

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**



**FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO**

28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> January 2009

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## 1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

Subject review process evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. It is focused on the student learning experience and on student achievement. It is designed to evaluate the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However, the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the institution itself, since it alone has the power to control and to change existing practices.

Review process was conducted according to the guidelines given in the Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The Department of Economics, University of Colombo submitted a self evaluation report consisting of twelve sections, namely: aims, learning outcomes and programme details; staff, students, and facilities; curriculum design, content and review; teaching, learning and assessment methods; student admission, progress and achievements; the extent and use of student feedback; postgraduate studies; peer observation; skills development; academic guidance and counseling; outreach activities, and areas for improvements. The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the self evaluation report.

The following eight aspects of education were reviewed at the subject level:

1. Curriculum design, content and review.
2. Teaching learning and assessment methods.
3. Quality of students including student progress and achievements.
4. Extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative.
5. Postgraduate studies.
6. Peer observations.
7. Skills development.
8. Academic guidance and counseling.

The review team visited the department from 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2009.

The evaluation of eight aspects was based on:

- Subject review report submitted to the QAA by the Department
- Meetings held with the Vice Chancellor, Dean, Head of Department, academic staff including two professors, IDC director, technical and supportive staff, senior assistant librarian of the faculty library, senior student counselors, undergraduate and postgraduate students, technical staff of the faculty computer center, coordinators of postgraduate programmes and the counselors of the department.
- Observation of physical facilities of the department, class rooms, two computer centers of the faculty and the department, and the department's library.
- Observation of teaching classes of undergraduates and students' presentations.
- Reviewing available documents at the department.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good / satisfactory / unsatisfactory, based on strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each. Considering the judgment of the eight aspects, an overall judgment was given as confidence / limited confidence / no confidence.

## **2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND THE DEPARTMENT**

The history of the University of Colombo dates back to the very beginning of higher education in Sri Lanka: the establishment of the Ceylon Medical School in 1870, later upgraded in 1880 to the status of a College. As a result the stark outlines of modernistic structures rise side by side with the graceful contours of colonial style buildings, reflective of the University's dynamic progressive outlook and its rich traditions. As a metropolitan university, it gains its strengths from, and contributes to the characteristic activities of Colombo: government, international relations, the private sector, finance, commerce, the arts and communication.

### ***Vision of the University***

To be a centre of excellence of regional and international repute, that will create new knowledge and sustain a culture of learning and critical inquiry, and foster a spirit of service and commitment to national development and democratic values in a plural society.

### ***Mission of the University***

To be a centre of excellence in teaching and research, with commitment to producing men and women of high ethical standards and social responsibility who are capable of creative, analytical and independent thinking, and to facilitate the creation of and dissemination of knowledge, and contribute to national development through partnerships between staff, students and relevant sectors of society.

Presently, the University consists of the Faculties of Arts, Education, Performing Arts and Mass Media, Graduate Studies, Law, Management Studies, Medicine, and Science, catering to the needs of over 7000 undergraduates (of whom 58.7 per cent are females).

The Faculty of Arts, with 3254 students in 2008, is the largest faculty in the University of Colombo in terms of student enrolment. The Faculty has eight academic Departments: Demography, Economics, English, Geography, History and International Relations, Political Science, Sinhala and Sociology, and six teaching Units: the English Language Teaching (ELT) Unit, the Journalism (JNL) Unit, the Mathematics Unit, the Computer Unit, the Islamic Unit and the Pali and Buddhist Studies (BST) Unit. The faculty offers courses in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences. Apart from undergraduate BA courses, several Departments offer Diploma, Masters and Ph.D. programmes. Many students, who successfully complete their Special BA degrees, eventually register for postgraduate degree programs offered by the Faculty.

The Department of Economics (DoE) established in 1960 is the largest Department within the Faculty of Arts in terms of both staff and students, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. During the past 20 years, the DoE has shown rapid progress in terms of staff development, student enrolment, curriculum development, improvements in library and computer facilities, international links, research and postgraduate education. This was achieved as a result of strong leadership, team spirit, commitment and hard work on the part of the staff of the DoE. The resources for much of these developments were provided by a ten-year collaborative project that the DoE initiated in 1987 with the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands (UC-ISS Project) with the objectives of staff development and initiating postgraduate education in Economics.

