

# **SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**



***FACULTY OF ARTS***  
***UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO***

30<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009

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## 1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The subject review process introduced by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors and the University Grants Commission has been designed to evaluate the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline, for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in a university. It specifically focuses on the quality of the student learning experience and student achievement.

Higher education is a 'public good' and plays a crucial role in the economic and social development in Sri Lanka. As public institutions delivering this public good, the universities in Sri Lanka have a responsibility to maintain and improve upon the high standards and the quality of higher education.

This report presents the findings of a review of the quality of education provided by the Department of Sociology of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (UCSL). The review was conducted at the Department from 30th of March to 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2008 adhering to the guidelines provided in the *Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities*, published by the CVCD and University Grants Commission in July 2002. The review process was based on the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the Department of Sociology for the subjects of Sociology, and supported by the information gathered from the three-day site visit to the Department.

The SER has been prepared under following headings:

1. Introduction
2. The Structure of the Department, Staff and Facilities
3. Academic Environment in the Department
4. Curriculum Design, Content and Review
5. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods
6. Quality of Students, Student Progress and Achievements
7. Extent of Student Feedback
8. Postgraduate Studies
9. Peer Observation
10. Skills Development, and
11. Academic Guidance and Counselling
12. Annexure

In the review process, attention was focused on the following eight aspects as emphasized the *Quality Assurance Handbook*:

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 observation.
7. Skills development, and
8. Academic guidance and counselling.

The evaluation of eight aspects was supplemented by the information gathered at the,

- discussions held with the Dean, Head of department, academic staff, non academic staff and undergraduate students representing different years and postgraduate students

- observation of department facilities (lecture rooms, library, staff rooms, office space etc.) and other facilities of the faculty and the university
- observation of teaching sessions, student presentations
- Reviewing of documents available at the department, such as course outlines and course contents, examination papers, marking schemes, answer scripts, assignments, undergraduate dissertations, evaluation forms, mark sheets and staff publications.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory paying attention to the strengths, good practices and weaknesses found in each area. Taking into consideration the judgments given to the eight aspects, an overall judgment was given as confidence or limited confidence or no confidence.

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

The history of the University of Colombo traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Ceylon Medical School over 115 years ago in June 1870. In 1880 the School was raised to the status of College permitting it to award the Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery (LMS) and in 1889 the College was recognized by the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom when holders of its license became eligible to practice in Great Britain.

Agitation for the provision of higher education in the island and for the establishment of a University began by the mid 19th century. This agitation gathered momentum by the beginning of the 20th century and the Ceylon University Association formed in 1906 by a group of western educated elite, urged the establishment of a national University. Owing to the persistent demands of the Association the government decided to set up a University College in 1913.

In 1921 the University College was declared open in a building that the government purchased called the "Regina Walavwa" which came to be known as "College House". Since then "College House" has remained the nerve centre of the University system in Colombo serving it in different capacities. It presently houses the offices of the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, and the various Conference and the Committee rooms.

University of Ceylon was established on 1st July 1942 by the Ceylon University Ordinance No.20 of 1942. The University was to be located in Peradeniya and was to be unitary, residential and autonomous. With the establishment of the University, the two Colleges, the Ceylon Medical College and the Ceylon University College, lost their separate identities and were absorbed into the new Institution. The first Principal of the University College Mr. Robert Marrs was succeeded in 1940 by Dr. (later Sir) Ivor Jennings, who was also the Vice-Chancellor designate of the new University. His main task was the establishment of the University in Peradeniya.

Instead of shifting the Faculty of Science to Peradeniya, a new Faculty was established there in 1961 and a new Medical School in 1962 while the original Faculties remained in Colombo. By 1963 a second Faculty of Arts was established in Colombo making use of the abandoned "Race Course premises" to accommodate the large number of Arts students who had qualified for University admission that year but could not be accommodated at Peradeniya. The Department of Law was then brought to Colombo from Peradeniya in 1965.

The idea of establishing a new University in Colombo was not altogether a novel one necessitated by this sudden influx of students. Sir Ivor Jennings, the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon, had anticipated this eventuality and had recommended the construction of a new building in Colombo for its library (then housed in a private building "Villa Venetia" situated behind College House) in spite of the decision to shift the entire University to Peradeniya as he felt the new library "would serve a future University there". The Universities Commission headed by Mr. D.C.R. Gunawardena (Sessional Paper XVI of 1963) had also recommended in its report submitted in July 1963, the separation of Colombo and Peradeniya into two independent Campuses "which will soon develop into independent Universities". The National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) established under the Higher Education Act No. 20 of 1966, which repealed the Ordinance No. 20 of 1942 too had directed its attention to the need to establish a separate and independent University in Colombo.

The first official announcement of the creation of a separate University in Colombo was made in Parliament in the Throne Speech of 1967. The necessary legislation for this purpose had been prepared by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs under section 34 of the Higher Education Act No. 20 of 1966 on the recommendation of the National Council of Higher Education. The new University which came into existence on 1st October 1967 with the Colombo Campus as its nucleus had initially a student population of nearly 5000 reading for degrees in Arts, Law, the Sciences and Medicine and a teaching staff of nearly 300.

