 3 – A Brief description of the Review Process

The review process commenced with several training workshops conducted by the QAAC/UGC which sought to train reviewers about the aims and the objectives of QA and rationale behind the Programme Review Manual. The importance of the desk review and procedures to be followed at the site visit were emphasized at these training workshops. As part of this, each member of the team undertook scoring of the relevant items in the SER and the individual scores were then forwarded to the QAAC. Before the site visit, the team agreed upon the standards, claims and evidence documents need to be examined in more detail during the site visit. The Chair of the review team circulated the site visit schedule in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty.

The team appointed by the UGC visited the SEUSL and conducted a 3 day review from 2nd to 4th October 2017. The panel consisted of 3 academic staff members drawn from 3 separate universities in Sri Lanka.

The review consisted of separate discussions with the Vice Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty, Registrar, Librarian, Director IQAU, Coordinator – IQAC, academic and non-academic staff members and students. Observations were made on the teaching learning process and infrastructure facilities. Review panel also checked and evaluated the documentary evidence submitted for the 8 criteria in the programme manual.

The Director/IQAU and the IQAC Coordinator ensured that the meetings with above personnel were conducted in a fruitful and cordial manner. Though the total period of 3 days allocated for the site visit was far from sufficient to fully observe and evaluate the General Degree programme vis-à-vis their attainment of quality, the review team attempted to optimally utilize the 3 days of the site visit by engaging in the necessary activities.

There were some concerns relating to the storing of submitted documents linked to standards as evidence. Initially they were stored in one place and the team had to request the coordinator and responsible SER writing team to trace for missing documents and also remove the documents which were not related to the standards.

The review team spent several hours including after hours, to discuss and agree on the modalities for scoring and the actual scoring of standards based on documents submitted as evidence. There were no disagreements among the team members regarding the modalities to be adopted for observance of documentation. Criterion wise strengths and weaknesses including recommendations were categorized under Section 5. The final judgment made by the review panel is also included. The team was aware that the site visit would be the only opportunity to have a face-to face meeting with staff to clarify any issue linked to scoring.

Section 4 – Overview of the Faculty’s approach to Quality and Standards

The Faculty has established its IQAC in accordance with the Internal Quality Assurance Manual (2013) of the UGC and the IQA circular of 2015 with evidence of appointments from 2015. The IQAC works in liaison with the University’s IQAU. However, IQAC has not been functioning in a systematic way with regular meetings and addressing IQA issues of the faculty from the period of its commencement. IQAC Coordinator and committee members have been appointed from time to time. There have been frequent changes of appointments to the relevant committees during the course of time. Some of the issues related to IQAC were managed through external funding where the quality has been addressed appropriately. For example, the ‘Blue Book’ containing course descriptions of the BA (General) Degree aimed at introducing to the external degree programmes has been adopted for selected internal programmes too. It demonstrates considerable alignment with SLQF requirements. Though the course descriptors are available, in practice, only limited evidence was available to confirm usage of the same by the teachers. One of the reasons for the mismatch may be the weak functioning of the IQAC. This inefficient functioning of the IQAC is linked to the nature of general academic management of the faculty, where IQAC involvement needs to be a continuing process in the future. The Faculty Board needs to have a permanent agenda item where in each meeting the IQAC reports and present issues and remedies are addressed.

The faculty possess sufficient human resources to maintain the study programmes at an acceptable standard. The total of 60 academic staff consists of 13 PhD holders and other post graduate qualified staff. Though there is evidence of providing various types of training to some of the academics on quality assurance requirements on various occasions, the same has not been practiced by the whole faculty. The faculty should design a policy on quality assurance where each academic member is assigned an identified task linked to quality assurance. This policy should be supported by an implementation, monitoring and evaluation system. The faculty should consider of employing a consultant as an expert to support above activities.

It is the view of the reviewers that the faculty considers quality assurance process as important. Accordingly, the faculty extended the fullest support to the external review process, particularly during the site visit. This included the provision of documentary evidence and facilities to support the required observations. The faculty has the capacity to further improve the quality of study programmes by establishing a policy and a system. Workshop type training on all aspects of curriculum design and quality assurance requirements should be provided to all academic staff in the future. These training programmes may improve the commitment of each staff member to support the quality related activities of study programmes suppressing personnel interests.

Section 5 – Judgment on the Eight Criteria of Programme Review

Observations made by the review team on the strengths and weaknesses of each criterion are stated below along with the recommendations for enhancement of the quality of the study programme.

5.1. Criterion 1: Programme management

Strengths

- The faculty established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) towards effective management of quality of study programmes linked activities.
- Distribution of student Handbook to all the incoming students and conduct of an orientation programme are good practices.
- Actions taken by the faculty to monitor and prevent ragging on the university premises also is one of the impressive strengths.