The DoE is one of the oldest and highly ranked departments in the Faculty of Arts with over 1000 undergraduates - including students who take Economics as one of the three subjects in the General Arts degree, take an economics course as a foundation (FND) course and those who take the Special Arts degree in Economics. In addition, two new undergraduate programs- Financial Economics and Quantitative Economics- are scheduled to commence in the near future.

### 3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Shifting to the course unit system from traditional end of the year examination system of the DoE had a number of objectives:

- **Widening the scope of the degree programme:** allowing students to follow a greater variety of subjects. In particular for special students, since students who previously followed one special subject and possibly one subsidiary subject during their degree program, now had the opportunity of following courses from other disciplines
- **Greater choice** of papers even within a given department
- Revising course units to be **more empirically based and skill oriented** in line with generating greater employment opportunities
- Smaller classes allowing for **more innovative teaching practices**
- **Greater flexibility** in terms of course load in different years and semesters
- **Multi-disciplinary courses:** In particular foundation and elective courses were now offered that were multi-disciplinary in nature.
- **Continuous assessment system:** all courses had a significant continuous assessment mark built into the final marks

Table 1: DoE Subjects in the special degree prior to the reform

2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	4 <sup>th</sup> Year
Microeconomics	Applied Economics	Project Appraisal
Macroeconomics	Development Economics	Planning
Statistics	International Economics	Industrial Economics
Mathematical Economics	Economic Thought	
Economic History	Public Finance	Elective I
Money and Banking	Econometrics	Elective II

Two electives were allowed in the final year depending on student's choice of stream: for example Econometrics (Time Series and Cross sectional), Monetary Economics, Agricultural Economics, and Health Economics etc.

In addition to the subjects listed above many other subjects were offered under the course unit system. In some cases this was merely the result of splitting existing course into two components material wise: International Economics was now offered as International Trade and International Finance. However when done intelligently this allowed for greater course coverage. In others new subjects were introduced into the degree program, often stemming from the research and teaching interests of the staff involved: Environmental Economics, Tourism Economics, and Game Theory.

The course unit system also applied to the General Arts degree: and in the case of Economics, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year courses that had been limited to Microeconomics, Macroeconomics,

Applied Economics and Statistics under the old system were now replaced by a wide range of economics related subjects, some involving career related material such as tourism and small businesses, with Microeconomics and Macroeconomics being made compulsory for general students only from 2008.

The shift to the course unit system also saw the DoE involved in teaching in a large number of foundation and elective courses. In some cases these courses were conducted by staff members of the DoE only and in other cases they combined with other faculty members to provide multi-disciplinary courses. Given that Economic behavior is a fundamental part of social behavior economics components were of importance in many subjects ranging from business studies to gender.

In 2001, the Department of Economics at this point moved away from the traditional teaching system of local universities, by taking the decision to strengthen the capacity of its Special degree students in line with the existing demand patterns in the job market, through creating specialized streams within its special degree programme instead of continuing with a single programme. Thus four study streams, namely Banking and Finance, Economic Theory and Applications, Trade and Industry and Economic Policy and Management were introduced with all the students in the Special degree programme being assigned to one of these streams after their second year, which has a common curriculum. The Finance and Banking Stream was developed and implemented with strong private sector input drawing on former undergraduate and Masters' degree students currently holding high positions in private sector banking and insurance organizations. Among the subjects offered are Practice of Banking, Insurance and Central Banking with a view to equipping students for careers in banking and finance institutions. The Economic Theory and Applications Stream focuses strongly on the teaching of Econometrics. It also involves a range of subjects such as International Trade, Environmental Economics and Public Finance that are based heavily on Applied Economic Theory. These students fit in well in Research Organizations as well as into the Research Divisions of private and government sector organizations. The Trade and Industry Stream incorporates courses such as International Trade, International Finance, Industrial Economics and Environmental Economics as well as courses on Labour Economics and Industrial and Labour Law with a view to creating graduates equipped with a theoretical and practical knowledge of the world of business capable of contributing to corporate decision making. The Economic Policy and Management Stream focuses on policy development and management issues, with a strong emphasis on sectors such as health, education and tourism. Graduates from this stream are likely to be sought after by service sector organizations and NGOs, since such courses are not commonly available within local universities.

The Internship programme for Economics students is an integral part of the Special Degree in Economics. The internship placements are with private enterprise, government agencies, policy making institutions, research institutions and non-governmental organizations in order to provide internship opportunities for all special degree Economics students for a period of 3 months during their final year. During this period they are assigned two supervisors, an institutional supervisor who is a senior official in the organization where the internship is being offered and a departmental supervisor, a senior staff member of the Department of Economics.