The Colombo section of the University of Ceylon which was originally intended to be shifted to Peradeniya, witnessed hardly any physical development and continued to function practically on the same land and in buildings and laboratories it inherited from the old University College. However, with the establishment of the University of Colombo in 1967 steps were taken to remedy these deficiencies and the University embarked for the first time on a capital development programme. Unfortunately due to lack of funds and other constraints these plans could not be adequately implemented during the period 1967 - 1978.

The authorities of the new University set up in 1979 gave high priority to the implementation of the building programme. With the land allotted to the University from the old "Race Course" premises it had now about 50 acres of prime land in the best residential part of Colombo, on either side of Thurston Road and Reid Avenue and in Kinsey Road where the Medical Faculty was located, in an area referred to as the "educational triangle".

The original plans for the university were modified in the process of implementation. But the idea that, "Colombo should capitalize its position as the University in the heart of the country's metropolis" was taken seriously. It drew strength from and hopes to contribute to the activities of the capital city; government, and administration, diplomacy and international relations, law, finance, trade, commerce and communications. The University of Colombo today continues its hope to maintain its position as the "metropolitan University, modern and international in outlook and character".

The University of Colombo has 7 Faculties with 41 Academic Departments, a Campus, a School, 6 Institutes and several Centers and Units. The Faculty of Arts has 8 departments, and Sociology is one of them. The Department of Sociology has 17 fulltime faculty members and about 1000 students doing undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

Teaching of sociology was initially introduced at the University of Colombo within the Department of Sociology and Social Welfare in the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1969. Tamil medium instruction began in 1970. Students were given the opportunity to follow a three-year B.A. degree program majoring in sociology, with an additional year leading to a B.Phil Degree.

Today, on average, more than 1000 students follow courses in sociology at both undergraduate and graduate levels as well as at special degree and general degree levels within the undergraduate program. At present, the department offers two post graduate courses; the Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Sociology (duration: one year) that commenced in 1995 and the Masters in Sociology (duration: two years) that commenced in 1978.

At present, all courses in sociology offered for both the special and general degrees are offered in the Sinhala medium while some general degree courses are offered in Tamil. Students are encouraged and permitted to undertake their studies in the English medium, however, only a few causes are taught in the English medium while some are being taught bilingually. Students are allowed to follow the causes in Sinhala medium and answer the exams in English language. All postgraduate courses however, are conducted in English.

### **3. AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The Sociology programme of study at UCSL is designed to achieve the following aims:

- Creating a broad sociological imagination in students as an essential prerequisite for studying and understanding society and culture;
- Providing insights from social anthropology, psychology and social work to broad base the subject of sociology;
- Training students to study the cultural diversity and dynamics of Sri Lankan society in all its complexity;
- Offering necessary training to students that would allow them to understand both local and global dynamics;
- Developing the ability of the students to conceptualize and effectively articulate ideas regarding the above.

When students graduate with a degree in sociology, they are expected to have acquired the following skills, abilities and competencies:

- The ability to undertake an analysis of social and cultural phenomena;
- The ability to undertake extensive social research;
- The ability to understand specific situations and effectively intervene to bring about positive change;
- The ability to conceptualize, articulate and effectively communicate.

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

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

The curriculum comprises 56 different course units in Sociology. Within the Sociology programme, Psychology and Social Work exist as two streams of study. The programme of Sociology together with the two streams of Psychology and social work, commence from broad, general, elementary course units and expand on to intermediate level in the second and third years and to advanced course units in the fourth year. Until now, general and special degree programmes are offered as separate programmes with separate course units, or same course units with different grading systems for special and general degree programmes. All the courses are offered in the Sinhala Medium, except a few that are being offered in the English Medium. In addition, courses in the General Degree programme are offered in Tamil medium but not in the Special Degree programme. Courses in Psychology and Social Work that comprise part of the special degree programme of sociology are taught in English Medium only. First year psychology courses are offered in Sinhala, with the option of answering in English or Sinhala in the examination.

Each course unit carries 3 credits. To complete the degree programme on time a student must offer five (5) course units in every semester. A student following the Bachelor of Arts Special Degree programme requires completing a minimum of 32 course units in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years, besides the course units offered in the first year. Altogether 40 course units or 120 credits in four academic years are required to complete the special degree.

The General degree programme requires a minimum of 1 course units each in the second and third years, besides the courses offered in the first year. Thus a minimum of 90 credits or 30 course units with three credits each are required to complete the general degree (CUS p11).

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

The degree programmes have been designed with the objective of imparting subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills to students while allowing for a subject-wise broad-based degree. The compulsory courses in the areas of sociological theory and methodology that spread over the three years, allow students to obtain better training and good grounding in the basic and required disciplines of the subject. The optional courses offered in the Department provide the students with the opportunity of broadening their subject knowledge and specialise in study streams.

The course unit titled 'Independent Research' offered in the fourth year allows students to adopt innovative approaches and acquire research skills. In addition, the inclusion of an assignment to each course unit, contributes to the development of independence, critical thinking and learning in students.

