



PROGRAM REVIEW 2017

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages
Cluster - 1

**Programme Review Report
of
BA (Honours) Degree Programmes in Social
Sciences**

**BA (Hons) in Economics
BA (Hons) in Statistics
BA (Hons) in Geography
BA (Hons) in Political Science
BA (Hons) in Sociology
(Cluster 1)**

**Faculty of Arts and Languages
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka**

**Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council
University Grants Commission
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Section 1: Brief introduction to the programme

The Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL) was established under the Universities Act No.16 of 1978 on 7th November 1995, and ceremonially inaugurated on 2nd February 1996. Currently it comprises of six faculties namely, the Faculties of Agricultural Sciences, Applied Sciences, Geomatics, Management Studies, Social Sciences and Languages, and Graduate Studies.

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages (FoSSL) was established in 1996, initially with two departments of study, namely the Departments of Languages and Social Sciences. The third department of the Faculty, the Department of English Language Teaching was established in 2004 while the fourth, the Department of Economics and Statistics was instituted in 2009. The Department of Geography and Environmental Management was established as the fifth department in 2015.

The Programme Review (PR Review) is focused on reviewing five of the honours degree programmes offered by the FoSSL of SUSL, which are grouped into Cluster 1. Table 1.1 summarizes the honours degree programmes offered by the FoSSL.

Table 1.1: Honours Degree Programs Offered by the FoSSL

Department	Name of the Degree
Economics and Statistics	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Economics (1+3)*
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Information and Communication Technology (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Statistics (1+3)*
Geography and Environmental Management	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Geography (1+3)*
Languages	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Sinhala (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Tamil (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in English (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in German (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Japanese (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Chinese (1+3)
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Hindi (1+3)
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Translation Studies (4)	
Social Sciences	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Political Science (1+3)*
	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Sociology (1+3)*

* Honours degree programmes included in Cluster 1

All the five programs listed in Cluster 1 are categorized as 1+3 programmes; i.e. students are admitted through a common window and after one year of common programme, they are streamed into three-year specialization programmes, based on the students' performances in the first year of study.

In the first year of study, through the core courses, the students are exposed to a broad range of academic disciplines of humanities and social sciences, in order to compensate uneven levels of knowledge and skills acquired at the level of secondary education. From second year onwards, students are expected to specialize in a subject designated as their major or special subject. They must also follow a minor subject. In addition to this, students will continue to follow core courses on English Language (CEL), Information Technology (CIT) as well on other general subjects (CGS) during first two years as listed in Table 1.2. All these subjects are credited and counted for the final Grade Point Average (GPA).

Table 1.2: Distribution of Core Courses during Year 1 and 2

Academic Year	Semester	CEL Courses	CIT Courses	CGS Courses
1	1	CEL 111 English Language	CIT 111 Preparatory CIT Part I	CGS 111 Mother Tongue
	2	CEL 121 English Language	CIT 121 Preparatory CIT Part II	CGS 121 Basic Mathematics
2	1	CEL 211 English Language	CIT 211 Principles in Web Design	CGS 211 Third Language
	2	CEL 221 English Language	CIT 221 Advanced Data Analysis	CGS 221 Soft Skills

In the study programmes under purview, students must obtain 127 credits in total in order to become eligible to receive an Honours Degree. Of this 127, 75 credits should be from specialized (major) subject area, 24 credits from minor subject area, and rest of 28 credits from core subjects listed in Table 1.2.

The Faculty is moderately equipped with modern technologies to provide a quality learning environment for student learning. Two computer laboratories are equipped with internet facilities and various statistical software including GIS software packages. Faculty has introduced an online Learning Management System (LMS) enabling the lecturers to upload teaching material, and in addition, some academics use Google Drive to share the reading materials with students. The University library carries over 86, 500 books including 59, 000

lending books and 22,400 reference books. In addition, large number of journals/periodicals and e-journals are also available for reference. The buildings and the surrounding of the Faculty are well maintained thus providing a conducive atmosphere for academic pursuits.

The Faculty also provide a wide spectrum of student support services and amenities for students. Almost every student is provided with accommodation facilities within the university hostels and in some rented houses throughout their university stay. The Career Guidance Unit offers regular training sessions to inculcate 'soft skills' and provide advisory services on career development. The facilities in the gymnasium along with the swimming pool provide ample opportunities for the students to uplift their sports talents and teamwork. The Student Centre provides a common meeting place for students and staff. The Student Centre has a spacious common room, a music room and special common rooms for women and for the clergy. Besides that, the Student Centre provides facilities to hold exhibitions, symposia, discussions and organize guest lectures.