Under the Internship programme, students are required to work 4 days a week at the organization, carrying out the tasks assigned to them, which are integral to the daily activities of this organization. The performance of each student at the work place is evaluated by the

institutional supervisor. In some instances the students also opt to do their research report unit also in relation to their internship placement. In such instances the departmental supervisor also acts as the student's research report supervisor.

The Internship Programme is of importance in terms of providing an opportunity for students to gain exposure to the world of work, to develop their soft skills and attitudes, and to make use of their Economics knowledge in carrying out work-related activities. In the past a number of students have gone on to secure employment in the same organizations after graduation.

## **4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM**

### **4.1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review**

Continuous curriculum reforms have played a major role in improving quality and relevance of undergraduate studies at the Department of Economics. Curriculum revisions were aimed at resolving problems and weaknesses identified in undergraduate programs over time. Decisions regarding curriculum changes are taken sometimes at departmental meetings, often based on reports from departmental sub-committees appointed to look into specific subject clusters. Curriculum reviews have been undertaken in the recent past every academic year prior to the beginning of the first semester.

The Department offers special degree in four major areas, namely Banking & Finance, Economic Theory and Applications, Trade and Industry and Economic Policy and Management. It also offers courses to the general degree of the faculty. The last curriculum revision was introduced in 2007/08 with the support of various stakeholders. Generally students are happy with the way that the curriculum of the Department has been designed. The team has noted that the contents of each course are adequately covered and the learning outcomes of each course are included in course outlines. In order to qualify for the award of the degree a student has to earn a total number of 126 credits for the special degree and 96 credits for the general degree. Research paper, three months internship with close supervision of the staff members, number of optional courses available to students, and teaching of the program in Sinhala, Tamil and English can be considered as the positive aspects of the curriculum design of the Department.

However, the team has noted that the module learning outcomes have not been developed relating to the overall learning outcomes of the degree programs. Absence of overall learning outcomes of the degree programs is a major weakness of the Department. Though curriculum revisions are discussed at the department and faculty levels there is no formal curriculum review meeting established at the Faculty level. (see section 7.0 for recommendations)

*In relation to the curriculum design, content and review the judgment of the team is "satisfactory"*

### **4.2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods.**

The Department has well qualified and experienced teaching staff including three professors and lectures are conducted by these senior academic staff of the department using examples

and metaphors to explain theories. The non academic staff supports the academic administration of the department to make teaching and learning environment efficiently conducive. The department of economics now is strong with many teaching and learning facilities. The department of economics has provided personal computers for all the staff members with internet facilities. White boards, Multimedia, etc. facilities are available in many lecture-rooms of the department. The review team observed that the facilities are being used by the majority of teachers. Handouts and reading materials are provided in advance or at least at the beginning of each session. As indicated by students as well as staff members, interactive teaching methods are now becoming popular. This was evidenced by the review team during the observation of teaching sessions and students' evaluations. The team is pleased with the friendly teaching and learning environment maintained in class rooms by the teachers.

The department has a separate library with a collection of about 5000 books and 10 reputed Journals for special degree students as well as post graduate students. The main library has about 10,000 books in both reference and lending sections and some journals in Economics and number of E-journals. Computer labs comprise about 90 desktop computers for students' use. Current state of the software availability at the department computer lab is fairly satisfactory. All the software required for social researchers are available. Students can learn word processing (MS Word), data tabulations and graphs (Excel), presentations (Power point) and advanced statistical analysis (SPSS, Minitab, Eviews etc.) from this lab.

According to the By-Laws of the Faculty of Arts, an undergraduate course of three credits should consist of 45 teaching hours including 30 hours of lectures and 15 hours of tutorials/discussions. Interactive teaching with pre-distributed teaching materials and recommended readings and self-learning assignments are also recommended. Short student presentations and preparation prior to lectures (often involving web searches) are demanded by students in some courses.

The department is currently moving to a *student centered* teaching learning method from a *teacher centered* method. However, activity based teaching and promotion of self learning are becoming popular. The DoE categorized all the subjects as theoretical, technical, policy related, empirical/historical and professional and predominant teaching approaches used are teacher centered, student centered or both. The activity based teaching methods are used mainly in quantitative and professional subjects on an experimental basis. For example, in econometrics course units' students are given introductory lessons in the classroom and followed by specially designed practical sessions in which students are required to use real world data sets with computer software to practice their knowledge and improve the skills.