The Social Work and Psychology streams add strengths to the study programme of the Department and make the programme broad-based. The development of these two streams within the Sociology programme will lay the foundation for a particular identity as well as expansion of the Department in the future vis-à-vis the sociology programmes in other Sri Lankan universities.

The opportunity provided to students to select course units from other departments and study programs in the faculty contributes to broaden the horizon of knowledge of students, and

improve on the multidisciplinary nature and interdepartmental harmony of the Faculty. If the opportunity could be expanded to include study programs in the other faculties, the prevailing interfaculty differences could be reduced to a considerable extent.

The involvement of the staff of the Department together with Slovenian professors in the Social Work stream as well as foreign students doing the practical component following the social work courses together with local students has an effect of cross-fertilization, and such interconnections improve the coherence and comprehensiveness of the sociology curriculum of the Department.

The present special degree programme of the Department allows identification of four study streams, namely, Social Work, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. Urban Sociology is yet another identifiable stream although it offers only three courses in the programme.

The compulsory courses in theory and methodology provide a thorough foundation for each of these study streams. While allowing the students to broaden their knowledge by selecting courses from among the different streams, such an identification of streams will give due credit and acknowledgement to the respective specialities of the faculty members of the Department.

Each study stream has been designed to provide theoretical and methodological training, practical application and development of transferable skills. The discussions with members of the staff revealed that the graduates produced by the Department, especially those who did them in the English Medium, had hardly found any difficulty in securing employment.

The course units taught in the Department are backed by research and publications of the academic staff. The staff members have developed specialties in their respective disciplines of teaching, with ten staff members having PhDs and seven having Master's degrees.

Parallel systems of evaluation and syllabi are adopted for both Tamil and Sinhala teaching programme of the Department (the Review Team could not evaluate the performance of Tamil and Sinhala media students in different subjects as such data were not available).

From 'time to time the Department reviews its curriculum and introduces new course units' (SER p13). In July 2008, the Department has conducted a curriculum review on the basis of which certain changes have been introduced to the study programme. The Department expects to implement the recommendations made in this review and combine the two degree programmes of special and general from next academic year.

**Need Improvement in the following areas:**

The fact that the study programme makes a clear distinction between special and general degree programmes from the second years onwards with different system of marking and course units, makes a distinction between general and special degree students and contributes towards a disintegration of student community and increasing tensions among students. The demarcation is so tight that it does not allow students who may find it difficult to follow the special degree programs to switch over to the general degree programme in the middle of the programme or visa versa.

The proposal to do away with the current system of differentiating between the special degree and general degree students by type of course units and marking systems is welcome in this



perspective. It will help the Department to reduce the number of courses offered, allow the staff to better concentrate on the courses offered and application of proper teaching methods, and improve the integration of students.

The optional courses offered in the Department need streamlining. Some courses have overlapping areas. For example the courses offered in the urban sociology stream requires close scrutiny to avoid such overlaps.

The Review Team is of the view that the study programme should take the advantage of being located in the metropolitan area of Colombo, and develop the Urban Sociology programme to be a separate stream to highlight this locational advantage that none of the other universities in Sri Lanka enjoys. The urban sociology stream should pay attention to the myriad of urban living patterns and problems shown in the city.

The English Medium students following the General Degree programme with Sociology as a subject are not provided with lectures in English; instead they attend Sinhala Medium lectures, and discussion classes conducted in English. This situation can be rectified if the general and special degree students are offered the same courses which are taught in English for English medium students.

The study programme for the general degree students does not entail a course in statistics. This deficiency can be addressed if the difference between the general and special degree students is done away with, and statistics are made compulsory for both students. The Review Team is of the view that a basic social statistics course should be introduced in the second year and make compulsory for both general and special degree students, while an advanced statistics course be introduced for the special degree students in the third year.

The modification of SOC 3247 – Applied Sociology to Sociology of Practical Application requires explanation (SER p13) since applied sociology and practical sociology are two different subjects altogether. In addition, the Review Team highly recommends reintroducing SOC 3264 – Introduction to Multivariate Analysis in to the curriculum of the Department. This however requires, as rightly stated in the SER, computer facilities for students.

***The view of the Review Team is that the Curriculum Design, Contents and Review can be judged as GOOD.***

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

The Review Team observed that Department maintains a high quality in teaching, learning environment and in students assessments. The teachers use different teaching methods, which includes article-based teaching, group and individual presentations, handouts, PowerPoint and transparencies on the projectors, lectures with discussions etc. The use of whiteboards is the widely practiced method in the classrooms (SER p14). Second correction of answer scripts, moderation of question papers by a second person are important aspects of maintaining quality. Written tests (Mid Semester, Final and Classroom exams), written assignments and oral presentations are used for assessment of students (SER p16).