In addition to the main cafeteria, each hostel is equipped with a canteen facility to cater the students' needs while a separate canteen is dedicated for staff members. Among the other facilities, a branch of Bank of Ceylon operates within the University premises with two teller machines, a sub- post office and a medical centre which provide health services to staff and students.

Section 2: Review Team's Observations on the Self-Evaluation Report

The review team was provided with a copy of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) in advance and requested to submit a desk evaluation to the QAAC prior to the pre-visit workshop held on 23rd of August 2017. At the pre-visit workshop, review team members discussed their individual evaluations and noted that there was a high degree of agreement among their evaluations and assessments.

The review team noted that the SER has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines given in the Programme Review Manual (PR Manual) by a team of writers representing all the five study programmes under the guidance and supervision of the Dean of the Faculty. It contained four chapters covering 110 pages.

Chapter 01 of SER gives an introduction to the study program including an overview of the Faculty, study programmes offered, learning resources, student support system and governance and management aspects, and the report of the findings of SWOT analysis. The SWOT profile given in pages 15 and 16 of SER provides an assessment of the Faculty in terms of its strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats.

The strengths identified are, geographical location, conducive working environment, qualified and dynamic staff, residential university, awareness of quality assurance practices, well defined intended learning outcomes related to the study programmes and courses, imparting the essential life skills through core courses, use of ICT platform and learning management system (LMS) for teaching and learning, facilities for cultural and sport activities, establishment of academic and research collaborations through well laid down memoranda of understanding with foreign universities, geo-cultural diversity existing in the region for research and outreach activities, availability of a wide range of academic choices for students through flexible subject combinations, staff engagement in national level research activities and preference of GCE'AL qualified students with high aggregates to enroll in Art and Commerce study programmes offered by the University.

The weaknesses acknowledged are inadequacy of staff, heavy dependence on visiting resource personal, inability attract overseas students, non-availability of a dedicated library facility within the Faculty, low bandwidth of the internet connection, non-availability of alternative power sources to encounter the regular power disruptions, and the improper conduct of students.

The potential opportunities highlighted are increasing demand for educational programs in the region, expanding possibilities for internship placements, attracting foreign students and scholars, and soliciting for scholarships and learning opportunities in foreign universities.

The threats identified include lack of awareness of educational opportunities offered by the University among GCE'A/L qualified students, underdeveloped university township, lack of part-time study and employment opportunities for undergraduates, interference by external political forces with university matters, high attrition rate of academic staff, and extreme weather conditions.

Chapter 02 of the SER is dedicated for the brief overview of the preparation the SER which included the names of the members of the writing team and editors.

Chapter 03 of the SER, titled as "Compliance with the Criteria and Standards" is the core of the SER running over the pages of 21 to 108, and it includes an analysis of the current status of five study programmes with respect to 8 quality criteria prescribed by the PR Manual. As instructed, the information has been tabulated in five columns. First column identifies the code of the standard while the second column describes faculty adherence to the individual standard. Column 3 highlights the claims for the best practices highlighting the achievement of the standard while the final two columns are dedicated for the support claims and respective identity codes.

The section on Criterion 1: Programme Management has been expanded under 27 Standards mentioned in the PR Manual. Under this section, the attempts have been made to describe the policy statements, strategies and activities that have been formulated and adopted by the Faculty in line with the vision and mission of the University.

The section on Criterion 2: Human and Physical Resources has examined the human resources management practices and availability of physical resources under 12 Standards. This section provides evidence as regard to the procedures and guidelines in place for recruitment and promotion of staff, staff development, induction programme of new recruits, and recognition and reward scheme of staff for outstanding performance. Also, this section highlights the facilities and services offered for teaching and learning, and for optimizing student's wellbeing, overall development, social cohesion and ethnic harmony.

The section on Criterion 3: Program Design and Development which elaborated through 24 Standards, attempts were made to highlight the Faculty's adherence to the policies and best practices relevant to programme design and development.

The section on Criterion 4: Course/Module Design and Development, which has examined under 19 Standards, efforts were made to highlight the commitment of the Faculty to internalize outcome-based education and student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) concept and approach in course curricula.

The section on Criterion 5: Teaching and Learning, under 19 Standards has described teaching and learning strategies adopted by the Faculty to ensure the quality education. It also provides an insight into the degree of alignment of course with the respective Subject Bench Mark Statements, extent of adoption of blended learning techniques in teaching and learning, and the facilities provided for differently-abled students.

The section on Criterion 6: Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression which includes 24 Standards has basically confined to analyzing the activities related to programme delivery methods, student support systems, use of ICT and language laboratories, monitoring student progression, student engagement in co-curricular activities, empowering students with soft 'skills' and interaction between the student and staff.