Certain course units, mainly in the policy related and professional courses such as Agricultural Economics and Rural Economy use field visits. There are two types of field visits in this context; *group-visits* and *individual student visits*. Under group-visits, all the students go together with their teacher/s to visit interesting cases and produce group reports. The individual student-visits and case study reports have been adopted in courses such as industrial economics, economics of education and poverty analysis. Given these differences in target group and subject orientation, teaching, learning and assessment methods keep flexible, with a great degree of autonomy given to those teaching the courses.

The Department of Economics expects greater preparation and commitment from students through activities such as demanding web searches, translation of articles into Sinhala/Tamil,



group work etc. Given the current continuous assessment system students are expected to do quite a sizeable amount of work in the form of self-study, as in the case of assignments that involve field research (mainly related to policy oriented courses), model formulation (Econometrics courses for example) and at the minimum the consultation of material beyond their own notes. All the senior staff of the DoE volunteered to conduct tutorial classes for first year students and both general and special students.

Lectures are conducted in all three mediums of Sinhala, Tamil and English. Sinhala medium students are provided with handouts in English and explained in Sinhala by most lectures. The DoE plans for gradual transition from all three media to one medium of English. The review team observed that the students are highly motivated and enthusiastic.

The assessment system of the DoE follows a common format which is compatible with the assessment system of the faculty. According to the existing evaluation method, students are evaluated at two levels: a final exam and continues assessments. Present system allocates 60 percent for the final exam and 40 percent for continues assessments. At a recent review of the FoA it was prescribed that 10% of marks be assigned for class participation (or attendance in the case of large classes). This was already being practiced by some lecturers of the DoE.

Final exam is a formal examination of two hours length with some exceptions and students have a choice of questions. In general, out of 7-8 questions, students are required to answer 4 questions. Final exams are conducted by the exams branch of the university in a fixed time period. All question papers are moderated while the special degree answer scripts are evaluated by two examiners to enhance the quality and transferability. However, preparation of a marking scheme is not in practice. Final year dissertations are marked by two examiners. A Common format is given to all examiners to maintain the consistency among evaluators.

Continues assessments are done by the teachers with their own arrangements with students. There is no unique form for continues assessments. There is reasonable freedom for teachers to decide evaluation systems and marks allocation. Continuous assessments are included traditional classroom examinations; take home assignments, group assignments, field visits, literature reviews and seminar presentations. In addition to the mid-term tests and final examinations, the Department of Economics provides internship training for undergraduate students in their final year. This training is weighted as one course unit (3 credits). All the students are given two supervisors, a university supervisor and an institutional supervisor. Performance in this training are evaluated at two levels; performance during training (by Institutional supervisor), and on the research report which may be related to the activities of the institution at which the internship is taking place (with supervision by departmental senior staff). The DoE is now carrying out an awareness campaign among its own staff about the designing and marking of take home and group assignments as significant variations do exist between the distributions of marks in different departments/within departments.

***In relation to the teaching, learning and assessment methods the judgment of the team is 'Good'***

#### **4.3 Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements**

Students are enrolled by the UGC following its' usual admission procedures and policies. However it seems that the Faculty of Arts, students with higher Z scores and most of who are from reputed national schools. Although the DoE allows first year students who have not sat

for Economics as a subject for their G.C.E.(A/L) to follow Economics, the majority of students are qualified in economics at the G.C.E (A/L). Accordingly the quality of students of the DoE at the entry point is satisfactorily high. The Department of Economics having noted the declining trend in first year and general student numbers took remedial action in 2007/2008 to attract more students to its discipline. The approach has been to instill among first year students the view that lack of prior knowledge in Economics will not handicap them in studying Economics. This was done through curriculum reforms to adapt the courses to cater to students with no Economics at their A/Ls. The Elementary Microeconomics course was formulated to address both goods and factor markets from a demand, supply, cost and market structure approach, drawing heavily on empirical examples, with greater emphasis on understanding concepts and use of graphics, than on equations. In Elementary Macroeconomics, focusing mechanically on the Keynesian cross and IS-LM frameworks was replaced with in-depth analysis on economic problems besetting Sri Lanka such as low growth, inflation, unemployment and balance of payments deficits, with the emphasis on definition of related concepts, measurement, causes and possible solutions to the problems. A streamlined program of tutorials for first year students, now being continued for second year general and special students has also been positively received by the student. The impact of these measures on Economic student percentages during the first year and now in the general second year has been noteworthy.