**The following areas as viewed by the Review Team require improvement:**

1. The question papers presented to the team for observation contained some mistakes in the use of Sinhala language and grammar. It is recommended that a thorough system of editing the question papers before they are printed and distributed to the students.
2. The undergraduate theses also contained such mistakes, and in addition the review team has found that the theses have not followed a common scheme of theses compilation (e.g. bibliography, chapter setting etc). This may be because the students are given the freedom of compilation of their theses without constraining them with a common scheme to follow. The guidelines provided (annexure 6 SER) need revision, and should be more detailed. The assessment of dissertations by the supervisor together with a second person is the current practice, which should be changed over to two examiners and none of them should be supervisors of the respective student.
3. The course outlines provided to the review team for observation were not in accordance with a systematic format. Course outlines displayed to the Team had their own way of presenting them. It is recommended that a common scheme be used for developing course outlines, which can also be the outline given to the students. It is important that the printed course outlines with details on student assessment methods are distributed to students at the beginning of each course unit.
4. General degree students were not given assignments but were tested on midterm examinations in lieu of such assignments. The large number of students attending the general degree courses may work as a deterrent towards marking individual assignments as observed by the staff.
5. The study programme does not contain a Tamil medium special degree programme.
6. The students are not fully aware of the system of evaluation. They have misunderstandings about the marking system of assignments in particular. The inadequate communication between the Department and the students is shown in this instance.
7. The use of teaching methods by the staff in classroom reaching need improvement. Poor use of audio-visuals in the lectures has been observed. The transparencies used on overhead projectors were not legible and clear. In addition, the number of overhead projectors and digital projectors were limited and were hand carried to classrooms each time when the lectures were performed. There was too much ambient light in the room so the projector-based presentation did not show up well on the screen. Physical improvement to classrooms and purchase of more projectors are recommended.
8. The Review Team is of the view that article-based teaching is a good 'active learning method' of teaching, and it helps improving students' language ability as well. However, the article-based teaching method has some problems as stated by students. This is particularly so with the Sinhala medium students who are given articles written in English to review in the class. The Review Team suggest the use of a combination of teaching methods in each course unit as such combinations help students with different learning habits. *Visual learners* gain knowledge best by *seeing* or *reading* while *auditory* learners do that by *listening*; and *tactile or psychomotor* learners do so by *doing*.
9. Students were not punctual in attending the lectures, especially the general degree classes.
10. As mentioned in the SER (p14) the Department together with the Faculty and the University should take necessary steps to provide for the disabled students enrolled in sociology, and provide them with easy physical access to classrooms.
11. Students lack training on the use of scientific calculators which are allowed in the examinations.
12. The Department should be provided with adequate number of multimedia projectors (in-built multimedia projectors would be the best) and OHPs for each classroom, and the

students should be provided with adequate photocopying facilities. As stated in the SER 'there is only one OHP for special degree students available in the Department'. Many students interviewed for this review stated that they have to spend many hours in the queues to get a couple of pages photocopied. It is mentioned in the SER (p14) that not having adequate number of equipments in the Department is a hindrance to achieving the goal of high standard of teaching and learning.

13. Not receiving name lists of students following the different courses from the Faculty administration is mentioned as a problem in allocating students to discussion classes. This should be rectified, and the Faculty should take remedial action to send the lists of students within the first two weeks of student enrolment to the Department. In addition, to address the issue of poor attendance by general degree students in discussion classes, the Faculty should strictly maintain the 70% compulsory attendance requirement in discussion classes for the general degree students.
14. The faculty members of the Department were not satisfied with the services provided in the main library especially with regards prescribed books. It seems that the prescribed books for different course units are not purchased in time for the commencement of the course units, or they are not available. The librarian stated that if the required books and articles are sent in to the library in advance (may be one month ahead of the commencement of the courses) the library would make arrangements to make them available on time. The Review Team recommends that the staff of the Department should assign for journal online contents and use different search engines available in the library and select the relevant articles for the librarian to obtain for the courses taught. Regular meetings with the librarian are recommended for this purpose.
15. The assignment grades and mid-semester results are usually delayed as mentioned by the students. It is important that these results/grades are released as soon as they were completed, may be within the course of the semester. Giving frequent and immediate feedback to students on the quality of their learning will facilitate the learning process. Such release of results reassures the students that they have learned the desired material or technique and it can help them retain and refine it. Such early release of results helps alleviating periodic plateaus in learning. Learning is made easier when the students are aware of their progress, before they embark on the examination or next semester's workload. In addition, release of such results helps the student in getting prepared for the final examination. Early release of feedback / results can motivate the student to greater effort because it makes their goal seem attainable, and probably want to take part in assessing his/her own progress toward learning goals. It strongly recommended that all the results pertaining to the assessments during the semester be released within the semester itself.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Teaching Learning and Assessment Methods can be judged as GOOD.***

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

In terms of students' performance the Review Team has witnessed an improvement in the quality of students over time (p 18 SER). Except in 2006, there is a steady increase in the GPA of students following the Special degree programme. Completion rate of special degree programme is 100% over the last ten years (SER p18) and the failure rate has been less than 10%. Dropout rate for courses offered, after two weeks, is negligible.

The number of students enrolling in the general degree in sociology has increased giving an average of 241 students per year since 2001. From 2005 there has been a steady increase in the number of students in the general degree program.