The section on Criterion 7: Student Assessment and Awards which contains 17 Standards has presented the details on the regulatory framework and procedures followed by the Faculty to ensure accuracy, fairness and transparency of student assessment.

The final section discusses the Criterion 8: Innovative and Healthy Practices. This section having 14 Standards covers information on those policies, processes and practices that enhance the quality of the academic programmes and experience offered.

At the end of each criterion, a summary of the information presented is given and it is indeed very informative for the reader to get a quick impression on the degree of compliance with best practices prescribed and achievements.

The Section 4, provided a Summary which explained the attempts made by the Faculty in assuring the quality of the five-degree programs under review.

Finally, SER provides the staff profiles of the three departments (Economics & Statistics, Geography & Environmental Management and Social Sciences) as well as the graduate profiles of the five special degree programs (Economics, Geography, Political Science, Sociology and Statistics) as annexures.

Section 3: A Brief Description of the Review Process

The review team peruse the SER which was provided with the SER well before the site visit and individual assessments were reported to the QACC. Members of the review team met at the pre-visit workshop held on 23rd of August, 2017, at UGC and discussed the individual assessments, scores and comments and found that they were comparable.

The site visit of the programme review commenced on Monday 6th of November, 2017 with the arrival of the review team at the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) of the Sbaragamuwa University by 8.00 am. At the briefing, the Acting Director/IQAU briefly explained the institutional approach and commitment to institutionalize quality culture, organizational arrangement of internal quality assurance system, the activities carried by the IQAU and reporting procedures. As explained, the management committee of the IQAU meets at monthly interval and reports the progress in quality enhancement activities at the Senate on regular basis. The IQAU through the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) facilitates and oversee internal quality assurance activities at faculty-level through provision of funds and guidance.

Following the briefing by the Acting Director/IQAU, the PR Team met the Vice Chancellor of the University and the Dean of the Faculty of FoSSL. The Vice Chancellor emphasized the importance of quality culture in higher education institutes and his personal commitment towards quality enhancement, and explained the progressive measures taken by the university administration in fostering quality culture within the University. The Dean of the FoSSL elaborated the academic and administrative activities of the Faculty, and distributed a docket containing the information related to the quality assurance activities along with listing of all the documentary evidences available for the reviewers with the code numbers pertaining to quality standards listed under each of the 8 review criteria.

Following the meetings with the higher management, the PR team had discussions with the academic, administrative, technical, and academic support staff. At the meeting with academic staff, the Chairman of IQAC made a presentation which provided an overview of the Faculty and the processes and procedures internalized for fostering quality culture within the Faculty. The meeting with administrative staff was attended by the Registrar, Assistant Registrar (AR) of the Faculty, AR/Examination and Acting Bursar. They briefed the review team of the routine

management practices adopted at University and Faculty level. They highlighted efforts taken to enhance commitment and work performance through provision of training; induction training for new commers into administration and continuing professional development training programme for others. The AR of the Faculty explained the routine activities carried out by the Dean's office including student registration, scheduling time tables and maintaining student records confidentially while the AR/Examination explained the procedures followed in handling the examination matters. At the meeting with the technical and support staff, the review team discussed their contributions toward the teaching, training and providing support services for learning activities.

Finally, the review team had a lengthy and lively discussion with the students. The student group was indeed not a representative sample as the student were on vacation. Review team had the opportunity to meet a group of students representing all 4 years with more representation from 3rd and 4th years. In general, students expressed their satisfaction with academic programmes offered, with respect to both components - first year orientation programme and specialization component. Nevertheless, they felt that if they had an awareness programme prior to streaming into specialization components as it would have helped the students to make some informed choices on specialization and medium of instruction. Some of the students who are following their special degrees in Sinhala medium were disappointed about their selection of medium of instruction, as they would have been preferred to follow the degree in English medium. All of them appreciated the undergraduate symposium and the opportunities provided to them to acquire competencies in research, academic writing, and oral presentation, particularly the opportunity provided them to publish abstracts. Further, they elaborated the importance of Courses in Research Methodology and Academic Writing in improving competencies in research and communication. There are some evidences of practicing student-centred teaching and learning by some academics in delivering some courses across all specialization programmes. Further, the students are well aware of assessments tools and procedures, and they are satisfied with the fairness and accuracy of assessments at examinations. They also elaborated their involvement in social, cultural and sports events.

As the programme review was coincided with the vacation, the reviewers had no opportunity to observe the teaching and learning activities.