Economics Special degree selection criteria is very competitive i.e. students should obtain high marks for Micro Economics, macro Economics and Foundation Mathematics at first year examination. This also reflects that the students who follow special degree programme is sound with the theoretical knowledge and mathematical background that are essential for a modern economist.

Students' Progress in each year is monitored by tutorials, mid semester examinations, open book assessment, term papers, presentations, special assignments and end semester examinations. Project works are also monitored and assessed by the supervisor, the other members of the department through oral presentations relevant to the project.

The pass rate of the general students who are doing economics as a subject is recorded as 94% in 2003 , 93% in 2004, 94% in 2005 and 88% in 2006 indicating high performance. As far as special degree students concerned, 70% of students have obtained awards over the last five years. It is noteworthy to mention that the dropout rate is negligible.

The UoC offers a memorial award for the best student who performed well in the Economic Special Degree Programme each year. Also the Professor of Economics Gold Medal is awarded each year by the DoE. Furthermore the graduates who passed out with First or Second Class (Upper Division) are given opportunity to serve as Temporary Assistant Lecturers for one year in the department to appreciate and ensure high quality.

South Asian Economic Meetings pave the way for students to have a very effective exposure and to disseminate their knowledge. Further Undergraduate Research Forum is functioning well and gives opportunity to publish their research output.

The waiting time for a job is said to be very short as internship programme supports to find a job quickly. Most of the economics graduates are employment in government and private sectors, especially in the Central Bank, state and private banks, other financial institutions, NGOs, SLAS, and other private and public institutions. The DoE believes that their average salary varies from 15000 – 50000 rupees per month.

It was evident that many of the students produced by the DoE have registered for the postgraduate studies at various universities in Sri Lanka. The study team observed that students are very forward and expressing their ideas clearly.

*In relation to the Quality of students, including student progress and achievement the judgment of the team is ‘Good’.*

#### **4.4. Extent and use of Student Feedback**

The review team observed that both quantitative and qualitative feedback information on teaching and learning of students are obtained from students. A structured questionnaire is served for each student at the end of each lecture and information collected through questionnaires are processed at the Faculty level and results are informed to the lectures in the Department. Additionally lecturers collect informal information about their teaching and learning environment through student meetings and discussions. Students in all the years believe that the feedback mechanism established at the Faculty level is very useful and satisfactory. Feedback results indicate that the teaching, contents of teaching and methods of assessments are acceptable to students.

*In relation to the extent and use of student feedback the judgment of the team is ‘Good’.*

#### **4.5. Postgraduate Studies**

Three types of postgraduate registration are available in the university i.e. through Examination Branch, Faculty of Postgraduate Studies and at the Department of Economics, University of Colombo. The Department of Economics strives to promote high quality education, training and research in Economics through its postgraduate and extension courses. The DoE started its postgraduate level programs in 1984 with the Postgraduate Diploma in Economic Development (DED). The UC-ISS project (1987-2000) was pivotal in developing postgraduate studies in the Department of Economics. The assistance provided by the Dutch government through the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), in the Hague in the form of assistance with curriculum development, provision of foreign academics to conduct courses in the initial period, short term staff visits to the Netherlands, the computer laboratory, the setting up of the departmental library, and in particular the support in developing staff capacity through the provision of scholarships for MPhil and PhD played a major role in the development of postgraduate courses at the Department of Economics. The DED programme was followed by the initiation of the Masters in Economics programme, later transformed into the MEcon program involving a second year of research, the introduction of the MPhil/PhD programme, and the Masters in Financial Economics (MAFE). In addition to postgraduate level programs, the department has introduced two certificate courses in Tourism Management (in 2005) and Micro Finance (in 2008).

Course guidelines of all the Programmes are well developed and courses are conducted in English medium. The selection criteria of the programmes are sound; however, very strict procedure is adopted in reading for M.Phil/PhD so that a few (06) is completed. Enrolments were done through entrance examination and an interview. The completion rate is also reasonable. The completion time for M.Phil and PhD degrees is generally two years and four years respectively. Majority of the postgraduate students are either with first class or for their bachelor's degree or Masters holders. Research students are assigned a supervisor(s) after

the approval of the proposal. In general, supervisors are from the department but for specific cases supervisors may be appointed from other universities or research institutes.