General Degree Program- # of student enrolment	
Academic year	# enrolled
2001	127
2002	160
2003	392
2004	119
2005	114
2006	388
2007	217
2008	414

From 2003-2007, in the special degree program, an average of 30 students per year has been maintained except in 2004 and 2006. Over the years since 2003, more students have been able to obtain classes, while the students who did not complete the degree were relatively low in number.

Performance of Special Degree Students						
Academic Year	Total enrolled	# completed	1 <sup>st</sup> class	2 <sup>nd</sup> Upper	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lower	pass
2003	29	29	0	5	9	15
2004	16	14	1	3	7	3
2005	33	31	3	11	15	2
2006	22	22	0	15	5	2
2007	30	27	2	12	13	0

The number of students following the degree programme in English medium has increased, and shows an improvement as witnessed in the discussion classes.

Students have cordial relationship with the staff

Willingness of students to follow the courses in English is a good sign, which the Review Team has observed in discussions with students. The Staff also is willing to teach the courses in English medium.

**Aspects that need improvement:**

Process of selecting English medium students is somewhat unclear, and there is no test of the students' English ability to follow the courses in English. All the students who apply for the English Medium special degree are usually taken in without a test of their English knowledge.

Lack of a data base on passed out students. This has created problems for the Department to assess the outcome and impact of the study program. In addition, because of this lacuna, there

is no input sought for program and syllabi revision of the Department. The Review Team recommends maintaining a database of past students and updating it annually.

The Department does not maintain a database on student performance separately for English, Sinhala and Tamil media, and therefore, a comparative review of the performance of students is difficult.

We do not have data on Z score of students opting to specialise sociology to see if any improvement has occurred. It is important to collect the Z scores of students selected for the special degree programme.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Quality of Students including student progress and achievements can be judged as GOOD.***

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

Staff who would like to be able to monitor their teaching during the semester in order to act immediately to improve their teaching might find collection of student feedback during the semester a useful strategy. The Department has adopted several measures to obtain student feedback (annexure 7 and 8 in SER). The self-evaluation report contains a copy of students' feedback questionnaire of a quantitative nature, although it is not consistently administered in all course units. Only 58% of students surveyed by the Department have admitted that they participated in written evaluations of course units in the Department (p20, SER). It was observed that the methods of qualitative nature are in use to obtain student feedback. The members of the academic staff are in constant contact with students to obtain a feedback on various aspects of students' life, particularly the study programme in small classes.

It was mentioned that the student evaluation method will be streamlined during this semester making it compulsory for all the course units, using a common form of evaluation.

#### **Aspects that need improvement:**

The Review Team did not observe any *systematic follow-up* of the results of the student feedback from. The percentage of students participated in written evaluations is 58%.

Different lecturers have used different formats of questionnaires to collect student feedback.

The Review Team is of the view that as with all aspects of feedback and evaluation of teaching, it is useful to draw upon a range of different yet complementary sources of data on feedback. While formal feedback strategies such as questionnaires can be adapted to collect feedback at the end of the semester, there are a range of strategies suitable for gathering informal feedback from students during the semester. Perhaps the most obvious way is to ask the students question directly (e.g. what are the three most important things you learnt well and the three things you did not learn well). In small and interactive classes there is mutual trust and respect on the part of the students and teachers, and posing questions directly to a class may be feasible.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Extent and Use of Student Feed back can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

#### 4.5. Postgraduate Studies

The Department's postgraduate programmes comprises four 'levels' viz: MA in Sociology (Course work and dissertation), M.Phil in Sociology (Dissertation only), PhD in Sociology (Dissertation only) and Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Sociology (course work and extended essay). These programmes are conducted in English. The number of students enrolled in each year and the number applied and passed are given in the following Tables.

<b>Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Sociology Course</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b># Applied</b>	<b># Enrolled</b>	<b># Completed</b>
2008	37	16	No data
2007/06	21	17	08
2005/04	20	13	08
2003/02	28	10	07
2001	48	12	11
2000	18	11	09
1999/98	16	16	08

<b>Postgraduate Programme in Sociology – 2000-2008</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b># enrolled</b>	<b>#PhD completed</b>	<b>#completed M.Phil</b>	<b>#completed Course work MA</b>	<b>Completed MA</b>
Before 2000	?				08
2000 - 2005	39			17	07
2006 - 2008	38				04
Year ??	?		04		
Year ??	?	01			

##### **Aspects that need improvement:**

After year 2000, only a limited percentage of students applied for Applied Sociology Programme are enrolled in the program. The Review Team is of the view that the percentage of enrolment should be increased.

The Diploma programme in Applied Sociology, commenced in 1996, does not have adequate content on the theoretical aspects as viewed by the students. As most students are not familiar with sociological theory, it is suggested that such a course be introduced.

The MA programme commenced in 1978 and has not been revised recently. It has only three subjects offered with a dissertation component. The students' view that the number of courses offered in this programme is inadequate, and provide for a limited choice. May be the course requires a review in the fee structure as well as the study program structure.