In addition, the review team had made visits to Staff Development Centre (SDC), Centre for Career Guidance (CCG), Library, IT Laboratories, and GIS and other geography teaching laboratories, and had obtained firsthand information on the resources available and functioning of respective facilities. The SDC provides induction course for academics once a year and also conducts such programmes for non-academic staff as and when required. The CCG conducts regular career guidance training programmes and facilitates internship placement for students. University library, located near the administration building has sufficient facilities but noted some degree of congestion as it caters for all faculties of the university. The ICT Laboratories are adequately equipped and functioned satisfactorily and well used by staff and students. The

GIS and other Geography laboratories are equipped with basic as well as with some essential advanced instruments. Review team observed there was only one differently-abled student in the faculty. Though there was no any special need resource unit, the PR team felt the need of such facility, even though the only one student is currently enrolled.

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

The University has established the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) in 2014 as per the guidelines issued by the UGC, and in the year 2015, a new set of Terms of Reference (TOR) was adopted by the IQAU. Furthermore, the University has taken steps to formulate internal quality assurance policy framework, strategies and activities. The university IQAU as the apex body of the internal quality assurance system of the university prepares annual activity calendar and budget after consulting the respective IQACs of faculties. The IQAU coordinates and conducts awareness and quality enhancement training programmes, both at university and faculty level. In 2017 the University had allocated Rs. 8,652,250.00 for quality assurance activities, and this confirms commitment of the University for quality enhancement.

Faculty level quality assurance activities are promoted and coordinated by IQAC of the Faculty. The IQAC is headed by a senior academic as its Coordinator. The IQAC is provided with adequate office space and furniture and office equipment. The review team has observed that the IQAC works in close liaison with to the IQAU and adheres strictly to the guideline issued by IQAU.

The review team is also pleased with the way the faculty staff members cooperate with the IQAC upon observing the documentary evidences that were exhibited in the documentation room. The subject of the quality assurance is included as a regular agenda item of the Faculty Board and the Senate. However, it was a disappointing to note the lack of proper maintenance of documents in the IQAC. Upon questioning, the review team was informed of the remedial measures taken to rectify the situation. Dedicated room for storing faculty documents is being arranged and this facility is expected to provide space for the IQAC to store its documents.

As evident from documents, student feedback on teaching have been obtained only for some courses for last three years and the review team strongly believe that this practice would be expanded to cover all courses in the future. However, the review team did not find any evidence to confirm the claim of conducting of peer evaluation of teachers. The review team strongly suggest the FoSSL commences this important component very soon possible, as it will be very useful, particularly for young academics to improve their competencies in teaching and training. As reported, internal reviews of some programmes were conducted in 2007 and 2013. The review team strongly recommends that internal review of all study programmes should be done at periodic interval as instructed in the programme review manual. The review team believe that the University in

general and the FoSSL in particular, have required mechanisms and procedures, and experience to do so in the future.

During the review process, the review team observed that the students are becoming more interested about the activities pursued under quality enhancement process. They were fully aware of the quality assurance procedures put in place by the UGC and the University, and their role, as an important stakeholder in participating in the process. Students appreciate very much of the value of such process. For example, they are very pleased with the opportunity given for requesting re-scrutiny of examination results, if required, and their role in assessing teachers, course contents and teaching and learning methods adopted. The review team wishes to emphasize the need of further educating students, and also introducing proper procedures on fallback and exit options.

The review team wishes to commend on some of the strategies activities adopted the Department of English Language Teaching to internalize very effective and practical learning methods. They conduct language camps and also adopt the policy of maintaining English speaking environment within the Faculty premises, through which students will be compelled to use the language, and hence may acquire much needed confidence to use English. Besides that, the Faculty has taken some other positive steps such as conducting Annual Research Sessions aiming to familiarize students with the research culture, establishment of Practical Training Unit (PTU) to facilitate students to seek information on future employment prospects, introducing research grants and reward system for excellence in research, *etc.*, to create conducive and rewarding teaching and learning experience for staff and students.

In general, the review teams' impression is that the Sabaragamuwa University in general, the FoSSL in particular, have taken progressive and commendable efforts in maintaining higher academic standards as instructed by the Internal Quality Assurance Manual (2013) of the UGC.

Section 5: Judgment on the Eight Criteria of Programme Review

The Chapter 3 of the SER stated that, as most of the corresponding best practices specified under 8 review criteria are common for all degree programmes, no attempt had been made to perform programme-wise assessment, except stating the programme-specific practices as and where appropriate. At the very outset, the review team sought clarifications on the above matter and the following information, given in Table 5.1, was provided in timely manner before the commencement of scrutiny of documentary evidences.