Sufficient revenue generated by the department through postgraduate and extension programmes and a certain amount of this income is spent to develop the departmental facilities and remuneration for the library staff. This reflects that the department is in a position of self sustaining.

Almost all the academic staff members are involved in postgraduate teaching, supervision and coordination. Most of the lecturers are affiliated to various local and international associations and professional bodies such as Sri Lanka Economics Association.

An adequate number of qualified academic staff members are available at the department for the supervision. At present the DoE consists of 23 permanent academic staff with 3 Professors, 11 other PhD holders and 8 Masters Degree holders. Most staff members in the department have obtained foreign training at postgraduate level, with the PhD holders having received their qualifications from universities in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Australia and France. Most of the staff members have contributed to research publications in local and international journals, paper presentations at international conferences, textbooks and other reading materials for local readership. It is noteworthy to mention that many publications are done jointly reflecting the informal practice of peer observation.

Department library maintains a good collection of textbooks and other reading materials which helpful for research students. Computer laboratory of the department is extremely useful for the postgraduate students.

***In relation to the postgraduate studies the judgment of the team is ‘Good’.***

#### **4.6. Peer Observations**

The review team noted that most of the senior lecturers guide their junior staff in teaching, paper setting and other activities in the teaching and learning environment in a friendly manner. Additionally regular department meetings are also used to discuss matters in the teaching and learning environment. However, there is no formal peer evaluation system established in the department to assess the work of peers.

***In relation to the peer observation the judgment of the team is “Satisfactory”.***

#### **4.7. Skills Development**

Generally the Department has taken adequate initiatives to develop skills and competencies of students in the following areas.

- Critical thinking by way of practical work, internship and research paper and student learning in real world situations
- Language skills, communication skills, teamwork, leadership and organization of work
- Problem solving, analytical and presentation skills
- IT related skills

Arrangements have been made by the Department and Faculty to improve students' IT related skills. However, more IT facilities should be provided as certain students do not receive a time slot in IT labs to improve their IT related skills due to lack of computers. Additionally, skills and competencies that are necessary to be developed in students should be recognized and included in each course outline together with the learning outcomes of the course. Moreover, English language and communication skills of Sinhala and Tamil medium students need to be further improved

*In relation to the skills development the judgment of the team is “Good”.*

#### **4.8. Academic Guidance and Counseling**

The department currently carries out academic counseling on an ad hoc basis as there is no structured programme in place. However, some staff members personally involve in such activities as and when students request advices and help. Additionally, in the specialization areas, stream coordinators have been appointed to oversee the students and act as their advisor in the choice of subjects, research projects, and internship placements. During the internship a supervisor is appointed for each student to assist any problem that may arise during internship. Moreover, a department representative has been appointed as the university counselor.

*In relation to the academic guidance and counseling the judgment of the team is “Good”.*

Based on the observations made during the study visit by the review team, the eight aspects were judged as follows:

<b>Aspect Reviewed</b>	<b>Judgment Given</b>
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	Satisfactory
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	Good
Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	Good
Extent and Use of Student feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative	Good
Postgraduate Studies	Good
Peer Observation	Satisfactory
Skills Development	Good
Academic Guidance and Counseling	Good

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- Curricular reforms are done continuously
- Curricular design includes Credit system, GPA and Semester system.

- Independent Research Report and internship programme are available for the undergraduates which encourages the undergraduates to apply the theoretical knowledge to the real world.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes of the study programmes are not explicit
- The DoE does not follow a formal and systematic procedure in curricula design.
- No auxiliary courses are available for the undergraduates to select.
- The total four year curriculum carries a weight of 126 credits which is above the norm.

The judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Satisfactory**"

## **2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- Rich with well qualified and experienced staff
- Good learning environment is maintained as Inter-relationship between students and teachers is very positive.
- Three mediums (Sinhala, Tamil and English) of instructions are available.
- Aims at student centered teaching.
- Modern teaching methods are used. Multi media, handouts, white board, OHP, etc.
- Balanced assessment method is used. 60% for end semester examination and 40% for continues assessments.
- A greater degree of autonomy is given to teachers in teaching and assessments.
- Self-learning is in practice, i.e. web search, group work, field research, tutorials etc.
- Practicing of second marking and moderation.
- 80% of attendance are maintained.
- Non academic staff in the department makes an effective teaching and learning environment
- Maintaining a good departmental library
- Maintaining a departmental computer lab
- All the staff members are facilitated with a personal computer and a separate room