M.Phil. degree is based on a dissertation without the coursework component. The Review Team suggest inclusion of the same coursework component available for the MA degree be extended for the M.Phil. degree as well. The dissertation in MA could be a short one with only 15-20,000 words, while the M.Phil dissertation could be a lengthy study of 80,000

words. However, we have not been able to study the dissertation component of the postgraduate programme as the theses were not available for us to review.

The Review Team suggests that the programme should have a minimum of six course units, and considerable elective courses be introduced for the students to select from. The theory and methods course units can be made compulsory.

Each course unit has 30 hours of teaching, and this is seen as inadequate. In addition, 15 hours of discussion classes can be introduced to each unit making the total contact hours per course unit to become 45. As the lectures are conducted in English, the discussion classes can be held in Sinhala for Sinhala Medium students and in English for the English medium students.

Access to the library in the Department during weekends is not available, and students view this as a problem. Making arrangements to use the libraries during the weekend facilitate learning as most students in this programme are working students.

The savings generated through the postgraduate programme should be used to provide facilities for the Department.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Post-Graduate can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

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

The Department does not have a formal system of peer observation. However, the Department recognizes the importance of it and the need for it (SER p23). Nevertheless, among the members of the staff of the Department discussions are held on improvement of teaching methods, methods of evaluations. In addition, academic papers are peer reviewed based on personal arrangements, examination papers are moderated by a second person, and they are scrutinised by a team before finalizing (SER p23).

##### **Aspects that need improvement:**

A formal procedure of peer observation needs to set up in the Department.

The Review Team has some reservations on the effectiveness of the moderation process and the scrutiny process, because the past question papers that were observed had many grammatical mistakes and other problems. More effective moderation and scrutiny process is needed.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Peer Observations can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

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

As mentioned in the SER, the Department has a ‘strategy’ towards developing the skills related to bilingualism, writing, conducting research, abstraction, making presentations and developing critical thinking, analytical skills, communication skills, self confidence, skills in teamwork and networking, time management and the use of computer and internet (SER p24-25).

‘Bilingualism is promoted by teaching in both Sinhala and Tamil and English beginning in 2007 for the first year General Degree students. A one hour lecture in English is held for each two hour lecture in Sinhala or Tamil. The students in the Special Degree classes have been required to use reading material in English. Discussion classes are held in English for General Degree students’ (SER p24).

The independent research assignments, literature survey and development of the research design in the third year, and the dissertation component in the final year of the special degree programme help developing research and analytical skills among the special degree students.

Course unit related field assignments, especially those that are in the Social Work stream immensely help improving the students’ research and fieldwork abilities.

The presentation component in each course unit is an important aspect of the programme that enhances the presentation abilities of the students. In these presentations students learn PowerPoint and OHP presentations and the use of computers for data analysis and presentation.

The reading material prescribed for the students are largely written in English, and hence the students are compelled to learn the English Language. The conduction of some undergraduate lectures and all the postgraduate lectures in English is yet another supportive measure adopted by the Department to further boost the language learning abilities of students.

**Aspects that need improvement:**

The skills development strategies apply largely for the special degree students, and the benefit of these strategies for the general degree students seem to be minimal. The general degree students should also be exposed to independent assignments, fieldwork and field research components of the programme.

The students stated that they do not have adequate computer facilities at the Department or in the Faculty to improve on their computer skills.

The Department should have several computers with internet facilities for the students to use.

The Review Team suggests introduction of an Internship Programme for the Special Degree students. During their final year when they embark on dissertation research, such Internship Programmes can provide suitable fieldwork sites and study problems. The programme sponsors can help identifying suitable problem areas for research and bear the cost of such research. Further, if the sponsoring agency is satisfied with the work of the intern, probably they would hire the students after graduation for work in the sponsoring agency.

The Review Team recommends obtaining the opinion of the alumni of the Department, and other stakeholders (e.g. prospective government departments, NGOs, etc) in identifying various strategies for skills development of the students outside the programme of study.

The students wish that they should have facilities for foreign language learning other than learning of English.



Student Presentations need improvement, poor use of audio visuals used in the presentations, and poor language use were observed.

***It is the view of the Review Team that the Skills Development can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

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

Academic guidance to students is provided through various consultations, discussions and provision of information by the staff of the Department. This guidance is sought through tutoring (personal tutors), and comments on assignments and class discussions on assignments and research guidance provided for dissertation work of the students. Student handbook, various handouts, guidelines on dissertation and research design and various notifications displayed on the department notice boards, telephones, emails and department website are other avenues of academic guidance (SER p27).

Counseling is provided for students through the Department from the beginning of the academic carrier of the students in the first year. Advise as to selection of courses, changing of course units, are often provided by the staff for the students. The counseling service provided by the Faculty through involvement of the staff of the department is a formal procedure of counseling. The Faculty counseling room is used on rotation by the staff members who are appointed as counselors to provide their services to needy students. Currently there are four staff members of the Department who are counselors in the Faculty. These staff members as student counselors are known to students, and needy students seek their services in the Department as well.