Table 5.1: Programme-Specific Standards

No	Criterion	Programme-Specific Standards
1	Programme Management	1.8, 1.10, 1.11, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15 & 1.19
2	Human and Physical Resources	2.2, 2.9 & 2.11
3	Programme Design and Development	3.3, 3.5, 3.9, 3.14, 3.19, 3.22, 3.23 & 3.24
4	Course/ Module Design and Development	4.4, 4.6, 4.9, 4.13 & 4.16
5	Teaching and Learning	5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 & 5.19
6	Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	6.5, 6.9, 6.10, 6.18 & 6.20
7	Student Assessment and Awards	-
8	Innovative and Healthy Practices	8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.8 & 8.12

Accordingly, for each of the five study programmes, the 156 standards to be reviewed under 8 criteria were divided into two types: 117 which are common for all study programmes and 39 which are degree programme-specific. When allocating marks 0, 1, 2 or 3, the review team carefully studied the claims made in the SER with respect to the degree of internalization of best practices and level of achievements of standards and then observed whether the documentary evidences made available to support the claims were appropriate and sufficient.

By taking into account a directive issued by Director of QAAC, all reviewers in the panel agreed not to consider the standard 3.24 for each study programme. Accordingly, calculation of criterion-wise score for Criterion 3 was done without considering the said standard. Table 5.2 illustrates the raw criterion-wise scores for each study programme based on the judgments made by the review team.

Table 5.2: Summary of the Raw Criterion-wise Scores for the Study programmes

No	Criterion	Raw criterion-wise score				
		Economics	Geography	Political Science	Sociology	Statistics
1	Programme Management	72/81	72/81	72/81	72/81	72/81
2	Human and Physical Resources	30/36	30/36	30/36	30/36	30/36

3	Programme Design and Development	49/69	49/69	49/69	49/69	49/69
4	Course/ Module Design and Development	46/57	46/57	46/57	46/57	46/57
5	Teaching and Learning	46/57	46/57	46/57	46/57	46/57
6	Learning environment, Student Support and Progression	56/72	56/72	56/72	56/72	56/72
7	Student Assessment and Awards	44/51	44/51	44/51	44/51	44/51
8	Innovative and Healthy Practices	24/42	24/42	24/42	24/42	24/42

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

5.1 Criterion 1: Programme Management

Strengths

- Establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell in 2015.
- Establishment of Curriculum Revision Committee and commencement of next cycle of curriculum revision and scheduling to finalize the new curricula for all 5 programmes before the end of 2018.
- Compilation and distribution of Student Handbook to all incoming students.
- Conducting orientation programme for all newly enrolled students.
- Obtaining student - feedback on course delivery since 2014 for at least some courses and depositing summary of feedback reports at the Dean's Office.
- Appointment of two student representatives to the Faculty Board
- Conducting monthly meetings by the Dean of the Faculty with student representatives of all study programmes.

- Establishment of Center for Gender Equality and Equality (CGEE), headed by a Director to ensure GEE and deter any form of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).
- Implementing measures to prevent ‘raging’ and harassment.
- Updating Faculty and Department websites on regular basis.
- Establishment of Psychological Counselling Centre (*Sitharana*) for addressing the psychological issues and grievances.

Weaknesses

- Absence of properly documented selection criteria for streaming students at the end of first-year programme into different Specialization Streams/Degree Programmes.
- Inadequate awareness among students on the criteria and method of streaming into specialization programmes.
- Insufficient detailing of graduating requirements in the Student Handbook.
- Absence of evidence to support the existence of monitoring of the implementation of Faculty’s Strategic plan by the Faculty Board or Senate or Council.
- Lack of grievance -redress mechanisms to address the issues of students and staff.

Recommendations

- Include a regular agenda item in the Faculty Board dedicated to discuss and review progress of implementation of Faculty’s Strategic Plan.
- Formulate and state clearly the selection criteria for specialization at the end of the first year of the programme and elaborate that information in the Student Handbook.
- Formulate programme evaluation and graduation criteria clearly and include the same in the Student Handbook.
- Introduce a suitable orientation session at the end of the first year enabling the students to make well informed decision on choice for specialization and preferred medium of instruction.
- Introduce suitable grievance-redress mechanisms for students and staff.

5.2 Criterion 2: Human and Physical Resources

Strengths

- Induction programme conducted by SDC for all probationary lecturers as per UGC guidelines.
- Well-resourced student learning resources – library, computer laboratories and teaching laboratories including GIS laboratory with basic and advanced instruments.
- Availability of facilities for social, sports, creational and cultural activities.
- Availability of in-campus residential facilities

Weaknesses

- Inadequate number of academic staff members for most study programmes.
- Inadequate use of library resources by the staff and students.
- Inadequate use of ICT platform to facilitate teaching and learning.