Weaknesses

- Although the Handbook is distributed among the students on time, ILOs not complied with the graduate profile.
- No evidence to support that the implementation of Faculty's Strategic Plan is monitored by Senate and Council.
- Measures taken by the faculty to collect information on implementation of the curriculum for the purpose of continuous improvement are not sufficient.
- The availability of ICT facilities for General Degree programme students is limited.

Recommendations

- Student Handbook to be designed with specific sections for the General Degree programme students while including the graduate profile and ILOs.
- Inclusion of regular agenda item in the Faculty Board meeting to monitor the implementation of the Faculty's Strategic Plan is of paramount importance.

5.2. Criterion 2: Human and Physical Resources

Strengths

- The staff of the faculty in terms of numbers, qualifications and competencies is adequate to carry out research as well as designing, development and delivery of academic programmes.
- The faculty takes timely measures to ensure that its human resource profile is compatible with its needs.
- As per faculty policy the recruited new staff has to follow an induction programme and thereafter participate in professional development programmes to upgrade their knowledge.
- The faculty ensures the availability of infrastructure facilities for administration, teaching and learning.
- The students have access to a library with adequate resources and ICT facilities.

- The students are provided with guidance in learning English and an ELTU with required resources.
- The faculty has facilitated the training of students on ‘soft-skills’ and ‘life-skills’.
- The faculty encourages students to engage in multicultural programs to promote harmony and cohesion among students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Weaknesses

- The study programme has not provided opportunities for students to gain suitable and appropriate industrial training or hands on experience outside the study programme with assistance from external organizations.

5.3. Criterion 3: Programme Design and Development

Strengths

- The programme design accommodates supplementary courses to broaden the outlook and enrich the generic skills of students.
- The programme consists of a course unit in English to cover basics to intermediate level English which is compulsory for all students. The total value of the courses in the unit is 12 credits.
- There are six courses in various aspects of IT contributing 12 credits.
- The programme consist of auxiliary courses such as Social Harmony, Basic Mathematics, Logic and Scientific Method, Human Resource Development, Basic Sinhala, Principles of Management and Research Methodology and Writing Skills. The students need to cover 12 credits out of available 14 credits from the auxiliary courses. Accordingly, the students can choose either Basic Mathematics or Logic and Scientific Method following other auxiliary courses as compulsory.
- The students of the BA (General) Degree programme are provided 36 credits out of the main subjects which meet the present day demand.
- BA (General) Degree programme is logically structured and consists of a coherent set of courses while allowing flexibility in students’ choice of courses. The students are offered 13 academic subjects out of which they should select three in any combination. All course units constituting the subjects are of three credits each. Accordingly, the students cover 18 credits from a subject and the total is 54 credits. The course units are arranged in a logically order with increasing challenge and the advancing analytical skill requirements. Accordingly, the study program of structure is compatible with a good practice.

Weaknesses

- BA (General) Degree programme design does not comply with SLQF adequately and has no evidence of guiding by any SBS or requirements of any professional body.
- No evidence of senate approval for the curriculum design policy of the faculty.

- Though, the study program consists of 90 credits, meeting the minimum requirement of SLQF, its credit definition based on notional hours requiring 4,500 hours of student learning has not been clarified.
- There is no evidence for adaptation of a quality assurance cycle including systematic monitoring and evaluation process with inputs from relevant stakeholders.
- The programme has not designed its own graduate profile, instead, uses general faculty graduate profile. Therefore, specific programme mission and goals are not clear and ILOs designed for course units do not provide space for analyzing to determine which particular competencies are provided through the programme.
- The programme has not been designed to provide fallback options.
- It was not possible to judge whether the ILOs of the study programme are realistic, deliverable and feasible as the programme specification listing its ILOs were not provided.
- There was no evidence of external stakeholder feedback on the programme and adaptation of assessment cycle.
- No opportunities are provided to gain experience of the ‘world of work’. There is no course unit through which the students can gain industrial training or similar experience. There is neither such ILOs identified and nor MoU signed.
- Though the IQAC of the faculty has been established, it has failed to adopt internal monitoring strategies and an effective process to evaluate, review and improve the programme design and development and approval processes.

Recommendations

- To establish a faculty policy and standard formats for study programme design.
- To design a graduate profile for the programme based on reliable need assessment and accommodating the views of all stakeholders in doing so.
- To introduce a course unit to offer industrial experience considering the present challenges in the job market.
- To improve the curriculum design by drafting the curriculum map to show how particular ILOs of study programme is covered by selected courses.
- To develop a system for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum with appropriate evaluation cycles of major and minor revisions as part of IQA activities.