##### **Aspects that need improvement:**

There is no formal system of counseling in the Department, and the staff of the Department does not wish to introduce a formal counseling system in the Department. The Review Team is of the view however, an introduction of a system whereby the special degree students are randomly assigned to the 17 members of the Department for purposes of academic consulting and discussion of personal matters would provide a basis for a formal system of counseling and an avenue for improving teacher-student relationships in the Department. Under this system each staff member of the Department would be assigned 6-8 students from different academic years, who can meet once a month as a group, or individually in the Department to discuss the various problems that the students face and need advice and counseling.

***It is the view of the Review Team that Academic Guidance and counseling can be judged as SATISFACTORY.***

Based on the observations made during the visit by the Review Team and as per the facts discussed above the judgments given to those eight aspects under review are as follows:

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

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The present system of differentiating between the special degree and the general degree programmes should be done away with
2. The optional courses offered in the Department should be streamlined to omit the large sections that overlap. For example the courses offered in the urban sociology stream requires close scrutiny to avoid such overlaps.
3. Develop the Urban Sociology programme to be a separate stream in the study programme. The urban sociology stream should pay attention to the myriad of urban living patterns and problems shown in the city of Colombo.
4. The English Medium students following the General Degree programme should be provided their lectures in English. This situation can be rectified if the general and special degree students are offered the same courses which are taught in English for English medium students.
5. A course in statistics should be made compulsory for special and general degree students. The Review Team is of the view that a basic social statistics course should be introduced in the second year and make compulsory for both general and special degree students, while an advanced statistics course be introduced for the special degree students in the third year.
6. The question papers should be closely monitored to avoid mistakes in language and grammar.
7. The undergraduate theses should be given a detailed scheme of theses compilation (e.g. bibliography, chapter setting etc) to follow up by the students.
8. The guidelines provided in annexure 6 of SER should be revised and include more details.
9. The dissertations should be assessed by two independent examiners. The examiners should not be the supervisors of the dissertation research of respective students.
10. The course outlines should be prepared in accordance with a systematic format agreed upon by the staff of the department.
11. The printed course outlines with details on student assessment methods should be given to students at the beginning of each course unit.

12. The Department should think of a viable method to assess the general degree students using the assignment method that is being used for the special degree students.
13. The Department should strive to introduce a Tamil medium special degree programme.
14. The students should be made fully aware of the system of evaluation, may be through a workshop at the beginning of each semester.
15. The use of teaching methods by the staff in classroom reaching should be improvement with good system of audio-visuals. The Review Team recommends the use of a combination of teaching methods in each course unit as such combinations help students with different learning habits. *Visual learners* gain knowledge best by *seeing* or *reading* while *auditory* learners do that by *listening*; and *tactile or psychomotor* learners do so by *doing*.
16. The Department should invest in increasing the number of overhead projectors and digital projectors, and improving the physical aspects and lighting in the classrooms.
17. Punctuality of class attendance of students should be maintained.
18. The disabled students enrolled in sociology should be provided with easy physical access to classrooms.
19. The use of scientific calculators should be taught at the beginning of courses that require the use of scientific calculators.
20. The Faculty should send the list of names of students enrolled in different courses to the Department at the beginning of the semester at the end of the two week 'shopping' time for courses.
21. The Department should strictly maintain the 70% compulsory attendance requirement in discussion classes for the general degree students.
22. The Department should facilitate a good system of communication between the library and the staff/students to facilitate supply of required literature for taught courses.
23. The Review Team recommends that the staff of the Department should assign for journal online contents and use different search engines available in the library and select the relevant articles for the librarian to obtain for the courses taught. Regular meetings with the librarian are recommended for this purpose.
24. The mid-semester results/grades and assignments marks pertaining to the semester should be released as soon as they are ready, within the course of the semester. Such early release of results helps alleviating periodic plateaus in learning. Learning is made easier when the students are aware of their progress, before they embark on the examination or next semester's workload.
25. The English medium students should be selected to follow courses in English, after an examination of their English ability may be conducted by the sub department of English.
26. A database of the passed out students should be maintained and periodically updated by the Department.
27. The Department should maintain a database on student performance separately for English, Sinhala and Tamil media, and this should be part of the overall student database of the Department.
28. The Department should make arrangements to obtain the Z score of students doing the special degree in sociology, and this should be part of the database maintained in the Department.
29. The Department should *systematically follow-up* the results of the student feedback from for improvement of the teaching programme. Student evaluation should be made mandatory for all students in all courses.
30. A common format / questionnaire should be used for student feedback in the Department.