Recommendations

- Provide training to academic staff on the application of SLQF guidelines and outcome-based education and student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) concept and approach in programme design and development, and delivery.
- Encourage the staff and students to use the facilities and resources available at library, ICT facilities, and other learning resource centers for academic pursuits.
- Perform critical assessment of availability of human and physical resources before introducing any new academic programmes in the future

5.3 Criterion 3: Programme Design and Development

Strengths

- Properly constructed graduate profile which seek to produce scholars, innovators, leaders and global Citizens
- Establishment of a Curriculum Revision Committee at Faculty level.
- Inclusion of core courses on English Language (CEL), Information Technology (CIT), and General Subjects (CGS) in the curricula of all study programmes
- Inclusion of grades of CEL, CIT and CGS courses as credit courses.
- Inclusion of the option for students to select student research project or practical training component during final year of the programme.
- Course structure for Honours Degree Programmes is logically designed and is clearly described in the Student Handbook.

Weaknesses

- Lack of full compliance with guidelines stipulated by the SLQF
- Failure to OBE_SCL concept and approach in designing the study programme and course curricula.
- Low number of students opting for undergraduate research component compared to that of practical training.
- Lack of clarity on how the Research Project is compared with the Practical Training in terms of SLQF guidelines and requirements.

- Absence of adequate tracer studies conducted on regular basis across all study programmes to collect and record information about employability of graduates and their destinations after graduation.

Recommendations

- Adopt SLQF guidelines and OBE-SCL concept and approach in the next cycle of curriculum revision.
- Motivate special degree students who would intend to be scholars, as per graduate profile, to opt for the Research Project in their final year instead of Practical Training.
- Amend the intended learning outcomes of Student Research Project and Practical Training in line with SLQF requirements of Level 6.

5.4 Criterion 4: Course/ Module Design and Development

Strengths

- IQAU/IQAC review of course design and development, and course approval processes.
- Availability of course specifications for the courses of all study programmes and provision relevant information on courses in the Student Handbook.
- Provision of study guides for all courses with required information - ILOs, course contents, lesson plans, teaching and training methods, assessment strategies and supplementary readings.
- Efforts taken to complete the study programmes within the intended period of time by having appropriate programme curricula layout, course curricula and time table setting.

Weaknesses

- Failure to integrate outcome based-education approach and student-centered learning strategies into the design and development of course curricula.
- Failure to adopt SLQF guidelines in detailing course specification – only the total teaching time is given without indicating the breakdown for different types of teaching and learning and assessment methods such as direct contact hours, self-learning time, assignments, and assessments, etc.

Recommendations

- Adopt SLQF guidelines and OBE-SCL concept and approach in designing the course curricula and specifications during the next cycle of curriculum revision.

5.5 Criterion 5: Teaching and Learning

Strengths

- Availability of Student Handbook which provides course specifications and timetables and making them available the Student Handbook to students at the time of entry into the study programmes and time tables before the commencement of each academic year.
- Obtaining student feedback on the relevance and quality, and effectiveness of teaching and course contents and using the information from such feedback for further improvement courses and teaching and learning methods.
- Provision of guided training during student research project with a dissertation or practical training that carries 6 credits.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate use by academics of blended learning to maximize student engagement with the teaching and learning.
- Inadequate adoption of outcome based-education and student-centered learning strategies and tools to promote students' engagement in learning.
- Absence of an insertional process for conducting peer observation of teaching at regular intervals.

Recommendations

- Adopt student-centered teaching and learning strategies and techniques to promote students' engagement in self-directed learning and collaborative learning which will foster creative and critical thinking, interpersonal communication, teamwork, etc.
- Encourage faculty members to use blended learning, including the use of ICT platform (i.e. LMS), and maximize student engagement in learning.
- Streamline the process of obtaining feedback from students and expand the coverage to include all courses.
- Establish an insertional process for conducting peer observation of teaching.
- Develop a set of indicators of excellence in teaching and research to evaluate performance of faculty members and commence performance appraisal and reward system for excellence in teaching and research.

5.6 Criterion 6: Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression

Strengths

- Mandatory structured orientation programme to facilitate smooth transition from ‘high school’ to university environment and provide guidance required to commence their academic pursuits.
- Once a month meeting by the Dean of the Faculty with student representatives of all study programmes.
- Students and staff participation in social, cultural and aesthetic pursuits: Art festival (*Girihisin Uda-Sanda*) and films Screening and discussions organized by the Film Society.
- Publication of magazines, “*Chamthkara*” and “*Bihidora*” by students with the guidance and contribution of staff.
- High learner satisfaction on learning experience, environment and student support services.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate use of library and ICT platform by academics and students for teaching and learning activities.
- Absence of fallback and exist option for the students who wish to go out with a general degree and for those who fail to complete the degree programmes successfully.