5.4. Criterion 4: Course Design and Development

Strengths

- The course specifications presented in the ‘Blue Book’ offers sufficient details of how course ILOs and course objectives are aligned within the course units.
- The course design and development has taken into account student-centred teaching strategies enabling the students to be actively engaged in their own learning.

- The courses have clear course specification that provides concise description of the ILOs contents, teaching learning and assessment strategies and learning resources made accessible to all students.
- With respect to credit weightage and volume of learning, courses are scheduled and offered in a manner that allows the students to complete them within the intended period of time.
- The staff assigned to instructional design and development have been trained for such activities.

Weaknesses

- Course design does not specify the student workload in terms of notional hours as per SLQF and has not broken down into different types of learning, such as direct contact hours, self-learning time, assignments, assessments, laboratory studies and field studies.
- Courses are not adequately evaluated at the end of each course with regard to its content, appropriateness and effectiveness of teaching, achievement of learning outcomes and feedback used for further improvement of courses, though there is a student evaluation process implemented.

Recommendations

- To develop a mechanism for course design and development, implementation, monitoring, feedback and evaluation for further improvement, withdraw from the course, and introduce new course units based on stakeholder feedback.
- To refer to credit definition and calculation of credits as per notional hours in the SLQF and breakdown the total credits allocated to a particular course unit into various learning experiences such as direct contact hours, self-learning time, assignments, assessments, laboratory studies and field studies.

5.5. Criterion 5: Teaching and Learning

Strengths

- Introduction of auxiliary courses for General Degree students.
- Providing students with a copy of the Handbook containing course description and making available the timetable before the commencement of each academic year.

Weaknesses

- Auxiliary subjects are diverse and those are not core subjects.
- Description for some subjects under the fields of study in the student Handbook are vague and just a list of key terms or subject related jargons only.
- Non-availability of facilities for the students with special needs.
- Although the previous Subject Review Report had recommended recruiting permanent lecturers for Sinhala in terms of the importance of social harmony and employability of graduates, it has not been implemented.
- Low level of use of blended learning to maximize student engagement with the course units.

- Insufficient involvement by lecturers of students in self-directed learning, collaborative learning and in the use of technology as an instructional aid.
- Absence of an established mechanism to monitor teaching and learning activities for their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Recommendations

- To take appropriate action to recruit permanent lecturers especially for the subject of Sinhala.
- To initiate a mechanism by the IQAC to monitor teaching and learning activities and to make recommendations to improve quality.
- To introduce lecturers to blended learning and encourage lecturers to use blended learning and to maximize student engagement in learning activities with the support of training workshops.
- In the Handbook before the section on fields of study, ILOs to be presented with clear mapping with the graduate attributes.
- Utilization of a room located in the building complex of gymnasium as the 'Resource Room' of students with special needs.

5.6. Criterion 6: Learning environment, Student and Progression

Strengths

- Availability of a mandatory structured orientation programme to give guidance to all new students.
- General criteria for submission of dissertation and detailed guidelines for preparation of a dissertation are annexed to the student Handbook which will be very helpful for the students.
- Organizing cultural activities to promote diverse talents of the students.

Weaknesses

- Library without AC facility is not conducive for study due to extremely hot weather.
- Limited opportunities for the General Degree students to enhance their learning experiences through placements in outside organizations.

Recommendations

- To provide AC facility, at least for a portion of the library.
- To ensure that the available library facilities are optimally used for academic success of students.
- To 'Network' with the respective alumni of the study programmes and utilizing such networks for mentoring purposes and for guidance of students in their choice of career paths.

5.7. Criterion 7: Student assessment and awards

Strengths

- Assessment strategy of student learning in the programme has been considered as an integral part of the programme design and has ensured the weightage for different components assessments and specified in the course specifications.
- The faculty has taken measures to appoint both internal and external examiners with clear ToRs. Finalization of results considers reports from external examiners.
- The students are assessed using published criteria and procedures and the criteria are communicated to students.
- The students are provided with feedback on formative assessments.
- The faculty adopts a marking scheme, internal and second marking system and a procedure for recording and verifying marks.
- Graduation requirements are ensured in the degree certification process.

Weaknesses

- The degree programme designator “BA General” does not comply the qualification naming requirements of SLQF
- The requirement of notional hours has not been properly addressed.

Recommendation

- To change the programme designator of “BA General” to “Bachelor of Arts” abbreviated as “BA”.
- To apply SLQF credit definition and to provide the credit breakdown to various components of course specifications.