31. The drawing upon a range of different yet complementary sources of student feedback is recommended. While formal feedback strategies such as questionnaires can be adapted to collect feedback at the end of the semester, there are a range of strategies suitable for gathering informal feedback from students during the semester. Perhaps the most obvious way is to ask the students question directly (e.g. what are the three most important things you learnt well and the three things you did not learn well). In small and interactive classes there is mutual trust and respect on the part of the students and teachers, and posing questions directly to a class may be feasible.
32. The percentage of enrolment in the Applied Sociology Programme should be increased.
33. Adequate content on the theoretical aspects should be included in the Diploma programme in Applied Sociology. It is recommended that a theory course should be introduced in this programme.
34. The MA programme should be revised and restructured.
35. The same coursework component should be made available for the MA degree be extended for the M.Phil degree as well.
36. The dissertation in the MA degree should be a shorter one with only 15-20,000 words, while the M.Phil dissertation could be a lengthy study of 80,000 words.
37. It is recommended that the masters programme should have a minimum of six course units, and considerable elective courses be introduced for the students to select from. The theory and methods course units should be made compulsory.
38. Each course unit should in the masters programme should increased to 45 contact hours with 30 hours of teaching, 15 hours of discussion classes.
39. As the lectures are conducted in English, the discussion classes can be held in Sinhala for Sinhala Medium students and in English for the English medium students.
40. Department should improve library use and access of postgraduate students, may be by keeping the Department library open during weekends.
41. The savings generated through the postgraduate programme of Sociology should be used to improve the Department's facilities.
42. The Department should take steps to setup a formal procedure of peer observation of teaching programmes in the Department.
43. The moderation and the scrutiny processes of question papers should be strengthened.
44. The general degree students should also be exposed to independent assignments, fieldwork and field research components.
45. The Department should make arrangements to increase the access to computers by students.
46. The Department should have several computers with internet facilities for the students to use.
47. The Review Team suggests introduction of an Internship Programme for the Special Degree students.
48. The Review Team recommends obtaining the opinion of the alumni of the Department, and other stakeholders (e.g. prospective government departments, NGOs, etc) in identifying various strategies for skills development of the students outside the programme of study.
49. The Review Team suggests an introduction of a system whereby the special degree students are randomly assigned to the 17 members of the Department for purposes of academic / non academic consulting and discussion. Under this system each staff member of the Department would be assigned 6-8 students from different academic years, who can meet once a month as a group, or individually in the Department to discuss various problems that the students face and need advice and counseling.

## **6. ANNEXES**

### **Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE REVIEW VISIT**

#### **DAY - 1 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009 (Monday)**

08.30	-	09.00	-	Meeting of Review Panel with the Members of the Quality Assurance Council
09.00	-	09.30	-	Discussion on the Agenda for agreement
09.30	-	09.45	-	Tea
09.45	-	10.45	-	Department presentation on the Self Evaluation Report
10.45	-	11.15	-	Discussion
11.15	-	12.30	-	Observing facilities within the Department
12.30	-	13.30	-	Lunch
13.30	-	14.00	-	Observing Teaching (SOC 2229, Room 296)
14.00	-	15.00	-	Meeting with the department academic staff (with tea)
15.00	-	15.30	-	Meeting with student counselors
15.30	-	16.00	-	Reviewers' Meeting
16.30	-	17.30	-	Meeting with Postgraduate Students

#### **DAY - 2 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 (Tuesday)**

09.00	-	09.30	-	Meeting with the students from the Social Work stream
09.30	-	10.30	-	Meeting with the second year Sociology Special Degree Students
10.30	-	11.00	-	Meeting with the non-academic staff (with tea)
11.00	-	11.30	-	Observing facilities (outside the Department)
11.30	-	12.00	-	Meeting with the Dean and the Vice Chancellor
12.00	-	12.30	-	Observing facilities (outside the Department)
12.30	-	13.30	-	Lunch
13.30	-	14.30	-	Observing Documents
14.30	-	15.30	-	Observing Documents (with tea)
15.30	-	16.30	-	Meeting with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year Sociology Special Degree Students
16.30	-	17.30	-	Reviewers' Meeting

#### **DAY 3 - 1<sup>st</sup> April (Wednesday)**

08.45	-	10.00	-	Observing teaching: Meeting with General Degree students
10.00	-	10.30	-	Observing student Presentations (First Year)
10.30	-	11.00	-	Tea
11.00	-	11.30	-	Reviewers' meeting
11.30	-	12.30	-	Meeting with the staff for reporting
12.30	-	13.30	-	Lunch
13.30	-	15.00	-	Report Writing

## **Annex 2. THE REVIEW TEAM STUDIED THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS**

- Social Work Stream Handbook
- Course Outlines for Postgraduate Programmes
- A set of answer scripts marked by a second examiners
- Handouts and teaching material used in Postgraduate programmes
- First Year Student Handbook
- Mid-semester Examination Papers and marking schemes
- Student Evaluation forms (undergraduates)
- Student Evaluation forms (postgraduates)
- Project Reports prepared by student groups engaged in field research
- Publications of the staff
- Moderated question papers
- Students attendant sheets
- Undergraduate Dissertations

## **Annex 3. LIST OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS MET WITH THE REVIEW PANEL**

GR Rajasundaram  
PM Rasika Malkanthi  
WAR Damayanthi  
Dinusha Wickremasekera  
Chandima Jayasena  
UI Senaratne  
MA Nihal Chandrasiri  
Tara Wijesekera

## **Annex 4. LIST OF SOCIAL WORK STREAM STUDENTS MET WITH THE REVIEW PANEL**

HUS Samaraweera  
ADSM Athukorala  
CPM Gunawardena  
EM Hanshi  
S. Jegaparakash  
RUSC Rathnayake  
DGKM Chandradasa  
AGKK Dissanayake  
S. Nilukshi  
MMP Dissanayake