Recommendations

- Encourage academics to utilize fully the library and ICT facilities for teaching and training.
- Staff training on OBE-SCL techniques and tools, teaching and training, and assessment methods.
- Introduce suitable fall back and exist options for students who wish to go out with a general degree and for those who fail to complete the degree programmes successfully.

5.7 Criterion 7: Student Assessment and Awards

Strengths

- Providing weightage for different components of assessments with respect to each course unit.
- Providing additional time at the examination on the request of differently-abled students.

Weaknesses

- Graduation requirements are not stated clearly in the Student Handbook.
- Absence of documented policy, regulations and procedures in appointing external examiners and clear instructions as regard to their role and responsibilities.
- Absence of evidence to support the full compliance with SLQF guidelines for the degrees awarded under the study programmes reviewed; except in volume of learning and naming of qualifications, the Qualification Descriptors and Level Descriptor requirements have not been complied with.

Recommendations

- Adopt and comply fully with SLQF guidelines in designing study programme and course curricular at the next curriculum review.

5.8 Criterion.8: Innovative and Healthy Practices

Strengths

- Availability of ICT platform with appropriate applications (eg.LMS) with a server having capacity to cater to the entire student group.
- Inclusion of the option of student research project or practical training in an outside organization worth of 6 credits.

Weaknesses

- Moderate use of ICT platform and its applications (such as LMS facilities) and ICT based techniques and tools for teaching and learning activities.
- Absence of evidence of using Open Educational Resources (OER) to supplement teaching and learning.
- Low research output and absence of institutional research agenda developed in alignment with national research and development priorities.
- Inadequate involvement in postgraduate studies and training of postgraduate research students.
- Absence of a reward system to encourage academics for achieving excellence in research and outreach activities.
- Inadequate linkages and interaction with international, national, governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- Failure to workout inter-faculty and inter-university credit transfer policy and programmes.

Recommendations

- Encourage staff to adopt blended teaching – use of both conventional face-to-face teaching and student-centered teaching and learning blended with the ICT -based teaching and learning techniques and tools.
- Encourage academic staff to use OERs to supplement teaching and learning.
- Encourage academic staff to seek funding from national and international funding agencies for research and development efforts.
- Promote postgraduate study programme and postgraduate research student training.
- Encourage academic staff to establish links with relevant international, national, governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- Take measures to workout inter-faculty and inter-university credit transfer policy and programmes.

Section 6: Grading of overall performances of the programme

The grading of overall performance of each the study Programmes was conducted as prescribed in Chapter 3 of PR Manual, and the results are in the Table below.

No.	Criteria	Weighted Minimum Score	Actual Criterion-wise Score				
			Economics	Geography	Political	Sociology	Statistics
1	Programme Management	75	133	133	133	133	133
2	Human and Physical Resources	50	83	83	83	83	83
3	Programme Design and Development	75	107	107	107	107	107
4	Course/ Module Design and Development	75	121	121	121	121	121
5	Teaching and Learning	75	121	121	121	121	121
6	Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression	50	78	78	78	78	78

7	Student Assessment and Awards	75	129	129	129	129	129
8	Innovative and Healthy Practices	25	29	29	29	29	29
Total on a thousand scale			801	801	801	801	801
Total score as a %			80.1%	80.1%	80.1%	80.1%	80.1%
Grade			A	A	A	A	A
Performance Descriptor			Very Good				
Interpretation of Descriptor			High level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; should move towards excellence.				

Section 7: Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

- Arrangements made for the programme review process by the Faculty and internal quality assurance team - preparation of SER in accordance with PR Manual along with all required documents and evidences.
- Provision of comprehensive docketts containing all relevant information for programme review.
- Strong commitment of the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of Departments and Internal Quality Assurance team in fostering quality culture within the Faculty and its programmes.
- Commitment of the Faculty administration and staff to promote quality culture within the faculty and efforts taken to internalize best practices prescribed by the PR Manual.
- Excellent facilities for teaching and learning with further efforts to improve and expand the facilities.
- Inclusion of core courses on English Language, ICT and General subjects and making them compulsory credit courses.
- Adoption of student-centered learning approach for English language teaching such as conducting 'English Training Camps' and compulsory use of English within the faculty premises.
- Provision of information to students about the academic programmes, learning resources and learner support system through Student Handbook and Orientation Programme at the time of their registration into the academic programmes.
- Student friendly environment and meticulous upkeeping of facilities.