5.8. Criterion 8: Innovative and healthy practices

Strengths

- The faculty implements Vice Chancellor’s Award to encourage academics to achieve excellence in research.
- The faculty promotes students and staff engagement in a wide variety of co-curricular activities such as social, cultural and overseas visit.

Weaknesses

- The faculty does not encourage the staff and students to use open educational resources (OER) to supplement teaching and learning.
- The study programmes do not contain an undergraduate research project as a part of the teaching and learning strategy.

- The students are not encouraged to disseminate the findings of the research projects.
- An industrial training as a part of teaching and learning strategy is not included in the study programme.
- There is no faculty policy to transfer credits.
- There is no mechanism to offer fallback options to needy students.

Recommendations

- To improve innovation and healthy practices of the programme by encouraging student and staff to use OER to supplement teaching and learning.
- To include a research project as a part of the teaching and learning strategy.
- To include an industrial training component in to the course structure.
- To introduce a credit transfer policy.
- To implement a mechanism for fallback options to needy students.

Section 6 - Grading of Overall performance of the Programme

No	Criteria	Weighted minimum score*	Actual criteria-wise score
1	Programme Management	75	120.42
2	Human and Physical Resources	50	91.66
3	Programme Design and Development	75	68.75
4	Course/ Module Design and Development	75	92.10
5	Teaching and Learning	75	113.15
6	Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	50	61.11
7	Student Assessment and Awards	75	108.82
8	Innovative and Healthy Practices	25	21.42
	Total on a thousand scale		677.43
	%		67.74

According to the eight criteria assessed two criteria namely programme design & development (criterion 3) and innovative & healthy practices (criterion 8) scores found to be less than the expected minimum scores. However the overall programme score is higher than 60% but less than 70%, therefore the grading of the **overall performance of the BA (General) Degree programme would be placed as satisfactory (C) indicating minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of a programme of study**, thus requires improvement in several aspects as indicated in the sections 07 and 08 of this report.

Section 7 - Commendation and Recommendation

In addition to the specific recommendations made under the Section 5 following commendations and recommendations are made by the review team:

- The faculty has Annual Action Plan which align with university Corporate Plan but there should be a proper mechanism for monitoring of the progress of actions during the year.
- The Website is being active, Wi-Fi-zones have been established appropriately indicating utilization of IT facilities among the university community.
- Undergraduate guide book appear impressive and attractive. It provides important information to the students and outsiders. However details of degree programmes are not clear (page 26, 47) and the lack of the students' code of conduct was evident.
- Basic physical resources in the faculty are at a satisfactory level but expansion of canteen facility is essential. The lecture theatre chairs are not equipped with writing facilities and needs replacement.
- There is an urgent need of an auditorium to the faculty.
- There are number of vacancies in some departments and particularly there is a need of more qualified academic and academic supportive staff members for IT to meet the current demand and upgrade the quality of students in the BA study programmes.
- There is a need to encourage young academic staff to proceed to foreign countries for their postgraduate training.
- Student-teacher gaps seems to be minimum as evident by exchange of ideas during the lecture, especially in the question answer sessions.
- All attempts have been made to prevent ragging and gender-based violence within the faculty to create a more conducive environment for students.
- The inclusion of the assessment marks of repeat students to their final mark of the repeat examinations to be considered.
- Incorporation of field studies or visits/excursions into the curriculum may enhance enthusiasm and active participations of students.
- Indoor games facilities for girls hostels and a separate gymnasium for girls due to cultural concerns is recommended.
- A formal peer evaluation system and effective mechanism of student feedback on the study programme must be introduced.
- No evidence of enrolment of foreign students to the faculty though it is one of the recommendations in the previous subject review.

Section 8 – Summary

The South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, the only university in the South Eastern Province, is aware of its relative strengths, the uniqueness of its architecture, and its relative potential for contribution to the development the South Eastern Province and the strengths and responsibility of making harmony of different religions and cultures in the province. In this respect the Faculty of Arts and Culture plays a significant role to further strengthen these aspects. The faculty has taken several meaningful and effective steps to obtain and provide adequate physical resources, hostels, library, as well as sports and medical facilities to students to conduct the study programmes under a more conducive environment. The faculty has well established infrastructure, teaching and learning facilities. However improvement of IT facilities and connectivity is essential to further support student access to IT and e-learning options.

All the departments in the Faculty of Arts & Culture have undergone subject reviews and the recommendations and suggestions made in the review reports have been adequately discussed at different levels of administration and some measure have been adopted to address salient issues. However the IQAU could play a more active and pivotal role in coordinating and supporting the IQAC. The role of IQAC need to be strengthened and formalized. In this context, active participation of senior members in the quality assurance process is vital to support the further development of the faculty and study programmes.