#### **Weaknesses**

- No unique format of continuous assessments (CA) is developed. This leads to a significant variation of CA marks.
- No marking schemes are supplied for the second examiner

Judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Good**"

## **3. Quality of Students, including Student Progress and Achievement**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- High quality students are assured by the selection criteria for special degree programme as the criteria is very competitive and sound..
- Dropout rate is negligible and high rate of awards are maintained.
- Opportunities are available for students to expose. (South Asian Economic Meetings, etc.)
- Teaching assistantships are available for well performed graduates

- Waiting time for the job is very short as internship programme is effectively maintained.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Communication in English of Sinhala and Tamil medium students is poor

Judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Good**"

### **4. Extent and Use of Student Feedback**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- A structured questionnaire is developed to evaluate the teacher.
- The Head and the staff members practices an open door policy and rapport developed with the undergraduates to get informal feedback.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Formula is not developed to analyze the teacher evaluations.

Judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Good**"

### **5. Postgraduate Studies**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- Several Post Graduate programmes and extensive courses are conducted.
- Professors and senior lecturers who have developed a research culture with number of publications are a strength of the department
- The senior members of the academic staff have had the opportunity to perform duties as teaching, supervising and coordinating the postgraduate programmes.
- A Link programme with ISS, Netherlands is effectively maintained which helps staff with training and the department with some kind of facilities.
- Memberships of local and international associations are held

#### **Weaknesses**

- Too strict procedure is adopted in reading for MPhil/PhD.
- Completion rate for stipulated time period of postgraduate studies is not satisfactory.

Judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Good**"

### **6. Peer Observation**

#### **Strengths/Good Practices**

- Moderation and second marking system are in practice.
- Regularly held departmental meetings facilitate a ground for sharing views of staff members.

#### **Weaknesses**

- No formal peer observation system.

Judgment is "**Satisfactory**" with regard to this aspect.

## 7. Skills Development

### Strengths/Good Practices

- Problem solving, analytical and presentation skills are improved by individual and group presentations.
- Critical thinking is developed by way of practical work, internship and research paper and student learning in real world situations
- Language skills, communication skills, teamwork, leadership and organization of work are satisfactory.
- IT related skills are developed by introducing IT modules and IT related practices and presentations

### Weaknesses

- ELTD courses seems not effective as communication in English of some students are poor.

Judgment assigned to this aspect is "**Good**"

## 8. Academic Guidance and Counseling

### Strengths/Good Practices

- Orientation program conducted by the university for fresh students gives familiar environment in the University.
1. Making available the undergraduates, at the beginning of the Programme, a copy of the Faculty Prospectus which contains the details of the degree programmes conducted by the faculty.
  2. Head and the staff members are functioning as student's academic counselors on ad hoc basis.
- A student counseling programme is available in the university in which some members of the Department perform duties as student counselors.
  - Programme stream coordinators are available in the department.

### Weaknesses

- No training for counselors

Judgment assigned is '**Good**' for this aspect

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The team recommend the following to be carried out in order to improve the quality and relevance of the programs offered by the Department.

1. Identify overall learning outcomes of the degree programs and then develop module learning outcomes relating to the overall learning outcomes.
2. Relate assessments to learning outcomes of each course module and at the end of each course assess whether the students have acquired intended learning outcomes.
3. Communicate overall learning outcomes and their relationships to module outcomes and assessment methods to students through students handbooks.
4. Some improvements can be introduced to course outlines and teaching plans. They are:



5. Include introduction and objectives/aims of the course
6. Provide a breakdown of continuous assessment methods
7. Details of references and their relationship to each topic of learning.
8. Reduce credit values to maintain international standards and reduce the workload of students.
9. Establish a curriculum review committee at the faculty level representing senior members of each department to review curricula on continuous basis.
10. Expand the scope of university Quality Assurance Cell to ensure high quality in each program throughout the university.
11. More access to facilities such as computers, reading materials and e-journals should be increased for both students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and the staff.
12. The university can provide research grants to support the research activities of the staff members.
13. Department can initiate steps to establish a database to record present and past information of students including employment details.
14. More emphasis should be given to improve the quality of the general degree program and those who are following the degree in Sinhala and Tamil media.
15. Skills and competences to be developed should be recognized within each course and include them in course outlines and teach plans.
16. Training for student counselors in counseling should be given.
17. Establish formal peer observation system within the department to formally assess lecturers.