- Monthly meetings between the Dean of the Faculty and students' representatives.
- Strong administrative stand and deterrent measures taken against ragging and any other forms of harassment.

Recommendations

- Adopt the SLQF guidelines and outcome-based education and student-centered learning (OBE-SCL) concept and approach in future curricula revisions.
- Continue with the efforts in adopting and internalizing all best practices prescribed in the PR Manual in all spheres of the faculty activities.
- Update the Student Hanbok with inclusion of criteria and method of selection for specialization and also the requirements for graduation as the current version does not provide sufficient details on these aspects.
- Introduce an awareness session/orientation programme at the end of the first year programme, enabling the students to make informed choices on the special degree programme and medium of instruction.
- Encourage all academic staff members to use ICT platform and its applications (i.e. LMS and other tools) in programme delivery and provision of learner support services.
- Guide the special degree students to make an informed choice between student research project and practical training component, depending on the career pathways they wish to pursue upon graduation.
- Revise course specification of student research project and practical training component in line with SLQF guidelines.
- Consider introducing fallback and exist options for the students who wish to go out with a general degree and for those who fail to complete the study programmes successfully.
- Critically assess resource needs, existing capacity and facilities before introducing new academic programmes.
- Avoid scheduling external quality assurance reviews when students are on vacation as observation on teaching and learning and interaction with representative samples of students and staff would help the review team to obtain wholesome impression and make evidence-based and well-informed review judgements.
- Establish suitable grievance-redress mechanisms to address the issues and grievances that may confront students and staff.

Section 8: Summary

The FoSSL of Sabaragamuwa located in Belihuloya provides an excellent environment conducive for academic pursuits, scholarly work, socio cultural activities, innovative thinking and research. Further, it is blessed with a large number of trained, committed academic staff. The review team noted that the University uses an inclusive and participatory approach in fulfilling its obligations and in decision making process.

The University has established an IQAU at the University level and IQAC at faculty level in the recent past. The University is yet to formulate internal quality assurance policy framework, strategies and an activity plan to support QA activities of the University in all aspects. In this regard, the FoSSL has demonstrated a keen interest in institutionalizing quality culture within its all spheres of academic, research and outreach pursuits.

The institutional arrangements required for improving governance and management of the University and Faculties have been put in place by appointing standing committees with clear TORs, and through these committees, efforts are being taken to develop manual of procedures including guidelines, by laws and regulations for important administrative and academic procedures, and job descriptions for nonacademic and administrative staff. These efforts would certainly be strengthened by establishing a comprehensive MISs to facilitate information gathering, monitoring, analysis and decision-making processes.

Though the policy and procedure for curriculum development and planning have been put in place, it needs to be further expanded to include mechanisms for periodic review and revision. Furthermore, the planned curricula revision must be performed by adopting SLQF guidelines and OBE-SCL concept and approach while taking into consideration of inputs from relevant stakeholders obtained through feedback assessments and tracer studies – graduate satisfaction surveys, employability studies and employer satisfaction surveys, etc., subject respective benchmark statements, and professional and international standards. Moreover, the course curricula must be prepared in such a way to align course and lesson contents, teaching learning methods and assessments with the intended learning outcomes of courses and also to internalize student-centered learning approach. Further, the ongoing efforts to promote adoption of SCL should further be strengthened through staff training and motoring, acquisition of teaching learning aids and resources.

The learner resource base and student support services put in place are adequate, and nevertheless, it could be further improved by expanding the services offered by the Career Guidance Unit by expanding its career counselling service and training programmes on ‘soft skills’.

Though the Faculty is blessed with a qualified academic staff, the research output and outreach activities including ‘industry engagement’ are somewhat below the desired level and potential. Further, the Faculty does not appear to have a research agenda developed in line with the national research and development priorities. Absence of a noticeable postgraduate training programme at Faculty level may be one of the contributory factors for low research output. Addressing these shortcomings may certainly be a proactive step that could be taken to promote academics to get involved with research and thereby become partners of national research and development drive and to promote the image of the FoSSL.

In conclusion, the five-degree programs offered by the FOSSL have shown high degree of compliance with best practices prescribed and achieved adequate or good scores for most of the standards listed under 8 quality criteria, and based on the overall performance score of 80%, it is recommended to award the Grade of “A” for BA Honours Degree Programmes in Economics, Geography, Sociology, Political Science, Sociology and Statistics which is interpreted as “*high level of performance of quality expected of a programme of study; should move towards excellence*”.

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